

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **360 degree feedback**

*What is 360 degree feedback?*

Most often it involves feedback being given to an individual by his / her boss, direct reports and colleagues, combined with a self assessment. Sometimes feedback is also sought from customers and other people external to the organisation such as suppliers, consultants and collaborators. We find that the wider the net is cast, the more complete is the resulting picture.

It is called "360 degree" because feedback comes from all around the person receiving it.

*What are the benefits?*

Specific benefits (especially in contrast to downwards appraisal) are:

- Combined opinions are more balanced than a single view. Some organisations have seen 360 as a way of countering managers' perceived unwillingness to give negative feedback.
- Some competencies (e.g. in relation to leadership and management) are best judged by direct reports and peers rather than by line managers. And in dispersed organisations managers may have limited opportunities to observe their direct reports' behaviour.
- It supports the increasing use of team, project and partnership working.
- Combined opinions are more difficult to resist or deny and may provide a stronger impetus to personal change. Specific positive or negative feedback becomes more believable when it comes from a number of sources.
- It helps to create a more open culture.

*Is 360 feedback the same as appraisal?*

No. The purpose of 360 degree feedback is to help people to develop. Some organisations have made 360 degree feedback part of the formal appraisal system and a few have linked the results to pay. This certainly ensures it is taken seriously and has a high impact, but risks making the process too political and can reduce the quality and authenticity of the feedback which is given. We do not recommend using 360 feedback for appraisal purposes.

*How is 360 feedback supposed to work?*

It should lead to increased self-awareness on behalf of the recipient and to them taking actions to develop themselves. This development may be to make better use of existing strengths, to turn areas of competence into strengths or to correct weaknesses which the feedback has identified.

## **Myown360**

*What do I need to be able to use **myown360**?*

A computer which can receive email and access the internet via any standard web browser – and a credit or debit card in order to pay.

*Is my computer or network at risk from viruses as a result of using **myown360**?*

No. You simply log on to our server. Nothing is downloaded onto your computer.

*Is my personal data secure?*

Yes. We have a high level of security in place on our server.

*Why does it cost more for a coach, training provider or organisation than for an individual?*

Because they have access to more functionality to enable them to manage more than one 360 process at a time.

*What's in the small print of the terms and conditions?*

There are two key elements. The competency framework is copyright and may not be reproduced in any way or used for any purpose other than **myown360**. Secondly, we do not accept responsibility for the nature or consequences of the feedback you receive. Of course these statements are for general guidance only: the terms and conditions on the **myown360** website form the only definitive statement.

*Can I get a volume discount?*

We will be happy to discuss this with you. Please get in touch.

*Is there any connection with MySpace?*

No.

## Key terms

### *Competency*

A mixture of knowledge, skills and attitude which accounts for effective performance.

### *Behavioural indicators*

Observable ways in which a competency is expressed.

### *360 questionnaire*

A set of competencies and associated behavioural indicators which you receive feedback on.

### *Recipient*

The person who receives feedback.

### *Respondents*

People who give feedback.

### *Report*

Document which draws together all the feedback and shows the spread of ratings and the totality of written comments. Indicates which categories of respondent (but not which individuals) gave the feedback.

### *Debrief*

Process of going through the report with a skilled facilitator to help you get the best understanding of what it is saying to you.

## Designing your 360 questionnaire

### *How many competencies can I choose?*

You can choose **between four and eight** competencies, which can be from any of the four clusters. Place your mouse over each competency's name to see a short definition.

The ones you choose might be:

- The areas that are most important to effective performance in your job.
- The areas you most want feedback on, perhaps because you are already working on them.
- Areas that you want to develop in the future.

### *How many behaviours can I choose for each competency?*

You must choose **four** behaviours for each competency. These can be any combination of the suggested behaviours and the alternative behaviours.

Choose the four behaviours which best match:

- Your individual role.
- What's important to you personally.
- The culture and style of your organisation.

*What if I have second thoughts about the competencies or behaviours I have chosen?*

You can easily change them while you are creating the 360 questionnaire and you can amend the questionnaire at any point before you issue invitations to respondents to give feedback.

*How long does it take to design a questionnaire?*

Obviously it depends on many factors: how clear you are about your needs, how many competencies you choose, how much tailoring of the behaviours you choose. We expect that 15-120 minutes would be typical.

