

people

performance

web based

so intuitive
it hardly needs training

DESIGNED BY
HR PEOPLE

survey

HarperCollins

Performance management has become increasingly important in recent years to enable organisations to nurture key talent and undertake effective succession planning. Yet most companies struggle to achieve as much as a 70% completion rate for their performance reviews, undermining the accuracy and value of appraisal and objective information.

For publisher HarperCollins, making the move from paper-based to online performance management for employee appraisals and objectives has transformed the speed and value of their performance data – most striking of all, the company achieved a 98% response in its latest annual review. In addition, using the Vaado Performance system has delivered unprecedented visibility of performance and development across the organisation and significantly reduced the administrative burden involved.

Nurturing Talent

With a heritage stretching back nearly 200 years, HarperCollins is one of the world's foremost English-language publishers, offering titles from classics to cutting-edge contemporary fiction; from digital dictionaries to online curricula.

With 900 people spread across two main locations in London and Glasgow, and a smaller site in Yorkshire, HarperCollins is firmly committed to attaining and retaining the best staff. As **Diane Gill, Head of HR Projects at HarperCollins**, confirms, "Publishing is a highly competitive business going through immense change. This makes it all the more critical for HarperCollins to identify, nurture and develop talent within our workforce."

In common with the rest of the publishing industry, the company, a subsidiary of News Corporation, has seen its digital business expand dramatically in recent years, creating new opportunities and demanding new skills. In 2009, HarperCollins decided to launch a new formal annual performance review process. However, as many companies have discovered, a paper-based appraisal system demands significant administrative resource.

"Paper-based performance review is an administrative nightmare. Hours were spent chasing staff for appraisal forms, getting forms signed off and then manually inputting the data into the system," she confirms. "It took five months to get appraisals completed and the process was so labour intensive, HarperCollins did not really have the time or resources to then analyse the resultant performance information, undermining the value of the project."

Effective Online Model

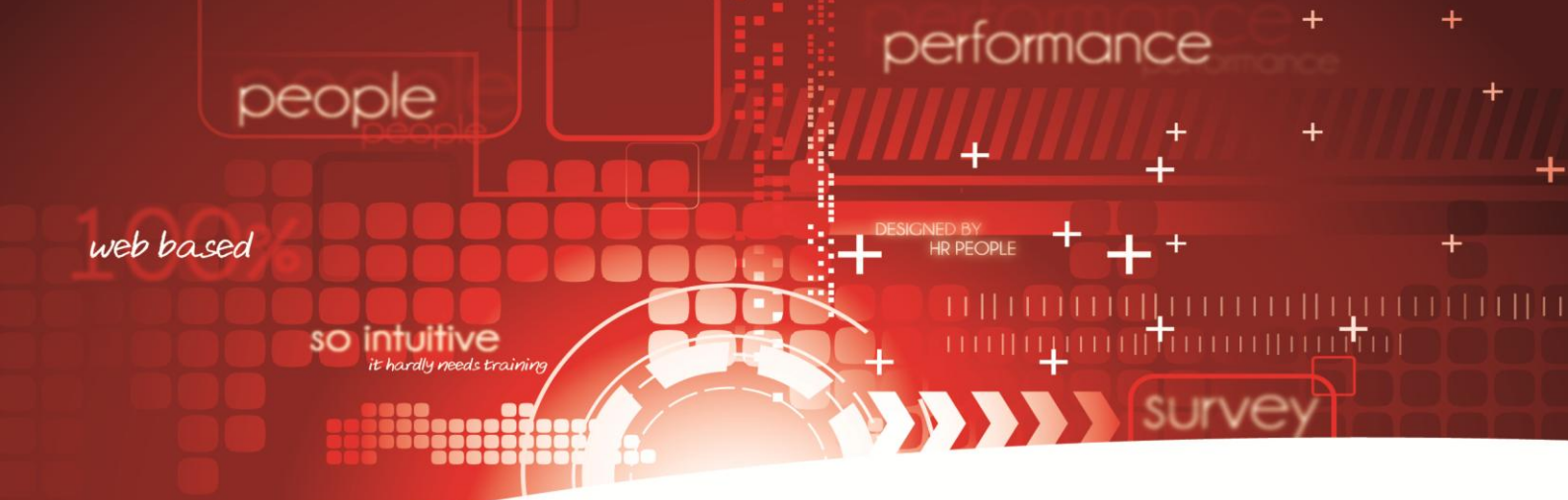
The following year, HarperCollins decided to take the performance review process online, adopting the Vaado Performance system. "The performance review has to become part of the culture of the business," says Gill. "HR has to make the entire process as easy as possible for employees, from the Executive board, though line managers to junior employees."

