



## Personalizing Learning for Child Advocates Using Next-Gen Platform

Quality Assist Inc.  
Best Advance in Learning Technology Implementation  
January 2017



### Company Background



QUALITY ASSIST

Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Atlanta, Georgia
Year Founded	1987
Revenue	Private
Employees	18
Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)	Quality Assist delivers programs across the United States.
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Quality Assist has designed and developed e-learning modules for prominent state, national, and international organizations including: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Cito International in the Netherlands, Kaplan Early Learning Company, Rutgers University of New Jersey, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Prevent Child Abuse Iowa, Iowa Department of Public Health, National Academy for Family Support Professionals, and Early Learning Indiana.
Industry	Early Childhood Education & Family Support
Stock Symbol	N/A
Website	<a href="http://www.quorumlearning.com">www.quorumlearning.com</a> and <a href="http://www.qassist.com">www.qassist.com</a>

### Budget and Timeframe

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Overall budget	\$200K (for design, implementation & launch)
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	Quality Assist: 3 OnPoint Digital: 2
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	Quality Assist: 3
Timeframe to implement	60 Days
Start date of the program	January 2016

### Business Conditions & Business Needs

Quality Assist, Inc. is a social enterprise with nearly 30 years of extensive experience in early education, research and evaluation, professional development training, and technical assistance. Its corporate mission is to increase the resources and resourcefulness of adults who have significant influence on the lives and well-being of young children.

Quality Assist is known for producing high quality and sustaining results in major initiatives. The organization has provided face-to-face training for more than 10,000 teachers, mentor-coaches, center administrators, consultants, trainers, and leadership from local, state, and federal agencies, leveraging field-based experience to bring invaluable authenticity to the work. The Quality Assist team includes staff with advanced degrees in early childhood education, child development, psychology, adult learning and related fields. Other highly qualified staff members include project managers, graphic designers, video producers, instructional designers, and instructional technology experts.

Annette Sibley, President and CEO, who has extensive experience with the development and implementation of large-scale, professional development programs, has been a principal in forming partnerships and collaborations, research and evaluation, and eLearning for professional development.



**Research and evaluation.** Quality Assist leverages the "Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs," authored by Sibley, to evaluate program practices and guide decisions about improvement plans, strategic technical assistance and specialized training for teachers. Quality Assist has evaluated the quality of military child care, private child care, Head Start programs, and family child care; studied the industry impact of changes in child care licensing regulations; and piloted systems for measuring program quality. The organization has partnered in research initiatives that focused on the fidelity of professional development implementation, including the effectiveness of instructional approaches to adult learning with an emphasis on mentoring and coaching for change and school readiness for children.

**Quorum learning portal.** Quality Assist introduced Quorum in 2013 as a membership program to provide low-cost, high-quality, engaging professional development in synchronous and asynchronous formats to the early education industry nationally. The goal is to advance the knowledge and skills of teachers, administrators, early education leaders, technical assistance consultants, and family home visitors using an online learning portal. The online solution is nationally recognized as it promotes interaction with specialized content and helps drive changes in practices to improve the learning outcomes for young children. The Quorum catalog of eLearning courses is augmented with a dynamic, individualized e-professional development system, which today serves a growing population of more than 4,000 subscribers. The overall success of the inaugural online learning initiatives fueled the company's interest in identifying ways to better engage the growing subscriber ecosystem while a more flexible and innovative framework. Quality Assist partnered with OnPoint Digital, a provider of technology-enabled learning solutions.

### **Business Conditions & Business Needs**

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Quality Assist has traditionally provided face-to-face training and professional development for child care and Head Start programs under state, federal, and private contracts for almost 30 years. The training was intense and on-site, professional development focused on measurable and enduring change in teaching practices. Face-to-face, on-site training is expensive, geographically limiting, time-constrained, and difficult to scale. In addition, funding for early education professional development is unstable and funding priorities are continuously shifting, leaving a seriously under-resourced and under-educated early education workforce ill prepared to deliver care and education at a critical juncture in a young child's life. To address recurring development problems, the



organization converted 300+ F2F courses to an online professional development membership program dubbed Quorum in 2011. The purpose of the Quorum platform was to increase accessibility, affordability, and accountability for training and professional development that produces enduring and measurable change in early education practices. The system, as envisioned then and remains today, is based on a set of fundamental principles, including: increasing accessibility and affordability, driving change, and providing accountability.

