

Managers' Q & As

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One of the really important things to get right with 360 is explaining things to people and addressing their concerns. This chapter aims to do exactly that! It's a practical guide for individuals receiving feedback.



What will happen?

There is no standard process for 360, but you can expect something like...

1. You ask seven or eight people complete a questionnaire describing your skills and approach, and also you complete a questionnaire for yourself.
2. The completed questionnaires are summarised into a feedback report.
3. Your manager, coach, or trainer helps you use the report to better understand your skills and develop an action plan.

It's called 360, because the people who complete questionnaires for you often occupy roles all around you in the organisation (senior managers, colleagues at the same level, your direct reports).

What is the questionnaire like?

You can expect about 30 or 40 short questions describing specific tasks, e.g. "*Setting a clear direction/agenda for the team*", "*Sequencing activities into well organized, logical projects*". Those questions might be answered with 1 to 5 rating scale, perhaps "*Needs improvement*" to "*Exceptional*".

There may also be some comment questions which ask for written answers, e.g. "*In a few words please see what the person does really well*". Comment questions give people the opportunity to add examples and explanations.

What's the feedback report like?

There is a huge variety of report formats; the most helpful of them present the ratings and comments people made very simply and very clearly. We think it should be really easy for you to identify your report's key messages in a few



minutes, so our reports use a persuasive red-amber-green format. In trials, it's the format which outperformed all others.

Is the feedback report confidential?

Most reports do not show who gave which answers; you should not be able to attribute ratings or written comments to people. Except, for your own answers and perhaps your manager's.

But, the report will probably show the answers given by categories of individuals, e.g. your direct reports, manager(s), colleagues, etc. You'll find it helpful to compare those - different categories often have different perceptions of you.

What could I learn from my feedback?

Your feedback report is unlikely to contain unpleasant surprises. Most people already have a good idea of how they are performing, so your report will probably confirm what you think. But, that's useful because good feedback changes impressions and hunches into reliable information.

That's not to say there will be no new information at all; 360 will probably provide one or two new insights and explanations. In particular, new links between your skills and achievements will become evident.

Will I need help?

A good coach will see things you don't, ask questions you have not thought of, provide new ideas, and guide you through the process. Without a coach 360 Feedback will provide you with few, if any, benefits. The academic research is pretty conclusive about that; 360 Feedback only works if it's supported by great coaching.

The coach might be your manager, someone from HR, a workshop trainer, or an external consultant. The important thing is to get your coach involved from the outset; before questionnaires are completed. Don't wait until you've got your report.

If you choose to work with us, we will use a proven coaching process which helps you think through the feedback in terms of your job and aspirations, then helps you deliver something very important for you in the business. Please take a look at the Handbook's "Getting Coaching Right" chapter for an introduction to that enormously helpful process.

Who should I ask to complete questionnaires?

If you're using 360 to improve your performance, the short answer is about eight of your "your customers" - people who rely on you to do a great, and people whose views you value. In practice, that might mean your manager, your



direct reports (or a cross-section of them if you manage a large team or teams), and some colleagues at a similar level to you with whom you interact regularly. And, you might ask external "customers" too, from outside your own organisation.

But, if you're using 360 Feedback for other purposes, such as talent management, career coaching, development centre input, etc..., then you probably need a different group of people to complete questionnaires.

Clearly choosing who complete questionnaires is very important; and inappropriate sample means misleading feedback. If you choose to work with us, we will help you think through whom those people should be, and then ask for their feedback.

How should I ask people to complete questionnaires?

Feedback is a favour; so ask people personally wherever possible. Then it's helpful to follow that invitation up with an e-mail, especially if you're using an online system - include a link and some simple instructions.

If the system you are using sends out automated e-mails, don't rely on that, make it a personal request.

And remember that people may have good reasons for saying 'no', good reasons for declining to give you feedback. They may be just too busy, or perhaps they've already been asked by several other people, or they may feel that they don't know you well enough.

What do I do about late questionnaires?

