My Journey to improve Pluralsight’s learner experience!

Details

My role

I worked on my own as a user researcher and product designer during my internship.

Tools

Figma, Google forms, Illustrator, Adobe analytics, Zoom

Methods

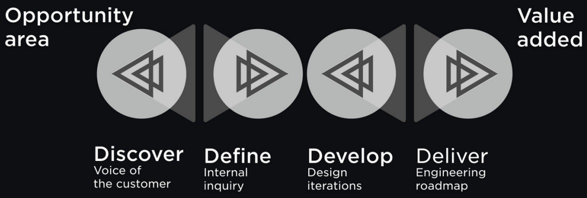
Competitive Analysis, Internal interviews, Co-design sessions, user Interviews, click tracking

Sponsor

Pluralsight

Timeline

May ’20 - Aug ’20



Opportunity area

Value added

Discover
Voice of the customer

Define
Internal inquiry

Develop
Design iterations

Deliver
Engineering roadmap

Opportunity area

While on boarding myself to the Pluralsight platform I noticed that the course page and the accompanying video player was the area most in need of attention. The course page and the video player are the main points of contact for Pluralsight learners (users).

Thus, if Pluralsight can improve learner experience in those areas it can improve their ability to learn and the likelihood that they stay engaged.

Prototype

Course exploration

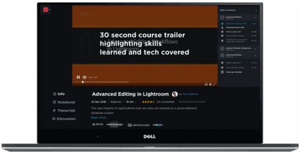
1 Course preview

To inform people what skills are going to be covered.

2 Pause screen

A place where people can dig deeper into the course materials or pivot to related courses.

3 Hover states

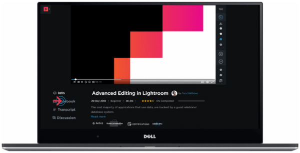


30 second course trailer highlighting skills learned and tech covered

Advanced Editing in Lightroom

Info
Notebook
Transcript
Discussion
DELL

Hidden table of contents and browse bar that show on hover so that there are fewer distractions.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by Tory Matthews
20 Dec 2018 • Beginner • 3h 2m •
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The vast majority of applications that use data, are backed by a good relational database system.

Tool Tabs

1 Info page

Access to the most pertinent information needed to determine what a course covers.

2 Notebook

Quick notes that include screen grabs so that they can be references easily later.

3 Transcript

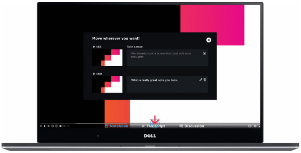
Auto scrolling transcript that can be searched and highlighted, as well as easy quote generation.

4 Discussion

A place where people can share code and ask each other as well as the author questions.

Full screen

The tool tabs pop up as windows when in full screen mode so that they can be placed on a second screen.

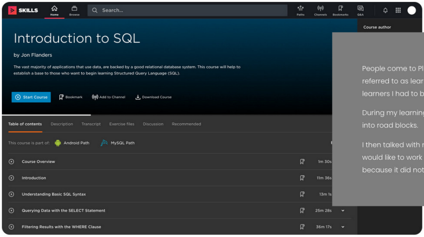

Move wherever you want!
▶ 1:53
Take a note!
▶ 1:09
Notebook
Transcript
Discussion

We already took a screenshot, just add your thoughts!

What a really great note you took.

Discover

Becoming a “learner”


SKILLS
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Q&A
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Add to Channel
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Table of contents
Description
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Exercise files
Discussion
Recommended

Introduction to SQL

by Jon Flanders

The vast majority of applications that use data, are backed by a good relational database system. This course will help to establish a base to those who want to begin learning Structured Query Language (SQL).

This course is part of: Android Path MySQL Path

Course Overview 1m 30s
Introduction 11m 36s
Understanding Basic SQL Syntax 13m 1s
Querying Data with the SELECT Statement 25m 28s
Filtering Results with the WHERE Clause 36m 17s

People come to Pluralsight to learn tech skills. So they are referred to as learners. In order to understand Pluralsight learners I had to become one myself.

