![PSI Testing Excellence logo]

Tell me more about...

How to make the test taker experience exceptional
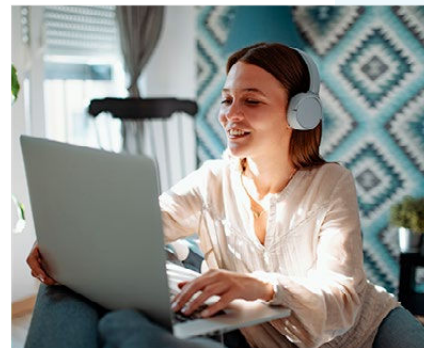
Introduction

Every year, we perform 17 million tests worldwide either remotely or in-person across our vast network of secure test centers in over 140 countries. These tests can be a make-or-break moment for the test taker, professionally and personally. We share the responsibility of these moments with our clients.

Today's test takers have high expectations when it comes to online experiences and customer engagement. They expect, quite rightly, an exceptional testing experience.

If your organization is looking to improve and enhance its test taker experience, you might be wondering where to start. At PSI, we always begin by taking a step back to fully appreciate the journey from the test taker's perspective.

Of course, every organization is unique with different eligibility, system integration and practice test requirements. However, based on more than 75 years of partnerships with clients, this guide shares some of the commonalities across any test taker journey where we typically find opportunities to remove friction and enhance the end-user experience.

"Your testing experience will be measured against the user experience of world-class consumer websites. Test taker expectations are high. Every interaction you have should be carefully considered, individually and as part of the whole customer journey. Whether it is filling in a registration form, submitting eligibility documents, or booking and taking a test, it is critical to benchmark against common web experience and expectations."

Rory McCorkle
Senior Vice President,
Global Business Development & Client Success at PSI

Contents

Develop your test taker journey map

A test taker journey map is a tool we use with clients to help us understand the testing experience from the test taker perspective. In building this map together, we consider every point of contact with the test taker, to determine how to make it frictionless at every step.

A visual representation of touch points with your organization, and all your stakeholders, helps us uncover positive and negative moments along the way. This might be where expectations are not met, people drop out or too much time is spent moving to the next stage.

The map includes every decision you – as program owner – need to make. For example, whether you are going to enable single sign-on and what information you will communicate to ensure a smooth journey. Where would test takers self-serve if they have questions, such as FAQs or videos? Where do they go for more complex queries, such as test accommodations?

When we have our map, we identify where improvements could be made and how these fit into the whole test taker experience.

Shared responsibility

Improving the test taker journey is a responsibility shared by the test sponsor and their testing partners, plus any other vendors involved in the experience (e.g., learning or candidate management system providers, test prep providers). This might be improvements related to test taker engagement and communication, where the test sponsor has the biggest influence. Or enhancements related to the use of technology or customer service, where your vendor could make changes.

Used in this way, and working in partnership, a test taker journey map is fundamental to creating test taker experiences that are truly exceptional.

> **According to Gartner, companies that use customer journey maps are twice as likely to outperform competitors as those that don't.** [i]

i Gartner Customer Experience Management Survey, 2019.

Case Study

Information Systems Audit and Control Association
(ISACA)

ISACA is a nonprofit, global association serving technology and cybersecurity professionals. ISACA won an IT Certification Council Innovation Award for their work using journey mapping to improve and redesign the test taker experience. With ISACA, we used this map to make improvements across test development and delivery for their test takers. ISACA has satisfaction scores that are consistently high, but they do not sit back and rest easy.

This work was completed in 2019 and we are collaborating with ISACA on a 2022 version of their test taker journey map, as we both seek on-going improvements.

"From our very first interaction with a client, we want to understand who their test takers are and how we can best support them. This includes every element involved to deliver their test result."

Adam Freeman
Vice President,
Client Implementations and Quality Assurance at PSI

Manage test taker expectations *right from the start*

Start off in the right way by making it easy for test takers to find what they need on their very first visit to your website. Are your testing program details obvious? Is essential information self-service with FAQs or videos? If they cannot find what they are looking for is it clear what to do?

