

## How to Get the Best Out of 360-degree Feedback

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*360-degree assessment* is the systematic collection and feedback of performance data on an individual or group, derived from a number of stakeholders. 360-degree feedback program aims at solving multi-dimensional problems in an organization ranging from employee engagement and attrition to development and succession planning.

The 360 feedback or *multi-rater feedback* provides a constructive input platform that enables a group of co-workers to provide reviews on the output of a fellow employee. Traditionally, the manager is the person who gets to use the feedback. *360-degree review* is an important component of most performance and talent management processes.

Usually, an online instrument is selected for employees to interact within providing the performance feedback. This instrument provides the advantage of collating the feedback for dissemination and employee understanding. But these instruments are only useful if the data is kept confidential, the respondents are encouraged to be more honest, and the intent behind the 360 is made clear to every employee. This needs special attention whether you are using an online survey or in-depth interviews by an outside consultant. Co-workers can be more honest and direct in the belief that their opinions are not going to be attributed to them, but many may be concerned that their answers will not be kept secret.

Colleagues who engage in the 360 assessments generally include the employee's supervisor, some fellow staff members, reporting staff members and the organization's functional managers with whom the employee interacts daily.

Helping leaders understand their unique strengths and development areas is only one of the many benefits that can be gained from conducting a 360 feedback initiative and for instance, in a case study by Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide (2011), the implementation shows a great example of how companies can provide the broader organization with measurable benefits as well. 360-degree assessment can also be used to support your development initiatives or integrate into performance management and succession planning. Identify themes, strengths and opportunities for improvement across teams, departments or the entire organization.

When carrying out a 360 degree, human resource and the manager of the individuals should be clear about the intent of the 360 with the consultant, the subject and the respondents. Is this for general development purposes, or is there a specific issue with results that is of concern? If the work of the subject is at stake, this should be made known to both the subject and the consultant. It can be counter-productive to hold the actual goals from the respondent, and the consultant who may be involved. For example, if consultants doing the interview do not know what's at stake, they may not be able to zero in on crucial areas of success or force participants to realize the seriousness of their condition.

## Advantages of 360 degrees

- **It gives you a broad picture of an employee's performance**

360 Feedback gives you a broader idea of an employee's strengths and weaknesses. This brings in feedback from many different angles, including peers and direct reports, and a self-assessment by the person being appraised.

- **It helps people to know how the organization sees them**

In day-to-day work we don't usually share positive feedback with our colleagues or say why we value them – 360 review is an opportunity for just that. It can give employees a real boost to see that their work has been recognized by work colleagues, direct reports and managers, as they might have thought it was not that noticeable.

- **It gives employees the platform they want to give and receive feedback**

Employees are given the opportunity to express what they like and hate about each group of co-workers they work with. And know what they are doing well and could do better.

- **Development opportunities in teams or divisions are easier to spot**

A manager will get one perspective of a member of the team but when it comes to managing their team members or communicating with colleagues, they may be lagging behind. But given the new AI technologies, consultants will generate a huge amount of company-wide reviews and get a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses within certain departments.

## What to do

To avoid people's inclination to be positive, but usually not very specific or biased, Limit who a person may appoint to review them, or have the survey administrator select the reviewers.

This will guarantee that reviewers are people with whom the subject interacts, or have regular contact.

In your survey questionnaire, your questions should encourage constructive feedback and give employees opportunities to say what someone is doing well. It's also about coaching: you should prepare your team to use the occasion to give fair feedback but that helps the team to grow. And if you still find that feedback is predominantly negative, or that people continue to attack others, then it's a sign of a bigger issue – why does this toxicity exist and what can you do to remedy it?

To have a successful 360 review program, you need to include everybody, from the CEO to the last low-level staff members. It needs to be clear that this is a continuously and fairly applied feedback plan, and that it is related to performance development and a scheme of incentives. To win over senior managers, show how 360-degree assessment helps companies review employee performance against core

organizational values and competencies

In any case, how you introduce, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of the 360 review process is critical to its success or failure. 360 feedback reviews are useful to the employee as they provide a detailed and balanced view of their skills and behaviours.

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