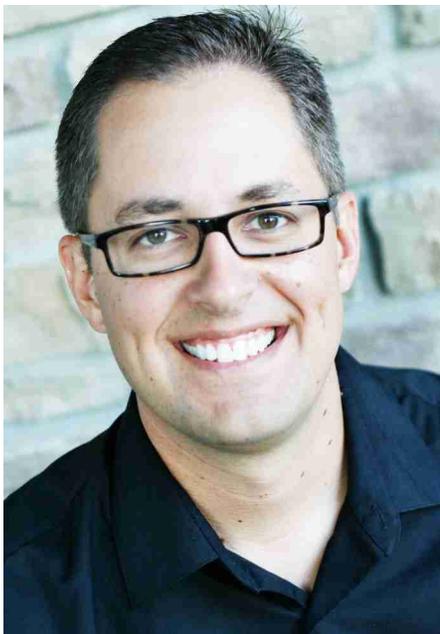


**With a Rich Collection of Online Training Courses delivered by World-Renowned Industry Authorities, Pluralsight is providing Professional Software Developers High-Quality Online Training with Flexible, Cost-Effective Subscription Plans**

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**Aaron Skonnard  
CEO**

**BIO:** Aaron Skonnard is the president and CEO of Pluralsight, the leading provider of online education for professional software developers. As CEO, Aaron focuses on Pluralsight's business strategy, future direction, product development, and strategic partnerships. On a day-to-day basis, Aaron works closely with the entire Pluralsight management team in a variety of different capacities.

Aaron comes from a strong technical background, and will always be a software developer at heart. Through-

out his career, he is written hundreds of articles and whitepapers, several books, and was a long-time contributing editor to popular software development journals. Aaron is a thought-leader in the industry and frequently speaks at industry events around the world.

Aaron earned his degree in computer science at Brigham Young University. Aaron's passion and curiosity for technology began as a child when his father purchased him an early Apple Macintosh and one of the first Compaq PCs. His father made it clear to him that programming was going to be the future of technology. This passion fueled Aaron's interest in the business side of programming and soon developed into a stronger mission of improving the profession of software development, which ultimately led to the founding of Pluralsight and Aaron's role as CEO. According to Aaron's Twitter profile, he is "changing the way software developers learn" and he believes it.

**About Pluralsight:** Pluralsight is a global leader in high-quality online training for serious software developers. The revolutionary Pluralsight training library provides developers everywhere with instant access to a rich collection of online training courses delivered by world-renowned industry authorities. Pluralsight provides flexible and cost-effective subscription plans for individuals and businesses starting from as little as \$29 a month. See what you can learn at pluralsight.com and join the @pluralsight community on Twitter.

**Interview conducted by:  
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor  
CEOCFO Magazine**

**CEOCFO:** Mr. Skonnard, would you tell us the vision when you founded the company and where are you today?

**Mr. Skonnard:** When we first started the company back in 2004 we started as an in-person professional training company for software developers. The original vision was a professional services business model. We would design professional training courses that would cover a particular technology and then we would deploy an instructor to go teach that to a group of people somewhere in the world and that is how we started. We built the business on that foundation and built a network of expert instructors all over the world up to about forty of them. Then about four years into that business we decided we wanted to do a major pivot and today we are a completely different company. Today we are a completely online education company for professional software developers. The content is very similar to what we used to teach before but now it is all delivered through our online learning model and we sell it through a subscription base service so people can pay a fixed amount per month or per year and have access to our entire collection of professional courses.

**CEOCFO:** What does 'hardcore developer' mean?

**Mr. Skonnard:** It means serious and professional as well as in-depth expert level. We do not target the beginner market today. We have some

courses that are good for starting out and learning new things, of course, but that is not our main focus. We are squarely focused on the professional training market and the professional developers who need to learn and acquire new skills and deepen and enhance existing skills that they already have.

