

Ministry of Transport

building a high performance culture



Step 2
Potential Factors

Talent



David Smith
Development Plan



Ministry of Transport
TE MANATŪ WAKA

newzealand.govt.nz



home careers about us c

Tasked with providing the long term vision and strategy to move people and products around New Zealand, the Ministry of Transport (MOT) has a challenging role. As the government's principal transport policy advisor, the MOT provides the strategic framework to lead and generate policy. The Ministry acts as the agent for the Minister of Transport and provides policy advice in a wide range of areas from roads, maritime, air and security.

Despite being a sizeable organisation, the Ministry was using a paper-based performance management system. While it worked, it wasn't ideal as it didn't allow a complete overview of performance across the whole organisation.

Environmental Factors

Claire Johnstone, General Manager Corporate for the Ministry, says that the existing performance management system was somewhat dependent on subjective opinions, and there was a great deal of variance on performance measurements.

"This meant that we couldn't be certain that people across different parts of the Ministry were being assessed on the same criteria even if they were doing similar jobs.

Requirements

About a year ago, the Ministry began considering moving to a more advanced performance

management system. The first key requirements were an agreed set of criteria based on competencies and technical skills. The Ministry had already adopted the Lominger Competency Model, a behavioural model that helps assess performance, so the ability to incorporate this model was a critical requirement of any system the MOT chose to adopt.

"Any performance management system we adopted had to be online, easy to use, and lead to consistency across the organisation," says Johnstone. "These attributes were essential because I had to be able to sell a new performance management system to our management as something that would be a very useful tool, and also something that our staff and the PSA (Public Service Association) would accept.

"We also needed a system that would fit our culture. Online delivery was essential as we make a point of keeping up with business and management trends, and a lot of our policy advisors are under 30 and they expect to see technology being used.

"The other area that is particularly important to the Ministry is public sector accountability. Our goals are to be not just a trusted employer, but a preferred employer. We operate under the State Services Commission guidelines on 'Transforming the State Services', which includes specific aims for government organisations to be employers of choice and to attract high performing people. Any system we adopted had to help us in our journey toward these goals."

Results

While the Ministry is in the early stages of implementation, every employee and manager has already been trained in the use of Sonar6. Performance measures have also been developed and staff details entered so they can already see their own profile.

“Our experience with Sonar6 so far has been great, with the two strongest points being that it is delivered online and is very visual and therefore easy to learn and use.

“The work we’re doing with Sonar6 is quite experimental. We pride ourselves on being very advanced in our approach to staff retention and management, as well as our IT systems. And, as the

first government organisation in New Zealand to adopt an online performance management system like Sonar6, we are really testing the boundaries.

“It is early days yet, but when the first round of feedback comes through we will be able to see where the performance issues are, where our stars are, and identify those people that go the extra mile to help us create a good culture.”

The Ministry believes that the real measure of success will be its management and staff reporting that Sonar6 is easy to use, and employees being happy that the system is fair.

“I can’t wait to get the next results, which will not only show us how our staff are dealing with Sonar6, but will also give us a much clearer picture of how our people are performing across the organisation.”

Sonar6 Solution

Johnstone says she was very impressed with the Sonar6 solution.

“We did look for other solutions but the team at Sonar6 were very approachable, I really liked the Sonar6 toolkit, and the cost was very competitive.”

“Sonar6 were great to work with and quickly adapted their tools to meet our specific needs. They hadn’t worked with a public sector organisation before and I think they were really interested in the different requirements. We worked together to change the competencies and measures of performance to suit a public sector environment.

Johnstone says that the performance measurements as a public sector organisation are different to, for example, a sales-based environment.

“As you would expect, our behaviour and technical competency requirements are quite different to the private sector. Our People and Development department has done some very good work to develop appropriate public sector competencies and Sonar6 was able to feed these into their system.”

At the request of the Ministry, Sonar6 also incorporated a 360 degree feedback function into the toolkit. The Ministry was already using a 360 degree review process in-house, so Sonar6 looked at their software and developed a way to incorporate it into the Sonar6 system. The tool that Sonar6 developed for the Ministry allows a person to nominate someone else to rate them, and for people to rate themselves. Sonar6 also built into the system the learning and development goals from the Lominger Competency Model that the Ministry uses.

“Sonar6 will allow us to see how people are performing relative to the group they work in and will also give us a whole organisation view. We really see this as taking a major step forward in performance and talent management.”

Summary

Sonar6 Director, John Holt says that the MOT takes a very progressive approach to talent and performance management.

“They really are leading the field within the government sector, and we’re enjoying working with them to develop and customise the Sonar6 system to their needs. It is great to see that a talent management tool set developed with the private sector in mind can be so easily adapted to the public sector environment. More importantly, it’s exciting to see a government department wanting to adopt cool, leading edge technology.

“While it is not necessarily what people would expect from a government department, the Ministry has shown true vision by using Sonar6 to build a high performance culture.”