



Case Study. Managing a Sales Team in a Merger.

CLIENT: DATAMAIL GROUP
ISSUE: People management in a merger environment
TIMEFRAME: Full implementation – 10 days
SOLUTION: Sonar6 talent management

Background.

Datamail Group – a leading provider of end-to-end business process solutions – had just acquired and merged with a key competitor. Group General Manager Sales, Nick Fox had a problem ... how to combine two sales teams while ensuring that key talent was not only retained, but also nurtured. Nick's problem was compounded by the fact that neither pre-merger company had an existing talent management solution.

Environmental Factors.

Talent management in the merger environment presents a raft of unique challenges:

- The normal issues associated with the retention and development of talent are magnified exponentially.
- In a climate of uncertainty, poor people decisions tend to be quickly reflected in a drop in customer satisfaction levels, sales and eventually, profitability.
- People decisions can become clouded with emotion, politics and misinformation.

Requirements.

Nick needed a fully-fledged talent system to underpin his newly expanded sales department and he needed it NOW!

Sonar6 Solution.

Select members of the Datamail Group were drafted into a 'factor discovery' workshop facilitated by Sonar6 consultants. Key success factors that traditionally indicated future *potential* in Datamail sales personnel were identified, as were the key *performance* indicators required for sales success.

Once agreed and critiqued, this information formed the basis of a test system created by Sonar6. The resulting programme was then trialed, refined and had existing staff data incorporated ... the fully fledged Sonar6 talent management system went live just 10 days after the initial brief by Datamail Group.



Results.

Sonar6 lets the client do the talking ...Nick Fox gives the low-down ...

On implementation:

“The activation process went supremely well. What impressed us most was the quality of the Sonar6 process and personnel. Their knowledge - not simply of the tool - but of the strategic issues surrounding our talent management situation was profound. They helped us get our heads around those issues. And, we put them under real pressure ... we were in the process of a merger and had a 10-day window from whoa to go. There was a huge tactical need around the merger. The starting state was basically nowhere. We had a strategic endorsement of the importance of talent, but that was it.”

On recognising and managing talent:

“The system has really crystallised where I need to spend my time. Actually, it has made me more engaged with the real talent. “A” players get more of my time, “C” players get less. This is not about being mercenary, it is about ensuring we retain focus on the people who make a difference. Here’s an example ... people come in and whine to management about the merger and the restructure. Utilising the Sonar6 programme, I can immediately identify whether they are disengaged, low performers. If so, while their concerns will be addressed, it doesn’t worry me so much. Conversely, if I am getting the same feedback from top performers then alarm bells ring. Sonar6 allows us to be leaders not managers.”

On looking beyond quota:

“The day to day of any sales organisation relies on revenue targets being met. However, as you step beyond standard sales management - things beyond quota – measurement becomes a very grey area. Quota performance is not the only indicator of success or talent; it is just the easiest to measure. Sonar6 tells us where the truly talented people are, where we can grow the business and who can grow it. And, we can easily identify the right people to lead new ventures.

“Sonar6 gives us a common view of all of the different kinds of people. For example, if we need to select 70 people for our development program, with this system we can instantly ID those people, without it being an argument.”

On creating a workable talent mindset:

“Sonar6 is helping to spread a positive talent mindset throughout my team of managers; but candidly they are still learning its full value. When you sit at the executive table, with a broader view than just sales, you see the full potential of this system and how it helps the business. And, it doesn’t matter that the people who truly understand the value are at the top of the organisation, it provides everyone – irrespective of the size of their team – with much better visibility and understanding of their personnel. More importantly, people managers find it really easy to use.”

On making HR strategic:

“In my experience, HR tools are generally tactical - they are an admin task not a strategic play. Sonar6 reintroduces a strategic focus to HR. Having just gone through a merger, the board can clearly identify the two pre-merger groups of people and understand how each group is faring.”



On being business led:

“This implementation has been entirely led by a business need in sales. The merger resulted in our HR team having a very full plate and they could only have cursory involvement. However, sales needed to move with speed. But sales doing this on its own will not hamper the rest of the business later; instead it provides a reliable testing ground. In fact, other departments are already seeing the direct benefits of utilising the Sonar6 system and they want to become involved.”

Summary.

A merger is a testing time and makes incredible demands of people managers. Sonar6 has helped Datamail Group gain clarity and make informed, accurate talent management decisions in this pressure cooker environment. The charge has been business led, fulfilling an immediate strategic business need in the sales department. And, the speed with which the solution was deployed - and the immediate positive impact - is a clear demonstration that implementing a talent management solution need not be a complex project.

Closing remarks go to Sonar6 founder Mike Carden:

“I never want to hear clients say *lets start the talent management project*, I want to hear them say *lets start talent managing!*”