



classroom  
CONNECT

## Classroom Connect

### CONTROL® unlocks critical information, enables more informed, collaborative decision-making



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Classroom Connect, Inc., a business unit of Harcourt, Inc., is a leading provider of professional learning and classroom resources. The company offers online professional development, classroom curriculum and adventure learning expeditions, as well as live, nationwide events and onsite seminars, to foster successful Internet use by students in kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Classroom Connect, like many organizations, faced a common and vexing difficulty: retrieving, summarizing, and analyzing accurate, decision-relevant corporate data—fast.

#### *The Challenge: Visibility*

While Classroom Connect’s JDE One World took care of the GL, paying bills, and invoicing clients, it did not deliver the financial and performance data critical for informed and effective decisions.

“We didn’t even have the basic standard accounting reports,” recalls Suzanna Sarasvati, Classroom Connect’s Financial Analysis Manager. “And if you wanted a total sales report by product, which is a fairly standard report, you couldn’t get one.”

Even more serious, however, was the fact that it was so difficult to simply retrieve key data and view the details behind the summaries—the information that was absolutely required for informed, fact-based decision-making.

Additionally, and not unlike thousand of other organizations, Classroom Connect had a huge patchwork of spreadsheet-based data repositories and models. Sarasvati herself, an Excel expert, implicitly understood the difficulties of maintaining an Excel-based system, especially with the highly complex subscription revenue model she was managing. It was a tedious, manual, error-prone, and inflexible process to incorporate all the complexities and exceptions, let alone take the information, consolidate it, make sense out it, and report it.

Whatever new solution the company implemented would have to provide these capabilities. Moreover, it would have to leverage existing technologies and systems, and integrate data well beyond the GL without sacrificing granular details.

For JD Edwards was only one piece of Classroom Connect’s data puzzle. There were large amounts of critical information captured and stored elsewhere.

“I knew we needed to link things like headcount,” says Sarasvati, “and have it hooked up to JD Edwards... and Goldmine, our customer relationship management software.”

#### *The Solution: CONTROL*

Sarasvati knew which enterprise financial management solution would benefit her company the most.

Having used **CONTROL** as her main tool to consolidate and analyze data from SAP (order management) and Spectra (general ledger) for a previous employer, she was familiar with **CONTROL**’s central data repository and unmatched multidimensional query and analysis capabilities. She was also aware that **CONTROL** had built-in functionality for budgeting and rolling budgets.

“I knew **CONTROL** would work,” she says. After evaluating all options, Classroom Connect was convinced, as well, and endorsed Sarasvati’s recommendation.

**CONTROL** has put at Classroom Connect’s fingertips the data its leaders need—when and how they need it—to understand the business, anticipate where it’s headed, and drive it right.

“**CONTROL** gives you a lot of flexibility,” says Sarasvati. “Other systems aren’t as comprehensive or necessarily user friendly. ERP systems are meant to process transactions and capture information, not necessarily do a lot with it. **CONTROL** is our key to getting at the data and using it.”

(continued)

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“We use the drill-to-source capability quite a lot. **CONTROL**® has made the information more accessible, and in a meaningful way. We can get at it more quickly so we can make decisions more quickly. ...If it weren't for **CONTROL**, we wouldn't be operational.”

Classroom Connect's Chief Financial Officer Lawrence J. deAngelis, as well, is pleased with the myriad of benefits **CONTROL** has brought to his organization.

“**CONTROL** is letting us have access to information better than we had before,” he says. “It's the timeliness of the information that we use for reporting purposes.” And “a lot of it is productivity.”

### *...And Added Unprecedented Value*

**CONTROL** not only proved it could meet Classroom Connect's need to have critical data faster, but it provided many efficiencies that simply weren't available to the company before.

#### **Effortless, instant data integration**

With **CONTROL**, Classroom Connect can see the big picture, examine finite detail, continually plan, adjust, predict and report in real time, with much greater confidence.

Information from all of the company's key data sources is automatically loaded, rolled up, and immediately summarized. There are no missing links and no data integrity issues. Gone, too, are the constraints of massive amounts of data. The supporting details behind the numbers are instantly accessible, as well, so understanding and interpretation are improved.

#### **Standardization among functions**

**CONTROL** has provided consistency across functional boundaries.

“The nice thing about **CONTROL** is you install it once and use it to address a variety of needs,” says Sarasvati. Classroom Connect does have to rely on a myriad of desktop software applications, and deal with the synchronization and reconciliation issues of multiple systems and technologies.

From corporate management to line managers, team members across the board can use **CONTROL** in support of corporate strategy.

While Sarasvati uses **CONTROL** to report, analyze and facilitate forecasts, a senior accountant uses it to close the books. Classroom Connect's CEO uses **CONTROL** to gauge how corporate objectives are being met. And the director of sales operations uses it daily to track product performance and identify trends.

The use of **CONTROL** by all of these key people has meant that everyone is working with the same numbers. The risk of delayed and misinformed decisions is greatly minimized. All of that translates into more effective collaboration, and better planning, decision-making and bottom-line results.

#### **Familiar Excel-based interface**

**CONTROL** combines the power of a centralized relational database with a simple to use, familiar, and flexible Excel-based interface.

It minimizes the learning and acceptance curve to have the same look and feel, whether in developing plans, measuring performance, or reporting profitability.

“Having the Excel spreadsheet front-end is very, very helpful,” agrees Sarasvati. “The ability to input the numbers in different scenarios where you need to see them, and compare them—very helpful.”

#### **Adaptive system**

In addition to its ability to access a variety of data sources, its powerful multidimensional analysis capabilities, comprehensive budgeting and forecasting capabilities, and user friendliness, **CONTROL** makes it easy to manage change and prepare for the future.

**CONTROL**'s adaptability will be critical as Classroom Connect goes through reorganization after being acquired (as part of Harcourt's education and testing businesses) by leading technical publisher Reed Elsevier.

Throughout the reorganization, Classroom Connect will rely on **CONTROL** to readily and seamlessly integrate the two companies' data and conform to new requirements and processes.

It's a good thing that **CONTROL** provides everything the enterprise needs, all in a single, easy-to-use solution.

**Take your financial management practices to the next cutting-edge level with CONTROL®**, the one-stop solution that inspires the insight that drives performance. Contact KCI at (310) 921-6222 or [info@kciCorp.com](mailto:info@kciCorp.com).