

Best Practices in the Usage of 360-degree Evaluations

A 360-degree performance evaluation is a feedback process created to evaluate and give proper feedback to all organization's members. What makes this evaluation unique and the reason why it receives that name is because it obtains valuable information surrounding the employee. In this process, the employee is evaluated by his or her superiors, subordinates, coworkers and even includes a self-evaluation.

The 360degree evaluation gives the final employee significant performance information for professional growth, helping him improve his interaction with each of the evaluators and to obtain an introspective view.

For almost two decades the 360evaluation has been increasingly more popular because of its proven efficiency. This popularity has grown so much that Atwater and Waltman (1998) found out that the 90 percent of Fortune 1000 companies use this tool to evaluate members of their organization.

This type of evaluation is an indispensable task to implement feedback strategies of this kind in all type of organizations, since the results obtained can achieve critical knowledge for positive changes in all levels of personnel.

A professional feedback evaluation process can bring clarity to specific tasks, and it can also be a link between specific objectives and assessment results.

The objective is to inform the reader about the best practices and tested recommendations. At the same time these can form part of the employee feedback strategy which are included in 360-degree evaluations.

Creation of the 360-degree evaluation work according to your organization's strategy.

Evaluate the evaluation's purpose for the people of the organization

Any kind of evaluation tool that is not created according to the organization's strategy is destined to fail. It is necessary a complete compromise from all of the organization's members so that for the 360-degree evaluations can work, which include:

- Human Resources Personnel
- Partners, chiefs, superiors
- Subordinates

Furthermore, it's important to make notice if these evaluations will only work to give feedback of the performance of the employee or if in a given moment they will work as an instrument for decision making, like the economic remuneration of the employees.

However, Carey (1995) emphasizes that the 360-degree evaluation should not be the main determinant in salaries, promotions or terminations of employees. This can create an adverse reaction and nervousness on the part of those evaluated.

Boost an adequate organizational climate

One of the key elements for a successful evaluation is a suitable work climate, in which the evaluation can be carried out successfully and with true data. If one deploys this methodology in an environment where collaborative work isn't appreciated, it is very difficult for it to function properly. Since individual recognition at the expense of others is sought in these hostile organizational environments, this breakdown happens because dishonest peer evaluations will flourish.

A friendly, honest, collaborative environment which is committed to the continuous improvement is needed so that information can be obtained from these evaluations with the organization's growth as its central goal.

Make sure that the survey is easy to apply

It's difficult to create a customized evaluation for each individual; the responsible department personnel would not have enough time to dedicate an individual process to each of the organization's member.

Therefore, it is recommended that customizable templates are created for each group of employees divided according to their needs, for example, function, division, geographical location, among others.

This task can be even easier with an Information system aiding in the location of skills defined for each area to assess. That way the staff responsible for managing the

application can use more time analyzing the information obtained instead of working on the process of the surveys application in itself.

Coates (1996) recommends that if you're going to invest in an information system it's important to look for a well-known and easy-to-use technology.

Prepare exercise participants

Be open with your employees and have the feedbacks available

It's within human nature that people get suspicious when they encounter things they do not understand or things that are meant to be kept as a secret or hidden. You must notify employees how they are going to be evaluated as well as the purpose, benefits and processes of the 360-evaluations.

Furthermore, a platform or procedure must be provided in order to have feedback from the employee without having them go through problems or bureaucracy. As a solution website can be provided, where these feedbacks are available for employees for whenever they wish. Let's talk about this sentence.

Reiterate to employees the anonymity of the exercise and seek the familiarity and precision of it.

Coates (1996) and Carey (1995) emphasize on the importance of the exercise's anonymity of the 360-evaluation. This is established according to the feeling that employees might come to feel, especially when they are evaluating their superiors which can give them retaliation if they are evaluated negatively and the evaluator is known. Eventually, this can lead to unreliable data.

One way to avoid this is by using information systems where safety is a priority and the data is protected even for the staff in the evaluators' area except for a few high level users.

Make a correct interpretation of the data obtained

Find a person or system that helps the interpret the results

One of the conditions necessary to initiate and sustain a change in personal attitude is to have the ability to interpret critical feedback from others with a positive mindset, suggests Nowack (1992).

One way of achieving this feedback to be as effective and concise as possible is to have an expert help interpret or visualize the most critical areas of opportunity for either each individual or organizations in general. Those who receive the feedback (individual or senior staff) must have access to one of these experts.

Information Systems, which can help in the process of interpreting data to assist in the recollection, conglomerate and data analysis, exist as well. However, for the interpretation of the data is recommended that it to be supported by an expert in this type of evaluation. Carey (1995) suggests seeking the help of an external organization, through a consultancy specialized in administrative or organization topics or a firm specializing in human resource development.

It is also advisable to train the personnel that deliver the feedback to be kind, respectful and sensitive. Treating employees in a friendly and respectful way, offering constructive criticism will make them more open to the evaluation system.

Develop an action plan based on the findings of the exercise

Having obtained the results of operations, in or the feedback of the evaluation 360, including areas of improvement within a measurable action plan should be sought.

It is also recommended that every couple of months a revision is done to the evaluated. This is to assess their progress on the development of their established goals.

This practice encourages the evaluated to improve day by day when an interest of the organization is felt. The way that you can handle this practice is to schedule a meeting with the supervisor or facilitator who will help the evaluated to establish their development goals.

Another way you can handle this practice is through an information system which facilitates the monitoring of development goals, whether it is from the evaluated or from the evaluators. This system should be easy to use so that the evaluated can easily find their goals and monitor progress towards the desired goal.

What can you expect in your organization when the 360 evaluations are implemented?

Ewen and Edwards (1996) posit that when the evaluations are implemented some of the effects you can expect in your organization are the following:

- Improved sense of employee satisfaction with the work environment.
- Significant changes in line with the objectives of the organization.
- Improved individual and collective performance. This ultimately affects the customer relationship in a positive way.

However there are other effects that can be observed when using this practice:

- Strengths in the organization are identified, which can then be used as a competitive advantage.
- Key development areas for individuals, departments and organization, are identified.
- It gives an opening of the feedback process and the evaluators receive a more complete picture of performance.
- A more valid and objective perception of the feedback is established, which leads to an acceptance of the results and actions required for improvement

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