

A business intelligence software company

How one company used Panopto to deliver complex technical training while growing exponentially.

The promise of “Big Data” is in helping organizations to identify and understand the important details in a sea of information. Today, this fast-growing analytics and business intelligence software company builds data visualization software solutions designed to enable users to create rich analyses of their own Big Data, and to share insights with others instantly.

Its solutions simplify complex data analysis and enable customers to put industry-leading research capabilities in the hands of every member of their teams, eliminating the need to rely on specialists or canned report templates to make sense of big data. In the world of data analysis, the company has built a better mousetrap. And now they’re experiencing the exponential growth to prove it.

It takes some pretty sophisticated software to make big data come alive in dashboards, charts, maps, graphs, and more, all that the click of a mouse — especially when it is all designed to work as easily as these do. Indeed, the company’s team of developers rivals any for technical aptitude. But that genius, in turn, left senior leaders with one big question to answer:

How to ensure a brilliant team of experienced developers always knows every aspect of the company’s product architecture in full detail — even as the product suite and the development team both rapidly expand?

Three challenges to growth

Answering that question is an internal team charged with supporting employee learning and development for the company’s entire development organization. It’s no small task — this is the team responsible for maintaining and enhancing the technical architecture development at the very heart of the business — they design and develop the software solutions the company sells. And as the company continues to grow, those solutions are only getting bigger, more disparate, and more complex.



At a glance

Based in the U.S., with offices worldwide, the company provides data visualization solutions that thousands of customers use to better understand their data. The company’s customers include Fortune 500 corporations, small and medium-sized businesses, government agencies, universities, research institutions and non-profits.

Organizations employ the company’s products in a broad range of use cases such as increasing sales, streamlining operations, improving customer service, managing investments, studying and treating diseases, and improving education.

And all of that, in turn, means that small internal employee training team is constantly working to solve three critical business challenges:

1. Ensuring that every member of the development team completely understands every facet of the product — from the core functionality to the newest features — inside and out, both now and in the future as new features are added;
2. Finding enough technically capable new hires to accommodate the organization's exponential growth, and then getting all those new team members up to speed on an incredibly complex technical solution within a target of 30 days; and
3. Enabling the development team to share their technical expertise with other business units, ensuring that members of the customer service and product sales organizations, among others, always have up-to-the-minute product knowledge.

The company has built a business around creating products that help people better see and understand data. So when the team realized it needed a solution that could scale their training efforts, finding a solution that could allow them to leverage the power of visual learning was important.

The company had already explored wikis and other means to curate organizational knowledge, but with a fast-moving product cycle and a host of new hires trying to make sense of technical architecture, those solutions weren't enough to help the development team actually see what they needed.

"We have so much information to share," notes a member of the company's employee training team. "We're tasked with conveying to our coworkers everything they need to know and understand in order to do their jobs—and often in a very short period of time."

With that in mind, the team sought out a tool that could help the company use video for learning and development. Specifically, the team needed a flexible solution for capturing formal training presentations as well as informal learning videos, and a video content management system that would make the videos viewable on any device. They soon found the Panopto video platform.

Panopto makes it easy to record, share, and search video in a single solution that runs on any laptop. With Panopto's video platform, business users can record video with virtually any

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camera and automatically upload recordings to a secure “Enterprise YouTube” where they can be shared, viewed, and searched from any device.

Visual data meets visual training

To support the company's incredible growth and create a solution to the company's key business learning challenges, the developer training team began using Panopto to introduce a new means of knowledge curation — formal and informal video training that would reach across departments and divisions.

Today that video knowledge sharing practice takes many forms across the organization, built upon four strategic pillars:

- Formal technical product training created and shared within the development team
- Informal knowledge sharing created by the developers themselves to communicate with each other
- On-demand product training created by the developers to communicate with the sales and customer support teams

Formal knowledge sharing that connects developers to the company and its mission

Rather than develop individual systems for each of these needs, Panopto's video platform enabled the company to address all four of those pillars in a single solution. Anyone inside the development team with knowledge to share can simply open the Panopto recorder on any laptop, click record, and present. Panopto takes care of all the technical AV work automatically, making the resulting video ready to share with anyone, anytime, anywhere, almost instantly.

To make sure Panopto would be the answer they needed, the company first started with incremental rollout of the video platform. The team introduced Panopto as a one-way training tool — trainers and select internal experts were given access to record presentations, which could then be viewed by any member of the team.

This small scale introduction served two purposes: first, to pilot the video learning concept and ensure it would meet the information sharing needs of the organization as hoped. And second, it would give the company the opportunity to collaborate with Panopto to ensure the tool integrated with internal identity management systems. This piece was critical to providing employees with access to Panopto via single sign-on, and to ensuring that the wealth of competitively sensitive information within Panopto would be secure.

A learning tool that scales

After implementing single sign-on, the company began working with Panopto to test the video platform across all four of the learning challenges the company sought to tackle. As these tests succeeded, the company expanded its Panopto deployment, bringing full recording and viewing capabilities to every member of the development team.

With Panopto installed on each team member's PC, anyone could launch the software with the click of a mouse, record their computer screen, their laptop webcam, or any other recording device, and then instantly share the recording from Panopto's secure video content management system (VCMS).

