



## Cox Smith uses Microsystems Skills Assessment Module to Pinpoint Microsoft Word Skill Levels and Provide Targeted Training

*Cox Smith adopted the Microsystems Skills Assessment Module in order to provide better, more targeted training plans for teaching staff members the Microsoft Word skills they need to be successful at their jobs.*

### Firm Overview

With 130 lawyers across four offices, San Antonio-based Cox Smith provides clients with services in a variety of practice areas, including corporate transactional law, complex litigation and personal estate planning.

### Situation

The training team at Cox Smith wanted to increase the effectiveness of the firm's Microsoft Word training courses by accurately identifying the legal-specific Word skills that the firm's staff needed to be successful at their jobs. In order to build targeted training and learning plans, Cox Smith determined to find a solution to measure 1) the current Word knowledge of its staff and 2) the level of Word expertise needed to meet the requirements of the firm.

Cox Smith initially implemented Questionmark software to assess the Word skills of its staff. However, because Questionmark did not do its testing within Word, those who were assessed felt that the software did not provide them the opportunity to fully demonstrate their Word skills. Additionally, the training team quickly realized that the word "test" had a negative connotation and created much fear and distress among the firm's staff. As a result, Cox Smith dropped this assessment program and initiated a project to find an assessment solution that worked within Microsoft Word and that did not feel like a test.

### Solution

Cox Smith purchased the Microsystems Knowledge Partnership suite of software and services, which includes the Skills Assessment Module.

The Skills Assessment Module is comprised of:

- Two Microsoft Word-based legal-specific assessment documents – a corporate transaction document and litigation document
- A list of assessment instructions for both the examiner and for the person being assessed
- Automated scoring of the assessment document or of a set of assessment documents

### Solution Overview

#### Company

Cox Smith

#### Company Profile

Cox Smith is a San Antonio-based law firm with more than 130 lawyers across four offices.

#### Business Situation

Cox Smith wanted to:

- Gauge the Word skills of existing staff for the creation of targeted learning and training plans.
- Enable HR to assess the Word skills of prospective hires.

#### Solution Description

Cox Smith chose Microsystems Skills Assessment Module to assess both its prospective hires and existing staff.

#### Benefits

- Reduces time required to administer an assessment
- Increases training effectiveness by creating targeted training plans for pre-hires and existing staff
- Eliminates unnecessary course offerings
- Reduces the likelihood of hiring an unqualified candidate

#### Software

Microsystems Skills Assessment Module assesses a test taker's legal-specific Microsoft Word skills and automates the time-consuming grading process of the exercise document, resulting in more targeted and effective training programs and better hiring decisions.

- Two types of reports: a summary report listing scores for multiple individuals, and a detailed report that delivers an individualized training plan per person being assessed

In advance of implementing the Skills Assessment Module, Cox Smith executed two important steps:

- Janet Waldon, Training Coordinator and Applications Manager at Cox Smith, attended a Microsystems Skills Assessment Workshop, where she learned how to administer and configure the Module. While at the workshop, Janet also benefited from the exchange with other classmates of assessment best practices.
- The human resources department arranged for individuals from different practice areas to take the Microsystems Skills Assessment anonymously in order to evaluate how well it assessed the Word skills required of a prospective new-hire and get a baseline score. The response was favorable, for the assessment document resembled the type of work product produced at the firm in large quantity and on a daily basis.

*“Our goal was to develop comprehensive training plans for trainers and targeted learning plans for users; the Skills Assessment Module helped us do both,” said Waldon.*

#### Assessment of the Existing Staff

In order to avoid the “test” anxiety caused by the previous assessment solution, the Trainers created a game based on lessons from previously offered classes on formatting, styles and numbering. Called “Formatting Fun,” the game was offered to administrators, secretaries, HR and paralegals, and was set up similarly to musical chairs. Cox Smith conducted the game in a room set up with PC stations. The assessment document was open on every PC and was broken into timed parts for different formatting responsibilities, which coincided with the musical chairs concept. Each person started at one PC station, performed the task assigned, then moved to the next machine to perform the next formatting task, and so on. Thus, every person had a hand in the formatting, styling and numbering of each document. After all rotations, each user returned to his/her original PC station and had ten minutes to clean-up the document, which was then submitted and graded. (The participants were not told in advance that the documents would be graded.) Prizes were awarded for the document receiving the best score (scores were kept confidential).

