

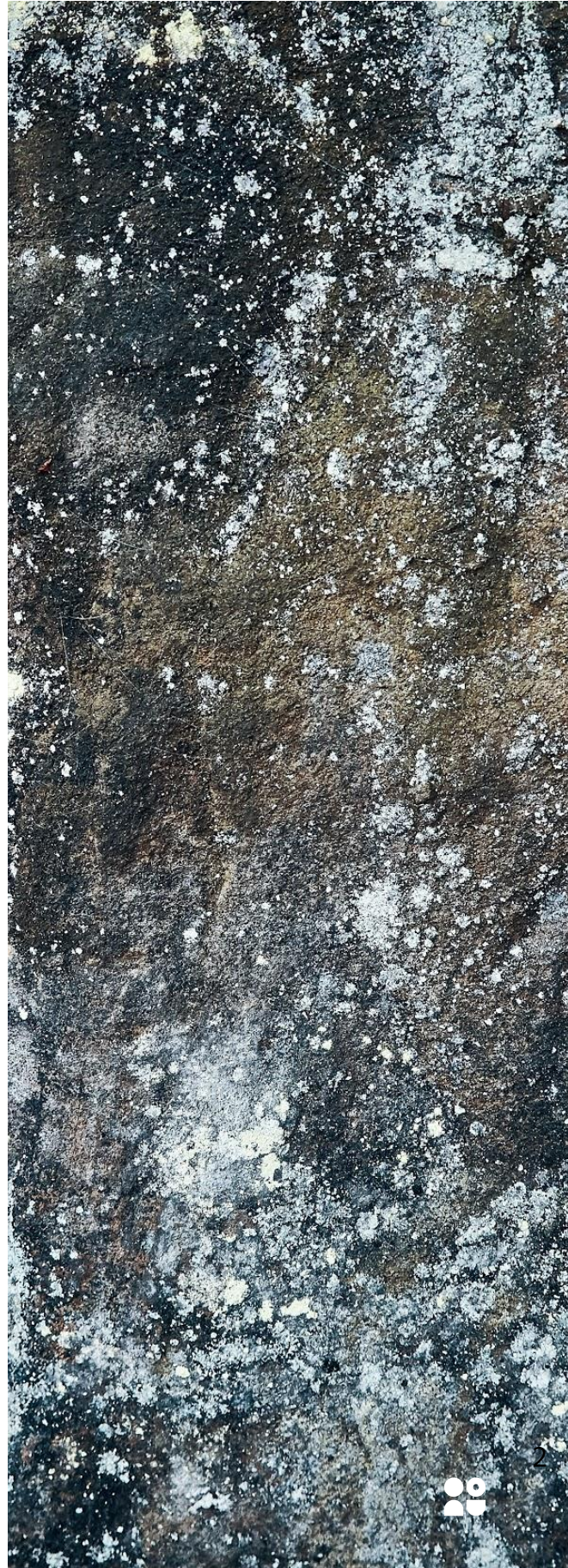
An Essential Guide to 360° Feedback

Helpful tips and best practices for all things 360° feedback



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What is 360° Feedback?



