



Are you settling for a “good enough” assessment solution?

eBook

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If you're checking out assessment management solutions, you may be enticed by anything that offers more features than you have today, even if it makes things only a little bit better. But don't be fooled. There's a real cost to settling for “good enough”.

A solution that only has basic functionality will not only slow down your processes, but also could cost you a fortune in compliance fines or HR disputes. “Good enough” assessment solutions are usually fine for creating basic surveys and quizzes, but when you use assessment results to make defensible decisions about people, you need a more complete solution.

This eBook looks at an example of how a Training & Measurement Professional, James, experiences the limitations of a “good enough” assessment solution, and how a complete solution like Questionmark will help make his job easier and help make his assessments more valid & reliable.

Establishing Content Validity

First, James needs to build his assessments. According to test development best-practice guidelines, to ensure assessments are valid, the first step in planning the test is to identify the key content areas that need to be tested.

James' learning management system doesn't offer him a way to ensure that the questions they include within the assessment are actually relevant to the job. This has resulted in their current new-hire assessments not being aligned with the job duties.

Like most training and measurement professionals, James feels frustrated and concerned that the lack of a structured planning process will not only impact the number of on-the-job mistakes but will also increase the risk of compliance penalties.

Complete tools, on the other hand, allow assessment professionals to use job task analysis survey tools to send out a survey to the top-performing 50% of employees in a job role and ask questions on a series of job tasks. For each job task, administrators can ask how difficult a task is (complexity), how important it is (priority) and how often it is done (frequency). They can then use the survey results to define the structure of assessments for new hires to ensure they aligned with needed job skills. (Phew!)



Secure Item Banking

Now that James knows what topics must be covered within his assessments, he needs to think through how they will organize their items. If there is a single word for where problems usually begin for James and his team within the assessment production lifecycle, it's "authoring". The constellation of people, activities and topic areas often results in an unstructured view of items and assessments, not to mention security risks.

Unfortunately, "good enough" solutions don't allow James to build an item bank where questions can be structured within a well-organized topic and metatag structure, authored once and re-used many times. James also has limited features for securing authored content, which is a problem as often the people who create items in one area must take assessments in another area.

James loves the fact that **complete solutions like Questionmark's provide him with a secure, collaborative authoring environment.**

James and his team will be able to:

- Organize items in a hierarchical folder structure
- Assign metatags to align with skills and competencies
- Utilize automated item version history for auditing
- Keep content secure with role-based access. SMEs just access the content – specific folders of items -- that they need ... no more, no less.



Manage Multilingual Assessments

James' colleague Sophia in Germany is going to be rolling out the same assessment program in her region. Making people take assessments in a language they don't understand well will negatively affect the results, so they know they need to translate the assessments. Managing this process is not only time-consuming and costly but also very prone to error, as there are no tools to help manage the process.

Currently James & Sophia are facing the challenge of having to create separate versions of everything including questions and assessments. They are concerned that this will lead to issues with updating content and creating new translations, which will prove to be very expensive. Without a way to effectively manage the process of translating assessments, the effort they've put into developing a valid assessment in its original language is going to waste.

With a complete multilingual tool like Questionmark, Sophia can create translation projects that specify what is going to be translated.

Projects can consist of topics, questions or an assessment. Once a project has been created to manage the translation, she can assign status updates to the project so that other authors are aware of the current state of the translated material.

The team outsource translation to a third-party translation specialist. Within Questionmark they're able to export the assessment content they want translated as an XLIFF file and then import the translated content back into the project.



Manage Multilingual Assessments

The next step for James and the team is to plan the items they plan to use on their tests. James is keen to keep his test takers engaged. He understands the critical role that questions play within the learning and retention of information.

Many “good enough” solutions only provide the ability to author standard item types such as multiple choice, true/false, multiple response and fill in the blanks. And some don’t even allow you to include graphics within questions. **Complete solutions, however, enable the use of rich and interactive media within test items to not only engage learners and motivate interest in the subject matter, but to also help illustrate the relevance of various concepts.**

With a tool like Questionmark, James and his team can utilize 20+ different question types. They decide to embed video to help simulate real-life experiences. They also have the option to take advantage of interactive items such as drag and drop and hotspot questions and to limit which authors can create which questions.



Collaborating with SMEs and Maintaining an Audit Trail

The item writers are now beginning to author their questions. Collaboration is crucial at this stage. A critical factor in making successful items is to get effective input from subject matter experts (SMEs), as they are usually more knowledgeable and better able to construct and review questions than learning technology specialists or general trainers.