Panopto's VCMS acts as a "corporate YouTube," providing employees with a central library for viewing their colleagues' presentations. And because Panopto automatically transcodes every video in the library for playback on any device, employees can catch up on training, the latest product knowledge, and more from their smartphones, tablets, or anywhere else, whenever the time is right for them.

The company's learning and development team easily sets employee permissions, ensuring that folders are appropriately shared or kept private as needed, that new employees are swiftly ushered into the system, and that exiting employees are automatically removed to ensure the resources remain secure.

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Four opportunities, one solution

Today video has become an essential part of how this analytics and business intelligence software company shares information, providing a valued solution to each of the organization's four learning challenges:

1 | Formal technical product training

The first contribution of video training to the company's developer training process was the most straightforward. In order to ensure every member of the development team is fully up to speed on the company's offerings, the team had already been holding a regularly scheduled 2-day all-hands conference to review product architecture.

These product architecture discussions bring together all the company's developers to explain to each other in full exactly how everything in the company's products worked. The course makes it easier to understand the intricacies of the software — assuming, of course, an employee can attend. In the past, those who had to miss the event for any reason could only wait for the next one — and hope they didn't miss too much regarding anything new.

With Panopto, the company was able to record and share those classes, ensuring that employees could still experience the class even if they missed a session — and that they could go back and rewatch a session later should a question arise.

“Sharing our knowledge via on-demand video in Panopto gives our people the power to access the team's expertise whenever and wherever they need it,” said a member of the employee training team.

“For example, I had a very senior engineer in my group that wanted to start watching our Panopto videos immediately. On day two, he was watching our product architecture conference videos so he could learn about all the backend components of our product.”

Other employees instead rely on the videos as guides they can access on-demand whenever they have a question. “As they watch the videos, people often like to follow along in the product, reading the code that’s being discussed. Panopto helps speed up the knowledge acquisition process immensely.”

2 | Informal social learning

To complement its formal training, the company also uses video for social, peer-to-peer knowledge transfer. As part of launching new or revised product features, the developer who created the new architecture is asked to record a walkthrough of the details and rationale behind their work.

“Recently one of our developers was asked by a new hire how to perform a specific task,” recalled a member of the training team. “A light bulb seemed to go off in his head and he said, ‘Why don’t I make a video?’ And so, that is what he did. Using Panopto he demonstrated the process step-by-step in a very short recording. Now we have that information ready for anyone else to view and learn from at any time.”

These individual videos are then stored in the organization’s video library, where teammates can find and reference them when working on those components later. In a short time, this practice has built an extensive library of internal expertise — all readily available at the click of a mouse, so that the developer’s knowledge can be shared on-demand, even if they aren’t available to answer questions in person.

3 | Cross-departmental training, available on-demand

Today the company has rolled out Panopto to all functional groups including, ensuring everyone in the organization can share information and trade expertise. As the development team leverages Panopto for training, teams all across the company make use of the knowledge stored there.

“Every time a new version is shipped, new features are there,” notes one of the company’s leaders. “All these new features need to be shared with our customers. And so, we

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use Panopto videos to train customer support and sales people on these additions, so that they can then effectively communicate them to our end users.”

As a provider of exceptionally technical data analytics software, it’s no surprise that the company has an almost constant stream of questions on how the tools work — both from new prospects working to integrate the tools into their own systems, and from long-time customers seeking to better utilize the product suite. That means everyone, including sales and customer service, must be up to speed on the details of how the product works.

To make sure they are, the company leverages Panopto to share its internal expertise with those key stakeholders. Managers watch for trends in common product or technical questions, and when those arise, quickly share the relevant video from the development team to ensure everyone has the right answer at hand.

“Our customer support people as well as our new developers — even those working from our offices outside the US — all have access to information about the feature well before that feature makes it to our customers. The videos are an invaluable part of our overall communication strategy.”

4 | Formal knowledge sharing

Technology teams in almost any organization can sometimes feel a certain disconnect with business teams — too often finding themselves in the role of order taker, with little if any communication shared about customer feedback or product strategy. To bridge this divide, the company uses video to help its teams connect throughout product development.

This starts with the kickoff meeting — when stakeholders across the company come together to define new feature requirements. The internal employee training team records these, sharing them with every member of the new feature's working team so as to tell the whole story of that feature, including who came up with the original idea, what data points led to it being included in the new version and more.

"With Panopto, our developers can record their demo videos for others very quickly," the team notes. "We keep track of the story of each feature from the beginning of the process of including it in a release. Then, after it's finished, it's really satisfying for us to go back and watch how all that played out."

These videos also become a key part of the launch of the new feature, shining a spotlight on the creators and giving the team the opportunity to share their perspective on the importance of the feature — connecting their work to the company as a whole.

Conclusion

Keeping a staff of experts up to date on complex and expanding technical product architecture is no small challenge on its own. Doing so while the organization rapidly grows requires determination, creativity — and as much support as your tools can provide.

Trusted as the experts in visualizing big data, this fast-growing analytics and business intelligence software company has found the support it needs to maintain and expand its industry-leading team of developers in another visualization tool: video.

With Panopto, the all-in-one platform for recording, sharing, searching, editing, and managing video tutorials, Q&A sessions, product demonstrations, feature reviews, and more, today the company enjoys company-wide product knowledge exchange as well as a new developer onboarding process that allows the company to scale up quickly — and match a growth rate that's off the charts.