

Qstream Is Winning via Continuous Learning: SWOT Analysis of Their Approach

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Issue: How will the corporate learning and the sales coaching and learning markets evolve?



SUMMARY

Qstream is well positioned to take advantage of the demand for continuous learning in high consequence industries, powered by their leadership in microlearning. This Research Note provides insight on Qstream, their platform, their strengths, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

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Introduction

There is a major shift that has started a revolution in the way that people learn at work. It is called microlearning. Microlearning is really continuous learning that is enabled via technology. The reason it matters is that by leveraging daily and weekly reinforcement of critical pieces of knowledge, microlearning ensures that people have the right information at the right time to get their work done.

What Is Continuous Learning and Why Does Microlearning Matter?

The power of microlearning is that it leverages an age-old idea that is called continuous learning. By constantly focusing on a specific topic, a set of knowledge or know-how, continuous learning helps to keep a set of employees up to speed and able to recall and apply that information when needed. Microlearning enables continuous learning by ensuring reinforcement of critical pieces of knowledge that are pushed out on a daily and weekly basis. Microlearning ensures that people have the right information at the right time to execute properly on the job.

Microlearning, which offers bite-sized chunks of knowledge to learners at just the right time, is seeing increasing adoption. For specific employees who are on the go or need just-in-time knowledge, microlearning is ideal. In many operational roles in knowledge-based businesses, that involves a series of tasks or know-how, microlearning is also ideal. Sales, service, and support roles all benefit from microlearning.

One major use case for microlearning is sales coaching and learning. Sales professionals have a competitive nature just like professional athletes. Because sales professionals need to be on top of their game, it's best to put them in a learning experience that's competitive and challenging. This means more regular practice of their craft in the form of actual customer scenarios to see how they react in certain real-world situations. Sales coaching and learning platforms offer this kind of capability in the form of situational learning within a microlearning activity.

In this note, we perform a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis on one provider of microlearning technology, Qstream. After providing an overview of the provider, we will delve into an examination of its market position.

Qstream Introduction and Company Overview

Qstream is one of the pioneers of microlearning. It focuses on long-term knowledge retention and behavior change to increase sales force proficiency to drive revenue. Qstream is based in Burlington, Massachusetts and Dublin, Ireland. When combining scientifically proven spaced learning with best practices (scenario-based Q&A challenges, repetition, real-time feedback, and game mechanics), sales reps are able to

recall information and apply newly learned skills in the field sooner. Qstream pioneered this multi-pronged delivery method for the life sciences industry and now is expanding outside of that core market. Qstream's customizable approach to content creation has allowed customers to deploy a variety of microlearning programs for other use cases besides sales and allowed them to utilize the technology for other broader organizational L&D use cases such as compliance, diversity and inclusion, leadership, safety and more.

Qstream has made it easy to deliver, track, and manage knowledge from any device. It's simple, a question-based approach to delivering knowledge in the most engaging way by using game mechanics so sales professionals can talk about the right information at the right time to accurately discuss with prospects and customers. Qstream supplements traditional L&D methods to reinforce knowledge, create meaningful behavior change, and provide managers with the latest learning analytics they need—at the individual level—for guiding targeted coaching actions that help increase proficiency and quantify the return on investments and training efforts.

Note 1: Qstream at a Glance

Qstream is a microlearning provider for the enterprise that offers solutions for sales training and other key learning and development use cases.

Location: Burlington, MA

CEO: Rich Lanchantin

Key Offerings: Qstream

Availability: Available Now

Website: <https://www.qstream.com/>

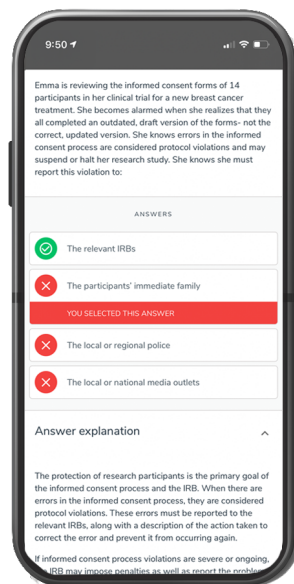


Figure 1: The Qstream mobile experience.

Aragon Research SWOT Analysis

After speaking with Qstream, Aragon Research developed a SWOT analysis (strategy, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). The goal of this analysis is to provide potential buyers of microlearning technology with a clear understanding of what Qstream provides, and how it could fit into their learning technology tech-stack (See Figure 1).

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous learning delivery that works in a mobile platform. • Ease of use across its use cases. • Early leader in low-code development offerings. • Rich mobile experience that supports learning on the go with speedy and responsive design. • Sophisticated analytics platform that can gauge the impact of learning modules. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall brand awareness is still a struggle as Qstream is a young company. • Market understanding of microlearning capabilities is still limited, which may narrow down adoption.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growing demand for continuous learning throughout the enterprise. • The growth of sales coaching and learning is a breakout learning market that has seen progress. • New partnerships may be on the horizon for Qstream and could increase its potential deal volume. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of competitive continuous learning offerings over the next 5 years will present a challenge to Qstream's market dominance. • The willingness of buyers to switch providers may limit buyer loyalty.

Figure 2. Qstream SWOT Analysis.

