questionmark

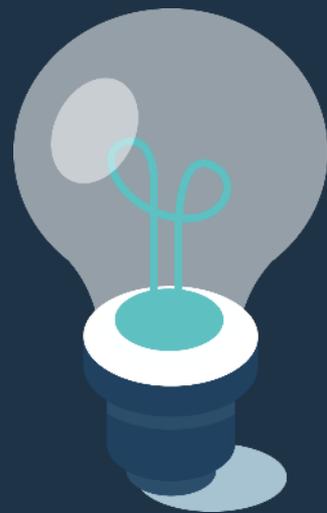# The need to know

Why do organizations invest in assessments?

Questionmark

The enterprise-grade assessment platform

Spring 2020

Contents

Introduction: why organizations invest in assessments

The decisions that businesses and organizations make matter. Too often critical business decisions are ill-informed, based on bad information or made by those who are not qualified to do so.

For instance, three-quarters of job candidates lie on their CV. The same number of higher education students admit to cheating in exams.

This makes it hard to get the right people for jobs and to maximize performance.

Good decision making must be based on accurate and relevant information. So, decisions must be based on valid, reliable, fair and defensible assessments.

Assessments provide leaders with crucial information around knowledge and skill gaps in the workforce. They reveal the extent of knowledge around product, process and regulations. They can ensure that the right people are in the right roles and are well placed to make good decisions.

Assessments have been shown to drive staff engagement, improve efficiency and increase productivity, across different sectors and industries.

It follows that organizations that are serious about getting the best out of their people and process need to be serious about assessment. That way employers and employees can learn, adapt, and improve the decisions that matter the most.

In this report, we explore the business needs that lead organizations to invest in assessments and the challenges they face with delivering them.

We also summarize how organizations overcome these issues and use assessments to transform decision making.

The findings of the report are based on information from Questionmark customers.

The need for assessment: making the most of training and development

Many organizations today invest significantly in learning and development and in meeting their compliance requirements.

But organizations need to know these programs are doing what they should. They need to know they are making the most of their investments. This means assessing the training programs to ensure they are working properly.

To make effective decisions based on robust information, they need to invest in valid, reliable, fair and defensible assessments alongside their training programs.

This is particularly important in areas of regulated activity where the cost of compliance failure is high.

Some common reasons why organizations invest in assessment include:

1. *concerns around health and safety practice:* organizations that perform safety-critical tasks need to demonstrate robust health and safety practices. As well as providing reassurance to customers, such assessments will satisfy the requirements of regulators. In many cases, internal certification and accreditation programs create an additional layer of confidence.

2. *failures to demonstrate compliance with internal procedures and external regulation:* businesses and organizations need to demonstrate they are playing by the rules. Staff assessments are an important means of measuring whether an employee has understood the conduct that is expected of them, according to one customer. Not only does this lead to better standards of behavior, but it also provides essential evidence in situations when a code of conduct is breached, and further, often disciplinary, intervention is needed.

   In some sectors, such as financial or professional services, ensuring that staff understand the regulations of the territory they work in is a matter of legal compliance. Staff assessments give senior leaders confidence that team members understand the rules. What's more, they can demonstrate to regulators that there is a high awareness of good practice and that staff are regularly trained and tested.

3. *inconsistent customer service experience:* businesses and organizations need to ensure they maintain standards as they grow. Many organizations introduce assessments to ensure a consistent, high-quality service which gives them a

competitive advantage. By analyzing staff knowledge and behaviors, interventions can be targeted to improve performance. In the tech sector, certified IT employees develop nearly twice as many applications per year than uncertified developers.[1]

4. **insufficient product knowledge**: front-line staff must have a strong knowledge of the product in many sectors. Health and pharmaceutical companies often invest in staff assessment to ensure that staff have a detailed understanding of new product development (NPD). This approach is also common in technology, where being able to emphasize the relevant features and benefits to a customer is essential to making a sale.

5. **inadequate quality of hire:** eight out of ten recruiters admit to making a hiring mistake[2]. For many businesses and organizations, assessing potential candidates before they are offered a job can make the recruitment process more robust.

