

# 360 degree feedback and change management essay sample



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The concept of 360-degree feedback has come of age. We no longer need to define it in conversations with executives; most have themselves participated one or more times in a 360-degree process, either as feedback giver, receiver, or probably both. Books have been written about it and special issues of journals have even been devoted to it. Yet ask the question: “ what is 360 degree feedback?” at a local Rotary Club and it will dawn that it is not as widespread as we’d like to think.

A 360 degree feedback process is actually gathering information about a person’s behavior and how their behavior might affect the people around them in a working environment. These people could be the person’s bosses, colleagues, internal and external customers, and suppliers. The result of the 360 degree feedback is a very detailed description of the person’s behavior at work. It allows organizations to take a “ reality check” and thus this makes it a very good training and evaluation tool that is very popular, esp. in company retreats. While assessing a person’s behavior, the 360 degree feedback feature can be enhanced by focusing on the kind of behavior needed to be present to do a job efficiently.

According to Uken (2001) where competency based models are used in 360 degree feedback it is ensured that the 360-degree feedback relates specifically to the competencies critical to the individual’s and the organization’s success. Increasingly, 360-degree feedback and competency modeling are becoming closely aligned (especially in their application to training and development systems). In fact, many organizations have already begun introducing competencies through 360-degree feedback questionnaires.

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These models are used as a instrument to find out what kind of skills are required for the business at the present moment and possibly in the future, it is perfect for first finding and then adjusting the criteria needed to meet the new found demands. The results tend to be accurate, relying on cold hard facts and they can be easily addressed. This is of great help to the employees being evaluated as they themselves can take actions necessary to avoid or rectify skill gaps or other such problems in developmental areas. Individuals will be motivated to change their behavior when they receive information, from various sources, that they are not performing optimally and because the feedback is anonymous, feedback providers feel comfortable providing honest. There is a myriad of factors that influence how individuals will react to such criticism.

This method of gathering information collectively makes it possible for organizations to compare and analyze the information across different departments, regions and even locations.

It has turned into an essential element of any good leadership developmental initiative. Its use within organizations is so significant that Wimer has described it as one of the most important human resource interventions of the last decade. In a review conducted by Warr and Ainsworth in 1999, it was found that 360 degree feedback was being used by approximately 50 per cent of large and medium-sized organizations and that 74 per cent of the organizations surveyed expected its use to expand. At the time, 34 per cent of the organizations that were not currently using it planned to introduce it before the end of 2000.

360 degree feedback supports leadership because it helps increase self awareness, leads to more effective managerial behavior and increased performance and productivity. A recent study done by Sweeney in 2002 of a private US sector showed that the most improvement was seen in two areas of behavior: leadership (including coaching and motivating staff, providing feedback and empowering others) and management (including clarity of goal-setting, organizing people to work on the goals, monitoring progress, and problem solving).

From such research important information stems such as the essential standards that are considered vital to support leadership development. A few of these principles are: providing a one to one discussion with an experienced development professional, encouraging the individual to seek specific examples from colleagues of how they can be more effective, turning the information gathered into no more than two or three priority development areas and regularly reviewing progress.

It important to keep the general good of the individuals in mind and not it is believed that how the desire results are obtained is as important as what the results actually are.

360 degree feedback deals with individuals and their perceptions and so does change management. It is as Randall (2004) said, “ The ways in which individuals interpret their experiences depend on the expectancies they hold and the ways in which these expectancies are affected by imposed change may radically alter perception and future expectancies as well.”(pg. 32)

Thus, the two are connected.

Effective change management involves several things such as: developing an understanding of the current state, articulating a clear vision of the future state and then guiding the organization through a delicate transition period. (Malekzadeh et al, 1993) Ensuring that a proper design of the transition stage is followed is critical as it will decide the future stages. It is possible to find out if an organization's change management has been successful if it actually moves from the present stage to the future stage, if when the organization is in progress with the new state the designs implemented works as expected, the organization doesn't suffer any kind of disruption and loss through the change and of course if individuals don't suffer either.

While it is obviously not possible for any organization to meet all the conditions, they provide a rough idea of what an organization should aim for when finished with their transition. The management has to try to ensure that as many as these objectives are met.

Change management is not easy to implement, it encounters problems which can sometimes get difficult to control. The foremost problem which arises with it is a power struggle. Every organization is a political system with a hierarchy and during the transition period this hierarchy is thrown into chaos. The change can insinuate undertones of a hostile take over if it collides with their personal values- loyalty for instance or their image of the organization and their position of power within the organization. When people believe that a change that could affect them for the worse is going to be implemented, they tend to dive into a plethora of political activity to oppose the change.

It is natural for those in the lower echelons of the hierarchy to have concerns over a new design. Their concerns range from whether they will even have jobs once the transition is complete to if they will need new skills and who their new boss is. If this distress isn't addressed in time then the work starts to suffer as increase in stress levels will decrease job performance. Normal activity is disturbed and management may feel like its losing control as it becomes tough to supervise when new targets, new designs and especially when new people enter the organization.

Leaders have enormous power to mold perceptions and they should primarily define and produce a very clear picture of the future. Managers should provide as much information before the actual change begins so that the workers can get used to the ideas and deal with their concerns accordingly. It is hard to maintain stability everyday and in every way throughout the change, but managers should try to preserve some form of stability-such as in the consistency of their messages-

As said by Nadler et al (1997) said participation is of the utmost importance, in particular participation of those who are going to be major stakeholders. Decisions taken behind close doors and then forced upon the managers and their teams only leads to resentment, skepticism and resistance. Prime examples of companies which have gone through major changes and done it successfully are Kaiser Permanente, Xerox, and Corning.

These huge organizations have purposely involved hundreds of people in both, planning and implementing the changes. Those who are brought into this circle not only feel a sense of belonging and security but also a sense of

importance. Consequently they don't feel the need to oppose what they've helped build. Keeping reality in mind there will always be those who don't like the change and will keep rebelling against it. To avoid the rebellion to start a ripple effect and resonate through the entire organization a great strategy would be to negotiate with them. If this doesn't work then they should be involved in the most remote and unimportant part of the transition.

One sure way of dealing with change management is including it in the training. Training that deals with change management imbeds the sort of attitude required to be an adaptive organization. Ukens et al. (2001) have studied training initiatives designed to facilitate change management, and according to them it has been noted that several elements must be in place to ensure success. These include: a well-articulated change agenda, pre-planning by senior leaders, thorough pre-program assessments, learning organized around management cohorts, curriculums designed to elicit collective dialogue, trained facilitators, active feedback mechanisms, and reinforcement mechanisms.

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