Strengths

- **Continuous Learning Delivery:** The Qstream platform is focused on continuous delivery and we like the way it works in a mobile first manner. This makes it easy for learners to get involved in learning while on the go. Qstream has never wavered from its focus on microlearning and as demand for continuous learning increases significantly over the next five years this bodes well for Qstream.
- **Impactful outcomes with nearly every learner:** Due to the short duration of the exercises, Qstream enables a high impact for nearly every learner. Analytics help to provide information on access and usage, which correlate to business performance and outcomes metrics that are specific to that individual.
- **Ease of Use:** The platform got its name for ease of use. With its initial deployments in Life Sciences, Qstream was able to overcome resistance to new technology and proved the value of microlearning and how it removes the complexities of

traditional eLearning tools. Its ease of use helped win over many sales organizations at many companies.

- **Mobile Friendly:** Mobile is critical for employees on the frontline. As mobile devices continually get faster and more powerful, the need to leverage those devices in workplace scenarios is greater than it ever was before.

Many factors go into a mobile first learning solution. Speed, ease of use and responsiveness to user inputs all matter. The Qstream platform blends all of these needs into a rich yet easy to use experience that is leveraged multiple times during the day. Given Qstream's strengths in mobile, this is an area for them to leverage. Qstream's application is designed from the ground up to offer a rich user experience on mobile devices. Its design is responsive and supports multiple platforms. The software itself delivers microlearning experiences that last only a few minutes, making it ideal for use during a commute or by pulling up one's phone in between daily work tasks. Its leaderboards and other game mechanics will also make it a natural fit for mobile use.

- **Analytics:** One of the major strengths of Qstream is its analytics platform. Going beyond traditional reporting, line managers and operational leaders are able to see what is going on and gauge the impact of different microlearning programs. The analytics expose patterns of usage and highlight areas to focus on.

Weaknesses

- **Overall Awareness:** While Qstream has been growing, it still faces the challenge of being a young company that is still building its brand. It was an early pioneer and has strong awareness mainly in the Life Sciences market. As it continues to grow, brand awareness will get better and that will lead to more firms seeking them out.
- **Understanding of Microlearning capabilities:** The awareness of what Microlearning is and why it matters is still a market issue and that makes it an issue for any provider, including but not limited to Qstream.

The traditional approach of 'teach and test' learning where associates are trained on materials comprehensively and then given often lengthy examinations to assess their knowledge is still table-stakes for many enterprises. These enterprises may understand this legacy approach to learning as more dependable or measurable than microlearning, which may cause them to hesitate on adoption. However, Aragon has strong faith that microlearning boasts advantages that go beyond the capabilities of legacy learning offerings, and for this reason its market awareness will continue to grow.

Opportunities

- **Growing Demand for Continuous Learning:** As awareness of continuous learning and its impact on business performance grows, so will the demand for Qstream's platform. Aragon feels that for nearly every customer facing job whether it is sales, service, support or contact centers, Qstream's offering is ideal for all of those scenarios. As the word gets around about continuous learning this will attract buyers to Qstream.
- **Growth of Sales Coaching and Learning Overall:** One of the markets that Aragon has been tracking is Sales Coaching and Learning. It is a breakout market from Corporate Learning and for enterprises that have adopted it, they have seen significant progress.
- **New Partnerships:** For Qstream there are many partnerships that are available for them to consider to grow both via industry partners and also via geographic market partnerships. Both of these approaches could add significant market presence and potential deal volume for Qstream.

Qstream's program for partnerships supports joint selling and joint RFIs, along with referrals and joint product development opportunities that have helped it secure more than 70 partners so far. Its microlearning solution can be bundled with partner offerings for an attractive, integrated package.

Threats

- **Growth of Competitive Offerings:** Aragon expects continuous learning to become a major theme over the next five years and that will lead to more providers offering continuous learning capabilities. This is particularly true in the sales coaching and learning market but Aragon feels that microlearning will become common approach for all learners. Employee engagement is a battle cry and microlearning is probably the answer too better performance in nearly every part of an enterprise.
- **Willingness of Buyers to Switch Providers:** The learning market is very competitive and in some cases customers have shown limited loyalty. Ways to address this include higher levels of customer support and continue innovation of the platform. The Qstream analytics are strong and this makes it one of the reasons that enterprise may not want to leave and go to another provider.

Aragon Advisory

Recommendations for Partners:

- Partners should take advantage of Qstream's robust partnership program to seek opportunities by leveraging bundled product, stream licenses, or joint development.
- Partners should work with Qstream to leverage repeatable solutions in market verticals.

Recommendation for Buyers:

- As one of the providers that helped create the category of continuous learning, Qstream is a vendor to watch for buyers.
- Enterprises need to leverage solutions that pivot from legacy teach and test learning methods to continuous learning supported by microlearning.
- Enterprises should ensure that they target critical use cases such as sales and other operational positions.

Bottom Line

Qstream is a growing enterprise provider in learning and it has helped to pioneer the concept of microlearning, which should be looked at as continuous learning that takes place every day. As a company, it is now winning deals outside of sales as the idea of technology enabled continuous learning takes hold. While it faces some challenges in market awareness and will face the threat of competition, Qstream can leverage the strengths of its mobile-enabled learning offering to take advantage of the opportunity that the demand for continuous learning across the enterprise presents.