

360° FEEDBACK

BULLETIN TO ACCOMPANY THE GEE TRAINING HANDBOOK

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FORWARD

The information available on 360 Degree Feedback/appraisal is substantial and growing as experience in its use develops across a wider range of organisations.

The approach, with its origins in the late 60s and 70s, has a growing number of exponents and fans and would appear to have many advantages if correctly designed and operated.

This bulletin does not aim to replace the existing literature and advice available from a range of sources. Instead, it is designed to present a summary and quick introduction to a topic of growing interest. A brief list of useful material is available at the end of the bulletin.

Diane Bailey
April 2002

INTRODUCTION

360 Degree Feedback, 360 Degree Appraisal, Multirater feedback are all names for a process which is growing in use and popularity in the UK, as it has done in the US. Organisations using the process in the UK include WH Smith, Tesco and Forward Trust, while in the US companies such as Motorola, Mobil and General Motors have adopted 360 Degree Feedback (reports indicate that most 'Fortune 500' companies use 360 Degree Feedback).

During 1995, the Ashridge Management Research Group surveyed *The Times* top 1000 UK companies to discover who adopted 360 Degree Feedback and how they were using it. Only 119 companies responded and of these only 45 had introduced 360 Degree Feedback. The results, despite the small number involved, paint a positive picture of the value of the method. For details of the survey and its results refer to the 1996 Ashridge report: *360 Degree Feedback – Unguided Missile or Powerful Weapon. (Details at the end of the bulletin).*

The Ashridge Survey indicated, for the small numbers involved at the time, that, as a process, 360 Degree Feedback was generally successful. Despite this, 54% of the organisations reported some disadvantages. They reported that:

- the process is time-consuming and expensive (50%)
- it is threatening to participants receiving feedback (38%)
- subordinates who provide feedback feel threatened and unable to be honest (45%).

Why 360 Degree Feedback?

360 Degree Feedback has raised interest because of a number of organisational and working changes which have taken place over the last decade or so. The changes fuelling interest include:

- the flatter structures which are now replacing many traditional hierarchies
- fewer promotion opportunities available in flatter organisations
- a move to measuring the value-added element in roles, people and specific jobs
- a growth in project methods of working meaning that direct line managers no longer know about or have experience of all aspects of an individual's work and contribution
- growing levels of customer focus and greater emphasis on internal customer-supplier relationships and satisfaction
- attempts at developing and embedding more open and democratic organisational climates
- higher levels of empowerment.

SECTION 1

USES OF 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

SECTION 1 - USES OF 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

Over the past 20 years 360 Degree Feedback or appraisal has been used in a variety of ways to inform and support such activities as:

- performance management systems
- team building and development
- management development
- supervisory training
- an alternative to assessment centres
- succession planning
- career development
- leadership development
- encouraging personal responsibility for development and continued learning.

The growing interest in 360 Degree Feedback systems appears to result from a belief that it has the ability to meet the needs of structural, organisational and business change. Its advocates believe it to have a high level of congruence with total quality management, as well as making a major contribution to skill and competence development and to the empowerment of employees at all levels.

The Contribution of 360 Degree Feedback

360 Degree Feedback is seen to offer a paradigm shift for hierarchical systems as organisations seek to adapt and improve systems of appraisal and feedback to ensure greater effectiveness and increased congruence with business aims and objectives. 360 Degree Feedback can help with:

- employee measurement
- people development
- feedback
- behaviour change
- improved employee performance.

What is vital is that those considering the use and introduction of 360 Degree Feedback need to be very clear about the purpose of its use within their organisation. Key questions to ask are:

- Is to be used evaluatively to measure performance and to link to such issues as pay, promotion, bonuses etc?
- Is it to be used purely for developmental purposes with feedback indicating areas of strength and providing guidance on where improvement is needed?
- Is the system to address both evaluative and developmental issues?

Whichever approach or result the organisation requires it is vital to remember that the standard 360 degrees approach normally solicits feedback from a range of people around the individual in question. It can involve:

- peers

SECTION 1 - USES OF 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

- colleagues above and below the individual
- managers who have experience of part or parts of the individual's performance e.g. project team managers
- customers, internal and external.

Such a combination of feedback does offer a much more three-dimensional overview than the traditional top-down appraisal system. However, this type of multirator feedback has its own problems. The approach will only operate effectively where there is an open, supportive and non-hierarchical climate and where individuals are willing, able and competent both to give good feedback and to receive feedback calmly and open-mindedly. The Best Practice Guidelines on 360 Degree Feedback (see Further reading/Information) contains an interesting quote by Professor Clive Fletcher, Goldsmith College University of London. He says:

'The concept of 360 Degree Feedback makes a lot of sense and if used well, should have a great deal to offer. It seems to suit the move towards the less hierarchical, more flexibly structured and knowledge-based organizations of the future.'

These guidelines state that professionally managed 360 Degree Feedback increases individual self-awareness and go on to say that, as part of a strategic organisational process, 360 Degree Feedback can promote:

- increased understanding of the behaviours required to improve both individual and organisational effectiveness
- more focused development activities, built around the skills and competencies required for successful organisational performance
- increased involvement of people at all levels of the organisation
- increased individual ownership for self-development and learning
- increased familiarity with the implications of cultural or strategic change.

