

VDAB visualizes Balanced Scorecards with SAS Translating Management-By-Objectives into Management-By-Actions

VDAB, the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training, is a complex organization that includes a large network of local job centres. Last year they implemented SAS Strategic Performance Management for the management and automation of their Balanced Scorecard system. SAS Strategic Performance Management provides the steering committee with an online, 360-degree overview of the company. It enables them to communicate the company vision with maximum efficiency throughout the entire work force and ensures that the entire company actively pursues the same objectives. It leaves top management free to concentrate on long-term strategies and at the same time it stimulates local managers.

Dynamic customer-oriented organization

The VDAB provides an extensive package of employment services including temporary manpower, training and education, recruitment and selection, career counselling, and outplacement. Since its creation in 1989, it has continuously fine-tuned its structures and internal processes to reflect the rapidly and ever changing labour market. The VDAB has been a pioneer in ICT innovations like e-business and CRM, allowing them to constantly improve the match-up of job seekers with employers.

Modern management with Balanced Scorecards


This modern and dynamic approach not only improves their services to the public but also gives them an internal management edge over their competitors. VDAB has followed Management-By-Objectives strategies since its creation. This approach measures a wide variety of critical and strategic parameters within their organization. These include everything from job offers to the number of job seekers. It then uses these numbers to monitor and guide the overall performance of the company.

“To make sure our service stays perfectly in tune with the market demands, VDAB is continuously evolving,” explains Bart Van Schel, Director Data Management and Analysis. “The problem is that the amount of data we collect is increasing exponentially as the strategic importance of local job centres becomes more critical.” To keep such a complex organization on track, management needs a constant and clear view of organizational performance, not just numbers. “Frankly, the volume of information in

our Enterprise Information System was becoming too complex and extended for the steering board to reasonably work with. We needed a powerful communication and visualization tool on top of our existing EIS-system to sort out and provide truly relevant and strategic management information to all management layers. For us, the system of Balanced Scorecards, visualized with SAS Strategic Performance Management, has proven to be a very comprehensive answer.”

Dashboard view

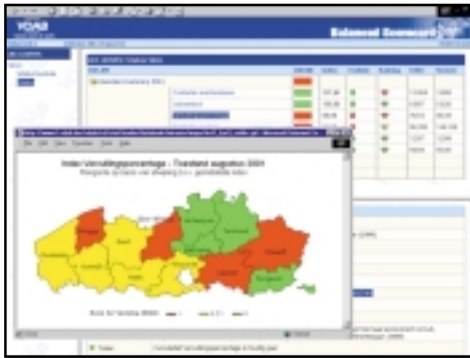
Balanced Scorecards permit the measurement and management of business performance in every layer of the organization. This means an optimal balance of financial and operational perspectives. Every aspect, from finance, clients, and staff, to markets and innovation are represented. “Now, defining and monitoring our key metrics is very easy, thanks to the customized interactive user portals in SAS Strategic Performance Management. Van Schel illustrates their new efficiency with a few examples. “Every division and local job centre is included on the start screen. One click brings the user to a lower organization level and more detailed information. Clear graphs and charts show the evolution of every parameter. Conveniently arranged tables with symbols and colours permit interpretation and comparison of the performance of each unit at a glance. There are even several alarm thresholds built into the metrics. This enables management to respond immediately and execute the appropriate adjustments. SAS Strategic Performance Management is an enormous help in keeping us on our defined growth path by providing accurate threshold values. Objectives always remain realistic.



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Director Data Management
and Analysis, VDAB



SAS Strategic Performance Management helps management understand precisely how activities relate to each other and the total affect they have on company strategy.

“SAS Strategic Performance Management provides a clear and continuous 360-degree overview of the company. Top management has all the information they need for developing long-term strategies. With the full picture in hand, they can make a more informed decisions regarding various divisions, how their activities relate to each other, and their overall effect upon the company strategy and performance. Equally important is the fact that the solution has been seamlessly integrated with the SAS analytical tools for forecasting, modelling, and data mining,” adds Van Schel.

SAS – a real partner for the long haul

Van Schel is very enthusiastic about SAS service. “They provide intensive support during the development and implementation phase as well as total training of the end-users. They transfer their specialized knowledge into our company. This in turn allows us to continuously optimize and refine the product ourselves, precisely what we expect from our partners.”

The implementation of SAS Strategic Performance Management was not the first collaboration between VDAB and SAS. Van Schel reports that “SAS has been our partner since the very beginning. They have always provided us with innovative and powerful solutions. SAS thoroughly understand the intricacies of our business. They bring the full force of their experience and knowledge to bear on our strategic needs in business solutions, data warehousing, and data mining. It is absolutely clear to us that in SAS, we have found a partner that shares our ambitions and vision of modern knowledge-based management.”

“All of this is ultra-fast and online via the Intranet. Instead of struggling through kilos of complicated paper reports that require extended interpretation, managers can focus on line items with a clear dashboard view. Managers can now make decisions based on comprehensive and up-to-the-moment data. We know the actual performance of the entire company, not just what we think or hope is happening.”

Stimulating responsibility in regional managers

SAS Strategic Performance Management results in the continuous transfer of internal knowledge. Vital information is easily and quickly communicated company-wide. Best practices are spread much faster to every level of the company. “SAS Strategic Performance Management has made it possible for us to evolve from a centrally-managed organization to a bottom-up-aligned management. This has been especially significant in stimulating responsibility in regional managers. SAS Strategic Performance Management permits local managers to benchmark their results with other local centres. This stimulates internal competitiveness and responsibility for rapid and appropriate new actions. Regional managers can easily add successful new ideas and activities to the Comment Manager during monthly management team meetings. In this way, the steering committee is immediately informed about local activities and can make adjustments if

necessary. A query on the comments database shows an overview of all actions conducted in relation to a specified performance indicator. That makes the Comment Manager a powerful knowledge sharing platform throughout the company,” observes Van Schel.

SAS Strategic Performance Management’s efficient communication means that information not only migrates vertically (top down and bottom up), but also horizontally. This way, local centres keep fully informed about the actions of their colleagues throughout Flanders. Van Schel again: “Local managers are enthusiastic about SAS Strategic Performance Management since it helps them evolve from directors to real coaches with increased responsibilities. The traditional MBO approach often leads managers to focus only on the numbers as their objective. With the Balanced Scorecard, on the other hand, numbers are only a starting point for management actions. SAS Strategic Performance Management creates a wide variety of possibilities for management to consider.”

Understanding and pursuing common goals

With the Balanced Scorecards approach, corporate strategy is easily translated into day-to-day management decisions. SAS Strategic Performance Management makes sure everybody in the company are pursuing common goals.



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