



HHG creates computerised tests for regulatory compliance with Questionmark Perception

Perception delivers central test management and local student control

Introduction

Regulations are a core element of the financial services sector and compliance is demanded. Getting regulatory compliance right will help ensure customers are treated fairly and protects the company and its employees from many forms of litigation. Get it wrong and the story becomes quite different.

The Life Services division of HHG PLC (which includes London Life, NPI, and Pearl Assurance) is one of the largest closed book operations within the UK Life and Pensions industry. It has traditionally used manual systems to ensure that all employees are trained on specific regulatory topics, such as data protection and anti money laundering. However, with the company split over two sites and the various computer systems in use across the sites, establishing a computerised system to handle this training task was essential.

Intranet Solution

It was not until John Tidy, business systems architect for HHG Life Services, heard that Questionmark had introduced an intranet version of its assessment software that the solution became clear.

John Tidy comments, "Keeping up to date with who had taken tests and when they had been taken was a massive task with the manual system. At the time, Pearl, London Life and NPI, all had different technical set-ups, so we needed a system that could be managed centrally but controlled locally. And, the only way to do this with relative ease was to move to an intranet-based system. Having used the PC-based version of Questionmark's Perception for some time within parts of the organisation, we were familiar with its look and feel and very happy with its functionality. Upgrading that system to the intranet version seemed the most appropriate course of action."

Implementing the System

Installation of Perception took place in June 2003 and ran extremely smoothly. Those tests that already existed on the PC system were upgraded and additional new ones were added with Questionmark's support. These were then put into production and employees are required to pass them annually. This new installation also catered for new starters to take their tests as soon as their training was complete.

The new tests were basic assessments of specific knowledge across the company. Their role was to ensure that all employees at every level within the company passed the basic knowledge requirements in the areas of data protection and anti money laundering, thereby protecting customers, the company and its staff. In fact, the financial services regulations do not require mandatory testing, only the provision of appropriate training and materials. Whilst testing is not a regulatory requirement, HHG Life Services nevertheless uses the tests as a way of demonstrating the success of the training given.

Systems in Practice

Perception is one of two main components to HHG Life Services' education/training regime. The control mechanism uses Lotus Notes to inform employees and their managers when they are required to take certain tests and monitors this until a pass has been achieved. Perception is then used in a focused way. It delivers tailored tests from a large bank of questions to a wide range of people across all sites via the intranet, testing everyone's understanding of the subject matter rather than an ability to remember fixed answers to fixed questions. The test results are then reported back in a timely and accurate manner.

Systems in Practice

According to John Tidy, "This is the first time we have been able to store test results centrally as soon as they have been completed. It gives us a clear view of the level of knowledge across the board and shows us areas where there are problems. This helps us to fine tune our training material, adjust the questions and ensure that there are no ambiguous areas. In the past, we would carry out these tests every two years or so. Our staff would sit through presentations and then do a paper-based test. Collating the results and keeping our records up to date was an effort and new people entering the company could have a long wait before the next test was scheduled. Central and local visibility is a key benefit of this new system as is the ability to disseminate the tests across our sites."

Integrating the Application

Integration between Lotus Notes and Questionmark Perception is vital. The ability to import and export data from one to the other with ease is essential to the on-going success of the tests. Notes holds all test student records, including ID, passwords, and previous test results and timings. It exports the relevant information to Perception so that students are identified when they log in and validate their identity. Once the test has been chosen, an invigilator logs in and the test questions are automatically selected from a bank of questions ready to be answered. When the test is completed, the result is recorded and exported to the test student management system (Notes) to be viewed locally.

The system has two main functions. The first, as described above, is to deliver the regulatory tests to all employees and to manage their scheduling. The second is to deliver more focused tests to smaller groups of people. In fact, over time, this second function will take on greater importance, allowing the training regime of the company to develop in many varied directions.

Of course, security of the system is vital, especially since it is concerned with regulatory issues. To ensure that the system operates securely, HHG Life Services, together with Questionmark, has developed an application control to take over certain aspects of employees' desktops when taking tests. This was developed to replace the requirement for a secure browser.

Conclusion

John Tidy concludes, "We extended the package to provide the level of security we need and we found that Questionmark was extremely helpful during the development of this application. We now have the facility to provide training and testing securely at every desktop in the company. Perception has proved so easy to use, that our non-technical staff have been able to roll out many more specialised tests within the overall framework with minimal support."

More information

Questionmark Contact:

Email: info@qmark.co.uk

Phone: +44 (0)20 7263 7575

Web: <http://www.questionmark.com>