Quality Assist's Quorum offering is a membership subscription program; members receive one year of unlimited access to the catalog of engaging and interactive online courses. Members include child care centers, corporate child care chains, Head Start agencies, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, family child care providers, state early education agencies, and public pre-K systems. Quorum currently has more than 4,000 active annual subscribers. Over the past three years, Quorum has processed 19,000 student Action Plans, provided more than 57,000 hours of training, and issued 19,000 certificates for completed courses.

As Quorum's membership has grown, it has become essential to automate accountability and reporting systems. Validating course completion elements, tracking student-generated actions plans, and producing individualized certificates had become a time-consuming manual process in the previous platform. As a result, course certificates were delayed seven to 10 days to allow time to confirm course completion, score knowledge assessments, confirm that each student completed an action plan, and create individualized certificates with hundreds of appropriate state training codes. Preparing approximately 4,000 individualized certificates and 4,000 action plans reports annually required a dedicated registrar at the direct expense of Quality Assist. In addition, staff time was spent answering helpdesk calls from users requesting certificates.

In 2015, ever-changing market trends and technical requirements encouraged the Quality Assist team to evaluate online learning platforms that could deliver a more engaging, flexible and innovative approach to the increasingly younger, more social and mobile Quorum audience. The Quorum team, numbering just four professionals, researched learning technology with interactive, online portals that use responsive web designs and content delivery. The Quorum team became intrigued by the myriad possibilities with Experience API that could increase learning programs at a wide variety of levels.

## Overview

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Quality Assist's next-generation learning platform needed to build upon the founding principles of the initial Quorum platform offering but be expanded to meet new goals, including:

1. **Enhanced accessibility and affordability.** Early education programs are burdened with limited financial resources, under-qualified staff, and high turnover. Research shows that the first three years of a child's life are critical to overall development. The new Quorum platform enabled a fresh approach to increase learner autonomy and reduce the financial dependency on third-party funding for workforce development by offering low-cost learning with flexible time commitment and intuitive, highly accessible programs.
2. **Drive change faster and deeper.** Quorum's online learning needed to transcend basic information delivery and engage learners intellectually, emotionally, and physically to inspire meaningful, enduring change in daily practices. These changes can only happen when learning is available whenever and wherever participants have time to engage. Plus, learner expectations for engagement are higher today than ever, mandating a need for more interactive and personalized learning programs that can drive higher retention rates and course completions. Accordingly, Quorum's next platform needed to facilitate these changes for learners while making it easier for the Quorum team to manage learners' educational programs and analyze their results.
3. **Augment accountability.** Child-care teachers are required to meet annual state training requirements, which vary widely for every state and placed a burden on Quality Assist's Quorum team. The new platform needed to reflect the unique criteria, codes, and certificate reporting requirements for approved trainers and courseware in every state across the country and provide an automated way to award Continuing Education Units and issue certificates based on different state and CEU authority requirements. The Quorum team sought ways to make it easier for child care employers to account for, analyze, and compensate their staff members for the training hours they completed.

**The Quorum 2.0 platform.** Quality Assist's learning platform is cloud-based and resides on a dedicated file server in a secure hosting facility. Access by Quorum subscribers happens via any computer, tablet, or mobile handset with support for modern as well as legacy web browsers, thus expanding the reach of the platform to a broader community.



The highly-customized user interface/user experience reflects the end-to-end learning experience that begins with either group-level access or self-registration and includes an ecommerce engine with a responsive web design, front-end, to allow for easier content selection, payment, and program initiation whenever the need arises.

### **Design of the Program**

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Quality Assist is known for its high-quality, high-impact professional development programs and the approach to online learning is grounded in 30 years of proven results based on the “rights of the learner” approach to adult learning. The extensive library of 70+ training modules were originally developed, delivered and refined in traditional face-to-face sessions, before being converted for web delivery that facilitates active engagement among participants.