Wynne and Clutterbuck, in their article in February 2002 on www.learningbuzz.com, list a number of reasons for using 360 degree appraisal which extend the potential benefits mentioned above. Their list of reasons for use indicates that 360 degree appraisal, when well managed:

- ensures improved accountability of more people
- supports an emphasis on teamwork
- provides a driving focus for improved customer service
- reduces the danger of bias and discrimination
- provides a link between individual performance and organisational objectives
- increases opportunities for workforce involvement
- identifies potential barriers to progress
- enables development needs to be identified and assessed.

SECTION 1 - USES OF 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

Hence, the information available on 360 Degree Feedback is substantial and growing. The CIPD and the Institute of Management provide reading lists for members and the internet is also a good source.

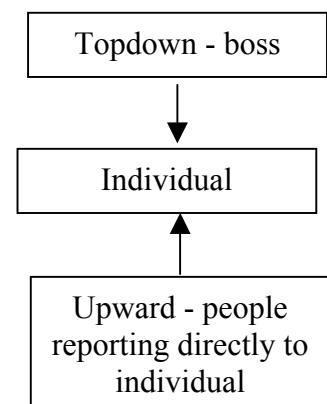
Three Multirater Approaches

There are three different multirater approaches:

- upward feedback
- 360 Degree Feedback
- 540 Degree Feedback.

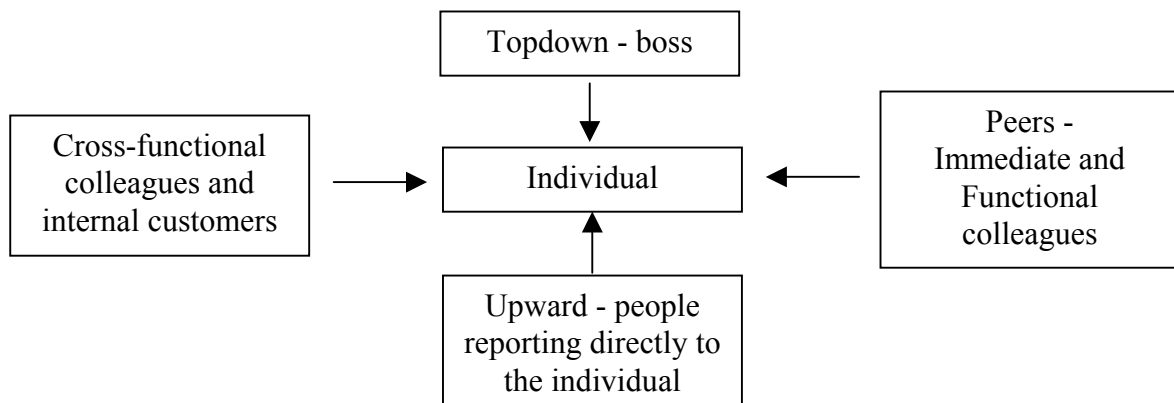
Upward Feedback

This is a reasonably well-established and widely used method which extends the traditional 'topdown appraisal'. It enables people who report directly to an individual to comment on the performance of their boss. As an approach it provides two different perceptions from within the individuals' organisation. Care has to be taken to ensure acceptability of upward feedback to both givers and receivers, particularly on first introduction when the process is new and possibly uncomfortable.



360 Degree Feedback

This approach involves a number of individuals:



With this approach, the individual, for whom feedback will be provided, is actively involved; they will be required to complete a self-rating questionnaire in addition to receiving feedback from a number of sources. The individual's manager, and perhaps other managers who have experience of the individual's work, will complete appropriate instruments, as will colleagues and people who report directly to the individual.

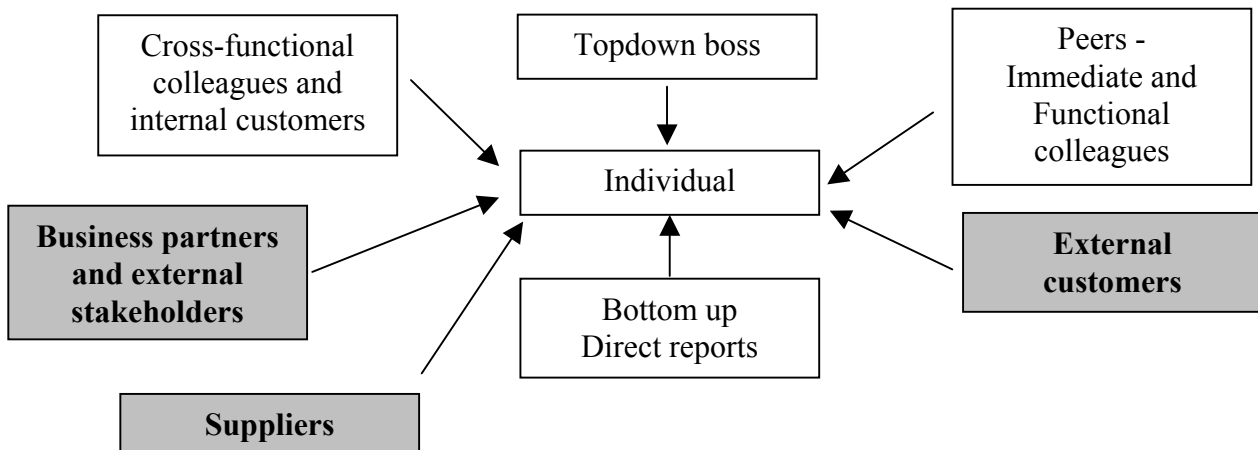
With this approach, feedback may be sought from other colleagues either from within the same team or work unit, or from different parts of the organisation. This approach is increasingly being extended to involve feedback from internal customers, although external customers are rarely

SECTION 1 - USES OF 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

included. In the main, 360 Degree Feedback is primarily intra-organisational and tends to focus on managerial input and consider managerial behaviours. It tends to be operated and initiated by the organisation rather than the individual.