The system features online objectives and performance and development reviews with automated workflow approvals. It was branded and customised specifically for HarperCollins and employee data is uploaded weekly into the system via an export from PS Enterprise, the corporate HR system.

Vaado Software is a specialist provider of online, human resources and performance management software & services.

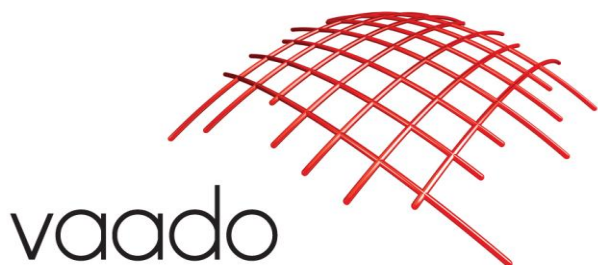
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"for the online generation"



During the performance review process, managers set a number of personal and business objectives for employees. Each employee is awarded a rating – a descriptor rather than a number – which is agreed by the relevant Executive Board member.

Gill says, “The Vaado Performance system is intuitive, making it simple for employees to complete and easy for managers to attain visibility of performance within their teams. The system also allows regular updating and reviewing of objectives and performance via the corporate intranet, ensuring employees are always up to date with the personal and business objectives that have been set.”



Excellent Response

Vaado Performance was rolled out from the top down, with one to one training for both the Executive Board and their PAs, as well as open training days for managers and the rest of the workforce. “The performance review process has to work from the top down; so it was essential to ensure the Executive Board were advocates of the system and felt comfortable using it,” says Gill.

In addition, HarperCollins worked very closely with Vaado throughout the deployment, encouraging the Executive Board and employees to provide immediate feedback on the system, including additional reporting requirements.

“Vaado turned around report requirements within 48 hours,” Gill confirms. In addition, the company responded fast to any changes required – such as the need to extend the character limit on the performance review. “We did not expect our employees to write so much! Following a request from HarperCollins, Vaado responded to increase the limit very quickly,” she says.

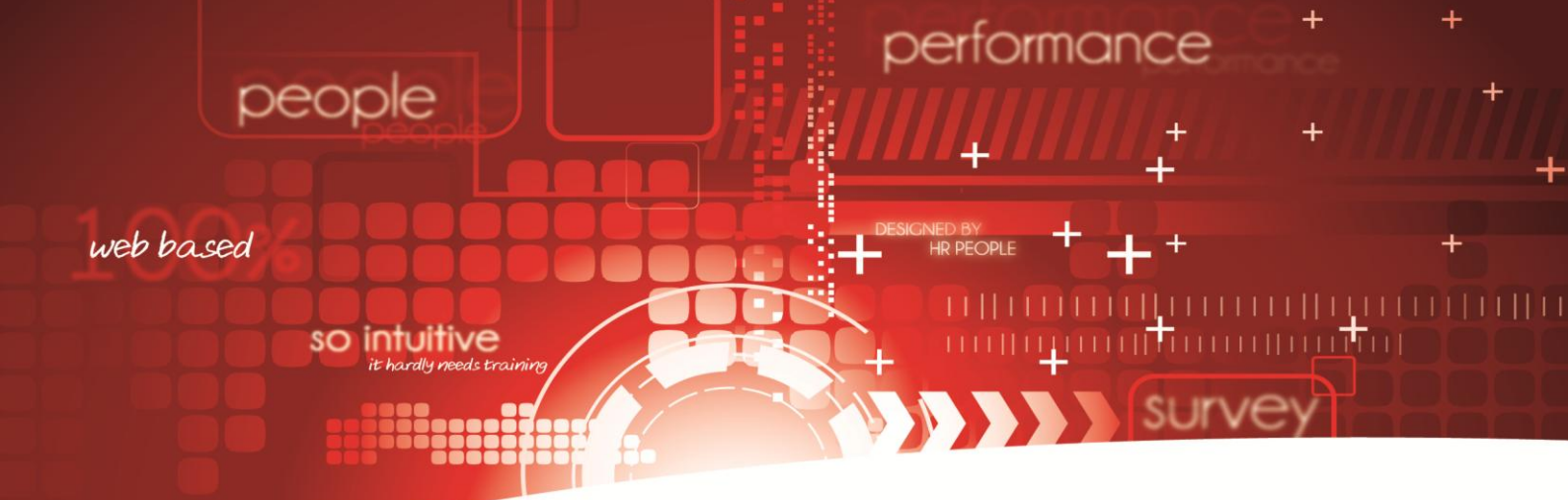
In addition, the company provided a first line helpdesk for employees although, as Gill confirms, the overwhelming majority of problems were simple password resets. She adds, “Throughout the process, HarperCollins quality checked a large proportion of appraisals and worked closely with Vaado to creating a training needs report to help shape next year’s training requirements on the system.”