Because asynchronous modules are self-paced and self-guided, the graphic design elements and interactive tools are of critical importance to facilitate the learner’s emotional, intellectual, and physical connection with the content. The learning is designed to facilitate higher order thinking (e.g., analysis, evaluation, and synthesis) and to promote immediate application of new concepts. Quorum’s interactive features are applied strategically to scaffold content, reinforce concepts, and amplify learning experiences. The training approach inspires the need and desire to know more and facilitates translating learning into real world applications.

**Need for a next-gen learning platform.** In 2015, Quality Assist was introduced to EdTech provider OnPoint Digital through Aaron Silvers and Megan Bowe, early pioneers in all things xAPI and the co-founders of Making Better, a leading consultant in the design and implementation of next-generation learning techniques. OnPoint Digital is an innovator in the xAPI realm, providing support for xAPI-based communications in a learning management system platform. Quality Assist engaged OnPoint to implement the new online learning platform with integrated ecommerce capabilities, a fully customized, responsive user interface/experience, integrated xAPI capabilities, a Learning Record Store and the ability to migrate course modules and historical training records of participants. OnPoint also worked with Quality Assist to develop several specialized modules and features to better automate and streamline the whole Quorum subscriber experience.

The Quorum Learning Portal extends the design principles found in Quality Assist’s courseware by providing UI/UX that organizes and displays relevant features to every learner based on their



progress and preferences. Each learner's personalized portal view provides access to courseware and associated training resources.

**Figure 1: Quorum Customized User Interface/Experience**



Source: Quality Assist Inc. 2016

The courses go well beyond the “click, read, listen” approach to by inviting learners to “lean into the learning” through interactive games, quizzes, assessments with instant feedback, community polls, personalized action plans and discussions, downloadable handouts and transcripts, and certificates individualized by state. The platform also provides administrative-level access for participating subscriber organizations using a new My Team function to help supervisors onboard new staffers, update rosters, monitor professional development, and track compliance with state training requirements.

Quorum members have 24/7, year-round access to a catalog of courses that allow individuals to learn at their own pace, take a break and return to where they left off. The courseware accommodates diverse learning styles as well as learners with various levels of formal education.

The following components are included in all courses to ensure learning application:

- Interactive learning boards put learners in the “driver’s seat” of the investigative process.
- Videos to add real-life animation to the content and are strategically used to introduce compelling information and establish emotional connections.
- Flip books support self-paced interactive, in-depth content exploration, blending audio and visual learning to support different learning styles.
- Handouts are easy to access, download and print and are stored on the student’s individual portal for future reference.
- Discussions build community across participants and content and are available on personal portals to share perspectives from the field, promote ongoing exploration of content, and connect with professional colleagues.
- Polls provide immediate feedback from the group to the individual participant and connect each learner with the larger community.
- Interactive learning games promote hypotheses and knowledge testing in interesting ways and function as embedded quizzes to reinforce and assess learning.
- Reflective writing deepens personal understanding of key concepts and promotes clarity and personal relevance.
- Knowledge assessments are included at the end of each course to validate learning, provide certificates of completion, and award Continuing Education Unit and state training hours.
- Individualized action plans are completed by each student and are archived and available to program leaders for reference. Personalized Action Plans help the learner create concrete plans for implementing training content and are shared with program administrators so they can support teachers.
- Director notes promote dialog and reinforces learning. Director notes are available to program administrators for each course and provide a brief overview of key concepts, conversation starters, and follow-up suggestions for implementation of course content. The director notes support leaders by



providing practical tips to apply training content and by promoting accountability for implementing the content.

- Parent notes provide a bridge between the classroom and home. They provide a brief overview of key concepts covered in training, promote teacher/parent dialog, promote accountability to parents, and showcase the teacher's commitment to ongoing learning.