James and his team plan to involve multiple item writers and subject matter experts (SMEs) in the authoring and review process. “Good enough” solutions don’t allow them to restrict what individuals can do with a particular item (i.e. “I only want colleague such and such to be able to edit but not delete”). They also have no way to manage comments and feedback for items that are in the development phase, so when questions and concerns arise about the changes to make to items, it is challenging for the team to track.

A complete assessment management system enables those that need to access the same topic folders to add or edit items, using levels of permissions that are appropriate for what they need to see and do.

In addition, when any changes are made to items, users are prompted to leave revision comments and cannot exit the item without doing so. This creates an automated audit trail of each item’s history and enables all to have a clear view of the item’s progression, including who made what change and when. Users can compare different versions side by side with marked-up changes and can roll back to previous versions of questions to undo edits made by others if they need to.



Since your item writers will likely be geographically spread it's recommended to use a collaborative tool that allows simple online review, securing of content based on roles and automatic maintenance of “item history”. These features can be crucial to defending the fairness and validity of your assessment.

Observational Items & Assessments to Measure Performance in Person

James and Sophia currently use a mentoring approach to give employees good examples and to define the competencies necessary to be a great employee. They then use surveys to measure how mentoring closes performance gaps. They are keen to get employees to the next level and give management a better view on performance across the organization and across departments.

Observational assessments are the most appropriate method of assessing practical skills. By watching someone complete a set task, you allow them to demonstrate their competence by performance. In an observational assessment, an "observer" is presented with questions to rate behaviors, skills and abilities.

A complete assessment management system will allow James and Sophia to create observational items that are often objective scales of performance.

They then assemble these into an assessment, in which a supervisor logs in as an observer and rates the employee on their performance. This allows not only for analytics of performance but also offers the ability to compare to other individuals or to agreed benchmarks for performing a task. Feedback collected during the assessment can then be displayed to the participant in a coaching report for later debriefing and learning.



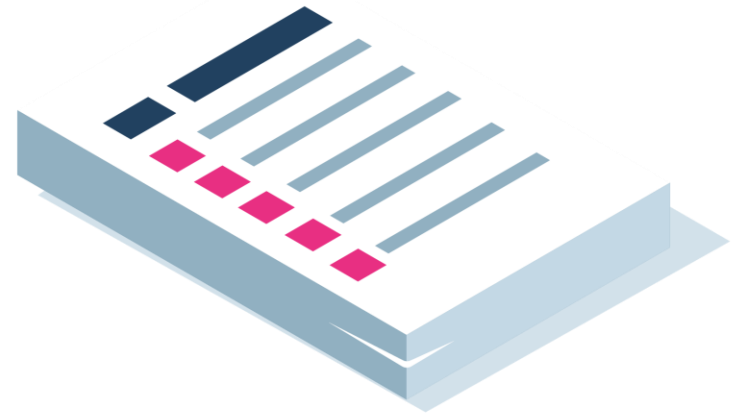
Remember that in the 70+20+10 model, 70% of learning results from on-the-job experiences. When assessing practical skills that will be used on the job, it is more valid to have someone observe the performance of that skill in conjunction with or instead of asking cognitive questions.

Set Pass Scores Based on Performance Across Topic Areas

When it comes to building competence assessments, it's important to make sure test takers have the required knowledge across a variety of topic areas.

Incomplete tools don't always allow you to ensure that individuals don't have varying drastic scores across topics.

A complete assessment solution enables learning and measurement professionals to make assessment more valid by making pass scores dependent on topic prerequisites, meaning a pass score will only apply if scores across all topic areas are above a certain threshold.



Blended Delivery of Assessments Including Mobile and Paper

True blended delivery means being able to create higher- and lower-stakes assessments and deliver them reliably and easily across a variety of platforms, browsers and devices.

“Good enough” assessment solutions sometimes have the capability to deliver assessments to mobile devices. However, this can involve creating a different version of an assessment custom coded specifically for mobile, which is not always possible — not to mention time consuming.

However, with a complete tool, L&D professionals can author an assessment once and take advantage of responsive design technology for simple online delivery to mobiles, tablets, PCs or printed delivery using standard scanners and paper (without the need for custom hardware).



Secure Browser Technology to Minimize Cheating & Content Theft

“Good enough” assessment solutions don’t often have many mechanisms for minimizing cheating and content theft, as they aren’t designed with high-stakes tests in mind.

James currently tries to reduce test-taker motivation to cheat by allowing retakes if employees fail, making it less likely that people will rationalize cheating. However, James is aware of a number of incidents that have compromised test integrity and would like to put technical measures in place to further minimise the risk.

A complete assessment management system will provide a lock-down browser that makes it difficult to copy or print screens during a test. It should prevent a participant from accessing restricted material and be compatible across multiple devices.

