

Testing, Testing

Reviewed by Barbara Fillicaro

QUESTIONMARK is an assessment management system. It offers four different types of assessments (survey, exam, quiz, and test) in 19 different formats, including drag and drop, multiple choice, hotspots, and embedded Macromedia Flash files. Testing can be delivered online via a web browser or offline using hard-copy or a CD-ROM. Questions can even be downloaded to a PDA for later syncing.

Another important component of the Questionmark system is its reporting capability. Among the report types are coaching, score list, grade book, transcript, gap, survey, and item analysis.

Initial use and support

We liked...

- the range of delivery options
- the workflow management system that lets organizations set rules for question development and deployment.

Could be better...

- The web and CD-ROM feature tours are delivered with obtrusive background noise.

Questionmark Perception, version 4

Online
Questionmark Corporation
www.questionmark.com
800.863.3950
\$2,995 for one year and 50 users

Recommendation

Take a close look at Questionmark's assessment tool if you're in the business of certification and compliance training. Perception might be the answer to your assessment challenges.

ments, and outcomes.

These types of help are available from within the application:

- wizards that guide you through the authoring process
- searchable help system that includes a glossary
- authoring best practices guide.

User manuals are available on the Questionmark customer support site. In addition, Questionmark offers free phone and email support during product evaluation. After purchase, you may choose to subscribe to a software support plan or pay on a per-incident basis.

Functionality

The Questionmark Perception system has four major functions: authoring, delivery, administration and scheduling, and reporting.

The authoring wizards make it easy to create the many different types of questions. You can add multimedia files including audio, video, Flash animations, and Macromedia Captivate simulations. It's easy to publish assessments from the questions you've created.

Important enhancements in version 4 include

- What You See is What You Get HTML editing
- support for cascading style sheets
- central repositories for content
- workflow management tools
- multiple levels of security
- content management features.

With the workflow management module, an organization can create processes and rules to control the development and deployment of questions. If you have multiple subject-matter experts and designers working in more than one repository, having a tracking system is imperative. The module also helps create an audit trail, which is essential for legally defensible high-stakes exams.

Compatibility

Perception is compatible with many learning management systems. It supports ADL SCORM, IMS Content Packaging, Learning Object Metadata, AICC, and other standards.

Perception product rating

Installation and initial use	****
Documentation	****
Help/support	***.5
Interface	***.5
Ease of use	***.5
Best uses/functionalities	****
Compatibility	****
Value for the money	****
Overall rating	****

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No Fear Here

Reviewed by Lee Smedley

MARKETED as a two-for-one package, *Fearless Facilitation* contains two completely different sets of lesson plans, video segments, and participant handouts—one pack focuses on leading training and the other on facilitating meetings. While many of the same concepts are addressed in the two versions, the video examples, concepts, and session designs are tailored for each purpose.

The VHS package contains only the video instructional segments. The DVD adds an electronic version of the overhead slides, a motivational audio-visual segment, and master trainer interviews. The extra features and flexibility are well worth the additional cost.

Evaluation

Fearless Facilitation addresses the novice trainer or meeting leader's fears head on. In addition to the paper and pencil exercises, discussion, and small group work, the video segments can be used effectively to retain learner interest and involvement. The clips include realistic representations of difficult situations: offline conversations, challenges to the content, sensitive topics, and so forth. The interactive design has participants work in small

We liked...

- the two separate, tailored programs
- the brevity of the video segments.

Could be better...

- A few elements detract from the generally good instructional design.
- The “never let them see you sweat” attitude may be troubling to some.

groups to consider approaches. After that, the video proceeds with an approach from a master trainer and resolution of the original scenario according to those suggestions. The brevity of the video segments avoids the daze often brought on by a longer program.

Fearless Facilitation won't replace a train-the-trainer program for

a specific course or your organization's problem-solving team leader training. Rather, it should be seen as an enhancement, offering the trainer or meeting leader a new, more sophisticated set of skills.

