MASTERCONTROL + PLURALSIGHT:

Improving onboarding, switching tech stacks & building a learning culture
Founded in 1993, MasterControl Inc. started as a document control solution provider. Since then, MasterControl has grown into a global leader, named the No. 1 Enterprise Quality Management Software (EQMS). Today nearly 1 million users worldwide rely on MasterControl to help them deliver their life-saving products to more people sooner.

MasterControl lives by four core values: customer success, sound economics, innovative solutions and exceptional people. These values aren’t mere words, but a uniting charge for MasterControl’s people.

“We’re not producing a product; we’re producing successful customers,” said Mike Armstrong, MasterControl development manager and DBA for the company.

For this reason, MasterControl’s headquarters showcases a “Wall of Success,” logos from companies who wholeheartedly recommend MasterControl to their colleagues. How do they stay at the top?

“With technology growing and changing so rapidly, there are times it feels like we’re years behind,” said Mike. “I believe innovative solutions can solve problems better.”

With onboarding, ongoing learning and technology stack transition underway, MasterControl’s developers make great use of Pluralsight courses to drive this innovation.

**MasterControl meets its training match**

For more than 10 years, MasterControl sent their software developers to live trainings and conferences. This approach ate away at valuable time and budget.

“We were struggling. We would spend thousands of training dollars without much return,” said Mike. “A whole week away halts productivity. Plus, we had many people who just flat out don’t like to travel.”

Rethinking their training strategy to involve less travel to conferences and in-person classes, MasterControl
management explored other options for their developers to keep up-to-date with latest technologies. One option was getting the team certified as software architect professionals. Another idea was costly book websites.

It was Randall Autry, MasterControl’s senior vice president of engineering, who first heard of Pluralsight and suggested they try it out.

Initially there was some concern about the investment. “I remember there being some worry,” said Colby Litnak, development manager and software architect. “If we didn’t use it, then we wouldn’t get budget for it again.”

But developers quickly grew fond of how Pluralsight met their needs. “The beauty is in five minutes I know if I want this course or another one,” said Mike. “I haven’t traveled to training in years, it seems like a waste. You don’t find out if it’s good or not until you go.”

“In some cases, Pluralsight is better than in-person training,” Colby added. “A few members on our team weren’t believers until they tried it. I wasn’t.”

Now Pluralsight is an embedded part of MasterControl’s core strategy for onboarding developers, transitioning to a new technology stack, and creating a culture of learning. “I mean, we absolutely love Pluralsight,” said Mike. “We have for years. We have always had a phenomenal relationship.”

“A lot of new hires right out of school may not know the newest stuff out there, like the JavaScript library that came out 15 seconds ago... Pluralsight is the best tool for the job.”

— Colby Litnak
MasterControl development manager and software architect

**MasterControl at a glance:**

- Founded in 1993.
- Offices in Salt Lake City, Tokyo and London.
- More than 1 million users worldwide.
- One of the first companies in the world to successfully complete a certification audit to the newly revised ISO 9001:2015 standard.

**Quicker, more efficient onboarding**

“One of the ways we use Pluralsight is the new hire training or onboarding training,” said Colby. “A lot of new hires right out of school may not know the newest stuff out there, like the JavaScript library that came out 15 seconds ago.”

So, every new hire is given an onboarding curriculum, built by MasterControl’s development team. It includes an internal wiki and a learning path of Pluralsight courses.

“Pluralsight is the best tool for the job,” said Colby. Every year MasterControl hires 10-15 development interns, who complete the same new hire curriculum everybody else does.

“Since we’ve cut back on in-person training and do more Pluralsight, onboarding time for our new engineers has gone from six weeks to four weeks,” said Colby. “This is a big deal for me. With interns, you only have them for three and a half months so if one-third of that is training, you don’t get nearly as much out of them as you could.”

**MasterControl developers practice, teach and learn**

MasterControl believes in a “trifecta” approach to personal development, encouraging employees to practice, teach and learn. To explain this further, Colby points to an unrelated example: the medical industry. It makes sense. Consider how
a doctor will often spend time in the lab, then teach a course at the community college or university, and then perform open heart surgery the next day.

“We believe in order to be a professional you don’t just practice. You also have to teach, and you also have to learn,” said Colby. “You have to spend a good amount of time in each of those areas.”

So, after Colby convinced leadership, developers at MasterControl were given time for teaching and learning every Friday afternoon.

“This is where Pluralsight comes in,” said Colby. “Friday afternoons you’re open to learn whatever you need to.”

MasterControl means it. Developers have full autonomy to choose whatever they want to learn. “When they ask, ‘Can I go train on how to program a video game?’ I say, ‘I don’t care,’” said Mike. “That’s 100 percent up to you. You’re going to learn something new about technology you can use almost anywhere.’ This is where innovative solutions are born, when people are learning what they are passionate about.”

One option for the dev team is to attend instructor-led trainings. Engineers can sign up to teach and often are awarded bonuses for participating. “It’s fun to see people come out of their shell,” said Mike. “We have people that are absolutely incredible, but also very shy, introverted. They almost always end up instructing trainings.”
Dedicating a whole afternoon to learning and teaching cuts down logged productivity time, but MasterControl sees it as a worthy investment.

“We really care about our developers’ careers. We want them to be successful. We want them to be happy. We want them to want to come to work, not just have a job,” said Mike. “We really, really take that to heart.”

MasterControl developers respond well to this culture of learning. They stay for more. “We have an extremely incredible retention rate here,” said Mike.

**Training for a new technology stack**

Recently, the development leadership decided to transition to a new technology stack using Java, Angular and Bootstrap. With a few million lines of legacy code, this transition is estimated to take quite some time.

“You know, one day we’ll get there, and we’ll party, right?” said Colby. “We may never actually get rid of all our legacy code, but we’ve got to cross somewhere.”

To start the mammoth project, MasterControl’s developers needed immediate, user-friendly training. Where did they turn? Pluralsight.
“The difficulty of getting a development team of almost 50 engineers to Java is a big deal,” said Colby. “We had one of our new hires help us build the curriculum. He went into Pluralsight, searched for courses that built on each other and taught how to move forward.”

The right tools, the right value, year after year

Pluralsight has become an integral part of the MasterControl dev team, a go-to resource in everyday operations. “Every January we renew Pluralsight for everybody. And to be honest, it’s well worth the money,” said Mike. “We get an absolute ton out of it.”

So much, in fact, other MasterControl departments like IT and tech support have noticed and are now using it too. With the core value of “sound economics,” Colby says Pluralsight just makes sense.

“We get a lot of value out of the training,” said Colby. “For our whole department we spent about $25,000 on Pluralsight a year. That’s the cost of sending a fourth of our people to conferences.”

“If you give the people the tools, you don’t even have to enforce it. They use it,” added Mike. “And it’s fantastic.”
Empower your team to become Smarter Than Yesterday.

Get started today and request a free pilot for your entire team.

Contact us:
sales@pluralsight.com
1.801.784.9007

Start learning