As well as general information about your programs, explain the testing journey in simple steps so test takers know what to expect and what is required from them.
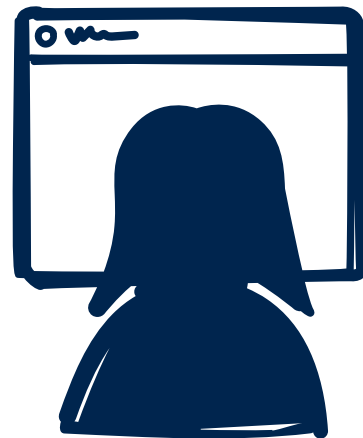
Top tip

Clear and easy to find information is even more important for remote testing with online proctoring, which might be new for many test takers. Look at the wide range of PSI resources available online, including website and email templates. How could these be adapted to engage your test takers?
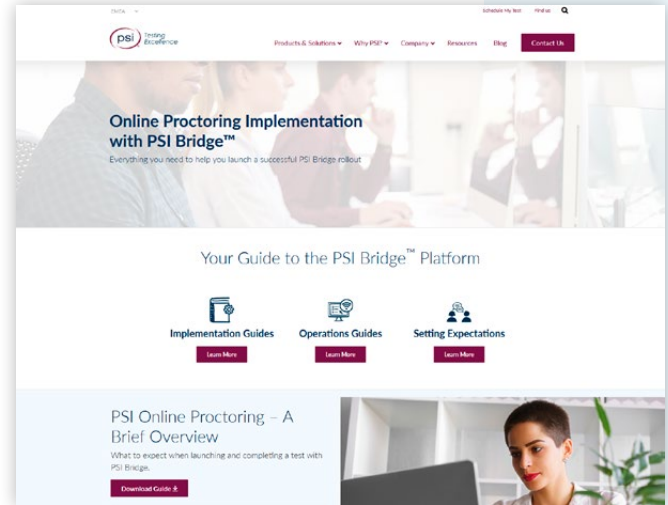
psiexams.com/bridge-implementation-guide

Support change

Keeping test takers informed is particularly important if you are making a change to your testing program. For example, from in-person to remote testing. We've supported many organizations through this change.

If your test takers get what they need at this early stage, they will go ahead and book a test – with a clear idea of what to expect during the rest of their testing journey.

"The correlation between quality website content and communication and positive test taker satisfaction scores is clear. This accounts for a huge proportion of the overall test taker experience. Something as simple as making the links on your website descriptive, so test takers know what they are and where they lead, makes an enormous difference."

Heather Richards
Vice President of Client Success at PSI

Case Study

National Board for Respiratory Care
(NBRC)

The NBRC has partnered with PSI for over a decade to deliver more than 30,000 tests every year. A smooth test taker journey is vital for the busy healthcare professionals they serve, and clear communication plays a significant role in this. NBRC use social media and video to share information and tips about their testing programs in digestible and accessible chunks.

![NBRC logo — The National Board for Respiratory Care]

Live Remote Proctoring Success Tip #1

You can prevent most issues by being prepared on exam day:

- Watch the remote proctor candidate experience video
- Read our remote proctor exam guide the day before you test
- Ensure you have adequate bandwidth
- Make sure your computer operating system is compatible with PSI software
- Have proper identification ready
- Confirm your webcam works

Live Remote Proctoring Success Tip #2

Before you test, use our system compatibility check link on the device you plan to test from. This ensures your internet and device are stable, up to date and will work. You can do this multiple times before your exam.

Live Remote Proctoring Success Tip #3

Once your exam begins, you will not be able to take breaks. Moving out of sight of the webcam is considered suspicious behavior. Prepare to remain in front of the webcam for the duration of the examination. Times vary by test.

## Live Remote Proctoring Success Tip #4

You can alleviate some technology issues beforehand, such as using a wired connection to the internet instead of a wireless connection. It's also recommended that you restart your computer before the exam session begins. If you encounter technical issues during your examination, use the chat interface in the software to contact PSI's technical support team.

