

Why Leaders Need 360 Feedback

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360 degree assessment, a formal, structured process for soliciting feedback from coworkers, has grown in popularity throughout the U.S. and abroad. The process provides valuable insight that individuals typically cannot gain from informal conversations with coworkers. Compared to informal feedback, 360 feedback offers the following advantages:

More Openness and Honesty

Most leaders would like to believe that their coworkers feel comfortable telling them something they need to know, but it is human nature to withhold criticism. The result is that some leaders are blind to significant leadership weaknesses. By explicitly asking for criticism and allowing feedback to be anonymous, 360 feedback can provide more revealing, truthful insight. For example, an individual may learn that he or she is too aggressive and therefore not completely trusted. Or that they have great ideas but rarely show that they value the ideas of others. The leader can learn the truth and begin to act upon it.

A Broader Range of Perceptions

Many leaders typically receive feedback from their manager and perhaps a few trusted coworkers, but not from others. The 360 process gives direct reports, peers, the individual being assessed and his or her manager the opportunity to express their opinions. Thus, a broader view is obtained; the leader can learn to work effectively with all coworkers, not just the few coworkers who are typically willing to express their opinions about the leader.

More Comprehensive Feedback

Leaders need to do many things right – communicate a vision, build and manage a team, plan well, run productive meetings, attend to quality, solve problems, drive for results, and so on. Unlike informal feedback, which may relate to just one or two aspects of leadership, 360 feedback provides insight into a broad range of leadership areas.

360 feedback keeps leaders on track as they take on more challenging leadership roles.

Gets the Message Across

Sometimes a leader will not listen to the feedback of just one coworker (who may be biased), but will take the message seriously if there is a chorus of convergent opinions from a variety of coworkers. 360 feedback shows the areas in which people converge on a need for improvement.

Creates Time and Space for Personal Development

Feedback is usually delivered as part of a process for thinking about strengths and needs, and planning actions to improve in the future. Normal work distractions are minimized, creating an opportunity for the leader to think about issues that are critical for their career and effectiveness as a leader.

Focuses Attention on the Right Areas

Every good leader is working on something; a desire to improve and willingness to admit imperfection are essential to good leadership. 360 feedback helps leaders work on the *right* thing.



Communicates a Desire to Lead Well

Participating in the 360 processes can communicate to one's coworkers a degree of humility and willingness to invest oneself in the process of becoming a better leader. It shows that the individual takes the role of leader seriously and would like to lead others well.

Can Prevent Derailment

Many high potential leaders have unexpectedly failed as they reached higher tiers of leadership. For example, they have struggled to build an executive team or alienated people whose support they need. By identifying leadership weaknesses earlier in a person's career, 360 feedback helps leaders keep their careers on track as they take on more challenging leadership roles.

