

Fast, Flexible and Affordable
360° Feedback



Best Practice in 360° Feedback and Appraisal

By Peter Ward, author of *360-Degree Feedback* published by CIPD

➤ Peter Ward Investigates:

As with conventional forms of assessment like ability tests and personality inventories, the information gathered via a 360° feedback measurement survey is very delicate. In recognition of the sensitivity of traditional assessment information, professional bodies, such as the British Psychological Society and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, have issued codes of conduct which are backed up with professional qualifications and a certification scheme.

But do they cover 360° feedback adequately?

There are some points specific to 360° feedback where the nationally agreed guidelines for conventional occupational testing do not give sufficient guidance to users and do not offer adequate protection to either Participants or Respondents against poor practice. This causes problems as there are no official accreditation requirements of users and facilitators of 360° feedback.

Peter Ward has developed the following list of responsibilities as a starting point for discussion on 'Best Practice'. It is designed to provide organisations with specific guidelines to follow in their use of 360° feedback solutions in the absence of a nationally recognised, authoritative standard.

The aim is to ensure that 'Best Practice' is applied wherever 360° feedback is used in organisations and establishing the responsibilities that Facilitators have towards Participants and Respondents. Also helping the user/customer to avoid potential pitfalls (from inappropriate use of instrument to litigation) while optimising the effectiveness of both the instrument and the intervention.

Participant: The person being assessed, through their participation in the feedback exercise.

Respondent: The person giving the assessment, through their responses to the questionnaire.

User Responsibilities:

- Examine the range of 360° feedback providers and ensure that the one chosen is qualified to advise on 'Best Practice'
- Ensure that the 360° Feedback instrument chosen is appropriate for the purpose
- Evaluate the information provided for standard instruments to ensure justification for use
- Obtain the necessary training and ensure no unqualified person is allowed to administer the instrument
- Give feedback information to the solution provider to enable the quality of their instruments and service to be improved continuously



User Responsibilities (cont.):

- Respect copyright and data protection law
- Strive to answer Participants' questions and provide them with accurate information or to pass them on to someone
- Arrange for an independent, qualified person to answer Participants' and Respondents questions/complaints in confidence and make these arrangements known to them
- Explain clearly and honestly to Participants and Respondents the extent of confidentiality, i.e. who will see the completed questionnaires and the feedback reports, how they will be used, and then stick to your word
- Use an instrument according to its purpose and in line with the recommended strategy
- Only use an instrument for a different purpose after careful examination of the implications
- Ensure that feedback given is accurate and imparted to the Participant in a sensitive manner
- Ensure that the implications of the feedback are understood by the Participant to avoid a 'so what?' reaction
- Respect and help the participant regardless of the desirability of their feedback profile
- Encourage Participants to share their feedback with Respondents and ask for clarification
- Never reveal the content of a Participant's feedback report unless that Participant has specifically agreed that you may do
- Evaluate the use of 360° instruments to ensure their utility within your organisation/ department
- Ensure that those people using the information from a 360° Feedback process are aware of its shelf life
- Keep a log of feedback events and make a note of any concerns that the Participant has and how they were handled
- If a breach of these guidelines occurs, take appropriate action or bring it to the attention of someone who can.

About the author: Peter Ward had held a number of senior human resource management positions in the motor industry and for Tesco's where he introduced the concept of 360-degree feedback in the mid-1980s before setting up Ward Dutton Partnership with John Dutton in 1991. Peter Ward was a founding director of Consulting Tools Ltd.