

Article

Designing Successful 360 Degree Assessments

Written by: Dr. Victor Teplitzky



A 360 Degree Assessment is helpful because it offers a complete picture of the employee's performance. The feedback gathered in this type of assessment can provide guidance to the skills that an employee may need to develop. In the traditional top-down approach you are evaluated by your superiors. This approach is better because information about the employee's performance is gathered from a variety of sources that include peers, subordinates, customers, self as well as your superiors. If you use feedback from a variety of sources rather than one supervisor you are left with a more complete picture of how that specific employee is doing in all aspects of his/her job functions.

The 360 Degree Assessment provides an understanding of how the employee is perceived from different perspectives. If the employee is informed of their strengths and weaknesses they can better utilize their strengths to their advantage, and know what actions they do that create problems for others, and what they need to do to change these actions.

In the evaluation you can assess the employee's problem solving techniques, planning and organization, adaptability, communication skills, supervisory skills, administrative skills, analytical skills, creativity, business control, and whether or not they have the potential to become a manager.

The questionnaire used by all parties evaluating the employee includes things that can be of help to measure different dimensions of job performance. The questionnaire, usually about 50 to 100 items, should take about 1 minute to complete each question and you should always include an open ended question to leave room for comments or written answers. In order to ensure that the results you are gaining from the evaluator are truthful you need to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. You can average the feedback ratings and summarize the comments or written answers.

Before implementing a 360 degree assessment in your organization you should provide an orientation session to make sure everyone in your organization knows what a 360 degree assessment is and why you are implementing it in your company. Let them know that their results will be confidential and provide examples of the questionnaire and the feedback results. If the participants know what it is all about and are informed they are more apt to participate to the full extent, giving your organization more genuine results. Then you are ready to administer the questionnaire. You can distribute to the employees with instruction if you are using a printed copy, or you can make it available on your website for easier access. If you do provide them on your website however, you should monitor the progress and make sure all of the parties participating are completing the questionnaire.

Analyzing the data is the most important part. You can have a basic analysis and provide averages for the ratings or you can do a more in depth analysis of the data. It may be helpful for your organization to analyze the data by division or department in order to find the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. This can help to support or promote training and organizational development. Once you have finished your analysis of the data make sure you share the results with the employee who was being

evaluated. You can provide individual review sessions or workshops that can help the employee review and understand their results and help to make goals and objectives that will better themselves.

Individual development plans are very important to ensure employee growth. The cognitive dissonance between the expected performance and the actual performance creates the targets for improvement. The evaluator overseeing the professional development of the employee should combine and assess the feedback information and compare that with the intended outcomes. The intended outcomes will have been part of the organization's strategic planning goals. The expectation of the supervisors is that their employees will achieve improvement over time. Using an action plan the employee and evaluator will agree on at least 3 goals. For each goal they should also include a series of short-range objectives, resources needed, a specific date of when the goals should be accomplished, and how the goals will be accomplished.