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Leadership Intelligence®

DecisionWise White Paper:

**8 Steps for Turning 360 Degree Feedback
into Results**

8 Step Overview:

1. Effective 360 Survey
2. Initial Debrief/Coaching Session
3. Develop Action Plan
4. Review Action Plan and Initiation
5. Check-In Meeting (30 days)
6. Maintenance Meeting (60 days)
7. Accountability Meeting (6 mos.)
8. 360 Repeat (1 year)

8 Steps for Turning 360-Degree Feedback into Results

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360-degree feedback is a process where data is collected, reported, and used in a way that is intended to bring about increased effectiveness on the part of the participant. DecisionWise is an international leader in the development of effective 360 surveys, enterprise-wide roll-out of the process in an organization, and in implementing a process to turn feedback into results. Too often the 360 process fails to produce change, as organizations rely too much on the survey administration phase, but do little in the way of coaching, goal setting, and follow-up.

DecisionWise has conducted tens of thousands of 360 surveys across numerous countries, industries, and job levels. Our experience and research suggest that there are two elements that separate a successful 360 process from one that produces little change.

First, our studies over the past three years show that only 34% of participants who do not set goals and receive follow-up coaching indicate that the 360 survey process is effective. Conversely, 94% of those participants who report they have set goals and have regular follow-up with a coach see the 360 process as a success. Imagine implementing a program in your organization where only 34% of the participants feel it is effective.

Perceptions of the 360 process are key to getting buy-in from senior staff, and will determine the success of future leadership development initiatives. DecisionWise research as well as outside academic studies clearly show that those who participate in a 360 process require coaching and follow-up to gain the most from the process.

The following eight steps serve as *the optimal approach* to a 360-degree feedback process. At the foundation of this process is human interaction, which cannot be replaced by elaborate electronic management development applications or the latest trends in action planning tools. These steps require real human dedication on the part of the participant and the organization to make the process effective. Simply conducting a 360 survey and handing out the results does little to promote change and can actually do more harm than good.

To get maximum value from the process and see real, tangible improvements, the following steps are essential:

1. Use an effective 360 Degree Feedback Assessment

360-degree feedback acts as a catalyst for change by prompting individuals to evaluate their current behaviors and make plans for improvement. The survey results provide detailed feedback from a participant's supervisor, peers, direct reports, and others who are in a position to evaluate the participant's behavior or performance. The results are broken out by the different rater groups so that a person can identify gaps in perceptions between the groups. The report also identifies a person's strengths and

derailers, which are those things that will impede a leader from being successful. It is important that the 360 survey content is relevant and uses actionable questions. Otherwise, the participant may discount the feedback because the questions don't apply to their current situation or job responsibilities. This is why an organization may want to consider using a customized survey versus an off-the-shelf version where some (or most) of the questions do not directly apply.

2. Debrief/Coaching Session (within 30 days)

An initial coaching session on 360 feedback is perhaps the most critical step in the process. Without it, the rest of the steps are not likely to happen. Coaching can be done by an outside coach, an internal coach, or (with proper training) the participant's supervisor. Coaching serves the following purposes:

- 👉 Helps participants to correctly interpret their results
- 👉 Provides a "sounding board" for participants to discuss their results and accept the feedback
- 👉 Mitigates negative or unproductive reactions to the feedback (vindictiveness, resistance, etc.)
- 👉 Helps identify natural strengths and talents, rather than focusing only on areas for improvement
- 👉 Helps participants to focus on the real issues and not get sidetracked by minor concerns
- 👉 Provides instruction on how to create a personal development plan based on the feedback

Without this initial coaching session, the feedback will probably not be used, or worse, result in hurt feelings and vengeful behavior. Most times, the initial coaching session is conducted by an internal or external coach. Coaching can be provided individually or during a group workshop. The initial coaching session should happen within 30 days of when the feedback is collected.

3. Develop Action Plan (during 2 weeks after coaching session)

After the initial coaching session, the participant is required to create a personal development plan using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely) goals. This plan should be created within two weeks of the coaching meeting. SMART goals should focus on changing behaviors, not on improving performance metrics. Goals should be set on developing strengths as well as weaknesses. It is best to focus on one or two goals at a time, otherwise the participant may become overwhelmed. This plan is usually developed by the participant on his or her own, but some people may prefer to collaborate with a coach.

4. Action Plan Review and Initiation (2 weeks after coaching session)

This step ensures that an action plan is actually created, and helps the participant finalize the plan. This review is usually held between the participant and his or her supervisor, but can also be done with an internal or external coach. It is important to check the action plan for three things:

- 👉 Goals should focus on behavioral changes, **not** performance objectives (sales, productivity, defects, etc.)
- 👉 The plan should include goals to both build on strengths *and* improve weaknesses
- 👉 The goals should be SMART with detailed actions and dates for completion

5. Check-in Meeting (30-Day follow-up)

The purpose of the check-in meeting is to ensure the participant has begun working on parts or the entire action plan. Each action item should be reviewed, with particular attention paid to what is working and what barriers are preventing action. If the participant has not started on their action plan, it may be necessary to evaluate the relevance of the plan, its attainability, and what resources are needed to ensure success.