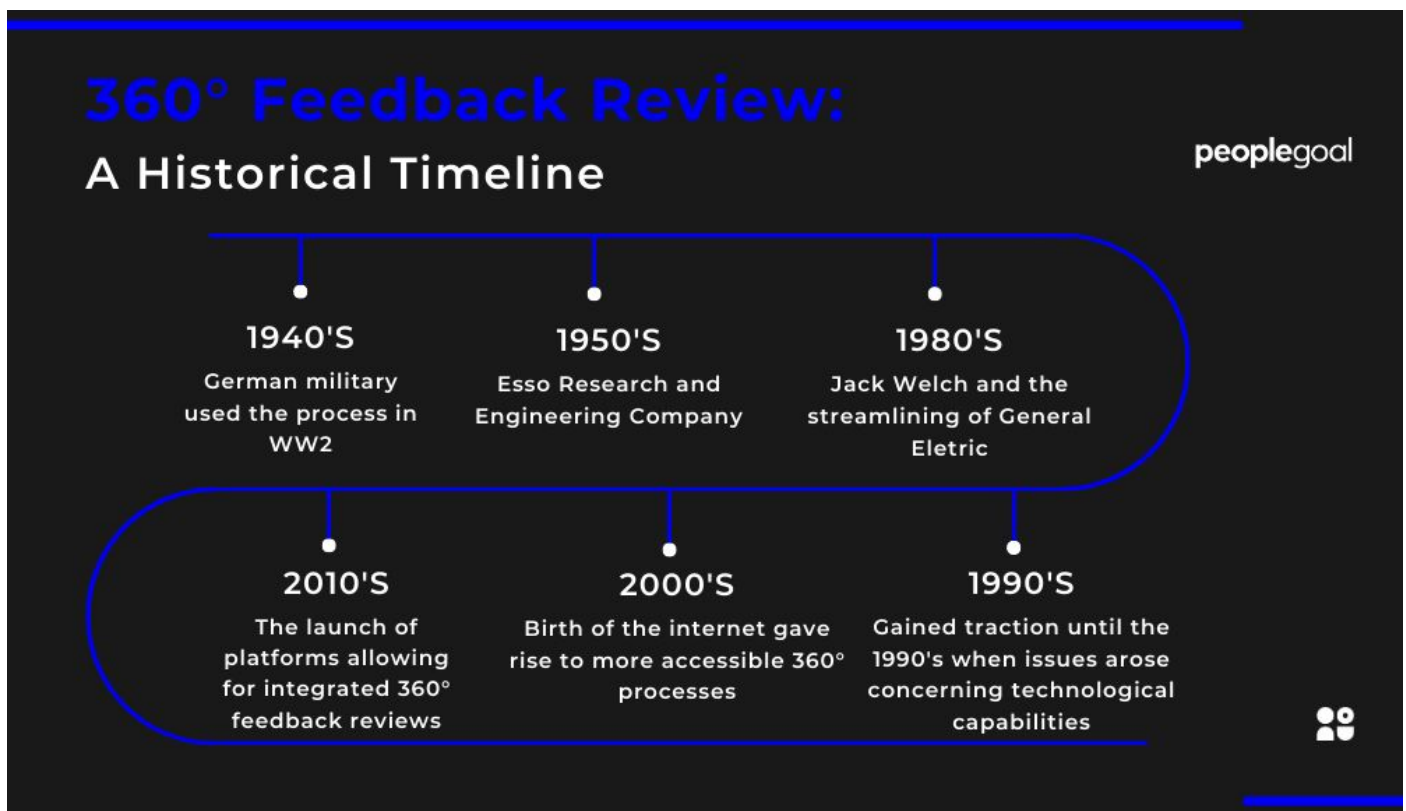
To word it simply, **360° feedback** is a process of feedback where the **employee is rated** by **members** of their organization, **across all levels of seniority** using surveys or forms. Feedback is gained from **subordinates, peers, managers, supervisors and senior leaders**. The goal is to get feedback from different sources **about performance and areas of improvement**.

360° feedback provides a unique opportunity for individuals and organizations to **elucidate deficits** in their knowledge and skills, but also **highlight where they are achieving and doing well**. It provides people with what has gone well in the past, and what needs to get better at in the future.

360° feedback is a well-established tool for organizations to:

- Manage performance and development
- Develop leadership qualities
- Align individual, team and developmental performance to organizational goals
- Continuously improve existing the existing review process

A History of 360° Feedback



Some have argued that the roots of 360° feedback lie with the German military in World War II. Soldiers were not just evaluated by their superiors, but also by their peers and subordinates. The concept was geared to improving performance by providing valuable insights from a range of sources. Supposedly the American army used a similar process in World War II, however, feedback did not include the appraisals of subordinates. Nonetheless, both tied the grade of appraisal to reward, promotions and compensation.

With respect to documented history, 360° feedback can be found in the 1950's at the Esso Research and Engineering Company. From here, 360° feedback **rapidly grew**, gaining traction up **until the 1990's** with most HR professionals having a firm grasp on the concept. However, a **problem arose with the capabilities of technology** at the time.

Feedback reports were largely **paper driven**, involving manual calculations and lengthy delays. This culminated in the decline of classical 360° feedback reviews via the reduction in rater interest and the scorn of the feedback representative.

But with the **rise of the internet** came the rebirth of 360° feedback. Reports were easily **creatable and accessible online**. The introduction of personal computers allowed 360° Feedback data to be analyzed and presented with **increased accuracy** and at a much larger volume.

Further still, **online software** is now a staple in many businesses which can provide real time, **360° feedback for everyone** to give and receive feedback. The popularity of 360° feedback has grown rapidly in the new millennium and reports suggest that an extremely high proportion of [Fortune 500](#) companies have implemented some form of 360° feedback process.

Where is 360° Feedback in 2019?

[Jack Zenger](#), a globally recognized and respected expert on organizational behavior regards 360° feedback as...

