



Technology & Suppliers

Harnessing collective intelligence: Qmarkets' packaged approach to innovation

January 2018

Qmarkets provides collective intelligence-driven innovation management solutions that support a range of different innovation use cases, both inside and outside an organisation's boundaries.

MWD Advisors is a specialist technology advisory firm that shows how digital technology changes work; helping today's innovation, architecture and technology change leaders accelerate their success and manage risk. Our approach combines flexible, pragmatic mentoring and advisory services, built on a deep industry best practice and technology research foundation.

Top takeaways

1

A flexible and scalable platform focused on configuration, not code

Targeting organisations with advanced innovation management needs, Qmarkets' offering is designed to enable the creation of a highly tailored, complex innovation management solutions that support multiple use cases, without the need for customisation or development. Its configuration-driven approach allows organisations to design an innovation management process that adapts to the needs of different parts of the business, while maintaining centralised control and visibility.

2

Packaged solutions to help accelerate deployment

To help accelerate deployments, Qmarkets has taken its experience with customers to build a set of pre-packaged offerings focused on specific innovation use cases, involving both internal and external stakeholders. These offerings extend beyond idea management, to include open innovation, employee suggestion boxes, process improvement and performance excellence, best practice sharing, virtual innovation workshops, M&A scouting and prediction markets techniques – with more being added in 2018.

A solution for complex innovation needs

Founded in 2006, Qmarkets provides collective intelligence-driven innovation management solutions that support a range of different innovation use cases both inside and outside an organisation's boundaries. Though its portfolio comprises packaged products and services that address even the most simple, entry-level needs, Qmarkets' primary focus is on enterprises that already have experience in innovation management, and that are looking for new ways to manage their innovation portfolio – enterprises with very specific, custom and potentially complex requirements. To support this, Qmarkets has developed a highly flexible, configurable innovation management platform that allows organisations to expand and adapt their implementations over time as their practice and strategy matures.

Underpinned by idea management

At the heart of Qmarkets' offering is an idea management platform that helps organisations capture, evaluate and select the best ideas from a crowdsourced innovation campaign, and then continue to track those ideas through to implementation. Available as a private cloud SaaS offering (hosted by Qmarkets) or deployed on premise, the technology supports the creation of multiple "tenants" within the customer's deployment, to enable different areas to be created to support different communities or use cases within the organisation. If required, each tenant can have a completely different look and feel, layout, roles and admin structure, while still allowing the organisation to maintain a centralised view on analytics, and shared controls and templates.

The idea management process is organised through time-boxed "campaigns" which enable innovation managers to focus ideation activity according to specific business priorities. Individuals are invited to contribute ideas to a particular campaign, and other members of the community can comment, rate or vote on those ideas to help provide clarity and initial feedback on its value. Multiple authors can be attributed to a single idea if required.

Innovation managers can customise the content and layout of the idea submission form, and can create multiple templates that can then be selected and configured by individual campaign managers for each campaign.

The ideation workflow process within Qmarkets' platform is fully configurable, with customers able to add new stages, customise tasks and features enabled at each stage, and rearrange the order of stages as needed. However, each of the packaged applications (including Q-Flex and the Q360 modules – see below) includes pre-configured workflows, forms and layouts that can either be used out-of-the-box, or adjusted as needed.

As well as enabling campaign managers to manually progress ideas from one stage to the next, Qmarkets enables innovation managers or administrators to create custom rules to automate the progression of ideas at any stage. These rules can be based on community activity (for example the number of likes or comments), or on variables such as an idea's assigned category, the length of time it has been at a specific stage, or a period of inactivity. These variables are also fully customisable, and can be specified using SQL. Campaign managers can configure the thresholds for these rules for their specific campaigns.

To help encourage participation and reward contribution, gamification features allow community members to earn points and badges for their activity. Again, the thresholds for these can be fully configured by the customer, and the feature can also be integrated with HR systems to tie into performance management, or with corporate incentive award schemes.

