

Introduction

In this article, Susan Smith shares her working experience and offers you what she considers to be the key considerations for maximising the effectiveness of the positioning of 360 feedback programmes. Susan has many years in both HQ and regional operations and has introduced 360 feedback programmes across many business teams.

Here we have eight key questions that we would recommend you challenge yourself or your 360 programme management team to answer.

1. Ask yourself - will 360 work around here, now?

360 should be approached as an evolutionary way to capture feedback. If there is no historical approach to feedback being a fundamental and accepted part of the culture it may encounter significant obstacles. It may be that a formalised review processes and one to one feedback needs to be introduced to lay the foundations for the full 360 and help to realise the value it can add to an open, honest culture with a genuine desire to improve performance. Perhaps a pilot in a certain part of the business (usually the top) might be a better starting point?

2. Can I create a 'What's in it for them'?

When positioning the 360 with the end-user it is imperative that a clear purpose is defined. Is the overall outcome designed to support Management Development, Coaching, Career Development or Performance Management? Are you introducing new competencies, ways of working or bonus schemes? It may be some or all of these. By exploring with the users it will help to sell the "what's in it for me" gaining buy-in and provide clarity to how the organisation will use the results.

3. Can I deal with 'emotional' objections?

Explain how the 360 will be administered, who will ensure it happens, who will collate the results and how, when will they receive the feedback and who from? Ensure that the process is transparent and all can see what the desired outcomes are. It is useful to show at this stage that the 360 process will be revisited to allow individuals to see how they have improved based on feedback captured over time.

4. Can I create a 'What's in it for the Management population'?

Is there an overarching strategy or goal that the organisation is working towards? 360 can be extremely effective when clear links can be seen between the outcomes and the future vision of an organisation. Are there values or a core mission statement that the behaviours link to?

5. Can I enlist their support as opposed to just agreement?

Identify the key stakeholders to act as "Champions" supporting the pilot of the process and promoting its worth and usefulness as a management tool. These may be a Senior Management Group or well respected members of specific business areas. This group would then define and promote the organisation need for the 360. I.e. to identify current skills against those required for future growth and develop training plans to assist this.

6. Are the questions (in the review) going to fit and be seen to be relevant?

Where possible ensure that the questions reflect the desired competencies. If the organisation does not use competencies ensure that the language used is common across the organisation, appropriate to the respondents and can clearly elicit the desired responses. It is useful to discuss the design of the questions and format with a pilot group of differing levels to ensure your format will deliver what is required and provide one clear consistent message of its worth. Do see our other article on this subject here.

7. Have I aligned the outputs of this with other HR processes?

Wherever possible align the feedback to the Personal Development process within the organisation. Formalising action plans based on the feedback and reviewing quarterly shows commitment to the users. It also ensures the feedback is revisited and discussed regularly keeping the process alive and helping to embed it into the organisations culture.

The choice should be given to the individuals to discuss the action plans with their manager or a mentor. Sharing by choice in this way can then help to naturally encourage a feedback rich team who seek to adopt the process into every day operations.

8. Have I equipped those tasked with delivering and receiving the feedback? And are they ready, willing and able?

Be specific when and how the feedback will be delivered. Ensure that the individuals are briefed on the stages on feedback - shock, anger, rejection, and acceptance. This helps them to mentally prepare for the sessions and understand their emotions are natural and expected. In our experience individuals can move more quickly to acceptance when they understand the stages and the reasons for their feelings. Thus helping the feedback to be digested and understood more fully.

Ensure the individual understand that by being a willing participant is a 360 feedback process, that they own the feedback. By accepting to be involved, make sure any ground rules are laid out in advance and that choosing to decline is 'ok'. It is only them that can act upon the feedback and use it to provide deeper self insight. Also explain that what they receive is in no way altered or edited. It is the views of their chosen respondents as provided on the forms. To provide a balanced view always state the number of responses received against those solicited.

How did you (they) get on? If you would like to know more, our core team and associates have deep expertise in the definition, design and fulfilment of 360° assessment programmes, **competence frameworks**, in addition to other **assessment strategies** such as situational judgement and psychometric tests.

Head Light Communications also has the proven ability to conduct objective marketplace searches and evaluations of enabling HR technology, having assisted organisations select HR Management Systems, Performance Appraisal tools, e-learning courseware and bespoke tools and software.

We also have our own portfolio of on-line assessment software in this area, namely **Talent 360™**, **Talent 180™ 3.0** and **Talent Spotter™**.