



Performance and development reviews

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Clair Clarke, Trapeze Group UK

Trapeze Group UK is one of the leading providers of high quality, cost-effective transportation software which helps plan, deliver and manage vehicle and transport services across the public and community sectors. Its aim is to make transport efficient for the providers and effective and useful for the end traveller.

Caring for 250 Trapeze employees in the UK – growing both organically and through acquisition – Clair Clarke, HR Director wanted to revisit the Performance and Development reviews and, if possible, add a new perspective to these conversations.

The challenge

Trapeze Group UK is structured into five separate business units and each headed up by a Business Unit Director. Performance and development reviews are carried out via a review and discussion between the Director and the Team Managers for the Unit.

They meet to look at the strengths and the development needs for each individual within that Unit and, as all the team managers are present, cross team observations can be made and performance grades allocated looking at both performance and potential. "It is important to us not to just get a view from the line manager of an individual's strengths and development needs but to broaden it out so others too get to input. It also makes good sense as a team manager is able to both look across the teams at the talent elsewhere and at how their own team members perform comparatively," commented Clair.

The solution

"We knew we wanted to bring a 360 tool onboard and looked at a number of products and providers on the market. What was important to us was to choose a company which would work with us and help us shape a solution to meet our specific needs. Head Light did just that."

"The team clearly understood how we were going to use 360 and the challenges that the introduction of this new technique could present. Whilst we wanted to be as self-sufficient as possible, the team's support was invaluable to us in shaping to the tool to make sure it would be adopted by managers and their staff. The product itself was just what we needed – attractive, interactive and easy to use."

A key consideration for Trapeze was their self-sufficiency. "We got up to speed quickly after an initial and short training session. We're confident in our ability to customise the system ourselves easily and whenever we want to. As our business needs change, our tool has stayed relevant and in step," Clair continues.

"Trapeze now has its own branded system populated with competencies which are appropriate for our business. We already had a number of core competences and Head Light helped derive the questions to ask to demonstrate the presence of the competency in our people."

"The flexibility and adaptability is one of the key strengths of our Talent® system which provides far greater customisation by the user than many other products, yet is ready to go with valid indicators of management and leadership behaviours from the Chartered Management Institute. Customers that are new to competence based appraisal techniques like 360 can make progress quickly, and then tailor it to suit as they go," says Ian Lee-Emery, Head Light.

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Results

“For the first year, we used the 360 only for the Business Unit Directors and it was very successful. Whilst the directors were a little nervous about the process initially, they were extremely positive about the experience. They came to respect the open and honest process and could see clearly how the feedback helped in their development.”

Having top-level support for a new project like the introduction of competence-based assessment is undoubtedly a key to success and Peter Bell, the MD of Trapeze UK was a key part in providing the feedback to participants. “Having an MD like Peter who is so supportive and positive about the process really helped to embed this within the culture of the organisation. When we were met with concerns or issues, Peter managed these: he has been a great champion for the initiative and essential to the roll-out,” comments Clair.

The following year, the 360 appraisal was broadened out to include both the directors and team managers with the directors facilitating the feedback for their team managers. “To be fair, some of the directors found the feedback a little challenging. Some of the areas which needed addressing could no longer be glossed over, as might happen in traditional appraisal processes, yet all were extremely positive about its impact. The reports produced by the system are really valuable as they allow us to compare all the talent we have available and we can look across the groups as well as within them. Head Light have helped us take this important step in the adoption of talent management practices.”

The 360 degree review data feeds into the Performance and Development Interview which is a 1 to 1 conversation and discussion. “In the interview, we look at the top two competencies in which the person is performing and praise these and then look at the bottom two and plan how to work on these so that these do not feature in the bottom two the following year. An action plan on how to achieve this is then created and owned by the person and supported throughout the year as they work on these development areas. We’ve been able to introduce a buddy system whereby a couple of people particularly strong in one area, were able to buddy with others and help to develop them.”

Next steps

“We invest considerable resources into keeping our software tools at the fore-front of development in this area and we engage our users regularly in this process. Our multi-tenant Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Talent® platform means that we can roll in new features and upgrades quickly and avoid additional costs for our customers,” says Ian Lee-Emery.

“Trapeze has had a real voice in shaping the product and its evolution and we’ve been delighted with the new features we’ve seen. Some of them have even been our ideas!” adds Clair.

“It’s been great being able to set up and run the system ourselves and be assured that it is always available on demand. We use it periodically during the year and only pay when we do so, regardless of the number of people it is for. This ensures we can keep control of our costs and get great value for money, especially as we acquire new businesses and feed that talent into the process,” Clair concludes.



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