

case study

Graham Group Ltd.

Graham Group Builds on the Saba People Management Platform to Keep Pace With Rapid Company Growth

Solution Overview

Industry — Construction

Challenges

Formalize people management processes — from performance reviews to talent management and succession planning — and adapt learning to meet the needs of a younger workforce

Benefits

- Implement a more structured and efficient performance management process that better aligns worker efforts with company goals and enhances review completion
- Implement talent and compensation management to help groom future leaders, fill middle management ranks, and improve the connection between rewards and results
- Institute new learning methods — ranging from blended and e-learning to on-the-job training — to support a younger demographic
- Facilitate informal learning and collaboration, and explore potential productivity gains available by connecting people through enterprise social networking

Solution

Saba Enterprise



Founded in 1926 in Saskatchewan by P.W. Graham, the predecessor to Graham Group operated as a relatively small, family-owned building contractor for nearly 60 years. In 1985, employees joined forces with the Graham family to form Graham Construction and Engineering Ltd. That set the stage for meteoric growth that has seen Graham Group's revenues soar eightfold, from less than US\$250 million to nearly US\$1.8 billion in under two decades.

Today, Graham is one of the largest general contractors in Canada, with operations in most provinces, as well as in parts of the U.S. Pacific Northwest and Midwest. The company's divisions handle a full range of projects from commercial buildings to infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, and even mining facilities.

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Kim Johnson
Executive Vice President for Corporate Development and CIO
Graham Group Ltd.

“We have experienced an unprecedented boom,” said Kim Johnson, executive vice president for corporate development and CIO of the Graham Group. “Consequently, we are facing some organizational challenges as we transition from what in many ways resembles a startup company culture to a larger enterprise that requires more formalized systems and processes to sustain growth.”

One of the steps Graham has taken is to implement Saba Enterprise as its people management platform. Graham is rolling out a broad array of people solutions including Saba Goals and Objectives, Saba Performance Reviews, Saba Succession, Saba Compensation, Saba Learning, and Saba Centra.

Improving Performance Measurement

The initial focus for Graham has been performance management. For many years, Graham had operated as a typical small company

where everyone knew one another — goals were self-evident and people did what had to be done. Reviews were informal, with the help of written documents managers were expected to complete in advance.

“Unfortunately, I would say our completion rate was less than 50%,” Johnson remarked. “It was challenging to get managers to do the write-ups.”

With Saba Performance Reviews, Graham has structured the casual process, while preserving the company’s commitment to its more than 3,000 employees and affiliated personnel as its most important asset. The new model has enabled Graham to continuously align workers with the company’s goals and objectives, and make the review process more relevant — tying rewards closely with results. The solution has also helped streamline the review process.

“We are now completing well in excess of 90% of our reviews,” noted Johnson. “The process still requires work — but because of its relevance to the company’s success and an improved framework, our managers execute more consistently.”

Identifying, Training, and Rewarding Future Leaders

The demographic distribution of Graham’s workforce has also created challenges in career and succession planning, training, and compensation. With many of Graham’s top people five to ten years from retirement and a scarcity of middle management throughout the industry, the company needs to identify and groom future leaders, train its large number of staff and field personnel in their 20s and 30s, and establish a compensation program that drives better results and encourages the best people to stay with the company.

“We are in the process of implementing Saba Succession and hope to be an early adopter of Saba Compensation in 2010,” Johnson said. “We expect Saba solutions will help us identify and fast-track the most promising 20- to 30-year-olds within our organization — and prepare them for the demands they will face in the future.”

Graham is also excited about what Saba Learning and Saba Centra can bring to the company’s educational arm — Graham University — especially for less experienced employees. “Our younger people have very different needs from our seasoned employees,” explained Johnson. “They also learn differently — are more used to a distributed, self-serve model. Saba supports a full range of learning environments and styles — from classroom to e-learning — and will enable us to efficiently meet our requirements.”

In addition, Johnson sees Saba Social likely being part of Graham’s people management mix in the future. Graham’s younger employees often prefer to learn on the job. Saba’s industry-leading experience in informal learning and collaboration — as well as enterprise social networking tools — helps create the connections that allow people to easily find needed answers and share knowledge.

Taking Advantage of an Integrated People Platform

One of the qualities that Graham likes the most about Saba’s people management solutions is that they are all part of an integrated people platform, designed to work seamlessly together — and integrate well with Graham’s other business and organizational development systems. Graham also likes the fact that Saba is available as either on-premise software or OnDemand solutions.

“Initially, we have chosen to run the Saba solutions on our own servers,” Johnson commented. “But I can see our company moving to OnDemand delivery as the ‘cloud computing’ concept becomes more of a reality.”

While Graham hasn’t yet calculated an ROI for its Saba solutions, Johnson knows they will prove their worth. “Implementing Saba’s people platform was a no-brainer for us,” stated Johnson. “There is no doubt we will receive significant business value from Saba over time.”