During my learning process I took note of times when I ran into road blocks.

I then talked with my team managers and told them that I would like to work on the **course page** (shown on the left) because it did not function as I expected out

Competitive analysis

Now that I had my focus on the course page. I started looking at how others in the online learning space structured their course pages.

I decided the best way to experience the competition was through the courses that they offered, so I signed up for courses from the top five tech learning platforms.

Visits: Coursera (50,884,863) Egghead (401211) Udemy (<10,000) Treehouse (<10,000) LinkedIn Learning (full site (1,170,522,123)

Takeaways

- Structured lesson plans gave me confidence
- Helpful tools increased my enjoyment
- Too many distractions made it hard to focus

Voice of the customer

In order to understand how learners view the current course page I set up a few interviews.

“I look at the summary because I need to know what level of detail the course is going to go”

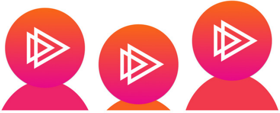
— IT Security UK Education Ministry

“I would feel more efficient if I didn’t have to open a new tab for the video.”

— Graphic Designer

“As far as these tabs go, the only one I use is exercise files if I’m following along with a course.”

—Software Engineer



Takeaways

- People want to be able to use the course page as a summary of what will be covered in the course.
- Learners want the tools and the material to be easily accessible.
- Many people do not know that the course page exists.

Define

Now that I had talked with learners and understood the state of the competition it was time to start scoping the project. I started by digging up any related internal research that I could find.

Past research

A researcher named Rich had looked into the functionality of the course page back in Q1 of 2018 (no visuals here since it was an internal report and I did not create it).

He created a set of recommendations based off of his findings. His recommendations were in line with my own findings.

- **Unify the course page and the video page**
- **Make content easier to find for new learners**
- **Make exercise files easier to find and use**

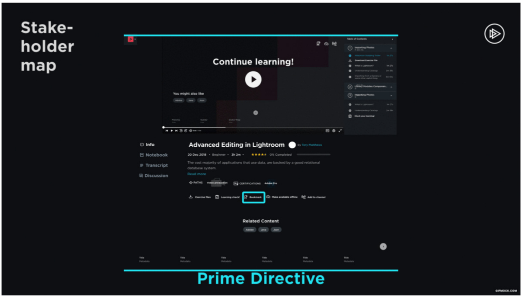
TOP

SECRET

Internal interviews

Empowered by Rich’s findings, I began setting up interviews with fellow product designers/managers and interns at Pluralsight to get their opinions on the course page. The questions I wanted to answer were:

1. How do people withing Pluralsight view the course page?
2. How do the various teams that own parts of the course page communicate?
3. What people at Pluralsight want the course page to do for them?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Prime Directive

The vast majority of applications that use data, are backed by a good relational database system.

Breakdown of who would be responsible for what part of the new course page.

Takeaways

- Agreement on the part of all teams that the course page needs a change.
- For the course page to work properly many teams will have to work together.
- If done properly the course page could improve the ability of other teams to deliver for the learners.

Develop

At this point I felt I had a design that was ready to be tested. So I began testing and iterating on it with internal and external stakeholders.

During my testing sessions I evaluated the course pages ability to complete what I had determined to be the three main learner **jobs to be done**

1 2 3

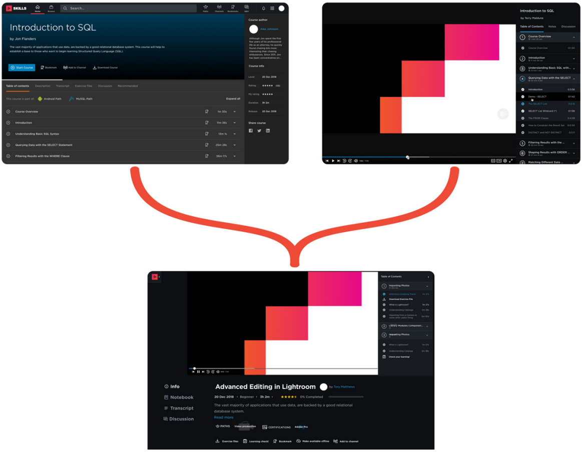
1 When learners arrive at the course page

they want to figure out if the course is going to teach them what they want, so that they can start learning as quickly as possible.

