

Papa Murphy's Pizza

connecting teams with talent management technology



Papa Murphy's is the fifth largest pizza company in the United States and is the dominant player in the 'take and bake' fresh pizza sector. More than 1,100 locations operate across the United States and Canada.

Headquartered in Vancouver, Washington, Papa Murphy's is led by a highly experienced senior management team and powered by 140 employees. Roughly half its employees are based on site and the other half work remotely, taking care of day-to-day business with franchise owners. Providing support for its remote managers was becoming increasingly important.

Environmental Factors

Papa Murphy's was (and is!) experiencing significant growth and with that comes new business challenges – they needed clear direction on company structure, talent development needs and reporting relationships. As a people-focused business, overcoming distance and maintaining conversation is vital. This is no small feat when 'distance' may mean up to 500 miles between managers and direct reports...

"People, relationships and conversations are our priority; career development is a must," says Vice President of Human Resources Maryellen Mech. But the company's geographical spread and aggressive growth was taking its toll.

First call was to Dianna Wilusz, an experienced, high-tech HR consultant with Craford Benefit Consultants who advises Papa Murphy's on its strategic direction and what that means for its people.

Working together to develop a new HR strategy, Dianna and Maryellen agreed on a complete performance management and talent development overhaul. A new system had to be "flexible and scaleable" to grow with the company and it had to happen fast – Papa Murphy's 'growing pains' were really starting to hurt.

Requirements

Papa Murphy's previous system was your typical paper-based suspect: Submit form, track form on Excel spreadsheet, rummage through files to find form... The process wasn't easy and information was difficult to access.

Papa Murphy's new talent management system had to tick these boxes:

1. Easy to use
2. Information easily accessible
3. Flexible to handle geographic spread
4. Consistency in appraisals across departments
5. Facilitate good management and goal setting
6. Enable succession planning

And finally, it had to be economical and not take forever to implement. They needed it NOW!

Well, no one said anything about 'simple'... But no one said anything about 'fun' either. And Papa Murphy's got both.

Sonar6 Solution

Dianna knew Sonar6 had an office in California. She also knew its forward-thinking approach to talent management would fit the bill.

"When Sonar6 came to our attention I was so excited by how unique it was," says Maryellen. "I liked its 'talent science' approach and its focus on relationships between managers and employees. Sonar6 makes the conversations easier and provides the tools to make them happen."

Papa Murphy's answer to talent management was in sight.

Results

On speedy implementation

"The program design and system implementation literally required 24 hours aggregated time of Papa Murphy's. This included design considerations, defining and agreeing measurable competencies, gaining alignment within the company on the redesigned program, and completing the system configuration. It was an extremely fast process."

On the 'wow' factor

"Sonar6 is very different to other systems in the market – I haven't seen anything else like it. Once you start pushing buttons and sliding the 'gummies' it's actually quite intuitive and it's really fun!"

"Sonar6 is re-engaging managers and employees with the whole performance management process. I have never walked out of a training session where managers and employees can't wait to get back to their desks to login and see how the system works – Sonar6 is really powerful like that."

On empowered managers

"As a senior manager it's important to have information at your fingertips. Sonar6 helps us to develop as managers, and develop our teams appropriately."

"What I really appreciate is the ability to look at my team, all at the same time, and rate them as individuals and see how they are performing against other members in the team."

The conversations began in September 2008, between Papa Murphy's, Craford Benefit Consultants and Sonar6... spanning New Zealand, California and Washington. Appropriately, this multilayered process reflected Papa Murphy's own set up. The success was evident, when two months later (no time wasted!) Sonar6 was being rolled out.

From the outset, the Papa Murphy's senior management team wanted to be involved, 'boots and all'. The thorough preparation process, facilitated by Sonar6's California-based business development and powered by Sonar6's New Zealand Consulting office and Craford Benefit Consultants, had all heads working together. Using webinars, conference calls and face-to-face meetings, they identified challenges, considered stakeholders, defined critical integration points to the Papa Murphy's culture and operating principles, and discussed factors and competencies that needed to be measured by the new talent management system.

"It got us on the same page prior to the system being implemented and helped us understand Sonar6's vocabulary and assessment criteria. It was really important to get calibrated on that internally," says Maryellen Mech.

Papa Murphy's adapted their own language and culture to the Sonar6 system and worked together to develop measurable competencies, and even added a couple of new ones. The Sonar6 tool was a catalyst for discussion around compensation structure, job groupings, and links to reinforce the company culture – "this was a really powerful point as an HR consultant."

"The Sonar6 tool is very flexible," says Dianna Wilusz. "It is designed from both a managers' and employees' perspective, focused on the end result, rather than just automating the process."

On "you should see the view!"

"The level of analysis Sonar6 enables is top level. Taking a 'helicopter' view of the entire organisation, you're then able to drill down to individuals as well as to groups. This information helps identify common development areas, and the strengths and gaps within the business."

"After doing the first roll-out with the smaller HR team, I was struck with the learning I gained from the 'kite' view. I could see that I needed to spend more time with an individual to discover their strengths and develop them further."

On the cool, fun stuff

"This company alignment was critical, but it was the fact that everyone loved how fun Sonar6 was... people couldn't wait to use their sliders and their little person."

"We know cool and fun, and we also know people need more than that: unless you're having the conversations to go along with it, your system won't work. Any system you employ must be supported by conversations – and Sonar6 gives us both."

On managing the remote folks

"Sonar6 suits our roving employees. Its online nature allows managers to capture information easily - from a hotel room if necessary - and pull up information immediately in a performance appraisal wherever they may be."

The Sonar6 bonus is its "fun quotient", says Maryellen. "It fits our culture of pride, passion and fun."

Summary

What Papa Murphy's wanted was useful reviews and appraisals that were accessible right across its operations. What they got was 'talent science' and an online art form. Most importantly, the implementation process was fast – before they could say "Extra cheese please!"

In a people-focused business, where your operations are spread far and wide, the conversations must keep happening. Any talent management worth its salt will support and enable conversation, not replace it.

"If an employee is surprised by anything that comes up in an appraisal then I haven't been doing my job right, because those things should be covered in conversations throughout the year," says Maryellen Mech.

It may be early days, but it's a measure of the success and speed of the initial implementation that Papa Murphy's is brimming with confidence and excitement about its future.

"We know our talent management program and the Sonar6 tools will take us light years beyond where we are today; they will help us get to where we want to be."