Performance Review

The response from employees was overwhelmingly positive, with appraisal completion at 98% using the online system. Critically, this was achieved broadly within the defined performance review timeline – in stark contrast to the paper-based review which took five months to achieve a 90% completion rate. “Employees and managers could immediately see the benefits of the online approach. Combining the intuitive system with automated workflow approvals was key to achieving this brilliant response,” says Gill.

Obviously, the objective of this process is to drive the business forward – and the excellent response rate ensures HarperCollins has access to the information required to support both day to day and strategic HR decision-making.

Gill confirms the online model provides far more information, especially for managers. Reports range from a list of the team’s business objectives, to the spread of employee ratings.



Managers can look at all the performance reviews for the team, which helped to keep track of who had completed the appraisal during the performance review process. Executive Board members can view not only staff reporting directly, but all the people in their line of sight if required, enabling any-time access to employee reviews and objectives throughout the year – most notably during the six month interim review.

For the HR team, the Vaado Performance system has provided a raft of easy to analyse data and in depth reporting. “Vaado’s willingness to create multiple reports in the month following the initial deployment allowed the HR team to identify reporting needs based on the information being collected via the Vaado system,” says Gill.

For example, HarperCollins has been able to rapidly assess trends in employee ratings and understand the training requirements that have been set. Says Gill, “Determining training needs is critical for HarperCollins to maximise its investment in Learning and Development (L&D). The ability to review training requirements at the touch of a button is transforming the effectiveness of L&D planning.”

Future Building

The next stage will be to exploit the system’s succession planning functionality. “This is a fast-changing marketplace and to ensure the right talent is in place, HarperCollins is currently going through a critical talent process. Using Vaado Performance to deliver succession planning, develop strategies and processes for identifying, attracting, developing, retaining and deploying talented people will be invaluable,” she says.

Critically, the shift from paper-based to online performance model has enabled HarperCollins to realise its vision of creating a new performance-focused culture. “The online performance review is phenomenal. The HR team can access critical information, such as the ratings distribution curve, at the touch of a button, supporting more effective strategic HR planning,” she concludes. “By adopting the intuitive Vaado Performance systems to provide Executive Board and managers with immediate access to appraisal and objective information, HarperCollins is now embedding performance reviews within the company culture.”



About Vaado Software

Vaado Software Limited is a specialist provider of online, human resources (HR) and performance management software and services. Vaado’s software portfolio is designed by HR practitioners with real-world, global experience specifically so that it can address the needs of today’s fast-moving medium-to-large enterprise scale businesses.

Built using the very latest in web deployable technologies, Vaado provides powerful functionality and prides itself on being ‘for the online generation’. The Vaado software suite was developed and delivered in 2010 against a rigid development timeframe for some very demanding large enterprise customers. Vaado People, Vaado Performance and Vaado Survey all utilise the very latest generation of Microsoft Silverlight technology, adopted by the majority of web-browsers and operating systems.