## Delivery of the Program

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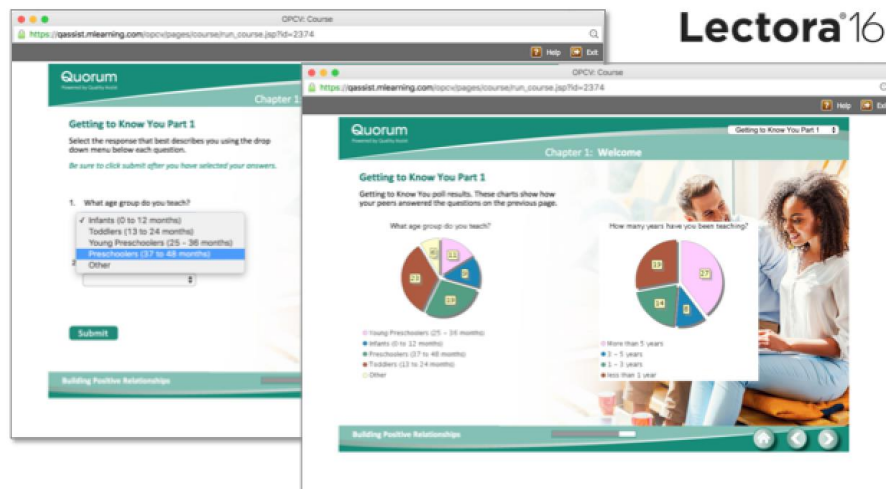
To remain at the forefront of technology innovations, Quality Assist has worked with OnPoint Digital to customize a highly flexible learning platform to meet evolving needs. OnPoint Digital's platform addresses learning experiences in a manner that is intuitive and visually appealing. It can provide social learning interactions, including games, points, badges and, leaderboards. The data from the platform is easily gathered and exported by clients through Application Program Interfaces.

The inaugural Quorum learning portal (circa 2011) served Quality Assist's needs well and exhibited functions found in virtually every LMS but had several technical limitations. Key considerations to switch vendors included the need for a flexible UI/UX, better mobile access, improved ecommerce functionality, enhanced social and game-enabled features, flexible reporting and certificate management and, most importantly, the ability to incorporate xAPI statement generation and tracking across the entire online learning experience. OnPoint Digital's online learning platform along with its integrated Learning Record Store and embedded xAPI features used in conjunction with Lectora 16 from Trivantis allowed the Quorum team to rethink learning experiences while making reporting and analytics far more detailed and flexible.

A summary of key innovations and enhancements to the next-generation Quorum learning environment included:

- **Improved interactive courseware.** xAPI-enabled features – unique to Lectora 16 – have added dramatic, interactive improvements to Quorum courses, enabling real-time feedback and statistics to appear on-screen during the learning process. Learners answer questions while taking a course and see how their responses compare to their peer groups and colleagues.

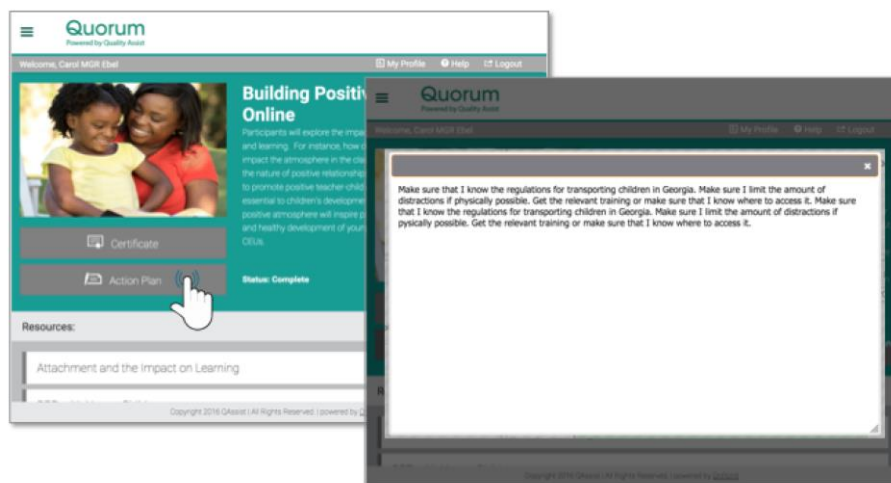
Figure 2: Interactive Questions within a Course Page Resulting in Real-time Feedback



Source: Quality Assist Inc. 2016

- **Dynamic action plans.** Personalized action plans were historically completed by learners using a third-party survey tool with rigid UI/UX capability that was later archived and made available in seven to 10 days to program leadership. Now, these personalized action plans are filled out while learners are still inside a course and the resulting deliverable – managed as an xAPI document – is immediately available to the learner and well as the manager or mentor through customized features.

