

Manufacturer of Outdoor Equipment Unlocks Potential of Workforce with Jakoba Software



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Solution Overview

Cascade Designs, award-winning manufacturer of essential camping and outdoor gear, was able to dramatically improve its employee performance management process. Cascade Designs turned to Jakoba Software to help it automate this process, and as a result was able to significantly lower the amount of time spent by employees and managers – while at the same time improving the overall relevancy of the employee performance review effort in driving positive business results.

Company Overview

Cascade Designs is a manufacturing company that oversees the production of outdoor equipment, such as self-inflating sleeping pads, dry storage products, hydration systems, and other backcountry gear. Over the past three decades, Cascade Designs has grown into a family of leading outdoor brands, including Therm-a-Rest, MSR, SealLine, and Platypus.

Cascade Designs has a history of refining existing products and engineering new ones so that their customers can get the most out of their outdoor experience. Cascade Designs' dedication to its customers and resulting top quality products has kept it atop the outdoor industry for more than 30 years.

Not surprisingly the company's employees are a collection of outdoor enthusiasts, and it's the employees' continued focus on enhancing the outdoor experience of their customers that has significantly contributed to Cascade's success.

Customer Profile

Cascade Designs manufactures outdoor equipment under a family of brand names with a dedication to quality that has made it a leader in the industry.

Business Situation

Cascade Designs needed to streamline and automate its employee performance management process. Its employees were spending too much time performing non-value activities such as printing documents and re-entering information into review forms.

Solution

Cascade Designs used Jakoba Software's employee performance management solution to dramatically improve and automate the entire process. The company now has the ability to transform this process into one that can significantly contribute to business results. Additionally, Cascade Designs found with Jakoba they enjoyed:

- Rapid implementation
- Intuitive user interface
- Very little need for change management and training

Business Benefits

- Payback on investment in less than 45 days
- Increased visibility into workforce strengths and weaknesses
- Employees and managers thinking of performance management process as a continuous, year-round activity
- Improved productivity
- Increase levels of employee engagement

Situation

Cascade Designs has maintained a formal annual employee performance review process for many years. As a result of this history, the company was confident it had the right criteria to evaluate employees. Unfortunately the tools they were using to perform this evaluation were not automated and included too much manual effort. Cascade Designs uses self evaluations, manager evaluation of employees, and upward appraisals of managers. Each appraisal was a different form that employees, managers, and the human resources team must fill out, edit, contribute to, and check for accuracy. Each form was a static version of a Microsoft Office Word document that would be passed back and forth between people as needed. These documents would be passed via email or printed out and physically handed back and forth.

As a result of this manual process, Cascade Designs was spending an inordinate amount of time managing the logistics of the employee performance review process instead of focusing time on providing useful feedback for all involved. The company estimated that a minimum of 200 hours were dedicated to managing the administrative aspects of the process, in addition to all of the time spent trying to help employees improve performance. Also, as is standard with most manual performance review processes, the multiple versions and copies of forms meant that data was invariably lost as it was passed back and forth. The company estimates that for its 350 employees in the prior review cycle it generated over 900 hard copy forms that each had between 3 and 5 pages. There was a significant productivity loss as each of these forms was opened by multiple people. The paper and administrative chaos associated with this process was also affecting employee's and manager's perception of the value of the overall process.

Solution

Cascade Designs turned to Jakoba Software to help automate its employee performance review process. Jakoba has developed a software solution that is designed to offer and support world-class employee performance management processes with minimal effort required to deploy, train, and obtain user adoption. The key requirements that Cascade Designs looked for, and found in Jakoba, included:

- ❖ An online, automated solution that took away the need to fill out hard copies of any review form; but yet was familiar, intuitive, and non-disruptive to the organization.
- ❖ Access, via reports, to all information captured during the review process without the need to re-key in any information.
- ❖ Automated workflow and document management so that employees and managers could spend less time worrying about the administrative aspects of the process, and more time thinking about providing constructive feedback.
- ❖ An automated way to connect day-to-day activities of employees to the larger goals of

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Tony Schwaerzler
Manager, Human
Resources
Cascade Designs, Inc.