*Can I use my questionnaire again?*

Yes, easily. As an individual you might want to repeat the process after a year to see if perception have changed. Just log in again and you will be able to access last year's questionnaire to reuse or amend. As a coach or organisation you may want to use the same for different individuals or groups. **myown360** has simple, but powerful functionality to allow you to do this.

## **Getting feedback**

*How many people can I get feedback from?*

You can choose up to 15 *respondents*, as we call them. You must include yourself and at least one other. We recommend that you aim for 8-12 in total.

We suggest you choose people who:

- have had regular or sustained contact with you over the last year or so
- are well placed to give you feedback on your chosen competencies
- are likely to have the time and inclination to respond.

If you are an employee, it usually makes sense to choose your manager, all of the people who work directly to you and a selection of people from inside and outside your organisation.

*Why do you insist on a self-assessment?*

360 feedback works by increasing self awareness – in particular by increasing the degree to which the way people see themselves matches the way they are seen by others. The self assessment prepares the way for this comparison.

*What categories of people should give feedback?*

**Manager** – your boss, if you have one. This might be a line manager or a project manager or both. You could also put your boss's boss in this category.

**Direct reports** – people who work for you. Our experience is that people who you manage directly can usually give more useful feedback than those you manage indirectly, via another manager.

**Internal peer** – colleagues in your own organisation who are not in a line management relationship with you.

**External peer** – people in other organisations you have dealings with. They might be partners, suppliers, customers, or stakeholders.

These same categories are used to present the feedback in the report you will get at the end of the process.

*Should I ask my chosen respondents in advance if they are willing to take part?*

We recommend that you should.

*How long do people have to give feedback?*

A month from the point the first invitation email is issued.

## **Giving feedback**

*How do I give my feedback?*

You will receive an email with a link to the **myown360** website and log in details. When you have logged in you are presented with an introduction screen which explains the process. The following pages present you with a series of statements about the person you are giving feedback on. You are asked to individually rate each of these by clicking on the appropriate button and to give an overall comment on each competency.

*What rating scale is used?*

The scale is:

- a **Strength**
- something that the person is **Competent** at
- a **Weakness**.

If you cannot make a judgement, or if the question does not really apply, there is also a **No evidence** option.

*Is my feedback anonymous?*

The report presents the feedback in relation to the category of respondent who gave it (see *What categories of people should give feedback?*). No respondent is ever named. However, you should be aware that comments you type in will be reproduced verbatim in the report which goes to the person you are giving feedback on. You may be identifiable therefore if you are the only person of a certain type – e.g. boss, colleague – to provide feedback. The same applies to the ratings you give to the questions.

*How long does it take to give feedback?*

Clearly it depends on how many competencies have been chosen and how fully you want to comment. We would expect that 20 minutes to half an hour would normally cover it.

*How long do I have to give my feedback?*

The email which invites you to give feedback will specify the closing date, which could be up to four weeks away. It is usually best to do it as soon as you can.

## **The report**

*Who can see my report?*

Yourself, the person who is debriefing it for you (if you are having a debrief) and the person who is administering the 360 process, if it is being done for an organisation or a training provider.

*What if people use this as an opportunity to get at me?*

You choose the people to give you feedback, so clearly you should avoid choosing anybody you feel may do this. Secondly, the web site provides guidelines for people giving feedback which should hopefully encourage them to do it properly. Thirdly, having a debrief will ensure you have someone to discuss any difficult feedback you receive.

## **The debrief**

*Why do you recommend a debrief?*

The debrief is primarily to ensure that the you fully understand and accept what the feedback is saying, and can identify some actions to take as a result. Although the report usually contains a wealth of data, it is still ultimately perception rather than fact. It should be understood as an invitation to reflection – and a skilled debrief begins this reflection.

*Who are the myown360 debriefers?*

They are all experienced and skilled management consultants and coaches who have carried out 360 debriefs many times before. Individual CVs are listed on the **myown360** website.

## **If you work in an organisation**

*I am an individual employee thinking about getting feedback. Do I need to involve HR?*

It must depend on how your organisation operates and is really a matter for your judgement. There is no technical reason to involve HR (or IS), but we know and understand that many HR departments like to be kept in the picture.

*Is it compulsory to give feedback?*

We suggest you clarify this with the contact person named in the email inviting you to give feedback.

*Is it official?*

We suggest you clarify this with the contact person named in the email inviting you to give feedback.