To support the review and selection process, Qmarkets provides four evaluation methods:

- **Scorecards.** Reviewers are asked to rate ideas against a set of criteria. The scorecard criteria can be customised by the innovation/campaign manager, and can comprise star ratings, drop-down options and/or free text comments. Each criterion can be weighted, enabling the system to automatically calculate the overall rating for an idea.

- **Expert review.** This method directs the idea to one or more experts, who are invited to complete a more detailed review of its validity, along with their recommendation. The application automatically suggests experts based on their expertise and interests listed in their profile (which can be populated manually or imported from HR systems) and on their activity within the platform (for example the ideas they have submitted, or have previously evaluated).
- **Idea tournaments.** This simple, quick-fire review method presents reviewers with a head-to-head, "pairwise voting" comparison of pairs of ideas.
- **Token voting.** Also referred to as virtual currency voting, this method allows each reviewer a quantity of tokens per campaign that they can allocate to their preferred ideas. Administrators can specify certain limitations, for example that reviewers cannot spend more than a defined number of tokens on one idea.

For scorecard and expert reviews, innovation managers can create reusable templates to accelerate the set-up process in each campaign.

For ideas that successfully pass the evaluation process, Qmarkets provides a simple project management capability that enables the ideas to be tracked through to implementation. By default, this is enabled as a single additional stage in the ideation process, though customers can add further project stages if required. Each project can be assigned a team (which can collaborate via a private discussion area), manage associated tasks, and capture associated information about the project and its progress. Qmarkets also supports integration with third-party project and portfolio management tools on a custom basis.

Qmarkets also provides several other areas of integration:

- **Portals** such as SharePoint and SAP NetWeaver – these integrations enable individuals to view and search personalised campaign activity from an external portal; SharePoint integration also enables content to be linked to an idea in Qmarkets.
- **Social collaboration** tools such as IBM Connections, Yammer and Jive – these integrations enable idea management activity to be surfaced in social feeds.
- **News and trend scouting services** such as TrendONE – these integrations enable articles to be surfaced as news items on the Qmarkets home page or within individual campaigns.

Qmarkets provides reporting and analytics at both a system level and at a campaign level. These focus on activity and usage data, allowing innovation managers to track adoption and participation and the rate and flow of ideas through the system as a whole, and enabling campaign managers to track the progress of their particular campaign. All reports can be exported to Excel for further analysis.

An emphasis on flexibility and configurability

A key feature of Qmarkets' technology is the degree of configuration and customisability available to customers, enabling them to create an experience that meets their needs both at a branding and process level. The application is widget-based, with the ability to add, remove, and rearrange widgets on each page (for example the home page, the idea page and the campaign page), to change the display style of individual widgets (from matrix to carousel, for example), and to change branding using configurable 'skins'. Qmarkets provides a set of pre-built layout templates to accelerate deployment time, which administrators/innovation managers can configure as required.

Most configuration can be done by the customer using easy-to-use, drag-and-drop tools that do not require specialist skills, although for more extensive or complex requirements (for example creating custom widgets or complete redesign of the UI), customers often ask Qmarkets or a partner to carry out the work on their behalf. However, for those customers purchasing the Q-Max edition of the software (see below), this up-front set up and customisation is included as part of the price of the solution.

Multiple product editions for different maturity levels

Qmarkets' software is available in three editions:

- **Q-start.** Designed for up to 5,000 users, this entry-level, SaaS-only idea management offering enables customers to get started very quickly with challenge-driven innovation, providing an out-of-the-box user experience with simple branding options, and a simple ideation process.
- **Q-flex.** For organisations with some innovation management experience, this edition provides an off-the-shelf deployment while allowing for more flexibility than Q-start, and is the most common starting point for Qmarkets' customers. Q-flex adds support for customisation of the home page and idea submission forms, as well as the ability to add optional features such as project management and custom workflows, and offers the option to deploy on-premise. It also adds multilingual support. This edition supports up to 1 million users, and is Qmarkets' most popular offering.
- **Q-max.** This is Qmarkets' premium offering, including all features of the technology, including multi-tenancy, multiple custom evaluation workflows, fully customised home page(s), rules-based expert assignment, multiple experts per review, and more. This version is designed for organisations with mature, established innovation management programmes that require the ability to create a fully tailored solution.

