

Getting and Giving Feedback Is Required, Not Optional



By Rita Balian Allen
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One of the key areas of focus for every human resource executive today is retention of talent in a highly competitive marketplace. Keeping employees motivated and engaged requires a culture that truly supports investing in the development of all staff members. Having career conversations with employees is an essential part of every manager's role along with clearly defined goals and development plans for growth. These conversations need to occur throughout the year on both an informal and formal basis, seizing coaching opportunities and open discussions that allow for the exchange of perspectives and challenges.

Getting and giving feedback on a regular basis is required to truly partner with staff to ensure proper employee development is offered and accepted.

360-Degree Feedback Process#

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 managers, peers, direct reports, and clients.

Giving and getting feedback can be a difficult scenario for many people. Nevertheless, it is an essential foundational requirement in talent development. The purpose of a 360-degree feedback process is to gain different perspectives regarding behaviors and performance as well as a deeper understanding of strengths and areas for enhancement. The use of this type of formal process can help create a format that minimizes some of these difficulties.

There are a variety of formats used, including multirater surveys, questionnaires, and one-on-one interviews. Determining the appropriate format can vary depending on the situation, organizational culture, the individual, and desired outcomes; however, all are viable options.

Elements for Success

For a 360-degree feedback process to be effective, it must be well aligned with an organization's culture and supported by senior leadership. It needs to be viewed as an important initiative to help people further develop their skill sets and competencies. In addition, the process should be viewed as a link for achieving business goals, departmental goals, and individual goals.

There must be clear objectives identified at the onset and people should 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 or as a supplement to performance management conducted separately. A 360-degree feedback process needs to be viewed as a collaborative partnership between people and their managers as well as other individuals who may be involved, such as human resources or an executive coach. The manager (and others involved) should maintain an open dialogue with the individual and create an atmosphere of trust, honoring and respecting confidentiality required to maintain the integrity of the process and to encourage a safe environment of learning for growth and development. Most important, the outcome should include an action plan that the individual has initiated and a development plan for which they are committed to achieving.

Viewing feedback as a gift truly takes a certain mindset that can be quite empowering when we choose to approach it in the proper way for ultimate success.

Value-Add, Outcomes, and Rewards

As talent development and human resources practitioners, if we offer the ability to participate in a 360-degree feedback process within our organizations, we want to encourage leaders, managers, and talent to truly embrace it as a gift toward their development. It is an investment by the organization in employee growth and ongoing development. According to the [Center for Creative Leadership](#), some of the outcomes may include increased awareness of manager performance and 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, and improved performance.

These are all 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. Cultivating and influencing a culture that values feedback is an important part of leading talent development. In the end, it can yield better results and improved performance and growth by all.



About the Author
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Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a national career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training, and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, and the author of numerous articles, blog posts, and the book *Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment*. Rita was voted one of the top 10 executive coaches by the *Boston Women's Business Journal*.

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