

Creating Sustained Behavior Change with 360° Feedback

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Introduction

There are many reasons for introducing a 360° feedback program into an organization. Sometimes it is used to emphasize the importance of company values by making behaviors related to those values a part of the performance appraisal process. Sometimes it is used to create culture change – for example, to become less siloed and more team-based across lines of business. At other times, it is used to guide individual development on behaviors related to outstanding individual job performance, or to focus the entire organization on characteristics missing from the workforce related to being a high-performing organization. In all cases, however, the objective is the same: create improved organizational performance through individual behavior change.

All the research with which we are familiar on the impact of 360° feedback on behavior change boils down to two themes: follow-up and accountability. The least effective way to get a return on the investment on 360° feedback is to leave development up to the discretion of the individual receiving feedback. Real change occurs when the feedback process is managed as a business process in which attention is paid to creating action plans for development and checking up on progress in a systematic fashion; and where there are consequences related to progress (or lack thereof) on the development plan.

Roles and Responsibilities

The usual process for debriefing 360° feedback involves the feedback recipient, a coach, mentor or other person help the person interpret his/her feedback, and the person's direct manager. Others may also play a role as part of a managed performance improvement and development process, including a local HR representative and someone in corporate HR with oversight and sponsorship of the entire process.

The key expectations for each person in the process are outlined below.

1. The Feedback Recipient

- Review the feedback in detail, maintaining an open mind and non-defensive attitude
- Meet with a coach or mentor to review the feedback, understand the key messages in the feedback, and obtain development advice
- Meet with his/her Direct Manager to review the key messages in the feedback and agree on development actions
- Create an individual development plan and act on that plan
- Meet periodically with a mentor or coach for follow-up advice and counsel

2. The Direct Manager

- Meet with feedback recipient to review the key messages in the feedback and agree on next steps regarding his/her development
- Support the feedback recipient in achieving the goals of his/her development plan
- Provide ongoing feedback and on-the-job coaching

3. The Coach

- Interpret the feedback data and assist the feedback recipient in making the links between the data, on-the-job performance, and development potential
- Identify important development areas for both the current position and preparation for future assignments, if appropriate
- Work with the feedback recipient to create an action plan to address current development needs
- Identify development opportunities that will prepare the feedback recipient for future roles
- Provide an opportunity for the feedback recipient to freely discuss his/her own personal development

4. The Human Resources Representative

- Support the feedback recipient in the feedback and development planning process
- Provide ongoing support to the feedback recipient throughout the implementation of his/her individual development plan
- Coordinate with Corporate HR to provide process improvement recommendations

5. Corporate Human Resources

- Administer the feedback process
- Manage the coaching process
- Evaluate the overall development initiative
- Be the central point of contact for all questions

A timeline of activities for an effective development process using 360° feedback as a key component is presented below. In our experience, there is no substitute for intensity of follow-up, as reflected in the table on the next page.

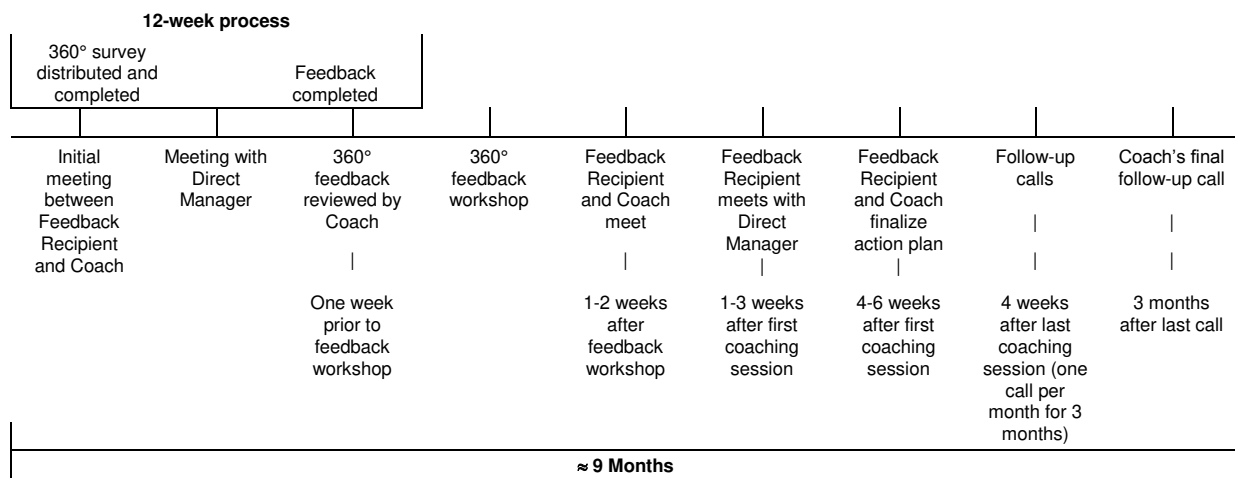
Best Practice Suggestions

The feedback recipient, direct manager and coach should have the most intensive contact throughout the feedback recipient's development process. Referring to the coaching and development timeline, the process clearly begins even before 360° assessment starts. At the outset, feedback recipients should understand the goals of the process (e.g., meaningful development to improve performance in the near term as well as to develop capability for the future) and the components of the process.