"...the value of 360° feedback as a central part of leadership development programs. It's a practical way to get a large group of leaders in an organization to be comfortable with receiving feedback from direct reports, peers, bosses, and other groups. Once leaders begin to see the huge value to be gained, in fact, we see them add other groups to their raters such as suppliers, customers, or those two levels below them in the organization."

- **Jack Zenger**



How Are Major Organizations Approaching 360 Feedback?

According to [research](#) by Forbes, 85% of Fortune 500 companies use 360° feedback. They obviously recognize this tool as an important feature in their feedback process. Here are some **case examples** from top companies and how they use 360° feedback:

Goldman Sachs

In 2016, Goldman Sachs announced shifting their feedback approach from a traditional approach to a more flexible, 360° approach. Goldman Sachs have implemented a system which involves feedback from all levels of the organization. They say the new performance method would rely on 'high quality and ongoing feedback' and that 360° feedback will improve their employee's performance.

GE

General Electrics uses a 360° review process and awards numerical rankings to feedback examples. Employees are ranked on items such as quality, achieving goals and meeting deadlines. Jack Welch once said that he implemented a feedback system to split people into three groups: the top 20%, the middle 70% and the bottom 10%. He uses this data to:

"take the top 20 percent of employees and make them feel loved - take the middle 70 percent and tell them what they need to do to get into the top 20 percent".

Facebook

Facebook conduct biannual 360 feedback reviews which focus on development. They use the buzzword 'impact' in their reviews, focusing on two main questions: What impact has the employee had since the last review? How can they increase their impact going forward?

Netflix

Netflix ended their relationship with traditional annual reviews, instead shifting to 360 feedback reviews when they began asking their employees to:

"identify things that colleagues should stop, start or continue"

Patty McCord (former Chief Talent Officer)

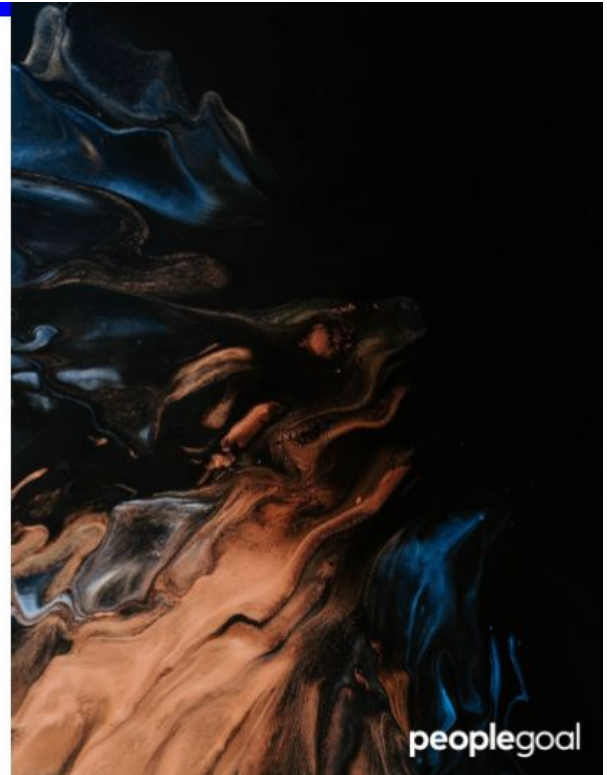


The importance of 360° feedback

Let's go over some of the key reasons why feedback is so important. If you want to find out why these reasons are important in more depth, check out [this blog](#).

Why is feedback important?

1. Continuous Learning
2. Employee Engagement
3. Improve working relationships
4. Motivation and Attitude
5. Career Development
6. Essential in developing performance



Continuous Learning

Feedback is a time where you can **gauge gaps in the employee's knowledge** and encourage them to **reveal areas** where they may have deficits **where they can improve**.

Employee Engagement

Research intakes that employees can become not engaged or even worse, actively **disengaged when they receive little or no feedback**. They want [recognition](#) for good work, and they want to know what they should be doing better.

Improve working relationships

Feedback represents an opportunity for a manager to **engender a positive relationship with their employees**. Further, 360° offers an opportunity for relationships between colleagues to develop as it opens up communication channels between employees.



Motivation and Attitude

Feedback is an opportunity to **motivate employees** to do better. Give them a **vision** of what they are capable of achieving and help them elucidate the path to get there.

Career Development

Feedback helps along the whole process of development. Initial feedback stages can help elucidate the ambitions of the employee whilst also gauging whereabouts they are currently. Feedback post this initial stage helps to guide the employee along the way, finding out shortfalls in their knowledge and finding out where they **may need training, learning and development**.

Essential in developing performance

Feedback is a method to try and help individuals in the future. It is **constructive** and geared towards **developing the individual**.

