

BETTER BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

Wizard Learning: a kind of magic?



Continuing his exclusive series for *Professional Adviser*, Mark Loosmore from technology consultancy AT8 Group analyses Training and Competence tools for advisers. Each week Mark selects a tool currently available to UK IFAs and assessed its strengths and weaknesses. Our aim is to help advisers compare and contrast solutions so they can identify the tools that may be most suitable for their businesses.

This week: Wizard Learning

AT8 recently had the opportunity to see a demonstration of Wizard Learning. Wizard has a relatively narrow focus on the training and testing area for the Financial Services industry. With RDR bringing professional development and the need to achieve the new benchmark clearly into focus, training systems such as Wizard Learning say they are gaining more interest in their solutions. These articles are intended to help our readers to understand the role each system may be able to play and so help determine which is most suitable for an adviser's needs.

Quirky style

The first thing that stands out when reviewing Wizard is the

style of the system. This is not your traditional corporate application in conservative style and colours or limited graphics. This is a bright visual and some may find it quirky. The screens are bright yellow and blue with the company's Wizard logo/character flying around with his wand, leaving a trail of stars as he casts his magic spells. Indeed, the application has more the look of something from the *CBeebies* website than a dull financial services training application.

I don't say this as either criticism or praise. I think the company deliberately wanted to create differentiation and get across the fun side of the company – to this extent, it achieves

the objective. However, as much as I think this will appeal to some, it will alienate others.

The content of the site itself is more serious (although its presentation continues to be light-hearted). It covers four key learning areas:

- UK Financial Services, regulations and ethics ;
- Investment and risk;
- Protection;
- Retirement planning.

For each of these areas, the learning material is presented in small pieces of text. Each of these is shown on its own tabs, and relevant tabs are grouped together to form a sub-section of the training material. Several subsections are then grouped to form a common topic area or chapter. The use of tabs is effective, allowing the user to hop between them in an order to suit them, revisiting sections at will. But I did wonder if sometimes a tab may be missed out, because there is no clear order in which to review the information. At the end of each topic or chapter the user has a chance to run a revision test to check on their understanding and progress.

Tests are used regularly throughout the system to help check understanding and so reinforce the learning cycle. The tests seem to be well-structured and engaging. It is here that the less formal look of the application has some appeal, because the tests appear less daunting and more like a game than an examination. As the revision test is answered, the correct answers are confirmed and an explanation of why it is correct is provided. If a test is started, but not completed, progress is remembered when you return to the test and you go straight to the next question.

Once a module has been completed, the user is presented with

three more types of tests. First, they can re-run the revision questions. If this is passed, Wizard Learning presents a case study test. This takes the acquired knowledge and gets the user to apply the information to different scenarios or case studies. This different approach to the multiple-choice questions reconfirms the learning. Once comfortable with the case study, the user can sit the formal examination.

Different testing mechanisms

I like this incremental building of testing progress and applaud the use for different testing mechanisms. In fact, Wizard Learning takes the provision of a variety of testing mechanisms one stage further and provides questions that require a fuller written answer. This works in two different modes: a self-assessment or an independent assessment, marked by one of Wizard's qualified staff. The hand-marked response is usually turned around quickly and gives an independent insight to the user's style and knowledge.

In addition to the formal subject areas, Wizard Learning also provide monthly content, giving

an industry update on various key subject areas of finance, tax, regulation and other general information from a range of sources and publications. Users can keep up-to-date with valuable relevant industry information, as well as apply it to their subject syllabus's reading and learning. The system keeps a log

of all CPD points captured and creates a training certificate to acknowledge certain milestones of progress. In addition, Wizard also captures key Management Information for the managers and business owners to assess and track progress.

As with other systems we have reviewed of this genre, I have had mixed feelings about its usability. On the plus side, the menu bar stayed constant at the side of the application. If one was ever to get lost it was possible to get back to the start of the application. However, within the training sessions on the system, navigation was less intuitive and tests opened in a separate window.

Wizard Learning is a colourful and lively application with well thought out testing techniques. It has kept a human dimension to its learning processes, both through its presentation and through the support infrastruc-

ture, which includes the personalised marking of test papers.

It is limited in its scope and doesn't try to provide the wider Training and Competence functions, such as case checking or financial promotions management.

Neither does it try to build development plans, nor management training catalogues. Instead, it focuses on its core, training and testing functionality. Wizard was a fun, if somewhat eccentric diversion from some of the more serious applications. More information can be found at: www.WizardLearning.com.

CORE FUNCTIONS

Learning and development plans	✘
CBT	✓
Online Testing	✓
CPD record keeping	✓
Training activity management	✘
Financial promotions management	✘
Case checking	✘
KPI management	✘
Complaints management	✘
Sales activity management	✘
Online	✓
Monitoring forms builder	✘
TCF tools	✘
Offline	✘
Regulated recruitment process	✘
MI reporting	✓

PRICE

Pricing is varied by modules – Core learning package is £15 per user per month All prices exclude VAT.

This data summary is part of a wider survey conducted by AT8. For more specific information, contact: marketing@at8-group.com

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