The Power of 360 Degree Feedback

What is the chemistry that you are generating at the workplace?
What impact are you having in your organisation?
How effective a Leader are you? What leadership styles do you exhibit?
What do others think of your Leadership effectiveness?
Would you like to see yourself through the eyes of others?
Do you know what your subordinates and colleagues think of you?

360-degree feedback is the best way to find out the true answers to these questions and many more!

360 Degree Feedback is one of the most powerful methods to increase one's own self-awareness. This multi-rater feedback process, continues to be one of the most effective and widely used initiative to develop Leadership capability, identify potential, develop strong bonds between teams and for enhancing key competencies in an organization. It makes the individual much stronger and better equipped charged to manage change and also empowers the individual to lead change in both his/her professional and personal life.

Background to 360-degree feedback

In today's volatile and dynamic environment, the need for good leadership has become even more pronounced. Today's organisations, institutions, NGOs and corporates are all starved for effective tools and mechanisms to develop leaders from within. While there are enough systems and mechanisms that give feedback to budding leaders and managers, most often than not, the feedback is from limited sources (normally only the boss) and deals only with the achievable.

360 Degree Feedback is one system or tool that addresses all these concerns. This is a process where leaders & managers can take a pause & get insights into their Leadership Effectiveness. When done at an organisational level, it can throw up useful insights into what more can be done for building the desired culture and for leadership development. 360 Degree Feedback has a very holistic approach. It captures the perceptions of and feedback from significant stakeholders as well as the role holder him/her self, on areas like Roles, Leadership styles, Delegation and Behavioural patterns.

Almost 70% of the fortune 500 companies are using 360-Degree feedback in some form or the other.
WHAT IS 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK?

360 Degree Feedback is also called ‘Multi-Rater Feedback System’ or ‘Multi-source feedback’ or ‘Full Circle Feedback’ or ‘Multi-Rater Assessment and Feedback System (MAFS). As these names suggest, in this system, the candidate is assessed periodically (once in a two years/one year and some times even every six months) by a number of respondents namely, superiors/boss, direct reports (subordinates), colleagues, internal customers, external customers and vendors.

The candidates’ own feedback is also taken and used to draw comparisons between his/her ratings and the ratings given to him/her by the other respondents. While the ideal number of responses is 15, the candidate can take feedback from anywhere between 8-20 respondents. The assessment is made on a questionnaire specially designed to measure behaviors and other parameters considered critical for being a good and effective leader.

The beauty of this system lies in this anonymity, which results in a more objective and authentic feedback.

ADVANTAGES OF 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

- It provides you with a more objective and acceptable feedback. It helps you to understand the chemistry you are generating on your people
- It helps you discover many of your blind spots. Even if you are already aware of them, it helps you to get more focused
- It is a powerful tool, which will help to identify individual developmental needs, enhancing Organizational effectiveness, and other areas on which an organization can further focus to create a healthy internal environment and thus enhance employee commitment and productivity.
- It acts as a powerful self-renewal tool for a Leader
- It helps to focus on what the customers or clients want

STEPS IN IMPLEMENTING 360 DF PROCESS IN AN ORGANISATION

Once the key objectives for embarking on a 360 Degree Feedback initiative are clear and the appropriate tool has been finalized, the key milestones in the implementation of the entire process are as follows:

Step 1: Orientation sessions

TVRLS conducts orientation sessions for the participants where the focus is to introduce the concept of 360 Degree Feedback to all the participants who will be going through the process. It will include the process followed, advantages, cultural issues, efforts required by the stakeholders, proposed system, time frames etc.

This is followed by similar orientation sessions for all the respondents, to sensitize all those who will be giving feedback to the participants. Along with introducing the concept of 360 Degree Feedback, the process followed, it also focuses on the guidelines for ‘dos and the don’ts’ etc. It also aims at reinforcing the role of confidentiality and effectiveness of frank and honest feedback in enhancing the effectiveness of the managers seeking the feedback.
Step 2: Implementing 360-Degree feedback (2-4 weeks)

Once the feedback process is initiated, based on the timeless decided, the survey is kept open for around 2-4 weeks, within which the respondents have to given feedback to the participants. In this period, two status reports are sent to each participant for the necessary follow-up to ensure that sufficient feedback has been received.

Once the survey is closed, TVRLS will prepare the consolidated feedback report.

Step 3: One-Day 360 DF based Leadership Development workshop followed by Individual Counseling (optional):

The individual consolidated 360 DF reports are handed over to the individual participants through a 1-day Leadership Development workshop. The workshop focuses on enhanced personal effectiveness of Leaders through awareness of Managerial Roles, Leadership Styles and Qualities. The feedback is given directly to the candidate in a sealed envelope with the benchmark data.

Step 4: One-day effort review workshop to be conducted 8-12 months after the completion of the 360 DF process.

The main objective of the effort review workshop is to:

- Recapitulate the leadership model learnt by the participants; revisit their leadership capabilities as revealed by the 360 data and the actions they have undertaken subsequent to the program.
- Review the self-initiated work done by each participant and ascertain the extent to which each of them has been able to demonstrate and use the inputs from the program, to enhance their leadership competencies.
- Revisit, reformulate action plans and work out monitoring mechanisms by each of the participants.
- The effort review helps to serve as a reminder of the change process that the individual has embarked on and also helps participants make a public commitment to the areas that they want to focus on.

To sum it all, 3 main ingredients are required for 360 Degree Feedback to be successful:

- The courage to seek feedback
- Patience and perseverance to be able to interpret the feedback
- Feed-forward: Willpower to pursue and bring about change in the right direction.

References:

1. Article on ‘Myths of 360 degree feedback By Nandini Chawla and Gopal P Mahapatra, T V Rao Learning Systems)
2. Article published in the NHRD journal “360 Degree Feedback: Miles To Go Before We Sleep” by Nandini Chawla.