540 Degree Feedback

This little-used approach involves acquiring the widest range of feedback input:



This approach is best termed inter-organisational as external sources of feedback will be involved. Often this approach will concentrate on managerial outputs and on achievement of specific times, quality and cost targets.

At present few organisations use the full 540 degree approach. It provides wider feedback but can be difficult to operate.

Other Variations

Other Linked Approaches

Leadership audit

Some organisations operate what is often called a leadership audit. As the term suggests, this approach involves requesting feedback, from within the organisation, on leadership behaviour and skill. National Westminster Bank, at one point, operated a system like this whereby branch managers were rated (on a numeric scale) every six months, on various leadership competencies by a selection of their staff. After the feedback was provided each manager had to discuss it and any development requirements based on the feedback, with their contact in Personnel.

Other feedback tools which look at specific skills, for example, team building, are used from time to time. Confusingly these are also referred to as 360 Degree Feedback.

Self-directed 360 assessment

SECTION 1 - USES OF 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

This variant extends the benefits of a standard 360 degree approach by including a process for getting face-to-face feedback directly from those who have given it. The approach bypasses intermediate stages such as HR consultants (internal/external) and surveys/questionnaires. It is designed to enable the recipient to ask questions, listen and get clarification of feedback. This approach also differs because it can be initiated by the individual involved as well as by the organisation. It also seeks information on the individual's specific role and objectives and on the organisation's needs. The individual can choose the performance issue on which they require feedback.

Basically, this approach is a full circle evaluation using self-evaluation and feedback from others about performance/achievements in pre-identified areas of skill or competence.

360 Degree Feedback and other Organisational Interventions

In addition to the three main approaches, with variations described above, other processes are used in organisations to measure people's performance or identify their potential. 360 Degree Feedback does not necessarily seek to substitute for any of these processes but it can draw on the strengths of each and possibly lead to a new form of report/rating. Relevant related process include:

- **Performance Appraisals**

Note to Gee
'range' is
singular

360 Degree Feedback extends the principle of regular feedback on, and discussion of, an individual's performance which informs traditional performance appraisal. As a wider range of feedback providers is involved the feedback in 360 degree can be seen as more credible, less biased and more generally, useful.

- **Coaching, Mentoring, Counselling**

360 Degree Feedback has the objective of increasing self-awareness and encouraging the individual to own their own development. Because of this it sits very comfortably alongside such activities as coaching, mentoring, counselling and specific career development activities.

- **Employee Surveys**

Employee attitude and opinion surveys are designed, not only to obtain feedback but also to ensure the wider involvement of employees and encourage consultation across the organization. 360 Degree Feedback changes the focus to the performance of the individual rather than the culture of the organisation.

- **Assessment and Development Centres**

Assessment and Development Centres offer opportunities for structured and rigorous assessment against identified competencies. 360 Degree Feedback builds on these principles and can effectively complement the use of Assessment and Development Centres.

SECTION 2

COMPONENTS OF 360 DEGREE SYSTEMS

SECTION 2 - COMPONENTS OF 360- DEGREE SYSTEMS

The key components of the 360 degree process all affect its success. They are:

- The organisation's climate
- The individual for whom feedback is being sought
- The people who provide feedback (the raters)
- The instrument(s) used to collect feedback
- The method chosen for presenting the feedback received from the raters, this may involve outside consultants or facilitators.

The Organisation's Climate

Currently, many 360 Degree Feedback systems are sold 'off-the-shelf'. This implies that the 'bought-in system' can be implemented easily as an 'add-on' to the existing human resource function. This is not necessarily the case and some systems have proved ineffective, and in some cases disruptive. Specially designed systems, focused on the operating organisation need greater investment of time/resources but tend to be more successful.

To be effective, 360 Degree Feedback needs an environment and culture of openness, trust and mutual support. If the organisation sees learning and the acceptance and management of change as keys to business success this can also help. In such an 'open' culture the 360 system can operate anonymously and confidentially. For 360 Degree Systems to be successful, people have to feel able to speak freely without fear or reprisal. Managers in particular need to be willing and open about receiving upward feedback.

A culture of involvement, empowerment and consultation needs to be in place and openly supported. Employees need to feel part of a participatory culture where constant review of performance and regular assessment of competence is fostered and encouraged in order to contribute informed judgements on their own performance or that of colleagues and managers.

Also and most importantly, for a 360 degree to work, the organisation needs to have clarified carefully:

- what it expects to achieve by and from the 360 degree process
- what it will do with the results and how it will handle the outcomes
- the guidance and training it will provide for all individuals involved
- the resources, financial and otherwise, to be made available.