The Qmarkets software is available in 14 languages including Bulgarian, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Korean, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Thai and Turkish. English, French, German and Italian are included in the core pricing; the other languages are available as optional extras.

Packaged solutions for collective intelligence use cases

In addition to its core idea management technology, in 2016 Qmarkets launched a suite of collective intelligence modules, collectively branded as Q-360. Available either as standalone solutions or in conjunction with a Q-Max or Q-Flex deployment, each module targets an alternative innovation use case, focusing on either internal or external stakeholders, and is a pre-packaged configuration of the Qmarkets platform. Current packaged modules in the portfolio include:

- **Q-IDM** supports always-on, employee suggestion box use cases.
- **Q-kaizen** supports best practice knowledge sharing within an organisation, enabling individuals to share ideas they've implemented in their particular region/branch, and surfacing these to relevant people across the business who can then re-use the ideas. Idea clones are linked within the platform, enabling the organisation to centrally identify and track popular ideas and create best practices from them.
- **Q-live** supports the hosting of virtual ideation workshops for employees.
- **Q-scout** provides support for internal teams involved in start-up scouting activities for the purposes of M&A, for example, enabling the capturing and tracking of prospects, and supporting decision making processes around which to pursue.
- **Q-city** enables municipalities and governments to engage citizens in ideation, providing transparency in support of the democratic process.
- **Q-open** supports open innovation scenarios, enabling organisations to invite customers or partners to engage in innovation initiatives.
- **Q-delphi** is a prediction markets offering, employing a stock market exchange mechanism to help organisations forecast the outcome of key events or activities.

Two further modules, **Q-hack** (which supports the hosting and tracking of hackathons) and **Q-patent** (which supports tracking and management of corporate patents), are currently available as custom offerings. Qmarkets expects to release them as packaged offerings in the first half of 2018.

For internal deployments, Qmarkets' solutions are priced on an annual licence basis, dependent on the edition and/or module, the number of users and any optional features selected. In external deployments, pricing is based on a one-time perpetual license, plus ongoing annual maintenance.

Configuration & consulting services

Qmarkets' technology is specifically designed to limit the need for custom development, instead enabling most requirements to be met via configuration of the product. Although this may be done by the customer, in the majority of cases Qmarkets' customers ask for its help in the initial set-up phase, creating a solution tailored to meet their specific needs. With this in mind, Qmarkets has built this configuration service into the first-year pricing for Q-max.

Qmarkets also offers several packaged consulting engagements, primarily to assist customers in establishing their innovation programmes. These include:

- **A turn-key pilot programme**, which includes consulting and guidance to facilitate the launch of the customer's first challenge.
- **A best practices workshop**, comprising a one-to-two-day session led by a Qmarkets expert providing guidance on how to launch and sustain a successful innovation management programme.
- **An innovation needs mapping workshop**, designed to help customers map their precise needs in order to build a business case and plan for their innovation programme.

The company also offers ongoing custom consulting packages, typically delivered as annual contracts.

A healthy partner network

Qmarkets offers its own strategy consulting services, but it also works with partners to deliver consulting services – for example where customers have an existing services provider in place, or where they require a local partner. Qmarkets has developed a network of more than twenty partners and resellers – from large systems integrators to small agencies, often with specialisms in specific domains or industries. Each adapts the Qmarkets platform to its own methodology.

