360-Degree Feedback

Overview

360-degree feedback (also known as multi-rater feedback or multi source feedback) is a process through which feedback is obtained for development purposes – helping one develop specific competencies or behaviors. Feedback is obtained from a variety of points of view around an employee – supervisor, peers, and subordinates; and compared with the employees' self-evaluation. Hence, the term 360. It can also include soliciting feedback from previous supervisors, other supervisors with whom the employee works, colleagues, customers, and stakeholders internal and external to the organization. The feedback is gathered and compared with the employee's self-evaluation.

Whereas, upward feedback is a supervisor obtaining feedback from their subordinate(s); and, downward feedback is a supervisor providing a subordinate feedback such as during a performance review.

Using as Part of Performance Evaluations

While supervisors and employees may want to use the 360-degree feedback in performance evaluations, it is recommended to separate the two in consideration of the following:

- The purpose of 360-feedback is to development versus evaluate one's performance
- Research and practice have demonstrated how powerful 360-feedback can be to one's development; yet, when it comes to performance evaluation, there is considerable subjectivity, variation, and uncertainty if feedback providers have the ability to fairly evaluate one's work and behaviors, especially if there is bias towards or against the employee. This may be an even greater concern if such feedback influences performance ratings, reward and recognition processes, and employment decisions.

Rather than using a 360-feedback process during performance evaluations, supervisors can solicit feedback from people with whom the employee worked during the year. Refer to the below tips.

Tips for Soliciting Feedback from Others During Performance Evaluations

- Be consistent in soliciting feedback for all employees on the team

- Let the employees know you are soliciting feedback from those with whom they worked throughout the year to assist with their development and help inform development goals for next year

- Caution soliciting feedback from those whom may not be able to be objective (e.g., buddies or good friends, there is a history of or significant conflict)

- Consider using the following open ended questions rather rating specific goals or competencies

  – What did [employee name] do well and what could they do better?

  – What could [employee name] keep doing, stop doing, and start doing?

- Emphasize with the feedback providers their feedback is for development purposes, will be shared anonymously, and although it may be filtered, it should be professional, genuine, helpful to the employee's development, specific and objective (based on observations versus interpretations)

- Review, organize, synthesize, and, as needed, filter the feedback in advance of giving it to the employee, helping ensure it is:

  – Anonymous

  – Professional

  – Focused on developing the employee

  – Identifies strengths and development opportunities