Make registration and booking *clear* and *hassle-free*

When a test taker decides to go ahead and book a test, how do they do it? Do they need to call a booking line? Or follow a link to create a new account and book their test on a different website? Make it easy for test takers and more tests will be booked and completed.
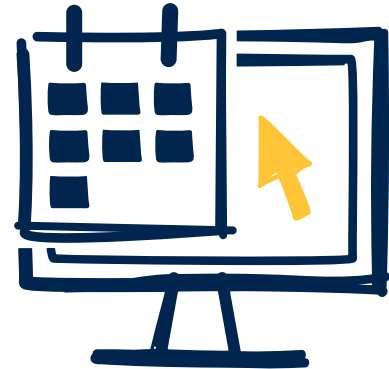
Easy access with single sign-on

The easiest option for your test takers is single sign-on (SSO), where they access a test taker portal securely and seamlessly from your website, just by clicking on a link. There is no need to re-enter personal information and they simply choose and book a test, pay any necessary fees, and get the support materials they need – all in one place.

With SSO, your branding is consistent throughout the journey, so test takers stay in a familiar environment. And by making your test taker portal mobile friendly, with SSO you offer easy access on a device preferred by many people.
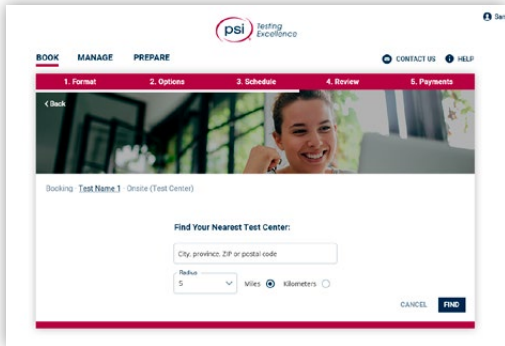
Efficient eligibility checks

Some organizations may require stronger eligibility checks which can be accomplished most efficiently via a third-party learning management systems (LMS); content management systems (CMS); or application management services (AMS). Eligibility checks are best accomplished electronically and PSI has a number of strong partnerships with such providers so can provide a referrals if needed.

With single sign-on (SSO) enabled, your chosen eligibility platform will automatically synchronize with a test taker's account via PSI's Application Program Interface (API) within our scheduling platform. Even without SSO, then API updates would still be instant, though delays may occur when eligibility data is batch updated to the booking system periodically, for example weekly.
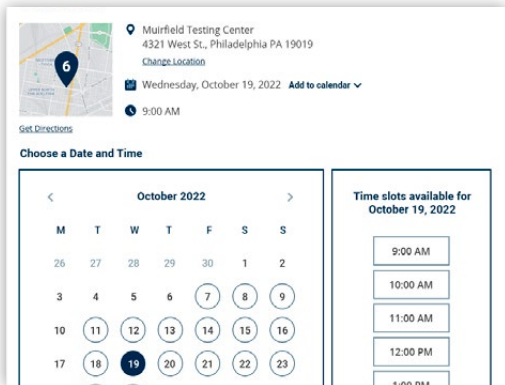
Familiar test booking tools

It is a good idea to replicate familiar online experiences for your test takers throughout their journey. For example, many people regularly use Google maps. The PSI test taker portal has a mapping tool that pinpoints a test taker's location and their nearest test centers. It is a terrific way to help them select a convenient option.

The PSI test taker portal uses a calendar tool to make it easy for test takers to browse available dates and times. Along with clear navigation, including a drop-down menu to see information in different languages and links to forms to request test accommodations.

▶ **Top tip**

At this stage of the test taker journey, consider how your test takers book the accommodations they need, such as extra time or accessible facilities. Many of these requirements can be automated in the test booking system. For those with more complex needs is there a dedicated customer support line?

Case Study
Life in the UK
(LitUK)

LitUK is one of the UK government's official tests with applications for British citizenship or settlement in the UK. To streamline the test taker experience, we worked with the Home Office to map out the test taker journey. Every step of the process was reviewed. This included highlighting important points during test booking, such as ID requirements and links to study guides. As well as a clear booking flow for test takers who require accommodation. Ninety-two percent of LitUK test takers rate their experience as satisfactory or very satisfactory.

PHASE 3. MAKING A NEW BOOKING

When the user has logged into their account, they are shown a summary of their information, and any active or previous bookings they have had.

For new users, they are only able to edit their personal details, or make a new booking.

Make a booking >

If the user requires special arrangements, the user can select this option as a first step. The user is then taken to the special requirements page, which contains a checkbox list of special arrangements that they can request.

In order to progress their booking, the user must add additional information regarding their requirements. This request is then sent to the Customer Support team, who reply to the user within 48 hours to confirm their special arrangements request.

1 **Choose a centre**

2 **Choose a centre**

3 **When would you like to sit your test?**

4

5 **Booking - Pay for your test**

6 **Thank you**

1. The first step to make a booking is to enter the desired place name or postcode to search for a nearby test centre.

2. The second step is to select the desired test centre from the search results. The results page includes a map view showing the locations of the test centres, and the individual addresses of each test centre.

3. The third step takes the candidate to the booking tools, which show the available dates and times for them to sit their test. This page also shows available time slots at test centres nearby to the test centre the candidate selected on the second step. A key on the top of the page helps to guide the candidate in understanding the booking tools and selecting a time and date that works for them, at the appropriate test centre.

4. The fourth step gives the candidate a summary of their booking, including the test centre they have selected and a map view of where the test centre is located. Additional information such as the cost of the booking, and site accessibility, is also included here

5. The fifth step is the payment step, allowing the user to pay for the booking natively within the booking journey, without being taken outside of the webpage. There is a time limit of 30 minutes in which the user is required to make the payment before the portal times out.

6. The sixth step is confirmation of the booking, and a reminder of the key details. At the same time, the user receives an automatic email containing the information and details of their booking, including details from their account page such as the form of ID they have selected to bring to the test centre.

Digital - online booking journey and payment portal. Automatic confirmation email.

Support- the Customer Support phone line and email address. Email exchanges to confirm special arrangement requests.

Design and develop the **best** test content

Presenting the right test items in a well-constructed test form is a key step in delivering an exceptional test taker journey. Your test takers will be reassured to know that their test has been created based on best practice principles, involving numerous experts. With validity, reliability and fairness taken into consideration through the entire process.
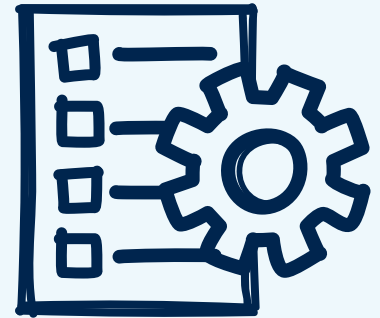
Test development lifecycle

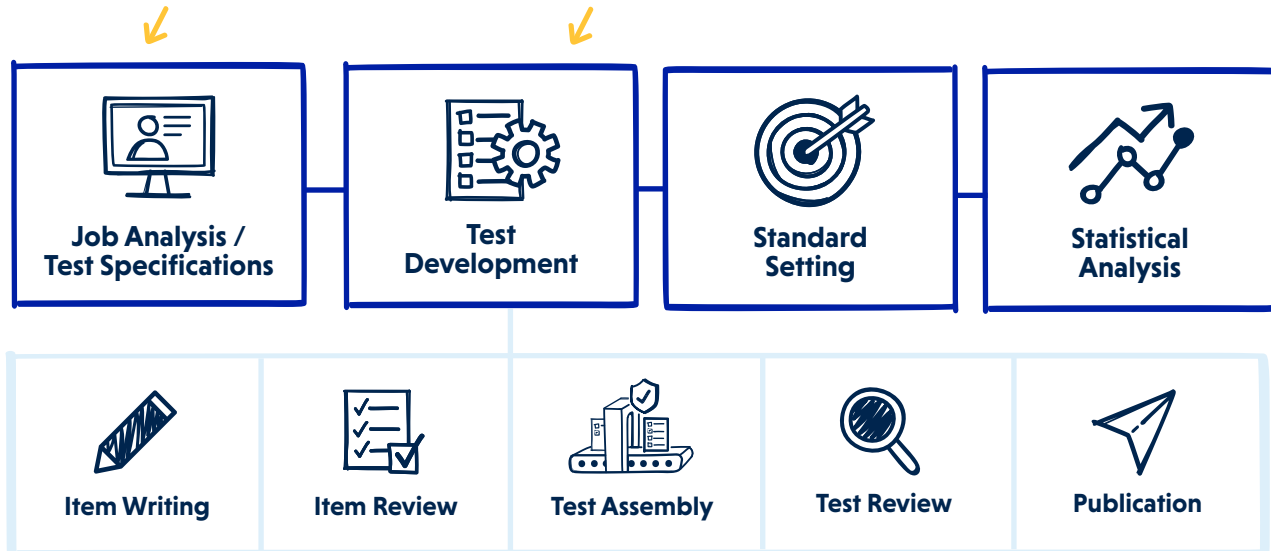**The test development process starts by defining what needs to be assessed and how** – the content outline or knowledge bank. This is usually achieved through a job analysis and in-depth consultation with SMEs.