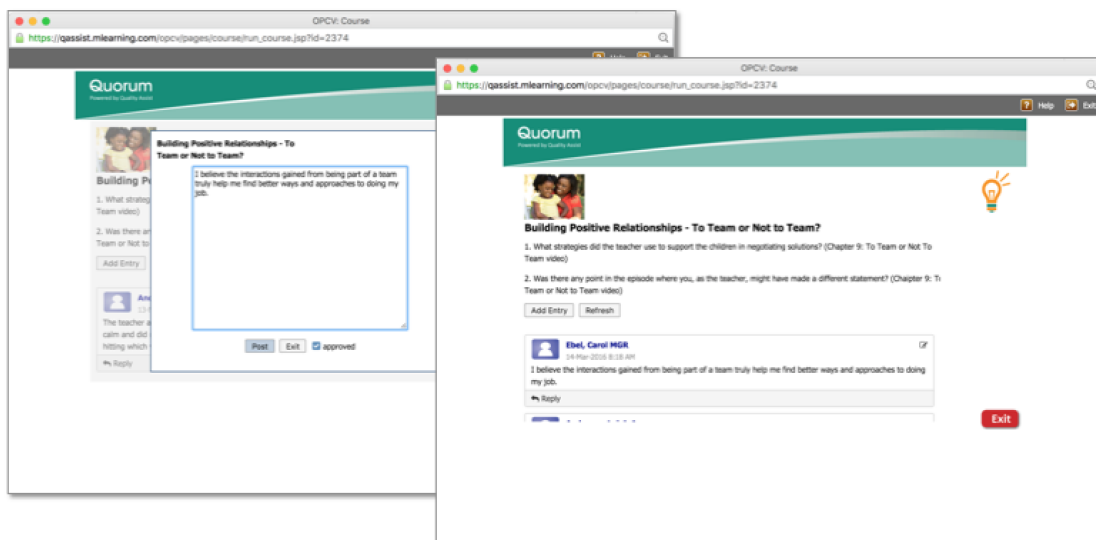
Figure 3: Personalized Action Plan Created within a Course Construct



Source: Quality Assist Inc. 2016

- **Threaded discussions.** Interactive forums also have taken a giant step forward by leveraging the ability of a course-specific discussion thread to be placed inside a courseware page, bringing the discussion directly to the learning community without having to leave the course or pop open a new browser window. This ability results in more frequent, active discussions among participants.