6. Maintenance and Re-tooling Meeting (60-Day Follow-up)

By this point, the participant should be well into their action plan. In addition, the participant should be at a point in their development where each action is becoming a consistent behavior. If the action plan is effective, the individual will likely need little guidance, and only reinforcement of the new behaviors. The most significant indicator of success at this point is the participant's confidence in their ability to continue with their goals.

7. Accountability Meeting (6-Month Follow-up)

This meeting ensures that the participant is still on task and is consistently practicing the new behaviors. The participant should notice that the new behaviors are having an impact on his or her performance. It is important to identify these performance improvements in order to reinforce the effectiveness of the changes and motivate the participant to continue.

8. Action Plan Completion and 1-Year Repeat 360

A follow-up 360 survey is used to measure progress and help ensure that the participant stays on task during the year. Knowing that there will be a "test" at the end motivates participants to create and follow the action plan. The same coaching and action planning process is then repeated.

DecisionWise Support

A 360 can elicit many different reactions in the participant. These may include shock, denial, anger, resentment, defensiveness, depression, and low morale. If these reactions are not dealt with in a systematic way, the participant runs the risk of either ignoring the results, or confronting his or her raters in an unproductive way. On the other hand, the feedback can be the catalyst needed for lasting change and improvement.

The above eight steps require dedication, time, and an objective frame of reference by which to assess and interpret survey results. It has been our experience that these steps are best implemented by an independent third party who is free of the political, hierarchical, and interpersonal factors that would limit growth. DecisionWise consultants are professionally trained in Psychology, Organizational Development, and Statistical Design and Analysis, and are specifically trained and experienced in turning 360-degree feedback into results.

Because of these inherent limitations in a typical 360 process. DecisionWise can act as the neutral consultant and provide the coaching throughout the process. Here is an example of what DecisionWise delivers:

Step	Time frame	Goals	Duration	Deliverable to HR
1. Effective Survey Administration		Develop relevant survey tool, communicate with participants, easy to read reports.	4 weeks	Participation summary
2. 360 Debrief	Immediately after reports are generated	Help participants understand their strengths, derailers, and gaps in perception.	3-4 hours for groups 1 hour for individuals (one-on-one)	Summary matrix of each participant's strengths, derailers, gaps, and general observations
3. Action Plan Development	After report debrief	Provide guidelines and tools that will help participant gather additional feedback to incorporate into action plan.	1-3 hours	Conducted by participant
4. Action Plan Review and Initiation	2 weeks after debrief	Assess additional feedback gathered. Complete action plan that will be used for next 12 months.	45-60 minutes	Summary matrix of action plans
5. Check-in Meeting	30 days after action plan initiation	Determine degree of action plan implementation. Offer coaching on any obstacles or concerns.	30 minutes	Summary of each participant's completed steps for each action item
6. Maintenance and Retooling Meeting	60 Days after action plan initiation	Determine degree of action plan implementation. Offer coaching on any obstacles or concerns.	30 minutes	Summary of each participant's completed steps for each action item
7. Accountability Meeting	6 months	Review action plan with participant and supervisor. Administer short survey to raters about participant's success in following action plans.	45-60 minutes	360 Process Effectiveness Survey Results
8. Action Plan completion and 1 year follow-up	1 year after initial 360	Meet with participants and review successes and learning areas. Review second 360 report and train participants on how to trend development and goals for next year.	1 hour individual meeting	

The DecisionWise Leadership Intelligence 360 process is a turnkey system that puts a leader's development into the hands of competent professionals who will collect, manage, and report the progress of each participant. Both supervisors and support staff will be fully informed of the development of each participant.

DecisionWise guarantees that this process, properly followed, will turn 360-degree feedback into results. DecisionWise has found significant outcomes for the employee and the organization through a properly conducted 360 survey.

Individual outcomes include:

- ✔ Greater effectiveness as a leader
- ✔ Increased awareness of impact on others
- ✔ Better understanding of stakeholder needs
- ✔ Focused personal development
- ✔ Commitment to performance improvement

Organizational outcomes include:

- ✔ Understanding of overall competency level
- ✔ Identification and targeting of training efforts
- ✔ Promotion of a culture of leadership
- ✔ More objective performance reviews
- ✔ Strategic planning
- ✔ Succession planning

About the Author



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About DecisionWise

DecisionWise, Inc. is a management consulting firm specializing in leadership and organization development using assessments, feedback, coaching, and training. Our Leadership Intelligence® process leads to more effective working relationships, higher levels of employee engagement, and increased business performance. We provide our consulting and survey services to organizations throughout the world, including many Fortune 500 companies, government organizations, and non-profits. Our mission is simple and straightforward: "To help people work more effectively by turning feedback into results." DecisionWise was founded in 1996, is privately owned, and based along the Wasatch Mountains in Provo, Utah.

For more information about DecisionWise, visit www.decwise.com.