

360° appraisal

360° feedback refers to the process by which feedback on an employee's performance is collected from a full circle of viewpoints – peers, bosses, colleagues and customers.

A 360° feedback program gathers the information, usually through a questionnaire, and feeds that information back to the employee in a structured interview.

The following process will enable a successful 360° feedback program:

1. Get your design right

A key feature of 360° feedback is a detailed questionnaire delivered by people who are familiar with, and a stakeholder of, the performance of the employee being rated.

The questionnaire items can be related to traits (“unhurried” or “dependable”), behaviours (“praises people for a job well done”), attitudes or values (“believes in democratic participation in decision making”) and competencies (“manages quality customer service”). Whatever the focus, the issues must be:

- Agreed by senior management.
- Linked to performance criteria.
- Relevant to the job (or job family).
- Clear and unambiguous.
- Valid at face value.
- Reliable.
- Able to reflect observable behaviours.

Remember, 360° feedback can be used at any level of the business, so you need to be quite clear in compiling the questionnaire about what and whom you want to assess. It is also important to decide up-front about the key issue of confidentiality – who gets to see the results.

2. Promote the benefits of the process

Like most initiatives, 360° feedback needs to be promoted to reach its full potential. Some of the key benefits to promote this process are that 360° feedback provides:

- A more complete and accurate process than the traditional top-down appraisal system.
- A broader perspective because of involvement by colleagues, managers and customers.
- Enhanced self-development opportunities.
- An opportunity for self-evaluation.
- Greater accuracy as reviewers have to defend their evaluations.

Of course, 360° feedback achieves the best results when conducted in a climate of trust, co-operation and sharing. Results will improve if you communicate the benefits, and involve and prepare all employees and stakeholders.

3. Involve the employees

Participation by employees will significantly enhance their commitment to the feedback process and, therefore, produce better results. For example, an employee could be involved in choosing colleagues to be invited to complete the questionnaire, and could also rate themselves against the criteria.

4. Train the raters

Raters need to be trained so they understand the 360° feedback process, its importance, and their role in it. They must be clear about the performance criteria against which they will be rating the employee. By spending a small amount of time training the raters, you will improve significantly the quality of the feedback.

5. Remain objective

Feedback should relate to the criteria and, where possible, be supported by examples that help to clarify meaning and provide direction to the employee. Feedback may be provided in both written and verbal forms.

6. Convert the feedback into development goals

To ensure action, it is essential that the feedback is converted into a few development goals supported by action steps to be taken. Avoid dictating step-by-step actions as though they are prescriptions to solve problems. Be aware that the employee may make valuable contributions. Whatever your approach, agree on actions and timelines for those actions to be completed. Always start with the goal that is easiest to achieve – success helps build confidence and the determination to keep going. The need for additional coaching may be another outcome. And don't forget the development opportunities for employees by emphasising the link between feedback and training.

7. Follow-up

Despite an employee's best intentions of fulfilling commitments made, you will need to follow-up regularly to reveal your ongoing interest in the growth of the employee, and to guarantee that you keep in touch with all progress being made. This post-appraisal involvement will also ensure that 360° feedback continues to effectively service the needs of your business.

8. Aim for maximum benefits

It is important that 360° feedback is seen as more than an individual performance management tool. If viewed in isolation, many of the opportunities associated with this valuable process can be lost. When used effectively, 360° feedback contributes to an overall performance management strategy.



› Driving the economic development of Queensland ‹

Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Maximise the value of 360° appraisal
- Performance appraisal