Figure 4: Interactive, Real-time Discussion Forums Directly Inside a Course

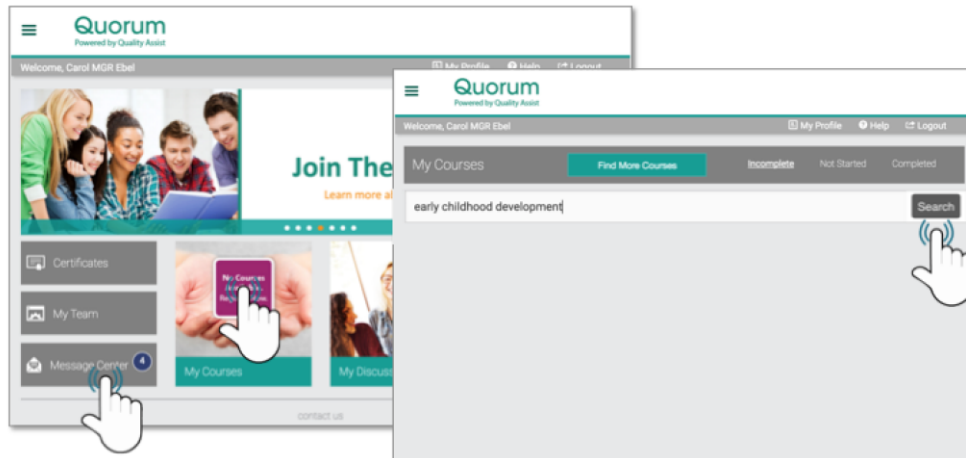


Source: Quality Assist Inc. 2016

- **Measurable usage statistics.** The Quorum team routinely monitors courses to ensure the functionality of interactive elements, determine the level of student engagement, and determine whether the module stimulates or deepens users' thoughts or creates a rich exchange of ideas in discussion posts, reflective writing, action plans, quizzes, and knowledge assessments. Course analytics provide quantitative data that track the sequence of a learner's path and length of time in key content areas. From the data, the Quorum team can identify under-utilized elements, exposure to content, learning patterns and rhythms. The data provide objective indicators of module use and, when reviewed in the context of learning objectives, identify module components that are effective catalysts and those that need improvement. In addition, the platform measures utilization levels outside of courseware and completions for every type of learner interaction whenever navigating the Learning Portal. For instance, every click of every button pushed in

the UI/UX is tracked, making it easy to find which features are used or not used. Likewise, words and/or phrases in search fields are tracked, enabling the Quorum team to determine what learners are seeking and either finding or not finding.

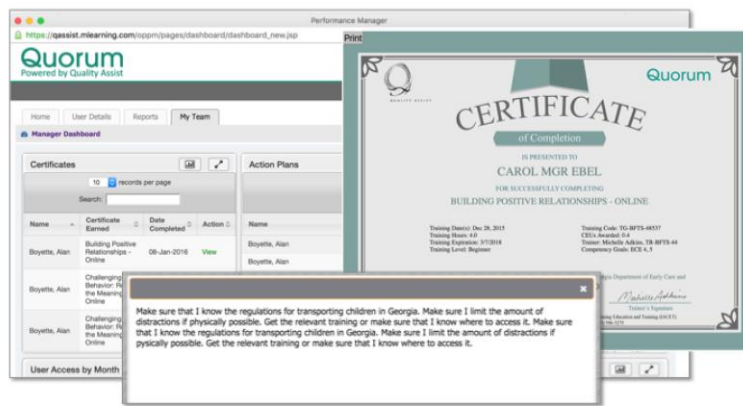
Figure 5: Tags Track Clicks, Interaction, and Outcome for Measurement and Analysis



Source: Quality Assist Inc. 2016

- **Detailed reporting and analytics.** Finally, highly interactive user-friendly and intuitive dashboards organize and present learning outcomes and provide Key Performance Indicators across the learning experience. Dashboards available to Quorum administrators and subscriber-level leaders offer a mix of progress charts and access to xAPI-based documents such as action plans and certificates.

Figure 6: Manager Dashboard – Interactive KPIs, Certificates, and Subordinate Plans



Source: Quality Assist Inc. 2016

This unique combination of features, wrapped in a customized UI/UX, has empowered the Quorum team to push the boundaries of the traditional online learning experience and add value to the expanding community of learners.

### **Change Management Efforts**

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The typical and expected challenges inherent in the implementation of any new automated systems certainly were present throughout the design and deployment phases of this implementation, but experience within both the Quality Assist and OnPoint Digital teams helped mitigate and overcome these common obstacles. Interestingly, one of the most time-consuming aspects has been the number of hours spent designing and perfecting the custom UI/UX that frames the learning experience for the audience.

Having far more choices than just the ability to add a logo and apply brand guidelines means every screen and associated process can be designed to purpose and needs to be carefully considered, reviewed, and approved for usability and flexibility. This fact is especially true given the wider challenges of supporting online training for a highly diverse audience accessing the site through a wide variety of computers, tablets and devices.

The Quorum team worked closely with OnPoint's designer and interface developers to craft a solution that was easy to understand and navigate without the need for excessive training or support. The rule of thumb is "a great user experience is like a great joke – neither one should require explanation." Once the design was fleshed out, the process of turning wireframes into working interfaces required a highly structured amount of testing and verification to ensure the proper experience across the expected range of computers, operating systems and browsers used in the Quorum community. OnPoint worked to design part of OnPoint's standard platform offering and serve as new/enhanced features for current and future customers.

