

# Insights Exchange and Qualzy help researchers build vibrant online communities across Australia, New Zealand and beyond

## Client: Insights Exchange

Sydney-based Insights Exchange uses Qualzy to enable its global network of researchers to explore and innovate research using online communities.



**Insights Exchange is a Sydney-based global research company which connects businesses and brands with global research and insights specialists. It was founded four years ago by Nichola Quail, who sensed the opportunities an emerging professional gig economy could present to freelance researchers, as well as businesses looking for cost-effective research solutions.**

Today, the company matches those in need of research expertise, and who often lack knowledge of what they need, with a global community of researchers. *"Our customers range from funded startups to global brands – because even large firms often have very small insights teams. They need to outsource a research capability and that's where we come in,"* she explained.

Insights Exchange uses Qualzy as its preferred platform for online community research. Nichola first encountered Qualzy at a QRCA conference. A lively debate ensued about the virtues of Yorkshire Tea versus Dilmah Tea. The conversation soon turned to the power of online communities.

## Creating continent-wide communities

It was opportune timing, as the pandemic was about to restrict some ways of doing research. Nichola reflected that *"In-room research became challenging during COVID, so online communities research became incredibly popular. We've run some fantastic communities since then."*

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As the option to do face-to-face research returned, the appeal of online research did not dim. In Nichola's view, its relevance only increased as economies tightened. She has seen research teams downsized and experience shrinking budgets. *"We provide a cost effective research model so they can keep the cadence around their research efforts, even if they find larger agencies are now out of their budget range,"* she said.

Australia is a huge country. Running cost effective research across this significant geography is hard. Nichola noted that *"Qualzy enables us not just to truncate the research timeline, but to reach a wide range of people from around the country cost-effectively. If you were running focus groups the old way and sending people to Perth and Brisbane, it would cost a fortune in flights and time."*



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## Delivering data with depth

The team appreciates more than the ability to reach widely dispersed audiences. *"One of the most surprising things has been the level of depth and breadth you can get using a tool like Qualzy,"* she stated. *"There so much richness you can get out of a community platform."*

It has used Qualzy to conduct research which formerly might only have been done face to face, she continued: *"We've done many things you would typically assume are more suited to a focus group, such as trying to uncover how a brand is perceived. It all works just as well in Qualzy as it does in a focus group room. This approach is great in terms of uncovering key insights about who people are, what motivates them, their core needs, category dynamics and the role of brands."*

Nichola described one complex project which helped uncover new travel industry opportunities. *"We ran two communities in parallel in Australia and New Zealand, doing in-depth exploration about travellers' needs and how they chose destinations. Asking questions in a focus group and charting it up on a white board would work OK – but it worked just as well on the Qualzy platform. We could do all the usual things we do in a focus group. People created their own mood boards, and we created positioning boards that people could highlight. We could do lots of things that were image based – such as exploring different destinations like Fiji or Vanuatu."*

For clients with such complex market research requirements, Qualzy can provide a rich base of qualitative insights to amplify with quantitative research, she explained. *"The depth and insight we got from that project was fantastic. The end game was a sized market so that the client could target it in terms of typology and demographics. With Qualzy, the transition between the qual and the quant phase was just seamless."*

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## Vibrant, visual engagement

Qualzy gives the Insights Exchange's researchers powerful visual tools with which to craft activities. Nichola explained "We are all very visual these days – we want to see and interact with things. Qualzy is completely geared for that. It is colourful and the stimulus displays so well, and that is partly why it can feel exciting and engaging for people to do the tasks."

She continued: "Qualzy is a vibrant platform, not just flexible but very creative in the way we can use it to share materials. When you do brand positioning or packaging work, you can use all the visual stimulus material in a topic question. People can interact with it, highlight what appeals to them about a concept, and use video too."



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## Inviting to design and use

It is important that any platform chosen is something that their researchers can use, but this isn't a concern: "Qualzy is inviting for both for researchers and participants, and really nice to use. You can set up the instructions simply, drag and drop elements around, and use lots of templates," Nichola said.

It makes the design and build process less onerous: "After the first time it's quite straightforward and intuitive. You don't need a designer because the functionality means it doesn't need much to look professional. Qualzy alleviates all the concerns about how to design, build and run online communities – and about how much time it's going to take to learn and navigate a new system. When we've used other and cheaper tools, our tech team often had to do a lot of manual set-up and data extraction – but Qualzy isn't too technical and is straightforward for a researcher to set up."

Nichola stressed the importance of knowing that there is support at hand. She said: "The Qualzy support response is fantastic. If we go live and have a few issues, or can't get our stimulus to go up properly, either Paul in the UK or James in Australia will jump on straight away. There is never a period when we sit and wait and wonder if someone is going to help us."

This is in stark contrast to the support experience with other providers, she reflected: "Real time responsiveness is one main attraction for us in working with Qualzy. Most other platforms have their base only in Europe or the US – until Qualzy we never had real time support. Now we deal with a real person, whereas with other providers it was more often through email and support tickets which felt very depersonalized."

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## Developing & innovating together

Qualzy and Insights Exchange have formed a relationship which extends beyond traditional platform support.

When Nichola founded Insights Exchange, she had a firm belief that the capability, energy, and innovation of smaller, specialist research firms make them more than able to compete with larger counterparts. *"We provide access to tools to researchers who have not been exposed to them before. We provide ways for them to trial and work on a project. When they are confident, they can go off and use them on other projects."*

She extends this belief in energy and innovation into the firm's partnerships. Nichola spotted an opportunity to bring the strengths of Qualzy and another partner together, believing that one could amplify the other. *"We started working with Qualzy and another platform at about the same time. As we learned what each could do, we realised that we had this amazing Qualzy platform producing lots of unstructured data, and we had Yabble, which is AI thematic analysis software. We have had lot of engagement with the tech teams as we bring the two together, and that's been great."*

Qualzy's own generative AI functionality is also put to work directly. Nichola said *"AI is a huge part of our research world now. It's part of our process and a means to providing value to our clients and helping them do more with less. It doesn't replace the human researcher, and Qualzy enables us to use AI in a way that is still human."*

## Platform for the future

Insights Exchange has tried out many different platforms to find one that delivers on its needs. Nichola can now state that: *"It's my preferred platform of all the ones we've used, not just from a researcher point of view but also from a project management point of view."*

She continued: *"Qualzy ticks all the boxes – from flexibility and variety of tools to a very accessible pricing package. Qualzy also understands the cadence of how online communities work. Projects can sometimes run over the planned duration. Other platforms may simply cut you off or make you rush to buy extra days to keep it running."*

As Nichola looks forward, Qualzy is part of the picture. She concluded: *"Our goal is to create long term partnership with tools providers. We've spent time trialling lots of pieces of software for different methodologies. We've found our sweet spot with Qualzy. We now have a good two-way relationship so we can feed our thoughts and recommendations to them openly. We feel like we're part of their growth journey, and we know they feel the same about us."*

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