The organisation needs to be clear about how it will handle such issues as:

- a conflict between individual and organisational needs
- individuals who are reluctant to take part
- individuals who are damaged or disturbed by the process and/or the feedback received.

SECTION 2 - COMPONENTS OF 360- DEGREE SYSTEMS

Useful early questions for the organisation to ask are:

- Is the organisation culture ready for 360 Degree Feedback?
- Is the culture one of involvement and empowerment with an absence of 'blame'?
- Are trust, support and continuous development embedded across the organisation?
- How hierarchical is the organisation and how far will the degree of hierarchy affect views and beliefs about 360 Degree Feedback?
- Are there appropriate support systems and mechanisms in place?
- Can results be effectively evaluated?
- Are the necessary resources available?
- Are people ready for the frank and open discussions on performance which the system will require?
- What monitoring arrangements are needed?

The Individual from whom Feedback is being Sought

Generally, 360 Degree Feedback, whether used for performance evaluation or for the personal development of the individual involved, makes demands on the 'central' or participating individual which extend far beyond those made by traditional Appraisal Systems. The 360 degree system requires the individual to:

- carry out self-assessment
- on some occasions, to make a choice of those individuals (peers and internal customers) who are to be requested to give feedback
- accept detailed and anonymous feedback in a situation which allows them no opportunity to question or respond directly to the giver of the feedback
- build positively on the feedback received and discuss and/or contribute to development needs and solutions
- have a broad view of the organisation and the fit of their own role and contribution to the organisation.

There is evidence that in some organisations individuals have felt threatened by having to receive such extensive feedback.

Questions for the organisation include:

- Are the individuals involved competent to carry out effective self-assessment?
- Will training be necessary?
- Are arrangements to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in place? Are they thorough?
- Is HR prepared, competent and equipped to put in place necessary development resulting from feedback?
- Are line managers supportive and willing to aid development?
- Are any groups or individuals likely to feel particularly threatened by the 360 system?

The People Who Provide the Feedback (The Raters)

Those groups who can be expected to provide feedback as part of a 360 Degree Feedback system are identified in the diagram (see fig. X). Specific individuals within these groups will need to be identified and approached for feedback. The organisation will need to decide how many views they want in order to build a comprehensive range of feedback on performance. One government department using a 360 degree approach to leadership specified that between eight and 10 colleagues, in addition to the individual's boss, would be selected by the individual and asked to provide feedback on a pre-prepared, numerically-rated questionnaire on an annual basis.

As a general rule, those requested to provide feedback should have a stake in the individual's performance i.e. their own role should be affected by the way the individual carries out their work and by the standard of their performance. Those contributing feedback will normally be line manager, peers, direct reports, self and internal customers.

The Line Manager

The line manager involved can be either the immediate or functional boss. Sometimes further managers may be involved, for example, in a matrix organisation or where project teams are used. In general, the line manager can most usefully comment on work results and output, as well as have an input on leadership and teamworking abilities, ability to manage self and others (including upwards) organisational awareness and ability to operate effectively.

Peers

These can be immediate colleagues or people at a similar level in other parts of the organisation. Such individuals can offer useful information on the individual's influence and negotiating ability, their openness, and their dependability.

The individual at the centre of the 360 degree process will often be required to determine who, amongst their peers, will be asked to provide feedback. The temptation for some people will be to ask 'friends' or those who are positively inclined. This may not be the best way of receiving a true range of feedback. In preparing and training people to take part in 360 degree systems the issue of choosing peers to give feedback needs to be addressed, as does the value of receiving a full range of feedback rather than just positive comments.

Direct Reports

People who work for and report directly to the individual involved can give useful and valid information on their leadership and people management ability, the relevance of objectives agreed, levels of support and contribution to the direct reports development. The individual may have a large number of direct reports. In this case decisions will have to be made about who and how many are to be required to provide feedback. If the organisation makes the choice it may wish to categorise the direct reports in some ways:

- new and longer serving individuals
- people who have good or less good working relationships with the individuals
- male or female

SECTION 2 - COMPONENTS OF 360- DEGREE SYSTEMS

- experienced or inexperienced staff.

Working with such distinctions would ensure a good range of perceptions. Where the participant is to make the final choice they will need to be informed of ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ and helped to understand the need for honest, complete feedback.

Self

The individual also completes a questionnaire on their own performance. This helps them think through their own performance, as well as providing a basis for comparing their perceptions with those of the raters involved.

Rating of one’s own performance can be difficult and if a 360 degree system is to be introduced those who will be the subject of rating and feedback need to be trained and equipped not only to use the system, but to carry out effective self-assessment.

Internal Customers

‘Off-the-shelf’ questionnaires can be bought for completion by internal customers who can offer useful information on inter-group collaboration, customer focus and appropriate/inappropriate behaviours.

Selecting the Raters

There are different opinions about and approaches to identifying those who will be asked as peers or direct reports to provide feedback. The spectrum is:

Individual selects Raters	HR and individual formally select Raters	Individual and their line manager jointly select Raters	Line Manager also selects Raters
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Each option has both advantages and disadvantages, the choice of option needs to be made based on a range of issues:

- what the system is to achieve
- how prepared and competent those involved in the system are
- the number of raters needed to give a valid result
- the benefit people believe will accrue from feedback.

