



Customer Success Story

Questar Achieves Headline-Grabbing Business Growth Using Qvidian Proposal Automation to Manage RFP-Ready Content

“One of the amazing aspects of this story is that proposals have emphatically been at the center of this explosive, headline grabbing growth. Questar’s growth didn’t happen until we completely transformed how we approached proposals.”

“We turned our proposal focus upside down. Instead of focusing on answering RFPs, our focus became writing good content. By starting with higher quality text maintained in our Qvidian library, we have more time to weave in win themes and engage our SMEs to improve the answer for each state bid.”

Leif Ueland, Director of Sales Operations, Questar Assessment, Inc.

Summary

Questar Assessment Inc., a wholly-owned, independently-operated subsidiary of Educational Testing Service (ETS), offers grades K-12 assessment testing solutions that focus on building a bridge between learning and accountability. After 40 years as primarily a provider of specialty assessments, Questar set an ambitious growth goal, which included emerging as a leading provider of grades 3-8 statewide assessments.

To earn the award of a highly-coveted state contract, Questar must replace the incumbent assessment solution provider by delivering a comprehensive and persuasive response to an extremely complex questionnaire.

In June 2015, within six months of fully implementing Qvidian Proposal Automation, Questar won Mississippi’s statewide 3-8 assessment contract. In short order, the State of New York awarded Questar its state contract over their incumbent assessment provider, and less than a year after that, Tennessee followed suit. And these were just some of a rapid succession of wins.

Because of this exceptional performance, Leif Ueland, Questar’s Director of Sales Operations was awarded the Qvidian Annual Excellence Award for Business Growth at Connect17, Qvidian’s annual user conference.

The Challenge

Winning more business, and becoming a premier provider of assessment solutions offered a multi-faceted challenge to the Questar team. First, for one company to win new business, the incumbent provider must lose the business. Next, the bid process always entails response to a comprehensive and lengthy RFP—through which the state performs due diligence to ascertain the vendors’ compliance and performance capabilities. With respect to its organizational size, compared to its competitors, Questar did not have an extensive team positioned to respond to the competitive bids. In addition, the Questar RFP response process was “incredibly old school—where team members and subject matter experts would lift answers from past proposals.” Without RFP technology and with limited staff, it was all that they could do to respond to RFPs in the time allowed.



The Solution

Questar's executive leadership recognized that they needed a "world class proposal team" in order to meet their business objectives. Questar's Director of Sales Operations, Leif Ueland, fulfilled this quest by "refocusing the proposal team's attention from reactive responses—to proactive content development and management using Qvidian Proposal Automation technology." Specifically, Questar's win strategy included:

"Qvidian provides Questar with a two-pronged advantage: efficiency to crank out a first draft proposal with preliminary answers to 70 to 80 percent of the questions; and the capacity to present the Questar value to each state."

"Initially our SMEs were resistant to the change in our RFP response process using Qvidian. Now, there is this sense that Qvidian is magical!"

**Leif Ueland, Director of
Sales Operations,
Questar Assessment, Inc.**

- **Focus on Content.** The Questar team turned its "focus upside down." Instead of focusing on answering RFPs, "our focus became writing good content. By starting with higher quality content maintained in our Qvidian library, we have more time to weave in win themes and engage SMEs to improve the answer for every state bid."
- **80/20 Rule Applied to Content Management.** Questar uses Qvidian to identify how content is used—and where it needs to be improved. Following the Pareto Principle, the Questar proposal team routinely focuses on identifying and making improvement to the 20 percent of the content that drives 80 percent of the proposals.
- **Solution Overviews—a Critical Content Resource.** Questar's library now provides well-crafted solution overviews that help the prospect's reviewers understand the Questar solution at a high-level. When responding to detailed questions, "proposal writers don't have to hope the reviewer understands the big picture—or hope another answer will provide the vision. Our writers can respond to a detailed question, supported by the solution overview."
- **Aggressive Content Improvements.** The Questar proposal team is "aggressive" about making content improvements. "The more effort that you spend making your content better over time, the better your content will become. You benefit from the compounded effort to improve content. Qvidian helps us make tactical content improvements."
- **Content Assessment.** Questar capitalizes on its assessment expertise by continuously "assessing" and "scoring" how the team can improve content. The team takes advantage of Qvidian's custom content metadata to track, assign and manage content update opportunities.

By maintaining and refining quality content in their Qvidian library, the Questar proposal team can efficiently prepare RFP response documents for each state bid—as well as capture the content improvement that helps the team remain prepared for the next opportunity to win.

Partnering with SalesEdge for Continued Success

Within six months of implementing Qvidian Proposal Automation with guidance and training from SalesEdge, Questar was awarded the first of several highly competitive state contracts. As with the assessment solutions that Questar provides, the Questar proposal team continues to seek new ways to innovatively use Qvidian to assess and improve the performance of its proposal content in order to win more business.

SalesEdge

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