"Combining the video player and the course page would decrease learner confusion and increase the utility of our learning tools."

Product researcher

Inspired by


SKILLS
Search...
Introduction to SQL
by Jon Flanders
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Exercise files
Discussion
Recommended
This course is part of:
Android Path
MySQL Path
Expand all
Course Overview
Introduction
Understanding Basic SQL Syntax
Querying Data with the SELECT Statement
Filtering Results with the WHERE Clause
Course author
Alex Johnson
Course info
Share course
Introduction to SQL
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Check your learning!

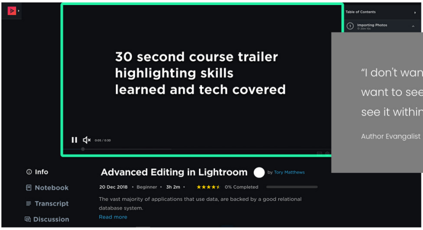
The vast majority of applications that use data, are backed by a good relational database system. This course will help to establish a base to those who want to begin learning Structured Query Language (SQL).

Although Jon spent the first few years of his professional life as an attorney, he quickly found chasing bits more interesting than chasing ambulances. Since 2011, Jon has been concentrating on...

The vast majority of applications that use data, are backed by a good relational database system.

I chose to combine the video player and the course page(info page) for several reasons;

- It decreases time to engagement and increases retainment.
- It makes it easier for learners to access the learner tools.
- It better resembles known entities such as YouTube and other major online learning sites


30 second course trailer
highlighting skills
learned and tech covered
0:05 / 0:30
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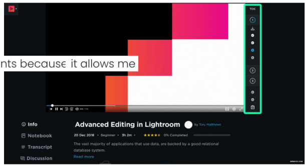
"I don't want to see the transcript. I want to see the video and I want to see it within the first 10 seconds."

Author Evangalist

I chose to include a course preview video at landing so that learners can get an immediate visual representation of not only what is covered in the course, but how the material is presented. Both of which are considered of utmost importance to learners when they pick a course to take.

"The most important info to me is the table of contents because it allows me to see what the course is actually getting into."

Machine Learning Engineer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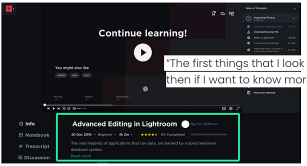
I chose to auto collapse the table of contents once the video starts playing. That way the learners can keep an eye on their progress while not being distracted.

The table of contents will be on full display when learners first get to the course page so that they can evaluate the course content.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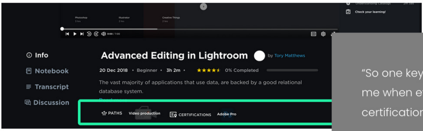
"The first things that I look at are the course title and the release date and then if I want to know more I'll read the description."

UX Designer

The course title, the release date and the description were shown to be the most important information based off of the interviews and data that I analyzed. Thus, I placed that information at the top of the course information architecture.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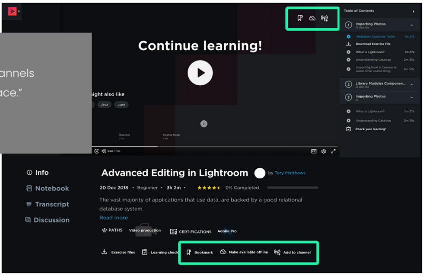
"So one key piece of information for me when evaluating things is the certification prep tags."

Information Security Officer

I wanted to make sure that learners could quickly understand how each course fits into their larger learning goals.

"I immediately go to my channels because that's my safe space."