It is vitally important that the people identified to give feedback must be credible to the recipient if they are to act on the feedback received. It is also important that the confidentiality and anonymity of raters is maintained and their feedback delivered sensitively.

Questions for the organisation include:

- What feedback is to be requested from each participating group?

SECTION 2 - COMPONENTS OF 360- DEGREE SYSTEMS

- How are raters to be chosen/identified from the peer and direct report groups?
- Which managers other than the direct line manager are to be involved in giving feedback?
- How can the credibility of raters be best ensured?
- How can anonymity and confidentiality be guaranteed so that raters feel free to give honest and full feedback?

SECTION 3

THE INSTRUMENT TO BE USED TO COLLECT FEEDBACK

SECTION 3 - THE INSTRUMENT TO BE USED TO COLLECT FEEDBACK

Many organisations have feedback instruments and questionnaires to sell 'off-the-peg'. These can be useful but should only be used if they fit what the organisation is trying to achieve. Ideally, any questionnaire used should be:

- in line with the organisation's culture and values
- relevant to the raters and their knowledge of and involvement with the individual
- grounded in specific work behaviours and actions
- relevant to existing systems such as competences
- a reliable measuring tool
- able to describe the behaviours which relate to the individual's performance
- designed to elicit clear, specific information
- couched in clear, relevant language
- easy to use.

More than one questionnaire may be needed. Any to be used should be well designed and seen as relevant by the raters *and* the person for whom the feedback is provided. Properly designed questionnaires will give raters an opportunity to say:

- whether or not they have had an opportunity to see each behaviour in action
- whether the behaviour listed is relevant to the individual's job.

In order for a questionnaire to be completed successfully, it should use straightforward language and familiar concepts – a numerical rating scale is one of the easiest methods to use. In choosing or designing a questionnaire the organisation needs to avoid becoming fixated on the instrument itself and to concentrate on the depth and quality of feedback information it can produce.

A questionnaire has most impact, and is easier to use, when it asks about the detail of a specific job. For example, one large insurance company uses a questionnaire for its sales force. It asks about the planning of sales campaigns, quality of technical advice offered to clients, use of sales support staff and other specific job-related issues. The questionnaire is 100% relevant to job performance and is written in language which is clear and relevant to the job holders and their raters.

Many 360 degree questionnaires contain generic questions based on definitions of competences rather than job tasks and the rater has to work out their relevance. One bad example of such a question is, '... fully commits him/herself to achieving according to circumstances'. What exactly does this mean and how could a group of different raters be sure to use the same basis for rating performance against it? Also, such questions could cause problems with interpretation for the recipients of the feedback. Fortunately, today's 360 Degree Feedback software is so flexible that you can quickly create a special, high relevance, set of questions for each key role or group of employees.

Questions for the organisation include:

- Should a questionnaire be bought externally or created internally?

SECTION 3 - THE INSTRUMENT TO BE USED TO COLLECT FEEDBACK

- One questionnaire for everyone or different ones for different roles?
- Should a range of questionnaires be piloted to test relevance and validity?
- How can fixation on the instrument(s) be avoided?
- What training will employees require?

SECTION 4

HANDLING THE FEEDBACK FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 4 - HANDLING THE FEEDBACK FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

There appears to be a consensus of opinion that a 360 Degree Feedback process will not work unless raters are confident that they will remain anonymous. Without this belief, it is unlikely that raters will provide high quality, accurate data, instead they will opt for 'safe' and 'obvious' information. Almost certainly, they will avoid commenting on weaknesses and development needs for fear of reprisal.

There is somewhat of a paradox here, if one of the aims of 360 Degree Feedback is to improve communication and aid the development of more open organisations, talk of anonymity and confidentiality may seem strange. However, you have to start somewhere and it appears that raters need to feel their feedback cannot be tracked to them.

Until you feel your organisation is ready for open feedback and face-to-face discussion of it, you will need to:

- make sure that raters know they can safely give honest views without fear of reprisal or identification
- select people who are trusted and impartial to collect and/or hold completed questionnaires
- ensure there is nothing to raise suspicion that confidentiality can be breached
- consider whether using an external organisation would be wise
- share questionnaires when analysed (do not just put them out for recycling or rubbish destruction)
- decide how/where data is to be stored and who has access to it (keep to a necessary minimum)
- stress to those receiving feedback that raters are supporter and enablers.

These points are equally important for evaluative or developmental use of 360 Degree Feedback systems.

Storing the Data

Feedback data must be sensitively handled. Participating employees need to know that completed questionnaires are securely held and that promises over confidentiality are kept.

Accessing the Data

Organisations which use feedback only for development sometimes distinguish between access to group and individual data. Feedback can be collated into group review in order to get an overview of a specific unit, section or segment. Here, however, feedback on individuals would not be made available.

Where feedback is linked to pay or promotion, line managers often need to access feedback data to make decisions about promotion and secondment. Individuals could also benefit by being able to use feedback information for career planning. The important thing with any of these arrangements is that anyone with access would see only the report, *not* the original questionnaires.

