

Case Study – 360 Degree Feedback for Building Workplace Culture

In 2012 we were approached by the HR Director of an SME in manufacturing. The organisation had been through extensive change and renewal. A new strategic plan was in place, as was a set of clearly defined organisational values.

Values

Keen to ensure the values were embedded in the day-to-day running of the business, the executive team decided to use 360 degree feedback. In this case, the members of the executive were to be rated by themselves, the CEO, their peers and their direct reports on how well they demonstrated the company's seven core values. The values were:

- Loyalty and transparency
- Stamina and passion
- Striving for excellence
- Responsibility
- Leadership
- Unified culture
- Innovation and initiative

The business had clearly defined and communicated the values to all staff in the organisation. Our task was to put those values and examples of aligned behaviours into an online questionnaire.

Questions

A typical question would look like this:

To what extent does this person demonstrate innovation?

Those who are innovative will -

- *Develop and initiate new approaches, experimenting with different ways of doing things*
- *Follow through on their ideas, even when faced with significant obstacles*
- *Maintain focus on the desired outcome*

In addition to the questions on each core value, two questions allowing for additional comments were added at the end of the survey. These were:

- **What they do well...** Please comment on how this person's behaviour in general demonstrates the core values.
- **How they could be more effective...** Please comment on what this person might do to more strongly reflect the core values.

Ratings

For each question, participants are invited to give a rating on the following scale and to add a free form comment.

Rating	Definition
1	Not at all
2	To a little extent
3	To a moderate extent
4	To a great extent
5	To a very great extent
N/A	Don't know or not applicable

The N/A option was used to ensure participants were not forced to give a rating if they did not have enough information to do so. Likewise, there was no neutral option. Participants instead chose between options that describe the extent to which the specific behaviour is demonstrated.

Administration

While we were designing the questionnaire, the HR director was:

- Educating staff on the purpose of the 360 and the process to be followed.
- Training participants on how to give appropriate feedback.
- Creating lists of who would be completing the survey. For each manager, there were five peers and five direct reports to give feedback, making a total of twelve responses for each person (including their own response and the CEO).

This pre-implementation phase took about two weeks in total.

Unique codes for each participant, linked to their relationship with the relevant manager, were sent to the HR director for distribution. The HR director knew who had which code, but had no access to the raw data. We knew which codes had been used but didn't know the names of the participants. By separating these functions, anonymity was ensured.

During the two weeks of the survey, we monitored the responses to track completion. Reminders were sent to all participants a couple of times, to give a 100% completion rate. Responses were also screened for inappropriate language, although none was found.

Results

The survey results were collated and published for initial consultation with the CEO within one week of the survey closing. Following this discussion, copies were supplied to each of the managers, supported by coaching from the CEO and HR director.

Lessons learnt

- Defining the purpose of the 360 degree feedback survey and how it links to strategy is critical in engaging participants.
- Good rapport, communication and cooperation between the internal person responsible (in this case the HR director) and the supplier are essential for the smooth running of a 360 degree feedback project.
- The 360 degree feedback process works on three levels to support company culture building:
 1. Demonstrates to all staff the importance management places on living the values;
 2. Helps individual managers understand how their behaviour in relation to the values is perceived by those around them;
 3. Points to areas for individual and organisational development in line with the desired culture.

More information

The Balance 360 feedback surveys and reports were developed by [Balance at Work](#) to complement the [Harrison Assessments](#) coaching reports.

The surveys are powered by software developed by [ER Strategies](#).

Please contact Susan Rochester directly susanr@balanceatwork.com.au to find out more: