

## **HANDOUT 21 - WHAT IS THE 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK PROCESS?**

The idea is to receive all round feedback on your skills as a performance management facilitator in order to identify the gaps and development areas. Once you know what your strengths and weaknesses are, you can identify and implement improvement methods.

The 360-degree feedback is basically a custom-made diagnostic questionnaire that addresses all the skills and behaviours necessary for successful facilitation of performance management. You need to receive feedback on how you handled the different aspects of the process and how effective your approach has been in order to develop and improve.

You can draw up a 360-degree feedback questionnaire in consultation with your peers and manager.

Questions should be directed at evaluating your skills in the following areas:

- Ability to communicate organisational vision and mission
- Ability to identify performance objectives and allocate them appropriately
- Ability to formulate SMART objectives
- Ability to consult and agree performance standards
- Ability to monitor individual and team outputs
- Ability to handle unsatisfactory performance and inappropriate behaviour
- Ability to formulate and agree action plans
- Ability to handle administration effectively
- Ability to take remedial action and resolve resource problems and barriers
- Ability to establish a trust relationship
- Ability to make staff member feel at ease
- Ability to ensure active participation from the staff member
- Ability to maintain and enhance self-esteem

- Ability to give and receive feedback
- Ability to provide constructive criticism
- Effectiveness of coaching skills
- Effectiveness of counselling skills
- Effectiveness of communication skills
- Effectiveness of problem-solving skills
- Effectiveness of conflict management skills
- Ability to motivate individuals and teams

### **Benefits of the 360 Degree Feedback:**

- Asking for and receiving feedback can be very powerful from a circle of influence with direct knowledge of a person's work behaviours.
- Receiving feedback from many people offers a more honest, reliable and valid evaluation than traditional appraisals given from one person's perspective only.

### **A Balanced View**

Feedback from only one source can be dismissed as being only one person's opinion. If a number of people say the same thing, it is harder to ignore. Equally, a personal opinion from one person can be balanced out by the collective view of others.

Leads to behavioural change:

An opinion from a number of different assessors is reliable evidence and is difficult to ignore. When faced with such evidence most people will choose to make changes to the way they work and behave. Subsequent feedback can tell them how they are improving. The evidence will also identify strengths that can be built on as a means of improving performance even further.

### **Overcomes resistance to feedback:**

The 360-degree feedback overcomes resistance to feedback. Staff members are often reluctant to give honest feedback to their supervisor/manager due to fear that such feedback could be held against them. The anonymous nature of the 360 method overcomes this problem.

### **Increases understanding of expectations:**

People often perform in ineffective ways because they either don't know what to do to be more effective or they fail to appreciate the effect of their behaviour on others. The 360-degree feedback is the ideal way to help them understand what staff expect from them and how their behaviour affect the people that report to them.

### **Leads to self-directed learning and development:**

When faced with overwhelming evidence of a competency that needs to be developed, mature managers will immediately ask themselves what they can do to overcome this problem. Deep-seated and long-standing problems are often confronted in this way.

The self-directed learning and development that then happens is based on a real need rather than on an individual's self-perception.

## **Developing and Implementing a 360 Degree Feedback Tool**

This process of developing and implementing a 360-degree feedback tool has the

following three steps:

### **I. Decide on the Purpose and the Use of the Information**

Rating the performance of peers, managers or reporting staff is a highly sensitive process that can have an enormous impact on the performance and culture of the organisation and the performance and self-esteem of those being evaluated. One must therefore be very clear on why you want to do it and what you are going to use the information for.

## **2. Decide What Aspects of Performance are to be evaluated**

Remember that 360-degree feedback can only be used for behavioural aspects of performance. Performance, based on job function, must be measured through a different system.

The first thing to decide is which elements of a person's behaviours should be incorporated into the 360-feedback process. The choice of behaviours to include in the process is often simple. Most organisations want to test how well their managers are behaving according to the values of the organisation.

So, they:

- Take their organisation's values.
- Describe the behaviours a manager should be displaying to represent those values.
- Insert those descriptions into the 360-feedback diagnostic.
- Distribute the diagnostic to the manager, a sample of their staff, a sample of their peers and their manager.
- Ask each person to rate the performance of the manager (on a five-point scale).
- Collate all the ratings and evaluate the performance of the manager on the results.
- Meet with the person that was assessed to discuss the feedback results.
- Develop action plans to address gaps and development areas.
- Use the 360 feedback again to assess improvement.

## **3. Use the Outcomes from the Feedback Process Wisely**

The outcomes of the 360-feedback process can be used in many ways. A few examples are:

- Incorporating them into the performance objectives of each manager.
- Arrange training and development activities to support the required behaviours.
- Recruitment and selection procedures can be amended to appropriately reflect the behavioural requirements of potential new managers.

## Potential Pitfalls of 360 Degree Feedback

The 360-feedback process has potential pitfalls:

### a. Fear Giving or Receiving Feedback:

Some people do not feel safe giving feedback because negative feedback can affect working relationships. Some people do not like receiving feedback because it is to confront. To overcome these pitfalls people, need to feel safe giving and receiving feedback.

For those receiving feedback:

- They should choose whom to ask to complete questionnaires.
- The responses they receive should be confidential to them and their manager.
- They should be able to view the results and plan development activities at their own pace.

### b. For those giving feedback:

- The feedback should be anonymous – there should be no way to link feedback to the identity of any individual person who completes the questionnaire.
- Feedback should be voluntary.

### c. Questionnaire Too Rigid and Not Relevant to Job

This problem arises where standard competency models or tests are used for the questionnaire. The best is to use a customised competency model as the basis for the questionnaire. Develop questions in consultation with peers and managers who is relevant for your organisation and your position.

### d. No Clear Way to Overcome Performance Gaps

Identifying development needs is impractical if there is no support mechanism in place to overcome the problems. Each element of the diagnostic must be linked to a development plan. This should contain behavioural tips for a person to try immediately, coaching and planned experiences to help them to improve through practice. Training and development options should also be made available.

#### **e. A Focus on Pay or 'Appraisal'**

A 360-degree process should be used for self-development purposes only. Only then will an individual be most open and accepting of the feedback. If feedback is linked to remuneration and appraisal the stakes are raised and the focus is not on development needs.

The 360-degree feedback is a powerful tool for change for both individuals and organisations as a whole. The clearest result is that individuals, faced with overwhelming and indisputable evidence, genuinely rethink attitudes and habits that have become ingrained over the years. Changing the individual performance or a number of people in a coordinated way then leads to changing the performance of the organisation as a whole.