So, we've told you about the importance of 360° feedback, but what about the advantages and potential disadvantages of this feedback method?



Benefits of 360° Feedback

Evidence from the literature regarding the effectiveness of 360° feedback in enhancing performance has indicated that when feedback is designed, implemented and carried out in a professional and apt manner, then it can have numerous beneficial effects. Here are some of the benefits:

Increased employee self-awareness

A fairly simple one to begin with. 360° feedback is an especially powerful feedback tool as it leads to a higher level of self-awareness in employees. Due to having **varied input from a range of disciplines**, self-awareness in the employee is likely to be at a more salient level.

Identifies developmental opportunities

360° feedback is particularly useful for identifying development opportunities for employees and it helps to discover areas of improvement or where their strengths lie. It also helps towards the creation of development activities that are more specific to the employee. Feedback helps in bridging the gap between what employees think of themselves and others opinion of them.

Creates a culture of openness

With the inherent feature of 360° feedback is the high level of transparency. Because of this increased transparency it is easier to address feedback in a constructive manner, without the fear of retaliation. A culture of openness is one where employees, peers, managers and subordinates are upfront about their opinions.

"As feedback results are delivered and discussed among team members, things become more transparent."

- **Antonioni (1996)**

Identifies skills gaps

360° feedback processes provide employees and their supervisors alike with the knowledge of apparent skills gap. This type of review process gives a varied perspective on areas where the employee can improve and ways of tackling these issues. As a whole, this helps individual professional development and address organizational deficits.

Multiple sources of feedback

Arguably the biggest benefit of 360° feedback is that it collects said feedback from multiple sources. This in turn allows for a greater scope of perspective and increased likelihood of greater accuracy. This also increases the likelihood that a developmental area will not be overlooked.

Drawbacks of 360° Feedback

Drawbacks of 360° feedback

1. Concerns over anonymity
2. Honesty is an issue
3. Negative Focus
4. Assessments can be potentially damaging
5. Limited reviewers



Concerns over anonymity

The level of **transparency** and **anonymity** that you apply to your 360° feedback process, is of course up to you. However, it is important to consider the implications they might have. With increasing levels of transparency comes the increased risk that employees may **not feel comfortable providing the feedback** that they truly feel, instead choosing feedback which the recipient wants to hear.



Honesty is an issue

Linking very well to the previous point, 360° feedback can be hampered by the level of honesty. As with other appraisal processes there are **natural biases** which can **affect the validity** of the review. The value of feedback here, is only as good as its honesty. Anonymity is inexplicably linked to honest here.

Negative Focus

Inevitably, some feedback will be met with hostility, and instead of taking feedback constructively, employees may greet feedback with stoic defense. Instead of focusing on the crux of the feedback issues, employees may look to instead say: 'who said what'. No one likes to hear criticisms of themselves, **you must make sure that the feedback is provided in a correct and constructive manner.**

