As NonLinear Educating Inc. gears up to launch what it predicts will be the largest online educational deployment platform in the world, Limelight Networks helps shoulder the load.

Pioneering Online Education with Digital Distribution

In 2005, massive open online courses (MOOCs) were completely unheard of. But one online education company envisioned how digital channels would pave the way for the industry in the next decade and beyond. And they knew that they would need more than great content to succeed.

Martin Sitter, a veteran Apple Lead Educator and courseware designer now serving as the company’s CEO, founded NonLinear Educating, which operates macProVideo.com and AskVideo.com. Martin saw an incredible opportunity to channel his expertise at Apple into something previously unheard of: an entire online training library that would bring video based education to the masses.

According to Martin, “Video solved the problem of trying to teach people how audio is produced because learners could quickly see—and hear—the results. This brought about a fundamental shift in how people learned to use computers, which has gained mainstream acceptance over the last 10 years. We’ve been using Limelight to help us deploy our video content since the inception of our company. They have enabled us to scale our business significantly over the last decade.”

Fundamentally a technologist, Martin is most passionate about building and producing industry-leading deployment systems for his company’s educational content.

“When it comes to the deployment of online content, a lot of our customers are self-paced learners,” says Martin. “They may be using an iPad to study for a university class while taking a bus to school, or gaining extra job skills while killing some time at home in the evening. We step in and allow them to learn at their own pace, on their own time.”

Which, of course, requires video delivery, cloud storage, and content distribution systems that can deliver content at breakneck pace, anytime.
NonLinear Educating’s Challenge: Revolutionizing Online Education in the Digital Age

Martin observes, “When we started our business in February of 2005, the Internet was an entirely different place than it is today.” At that time, videos were the size of a thumbnail, and most consumers did not have the ability to stream high-definition video. In fact, they may not have even known that it was possible to view video online. Mail order DVDs were the prevailing method for distributing instructional content to a global audience.

NonLinear Educating offered a mail order DVD option, but Martin knew that the digital revolution would radically change his business model. He needed a distribution network that could handle the heavy traffic load of a rapidly expanding online customer base. He needed an online video player that had all the functionality of the physical players consumers were accustomed to, and he needed somewhere to store his bandwidth-intensive video library.

On the front end, NonLinear Educating wanted to create an elegant, easy-to-use interface for online users and their growing number of devices. But behind the scenes, says Martin, “it was a different animal.” How would the company build its own global infrastructure, reduce the capital expenditures associated with fixed storage costs, and assure high availability of content without overwhelming its technical teams?

To succeed, the company needed a partner that was as forward-thinking as its founder, as technologically advanced as its own offerings, and as global as its audience.

“Limelight has been a close ally of ours since the inception of our business. We have been extremely happy working with Limelight since we first went online.”

– MARTIN SITTER, CEO, NonLinear Educating Inc.
NonLinear Educating’s Solution: A Combined Storage and Delivery Network that Can Deliver Under the Pressure of High Demand

NonLinear Educating needed an online video delivery platform and content delivery network, and the company’s massive video library and worldwide audience required specific technical capabilities backed by great customer service. Their key requirements?

- **Video streaming optimization**—NonLinear Educating’s CDN had to be optimized for large objects like video, including streaming hardware to serve content, intelligent software to transform it into the multiple formats required by mobile and other devices, and sufficient storage capacity for its enormous library.

- **High redundancy architecture**—When a company’s product is video-on-demand, this demand must be met at all times. NonLinear Educating needed on-network storage with replication policies that would place content in multiple servers in multiple locations, ensuring that a copy of each video remained available to any user, every time.

- **Excellent service**—NonLinear Educating’s macProVideo and AskVideo brands are built on offering technical video knowledge to their audience, so the performance of its own video is critical to building customer trust. The company needed a dedicated support team to keep its content up and running at all times.

NonLinear Educating ultimately chose the Limelight Orchestrate Video, Orchestrate Content Delivery, and Orchestrate Cloud Storage services not only for their ability to meet technical and service criteria, but also, for cost-effectiveness as NonLinear Educating scaled.

“Limelight offered an excellent streaming architecture and we decided that working with them was the best way to distribute our content,” Martin states.
World-class Video Delivery for the World’s Online Video Experts: NonLinear Educating’s Limelight Orchestrate Solution

In just a decade, NonLinear Educating has become the world’s largest online educational community for Mac users. Its longstanding relationship with Limelight has brought tangible benefits to the business.

- **Ability to scale**—The Limelight storage and content delivery network, combined with its OVP offering, proved to be the solution that NonLinear Educating needed to scale its business to what it is today: a top 5 educational publisher in the world with 32,000 tutorials, 1,800 hours of training, and more than 750 online courses.

- **Expanded product portfolio**—Limelight continues to enable growth and innovation for NonLinear Educating. The company is set to unleash what the founder and CEO believes will be the biggest educational deployment platform in the world. “Our focus for the future is deploying a plug-and-play system for universities that pulls pre-existing content from our library,” says Martin. Limelight’s content storage, distribution, and video player technology will be integral to the success of this latest offering.

- **Multi-device performance**—NonLinear Educating’s customer demographics are shifting; its online education courses have taken hold with a younger, more mobile audience. With Limelight’s optimized architecture and multiple streaming protocols, the company is assured the best performance regardless of user device.

“It has been incredible to see how the growth of Limelight’s business has enabled the growth of our business,” Martin observes. “We can expand in a much more streamlined and efficient way by having Limelight power our vast amounts of content behind the scenes.”