While the majority of the instructional design is quite good, a few elements detract from these programs. In one instance, participants are asked to select items to address specific disruptive behaviors from a list, while the answers lie on the next pages of their handout. That could be taken as a childish, contrived exercise.

Also, the programs have a subtle “never-let-them-see-you-sweat” attitude that may be troubling to some. The best facilitators I've worked with are humble and open to the wisdom and direction of others. Those presenting this program are advised to balance its emphases by modeling the stewardship and appreciative inquiry of good facilitation.

Fearless Facilitation product rating

Holds viewer interest	****
Acting/presenting	***.5
Diversity	** .5
Production quality	***.5
Value of content	***
Instructional value	***
Value for the money	***
Documentation	***.5
Overall rating	***

Fearless Facilitation: How to Lead Effective Meetings and How to Lead Effective Training

Videos, 21 minutes each, 2005

VisionPoint Productions

www.vppi.com

800.300.8880

\$795 VHS, \$995 DVD

Included: facilitator guide, participant materials

Recommendation

The *Fearless Facilitation* two-course package is a good value for organizations committed to increasing their instructor and meeting leader effectiveness.

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An Innovation Story

Reviewed by Bill Ellet

THE SECOND EDITION of *Theirs Is Not to Reason Why: The Story of Lt. William Soden Sims*, now available on DVD as well as VHS, arrives at an interesting historical moment. Sims was one of those rare dogged individuals willing to take great risks for the cause of an uncomfortable but objective assessment of reality and an innovative response to it. You have to wonder whether the contemporary climate for such people is even worse than it was in Sims's lifetime, which straddled the 19th and 20th centuries. If it is, that isn't good news for companies and organizations trying to succeed in the ferociously competitive world of today.

Lieutenant Sims looked at the performance of the U.S. Navy in the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898 and saw failure, not the great success that the Navy still trumpets. The U.S. ships did sink most of the Spanish fleet in the Philippines, but Sims was con-

cerned by the inaccuracy of American gunfire. About 99 percent of the American shells hit the Pacific, not the Spanish. Had the Americans been up against a more formidable enemy, it might have been their keels resting on the bottom of the bay.

Sims found a far more accurate gunnery system in use by the British, who were happy to share it with the errant Americans. The problem was that the brass of the U.S. Navy was adamantly opposed to the innovation and was willing to court-martial Sims to shut him up. But his audacious appeal to President Teddy Roosevelt saved his career. Roosevelt saw the idea's worth and overruled the brass, and William Soden Sims went on to a glorious career.

The video telling this story should fire up your innovation-minded employees. Maybe they won't be willing to risk everything for a good idea, but the organization that shows this video is signaling that it wants people to stand up for one.

Theirs Is Not to Reason Why examines these questions: How open is your organization to new ideas? Is there an internal understanding that improvement is a constant process and that the status quo should be constructively challenged?

Shot among the display cases and warm wood of the Oregon Maritime Center and Museum, this 12-minute video

We liked...

- the compelling story and good information.

Could be better...

- The support materials should be beefed up.

Theirs Is Not to Reason Why: The Story of Lt. William Soden Sims

Video, 12 minutes, 2005

Monad Trainer's Aide

www.monadtrainersaide.com

800.344.6088

\$395 VHS, \$445 DVD

Included: leader guide, participant materials

Recommendation

Modest as it is in terms of production values and support materials, *Theirs Is Not to Reason Why* is a potentially powerful message for smart organizations.

consists of a two-man cast, a few props, and some period photos and film clips. When the actor who plays the narrator and several other roles pastes on a mustache on camera and suddenly acquires a Southern accent, the low-budget production almost scuttles itself with unintentional comedy. The story is still compelling, however.

Now that the program is on DVD, though, the disc should have a copy of the support materials, and those materials should be beefed up. There is good material here, and it is getting more useful over time, not less.

Theirs Is Not to Reason Why

product rating

Holds user's interest	***.5
Acting/presenting	** .5
Production quality	**
Value of content	***.5
Instructional value	***.5
Value for the money	***.5
Overall rating	***

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