start at best

Workplace Innovation for Business Competitivity

Visionary Analytics
CASE STUDY

Country
Lithuania

City / Region
Vilnius

No. of Employees
18

Description of the organisation

Visionary Analytics (VA) is a private research institute providing applied research, evaluation and technical assistance services for the European Union institutions, international organisations and national governments. VA services focus across three domains: education, innovation, and development of state-of-the-art research methods. Visionary Analytics It is a young and ambitious company striving to be equally profit- and values-driven. The company is comprised of highly motivated individuals who prefer analytical work bringing value for society.

Workplace Innovation practices implemented

VISIONARY ANALYTICS

The Challenge
The company has faced a steady growth for the past years, the working conditions are getting better, and salaries are increasing. As the company grows, it faces a few challenges:
- the efficiency indicators have staggered;
- the lack of feedback precludes leadership and growth of younger staff;
- the existing processes and administrative tools (such as a performance management system based on a scorecard of annual targets, detailed project management guidelines) are not linked together into an integral system.

The Solution
The key idea behind the GameOn! project was to reinvent selected business processes by operationalizing and gamifying them. The methodological approach combined the current theoretical understanding of employees' motivation and state-of-the-art knowledge on gamification in the context of business processes. As employee engagement is firmly linked to organisational outcomes, the lack of motivation can pose a serious problem for a company. The workplace is usually full of external motivators, such as salary, responsibility, bonuses, and others. However, the introduction of game-like elements to work develops internal motivation (which still has to be aligned with the external), as it generates satisfaction, happiness, and fun.

Our actions
The foundation of the whole project is the use of the data and company mechanisms to ensure that the activities are well-grounded and also reduce the administrative burden. The project design fully exploited the synergies between different processes - performance management, competences building, feedback, and project implementation data.

The project consisted of five key stages. First, the conceptual stage of the project was started by operationalizing the key employee competencies and desired behaviour for gamification. A crucial aspect of this stage was the phrasing of each competency and behaviour. Since these processes are very sensitive for each organization and employee, it is essential to ensure that the goals and

intentions behind each encouraged behaviour/competency are clear for all of the stakeholders. The key encouraged behaviours at VA were defined according to the six company values: Team First, Leadership, Continuous Learning, Value, Can Do / Get Done attitude, and Honesty.

Second, in order to strengthen the appreciation culture, a small group of colleagues had thought of the game design. A certain task is linked with evaluation criteria in the form of badges (e.g., stars, fruit or famous scientists) according to how well one performs. Each behaviour can be awarded in three levels depending on the employee's success (i.e., 'Good', 'Excellent', and 'Top performance'). After a behaviour is spotted (e.g., delivering high-quality results ahead of schedule or providing clear and constructive feedback), any member of the team can reward a colleague accordingly. The benefit of the game is that one may not only be acknowledged and appreciated by the team yet also notice which areas need improvement if he or she never receives rewards in the corresponding section.

Third, to ensure the team buy-in for the planned changes, VA team used engagement-based implementation processes. A cross-functional project team involving members with different functions and capabilities helped identifying and addressing important bottlenecks. The focus groups aided in finding the best
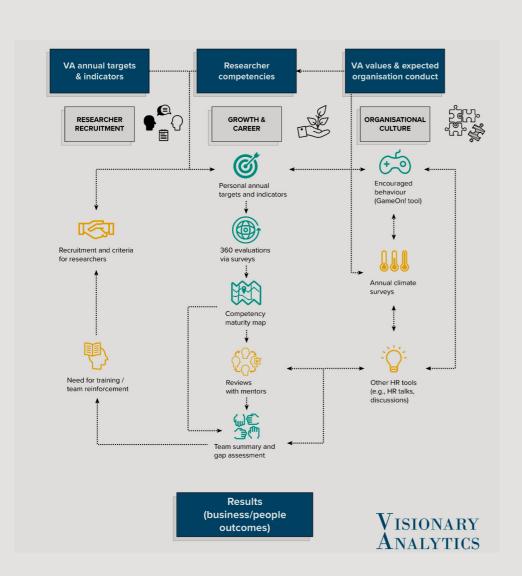
definitions for the behaviours and prototypes for testing. The pilot group of eight had four weeks to test the game, review its mechanics and crystalize the chosen behaviours for gamification.

Fourth, once the competencies/behaviours with their descriptions are ready, it is possible to create and introduce the final gamification tool. On the technical implementation, various platform options were analysed, and at this stage, an excel-based tool was selected as it was an accessible and well-known solution for the team. Since piloting the tool, we already have a few ideas about how to develop it in the future. A 12-month pilot program is planned in order to assess the benefits based on long-term results. In case the gamification is successful - the company is going to create a mobile app. In addition, the tool may also involve material benefits such as prizes for certain point/badge combinations or their amount (e.g., tickets to the theatre, SPA coupon). In addition, including a 'Comments' option when giving the chosen evaluation helps the feedback to be more empowering, valuable, and effective.

It is vital that the organisation clarifies the context, purpose, and desired outcome from this tool for the whole team besides the technicalities. Introducing merely technical solutions will not ensure that the team is on-board with the idea. Hence, explaining and understanding that the change is not merely technical but also adaptive facilitates the team buy-in.

The final step of the project was reviewing all the related processes and tools, and upgrading them according to the operationalized competences and behaviours. This included a review of the employee surveys and career model. The final step ensured that all the existing and new performance management tools were integrated into one holistic system (Figure below).

Main Achievements

The main output is a gamification tool linking key processes together, and rewarding the employees for behaviour that meets key company values. Besides this tool, this project has also benefited our company in other aspects. We were able to (1) create a unified system of company competences, team values and encouraged behaviours, (2) review our career system, (3) review quarterly and semi-annual employee and leadership surveys that were transformed into 360 surveys based on the new competences model, (4) strengthen work appreciation measures, and (5) determine the key areas of improving our company competences map.

We believe that our investment in talent appreciation and growth, as well as clarity of company values, competences and career models will breed the following outcomes:
- Better communication within the company, implying increased satisfaction with feedback reported in annual employees' survey;
- Faster growth of younger colleagues and increased leadership skills;
- Higher efficiency, timely and high-quality project management;
- Overall increased effectiveness of performance management and its links to processes and tools will lead to higher employee motivation and engagement-based company culture.