

# Best Practices for 360-Degree Feedback

Rita's Career Corner ...With Rita B. Allen

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Retaining talent is a critical factor for many organizations in today's competitive market. Employee engagement requires investment in your people and their development. One common tool used in many companies to assist with creating employee development plans is a 360-degree feedback process, in which employees receive confidential, anonymous and structured feedback from a multitude of levels of people with whom they work, including manager(s), peers, direct reports, internal and external clients as well as other appropriate stakeholders.

***"Feedback is the breakfast of champions."***

***~ Ken Blanchard, management and leadership expert and author***

## **Purpose and Overview:**

- The purpose is to gain different perspectives regarding behaviors and performance as well as a deeper understanding of strengths and areas for enhancement
- There are a variety of formats used including multi-rater surveys, questionnaires, one-on-one interviews and/or a mix of these options
- In order for a 360-Degree Feedback process to be effective, however, it must be well aligned with an organization's culture and supported by senior leadership
- In addition, the process should be viewed as a link for achieving business goals, departmental goals as well as individual goals
- There must be clear objectives identified at the onset and the individual must have ownership of the process rather than something they see imposed upon them
- To achieve the best results, it should always be associated with development and/or as a supplement to performance management
- A 360-Degree Feedback process needs to be viewed as a collaborative partnership between the individual and their manager as well as other individuals who may be involved such as Human Resources and/or an Executive Coach
- Most importantly, the outcome should include an ***action plan*** that the individual has initiated and a ***development plan*** for which they are committed to achieving

### **Manager's Role – Tips for Success:**

- Ask for and receive appropriate training in order to fully understand 360-degree feedback process and your role as manager/leader
- Be clear about purpose and objectives of 360-degree feedback process with a focus on development
- Keep it aligned with organizational culture and functional goals as well as individual's goals
- Select tools, resources and formats that are well matched with objectives and will assess required competencies as appropriate (work with Human Resources to do so)
- Maintain an open dialogue with individual and create atmosphere of trust honoring and respecting confidentiality required to maintain integrity of process
- Provide leadership and support throughout process allowing individual to try new approaches and behaviors to leverage strengths and enhance areas of development
- Establish a safe environment of learning for growth and development

### **Individual's Role – Tips for Success:**

- Be open to receiving feedback, increasing self awareness and truly engaging in the feedback process; understand objectives to be achieved and ask questions if unclear
- Select participants who will provide honest, valuable and constructive insights from a variety of perspectives
- Get comfortable being uncomfortable, receiving feedback can be difficult at times so allow yourself to grow and learn; stay focused on your development
- Keep perspective by emphasizing and leveraging your strengths to enhance areas needing growth and development; resist defensiveness, rationalizing and/or trying to identify origin of comments and embrace feedback as the reality of perceptions
- Invest in your career development by creating and being committed to a development/action plan with clear and 'SMART' goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely)
- Allow this to be the beginning of further self assessment and exploration for your own personal and professional development, view this as an on-going process rather than an event
- Be sure to thank everyone who participated and keep an open dialogue regarding your growth and on-going learning and development

If we are fortunate to be able to participate in a 360-degree feedback process, we should truly embrace it as a gift towards our own development. It is an investment by the organization in our growth and on-going development. According to the **Center for Creative Leadership**, [www.ccl.org](http://www.ccl.org), some of the outcomes one can expect may be:

- ✓ Increased awareness of managers performance/work-related behaviors
- ✓ Increased awareness of co-workers expectations of managers

- ✓ A greater alignment of performance expectations between managers and others
- ✓ Improved informal communication and feedback
- ✓ Improved performance

All of these are compelling reasons for organizations, managers, leaders, and individuals to be open to the 360-degree feedback process and embrace it as an effective career development tool. Even if you don't have a formal process in place, take the time to ask for feedback, be open to receiving it and be generous offering it to others with whom you work. In the end, it can yield better results and improved performance and growth by all.

### ***Ask Rita...***

Question: As part of my development plan, my manager has suggested I participate in a 360-Degree Feedback process. I am a little reluctant to do so and am concerned about the intent and outcome since I have never participated in one before. Is this something that could hurt my career?

Answer: On the contrary, the fact that your manager is invested in your development will benefit your career. Believe it or not, participating in a 360-degree feedback process is quite empowering. Give it some thought and select the right mix of individuals who will give you honest and valuable feedback. Their insights will help you highlight your strengths to be leveraged and identify areas to be further enhanced for growth. It will be an enlightening experience. Be prepared for a good deal of personal reflection and constructive input that will allow you create a plan for advancement. Although it may seem a little frightening, challenge yourself to embrace the process as a key learning tool for your personal and professional development. Enjoy the journey!

*Rita Balian Allen is the President of Rita B. Allen Associates, [www.ritaballenassociates.com](http://www.ritaballenassociates.com), a provider of career management/talent management consulting and executive coaching services with specialty areas in leadership development, management training and career development. She is also a Lecturer and adjunct faculty member at Northeastern University and Bentley University.*