

When introducing a 360 Performance Feedback tool for the first time, there are several questions you should be asking. Contact the Alice Dendinger Alliance Group at 512-835-1343 or alice@gotoalice.com for answers to the following FAQ.

1. Why do some people resist the idea of 360-degree feedback?

360-degree feedback gives precise, credible information about important aspects of individual performance that are otherwise hard to measure. The feedback can enhance a person's effectiveness in the workplace and promote teamwork.

So why do some people resist it initially? The short answer is that they're not sure that 360-degree feedback will benefit them. It's important to overcome this resistance, because the assessment process depends on willing participation. Knowing the most common reasons for resistance can help you avoid problems.

Bad associations with performance appraisal. Most people have not had positive experiences with performance appraisal, and they may think that 360-degree feedback will be used as an appraisal tool. They may be afraid that negative feedback will affect their pay or job. The answer is to use 360-degree feedback strictly for development and avoid linking it to appraisal, compensation or personnel decisions.

Concerns that ratings and comments will not be anonymous. People are wary of telling the truth if they think that doing so will cause censure or retribution. They worry that executives are "rating the raters." Make sure that systems and policies guarantee anonymity, and let everyone know how they work.

Concerns that the process will not be confidential. If people think that higher-level managers will scrutinize specific ratings and comments, they will conclude that realistic ratings could have negative consequences. This makes it hard for them to be objective. Establish and enforce effective confidentiality mechanisms. Show managers only the minimum information they need to coach direct reports.

Time investment. Most employees are already under a lot of stress. They resent having to do things that will interfere with their success. For best results, abbreviate the surveys, so that you address only essential issues. Ask for feedback only from people who are familiar with the rated individual's performance. Plan follow-up developmental activities; people resent exercises that come to no result.

Fear of feedback. Nobody is perfect, and it's often unsettling to discover the truth about oneself. Constructive feedback is never easy to accept. It spotlights performance defects and implies extra effort to address issues. During the first cycles of feedback, conduct sessions to reinforce feedback skills and to help people accept feedback.

Cynicism about HR programs. Based on past experience, employees may have acquired a "here it comes again" attitude. HR fads come and go, but employees don't always see the promised results. They may suspect that 360 feedback is another "feel-good" exercise that will ultimately benefit neither them nor the bottom line. It's best not to promote 360 feedback as an HR program. Introduce it as a new resource for employees that has its place in an already well-established system of professional development. Explain how it works. Position it as a tool for people who want to improve the quality of work life and increase their value in the career marketplace.

Copyright © 2006 Performance Support Systems, Inc. All rights reserved.

2. What factors influence readiness for 360-degree feedback?
3. How important is trust to using 360-degree feedback successfully?
4. Can 360-degree feedback be used successfully during a reorganization?
5. Will an existing performance review program help people accept 360-degree feedback?
6. Can an organization that has no HRD program use 360-degree feedback effectively?
7. How comfortable do people need to be with 360-degree feedback?
8. How can you build support for 360-degree feedback?
9. What's the most effective way to introduce 360-degree feedback?
10. What can an organization do to avoid problems with 360-degree feedback?
11. What are the ideal purpose and goals of 360-degree feedback?
12. Who needs to be involved when planning a 360-degree feedback project?
13. What motivates people to give honest, objective feedback?
14. What role will managers play in the feedback process?