“We told the user that in this game, cheating was encouraged,” said Waldon. “We hoped that the users would utilize the Microsystems tools (DocXtools) that were available to quickly and automatically perform the same tasks.”

“Formatting Fun” modeled a true document production environment – fast-paced, while requiring a short turnaround time and lots of collaboration. It fostered teamwork, friendly competition and some (but not too much) peer pressure.

After Training graded the game’s assessments and notified the winners, the Trainers held a follow-up class with participants to review the test document, the steps for accurate completion and the best practices for formatting, styling and numbering. The Trainers also revealed how DocXtools could have been used to automate these processes.

*“The ‘Formatting Fun’ game is very popular,” said Waldon. “As a result of the ‘game,’ our staff is using styles and formatting more and realizes the importance of their Word abilities. We were only able to carry out Formatting Fun because of the Skills Assessment Module.”*

#### Pre Hire

Cox Smith also adopted the Microsystems Skills Assessment Module for use by human resources to assess the Word skills of prospective hires and to create a targeted training plan for use if the candidate is hired.

The new hire candidate takes the Microsystems Skills Assessment in a private room, on a PC loaded only with Microsoft Word. After the candidate completes the assessment, Janet remotes into the PC and uses the automated grading feature of the Microsystems Skills Assessment Module to generate (in about one minute) a report of the candidate's performance, which she then sends to human resources for review. If the candidate is offered the position, the report represents the custom learning plan that Training puts in place to prepare the new hire to be productive upon starting the job.

*"The Skills Assessment Module has made Cox Smith better able to hire qualified secretarial and word processing candidates," said Waldon. "Previously, we did not assess new hire candidates. Human Resources asked the candidate to rate their Word skills on a scale of 1-5, 5 being proficient. With the Skills Assessment Module, grading is automated and very quick, and I can provide human resources with a comprehensive report while the candidate is still on-site."*

## **Business Benefits**

### **Increased Training Effectiveness**

Because the Microsystems Skills Assessment Module produces an accurate, targeted training plan, its implementation increased the effectiveness of the training courses Cox Smith provides to its staff.

*"Not every Word user has the same Word skills," said Waldon. "Because of the Microsystems Skills Assessment Module, we know who needs training and on what specific Word skills."*

### **Eliminated Unnecessary Course Offerings**

With a specific and comprehensive Word skills report for each staff member, Cox Smith reduced the number of unnecessary and un-targeted Word training courses it offered and, instead, designed custom learning plans for its staff that matched perfectly with the Word skills that needed to be built up.

### **Reduced the Likelihood of a Bad Hire**

Cox Smith is able to accurately and within minutes gauge the Microsoft Word skills of prospective hires. By detailing a candidate's Word strengths and weaknesses, the assessment report provides human resources with an important component of its hiring decision, directs the firm on where to focus precious training time when the candidate is hired, and raises a red flag in advance of the hiring moment in situations when a candidate is severely lacking Word skills.

## **About Microsystems**

Microsystems is the leader in providing complete, "first draft to final delivery" document lifecycle solutions to the legal and life sciences markets and other document-intensive businesses. The company provides more than 650 clients with an innovative combination of software products, consulting services, and training designed to improve the total document creation, quality control, and delivery processes. Microsystems is headquartered in Downers Grove, IL.

To see a demonstration of how the Microsystems Skills Assessment Module can help you develop targeted training plans for existing staff and reduce the likelihood of a bad hire, call Microsystems Sales at 630.598.1100 or e-mail [salesinquiry@microsystems.com](mailto:salesinquiry@microsystems.com).