Educator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Importing Photos
Attention Grabbing Trailer 1m 27s
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What is Lightroom? 1m 27s
Understanding Catalogs 2m 38s
Importing from a Camera or some other useful thing. 5m 50s
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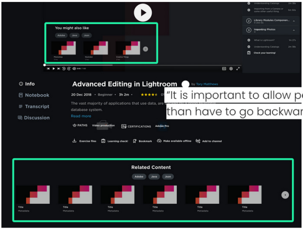
Exercise files
Learning check
Bookmark
Make available offline
Add to channel

The vast majority of applications that use data, are backed by a good relational database system.

I did two things to improve learners ability to add content to save their content for later. I created two places they can add to their channels and bookmarks.

I also changed the icon for offline downloading because the previous icon was too similar to the “exercise file download” icon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database system.

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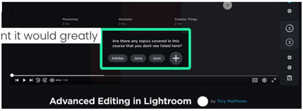
> “It is important to allow people to keep moving forward. To redirect rather than have to go backward.”
>
> Leader of Discovery Team

Browsing content can be a discouraging task so I wanted Pluralsight learners to be able to easily pivot from one course to another without having to backtrack. I did not want them to feel like they hit a dead end, but rather that they are working on the right track.

To do this I made related content show up on the video player after the initial trailer and also always present at the bottom of the page, similar to how you would find related content on Amazon or eBay.

> “If we could get learners to help us tag course content it would greatly increase their accuracy.”
>
> Head of Discovery Team


Are there any topics covered in this course that you dont see listed here?

Advanced Editing in Lightroom

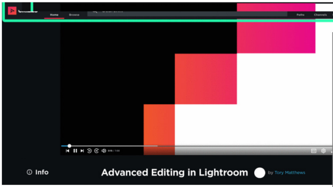
Photoshop
3 hrs
Illustrator
2 hrs
Creative Things
2 hrs
Adobe
Java
Json
by Tory Matthews

I know that tags are an important part of the content discovery process. So by crowdsourcing the tagging of content, hopefully it will be easier to find.

I hope that by surfacing all decision making data and allowing easy access to bookmarks and related content that learners will be able to find and engage with content quickly.

2

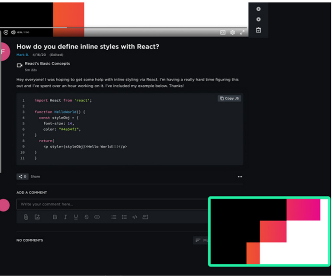
When learners are watching content they want a clutter free environment, so that they can focus and retain information.


Home
Browse
Paths
Channels
Bookmarks
Q&A
Info
Advanced Editing in Lightroom
by Tory Matthews

> “The top bar feels really cluttered and could be distracting if the video does not open in a new tab.”
>
> Graphic Designer

One of the most visually dense objects on the original course page was the navigation bar. So in order to keep its functionality, but to limit its distraction I have it collapsed at resting state and expand upon hover.

> “I don’t like how you have to scroll away from the video to see the stuff below.”
>
> Author / Sr. Director of Engineering Practices



How do you define inline styles with React?

Mark B. 4/16/20 (Edited)

React's Basic Concepts
5m 22s

Hey everyone! I was hoping to get some help with inline styling via React. I'm having a really hard time figuring this out and I've spent over an hour working on it. I've included my example below. Thanks!

```
import React from 'react';

function HelloWorld() {
  const styleObj = {
    font-size: 14,
    color: "#4a54f1",
}
  return(
    <p style={styleObj}>Hello World!!!</p>
)
}
```

Copy JS
0
Share
ADD A COMMENT
Write your comment here...
NO COMMENTS

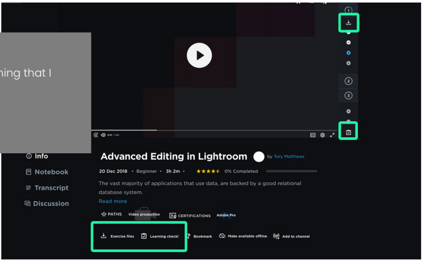
Since there is a lot of functionality below the video player I included a window within a window player that pops up so that learners can continue to view content while they post questions or highlight quotes in the transcript. This design idea was directly inspired by Coursera.