Content is then developed to match what needs to be assessed. Test items are written by SMEs in the field, trained in the principles of creating valid questions. All facilitated by psychometricians and expert test developers. Test items are thoroughly reviewed, and test forms are assembled to be equitable and include a diversity of items at diverse levels of difficulty.

Job Analysis / Test Specifications

Test Development

Standard Setting

Statistical Analysis

Item Writing

Item Review

Test Assembly

Test Review

Publication

Regular reviews of test items ensure a test remains current, meeting the needs of your market and your test takers.

Rigorous and fair

The whole test development process is rigorous, everything links back to the content outline and every question has a clear purpose.

The principle of fairness is important to many test takers. High quality test content and a rigorous process that does justice to their hard work is central to delivering an exceptional test taker experience.

"Through our continuous efforts and partnership with representative Jurisdictions and Subject Matter Experts, PSI developed its National Barber and Cosmetology Program that allows state governments and regulatory boards to fully assess practitioners' skills necessary to protect the public's health and safety, including a rigorous focus on infection control and tool safety, and the salons in which these services are performed, to the highest level."

Isabelle Gonthier, PhD, ICE-CCP
Senior Vice President, Assessment Services at PSI

Case Study

PSI National Barber and Cosmetology Program

Barbering and cosmetology licensure is built on the health and public safety protocols needed to protect consumers and licence holders. Currently, most U.S. States have a state-specific licence to practice. There's a lot of disparity with different study hours and unnecessary or inconsistent content.

PSI has established a national program with a uniform battery of tests for state licensure. Our team of expert psychometricians has created exams equal in value regardless of whether they involve hair, nails, or skin care. We work with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from all over the U.S. to inform the program and conduct regular reviews. States are excited to see this forward-thinking program and are incorporating our tests into their licensure qualifications.

Engage and *prepare* test takers before their big day

Engage your test takers from the moment they book a test with a confirmation email. Think about including a short welcome video for those who prefer visual rather than written communication. Again, PSI offers a wide range of editable resources and templates such as landing pages, guides and FAQs, policies and procedures and emails that can be tailored to your test takers.

After your welcome email, a countdown to test day is a good idea. Whether testing is in-person or remote this delivers the information your test takers need when they need it.

For test centers...

If your test takers know what to expect on the day, they will be less anxious, and issues will be avoided.

- How to get there and where to report
- Time to arrive before scheduled test
- Program rules e.g., ID requirements
- Testing rules e.g., allowable materials
- Link to reschedule a test if needed
- Suggestion to get familiar with test center location beforehand
- Link to check for test center closures
- Security procedures e.g., visual or Bluetooth wand checks for device

"Test takers can be taken unawares about security checks on test day. Warn them not to be surprised if a Test Center Administrator (TCA) asks them to perform checks such as a Bluetooth wand. Offer reassurance that these measures are in place to protect the integrity of their test and TCAs are there to answer any questions they might have."

Neal Baer
Senior Director of Operations at PSI

For online proctoring...

More frequent and detailed communication is required as preparation is more incumbent on test takers. Contact them more times and using more channels.