**CEOCFO:** What are some of the challenges in creating courses for developers?

**Mr. Skonnard:** That is a good question. It is a very different type of experience. Software developers are working with technologies that are very complex and languages that provide different ways of expressing intent. It is almost like learning many different foreign languages in school. As a software developer you are constantly learning new languages, technologies and platforms that you can use to express your intent on the technology. Developers need hands-on and they need to see it and they need to build on the foundation that they already have. We like to think that each of our courses have a "story arch" where we present a motivation and why you need to learn this particular technology or concept. There is a challenge that you have to overcome and the instructor then walks the student through the technology into the solution. That is usually when those light bulb moments occur and that motivates them to download our exercise files and experiment with those concepts on their own computers and within their own projects. Designing an experience that allows for all those things to happen is a little tricky and that is exactly what I think the core of our business is focused on and what sets us apart from many of the other models in the industry.

**CEOCFO:** Do your courses have to be as user-friendly or user-simple as they might need to be for non-developers?

**Mr.:** It really depends on the course. Throughout our library we have courses that we consider beginner level. We also have intermediate and

advanced courses. The beginner courses assume they do not know much about that technology but we typically assume they have some experience as a software developer. There is always this base level of understanding if you will that we assume most people have. The intermediate and advanced courses assume more prerequisites. People typically come into our environment wanting to master a particular technology area and they will start out with one of our beginner courses and then walk through a sequence of four to eight additional courses in that area going more and more in depth and becoming a master of that technology.

**CEOCFO:** What is the revenue model for you?

**Mr. Skonnard:** The revenue model is very simple. We only sell two subscription plans which are our standard plan and our "plus" plan. The standard plan costs \$29 a month for an individ-

**"Software developers more than any other profession have to be really good at learning new things. Learning how to learn new things quickly is an incredibly important and valuable skill in this profession."**

**- Aaron Skonnard**

ual and \$49 a month for the Plus Plan. We also have annual plans where customers pay for the whole year in advance and that is \$299 a year and \$499 a year for individuals. We also sell to businesses where if they buy in volume we will sell them a business subscription for a certain number of developers at their company and then we will provide volume discounts for those bulk purchases or company purchases. They also get a management portal where they can manage all the people using the subscription within their company so that they can move licenses around if they need to and they can also see reports that show activity on who is watching what and who is passing the assessments that are better built into each course and things of that nature.

**CEOCFO:** How do developers typically learn?

**Mr. Skonnard:** Developers learn by experimenting as well as reading

blogs and books. They also learn from each other. Much of the learning that happens today happens in pair programming environments where they work side-by-side with another developer and are taught on the job as they go. There is a great deal of that which happens in the software space as part of the whole software craftsmanship movement. Most software developers that are working in corporate America today did not learn what they are using in a traditional academic environment. In that environment you learn the fundamentals. More than anything you learn how to learn. Then you go out into the real world and get a job with some company and they say we are actually using this and this and then you have to transition over to these things immediately. There is a great deal of that transition that happens as people move from jobs to jobs as well. I think software developers more than any other profession have to be really good at learning new things. Learning how to learn new things quickly is an incredibly important and valuable skill in this profession. Our model has been designed for that. We have tried to design a model where the courses are short and concise and specific and the whole library is very malleable so that people can learn exactly what they need at the right time. It is almost like having that pair programming model with you all the time where you can call on one of the Pluralsight experts in the library to sit over your shoulder and show you how to code something with this new technology. Our screen casting style of videos often feels exactly like what it would feel like as if you were pair programming with someone only you are doing it with one of the industry experts on that topic.

**CEOCFO:** How do potential customers learn about you?

**Mr. Skonnard:** We have a website at Pluralsight.com and on our website you can watch some videos about our product and take a free trial that will give you ten days of free access up to two hundred minutes of viewing without any charge. That is enough to

watch one full course typically within our library. That is the easiest way to get started. We also have the corporate sales team who can answer questions for businesses if they want to learn how to use Pluralsight within a software development organization at a broader scale.

**CEOCFO:** How often do you update your courses?

**Mr. Skonnard:** We do not do much updating to existing courses but we do a great amount of producing new courses. Updating video is very difficult and time consuming so we often find that it is more effective to create an entire new course instead. If a technology changes dramatically we will simply create a new version of that course and then if there are still people watching or needing the old version because that technology still exists, we will keep both versions of the course around. Sometimes those older technologies just completely go away or they are replaced in which case we would just replace the old course.

