

- Provide clear and accurate feedback on individual/team performance
- A complement to existing performance review procedures
- Identify the individual's management of internal and external clients
- Highlight problem areas
- Identify development needs

A '360° Review' is a personal audit in which a range of people with whom an individual works are asked to evaluate his or her effectiveness by answering a questionnaire. The name is used because people who work in all kinds of relationships with the individual are involved. For example, junior staff, a group of peers and their management may all complete the questionnaire.

Results are summarised in a series of bar charts and numerical tables, along with all the comments provided. These reviews are judged to be amongst the most robust and reliable methods of evaluation because of the number and range of people involved. The participant usually is asked to choose the respondents in order to give maximum credibility to the results.

When To Use A 360° Review

There are three main applications and employers, both large and small, commonly use all three. The highest levels of use have been achieved in larger organisations where well-established human resource practices and procedures exist.

As a performance review tool

Most organisations undertake annual or bi-annual performance reviews and it is common for a brief 360° Review to be adopted as one input to this process. The results summary can then be included among the topics covered during review discussions between individual and manager.

Diagnostic work with staff

It is common for the 360° Review to be used to identify or highlight problems associated with staff who are performing below expectation. It provides an honest and candid summary of colleagues' views. This can then be used to pinpoint development areas that will assist the person involved in improving their work performance.

Training and development

A 360° Review can be invaluable in identifying individual career development needs and likely succession opportunities.

It is also frequently used for team development purposes, allowing each team member's profile to be compared and contrasted with others in the group.

Why to use a 360° Review

Their use has grown in popularity over the years. There are several reasons for this:

- The participant usually determines who evaluates them and therefore trusts the process.
- The whole assessment is completely transparent and face validity is high.
- The entire results are shared so the balance of power between reviewer and reviewed is fairly equal.
- People understand what to do with the results and can often do it for themselves. It's highly motivating.

Areas Assessed

The Selby & Mills 360° Review gathers information on 3 areas of performance:-

- Delivery of Results
- Leadership and Communications
- Business Strategy

The person being reviewed, the 'Participant', also completes the 360° Review questionnaire with respect to themselves.

Tailored Questionnaire

Whilst Selby & Mills have this standard 360° Review, it is easy to tailor this to client requirements by incorporating additional questions which tackle areas that are of particular concern to the client organisation.

Indeed our advanced web technology means that we can construct individual questionnaires for clients quickly and effectively.

Web based

Our 360° Review questionnaire is fully web based which means that there is no onerous distribution and collection of documents and their subsequent electronic capture. As a result a report can be produced within a few hours of all of the respondents completing the questionnaire.

The system enables an organisation to easily and effectively manage the reviews of a number of participants simultaneously. Each participant is able to initiate emails to their respondents and monitor progress via the system and determine when the report process should commence.

Review Process

There are 6 steps to be completed when undertaking a 360° Review. It is recommended that a member of the HR function or a consultant support the process in order to reassure candidates about confidentiality.

The steps are as follows:

Step 1: Agree with the person under review the exact nature of the questionnaire and those who are to complete it. In addition, the timing of all the meetings, which form part of this process, should be clarified.

Step 2: Distribute an email to the nominated respondents explaining why the activity is being undertaken and what to do to complete the questionnaire.

Step 3: Analyse the completed questionnaires, including one from the 'focus' person, to produce the report which summarises the responses from each group.

Step 4: Arrange a meeting between the candidate and their consultant/HR advisor at which the 360° Review results are discussed, and development needs identified.

Step 5: The person being reviewed provides feedback about the survey to those who responded and thanks them for their participation.

Step 6: The focus person implements development action.

(While the process is different if it is used for other purposes, this is a typical example.)

Outcomes

Outcomes will vary according to use but the following case study puts the benefits of the 360° Review into context.

Company X is in the construction sector. The Board of one of its companies was concerned that morale was low amongst the workforce and that communications did not flow smoothly. The five Directors each decided to undertake a 360° Review involving obtaining feedback from staff across the entire organisation.

The process alone improved communications, because by submitting the review for completion by staff junior to themselves, the Directors were admitting that they did not 'have all the answers'. This left a positive impression with the workforce.

Following analysis of the results, it became clear that two Directors had a different orientation to workforce relations from their colleagues and that this was partly responsible for the communications and morale difficulties. This became the focus of developmental attention.

In a second administration of the questionnaire one year later, the feedback indicated a clear improvement in workforce relations.

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