Standard issues such as migrating historical training were addressed and easily overcome using existing import/export templates and best practices. Staffing levels to transition from the old system and support the new system remained the same, and the Quorum team learned the new platform through a formal two-day training class, a series of informal workshops, and written job aides. Staffing hours to support the new system were dramatically lower as manual processes of compiling certificates and reports became automated.





Finally, the teams had to ensure all the unique tracking, reporting and compliance requirements, especially state-specific variables, were met in the new platform through a combination of custom reports, interactive certificate functions, and simple utilities.

### **Measureable Benefits**

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Quorum 2.0 and the xAPI-enabled features have provided multiple, significant benefits and return on Quality Assist's investment. The manual process of uploading and updating authorized users, generating user and labor reports, preparing individualized, state-specific certificates, and compiling and disseminating individualized action plans had required considerable helpdesk support and a registrar at 75% FTE for 4,000 subscribers. Quorum 2.0 has eliminated this manual processing system and nearly eliminated helpdesk support. Since the release of Quorum 2.0 in January 2016, registrar/helpdesk labor expense has been reduced to 10% FTE. Quorum 2.0 is now scalable and cost effective.

End users also realize cost-saving benefits. Immediate access to real-time data has significantly increased efficiencies for end-users. Quorum 2.0 allows administrators to monitor ongoing staff development, compliance with mandated state training hours, and immediate access to proof of training for unannounced state licensing inspections. Under state laws, if administrators are unable to provide training certificates for each staff member, the center is designated "out-of-compliance" and subject to financial consequence. In addition, labor laws require employers to compensate staff for training hours within the pay period. Quorum 2.0 accelerates employers' ability to document compliance with state early education licensing laws.

The combination of features and functionalities of Quorum 2.0 is pushing the boundaries of traditional online learning experiences and expanding e-PD systems across states and industries. Numerous states have recognized the power of Quorum 2.0 and are adopting the system statewide. Since the January 2016 release, Quality Assist secured a contract to replicate the e-PD system for the National Academy for Family Support Professionals. The National Academy had embargoed 23 highly engaging, interactive, online modules because they lacked a responsive platform and hosting solution. In a two-month period, Quality Assist and OnPoint Digital established an Academy e-PD system, migrated the Academy's 23 modules and integrated a new Competency Assessment System that links assessment scores to target content. The entire system is live!



## Overall

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In eLearning, instructors are not in the room to influence the learning. It is critical that every element of the learning experience, including environment, language, function, and content facilitates learning. Such learning is strongly influenced by UI/UX functionality and needs dedicated time and resources to drive the ideal outcome.

Quality Assist and OnPoint Digital recognize the value and importance of user experience and seek to ensure strong outcomes for high-risk communities. Working with partners with the same values, shared goals, flexibility and excitement to embrace the unknown, enhances the work and is reflected in the final product.

A critical lesson is that any eLearning solution should be built to be flexible for the future, scalable from the beginning, capable of adapting to all types of learners and able to embrace innovations in the field of technology and instructional design. Its e-PD system meets these criteria.

Next, the experience also proved that xAPI capabilities, while relatively new to most learning professionals and practitioners, are not the exclusive domain of larger T&D enterprises with bigger budgets and larger staffs but are practical and accessible by smaller teams as well. In short, innovations pay off for those willing to take a visionary approach to their learning initiatives. The Quorum team has proven that great things can come in small packages, especially given the wholesale change and adoption of xAPI proved practical to meeting the mission.

Finally, the success of the initial implementation to support Quorum subscribers triggered a near-immediate launch of another online learning program at Quality Assist for the National Academy for Family Support Professionals, a group previously not supported by an online learning portal site. The general design and flow of the modernized Quorum site was easily modified to support National Academy's 300 new users and was deployed in the group's branded environment in two months.

Quality Assist and OnPoint teams continue to evaluate other learning initiatives to leverage its next-generation platform into several more active programs that drive customer and vendor partnerships that benefit both organizations.



## About Brandon Hall Group

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Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 20 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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