



## Questionmark Case Study

### Los Angeles Mass Transit Authority Uses Computerized Tests to Raise Training Standards

#### Scenario

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority plans, coordinates, designs, builds and, most importantly, operates the public transportation system for one of the country's largest and most populous counties. Operating public transit in LA requires enormously complex responsibilities involving 1900 motor coaches, sixty miles of rail service, and over 8,000 drivers and maintenance workers.

The company trains more than 500 people a year as new bus drivers both in the classroom and on the road. Until recently, course instructors administered paper-based assessments after course completion. Not only did the manual method make administering and grading the tests and quizzes time intensive but also tended to make the final test easier to pass. The same 180 questions had been used for years — a threat to test security — and those who flunked could take it again.

#### Solution

Mark Anderson, head of operations training, felt strongly that teaching and grading should be separate functions. "We want to get quality people; we don't want to make sure that everyone passes," he said. The best way to achieve that goal was to use computerized testing. Anderson chose Questionmark™ Perception™ because the assessment program easily randomizes the questions and because computerized testing assures objectivity.

MTA delivers an orientation program, a defensive driving course, and one on customer service. At the end of every class during the courses, learners take a practice test to assess their progress. They're able to accomplish this easily because they take the tests in the same room where they work through computer-based training courses.

At the end of each week, MTA uses Perception to give a "unit" test on that week's topic. MTA has already invested in 40 computers and looks to gain future access to satellite training computers in its eleven divisions.

#### Results

At first, personnel at MTA resisted the new approach. Accustomed to a manual system, the instructors didn't like the loss of control. New students who knew about the old system and its easier standards were also nonplussed. However, now that MTA has used Perception for several months the results have become very positive.

"Everyone's saying, 'Gosh, the students coming out are so much better,'" said Anderson. "Their customer service skills are better, they listen, and accident statistics for new employees are way down."

Anderson went on to observe that many students come in after class, on their own time, to take practice quizzes. They are more engaged and Perception provides a great vehicle for students to assess their own skills as they work through each course.

Now he plans to use Perception for course evaluations as well as expand its use to maintenance training.

#### More information

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