Head Light

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Identifying Talent from within at Travis Perkins

Travis Perkins has been supplying building materials to the trade for over 200 years and is now one of the largest suppliers to the UK's building and construction industry with a network of more than 600 branches. It forms part of Travis Perkins plc which also houses more specialised businesses supporting the building trades such as CCF, City Plumbing Supplies, Benchmarx and Keyline and Wickes in the retail sector. 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 and chose to deploy Talent 360 to support this.

Working with Head Light and Talent 360 gave Travis Perkins:

- An objective and transparent process for promotion
- A mechanism for individuals to inform and plan own development
- An easy-to-use and understand software system so that those with limited IT skills can access its value
- The ability to control and adapt the 360 reviews – and therefore become self-sufficient
- A quick and flexible tool which meant they could get up and running easily
- A partner which was a good fit with the way in which Travis Perkins works – open, honest, supportive

"Head Light fits well with us at Travis Perkins. They talk our language and take the time to understand us and what we want to do."

Sue Scouler-Davison, Group Head of Training & Development, Travis Perkins plc

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."*

With a shift in the buying behaviours of some customer groups and the emergence of new customer groups and entirely new channels, Travis Perkins believed that the Regional Directors of the future would need some additional competencies and this informed the design of the Development Centre used to assess those Branch Managers looking for promotion. To take in a wider perspective a 360 was included but it needed to be suitable for a disparate population with varying degrees of IT familiarity.

The solution

Sue continues, *"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."*

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"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. But it is more than this. 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 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 Tysoe, Business Partner at Travis Perkins. *"We looked to include some positive and negatively scored items by changing the way in which the questions were phrased."*

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.

"This is a really good tool for our business and one that will provoke interesting discussions."

"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.

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."*

"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."

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."*

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 have 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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