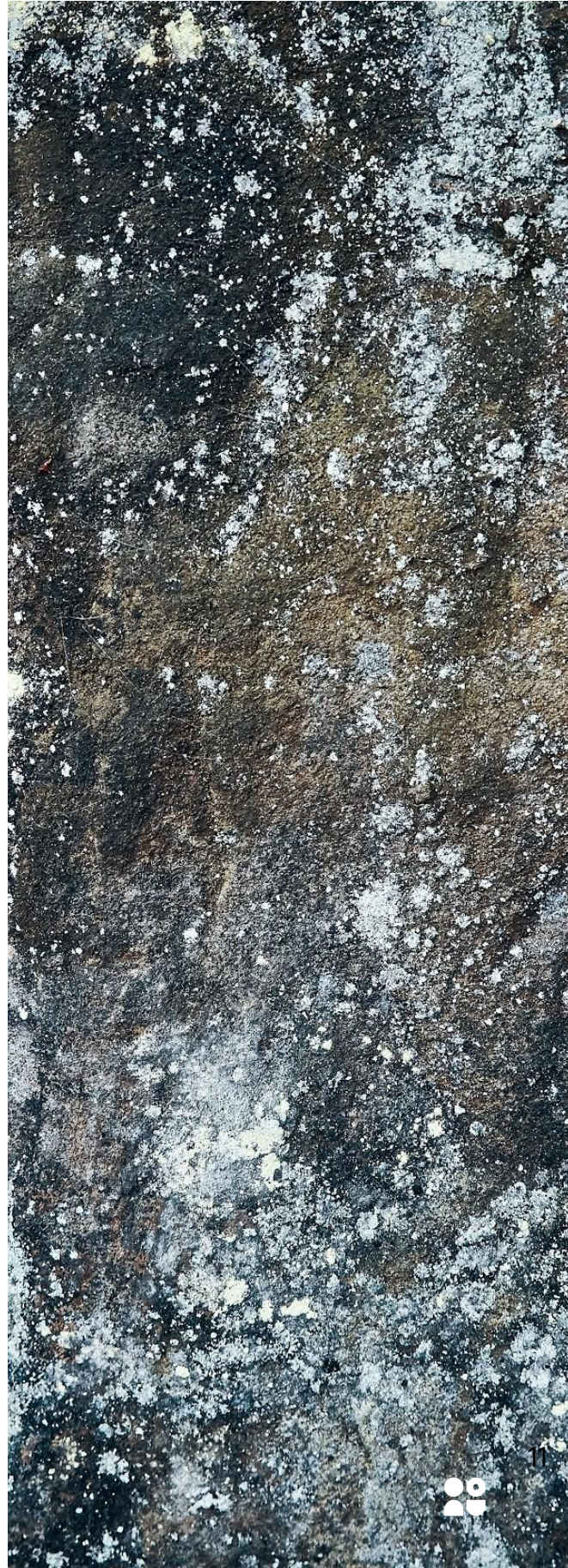


Assessments can be potentially damaging

Although issues with 360° feedback include honesty, previously we have described this with a positive outlook. However, some employees may see 360° feedback as an opportunity to **express a grudge**. In this instance, damaging comments may be given to an employee. When this does happen, one employee **will need reprimanding**, while the other employee may want coaching in order to be able learn from this experience. Regardless, **strong leadership is needed**.

Limited reviewers

One of the key components of 360° feedback is that it takes multiple different perspectives and viewpoints. Particularly for smaller organizations this may throw up a potential issue, as it will be difficult to garner a full **360° view**. For the tool to work at an optimal level there needs **to be at least 5 reviewers**, preferably coming **from different disciplines**.



The 360° feedback process

Feedback is usually given in two ways

- By rating a series of statements designed to measure specific behaviors and competencies.
- Using open-ended questions to allow raters flexibility when answering.

The results are then **collected and analyzed** to produce easily readable data. You can choose to present your report in **qualitative or graphical form**, or a mix of both.

The recipient can then **review** either the report **individually**, or **with the help of their manager** or a trained facilitator for the full effect. This can help by guiding and encouraging the recipient to take on board the details of the report.

Here's a condensed process model of the feedback from the start to finish!



A Performance Review Timeline

Planning and Preparation Stage

- What is the purpose of running this feedback?
- What are the determinants you wish to assess?
- Who are the employees being assessed?
- Who is going to provide feedback?

Design Stage

- How is the survey going to be administered?
- What statements are going to be used?
- Provide instructions for the employees
- Set timescales

Gathering Feedback

- Monitor process
- Gather results
- Analyze Data

Data production stage

- Data Analysis
- Choose how you want to present the data
- Generate reports and tables

Feedback stage

- Decide how you want to give the results of the feedback to the recipients
- Deliver feedback

Post-feedback stage

- Decide on the main points to arise out of the process
- Identify methods of improvement on these areas
- Develop managers to help employees on development tasks

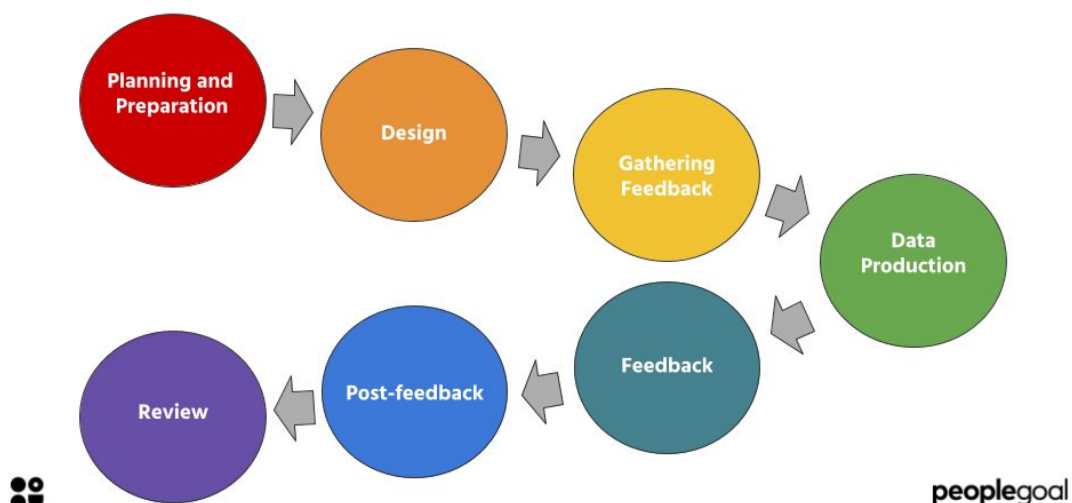
Review stage

- Carry out a project review
- Implement any changes prior to the start of the next feedback process

You might also want to have a look at how the PeopleGoal [platform](#) can help you conduct a 360° feedback review and the process model that it takes.