- Emails in the lead up to test day
- Website landing page
- A series of short, fun, and relevant 'How to' videos
- Comprehensive user guides
- Link to system compatibility check
- Guide to room scan and lighting

Read our guide

How to Prepare Test Takers for Online Proctoring

Download ↗

Regular reviews and updates

It is a good idea to update your test taker communications on a regular basis. If you keep sending out the same emails your test takers will stop reading them.

When we onboard a new client, PSI account managers experience the whole testing process and revisit it on a regular basis – to view it from the test taker perspective. We recommend clients do the same, as well as checking PSI release notes to check how enhancements might affect test takers and update communications accordingly.

"We have clients who review their test taker communications systematically toward the end of every year, so they are fresh and remain relevant. It is important to have a cadence of reviewing communications, as technology is changing all the time and your communications need to keep up. It is no longer a case of set it and forget it."

Heather Richards
Vice President of Client Success at PSI

The benefits of practice tests

Offering practice tests is an effective way to support your test takers and reduce anxiety. A practice test helps test takers understand what they will be tested on, so they can prepare accordingly. And it allows them to discover how they will be tested, through trying out the test delivery system. This includes how a test is structured and how to navigate through it.

Make your practice tests easy to find, purchase and/or take on your test taker portal. Alongside additional support materials that help test takers understand the tasks and knowledge they will be assessed on.

Practice tests make test day easier for everyone – fewer questions, fewer issues and a great test taker experience that gives them every opportunity to succeed.

▶ **Top tip**

Ask your test takers to review your emails, website content and other communication materials. Are they clear and engaging for the user?

Case Study
Board of Certification for Emergency Nurses
(BCEN)

BCEN offers comprehensive information on their website for those taking a test with online proctoring. However, their test takers provided feedback that anxiety in the lead up to test day was a real issue for many of them. BCEN responded to this by creating short films so test takers know what to expect.

Deliver a *seamless* and *secure* test day experience

If your communication before test day is clear, the experience will be easier and less stressful for your test takers. For example, we see issues that could be avoided if test takers are clear what ID they need to bring. For online proctoring, the most important preparation for test takers is a system compatibility check before test day.

There are additional steps to ensure an exceptional experience for your test takers on test day itself...

In a test center...

Convenient locations
Good coverage and accessible from large metropolitan areas.

Accommodations
A separate testing room, additional facilities to meet demand.

Comfortable and secure
Quiet atmosphere free from distractions, secure storage for belongings, DVR recording and retention.

Trained staff
Check-in administrators and on-site proctors.

With online proctoring...

Efficient check-in
Minimal wait times, ID verified and room scanned by check-in specialist.

Human proctors
The experience should never be fully automated or wholly reliant on Artificial Intelligence.

Access to support
Self-service where possible and 24/7 assistance, including technical support, through chat, email, or telephone.

Latest technology
Secure lockdown browser for a fully secure experience that protects test taker privacy and personal information.

Continued integration

Whether you test in-person or remotely, your test delivery platform is a key element of making the test day experience seamless for your test takers. It should make the steps needed to access and complete a test as easy as possible. For example, well positioned buttons and clear navigation through test items.

Integration is important at this stage of the test taker journey. Single sign-on allows your test takers to navigate from your website or Learning Management System to start their test. Giving them a familiar environment and seamless experience at a time when they will already be feeling nervous, while always maintaining test security and integrity.

Case Study
Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner
(Washington State OIC)

Many parts of Washington State are geographically remote, causing issues for convenient test scheduling at traditional test centers. Especially during the annual Open Enrollment period from October to December. The OIC worked with PSI to expand their test center network and supplement the existing test center program with online proctoring. Test takers now have the added convenience to choose to take a test in their own home or office, at a time that works for them.

"We're aiming for a frustration-free environment and to make the exam process much more satisfying. This hybrid insurance exam is revolutionary for the insurance industry."

Jeff Baugham

Producer Licencing & Oversight Program Manager, **Washington State OIC**

"As custodian of best practices in executing quality implementations, the PSI Project Management Office (PMO) and Project Managers work in close partnership with our clients to ensure decisions keep the consideration of the test taker experience front and center. We provide our clients with guiding documentation and collaborative workshops at early stages to permit effective planning and resource allocation. We work to ensure a working draft of our integration solution is available to our clients giving opportunity to validate and refine the configuration before the full User Acceptance Testing phase begins."

