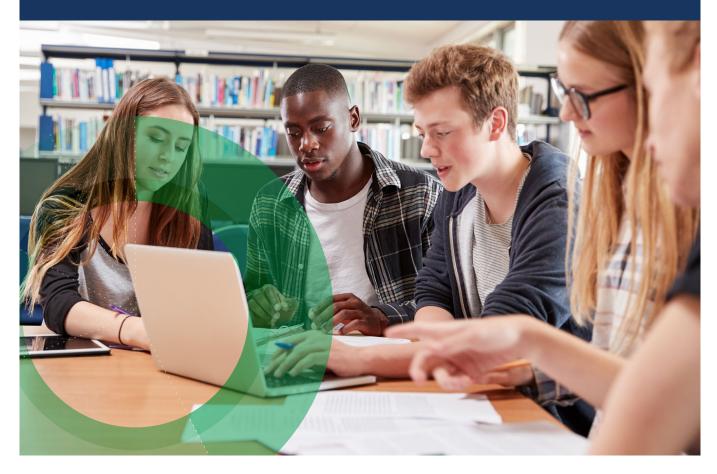CUSTOMER STORY

Plugging the data analysis skills gap

University of Worcester embeds Qlik Academic Program into Data-Driven Decisions module

University
of Worcester

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Richard Wilkinson, Senior Lecturer in Computing, University of Worcester

Increasing demand for data analytics

The explosive growth of big data and an increasing recognition of its value is creating huge demand for data scientists who can unlock hidden information and translate it into vital business intelligence.

In its Future of Jobs[1] report, the World Economic Forum said that data analytics will be one of the most in-demand jobs by 2022, with 85% of large companies adopting big data and analytics and 96% planning to hire staff with data analytics skills.

However, UK digital recruitment firm, Ignite Digital, has highlighted a data science skills gap that has left companies struggling to find the trained people needed to meet growing demand[2].

One organization working to correct this imbalance is the University of Worcester and it is using the Qlik Academic Program to achieve results.

The university is located in the West Midlands, UK and has 11 distinct academic schools including business, science and the environment, with over 10,700 students. It is a close-knit and high achieving community with several notable achievements in recent years, including being a finalist in the 2019 and 2020 Times Higher Education Awards and UK Social Mobility Awards.

Worcester also has one of the best graduate employment rates among UK universities. It was in the top ten for 'sustained employment with or without further study' in the UK Government's Longitudinal Educational Outcomes data (2017), which looks at employment rates up to three years after graduation.

[1] http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2018.pdf
[2] www.ignite.digital

Solution Overview

Customer Name
University of Worcester

Industry
Public Sector

Geography
Worcester, UK

Challenges
- Meet the global demand for data specialists through existing data-driven decisions module
- Give students a better understanding of data analysis and data mining by enabling them to visualize the results of their work
- Increase student marketability by providing hands-on experience of commercial software

Solution
Qlik Academic Program is embedded into data-driven decisions module to introduce students to the value of data and the techniques of using it to inform decision-making.

Results
- Ensures access to industry-leading tools, expertise and data analytics best practice
- Enables diverse and dispersed student body to access content online
- Cloud software and online resources allow students to train anywhere at any time
- Streamlines student learning through visualization of results
- Increases student prospects in the job market

Hands-on experience improves prospects

The university-level Qlik Academic Program gives professors and students one-year access to Qlik Sense software and to the Qlik Continuous Classroom online course curriculum.

Along with lecture notes, course materials and student exercises, the program also provides access to a community forum. It enables professors to deliver richer learning experiences and increases student marketability through hands-on experience.

Students can also take Qlik Sense Business Analyst and Data Architect Qualification exams to earn a printed certificate and digital badge they can add to their resumes or social media sites.

Learning the value of data

Richard Wilkinson is a Senior Lecturer in Computing at Worcester, teaching modules across computing, IT and business degrees. He first began to explore the Qlik Academic Program in the summer of 2019.

After completing Qlik online training himself and seeing the benefits, he decided to integrate Qlik into his data-driven decisions module. This module introduces students to the value of data and the techniques used to analyze it to inform decision-making.

"The learning plan is a great way for students who are brand new to Qlik to understand the functionality and to quickly develop their ability to build visualizations and analyze data," says Wilkinson.

As part of their end-of-course assessment, students were tasked with finding a data set that interested them and had some relevance to their chosen degree pathway. They then had to analyze the data in Qlik Sense and present their discoveries. Chosen topics varied from analysis on how Birmingham City Football Club can maximize ticket revenue to how companies such as BP and Starbucks can use company data to drive business decisions.

Distance learning due to Covid-19

The plan was that students would present their applications in person but with the university closed due to Covid-19, they recorded their presentations and submitted them virtually. Thanks to the storytelling functionality in Qlik Sense, students could easily present their visualizations to an audience, with the ability to dive directly back into the data in case immediate questions arose.

"Despite the transition to distance teaching due to Covid-19, thanks to Qlik Sense being hosted in the cloud and the training materials being available online, students were able to continue their learning with minimal disruption," says Wilkinson. "The Qlik training resources are easy to navigate and they are accessible and understandable for non-computing students. Giving students access to this kind of market-leading analytics software is key for ensuring that they are prepared for the modern workplace."

With the uncertainty facing the 2020/2021 academic year, Wilkinson plans to integrate the Qlik Academic Program into more of his teaching, safe in the knowledge that students will be able to access the software and training resources from home or wherever suits them best.

Easy-to-follow tutorials

Students have given positive feedback on their first experiences using Qlik, with overall satisfaction increasing to 80% compared to 66.6% in the past when another analytics platform was used. One commented: "Overall I have found Qlik Sense to be a useful tool for analysis data. It was fun to use and the tutorials provided were easy to follow."

Many also recognized the value that Qlik can bring to organizations: "Qlik gives everyone the ability to interpret data, which means that businesses can utilize this to lead to real outcomes and implement changes to help develop their business."

Wilkinson concludes: "Embedding Qlik into courses like this is a great way to improve students' confidence of working with data, while also getting them hands on with an industry leading solution.

"We are all making increasingly more data-driven decisions, so university experiences like this help to prepare students for the digital workplace and enable them to thrive."

The keys to success

83 students signed up to the program in the first three months

80% overall module satisfaction

"Despite the transition to distance teaching part way through due to Covid-19, thanks to Qlik Sense being hosted in the cloud and training materials available online, students were able to continue their learning with minimal disruption."

Richard Wilkinson, Senior Lecturer in Computing, University of Worcester

Qlik Q®

About Qlik

Qlik's vision is a data-literate world, where everyone can use data and analytics to improve decision-making and solve their most challenging problems. Qlik provides an end-to-end, real-time data integration and analytics cloud platform to close the gaps between data, insights and action. By transforming data into active intelligence, businesses can drive better decisions, improve revenue and profitability, and optimize customer relationships. Qlik does business in more than 100 countries and serves over 50,000 customers around the world.

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