The 360° feedback process

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360° Feedback Tips for Managers

1. Communicate the purpose of 360° feedback to your employees

Let employees know the purpose of 360° feedback before beginning the process. **Communicate** how the process occurs and the role that employees have in it. **Provide details** of what you expect and how employees can best provide feedback.

2. Use relevant and well sized groups

Consider the number of people that will be involved in providing feedback. Further, consider who you want providing feedback. 360° feedback permeates through all levels of seniority in the organization. 360° feedback surveys involve more of the organization in terms of providing feedback.

3. Customize the 360° process

Everyone is different, and every organization isn't the same. Feedback **survey questions should be tailored to specific areas** you want to measure and potentially improve.



360° Feedback Tips for Employees

1. Be Respectful

Provide detail in your points, **act professionally** and **respectfully** when providing feedback. This is not a forum for banter, pettiness or a character assassination. Provide feedback with a degree of emotional intelligence so as to balance out giving apt and reasoned judgement with making said feedback constructive and actionable.

2. Be honest

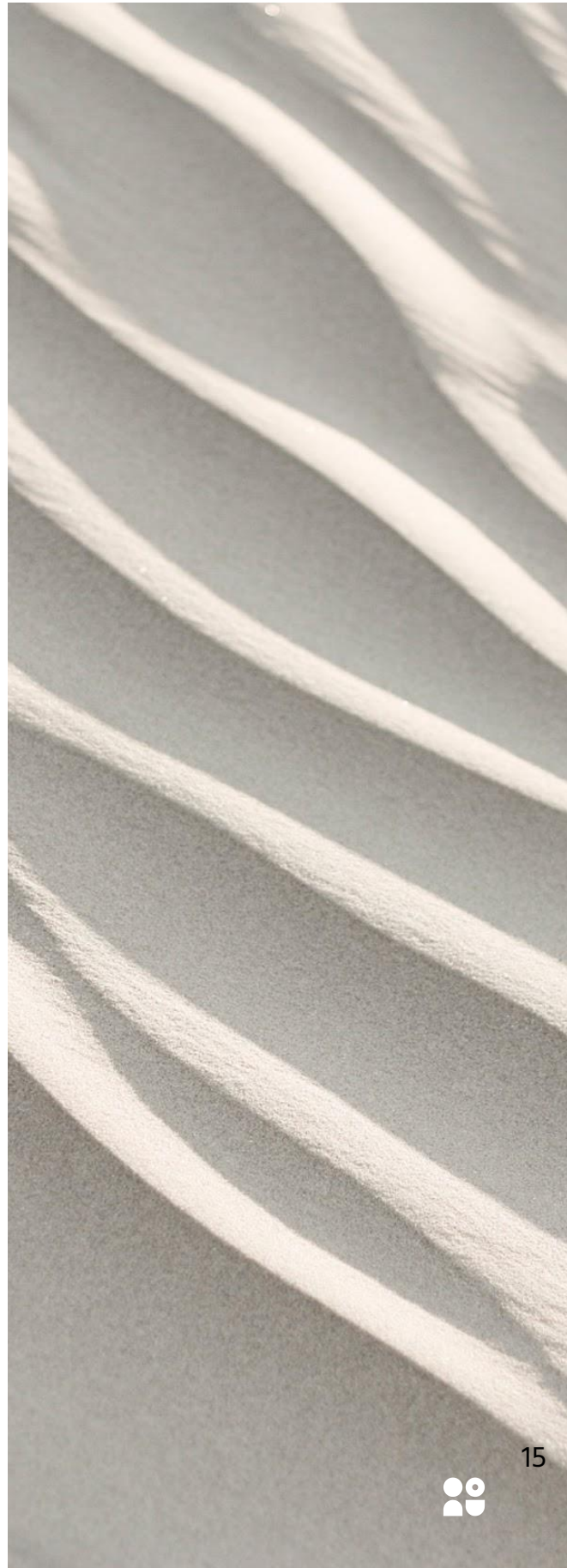
Make sure that the feedback you provide is honest and give examples to back up your points. Don't think you need to be too nice to your colleague. A feedback review is a time for open and honest discussion. But make sure not to be overly harsh either for the obvious negative connotations which come with this.

