

Trends in 360 Feedback

Traditional feedback processes are effectively one-degree type systems with, usually, the immediate supervisor providing the employee with uni-directional comment. By involving more than just one person in the feedback process, the process is likely to be more meaningful for both manager and employee with greater representation in the amount and type of information supplied.

The theory sounds right but does 360-degree work in practice? This paper explores some of the latest findings and suggests implications for the most appropriate use of the technique.

The following are some of the issues to be discussed during the presentation and will be supported by examples and case studies.

1. Applications of 360-Degree Feedback

Organisations have used 360-Degree Feedback for the following reasons:

- Making general personnel decisions such as promotions, terminations, pay increases, probationary status;
- Identifying training and development needs, pinpointing employee skills and competencies that are currently inadequate but for which programs can be developed and
- Serving as a criterion against which selection and development programs are validated

2. The Advantages of 360-Degree Feedback

- Peers and direct reports have more regular contact than supervisors
- The self knows what others cannot know
- Self-ratings force employees to focus on what is expected in a job
- Self ratings are best accepted by employees
- Each person has a unique perspective
- Greater reliability in the feedback exists because of the increased number of ratings
- The feedback process opens communication within the system

3. Disadvantages of 360-Degree Feedback

- How to interpret the findings when they differ from group to group
- As each rater sees a different behaviour, how do we know the basis upon which the ratings are observed?
- 360-degree feedback ignores the system in which the behaviour occurs
- There may be the fear of retribution from the supervisor if the rating is unfavourable
- Self ratings are “unreliable, biased and inaccurate”

4. 360 Survey Design

- Scale variations
- Scale width
- Scale anchors
- Survey length and ways to overcome survey fatigue

5. How to Score and Interpret Results

- Ipsative (comparing results over time)
- Normative (comparing results against a database)
- Competency-based norms

6. The Future of 360-degree Feedback

360-degree feedback systems are seen as a catalyst for increasing organisational performance and efficiency as feedback from others is considered a highly powerful motivator for behavioural change. With continual innovations in 360-degree processes and software technology, systems will be created which are more user friendly, more widely available and more fair, accurate and valid. 360-degree feedback will continue to become a better process for collecting information and applying it. Intelligence will therefore be integrated into 360-degree systems in order to make them faster, easier and better. Thus, 360-degree systems will not only provide important feedback to individuals but also suggest better ways to improve performance.

The conclusion is that 360-degree feedback is useful for developmental purposes as it is helpful to be able to view one's own performance from the perspective of several groups. However, when a decision is to be made, such as evaluating a developmental



activity or making an administrative decision (such as pay or promotion), the research offers only contradictory evidence. 360-degree feedback seems best used for voluntary individual developmental purposes.

About the Author

Roland Nagel is Director of Nagel Consulting Pty Limited and a Registered Psychologist, Accredited Executive Coach and Certified Emotional Intelligence Facilitator. He specialises in performance and productivity improvement issues at work and has identified the need for Australian business to address the significant challenge of developing high potential leaders through solutions-focused and transformational coaching. He is particularly experienced in the use of multi-rater and coaching processes to enhance a leader's effectiveness in the areas of people interactions, corporate problem solving and the management of change.

For further information, contact:

Roland Nagel
Nagel Consulting Pty Limited
Level 57, 19-29 MLC Centre
Martin Place NSW 2000
Phone: (+612) 9371 0001
Fax: (+612) 9371 0664
E-mail: 360feedback@nagelconsulting.com.au
www.nagelconsulting.com.au