I hope that by minimizing both the top bar and table of contents, as well as offering continuous viewing while scrolling I can improve learners ability to stay focused.

3

Learners want to be able to apply their learning in real life.

> “Exercise files are the only thing that I use on the course page.”
>
> Software Engineer



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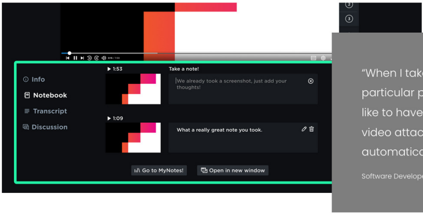
Exercise files
Learning check!
Bookmark
Make available offline
Add to channel

The exercise files and the learning checks were shown to lead to the highest levels of engagement.

I integrated them into the table of contents so that learners know when the files are going to be used in the course as well as giving them one more place to find them.



Info
Notebook
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▶ 1:53
Take a note!
▶ 1:09
Go to MyNotes!
Open in new window

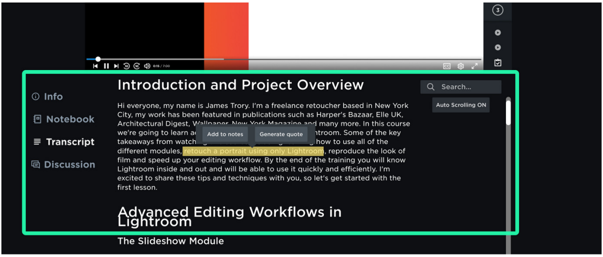
We already took a screenshot, just add your thoughts!

What a really great note you took.

> “When I take some notes at a particular point of the video, I would like to have the screenshot of the video attached with that note automatically.”
>
> Software Developer

Notetaking has been shown to strongly increase knowledge retention. More than that thought I wanted to create a tool that would allow learners to combine visual ques with their notetaking.

I included a screen grab and time stamp with each note for quick referencing. I also made a universal notebook shelf so that learners can organize their notes based on paths and courses. There is also the option to open any of the tools in a new window for those with multiple monitors (this will be the native action while in full screen mode)



Info
Notebook
Transcript
Discussion
Search...
Auto Scrolling ON
Add to notes
Generate quote

Introduction and Project Overview

Hi everyone, my name is James Trory. I'm a freelance retoucher based in New York City, my work has been featured in publications such as Harper's Bazaar, Elle UK, Architectural Digest, Wallpaper, New York Magazine and many more. In this course we're going to learn a … ntroom. Some of the key takeaways from watch … how to use all of the different modules, retouch a portrait using only Lightroom, reproduce the look of film and speed up your editing workflow. By the end of the training you will know Lightroom inside and out and will be able to use it quickly and efficiently. I'm excited to share these tips and techniques with you, so let's get started with the first lesson.

Advanced Editing Workflows in Lightroom

The Slideshow Module

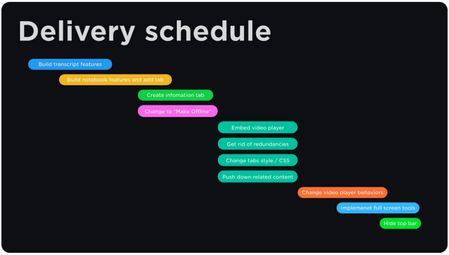
I decided to evolve the transcript into an interactive document, where learners highlights will be added to their notebook and where they can follow along while the presenter is talking. Listening and reading at the same time has been shown to increase retention.

Also being able to search the transcript will give learners another way to find a part of the course that they want to review.

> We hope that having everything on one page will make our powerful learning tools easier to access and learners will feel more gratified when they are rewarded for learning.

Deliver

It is critical to release course page updates in a methodical manner so that we can **measure each change** as we make them.



Overall value added

By improving the learner experience and overall appearance at the course level we can **increase engagement, learner satisfaction** and **conversion** from free to paid subscriptions.

Next steps

1. Trouble shoot for accessibility

2. Increase gamification integration

3. Polish graphics and flow