



Seven Steps to a Successful 360° Implementation

Understand the Value of a 360° Program

These days, the vast majority of Fortune 1000 companies use some form of multi-source assessment (over 90%, according to a recent HR Magazine article). The most common type of multi-source assessment is known as the 360° evaluation. The 360° evaluation gathers insight from all perspectives to diagnose strengths and developmental areas for individuals within an organization. Typically, surveys are given to everyone familiar with the individual's work behavior, including managers, peers, and direct reports. 360° evaluations have evolved over time from a simple tool used to diagnose performance issues, to a tool that can help organizations develop future leaders. At its best, a 360° survey can move culture and communicate expectations to employees and leaders about what is valued in the organization.

Prepare Your Company for Future Success

With large numbers of baby boomers heading out of the workforce, there is a lack of leaders to succeed them. Organizations need to find individuals who can meet the ever-changing demands of the local and global economy. Because the population of incoming workers is much smaller than the population exiting, organizations will not be able to replace leaders with leaders. Instead, they will need to develop leaders from their existing pool of employees. Clear and focused feedback accelerates this development process.

It can be challenging to move technically talented employees into roles that require an understanding of the broader organization, managerial decision-making, and leadership. Many of these new leaders have technical skills (hard skills) pertinent to their specialization, but not the soft skills to lead a team and influence an organization. Soft skills, including communication, empathy, integrity, etc. must be developed in order to transition employees to higher leadership levels. These soft skills, and the behaviors associated with them, are best measured through the eyes of others.

Soft skills are often more difficult to change than hard skills; they reflect habits that individuals have learned throughout their life. Before people can change their behaviors, they must understand their habits and attitudes. 360° feedback provides the "aha" moments that allow us to recognize individual strengths and blind spots.

Change is a two-step forward, one-step back proposition that requires support if it is to be real and long-lasting. Studies have shown that change is most effective when supported by coaching, training courses, and encouragement for at least one year. Follow-up 360° surveys are also beneficial, because they provide measurable feedback on progress that is being made. These follow-up surveys also allow organizations to gauge the return on their investment in leadership development.

Seven Steps to Success:

1. Build 360° feedback into broader development opportunities.
2. Clearly define and communicate key competencies and set clear behavioral standards – this will keep the tool from just being a measure of the likability of leaders.
3. Train raters and ensure the confidentiality of their responses to 360° surveys.
4. Keep raters engaged by making leaders accountable for follow-up communication. Provide templates to help leaders communicate key learnings and the focus of their action plan.
5. When conducting training needs analysis or leveraging strengths, use a group level 360° report (rather than individual reports).
6. Provide guides and tools to help people develop against the results of their 360° feedback report.
7. Make it count; add action plan follow-up to your performance metrics.

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