   It's also necessary for staff to have the background knowledge to understand the products and services they will be working with. Sales team members in pharmaceuticals firms need to have a decent aptitude for science. By assessing staff pre-hire, businesses and organizations can establish which candidates will have the ability to thrive in their new roles. They also reveal what training will be needed as recruits start.

6. **training failing to make the necessary impact:** staff assessments are often deployed to ensure that training around new products has been successful. Utility and manufacturing companies that carry out safety-critical work invest in assessments to ensure that staff members across the supply chain have understood health and safety training.

7. **lack of knowledge and confidence in the sales channel:** as well as testing staff knowledge of products and services, assessments can ensure that dealers and distributors are equipped with the information they need. Assessments can also check that the correct procedures are understood and followed throughout the sales channel.

8. **failing to measure and recognize career development:** staff retention is strengthened when team members have a strong sense of career development.

---

[1] https://download.microsoft.com/download/E/4/1/E4101D56-EBEE-49C1-806E-2A22A5CCF79D/BVW_Microsoft_US40548215.pdf?cid=20346
[2] https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/long-reads/articles/how-stop-getting-hiring-wrong

Internal certification programs, underpinned by robust assessment, help employees measure their progress within their chosen career. They also increase customer confidence.

9. ***Need to ensure partners technical ability:*** organizations need to assess partners who require technical knowledge for its products or services. Assessments help create confidence in the relationship. Organizations can be confident that the partner has the relevant knowledge to perform their function in the right way.

The issues with 'good enough' assessments

Once organizations know they need to assess their staff, some may choose a 'good enough' solution, such as pen and paper, a learning management system (LMS) or another basic software tool.

However, these solutions do not maximize the potential of assessments. In the short term they can be time-consuming, difficult to operate and create inefficiencies. In the long run, organizations may not be testing the knowledge or skills to the scale needed to do their job properly. Results are hard to compile and analyze. It is difficult to take relevant action as a result of the assessment.

Organizations that fail to use robust assessments could face disputes or, in areas of regulated activity, even compliance fines.

Before using Questionmark, some of the problems our customers experience with other assessment methods include:

Failing to assess what they want or need to know
One of the biggest concerns for customers is that pen and paper or basic LMS assessments are not robust. Organizations cannot be sure that the 'good enough' assessments they create are valid, fair or that they are even assessing what they should be. Without reliable information, customers say that cannot make informed decisions. What's more, some customers worry that if they do not build their assessments fairly and defensibly, they could face lawsuits from people who fail them.

Time-consuming
The time it takes to organize, mark and distribute results from pen and paper tests is a common problem. Often pen and paper assessments mean supervised sessions need to be organized which creates logistical problems for both employers and staff. These types of tests also create time lags with results, delaying the start of new positions.

Organizations also need to spend more time authoring tests as the workforce grows and the range of assessments they require increases. Most methods of assessment, including LMSs, do not offer question banks meaning that each test must be crafted individually. With LMS assessments, organizations also face difficulties in ensuring these tests are appropriately proctored or invigilated.

Prohibitively expensive

Traditional pen and paper assessments are also expensive to implement due to the high levels of staff time required. A full-time administrator is often needed to manage the assessment process.

In sectors such as education, which require a high volume of assessments, this creates significant limits around what can be delivered. In workplaces, staff are assessed less regularly than needed for good decision making.

Results are hard to store and analyze

Pen and paper or basic LMS solutions also make it hard and time-consuming to analyze results. Trends are difficult to spot making it challenging to tailor appropriate interventions.

As staff teams grow, pen and paper assessments become increasingly unwieldy. As well as being difficult to implement and less secure, organizations often struggle to find space to store completed exam papers.

Vulnerability to cheating

With pen and paper exams, LMSs or basic and unsecure software solutions, candidates can easily share details of assessments with those yet to take a test. This undermines results and fails to give organizations the insight they need.

Difficult to guarantee consistency in global organizations

International organizations can also struggle to deliver pen and paper assessments quickly and consistently. Translating questions from one language to another is time-consuming and costly. It also creates complications when papers are marked.

Overcoming these barriers with Questionmark

Organizations recognize that assessments help them to make informed decisions and unlock their organization's potential.

