

360° Leadership

A guide for valuable multi-source feedback

About 360° leadership surveys

People who find themselves in management positions aren't always natural born leaders. Most need training, reminders, and support.

Multi-source feedback gleaned from 360° leadership surveys gives managers a unique look at their abilities as viewed by themselves, their boss, direct reports, and peers. It sets the stage for greater self-awareness and personal development.

To understand how the insights of others can lead to better management performance and outcomes TalentMap created this four-part 360° Leadership Survey guide.

Part One presents the concept of 360° surveys as a tool that can be used i) to identify and nurture candidates for managerial development and ii) to enhance the leadership competencies of current managers.

Part Two looks at the sources of input – the people who together and in part – bring about a manager's greater self-awareness.

Part Three introduces the kinds of questions that make this tool so effective.

Part Four explores the importance and kinds of post-survey actions that contribute to a manager's professional growth and development.

Advantages of 360° Leadership Surveys:

- Unique to each individual and their position
- Brings awareness to interpersonal and relationship skills
- Sheds light on the views and expectations of others
- Gives a clear sense of an individual's strengths and weaknesses
- Presents results in a constructive way that's easy to understand and accept
- Provides data that can be used to create personal development plans
- Helps managers – new and seasoned – to adjust behaviors and acquire new skills to excel
- Reinforces the organization's mission, vision, and values
- Communicates a culture of employee engagement to evaluators and evaluatees alike



Part 1: Management cultivation & development

With the help of 360° leadership surveys, organizations can find the right people to be managers and help new, long-standing managers adapt to and refine their leadership roles.

Is a prospect's management style in sync with the team they'll be leading? Does the group dynamic call for inclusiveness, empowerment, authoritarian heavy-handedness, or a little of each?

What is the cultural fit? Is a risk-oriented individual focused on getting the job done equipped to lead a family-like team that's long been driven by following procedures and doing things right?

Does the nature of work require specialized talents? What competency levels does a department need from their manager to be able to perform optimally?

Whether management talent is brought in from the outside or nurtured from within, whether they've served in a managerial capacity for decades or months, managers can enhance their leadership skills by paying attention to the feedback of 360° leadership surveys. While this input provides empirical leadership competencies and affirms an individual's strengths, the process also opens the door to increased awareness of interpersonal relationship behaviors that can be added or adapted for more effective and influential leadership.



CLARIFY WHY, WHO, AND HOW

Before launching a 360° survey, it's important to allay fears by effectively communicating the purpose of the program. If the professional development focus isn't clear, some managers can become suspicious about why they've been selected for 360° feedback. It can be misconstrued as a lack of confidence higher up the chain of command, a personal attack – which can negatively affect performance. Stress the 360° survey is about finding hidden strengths and improvement opportunities for an effective development plan to become stronger, more influential leaders.

Demonstrate commitment to your 360° leadership survey program and build trust firstly, by getting buy-in and support from across the executive team and secondly, by rolling out the process from the top on down.

Depending on your organization's culture, objectives, and approach, consider giving managers the freedom to choose whether they participate. A voluntary program can foster more trust for the process than a mandatory ruling.



Part 2: The quality of raters & the information they convey to managers

While the 360° leadership survey process is an exceptional opportunity to integrate a new manager into their role, it simultaneously teaches people leaders about expectations and sets the stage for important dialogue between the individual, their boss, direct reports, and peers.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW FROM THE BOSS

Since performance evaluations have traditionally fallen to an individual's immediate supervisor, "downward observation" is a familiar kind of feedback. However, a supervisor, manager, or senior leader's perception of their direct report is usually from a vantage point vastly different from the colleagues or subordinates of the individual. Interaction is typically less and discussions of an altogether different nature, often focused on tasks, project updates, or high-level communiques.

While peers and subordinates are assured anonymity in the 360° leadership survey process, it's important to note that feedback from the individual's boss is not confidential. As such, these evaluators should be prepared to explain ratings and comments in a constructive and supportive manner.

INPUT FROM THE RANK AND FILE

People don't leave organizations, they leave managers. The perceptions or upward ratings of direct reports are an important part of the 360° feedback system. By shifting the traditional roles of evaluator and evaluatee, a new set of dynamics takes place. From the perspective of direct reports, 360° surveys change the normal flow of power and represent a rare opportunity to provide honest feedback with assurances of confidentiality. Because of their regular and frequent interactions, direct reports are privy to very important information about their manager's abilities and behaviors; insights that can and do contribute significantly to overall managerial competence.

PEER REVIEWS

Lateral ratings from co-workers are a third valid and reliable source of feedback, albeit with biases. Research has shown, for example, that people tend to rate colleagues who are similar to themselves higher than peers who are dissimilar.