SECTION 4 - HANDLING THE FEEDBACK FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Discussion of Feedback

For 360 Degree Feedback to produce real change the feedback discussion must work well. This final stage in the whole process must be both professional and sensitive. The organisational needs to recognise that:

- if feedback is not high quality the individuals will not accept or action the data they receive
- the feedback report is important, people may need time to consider it. Sending it out a week before the discussion session can aid reflection, acceptance and preparation for the meeting
- a confidential feedback session maximises confidentiality and accountability – any development plan can be discussed with either HR or the line manager
- it could be valuable to have a meeting of participants and raters to improve involvement, mutual confidence and support
- follow up will be necessary to ensure development happens and learning occurs, coaches, trainers and mentors can all help.

There is evidence that it is not productive for individuals to work through their feedback report on their own. Many people will not be able to interpret the data correctly, let alone work out an appropriate development plan. Additionally, most people will, at the start of any 360 system, be unused to receiving detailed feedback, while others will not be comfortable with bar charts and comparative statistics. It would be dangerous to assume that everyone will respond logically and rationally to their feedback. For example, some people will focus only on the good news and others will fixate on anything that seems critical or negative. In the case of the latter, some people may deny or reject the data and become even more entrenched in their behavioural comfort zones. To counter this, it would be sensible to build in a feedback session of some sort and to give thought to ongoing support.

Questions for the Organisation

- What is your system for getting the feedback report to the individual?
- Do you make provision for a confidential feedback discussion? If not, why not?
- Do raters and participants have a chance to meet/share views?
- Do you have a satisfactory support system for:
 - discussing and arranging development?
 - counselling anyone who is anxious or disturbed by their feedback?
 - helping each individual make maximum use of their feedback?
 - providing additional support and guidance where individuals need it?
 - action development plans and help people take responsibility for their own development?
 - learning?

SECTION 5

MAKING 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK WORK

THE WHOLE 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK PROCESS

The overall 360 Degree Feedback process can be divided into six stages:

1. preparation, planning and design
2. piloting
3. implementation
4. delivering the feedback
5. review
6. continuing support

1. Preparation

1.1 Preparation

All the research results indicate that to be successful your 360 degree system needs careful planning and preparation. It will be important to have an accurate view of the time and resource, needed to set it up and implement it effectively. You will need to consider time for:

- setting up and managing the programme
- giving and collecting feedback data
- compiling reports
- providing feedback
- meeting for discussion with participants
- supporting and providing development.

Decide what you want

It is beginning to be clear that there are three different types of 360 degree systems with some variations. These are:

- support for development
- supporting appraisal
- supporting pay and appraisal.

Supporting Development

This type of approach is designed to help the individuals understand how other people are affected by their behaviour. This type of system explores strengths and weaknesses and attempts to improve working relationships.

The focus here tends to be on changing and improving over a period of time. The participant tends to 'own' the process and there is little involvement for the line manager. Feedback is about the individual personal behaviours and is provided to provoke change and inform personal development. Involvement, by individuals, in such systems tends to be voluntary.

SECTION 5 - MAKING 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK WORK

Supporting Appraisal

This type of system addresses both personal development and performance with the focus on current performance and the short- to medium-term. The organisation has a stake in this sort of system and there is a greater role for the line manager. Data collected and used as the basis for feedback is a mix of developmental and evaluative. Involvement in this type of system is usually mandatory.

Supporting Pay and Appraisal

This third option is driven by the organisation and focuses strongly on current performance. Work outputs are part of the consideration. The line manager initiates and manages this approach. Feedback is evaluative and this type of system places more emphasis on the organisational use of data. It generated competition and anxiety and can be more controversial. There are explicit links between feedback, evaluation and pay. Involvement in this type of system is always mandatory.

At present most organisations seem to be using 360 Degree Feedback for development purposes only.

1.2 Planning and Design

Here the organisation needs to:

- decide the purpose of the system
- gain commitment of senior managers
- design/define the process to be used
- define roles and responsibilities
- gain commitment from all to be involved
- choose/design and validate the data collection instrument(s)
- decide/define how the feedback is to be presented – maintaining confidentiality but being sensitive to needs of the individual
- consider and agree the necessary resources
- check security of data collection and handling systems – manual or computer
- plan and gain co-operation
- decide upon training and communication provision required.

Questions for the organisation at this stage include:

- Is there to be any link to reward?
- Is the purpose clear and promulgated to all who will be involved?
- Will the organisation's culture support the proposed system?
- How committed is senior management?
- How often will the system be operated?
- Have users of the system been involved in the design/planning stage?
- Is the system to be voluntary or mandatory?
- How many raters are to be used?
- How are raters to be identified?
- How will credibility of raters be ensured?
- Is everyone clear how raters will be identified?
- How will anonymity and confidentiality be maintained?
- What is the role of the line manager? HR?
- Do the instruments to be used, address job performance specifically?
- Is the same instrument to be used for everyone?
- Do the instruments describe required behaviours clearly?
- Is the questionnaire(s) relevant to raters' knowledge of the individual?
- Does the questionnaire provide an opportunity to say when behaviour has not been observed?
- Who will have access to feedback data? And why?

SECTION 5 - MAKING 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK WORK

- Will feedback be presented in a useful and sensitive way?
- What is the format of the feedback?
- How can good links be maintained with existing systems?
- Is there sufficient time resource to operate the system effectively?
- What role is there for technology?

2 Piloting

There is a danger of being too ambitious too soon when introducing any such major system and change. Most 360 Degree Feedback systems are very different from the way people are normally given feedback and managed. Even the concept of giving upward feedback to a manager and involving peers in the feedback process may be considered both radical and frightening.