But these decisions must be based on valid, reliable, fair and defensible assessments. If they are, they can make a real and lasting difference to an organization's performance.

Questionmark enables partners to overcome the issues with pen and paper, LMS or other basic software assessments.

Customers tell us we help them to:

- *Make informed decisions*: with valid, reliable, fair and defensible assessments, organizations tell us that they can make informed decisions. Moreover, they tell us that these decisions have a positive impact on their organization and help improve performance.

- *Save time and money:* by enabling good decision making, organizations tell us that they save both time and money. This is a result of better performance and higher productivity. It is also because robust assessment reduces risk and compliance complications.

- *Reduce logistical headaches*: assessments can be taken at anytime, anywhere in the world, saving logistical costs of bringing everyone physically together. Our proctoring (or invigilation) services reduce the need for assessment centers. Shifts and schedules do not need to be rearranged. Organizations with a disparate workforce see significant cost reductions.

- *Guard against cheating:* because of our randomized question feature, no two students need ever sit the same test. As a result, no one is advantaged by having been briefed on upcoming questions by a previous candidate. Organizations across different sectors have seen the level of cheating drop dramatically.

  Other security features, including our secure browser and proctoring options, help guard against cheating.

- **_Create defensible results:_** organizations need to show their customers and regulators that their workforce is competent and has the necessary skills as a result of training and assessment. With Questionmark they can demonstrate the progress of individuals and entire business functions. When big decisions need to be taken as a result of training, the data provided by Questionmark proves that the action can withstand scrutiny.

- **_Make it straightforward and easy to use_**: in both education and the workplace, candidates find the platform easy to use. One major retailer noticed a dramatic increase in engagement among its staff after switching to Questionmark. Organizations find that both test setters and sitters find the platform easy to use.

- **_Develop instant results and analysis_**: instant results prove to be a motivating factor for candidates sitting assessments. Receiving the result straight away increases the relevance of the assessment and drives up engagement among staff and test-takers.

  Organizations find they are quickly able to translate the results of an assessment into an individual training program for team members. Our customers tell us they use our results analysis to spot trends and make changes to courses and future assessments.

- **_Develop a variety of assessment_**: the diversity of question types available make it possible for customers to test a wide range of skills and subjects. Assessments can be developed for different age groups, qualification levels and academic stages. Organizations can use the platform to test everything from core competencies to health and safety awareness and attitudes toward compliance.

- **_Make it much easier to test staff worldwide_**: as there is no need to pull all candidates into one physical location, it is much easier to test staff across multiple locations. Our translation function makes it possible for global companies to roll-out the same assessment to team members around the world. Our platform eliminates the delay in results from posting physical exam papers to a global assessment center.

Conclusion

Assessments provide the information that businesses and organizations need to make good decisions. They have been shown to drive staff and test-taker engagement, improve efficiency and increase an organization's productivity, across different sectors and industries.

A series of common concerns cause organizations to recognize the need to invest in assessments. However, many assessment solutions fail to offer the flexibility, cost-effectiveness and analytical ability that ensure assessments unlock potential and transform decision making.

Questionmark overcomes these issues.

It is a secure, enterprise-grade assessment platform that helps organizations to improve their performance and safely meet their compliance requirements. Questionmark enables organizations to unlock their potential by delivering assessments which are valid, reliable and defensible.

About Questionmark

Questionmark provides a secure enterprise-grade assessment platform and professional services to leading organizations around the world, delivered with care and unequalled expertise.

Our 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 Learning Management System, Learning Record Service and proctoring services making it easy to bring everything together in one place.

Our cloud-based assessment management platform offers rapid deployment, scalability for high-volume test delivery, 24/7 support, and the peace-of-mind of secure, audited U.S., Australian and European-based data centers.

Working with Questionmark

To further explore how Questionmark could work for your organization, or to book a demo, please see:

https://www.questionmark.com/request-demo/

Questionmark Corporation	**Questionmark Computing Ltd.**
35 Nutmeg Drive	Moor Place
Suite 330	1 Fore Street
Trumbull, CT 06611	London, EC2Y 9 CT
United States	United Kingdom
Tel: +1 (800) 863 3944	Tel:: +44 (0)20 7263 7575
info@questionmark.com	info@questionmark.com