Georgina Seal
Global Director, Client Implementations and PMO at PSI

Follow-up with **timely results** and **effective reporting**

How and when your test takers receive their results are decisions that need to be made when you map out your test taker journey. This information should then be communicated to test takers at the right time before test day, through the appropriate channels. Test takers will be disappointed if they expect an immediate result and discover they must wait much longer to find out if they have been successful.

For test centers...

How do test takers get their result? With instant scoring on the test end screen or by email later? Do they need to login to their account to access their result after a certain period? If they have not been successful, will they get feedback and information about when and how they can test again?

For online proctoring...

All the same questions about timing and how results will be delivered need to be considered for remote testing. If your organization is changing from in-person to remote testing, consider how the results process will transfer across. How will results be delivered if they were previously accessed at a test center?

Reporting Capabilities

Reporting is important as it feeds into continuous improvement and will help identify areas where the test taker journey could be enhanced.

It should be quick and easy for test administrators to create and download reports. Ideally you will be able to customize your report and add data points post launch depending on requirement.

Up-to-date information about the number of tests delivered, tests booked and whether test takers choose in-person or remote testing will all help you make decisions about your testing program.

▶ Top tip

Digital badging is an indicator of an accomplishment or skill that is displayed online. With a digital badge, your test takers will easily demonstrate and verify their credential to employers and their professional community. With the added benefit that this acts as a promotional tool for your programs and your organization.

Case Study

## American Management Association
(AMA)

The AMA is an international membership association that provides a broad range of development and educational services. By looking at the entire test taker journey and how various stages interact, including the different vendors involved, we worked with AMA to improve their test taker experience. After initially offering only in-person testing, PSI was able to set up multi-modal testing quickly in response to test taker feedback.

Do not forget

Recertification / licence renewal and CPD

The destination of your journey map is not the moment your test takers get a pass result. This is just the beginning of their relationship with you.

Be clear about 'what's next' with test takers from day 1 of their first successful test. Take this opportunity to educate, inform and inspire test-takers to continue their learning journey with your organization.
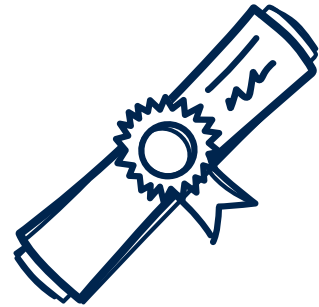
Test taker experience needs to be considered at these later stages of the journey as well.

Additional ongoing responsibilities may include:

- Re-certification
- Licence renewal
- Continuing education
- Further credentials

Continuing your journey map beyond test day is a way to identify potential growth opportunities for your organization. We've seen that a journey map highlights gaps, where your organization could meet a need with new and different services.

Your trusted testing partner

Every day our clients support millions of people to realize their dreams, reach their potential, and improve their life chances. They care about their test takers – and we share that responsibility.

Our unwavering focus is on delivering frictionless and fair test taker experiences, without compromising test integrity, through...

Secure test delivery

- Authorized global **test center** network.
- Secure and scalable **remote testing** Live and Record & Review **online proctoring**.
- Flexible **multi-modal** test delivery.
- Testing **windows or continuous testing** on-demand.

Rigorous test development

- Legally defensible and **valid test content.**
- **Job analysis** and **test** content specification.
- **Subject Matter Expert** (SME) recruitment, training and management.
- Secure **item authoring, banking and test generation** software.

Expertise in testing science

- Experienced **psychometricians.**
- Specialist **test developers.**
- **Data forensics** and web crawling.

Our willingness to listen and adapt means clients can either benefit from a full testing service, or access solutions at any stage of their testing journey.

Dreams deserve

We understand every test is about more than the result. It's about a dream. A dream the test taker believes is worth striving for. And we believe that too. Their dreams deserve trusted science, technology and operational expertise. They deserve PSI.

psiexams.com ↗

Connect with an expert today.

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