Piloting is important before wholesale implementation. One sensible approach is to find a stakeholder in the organisation who has a business based need which could be addressed by 360 Degree Feedback and introduce the process here on a pilot basis. This way the process can be evaluated not only for effectiveness but for its potential contribution to the identified business need. A good pilot is often a way of gaining senior management commitment.

At this stage you will need to:

- identify a suitable host of the pilot (the pilot group needs to be open minded and willing to give a fair test)
- determine the evaluation points/success criteria and how they will be measured/weighted
- engage the co-operation of those necessary
- inform others of what is going on and why
- set up the pilot
- let it run for the agreed period
- review effectiveness of the instrument(s) to be used
- evaluate results
- extrapolate results and learn from them
- make any change to proposed system based on results of the pilot.

Questions for the organisation at this stage include:

- What information needs to go out?
- Where is best to run the pilot?
- What will the pilot runners gain?
- What is appropriate length of the pilot?
- What is appropriate number of people to be involved?
- How will we test the reliability of the questionnaire(s)?
- What are the success criteria to be measured?

SECTION 5 - MAKING 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK WORK

- How will necessary changes be implemented? and by whom?

During the pilot consider:

- is the instrument usable?
- does it meet its purpose?
- how are people reacting to providing feedback data?
- is the questionnaire relevant to people and their jobs
- is the questionnaire reliable and valid? Is it user-friendly?
- how is the feedback slanted?
- is it too positive/ negative?
- how/when is feedback to be given to the individuals?
- are appropriate development actions identified?
- have the appropriate number of items been included to achieve the purpose of the exercise?
- what resources will we need to implement any changes to the process/instrument?
- will we have enough resources for the roll-out?
- is it easy to maintain anonymity and confidentiality?

3 Implementation

All the planning and piloting should pay off at this stage. Before starting to implement the organisation will need to:

- consider all the lessons learned from the pilot
- take steps to ensure that everyone involved in, or affected by the process, is fully informed and equipped
- run training events
- use RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) to determine communication and training needs
- clarify ownership of the process and its components
- clarify precisely roles and responsibilities
- set up a point of contact for participants
- allocate responsibility for administration of the system
- set up systems for following up on low returns and uncompleted questionnaires
- establish deadlines
- decide action to be taken in the case of non-compliance or lack of co-operation
- communicate deadlines to everyone involved
- publicise information on when and how recipients will receive feedback
- monitor completion roles
- establish and put in place resources required for providing feedback.

Questions for the organisation at this point include:

- Does everyone know the objectives of the scheme?
- Has the system been positioned and publicised sufficiently?
- Which are the important points from the pilot experience?

SECTION 5 - MAKING 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK WORK

- How do we minimise potential problems in the full roll-out?
- Who is responsible/accountable? Who needs to be consulted/ informed?
- What training is needed? By when/ whom?
- Who will design and provide the training?
- Is everyone clear on their role and responsibilities? If not what needs to be done?
- What is the best way to ensure a full time point of contact for participants?
- Who will administer the system?
- Is the software appropriate?
- Are the appropriate resources in place?
- How will we monitor completion and return rates?
- Are sanctions needed for non co-operation/non compliance?
- How will these be implemented if needed?
- How do we ensure that recipients receive feedback in a timely and sensitive manner?

4 Delivering the Feedback

Feedback from the 360 degree exercise is the starting point for personal development and change and is integral to the success of the process. The results of the exercise need to be communicated effectively to the individual at the centre of the feedback circle.

At this point the organisation needs to:

- consider how feedback is to be delivered
- determine how to ensure that delivery is sensitively handled
- consider whether and how help is to be made available to interpret results
- decide whether internal/external facilitators are to be used
- agree competences and skills needed of facilitators who may be used
- design and deliver any training needed by internal facilitators
- agree when feedback is to be delivered
- agree support needed to help those who are disturbed or made anxious by their feedback
- make plans to capture broad trends and themes from across the range of feedback.

Questions for the organisation at this point include:

- Is feedback to be communicated face-to-face via a facilitator?
- Can internal facilitators be used?
- Is feedback to be delivered via a report without the help of a facilitator?
- What support will be made available to help recipients interpret results?
- If using face-to-face feedback should internal or external facilitators be used?
- Can anonymity and confidentiality be guaranteed if internal facilitators are used?
- If using internal facilitators, do the people involved have the necessary skills?
- Will training be necessary for facilitators?
- How can we best encourage recipients to explore fully the meaning of their results?
- How do we make sure feedback is delivered to the individual as soon as possible?
- How do we ensure support is available while results are being communicated afterwards?

SECTION 5 - MAKING 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK WORK

- How can the organisation capture information on themes and trends identified across the range of feedback, without prejudicing confidentiality and anonymity.

5 Review

5.1 It is easy for busy, pressured people and organisations to fall into the trap of thinking that everything ends with implementation and that the introduction of the 360 degree system ensures its success.