3. Speak for yourself

Base your feedback on your own personal experience and opinion, not that of someone else or the gossip you hear around the office.

4. Provide examples to illustrate your points

Obviously an imperative feature. Feedback is an evidence-based process. Making feedback off a whim or general emotion is a detrimental way of going about things.



360° Feedback Tips for the Recipient

1. Be professional

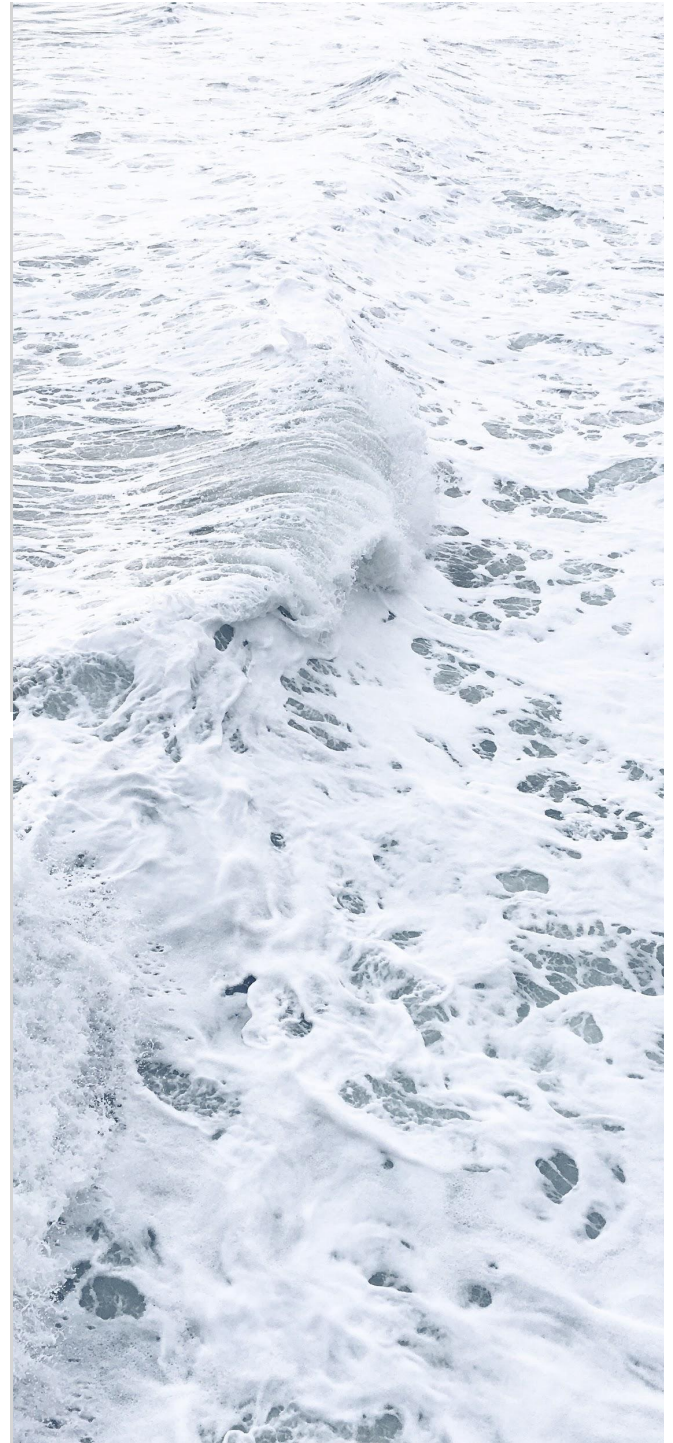
You might not like the feedback, you might not agree with it. But it is important to present yourself with professionalism. Feedback is there to benefit you and to discover potential development areas.

2. Reflect upon the feedback

This can be both independently, with a peer or with a manager. Reflect upon the feedback you've been given. Identify deficits in knowledge and performance areas and think about how you can fill these gaps going forward.

3. Acceptance

You need to accept the feedback. Keep your emotions and curiosity in check, don't start trying to work out who provided what feedback etc. Accept your feedback, recognize the attributed evidence and consider areas where you can improve.