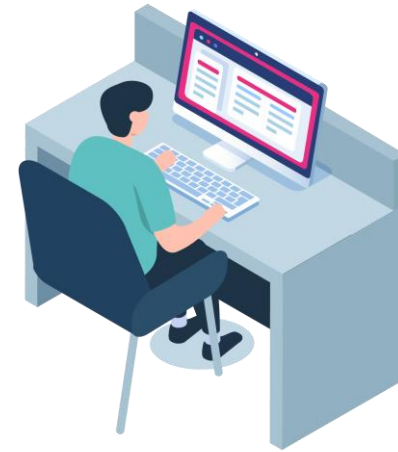


Robust Delivery to Prevent Data Loss in Event of Technical Failures

When James recently delivered an assessment to 100+ employees, the company Wi-Fi lost connectivity for 20 minutes. This was very frustrating for test takers.

“Good enough” assessment tools don’t provide data loss prevention measures that preserve results even if devices or network connections fail.

Complete assessment management solutions provide “save-as-you-go” capabilities, allowing administrators to define intervals at which participant responses are saved. This allows participants to resume the assessment when issues are resolved. The ability to recover the answers prevents test-taker frustration and puts people at ease.



Tamper-proof Results Storage

Complete solutions will ensure your results (participant responses) cannot be tampered with or lost. That's because they are stored accurately even in the event of system downtime or technical issues.

James and Sophia fear that sharing results across all administrators is inappropriate and will affect validity and potentially expose questions to future test takers.

A comprehensive assessment tool is one with a highly robust architecture backed up by solid quality-assurance practices to ensure results are stored safely.



Comprehensive Reporting Along with Roles-Based Security

Many “good enough” solutions will come with a few pre-built reports to help you evaluate participant performance.

Complete tools will go a step further, providing you with an extensive range of accurate reports that enable you to make defensible decisions. These reports include the ability to evaluate how reliable your assessments are.

A complete assessment management system will provide the team with differential security on results so only the right people see them.

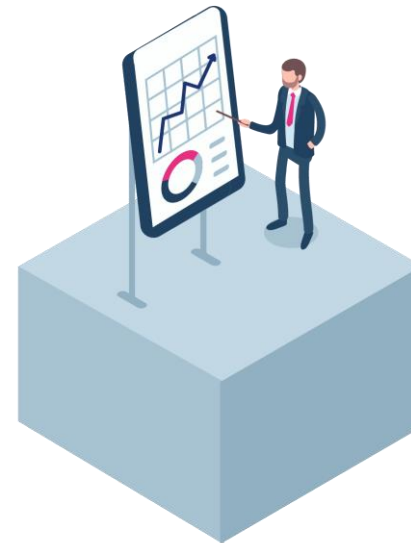
With a tool like Questionmark, James will have access to over 30 pre-built reports. Questionmark will also give the team the potential to leverage “big data” and compare assessment results with other business data.



Item and Test Analysis Reporting to Weed Out Poor Test Items, Ensuring Reliability and Validity

Part of having comprehensive reporting includes item and test analysis reports. “Good enough” solutions don’t allow item analysis. Item analysis looks at the difficulty of test items and how they correlate to the test results, helping you identify poor items and improve or remove them.

A complete assessment tool enables you to run item analysis at both the trial and production stage. Questionmark’s platform makes it easy to identify potential problem items with its colour-coded report and comments on item performance. Perfect for James, who isn’t a psychometrician!



Conclusion

This cheat sheet has given you an overview of some of the powerful functionality available in the Questionmark Assessment Platform that go beyond those in many “good enough” solutions. If you are using assessments to make decisions about people, you need defensible results you can trust.

Trustworthy results only come with the right technologies in place, combined with structured processes at each step of assessment development — from authoring to delivery and reporting.

We hope this has been useful if you are considering purchasing Questionmark but need to better understand its value compared with other tools.

Get the [**full comparison chart of key measures for reliability and validity here**](#) for a quick side-by-side view of the differences between Questionmark’s technologies and other tools on the market.





Questionmark provides a secure enterprise-grade assessment platform and professional services to leading organizations around the world, delivered with care and unequalled expertise. Its full-service online assessment tool and professional services help customers to improve their performance and meet their compliance requirements. Questionmark enables organizations to unlock their potential by delivering assessments which are valid, reliable, fair and defensible.

Questionmark offers secure powerful integration with other LMS, LRS and proctoring services making it easy to bring everything together in one place. Questionmark's cloud-based assessment management platform offer rapid deployment, scalability for high-volume test delivery, 24/7 support, and the peace-of-mind of secure, audited U.S. and European-based data centers.



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