

## Ward Educational Consulting Guides Financial Services Firm in Effective Deployment of Online testing

Questionmark's network of consulting partners provide services to develop strategies, custom materials for learning, training and a variety of assessments. These partnerships ensure that Questionmark Perception is deployed effectively with guidance from expert consultants that customers can trust. One such partner is Ward Educational Consulting, headed up by Christine Ward, who provides expert consultancy to companies on the quality of content within their tests and assessments.

Christine comments, 'I've known Questionmark since about 1990 and I have been involved in several projects which have used their software. I've been impressed at the way the company has grown and has responded to customer requests for new features and for different question types. Perception offers possibilities for all sorts of testing, ranging from standard high stakes multiple-choice tests, through other objective question formats to more open-ended questions with formative feedback. In one project the availability of user prompts in other European languages was a deciding factor in the choice of Perception. I can also see how the new workflow management system in v4.0 will be really useful to many corporate clients.'

### Situation

Ward recently worked with a major financial services firm that operates on a global basis; the need for an integrated, standards-based assessment platform is vital and a structured approach to core competence assessment is key. The company in this instance had implemented an LMS (Learning Management System) which was providing a solid basis for distributing learning materials to those that needed them.

However, it was not supporting the company in terms of testing and professional assessment. This was becoming an issue as professionally qualified staff require on-going training to keep them up to date and there is a growing pressure within the industry to demonstrate that certain standards of knowledge have been achieved.

The company already had two e-learning courses, freely available on the company intranet, which needed to be mastered before employees went on one of the face-to-face learning events. Resources needed to be put into place to test employees' understanding of the e-learning courses and of the material from the face-to-face event. To that end, two tests were created and linked to the e-learning material. The tests would ensure that the learning material was being used and that the required level of knowledge had been achieved. A third test was based on the face-to-face event.

All three tests were made available on-demand and employees were allowed to sit the tests as many times as necessary. Everything was logged to show how employees had fared throughout and to highlight any items that might be proving difficult or ambiguous. A bank of questions was created that contained more than three times the number of questions required for any one test. Random delivery of questions from the bank ensured that no two tests would be the same and that an employee re-sitting a module would receive a different selection of questions. The pass mark for the final test was set to reflect the high level of knowledge expected.

Christine played an important and complex role, from helping to identify the company's requirements, through training the item writers and monitoring their progress via email coaching and item editing, to the live launch of the new test systems and the evaluation of the project's success.

Christine comments, "It's important that the tests ensure that employees can apply knowledge to realistic business situations, not just that they can recall the rules. Item writers were encouraged to consider how the knowledge would be needed in practical situations. For us the trial stage was an incredibly useful part in the development of the final tests. After all, it had to be right as up to 15,000 people worldwide would take each test created. These are delivered in English for the main part, but some territories have translated the tests into their own language."

### Results

Christine concluded, "The project was completed on time and to budget. This is a real achievement bearing in mind the limited time that was available for item writers to learn the skills of writing good items and deliver the finished product. The strong relationship between myself and the talented team within the customer was instrumental in bringing this project to its successful conclusion."

### More information

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