If someone hasn't completed a questionnaire for you it's for a good reason. Perhaps they are very busy, been away, or don't know you well enough. So, a pointed e-mail reminder from you will probably be detrimental. It's better to chase late questionnaires with a phone call or conversation, and do so diplomatically.

Will feedback be honest?

Some people are reluctant to give honest feedback if that means being critical. But, useful feedback is balanced feedback. A feedback report that contains nothing but praise may be a morale booster, but of little practical value to you. Ask those who complete questionnaires for you to give some critical ratings and written comments.

Can I follow things up with people who completed questionnaires?

Your feedback report might suggest that one or two people see things differently to everyone else. If those people are your managers, then



there is unlikely to be a problem asking them why they gave those ratings or comments.

However, if odd results are produced by colleagues, the people who work for you or others don't approach them individually. That would look like a witch hunt, and people won't give you feedback in the future.

Ask groups of people about odd results. Meetings protect the anonymity of individuals. And, ask what you might do differently. Never ask why someone gave a rating or comment.

Should I share my feedback with my manager?

Your manager exerts greatest influence over your development; so it's really important to involve him or her. A good manager will offer you support and guidance, and help you monitor your progress. They will also have a wider view of how your plan fits with wider plans for your team or business area.

If your relationship with your manager is poor, a facilitator or coach would be helpful to assist you to you work out a strategy for getting your manager's backing.

You may not feel comfortable sharing the detail of your report, but you might share the report's main findings, and especially your action plan. It will probably help to think through what the benefits of your plan to the business will be, this will help 'sell' your plan to your manager and get his or her backing.

Will I get an action plan?

Yes. You should expect 360 feedback to produce a practical action plan you can implement easily. It should be a plan that focuses on what's important to you. And, crucially it should be a plan designed and owned by you.

It's likely to involve changes in how you do things, getting help from people and learning to do new things. Training courses might be helpful, but might not feature at all. See this Handbook's Feedback and Coaching section for help with action planning. There are some simple, proven suggestions.

Does anybody else see my feedback report?

If your HR team is helping you get and use 360 Feedback, one or two members of the HR team may have access to your report. However, HR would be crazy to make your report available to others; that would destroy trust the project and all HR's work. If you are concerned, ask HR for an assurance.



Will 360 Feedback influence my appraisal?

Some organisations link 360 with appraisal or performance review; if this is done carefully 360 can be a very helpful input into the performance discussion. 360 feedback gives more concrete information and a more rounded view. Ask HR if there is a link or not.

If there is no formal link with appraisal, you can still use your feedback to inform your appraisal discussion. But, decide on your appraisal ratings first, then use your 360 Feedback to explain the ratings and plan your personal development. Don't allow 360 Feedback to determine your appraisal ratings.

What does my manager need to know?

Quite a lot! One way of providing your manager with a good introduction to 360 Feedback might be to give him/her a copy of these Q & As. Get him or her informed and interested as soon as possible.

Can people "hack into" my online questionnaire or feedback report?

Both your questionnaire and reports ought to be protected by passwords (or passwords embedded in complex web addresses or links). Your organisation's 360 provider should have a security policy and meet data protection requirements. If those things are in place it's very unlikely that any of your information will be accessible via the Internet.

What do I do when it's all over?

Thank those who completed questionnaires for you. That's really important. If you feel able to, show them some of your feedback and your action plan.

And, tell HR what was good about the process and perhaps make a one or two recommendations.

When's a good time to do 360?

When you are....

- Attending a training course or development programme. 360 will help you understand the relevance of the program, and clarify what you want to get from it.
- Aiming for promotion and it would help you to get feedback on the skills and abilities that you will need to develop in preparation for your new role.



- When you've been in a role for a while and you want to know how well you are doing.
- When there is something you are struggling with and you'd like some insight into what is happening and why.

More information

If you have further questions, or if there's anything we can do, we would of course like to hear from you. Please call Peter Goodge on 07976 373 562, or e-mail Peter at info@NextHR.co.uk

