

Guide to Completing a 360° Assessment

What is 360° Feedback?

360° Feedback is a process for collecting feedback about you and your performance at work from a range of people including yourself. It is especially useful for anyone who leads or manages others.

Unlike normal appraisal/review processes, which usually just involve yourself and your immediate Manager, a full 360° feedback process also collects views from a wide variety of others such as your direct reports (vitaly important if you are a Manager of people), your peers, your clients, or people who work with you from partner organisations.

Although the process will focus in part on the results you achieve, a particularly heavy emphasis will be paid to the behaviours that you demonstrate at work. Assessment may be made against a competency framework, if one is used within your organisation, or a set of more general behaviours may be chosen suitable to your level of employment.

Why is 360° Feedback Such a Valuable Opportunity for You?

When a performance review or appraisal process works effectively, it can be a really useful tool for the individual and for the organisation. However, experience tells us that sadly this is the exception rather than the rule.

Too often, the individual's Manager does not have a really accurate view of how the individual manages and interacts with their own team. Even more often, the Manager has a fear of saying what really needs to be said without upsetting the individual and harming the long term relationship. British Managers, in particular, are rarely comfortable with providing praise and valuable constructive feedback. Hence the meeting is often a lost opportunity, focusing more on results than behaviours and avoiding some of the difficult discussions that need to take place to have a truly effective working relationship.

In 360° feedback, all such barriers are removed. Feedback is provided by all participants anonymously, apart from the participant and their Manager, to a third party. By gaining a number of views trends can be identified and so improve the validity of the feedback. As much emphasis is placed on determining strengths and how to make the most of them as is on discussing areas for development.

It is rare that one gets such an opportunity to discover how others see us at work in such an objective manner. What you will learn most about in the 360° feedback will relate to *how others perceive you*. Whatever you may have intended others to think, these perceptions will be very real to your respondents. In today's quest for ever improving self-awareness, their comments cannot fail to be useful for your future development.

Instructions

The type of 360° assessment that you will be completing is called an Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI). You will soon receive an email from the Hay Group, telling you how to get the whole exercise started online.

However, **before you start**, here are just a few tips for maximum effectiveness:

1. Please choose your respondents immediately so that they will have sufficient time to provide the necessary feedback.
2. You will be asked to register names and e-mail addresses of your chosen respondents. Please pay careful attention to your choice of respondents. It is most helpful to you if you choose the people who have the closest knowledge of you in your professional role. If they are unable to answer at least 80% questions, their data will not be processed.
3. Please explain that you need the questionnaires completed honestly and accurately for the feedback to be most useful to you (and that you are prepared for that people have to say!). Each questionnaire will take about half an hour to complete.
4. It's useful to send out a quick personal email from yourself to all your nominated raters telling them what you are doing and to expect the email from The Hay Group (otherwise lots of people delete things they don't recognise nowadays!). Tell everyone that there are 2 parts – a multiple choice section and a comments section and you really need their feedback on both parts for it to be valuable.
5. Don't forget to do your own self-assessment too!
6. Regarding raters other than yourself, it is suggested you choose as large a sample as you feel able. There is no difference in the cost and it helps to ensure the validity of the responses, when trends can be seen. These should include your Manager, direct reports and peers as a minimum but you may also choose employees with whom you interact quite often who are not direct reports, suppliers, customers, partners, people you deal with in associated organisations etc. too.
7. Hay will remind people online if they do not complete in the agreed time period but a personal word about how much you want people's input and the fact that you won't know who has said what (other than your own view and that of your Manager) is quite helpful too!

Follow Up Activities

Following the meeting, it is likely that you will ponder further on your report and its contents. Sometimes you will feel happier with what you read the more you read it, sometimes you may feel a growing sense of dissatisfaction or frustration.

Whatever you do, you should not be tempted to go on a 'witch hunt.' Despite respondents being told that they should write their comments in a certain way so as not to be easily identified, many choose not to do so and some say that they do not mind their comments being recognisable as their own. It is always tempting to try to decide who has said what! Even if you do feel that you can identify who said what, it will NOT be helpful to tell others that this is the case. If you tackle people about what they have said or 'hold grudges', they are unlikely to give you honest feedback again in the future and this will defeat the object of the whole process.

However, there may well be themes or comments that you do not fully understand. You may like to know what they were intended to mean in order to decide whether you need to act upon them.

We often suggest that you hold a meeting with some of the groups who have given you feedback, most commonly your direct reports but it may be just as useful with others such as a peer team you work in too. At such a meeting it is a good idea to do the following:

- Thank everyone for providing you with feedback and tell them how much you valued the process (even if you didn't necessarily like all you heard!).
- Tell them about the strengths identified and how you are pleased that these have been recognised.
- Tell them about the main development areas that have been identified and how you intend to address these (you may even ask for feedback on when you are getting better or when you repeat actions without realising it!)
- Then take the opportunity to ask about any feedback that you do not fully understand (the intention would NOT be to make that person / people explain it in front of everyone, but just to ask if anyone can shed light on what certain comments might mean either during the meeting or perhaps afterwards on a one to one basis). For this to be successful, however, people must know that you will receive this more direct feedback in a professional manner and are not likely to become defensive as a result.

Whatever you do, be careful not to let your personal development plan be something that gathers dust on the shelf.

In many organisations the 360° feedback process is used for large groups as a way to identify core content for a development programme. Sometimes 'one to one' coaching may also be offered to help meet identified needs.

Wherever possible, repeating the same 360° assessment process some 12-18 months later to determine levels of improvement is also encouraged and generally shows excellent results.

If this is the case, that's great. However, meeting your development needs is actually down to you. How much do you really want to address them and how proactive are you prepared to be to get the help you really need? It's up to you to take responsibility!

We hope you have found this guidance useful. If you have any further questions about the process that the contact in your organisation cannot answer, please do not hesitate to contact us on 01924 385600.