

PANDEMIC ACADEMICS: COLLEGE TESTING GOES VIRTUAL

Testing experience improved for students and administrators

When COVID-19 forced social distancing, Cognizant Softvision teamed with a leader in college and career readiness to virtualize test taking.



AT A GLANCE

- National leader in college and career readiness
- Established in 1959 with the launch of the first test
- Offers more than 20 programs and services
- Millions of students take the standard college test annually
- 7,000 test centers across the U.S.

CHALLENGE

A non-profit organization representing America's most popular college entrance exam—one that is accepted and valued by all universities and colleges in the U.S.—had a lofty goal: “Modernize the Test Day Experience.” The organization called on Cognizant Softvision to build custom digital tools and platforms to improve the testing experience for all key stakeholders, including students taking the exam, as well as administrators, coordinators and employees who support test days across the U.S. from the “Command Center” in Iowa City, Iowa.

When the COVID-19 crisis forced social distancing, the organization's on-site testing model was upended. Cognizant helped the operation pivot to adapt to the new reality.

SOLUTION

When the engagement began, the Cognizant Softvision team walked the client through the process to define differentiated digital experiences and tools for test administrators, students and the organization's Command Center. We determined that several new software and technology solutions were needed. Enabling these applications required modernizing back-end systems and drawing a clear roadmap for how to deliver these experiences.

We curated two remote, dedicated teams, called “Virtual Pods,” to develop the client's software and technology, starting with web and mobile applications for the test administrators and coordinators. Custom applications enable administrators to undertake the pre-test planning process, manage the test day and complete the post-test set of processes, all digitally.


FROM ON-SITE TO ONLINE

With the onset of COVID-19, the organization's business model—on-site testing in 7,000 locations nationwide—was upended. All Spring 2020 test events were cancelled. Pivoting nimbly, we conducted virtual workshops with key stakeholders and brainstormed ways to not only maintain the momentum of primary project initiatives but also shift focus to new methods to respond to the changes that social distancing requires. While a shift to remote, online testing was already in progress, the pandemic accelerated the move.

Throughout the process, we kept in close contact with the client via collaborative tools such as Miro, Skype for Business and Zoom. In addition, we conducted weekly telemeetings with key stakeholders to maintain a shared vision while creating an improved, more innovative product.

RESULTS

Although coronavirus-related social distancing has impacted standard on-site testing, it has also accelerated the client's move to create and launch a remote testing model. The organization is working toward a pilot online test event. And as digital programs have rolled out, the response from test administrators has been overwhelmingly positive. According to Jennifer Gidley, teacher and test center supervisor, “It was an easy switch,



and actually using the app took less time to set up than paper. The more digital you go, the less troubleshooting we have to do, which is a big help.”

Client leaders and executive sponsors are also impressed with the results thus far. “It’s everything I hoped for and more,” says the client’s lead architect, “and I believe it represents an opportunity for us to truly change not only the test day experience but the way our technology organization learns and evolves to deliver digital product in a more predictable and scalable way.”

As Cognizant Softvision continues to help the client adapt its business model to market changes, the goal is to enable deeper engagement with all stakeholders, from student registration and check-in to how test administrators organize seating. Among the options we’re exploring:

- Tablet-based augmented reality (AR) that enables administrators to check and modify students’ seat locations in both the application and the physical environment.
- Facial recognition technology that can automatically recognize a student, making the check-in process more efficient for both students and administrators.

As we grow the program, Cognizant Softvision continues to work with the client to leverage innovation and build digital experiences and products that will remove friction in its everyday business.



Cognizant Softvision

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