



Identifying talent from within

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The company has an established heritage for growing and promoting its own talent with around 68% of its most senior people having joined the company at entry level.

The challenge

"Whilst we have a strong track record in promoting Branch Managers to Regional Directors, we recognise that the business is changing and with a number of emerging vacant positions, we were keen to revisit the skills and competencies we need from a Regional Director and create a more managed and objective way of identifying the people to do this role," comments Sue Scouler-Davison, Group Head of Training & Development for Travis Perkins plc. "But our project was also about supporting our staff. We wanted to make the promotion process clearer to all our staff so that they could both understand and witness the processes to be selected for promotion."

"Our MDs, to whom the Regional Directors report, are exceptionally talented individuals and have a real insight into the business and what is needed to be an effective Regional Director today. We wanted to build on that by also looking at the skills needed for the business of tomorrow."

"We have seen a shift in the buying behaviours of some of our customer groups as well as the emergence of new customer groups and entirely new channels. Without doubt the rapid onslaught of change and technology which touches all businesses is also touching ours," continues Sue. "As such we believed that the Regional Directors who will drive our business growth may need some additional competencies. For example, we thought we should look at the skills of adaptability and change management and how these could be utilised."

Hilary Tysoe, Business Partner for the Travis Perkins company, developed with the 'business' an outline of the requirements needed for the role and this formed the bedrock of a Development Centre they designed and implemented to assess those Branch Managers looking for promotion. To take in a wider perspective of those attending the Development Centre, Sue and Hilary looked to include a 360.

The solution

Sue Scouler-Davison continues, "We have a diverse population of people here and they are dispersed all across the UK. Many do not have very high levels of IT skills and familiarity and yet we want to be able to gather their feedback electronically using 360. We knew the people at Head Light and talked with them about how they could add to our Development Centre. Once we saw how intuitive Talent 360 was to use, we were confident that everyone would be able use it – and we were not disappointed."

"Our decision to go with Talent 360 was driven by its flexibility, the ability to control and manage the system ourselves and the value for money. It was very easy to set up and get started and it's right for our business," says Sue.

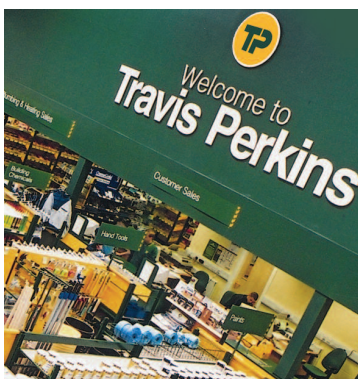
"But it is more than this," Sue continues. "The team at Head Light fits well with us at Travis Perkins. They talk our language and understand what we want to do. They take the time to understand us and we have a relaxed, open, honest relationship and I very much feel that the support they give us is personal to us and our business."

"I worked with Debbie Hance from Head Light to create the questions which, because of the groundwork we had carried out with our Ideal Requirements Document, seemed straightforward to do," comments Hilary. "We looked to include some positive and negatively scored items by changing the way in which the questions were phrased."

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Sue Scouler-Davison, Group Head of Training & Development



To ensure that the results from the 360 were being both understood and fully used, Head Light attended a wash-up session to facilitate a discussion around the interpretation of the 360 results. “We discussed how the data could be integrated as part of the Development Centre and gathered views on how the questionnaire was working for them and recommended that a statistical analysis of how the instrument was performing was carried out,” comments Debbie Hance, Head Light. “From this analysis it became clear that the negatively scored questions didn’t work with our participants. It suggested that this format may have been a little confusing and so we then amended the question format for the next Development Centre,” says Hilary.

“We added the 360 into the Development Centre and whilst the results were available for consultation by the assessors at the end of the Development Centre they featured more heavily in the actual feedback session with the delegates which take place within two weeks after the event,” says Sue.

“We wanted the feedback discussion with the participant after the Development Centre to have a broader context than that of just the ‘snapshot-in-time’ Development Centre performance and the 360 gives us a platform to broaden the feedback for development purposes,” comments Hilary.

It was soon clear that a 360 programme could have impact and value beyond the Development Centre and to take this forward and to build on the existing skills of the HR team, a workshop for eight HR and L&D specialists was held. Each brought a clear set of skills in the areas of giving feedback, performance management and development planning. Head Light developed a tailored one day programme which, recognising the existing skill levels, encouraged the delegates to share their knowledge and helped them to build a plan as to how each person could drive development in their area of the business using 360 degree feedback.

Results

Feedback on the 360 is positive. Hilary comments “The 360 has been very useful for us not only at giving people the information they need to plan their development but the way we have worked with Head Light has meant that it has been a valuable test of the original Ideal Requirements Document.”

Debbie Hance, leading the analysis work for Head Light comments, “We have the data within Talent 360 to conduct various analyses to make sure the questionnaires for Travis Perkins are testing what they are supposed to in a valid and reliable way. Talent 360 exports the data in a form which makes this type of psychometric analysis affordable even when used with bespoke questionnaires. For customers, it’s the best of both worlds – an assessment that reflects the business and one that is proven to be fair and reliable.”

The tailored programme designed for the internal HR and L&D professionals was well received – “The tutor really used the knowledge in the room to direct the workshop” – “This is a really good tool for our business and one that will provoke interesting discussions.”

In terms of results of the Development Centre, Sue explains that there have been a number of individual cases where the merits of assessing objectively against a rigorous set of characteristics has proven beneficial. “It was likely that one individual would have been promoted to Regional Director before the Development Centre but having been through the experience it was clear to the MD of the region and the MD’s peer group that, whilst this individual was making a valuable contribution to our business and had potential to develop, this person did not fully meet our requirements for a Regional Director of the future. Similarly someone who probably would not have been identified for promotion went through the Development Centre, was highly rated by the assessors and subsequently appointed.”

The Talent 360 system is flexible enough to deliver other questionnaires for Travis Perkins and Sue is looking to create a 360 for use with Sales Directors. “Now that we have the system and it’s easy to amend the question items, we can see how it can be used across the business and I am already being asked for ad hoc assessments of other roles.”

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