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360 Degree Feedback FAQ

What is 360 Degree Feedback?

Wikipedia defines 360 degree feedback as follows:-

In human resources, 360-degree feedback is employee development feedback that comes from all around the employee. The feedback would come from subordinates, peers and managers in the organisational hierarchy, as well as a self-assessment, and in some cases external sources such as customers and suppliers or other interested stakeholders. ('360' refers to the 360 degrees in a circle.)

What are the advantages of 360 Degree Feedback?

To the individual:

- Helps individuals gain a realistic view of how others perceive them
- Can uncover hidden lights and blind spots
- Feedback coming from a number of different people is more likely to be accepted
- Inspires people to take ownership of their own learning and development
- Provides feedback in a quantifiable form on a structured range of behaviours

To the team:

- Increases communication between team members
- higher levels of trust and better communication as individuals identify the causes of breakdowns
- It helps people understand how their behaviour influences both their own personal effectiveness and how they impact the smooth running of the organisation.
- Supports teamwork by involving team members in the development process
- Increased team effectiveness

To the organization:

- Reinforced corporate culture by linking survey items to organizational leadership competencies and company values
- Better career development planning and implementation for employees
- Helps with training needs analysis



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Are there other names for 360 Degree Feedback?

360 Degree Feedback is also known as multi-rater feedback', 'multi-source feedback', 'multi-source assessment' or 360 Degree Appraisal.

How is 360 Appraisal different from Personality Profiling?

Psychometric Profiling tools such as Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), DISC (Thomas International) or Forte Communications Style Profile work by asking you to choose a number of preferences and then tries to predict how you are likely to behave in different situations. 360 Degree Feedback uses structured questions to ask a number of people who know you well for observations about your real life behaviour.

Psychometric Profiling measures your preferences and then predicts how you are likely to choose to behave, while 360 Degree Feedback focuses on your observed behavioural competencies.

Who are the various participants in a 360 Degree Appraisal?

- The **Subject** or **Candidate** is the person who the feedback is about
- The **Respondents** or **Reviewers** are the people who are giving feedback (e.g. colleagues, peers, team members, customers, associates)
- The process may be overseen by a **Manager, Coach, Trainer** or **Mentor**

How can you verify the validity and reliability of a 360 report?

The process of compiling a 360 Degree Feedback report should be transparent - it needs to be clear where the figures have come from and how the different answers have been calculated. You should steer clear of reports which attempt to over analyse the data or where it is not clear how the conclusions derive from the original feedback data.

What is a Competency Framework and how do I know if it is valid?

In this context Competencies have headings like 'analytical thinking', 'customer focus', 'commercial awareness', 'communication skills'. Each competency can be described in terms of a variety of observable behaviours which contribute to the overall competency. The competency framework for a particular role describes the qualities of the ideal behaviours displayed within that role.



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What are Levels in Competency Frameworks?

Different roles require different levels of expertise even though the area of competency may be the same. For example: requirements of a Managing Director's behaviour in terms of Commercial Awareness would be different from an office worker's. In 360 Degree Feedback this would be reflected in the different questions that would be asked.

Why are Competency Frameworks used for 360 Degree Feedback?

It is important that feedback is well rounded and covers all the types of behaviour that are required in a particular job role rather than focussing on one or two issues. Competency Frameworks provide that structure and ensure the feedback is balanced across the range of competencies.

Can 360 Degree Feedback be used in place of traditional Performance Reviews?

Not recommended. Firstly the respondents are not necessarily in a position to assess your performance in terms of achievement of objectives. And secondly it places unfair pressure on them when what you really need is their honest feedback. However, your 360 Degree Feedback report may be a useful input to your Performance Review and Professional Development Plan.

Are there circumstances where 360 Degree Feedback should not be used?

Yes. 360 Degree Feedback is a powerful tool and it should not be used in a way which is likely to damage trust between colleagues - for example to try and manage someone out of a job or justify some sort of disciplinary action. Also it should be credible that the purpose of the exercise is a supportive one designed to help people succeed. It should not be used if there is no intention of helping the candidate to develop in the issue that it raises.



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Is confidentiality important for 360 Degree Feedback?

In the ideal situation people are happy to give feedback and don't mind it being known what they said. However, in the real world most people feel that a degree of anonymity allows them to be honest without fear of any difficulty resulting from what they might say. It is important that the 360 solution used gives people the assurance of anonymity. For this reason, many major companies use an external 360 supplier with a focus on user support.

How many companies are using 360 Degree Feedback?

Hard to say. However, Carruthers (2003) reported that 90% of Fortune 500 companies used 360-degree feedback. Most major companies now routinely use 360 Degree Feedback and it is commonly used in training and coaching.

What type of information should be targeted?

360 degree feedback is suitable for measuring core skills that impact on the performance of colleagues and others in the candidates circle of influence. It is important that the questions in the 360 Degree Feedback survey target real observable behaviour and skills rather than subjective points of view.