

Ten Ways to Get the Most from a 360-Degree Leadership Assessment

By David Levy



Dan McCarthy of the Whittmore School of Business Economics shares some best practices for getting the most value from a 360-degree leadership assessment. In employee-owned businesses, an alignment of goals and priorities is vital and desired. The leadership should be interested in an assessment of their performance. Leadership in these companies may be unorthodoxly defined because it may include culture leadership and not only corporate leadership. What is a 360-degree assessment? It is a process in which employees receive confidential, anonymous feedback from the people who work around them. This typically includes the employee's manager, peers and direct reports. It is an effective way to get feedback, often against a set of pre-defined leadership competencies.

Here are McCarthy's 10 top tips for getting the most value from a 360-degree leadership assessment:

1. Mentally prepare yourself

Prepare yourself to accept the feedback positively, as the next step to becoming a better leader.

2. Don't try to figure it out yourself

Discuss the results with a coach, colleague or a mentor. If you are using an organization to administer the assessment, use their assistance in evaluating the results. It is too easy to miss something important or to misread something. We sometimes see what we want to see, are too hard on ourselves or make assumptions that others would not make.

3. Don't play detective

When one is too close to the data, human nature will often cause us to want to determine who submitted the information which is submitted anonymously. With the exception of the manager, the reporting is designed to protect anonymity.

4. Holistically or systematically?

Leaders have different personality types. Some prefer to take a holistic approach to the results by

taking in the ratings, feedback and everyone's comments and coming up with an overall evaluation, as well as coming up with preliminary plans of action. Others will review the results systematically, one at a time, perhaps even analyzing the statistical differences to determine their approach. Use whatever method works for you, not the one which someone else might suggest, if that one doesn't fit your style. The comments provided are often insightful and valuable. However, don't focus on a comment which is not supported by the balance of the report.

5. Pay attention to and celebrate your strengths

This is another reason why it's important to have someone else go through the result with you. There are many things that you are doing right – celebrate them! They also may play a role in how you will work around some of your weaknesses.

6. Look for blind spots and differences

These are typically areas where you have rated yourself higher than others have. Have a look how different rating groups are rating you. Perhaps you're choosing your behavior differently, whether for different situations or for different people. Is it a matter of respect?

7. Absolute vs. relative scores

If you score 8 on a 10-point scale and 6.5 is defined as “good,” does that mean that you have nothing left to do? No, not unless all of your scores were 10. Rather look at the relative scores and see which ones are lower and concentrate on those. Your relative strengths and weaknesses are what are important to you.

8. Find two to three things to improve.

Why only two or three areas of concentration? For the simple reason that concentrated effort has a better chance to yield superior results than a shotgun approach. In your case perhaps you can handle four or five. Look for those areas that you have opportunity to improve - where improvement is important and where you believe you actually can improve.

9. Make a plan and take action

Taking these two steps will make your results from the 360-degree superior to many. The first step is to create a written plan of improvements. The second step is to share the plan with someone to help hold you accountable. Then thank those who provided input and let them know that you plan to improve as a leader.

10. Follow-up

If possible take another assessment 12 to 18 months later. It is said that it takes that long for people to notice a change in behavior.

Remember that asking for feedback from others takes courage and requires them to invest their time. However, the results make you a better leader, a better colleague as an employee owner and ultimately, your company, whether employee owned or not, more valuable.

Follow these ideas and the investment will be worthwhile and the return on investment impressive.

About the Author



David Levy

David Levy is the principal of Consult Levy. His firm specializes in offering full service business solutions by experts with proven success. He has more than 20 years of experience advising companies. He helped one of those companies become 100 percent employee owned. Levy can be reached via e-mail at dlevy@ConsultLevy.com or by phone at 858-453-3778. You can also learn more about his services or read past articles by visiting his Web site at www.consultlevy.com © Consult Levy – David Levy 2013.