



## 360 Degree Feedback: Goals and Philosophy

The 360 degree feedback process serves four key purposes: 1) Increases an individual's awareness of managerial and leadership behaviors, strengths & weaknesses; 2) It sets a baseline measure of skills; 3) It helps participants understand the importance of any subsequent leadership training and where they may need to focus their attention; and, 4) It can be repeated later to measure changes in behavior (i.e., how well participants address weaknesses or transfer training from the classroom to the workplace).

It is critical that 360 degree feedback be used in a constructive manner. At the Center for Organization Effectiveness, our 360 degree feedback process is based on the following premises:

- Participants have a clear understanding of the purpose of the tool and how results will be used.
- 360 degree feedback is for development purposes only. It is NOT a performance appraisal.
- Results are delivered to the recipient only. While giving the data to the participant's manager does increase accountability and allows the manager to quantifiably track progress, there are a variety of pitfalls to giving the manager a copy of the report, such as:
  - people may fear the process.
  - feedback comments may not be as constructive.
  - scores may be arbitrarily higher.
  - data can viewed as being a weapon, not a development tool.
  - manager may lack the ability to interpret the data appropriately.
  - manager may reprimand the employee for not doing well.
- Recipients must clearly understand how to interpret the results. We can share feedback results in either a workshop setting, or by providing one-on-one feedback to each participant.
- Recipients must share goals, not actual results. In this way, managers can act as coaches, guiding the individual to higher performance levels, not judges, focusing on specific scores and comments.

Is 360 degree feedback ever inappropriate? Yes, when:

- there is no clear purpose for the 360 process.
- it is not fully supported by the leaders in the organization.
- individuals have not been in their roles long enough to provide valid feedback.
- there are not enough respondents who truly understand the full scope of the individual's responsibilities.
- the group or organization is experiencing or just experienced major change.
- there is a high degree of mistrust or cynicism in the organization.
- the goal for the process is not development focused.



## 360 Degree Feedback: Review of Approaches

There are several 360 degree feedback methods to consider — (A) a customized approach, (B) a standardized approach, or (C) a semi-customized approach. Each have their advantages and disadvantages, and can be useful in helping the leader focus on his/her strengths and improvement opportunities.

### **A. Customized Approach**

The process for designing and implementing a customized 360 survey includes:

#### **1. Competency model development and survey design**

- Conduct critical incident interviews with a sample of leaders/managers/direct reports.
- Transcribe interviews and review interview notes.
- Develop a leadership competency model.
- Submit a draft for review; revise.

#### **2. Survey distribution**

- Obtain list of reviewers.
- Distribute cover letter, surveys and business reply envelopes OR facilitate distribution of online 360 survey.

#### **3. Data analysis and reporting**

- Compile and analyze the data, prepare a summary report for each participant (including competency results, individual question results, and narrative comments).
- Share feedback results during the course of the workshop OR on a one-on-one basis with each participant.
- Prepare a report of aggregate results and present to the executive team, discuss implications, next steps, etc.

### **Advantages of Customized Approach**

- Tie to other company initiatives – Competencies can be used for other human resource initiatives, such as succession planning, recruitment, development of training programs, etc.
- More buy-in – because of their involvement with the development of the survey instrument, individuals will have more buy-in to the process.
- Higher face validity – Just because a standardized survey was validated in the context of another population, it does not mean that it will be valid for your organization. Customized models usually have higher face validity in the eyes of the participants and the organization.

### **Disadvantages of Customized Approach**

- Cost – Customized approaches require an initial investment to develop the model.
- Time – Again, due to the need to develop the competency model, customized approaches take more start-up time before the actual survey process can begin.



## 360 Degree Feedback: Review of Approaches (Cont'd.)

### **B. Standardized Approach**

An off-the-shelf instrument you might want to consider is the Management & Leadership Profile (MLP). It is a tool that provides managers with understandable and believable feedback on their behavior in fifteen critical areas. While not as organization-specific as a customized survey, the fifteen areas tend to be time-tested management and leadership needs. These include:

#### **Clarity of Purpose**

- Goals
- Communication

#### **Providing Feedback**

- Feedback

#### **Planning & Problem Avoidance**

- Planning
- Involvement
- Decision Making

#### **Exercising Control**

- Managing Performance
- Accountability
- Delegation

#### **Task Accomplishment**

- Competence
- Motivation
- Work Facilitation

#### **Individual & Team Relationships**

- Relationships
- Linking
- Teamwork

The MLP is a meaningful way to help people understand what behaviors they need to continue and what behaviors they need to change. Used with a group of managers, an aggregate report can be produced to determine the team's overall training and development needs.

### **Advantages of Standardized Approach**

- Costs & time – Instrument has already been developed. Requires no up-front time to develop the model.
- Reliability – Models have been tested with hundreds of other organizations.

### **Disadvantages of Standardized Approach**

- Not organization-specific – can't tie to other human resource initiatives as easily.
- Less buy-in from the participating individuals – they had no involvement in the development of the 360 model and survey items.
- Face validity – instruments may contain items that do not apply to your organization, thereby decreasing the face validity of the instrument and the 360 process itself.



## 360 Degree Feedback: Review of Approaches (Cont'd.)

### **C. Semi-Customized Approach**

The process for designing and implementing a semi-customized 360 survey includes:

#### **1. Survey design**

- Meet with senior management to determine needs.
- Review and select the competencies from the Center Survey Database.
- Select between 4 and 7 survey items for each competency area.
- Submit a draft for review; revise.

#### **2. Survey distribution**

- Obtain list of reviewers.
- Distribute cover letter, surveys and business reply envelopes OR facilitate distribution of online 360 survey.

#### **3. Data analysis and reporting**

- Compile and analyze the data, prepare a summary report for each participant (including competency results, individual question results, and narrative comments).
- Share feedback results during the course of the workshop OR on a one-on-one basis with each participant.
- Prepare a report of aggregate results and present to the executive team, discuss implications, next steps, etc.

#### **Advantages of Semi-Customized Approach**

- Less cost and time than full customized approach.
- Instrument is more organization-specific than a standardized 360 instrument.
- Higher face validity than standardized approach.

#### **Disadvantages of Semi-Customized Approach**

- Less buy-in from the participating individuals than a full customized approach.
- Less organization-specific than a full customized approach.
- May omit behaviors necessary for effective leadership in the specific organization.