

Multi-source (360°) 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° Feedback is in their best interests. 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.

Reason 1 Bad associations with performance appraisal. Many people have not had positive experiences with performance appraisal, and they may think that 360 will be used as an appraisal tool. They may be afraid that negative feedback will affect their pay or job.

Strategy 1: *use 360 primarily for development, and avoid linking it to appraisal, salary or other personnel decisions.*

Reason 2 Concern 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 may worry that managers are "rating the raters."

Strategy 2: *ensure that the system being used guarantees anonymity, and let everyone involved know how that works.*

Reason 3 Concern that the process will not be confidential. If Raters think that higher-level managers will scrutinise ratings and comments, they may conclude that realistic ratings could have negative consequences for the Subject and hold back mechanisms.

Strategy 3: *Establish and enforce effective confidentiality. Agree that line managers will only see the action plan that arises from the report, not the report itself, which remains confidential.*

Reason 4 Don't like taking the time. Most employees are already under a lot of stress. They resent having to do things that will interfere with their success.

Strategy 4: *reduce the number of survey items to 15-20, so that you address only the important behaviours. Ask for feedback only from people who are familiar with the rated individual's performance.*

Reason 5 Nothing will change. Many training and development activities result in no lasting change – only increased disillusionment.

Strategy 5: *plan follow-up developmental activities, and make them visible to those people who contributed feedback.*

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING RESISTANCE



Reason 6 Afraid of feedback. Nobody is perfect, and it's often unsettling to discover the truth. Constructive feedback is never easy to accept. It implies extra effort to address performance issues.

Strategy 6: *before starting the feedback phase, hold coaching sessions where necessary to reinforce both the skill of giving feedback and the openness to accept feedback.*

Reason 7 Belief that it is remedial. Some organisations only appear to use 360 with “problem” employees. It is as popular as a visit to the dentist.

Strategy 7: *don't use it only remedially and with “problem” employees. Use it as a development tool as part of a wider programme.*

Reason 8 Don't take HR programmes seriously. Employees may have a "here it comes again" attitude, and regard 360° Feedback as yet another transient human resource initiative.

Strategy 8: *Do not position 360 as an HR initiative, but as a tool to improve communications in the workplace in general. Stress the benefits for people who want to improve their own self perception and thereby their value in the career marketplace.*

e-mail: peter@beacons.co.uk

tel: 01275 848791