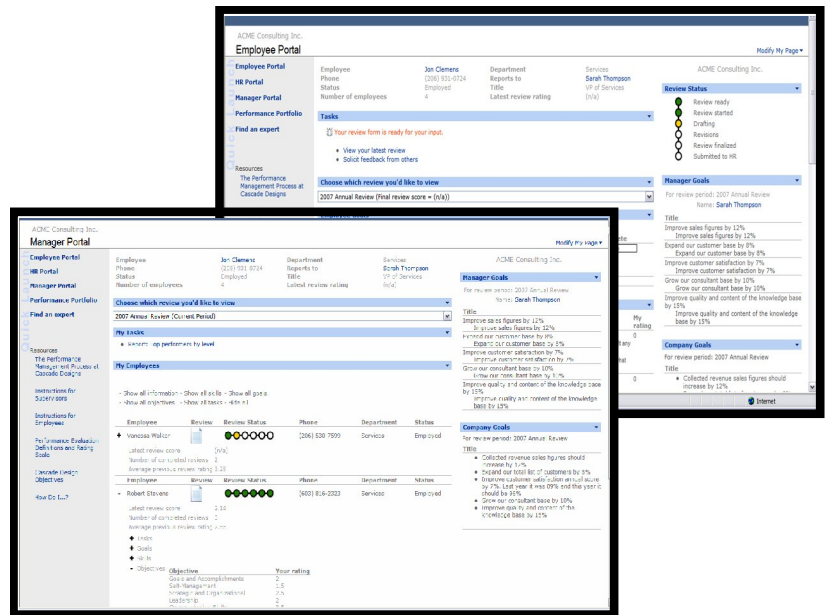
the department and of the company as a whole.

❖ Visibility into strengths and weaknesses of the workforce and of individual employees. Jakoba's solution helped Cascade Designs quickly meet all of its requirements and deploy an automated tool for employees and managers to use. "With Jakoba's easy-to-use software we were able to dramatically improve this process." said Tony Schwaerzler, Cascade Design's Manager of HR. "More important was the increase in visibility we had to all of the skills and performance data captured during the process. Having this information will enable us to make better decisions as a company." Cascade Designs now has an automated employee performance management tool that helps optimize employee efforts and management effectiveness.

Cascade Designs was able to quickly implement Jakoba's solution, roll it out to the entire workforce with little training, and quickly see employees and managers embrace the new tool. This was possible because of Jakoba Software's technology architecture which is designed to provide all of the advantages of an automated employee performance management application but uses Microsoft's Office tools as the primary way in which users interact with the system. Cascade Designs found that Jakoba's intuitive design of its software interface provided employees an easy-to-use tool that gained rapid adoption.

"With Jakoba's solution we are able to transform the employee review process into one that is relevant year-round."

Ken Meidell
VP, Outdoor Group
Cascade Designs, Inc.



Business Benefits

By using Jakoba Software's solution Cascade Designs was able to meet or exceed all of its expectations and requirements that it laid out before deploying an automated employee performance review tool. As a result of the Jakoba solution Cascade Designs was able to:

- ❖ Improve the productivity of its workforce by reducing the time previously spent managing the process and using hard copies of forms. These productivity benefits span across the entire organization, and easily provided quick return on investment for Cascade Designs. According to Schwaerzler, "This solution paid for itself in productivity gains within 45 days of deployment."
 - Each employee, on average, saved approximately 1 hour using Jakoba versus the previous, manual process.
 - Managers, on average, saved 6 hours using Jakoba versus the old process
 - The human resources team reduced the effort that was spent finalizing, tracking, and reporting on the review process by 88%.

"Jakoba's solution went in with minimal effort and very little of the IT staff's time."

Barry Paxman
CIO
Cascade Designs, Inc.

- ❖ Significantly increase the amount of information it has on its workforce and better understand both the strengths and skill gaps of its employee base. This in turn has helped Cascade refine its employee training/learning programs and its recruiting efforts to better meet the needs of the company.
- ❖ Increase the engagement of employees who now know how their individual efforts link to the larger goals of Cascade Designs and who now have tools they can use year-round to help them stay engaged. "With Jakoba's solution we are able to transform the employee review process into one that is relevant year-round. Plus, this increased our ability to make sure our people are focused on the things that matter most for the business." Said Ken Meidell, VP of the Outdoor Group at Cascade Designs.
- ❖ Achieve all of these benefits without forcing disruptive change on the organization because the roll-out of Jakoba was quick and training users on the new tool was easy. "Jakoba's solution went in with minimal effort and very little of the IT staff's time." said Barry Paxman, CIO of Cascade Designs, "I attribute this largely to the way Jakoba is built on a familiar set of technologies which reduced the learning curve for both IT and end users."

"This solution paid for itself in productivity gains within 45 days of deployment."

Tony Schwaerzler
Manager, Human
Resources
Cascade Designs, Inc.

For More Information

For more information about Jakoba's products, email info@jakoba.com or browse to <http://www.jakoba.com> on the World Wide Web.

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