Setting up and implementing a 360 Degree Feedback system is an expensive and time-consuming activity. It will generally only be entered into when there is an identified business need or driver. It is important, not just in terms of justifying the investment, but also in terms of ensuring business benefits actually result that monitoring and review takes place. The key question is whether the 360 Degree Feedback met its original purpose. Questions to be asked include:

- If the purpose of the system was basically developmental then have real, business-linked development needs been identified?
- Have development activities taken place, with resultant changes in people and their behaviours?
- If the system was to support an Appraisal System, has the 360 degree process supplied fair and credible information?
- Are performance ratings improving over time?
- Who has responsibility for regular reviews?
- Are people demonstrably more aware of and concerned by the results of their own behaviours?
- Are levels of non-co-operation in the process reducing over time?
- How do raters, individuals at the centre of the process, line managers and others feel about the system?
- How are improvements identified by the review to be implemented?
- What information for the review is to go to participants? To senior management?
- Is further training on the process and its roles and responsibilities needed?
- How practical was the process overall?
- How was the process in terms of time?
- How easy was the feedback process to use?
- How comfortable are recipients with the feedback given?
- How acceptable is the system to those involved?
- What problems have resulted?

5.2 Review of the Questionnaire(s)

The usability of the questionnaire(s) will have been tested during the pilot stage. Once the 360 degree process has been implemented, further information will become available on the instrument(s). During the review it would be useful to look closely, again, at the questionnaire(s). Ask:

- Does (do) the questionnaire(s) really measure what it (they) set out to cover?
- Are raters using the rating system correctly and happily?
- Are there any/too many areas of confusion/duplication?

SECTION 5 - MAKING 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK WORK

- Is development information really available for individuals?
- Is the data collected consistent and reliable?
- Is there the added value of identification of trends/themes for the organisation?
- Can data be aggregated to give patterns for groups, teams, departments and so on?

6 Continuing Support

Once the system has been implemented and a review process established there will be need for some continuing support. This will involve:

- choosing/identifying other raters as individuals leave, move, get promotion
- further information on new roles/responsibilities for those who move
- regular training coverage to keep people updated
- keeping line managers interested in offering individuals help with development
- ensuring planned development plans are implemented
- ensuring that anyone shaken or disturbed by feedback is helped to get back on track
- ensuring that someone has responsibility for training, review and general management of the system

SECTION 6

TRAINING FOR 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

SECTION 6 - TRAINING FOR 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

360 Degree Feedback is a demanding process with the potential for many difficulties and problems, not least of which are those of people's feelings and sensitivities. A vital element in the effective introduction of a 360 Degree Feedback system is to provide training for all involved.

There is not room in this bulletin to go into detail on training needs and training provision but the following ideas may help (see also, *Making 360° Appraisal Work For You in Further Reading/Information and Supplement 10 to the Training Handbook published by Gee*).

Who Needs Training?

Everyone who is going to be involved in the system will need training, in particular for:

- individuals (on whom feedback will be collected)
- anyone who will be involved in providing feedback via the 360 instrument being used (the raters)
- internal facilitators who will be involved in providing feedback to individuals and in helping them to interpret it
- managers of individuals receiving feedback via the system.

Training the Individual

Individuals will need to understand:

- why the system has been introduced
- what the purpose of the system is
- how it will affect their:
 - development/ appraisal
 - pay/career/promotion (if applicable)
- how the system will work
- how raters will be appointed/chosen
- how the questionnaire works
- how they will receive/interpret feedback
- how to make the most of feedback received
- how to identify development needs and plan to meet them
- how to put together a development plan
- the contribution the system can make to the organization/business.

Training the Raters

People who will use the questionnaire(s) to provide feedback need to understand:

SECTION 6 - TRAINING FOR 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

- everything included on the list above for individual
- the questionnaire(s) and the scale(s) involved
- the relevance of the questionnaire(s) and its (their) contents to the business and to the individuals and their work
- links with other company systems, procedures and initiatives
- what is of benefit in 360 degree systems:
 - to the individual
 - to the organisation
 - to the business and its customers
 - to the rater
- the specific process and its components
- how the feedback informs development plans and activities
- how providing feedback can improve their own judgement and decision-making
- any relevant competence framework
- how to complete the questionnaire effectively
- how feedback will be collected and delivered to the individual.

Training for Internal Facilitators

The role of the internal facilitator in passing on feedback results and helping the individual to interpret them is vital. Internal facilitators will need to know:

- all requirements by the individual (see previous list)
- how any competences work
- how to complete a questionnaire
- what is feedback
- how feedback works and what makes it effective
- benefits of feedback to all concerned
- reactions to and problems with receiving feedback
- the expectations of the recipient of feedback
- how people cope with knowing the detail of how others see them
- overcoming problems and negative reactions to feedback
- ownership of feedback
- the skills required in giving feedback: questioning, listening, summarising, calming and enthusing others
- how to develop personal action plans.

Managers of those who receive 360 Degree Feedback

Managers need to understand:

SECTION 6 - TRAINING FOR 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK

- what the individual needs (see list above)
- links with other company initiatives
- competences to be measured
- how competences work
- making use of feedback
- what the benefits are for all concerned including the line managers
- how to build an effective development/action plan
- how to support the individual immediately after receipt of feedback and afterwards
- the details of their own role.

FURTHER READING/INFORMATION

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360 Degree Feedback – Best Practice Guidelines

Available from CIPD, Institute of management And www.dci.gov.uk/mbp

Free

360 Degree Feedback Unguided Missile or Powerful Weapon - Report

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