**CEOCFO:** How do you judge when you need to create a new course?

**Mr. Skonnard:** It is a matter of how much of the particular technology has evolved. If they simply added a few new features but everything that is in the existing course still applies, we might just add a new module to the end of that course that covers the new features in the latest version. If it is one of these things where the technology changes dramatically, we will build an entire new course to cover it. It is a hard thing to balance and one of those things that ends up being a subjective decision by our content team.

**CEOCFO:** What is your geographic reach?

**Mr. Skonnard:** We sell into over a hundred different countries each month so we are worldwide. India is our #2 country in terms of website activity and half of our revenue comes from outside the US.

**CEOCFO:** Where do you see growth?

**Mr. Skonnard:** We see growth in several places. We see a great deal

of growth internationally. We see India as a very strategic growth market for our business because of the sheer number of software developers that reside there and the amount of software development that occurs there. We also see much growth in the small business and enterprise markets. Today our revenue is pretty well diversified across our various channels but we see a lot of additional growth occurring today in our corporate channels. We are investing a lot there. We also see a great deal of potential growth in the academic space and believe there is a lot of future opportunity awaiting us there.

**CEOCFO:** What is the competitive landscape look like?

**Mr. Skonnard:** There are a handful of companies that are doing similar things to what we are doing but there are only a few that do it at the scale we are talking about. There is a “shake out” occurring right now and surely some consolidation that will happen in the future. There are certainly companies focused on the goal of teaching people how to become programmers more at that entry level market. There are many players in that space but that is a very different type of business that competes more with traditional computer science degrees as opposed to helping professionals in a continual education context which is more of what we do. We focus on enabling new skills for professional software developers on a daily basis. We are helping them improve their resume and improve what they know how to do, which in turn results in better and more interesting jobs and better salaries. It is something that people will stay on and that is a core part of our model where we want them to be with us month after month and year after year. We see that trend occurring and we have very loyal customers. I would say in the competitive landscape where we sit, there is no one else like us. The barrier to entry is also growing quickly because of how difficult it is to amass the kind of library that we have, with the same quality, and price point.

**CEOCFO:** How is business?

**Mr. Skonnard:** Business is great! We have been growing like crazy and by over 100% per year for the last three or four years running. This year looks even better. We are growing our library significantly this year. We are investing heavily in content acquisition and production. On January 1<sup>st</sup> we were sitting on four hundred professional courses in our library. By the end of this year we hope to have over a thousand courses total to put things in perspective. We are moving quickly and we are focused hard on not sacrificing the quality of our courses. In order to accomplish that, we have restructured the company and invested money. We have hired new teams to ensure that we can do it. Customers are going to see a tremendous increase in value without an increase in price. We believe that is going to drive even more growth than the current growth we project at this point in time. We are happy with how things are going and we are also trying to give back a little bit at the same time. We just released three new courses that are completely free that are designed to teach youth and even kids aged ten and up how to start programming and they are very fun courses. We just released them about two weeks ago and I have been using them with my own kids. I have two boys that are at the right age now of fourteen and eleven. They have gone through these courses and are having a wonderful time and have already built their first games. You can just see them lighting up. We are hoping that over time we can provide a free set of resources like this that parents and elementary schools and high schools can use in their curriculum to create programming clubs and technology clubs led by a passionate parent or teacher who has some familiarity with programming can use these courses to inspire the kids. Ultimately that is the most important thing – just exposing them to it and making it real.

**CEOCFO:** Why should the business and investment community pay attention to Pluralsight and what makes you a special company?

**Mr. Skonnard:** It is because we have a special product and we are moving

fast. No one can compete with Pluralsight in terms of the quality of content that we publish for software developers. The reason we are able to acquire this content is because the three founders came from a software development background. We understand what our customers want inherently so we have designed this model around that and we acquire this content from the leading industry experts all over the world. Content is king in

this world. We are investing heavily around that. We believe our business sits at the crossroads of two very interesting and compelling trends. One is the rise of online education and the second is the rise of the software developer in the market. There is a talent crunch and huge issues around finding capable software developers to build the business ideas that all these wonderful entrepreneurs have. You cannot find them today and we

are not producing enough of them around the world. Our business sits right at the crossroads of those two trends and you are going to see many powerful and interesting things shake out from that over the months and years ahead. We have aggressive growth goals and I think you will see a great deal of interest around Pluralsight in the financial community soon.

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