

## Pennichuck Water Works Inc. Goes Online with emPerform for Streamlined Performance Management, Compensation Planning & Employee Feedback

In 2019, Pennichuck Water Works, Inc. was in the midst of change. It was experiencing the highest levels of retirements, new hires, transfer and promotions they had seen in 167 years of operations. With over 130 staff members responsible for both field and administrative projects, the company needed a better way to engage and support the growth of its valuable people. To manage through the change, Director of Human Resources, Mary DeRoche, and Human Resources Generalist, Sarah Rossetti, migrated the company's performance management processes and systems to emPerform. Over a year after implementation, the organization is seeing the benefits of a streamlined performance and compensation management system for better performance tracking, improved performance conversations, and significant time savings.

Industry: Utilities | No. of Employees: 130

### Managing a Highly Specialized and Tenured Workforce

#### Supplying Southern and Central New Hampshire with Potable Water

Pennichuck Corporation is engaged in the collection, storage, treatment, distribution, and sale of potable water in southern and central New Hampshire. Its mission is to be a premier supplier of water in New Hampshire by providing reliable, high quality, and affordable water and to be New England's premier supplier of water-related contract services by providing high-quality solutions to meet customers' needs.

As a water utility, Pennichuck Water Works, Inc. (PWW) faces the same challenges as many other utilities in attracting and retaining skilled and experienced workers for specialized positions. Long tenure is common and employees who join tend to stay. As such, the company's performance management process needed to support the growth of both newly hired/transferred staff, as well as keep the existing experienced staff engaged. Employees at PWW desired more continuous and timely feedback, as well as a thorough understanding of where they stand in meeting performance expectations for their job. Managers were also demanding an efficient way to track progress and keep records of performance. With an increased rate of staff members retiring, PWW also needed to ensure they were using performance feedback to identify potential succession opportunities.

#### The Challenges of Manual Appraisals at Pennichuck Waterworks

Before using emPerform, PWW administered performance appraisals using manual paper and Word®-based review forms. The company had two forms to support different employee groups, and the forms gauged performance in several areas that were core to PWW success, including communication, initiative, job knowledge and teamwork. The manual process presented administrative burdens for supervisors, managers, and HR. It was difficult to track the status and various versions of appraisals that were being emailed back and forth during the approval process and there were inconsistencies in the use and interpretation of appraisals.

#### The Search for a New Performance Management System

In June of 2019, PWW's HR team began their search for a new performance management system that would replace their paper appraisals and support their needs. They had a well-crafted list of top system requirements; including: customizable appraisal forms that could remain open throughout the year, a 4-box or 9-box feature, the ability to automate their existing paper forms and track the status of reviews online, the ability to enable more consistent feedback, and strong reporting capabilities. The HR team **researched over two dozen platforms** online. After narrowing down the list, the team gathered a cross-departmental/cross-generational steering committee to view demos of five platforms. Of the five platforms included emPerform, which ended up appealing to the steering committee and the senior management team. They most enjoyed emPerform's user-friendly yet robust operating system, the compensation module, and the ability to provide more consistent employee feedback on both goals and performance.

**"We selected emPerform because it very closely matched our needs and we appreciated the transparency in the fee structure and implementation process. We were also very excited that emPerform included a Compensation Management module. This was a great bonus feature that we weren't even thinking about originally."**

- Sarah Rossetti, Human Resources Generalist at Pen-nichuck Water Works Inc.

After a thorough review of all systems from both the HR team and the steering committee, PWW selected emPerform as its vendor of choice for many reasons; including:

- The tag feature for [journaling and feedback](#)
- The user-friendly look and feel of the system
- The ability to mirror current forms in the software
- Easy goal setting and cascading goal functionality
- The ability to automate [compensation planning](#)
- The ability to integrate employee data from the company's existing HR system, Proliant®
- The feedback from references indicating a strong level of customer support

## Getting Started with emPerform at PWW

In September 2019, PWW kicked-off its emPerform implementation with their dedicated Implementation Specialist. emPerform worked with the PWW HR team to understand their exact needs and build a solution design that would allow them to successfully onboard users, translate and augment their existing appraisal processes, and effectively plan for future enhancements. After planning, PWW was trained during on-site administrator training sessions over the course of 3 days. The goal of the training was to ensure PWW's HR team understood the system and felt comfortable managing and owning emPerform.

***"We were very pleased with the on-site training and implementation and appreciated the step-by-step guidance from our implementation specialist. Having someone on-site allowed us to really explore the system and fit it to our ideas,"***  
*continued Sarah.*

PWW successfully automated their appraisal forms, launched emPerform tag for journaling and feedback, configured emPerform's Compensation Manager module for merit planning, and activated a data connector/integration from Proliant to emPerform. The PWW HR team learned the system so well that they felt comfortable setting up and using emPerform's [On-Demand Form Functionality](#), creating ad-hoc forms for new-hire reviews, and off-cycle goal setting.

## What's Working?

Since launching emPerform in 2020, PWW has already started to realize some significant benefits; including:

- Reduced time spent administering appraisals
- Easier tracking of appraisals and goals
- Streamlined compensation management
- More efficient means for managers and employees to track goal progress for performance conversations

### **Streamlined & Centralized Performance Management:**

"emPerform helped us eliminate paper in the appraisal and merit increase process and has allowed us to cut down on a lot of the time that used to be spent on approvals and tracking," said Sarah. "Having all appraisals, compensation plans, and performance notes in one centralized location has also helped HR and managers better track this information."

### **Meaningful Performance Conversations:**

PWW hopes to see more meaningful conversations as managers and employees continue to become more comfortable using emPerform. "We are encouraging managers and supervisors to use the tag and journaling wall moving forward. We believe these features will become increasingly more useful for staff to track performance notes throughout the year."

### **Automated Compensation Planning & Merit Decision-Making:**

Before implementing emPerform's Compensation Manager module, PWW's annual merit increase recommendation process was managed in Excel and was cumbersome for HR, directors, and managers. "The HR Director would have to input merit increase recommendations per person, continuously going back and forth with managers to ensure the budget was not exceeded. Now, with emPerform, this process is so much more straightforward and requires less legwork."

## What's Next?

PWW now plans to build on this momentum to further develop its performance management program with emPerform. **"emPerform has enabled us to take certain ideas and make them a reality,"** continued Sarah. "Our first emPerform review cycle has also sparked significant conversations about how to utilize emPerform to focus more on goals and employee development as well as to understand how we may better track employee progress and achievements. emPerform has made us look at our needs differently – in a very good way. The Steering Committee which participated in the identification and selection of emPerform is now charged with reviewing and recommending revisions of our process and our forms to better support our performance management and succession planning efforts with our changing workforce needs."

***"We hope to continually enhance our appraisals to best suit employee and company needs. We also plan to fully utilize all that emPerform has to offer by building succession planning and additional on-demand forms,"***  
said Sarah.

**Get started today!**

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of emPerform**

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