



“Removing the Fear of Feedback: 360°s as a Talent Development Tool”

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Introduction

Whenever a 360° feedback process is introduced into a company, there is usually quite a bit of undue consternation about the idea. Some executives, managers, supervisors, and employees might even perceive 360°s as an unfair and unnecessary process. Concerns also loom regarding confidentiality, anonymity, lack of impartiality, retaliation, “career suicide,” and other negative repercussions. For some, nothing good could possibly come from the 360° process.

The fact is, 360° feedback is invaluable when correctly administered and applied. This multi-source feedback provides recipients with critical, honest direction on how to perform even better than before.

Not surprisingly, under-performing employees do not embrace evaluation opportunities or constructive feedback. On the other hand, strong performers eagerly welcome the feedback, hoping to learn how to perform their jobs more effectively and position themselves for future opportunities.

When employees are fully informed about the process execution and expectations and understand the tangible benefits to their own individual development, critical buy-in occurs. As with any new initiative, communication and clarity of impact are the keys to success.

What is 360° feedback?

In 360° feedback evaluations, an employee is provided specific numeric ratings and comments in written form designed to give specifics about others’ perceptions of their work-related behavior. The feedback should originate from those in the best positions to observe the employee on a regular basis. Typically, those providing feedback fall

into one of the following rater groups:

- Subordinates
- Peers
- Managers
- Self
- Customers

How can the 360° process enhance your employees and your company?

360° feedback is an extremely effective vehicle for developmental purposes. It provides a complete vantage point for gaining self-awareness of how others view one's level of performance relative to work-related competencies. The 360° process provides feedback on *how* one achieves goals, not whether the goals were achieved. The information an employee receives from a 360° contributes to professional and personal development in many ways:

- Identifying strengths and leveraging them in order to add maximum value to the organization
- Identifying developmental opportunities and the steps that can be taken to improve performance in those areas
- Understanding how one's behavior is viewed differently by various groups of workers
- Gaining awareness of how one's self-perception differs from others' perceptions
- Guiding career planning
- Providing structure and focus for managers and coaches as they offer guidance and support

What 360° feedback *doesn't* do:

360° feedback is not intended to be a performance appraisal or end of year review. Performance appraisals are designed to document an employee's performance and progress on work-related business goals set by one's manager. Data from performance appraisals, not 360's, is often used to determine:

- Promotions
- Salary
- Changes in job responsibilities

Potential Pitfalls of the 360° Process

- Dedicating inadequate attention or care to the feedback process (i.e., carefully reviewing and accurately interpreting results with participants).
- Indirectly or directly sending the message that feedback is a unique event rather than an ongoing process.

- Neglecting feedback or not applying it to development efforts may cause raters to feel efforts were wasted.
- Avoiding setting specific development goals & action plans based on the feedback.
- Basing feedback on recent critical incidents (positive or negative) rather than the individual's entire body of work for the rating period.
- Halo effects and "one-time jerk effects" could be observed if the rater is not considering the person's performance over time.
- Sending unsupportive cultural signals. If the culture is not supportive, the participants will be afraid to be candid and results will not have value.
- Neglecting to clarify the purpose and expectations of 360° feedback. This step is critical in order to allay fears and correct misperceptions.
- Providing inaccurate feedback because raters are fearful of or hesitant to provide negative feedback. Peers may be in the best position to evaluate each other after working closely together but are afraid of damaging relationships.
- Using the 360° process to scapegoat, blame, or single out individuals negatively rather than for constructive enhancement.

By paying close attention to potential pitfalls and addressing each one carefully, you can realize individual and organizational improvements via the 360° process. Your organization, your employees, and your bottom line can benefit.

For assistance with implementing a 360° process, please [contact us](#) at [TalentQuest](#).

Is your company ready for a 360°?

Does your company have a supportive, developmentally oriented culture? Your organization must value feedback and development, not just pure results and the achievement of various performance indicators.

Consider the following to gauge your organization's readiness:

- Does the company operate with an existing competency model?
- Are employees informed and aware of individual expectations?
- How open are your communication channels?
- Are employees willing to address any and all issues that might be uncovered?

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