Ideally, a coach or mentor, someone who is not the feedback recipient's direct manager, should be chosen with the feedback recipient's involvement. The coach has a significant amount of preparation to do for the feedback and coaching sessions that follow the administration of the 360° feedback process. For feedback recipients who are senior managers, the coach may collect additional information through "360° interviews" with peers, direct reports, and other stakeholders to fill in any gaps in the feedback report, to clarify ambiguous or conflicting information, and provide an extra level of detail.

Feedback, Coaching and Development Timeline



The quality of the coaching relationship is a key element of success. The coach should create a safe environment in which the feedback recipient can be comfortable taking the risks necessary to learn and develop. Drawing from a broad knowledge base and a solid repertoire of learning tools, the coach needs to offer guidance and activities that help the feedback recipient meet his/her learning goals. Conversations explore the feedback recipient's current work situation to find practical, business-focused "learning lab" opportunities.

Upon completing the coaching sessions, the feedback recipient and his/her coach take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the feedback recipient will be able to continue his development. Considering the results of the coaching within the context of the feedback recipient's long-term development is an important part of this process. It usually includes the joint preparation of a long-term development plan identifying future areas of focus and action steps. The coach may also recommend a range of internal and external resources relevant to the feedback recipient's long-term development needs.

In most cases, transitioning includes handing off the development plan to the feedback recipient's manager or another stakeholder who agrees to take responsibility for monitoring future progress in partnership with the feedback recipient. The coach, feedback recipient, and other stakeholder incorporate a regular review of progress toward objectives or goal reassessment into the long-term plan. A successful coaching process can therefore serve as a catalyst for the feedback recipient's long-term development.

Specific Suggestions to Maximize the Benefits

1. For the Feedback Recipient:

- Identify a manager or other organizational stakeholder who will take responsibility for monitoring your future development.
- Identify areas where gaps might exist or further progress could be made.
- Identify any areas that may become more critical to address in your anticipated future roles.
- Participate in creating a long-term development plan, identifying specific areas of focus and action steps.
- Discuss feedback with your direct reports, make a public commitment to progress on areas for improvement, and discuss on how the direct reports can support your development.
- Hold yourself accountable for adhering to your action plans, including a regular review of progress with your direct manager.
- Provide feedback to your coach on performance, strengths and development needs.
- When the coaching process is complete, discuss its results with the coach, including how successfully he/she feels your development needs have been addressed.
- Provide your organization with a forthright assessment of the coach's capabilities and organizational fit.

2. For the Direct Manager:

- Set development goals related to the strengthening of competencies in the context of business challenges that require the competency.
- Make development and progress against development goals count in the performance management discussion.
- Identify development resources, including work assignments or special projects that stretch the feedback recipient developmentally.
- Support the feedback recipient's future development, including a long-term development plan.
- Facilitate internal and external means of development for the feedback recipient including, but not limited to, rotational assignments, stretch assignments, mentoring opportunities, task force leadership or participation, and internal or external seminars or courses.
- Share feedback about the feedback recipient's progress toward development objectives.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the coach and the coaching process for future use in the organization.
- Provide feedback to the coach on performance, strengths, and development needs.

3. For the Coach:

- Follow-up the 360° feedback by interviewing direct reports and peers about the challenges facing the feedback recipient, what he/she should start/stop doing, and develop themes and action implications.
- Guide the feedback recipient and other stakeholders in developing a long-range plan that targets areas of focus and action steps.
- Recommend internal and external means of development that best fit the needs of the feedback recipient and the organization.
- Communicate with the feedback recipient's manager or other stakeholders to ensure commitment to the feedback recipient's future development, including regular progress reviews.
- Make yourself available for questions and clarification after the coaching ends.
- Facilitate a "work-out" session with the feedback recipients and his/her team, to move the discussion from the feedback recipient's own development to how performance improvement can happen with total team involvement.
- Conduct frequent follow-up discussions with the feedback recipient – in-person or by phone.
- Check in periodically with the feedback recipient, as appropriate, to maintain the relationship.