



How to Unlock The Full Potential of 360-Degree Feedback

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With the increased need for upskilling employees, research shows that alignment between managers and employees is essential for igniting employee development. Most importantly, 360-degree-feedback, when paired with the right learning tools, enables organizations to significantly improve their [talent development](https://talentculture.com/talent-development-positive-impact/) (<https://talentculture.com/talent-development-positive-impact/>) planning process at the individual, team, and organization levels. Moreover, these tools uniquely enable leadership teams to identify specific behavioral patterns and skill trends needed for success and some habits that may need redirection. After all, these patterns in leadership behavior accelerate business performance on an ongoing basis and are crucial for combating disruption, inspiring teams, and serving customers.

What Can We Learn from Multi-rater Data? How Do We Unlock its Potential?

The tool itself has not changed much, but the process and profound insights that can be architected to inform talent development strategies have changed. For instance, knowing ahead of time which questions to ask participants and how to act on the data allows leaders to use the tool more intentionally. As a matter of fact, Peggy Parskey, co-author of *Learning Analytics: Using Talent Data to Improve Business Outcomes* (https://www.amazon.com/Learning-Analytics-Improve-Business-Outcomes-ebook-dp-B086FHTGC1/dp/B086FHTGC1/ref=mt_other?_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=1615837002) says that valuable answers can be obtained from 360 data when you ask the following questions:

1. Is organizational competency changing? Is it getting stronger or weaker?
2. What is the growth of different employee cohorts? Are employees growing their capabilities? By how much?
3. What level of talent is the organization losing? How does that compare to the new hires?
4. Does the data uncover high-potential employees? Does it help us with succession planning?

5. How does training (e.g. onboarding, skill development) affect ratings? Does it close the competency gap?



Holistic 360 Process (Source: [Explorance](https://explorance.com/solutions/360-degree-feedback/) (<https://explorance.com/solutions/360-degree-feedback/>))

To obtain maximum benefits, we recommend these five best practices for implementing a 360 feedback process (see diagram above):

Set a clear purpose aligned with the organizational direction

360-degree feedback assessments work best when the purpose directly serves the goal of the business. For example, they are most valuable when used for development planning. However, administrators should invest extra thought when adding performance appraisal aspects to the process, as it may taint the data and the process with user bias.

Use the feedback process as a continuous development tool

It's important to realize that 360 isn't an ad hoc tool. It's the process of understanding expectations, identifying key players, and tailoring the information into meaningful data upfront on an ongoing basis. In the long run, this ensures a cycle where everyone remains on target for continued development, including regular reviews and alignment on multiple levels.

Leverage automation and integration

Ensure data integration into talent reviews, succession planning, and leadership development needs. In essence, the new and improved 360-degree assessment tools that contain text analytics and machine learning ensure the data is collected and analyzed in a timely, user-friendly manner. Ultimately, this significantly improves objectivity and accelerates deployment times.

Develop a holistic strategy

By and large, the 360-degree assessment creates a shift from a siloed approach to one that seeks unified consistency across similar roles in the organization. On the whole, 360-degree assessments are useful when seen as a data source to illuminate strengths and



offer individualized advice for leaders. Generally speaking, at an organizational level, 360 data can inform an overall leadership development strategy to nurture leadership strengths.

Integrate ongoing coaching support

All in all, a 360-degree process that encompasses action planning will help ensure concrete paths for addressing gaps. Additionally, it will help to build on strengths through ongoing coaching and support, which is crucial for sustained development. Thus, this approach also prevents employee demoralization as they step through the process.

How Can We Make 360-Degree Feedback Assessments a Success?

From the start, leadership support is essential to the ongoing journey. In short, they must develop a clearly defined purpose that is agile enough to adapt to business needs. Also, they need to enable targeted improvement initiatives that allow tracking results over time.

With this in mind, the 360-degree assessment platform needs to be integrated with the existing HR ecosystem. Additionally, it needs to be backed by scientifically proven methodology and coaching capabilities. This will enable identifying behavioral strengths mapped through competencies. This is imperative now when organizations want confirmation that their investments will make a positive difference in business results and instill confidence in their employees moving forward.

In summary, the table below further summarizes the differences between today's successful 360-degree approach versus the past use of 360-degree assessments:

360-Degree Feedback	
Past Approach	Today's Approach
Focus on individual performance	A clear purpose to develop defined competencies aligned with organizational and individual goals
A one-off measurement tool	Continuous employee development
Complex and time-consuming process	Automation and integration
Inconsistencies, user bias, and skewed data	Objectivity and holistic strategy
Lack of action in response to data	Coaching approach

Moving forward, organizations that will benefit the most from 360-degree assessments are those that genuinely want to boost leadership team and employee development. These organizations strive to have a clear picture of the competencies needed to achieve



business success. They are committed to developing their workforce (build vs. “buy”). Just as important, they are willing to invest time, energy, and resources into the process and its sustainment.

Basically, when leaders and managers allow 360-degree assessments to help them understand the individual strengths of their people and have clear plans for the future, they successfully navigate the various challenges thrown at them. Likewise, they’ll soon benefit from the newest rise of 360-degree feedback tools.

A note on the authors:

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