Current partners include Ars et Inventio (Business Integration Partners Group), ASP Group, Bengs, Brightcon, Cliclogix, Creative Spirit, Deloitte, Edengene, Endavant, Enterprise Development Group, Fresh Squeezed Ideas, Giyora Golan, Idea & Innovation Consulting, Innovation Consultancy Cridon, Innovation Framework Technologies, Point B, Protean Strategies, SPARQ360, Steinbeis, TRISSA and Wiscom.

Business overview: strong momentum and growth

Qmarkets is a privately held organisation, headquartered in Rosh HaAyin in Israel, with sales offices in France, Germany, the UK and the US (Connecticut and California), and additional sales presence in Australia and Italy. The company employs around 60 staff, and is growing rapidly with a 50% increase in revenue in 2016, and 27% growth in customers. The US is a particularly strong growth market for Qmarkets at present, with 100% growth in US revenues in 2016. The US now accounts for around 40% of Qmarkets' revenues, with Western Europe accounting for a slightly larger share. In July 2017, Qmarkets announced that it had secured \$5.2m in funding, which will be used to further increase the company's US presence, and also to expand its product roadmap.

Qmarkets has around 210 customers across a wide variety of sectors including automotive, banking & financial services, energy & utilities, engineering, facility services, healthcare, manufacturing, pharma/chemicals, recruitment, retail, technology, telecoms and transport.

Current customers include AB InBev, Amadeus, Amdocs, Bank of America, Cigna, Colruyt, DuPont, Enexis, Ford, Intesa San Paulo, ISS, Kraft, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Lidl, Lufthansa, Nestle, NHS, Novartis, Orlando Magic, Oceaneering, SBB, Schindler Elevators, SKF, Solvay, Swarovski, SwissPost, Teva, Total, TrueBlue, UBS, UniCredit and Visa.

An emerging leader in innovation management

As one of the more established players, Qmarkets is capitalising well on the current wave of innovation management opportunity, enjoying strong growth as well as new investment in its business. It's clear to see why: in a competitive market where it is very difficult to effectively differentiate, Qmarkets has a very clearly articulated offering; it knows where its strengths lie, and it has developed and packaged its offering to maximise the impact of these strengths. Its investment in packaged solutions is particularly significant, leveraging its experience with customers to create pre-built configurations that help accelerate new deployments, and – importantly – also demonstrate its understanding and ability to support different use cases.

The level of configuration that is possible with the technology is impressive, enabling customers to create a highly tailored innovation management solution without extensive custom development, and without concerns about how the customisations will cope with any upgrades to the core platform. The technology adapts well to a multitude of use cases – both internal and external – and checks the box for most capabilities.

However, although there is considerable breadth of functionality, some areas could do with a little more depth, and a more templated approach to the customisation of individual features. Areas that would benefit from further investment include evaluation and selection, particularly around the idea tournament feature, and also personal profiles, which could better incorporate the skills and expertise capabilities that underpin the expert review process, for example. The analytics and reporting capabilities of the product could also be significantly expanded from their current, highly transactional focus, for example to provide analysis of the information shared within campaigns, rather than simply the process itself, and also to help organisations more easily understand and demonstrate the value of their innovation programme.

One final area to highlight is the limitations of Qmarkets' project management capabilities. Although these provide a good starting point for tracking idea projects, they do not extend to supporting more complex scenarios or those generated outside the Qmarkets environment. They also do not support project planning activities such as scheduling and resource management, for example. However, Qmarkets acknowledges this and provides good integration support with third-party products, both in this area and others.

Overall, Qmarkets' solution stands up well in this market, and its no-code, configuration-driven approach will appeal to many organisations with ambitious innovation management goals, even if they are starting from a relatively modest beginning. We expect the company to continue to build traction and market share, expanding its support for repeatable scenarios through templates and pre-built solutions, and deepening its capabilities across the platform. With a strong network of partners in place already, and renewed investment to help it expand its reach into new territories, Qmarkets is without doubt a major player in this space.