

Ninth Seat puts trust in Qualzy to deliver on complex global product insight projects for 6 years via 300 online communities – and counting

Client: Ninth Seat

Qualzy is now an indispensable delivery partner helping Ninth Seat to gather rich and vivid consumer insights in real time, across multiple markets.



Ninth Seat is one of the longest-running independent market research firms in the UK, conducting qualitative and quantitative research for some of the world's biggest consumer packaged goods brands including Unilever, Nestlé and Mondelez. Based in London and named after the 'ninth seat' occupied by the cox in a rowing boat, it helps brands steer decisions using insights from consumers around the world.

Over 6 plus years and more than 300 research projects, Ninth Seat and Qualzy have formed a firm and friendly partnership. Today, Qualzy acts as the technical partner, building online communities and projects so the company's research experts can focus on designing research that meet its clients' complex global requirements.

Senior Research Director Andy Fraser and Associate Director Dafydd Jones work closely with Qualzy in what has become a constant collaboration. Dafydd stated: *"Ninth Seat and Qualzy have a continuous relationship. I don't think there's any month where we don't have an online community underway, or we don't talk about a new one. We always have numerous projects being worked on at the same time."*

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Flexible on many fronts

Qualzy's benefits have manifested in different ways, but one is certainly around cost suggested Dafydd: *"Qualzy matches our way of working on a project by project basis. Our projects don't go on for months and months. We don't want to be tied into something when Qualzy gives us the flexibility to run something for two days."*

Ninth Seat can shape its projects exactly as it needs, agreed Andy: *"You can open Qualzy just for a few days, extend or change it if you want to, giving huge flexibility for multi-method or multi-date projects."*



He continued: *"We often ask people to trial things at home. We might run this for a week as an online community, then reconvene people back into sessions. Using Qualzy we can get the nitty gritty of their experience and how they feel first – then ask them into the room to cover other objectives, like revealing other potential features."*

Whether researching household goods or food, Dafydd said: *"Qualzy gives you a window into the reality of people's lives. If we're doing a food diary as part of a project, they can easily upload pictures of what they are having for breakfast, lunch and dinner at the time. We get live up-to-date feedback rather than an email at the end of the day. In an online community you can learn about people's behaviour, see those behaviours in pictures and videos they put up, and see how they interact with products in their daily lives."*

Ninth Seat distributes products for home trial, as part of product development and innovation projects, which can throw up some challenges. He recalled: *"We needed to ask consumers to rate the experience of using a new product – so we asked Qualzy to develop a sliding scale. This way they could respond accurately and in the moment. The fact that Qualzy are willing to build something specifically for us into their platform is hugely appreciated."*

Rinse and repeat – anywhere

Global clients may need consumer insights from anywhere in the world, and fast. The team runs a substantial number of laundry-related projects, featuring many simultaneous activities that might explore not just usage but sensory experiences about fragrance, softness and freshness.

The team has created a repeatable process for building international communities. *"It is now second nature for us to create and run these*

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communities efficiently. I can simply send an email to Qualzy and ask them to create a community in, say Türkiye, next week, knowing the answer is always yes. It is really seamless, and feels like it's already set up and ready to go," commented Andy.

Every project is an international collaboration, he explained: "Most of our work is multi-market. We don't have on-the-ground presence everywhere, but have a fantastic network of local partners who translate and moderate. We create the task guides then Qualzy builds the community in English. When the structure and task types have been tested, our people in-country translate the task guide. Qualzy applies the translations in the platform, in almost any language – even Tamil."

Simple for stakeholders

"Another advantage with Qualzy is that it is very intuitive," Andy suggested. "Partners using it for the first time need very little help to understand how the platform works and how to moderate – it all seems very easy. That's a huge plus for us in terms of onboarding partners to execute the research."

Qualzy is always willing to help, added Dafydd: "Whenever we've gained new partners, or one hasn't used Qualzy before, they have joined our internal briefing calls."

Clients are key stakeholders, and using Qualzy they can be given access to projects. Andy said: "We can give our clients links to see research in real time, which helps bring them along on the journey. Getting them involved and engaged in the findings as they happen can make a big difference to how successful a project is on the back end."



Conquering complexity

Ninth Seat's projects are frequently sizeable, with numerous prototypes to deploy across large participant groups in multiple markets. They may have complex product rotations requiring certain consumers to see certain products in specific order. Dafydd admitted that "human error is only to be expected, and can come from anyone. If something goes wrong Qualzy is always committed to correct things – I've often had conversations with them on Saturdays and Sundays."

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Qualzy acts as fresh eyes, he explained: *"If someone at Qualzy notices something that doesn't look right in the task guide, in the rotation, or an issue uploading participants, they come to us. That's incredibly helpful. Qualzy honestly care about making every project a success for us – and go out of their way to make it happen."*

Collaborative partnership

Although Ninth Seat used to build its own online projects, the benefits of using Qualzy as an ongoing technical partner to build them were irresistible. Dafydd explained: *"As soon as Qualzy began offering the service to build communities, we took it. It is a lifesaver, because they are so adept with the platform it saves us huge amounts of time. The difference in speed is stark. They have built really intensive two-week communities in just four or five hours that would have taken me a couple of days."*

Andy sees other benefits beyond the efficiency of the team, noting that *"there are clear commercial benefits in having Qualzy build communities. The cost of this build support is very reasonable – it's good value and frees up the rest of the team's time to do other parts of their role."*

Transparent pricing, build assistance and any extra project support all help with planning, he said: *"If we need to rapidly estimate the cost of a project, or get moving on one at breakneck speed, we know roughly what the platform element will cost because Qualzy pricing is so easy. We can also quickly check with our account manager Adam what something will cost – without worrying that we'll be charged for the help."*

One reason the collaboration works well may lie in the alignment of company values. Ninth Seat's website puts its people and principles out for all to see, while Qualzy is visibly determined to put researchers' needs ahead of its own. Andy stated that *"at Ninth Seat, we're in business as a force for good. That influences everything, from how we work, who we choose to work with, and even our recent B Corp certification."*

Excellent communication helps too, Dafydd added: *"Communication with Qualzy is always great. Paul and other team-members give us updates regularly, and often come to our offices. They're always open about how they are progressing the platform – and often turn up with cakes!"*

He continued: *"The fact that they make an effort to come to see us in London speaks volumes about the relationship. They don't just tell us what they're doing and planning. They also ask us for our experiences and how we would like things to be optimised or changed."*

Together for tomorrow

The firms are always engaged in conversations about what comes next. Andy said: *"AI is increasingly part of the conversation. We are keen to harness AI to help us be better researchers, speed up parts of what we do and help us in our analysis. Their outlook is similar. It's so good to see Qualzy leading the conversation about AI as a researcher efficiency tool. It's something we can absolutely trust them on, and they've kept us well informed about how they are implementing AI."*

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Ninth Seat has a partner they can rely on, even under pressure, Dafydd said: *“Even when we come up with quite mad timelines, they ask no questions. The guys just move fast and simply make it happen. Not only do they have our trust, but they are collaborative. For me it is this aspect of Qualzy that makes the partnership so successful and enjoyable”*

Ninth Seat shares its positive view of Qualzy openly, including them in presentations. Andy stated: *“We are proud of our partnership with Qualzy. We like to share that as an independent we can and do choose the best platforms available. We know we can count on them to deliver what we need.”*

He summed up by saying: *“Qualzy is our go-to platform for this type of research. Its our preferred way of working, and opens the whole world of online research which is well suited to our objectives. It is flexible not just as a platform, but as a team – a true partner that actually wants to help us get to where we want to go.”*

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