Research has also shown colleagues may be reluctant to evaluate each other to avoid upsetting a positive group dynamic or temper their feedback to prevent creating or adding to a competitive environment. Nevertheless, coworkers reveal some of the most accurate and meaningful insights.



SELF-ASSESSMENT

The fourth and most important component in the 360° survey process is self-reflection. The knowledge that others think positively (or negatively) about your ability is very powerful and often difficult to accept. This impact can be more pronounced when others' perceptions are different from your own.

While peer and direct report feedback tends to be more accurate than self-assessment, introspection expands an individual's receptiveness to change vis-à-vis re-evaluation of their mannerisms and methodologies. Self-assessment is a huge step in personal managerial development.

Part 3: Gateway to communication & self-awareness

Questions in the 360° leadership survey reflect behaviors displayed by managers and employees in high performing organizations.

Each item of query in TalentMap's standard 360° questionnaire results from research conducted by TalentMap over some two decades. During the course of these years, TalentMap has worked with hundreds of North American public and private organizations and tens of thousands of managers to help them improve by reflecting on the following.

How is the individual perceived in terms of their relationship to self?

How is the individual perceived in terms of their relationship to others?

How is the individual perceived in terms of their relationship to the organization?

Evaluators are asked to indicate how well they feel they know the individual and are invited to assign ratings and share comments based on their perceptions of the individual's:

- Self-development
- Adaptability
- Leadership behaviors
- Communication effectiveness
- Ability to instill trust
- People development
- Overall performance effectiveness
- Problem solving
- Networking and links to and throughout the organization

Data surfaces information, standards, and behaviors that are both organization-specific and in context of industry norms.



Part 4: Charting a roadmap for change

Making sense of 360° feedback? It's not all black and white. This is where it gets interesting.

How does the individual's perception of themselves compare to the perceptions others have of them? Patterns of strengths and weaknesses become apparent.

If a "self" score is below the "all others" score in a particular area, this suggests there's a hidden strength perceived by others that the individual doesn't see or recognize in themselves.

Conversely if the "all others" score is below the "self" score, it may be that the individual overrates their abilities in these lower scoring areas suggesting an opportunity for improvement.

Attention should be paid to large variations in rater scores. Should this happen, the manager will want to ask themselves what they're doing with one rater group that they might want to consider doing or not doing with another.

Once feedback has been received and digested, it's time to chart an individual roadmap for change. Using insights from a 360° leadership survey to establish a development plan is a critical part of the multi-source feedback process.

...MEASURE-ANALYZE-PLAN-IMPLEMENT-SUSTAIN- MEASURE-ANALYZE-PLAN-IMPLEMENT-SUSTAIN...

To positively influence performance, individuals must commit to understanding and accepting feedback, and to developing personal goals and self-improvements plans that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reliable, and Timely (SMART).

As always when it comes to employee feedback initiatives, post-survey follow-through can't be emphasized enough. **Coaching and 360° Self-Development Workshops** (available from TalentMap's senior consultants) can kickstart the internal support systems needed to see leadership development become an ongoing and successful priority.

Internal support from the individual's direct supervisor, manager, or senior leader is critical at every stage. Without a regular structured process, performance improvement efforts can be lost under the pressure of daily activities.

Changing workplace environments, expectations, and roles are a juggling act for even the most astute people managers. TalentMap's proven 360° survey is a transformative tool that influences careers and impacts work environments in a positive way.

Conclusion

This 360° Leadership Survey Guide should help you better understand the purpose of 360° surveys and plan for a more successful multi-source feedback program. For more information on 360° surveys and other ways to better engage with your employees, visit www.talentmap.com/360-leadership-surveys

Additional Resources:

- www.talentmap.com/360-leadership-surveys
- www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/guide-to-360-reviews-what-is-a-360-how-do-you-administer-360-feedback/
- explorance.com/2013/05/5-strategies-for-360-degree-feedback-success/

About TalentMap

A thought leader focused exclusively on workplace engagement measurements and research, TalentMap is passionate about understanding the people behind organizational success: Employees.

Since its start in 1998, TalentMap has conducted tens of thousands of employee engagement survey projects and surveyed more than 14 million employees. Working in partnership with public and private sector organizations of all sizes across North America, TalentMap's deep understanding of methodologies and assumptions unique to different sectors alongside volumes of benchmark data accrued over the years have become valued resources for organizations that value their people.

TalentMap employee engagement survey tools – readily customized from hire to retire – are based on years of research, field experience, and scientific measurement. The company also offers expert consulting services, deployment, data collection, analysis reporting, and post-survey action planning. It's a proprietary workplace intelligence process – developed and delivered by people-oriented people consumed with helping leadership teams and HR professionals create positive organizational change.

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