
A Guide to choosing reviewers for a 360 degree feedback programme

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1. Introduction

This guide is aimed at helping 360 participants and their Managers or Moderators decide whom to invite for feedback. The choice of feedback providers will have an impact on the quality of feedback received, so it is important that choices are made carefully and in discussion with your Manager, Moderator or the person managing the Review Programme (Review Manager). The following guidelines and key questions should help determine who Participants should ask.

Talent 360® is able to provide 360 degree feedback services and provides support for all of the following guidance and rules.

2. Seven Key Principles

Our experience suggest that while there are no hard and fast rules for selecting reviewers, the following seven guidelines represent good practice in this area:

- 1) The participant is generally in the best position to identify who is able comment meaningfully on their performance. However, they should make their selection in agreement with their manager or a Moderator to ensure that a balanced sample of feedback providers is selected, and that the person hasn't accidentally overlooked any important sources. All feedback providers must be credible and trusted by the participant in order to make the feedback valid and to encourage the participant to act on that feedback.
- 2) There should be a minimum of 6 feedback providers for each Participant. This includes the Participant themselves, their manager, and four others. If you have fewer than this, there is the danger that one person's view will have a major impact on the overall results. Additionally, anonymity is a key consideration - you should ensure you have enough people so that individual feedback providers are not identifiable from their ratings and comments.
- 3) The maximum number of feedback providers should be about 12 (again, including the Participant and their Manager).
- 4) The Participant will get a more rounded and complete view if they ask people to provide feedback from people who see them in number of different contexts.
- 5) The potential reviewers should be people that are able to comment on the Participant's work performance in a number of areas (for instance, the way they approach their work, the way they deal with others, how they make decisions and how they handle different situations). These reviewers should all have or have recently had a reasonable amount of contact with them in a work context. For example, they may want to ask a colleague in another business unit with whom they have recently worked on a project or opportunity, or a senior member in their area who is not their immediate Manager but is someone they have regular contact with.
- 6) To ensure balanced and useful feedback, Participants should avoid inviting just those people with whom they get on best. This is for their personal development and benefit and people usually find that the more constructive and useful comments are provided by people who are not close friends.
- 7) External contacts and partners can be included to provide feedback as long as they have a reasonable amount of contact with the Participant and will be able to comment on most of the competencies.

3. Anonymity

Within the Personal Report generated as a result of a 360 degree feedback review, the feedback is generally broken down by reviewers in the following review groups:

- Self
- Manager
- Peers
- Direct reports
- Customers
- Suppliers
- External partners or agencies (common in the Public Sector)

Only feedback from the Participant and their Manager should be identifiable; therefore at least two people in each of the other two categories are needed (i.e., if you are a manager, you should have at least two direct reports and at least two peers, etc) to ensure anonymity. It is preferable to start off with more than two in each group, so that if for any reason one person in a category decides or is unable to provide feedback, there are still enough people to maintain anonymity.

If only one review is provided within a review group and this feedback is required to be anonymous, the report should not show the feedback in a way that can identify its source. The report should also not mix feedback from different groups e.g. to include a single Peer into the feedback attributed to Direct Reports, as this distorts feedback from the Direct Report Group.

It is desirable to be able to identify the group from which answers to free text questions come as it provides useful context for their comments.

Some questions which you can ask yourself when deciding on your feedback providers are given on the following page.

4. Guidance for Participants

(cut and paste this section into a document for Participants or Moderators if required)

Some questions to ask yourself when deciding whom to ask for feedback:

- 1) With whom have you worked most closely over the past year?
- 2) Have you worked on any projects or tasks that are outside your normal remit? Who could provide feedback in this context?
- 3) Have you been trying to improve or develop your performance recently? Who might have observed your efforts in this area?
- 4) What achievements are you most proud of this year? Who would have been in a position to observe and comment on those?
- 5) What aspects of your work could be improved? Who might be able to give you helpful and constructive feedback in these areas, to help increase your future performance?
- 6) Do you have a 'dotted line' into any managers or senior colleagues other than your immediate line manager? Could they provide you with feedback?
- 7) Looking at the list of people you could ask, do they all have sufficient contact with you to comment on most of the competencies included in the questionnaire?
- 8) Have I just picked my 'best friends and closest allies'? Am I really giving myself the opportunity to collect balanced and useful feedback?

There are no hard and fast rules as to how long you need to have been working with someone before they are able to provide you with meaningful feedback; this does depend to a certain extent on the depth of contact they have with you. However, people who have had only a couple of weeks' interaction with you may end up rating many of the items 'not observed/don't know' which can lessen the usefulness of the feedback. If you have only been working with an individual for a few weeks, but in this time they have seen you in a number of contexts, have worked very closely with you or will have useful feedback on specific areas of your performance, it might be worth inviting them to rate you anyway. The questionnaires are usually tailored with each response group in mind; for instance, external partners are not usually asked to comment or rate on your ability to develop your direct reports, since they are unlikely to have seen you in this context. If in doubt, you can discuss this with the individual - highlight the competencies that are being measured and ask them whether they feel they could comment appropriately and provide you with meaningful feedback.

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