360° Feedback Examples

We're not just trying to bombard you with information about 360 feedback, we're also here to give you a helping hand when conducting your feedback. Here are some feedback statements you may want to integrate into your process:

Integrity

- "Commands a high level of respect and trust."
- "Mirrors the company's values."
- "Holds themselves accountable."
- "Recognizes that opinions and experiences differ, and they take time to understand other viewpoints."
- "Shows respect when interacting with others, regardless of seniority and experience."

Ownership

- "Takes responsibility for the outcomes of decisions they have made."
- "Conveys clear expectations, holding people fully accountable for their work and responsibilities."
- "Provides people support when they need it."
- "Accepts ultimate responsibility for their achievement of objectives."

Communication

- "Communicates openly with others."
- "Communicates effectively with others."
- "Is open to feedback."

Strategic Thinking

- "Translates organization's mission and strategy into measurable and achievable objectives."
- "Deals and resolves challenges well."
- "Plan ahead and set goals which align with the organizations values and goals."
- "Implements plans which aligns teams."

Leadership

- "Handles conflict in a tactful and appropriate manner."
- "Recognizes when others are struggling and may need a helping hand."
- "Motivates others to achieve their goals."
- "Uses initiative to solve problems."

Teamwork

- "Adopts and promotes a collaborative mindset."
- "Gives constructive feedback."
- "Respectful and professional."
- "Consults with team members."
- "Openly shares plans, ideas and goals with team members."
- "Effectively builds relationships across different teams."

Results Driven

- "Is a problem solver."
- "Is focused on results."
- "Has a track record of delivering good results."
- "Applies knowledge and experience with initiative when trying to achieve results."
- "Generates new and innovative ideas."
- "Evidences a strong 'can do' and enthusiastic attitude when achieving results."

If you're looking for more personnel type-based feedback questions, we've come up with a few more feedback statements to use in your 360° process.

Employee Feedback Questions:

- "They work well in high pressured situations."
- "They work well in a team dynamic."
- "They are innovative and generate new ideas."
- "They are well organized and timely."
- "They interact well with others and find it easy to build good interpersonal relationships."
- "They want to continuously develop their skills repertoire."

Manager Feedback Questions:

- "They help others achieve their goals."
- "They align employees focus towards a common goal."
- "They build good interpersonal relationships."
- "They are excellent in generating a good team dynamic."
- "They are firm when appropriate."
- "They deal with difficult situations well."
- "They offer appropriate and timely recognition."

The last statement fits quite well when thinking about providing your employees with positive feedback. It is important to provide your employee with recognition and positivity when they complete a task to a high standard. Positive feedback is a sure way to ingrain positive actions within your workplace. This is due to its ability to make employees **feel valued** and connected to the team as they are a **contributor in an organizations' activities**.

Moreover, it provides meaning to a job which **increases engagement** and **productivity**. On the most extreme end of affairs, employees that feel valued and find meaning in their work are **less likely to leave**. However, not everyone knows how to give positive feedback, or to be more succinct; constructive positive feedback. So, [here](#) is a couple of tips for giving effective feedback, followed up with some examples you yourself could use in the office.

Encouraging Feedback from your Employees

Often, the problem with encouraging employee participation lies in two key areas: communication and trust in the organization. Your first steps to tackle this are to assess the way you're promoting the feedback loop and to address the reasons people are afraid to give feedback.

So how do you encourage your employees to give feedback? [Here](#) are the best ways to ease out feedback from your employees:

Market your feedback process

Sometimes the reason employees don't give regular feedback is just because they don't know that it's there! Promote your feedback process.

Give guidance and training

Giving feedback can be confusing when you're not sure of the best way to structure it. Head this off by creating training packs.

Take action

There's no point in giving feedback if nothing is done about it.

Model the behavior you want

Start with yourself and the leadership team. Seeing senior management buy in to the process automatically boosts the importance of feedback in everyone's minds.

Address the discomfort

Will we be punished for giving criticism? Will I be called out unfairly and who oversees that? Are feedback scores tied to compensation? Short answer - tell them! Provide clarity to your employees regarding the feedback culture.

Encourage peer feedback

Let employees know that they should be giving and receiving feedback with their peers, too.



Concluding Remarks

So, there you have it. The essential guide to 360 feedback. Of course, we probably haven't fitted in more niche research, or certain trends that are appearing in this type of feedback. Maybe you don't agree with certain aspects of this guide, maybe you think we've missed something. If that's the case don't hesitate, let us know. We hope we've given you a good overview of the topic and enthused you to go out and read more. 360° feedback has seen a resurgence in the last few years and is a great tool to use when trying to generate authentic, honest and balanced feedback. Perhaps you want to integrate an element of 360° into your feedback process. Perhaps you like the peer-to-peer element. Whatever it is, we're here to help!



