

So what do your colleagues really think of you?

Some people say “feedback is a gift” – but for many of us, it’s as welcome as the hand knitted sweater Granny gave us for our birthday! It can be surprising or painful, but wouldn’t you prefer to know how people see you so you can manage and improve their perceptions of you?

The best way to get comprehensive feedback is through a confidential 360 degree feedback tool. It’s called a 360 because it takes in information from all around you - your manager, the people who report to you and the people you work alongside.

Seeking 360 feedback can signal you as forward thinking or a potential leader. If shared, the practice can help businesses establish a highly productive and co-operative working environment. If 360’s are not part of your company culture and you are developing your own there are 5 questions you need to think through:

- 1 Why do you want a 360? It’s a great self-improvement tool. Perhaps you have been trying out some new behaviours or you are trying to adapt to a new company culture? Typically respondents will be more candid with you when it doesn’t affect your performance ratings!
- 2 What questions do you want to ask for feedback on? More specific requests will generally return more detailed feedback e.g. don’t ask for an appraisal of your communication skills – ask if you were effective chairing a meeting. Balance questions across the areas you are confident in and those you know you struggle with. This allows people to offer ‘nice’ feedback together with constructive criticism.
- 3 Who do you want feedback from? Try to select people who will offer opinions based on seeing you perform on a number of occasions. If it’s a new skill, you may want to wait a while to do a 360. It’s a good idea to ask people who you think will be positive about you and also ask those who may be critical – you can learn from both perspectives.
- 4 How will you ask for and receive feedback? You will need to explain why you are asking for it and why you are asking for it now. Consider the response mechanism and whether it will be anonymous e.g. using a trusted PA as an intermediary or an external 3rd party to manage the response for you.
- 5 How will you handle the feedback you receive? 360 feedback can be daunting, so ensure you are mentally prepared for the results and have support mechanisms in place e.g. a trusted ‘sounding board’ to relate to. If you’ve taken the trouble to seek feedback, be ready to take it on board as being defensive will waste a great opportunity. Even if you don’t like the information, you should consider it and you may even receive some blindingly positive feedback – so make sure you fully embrace this too!

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