Critical elements of a good 360 strategy

Too many people can recount an experience with 360-degree feedback that was less than they hoped for. What they wanted was an indication of how they were perceived by others and what they could do improve, but what they got was more personally threatening than helpful for self-development.

There are some incredibly simple, yet effective, steps you can take to ensure your next 360-degree event is positive and constructive for participants and other stakeholders. Here are a few of the things to keep in mind as you get started.

If you want honest ratings (rather than inflated ratings)…

- Be clear about the intent of the 360; emphasise that the learner owns the report.

- Orient raters to the process and give them some training.

- Remind participants (self-raters) that there is a tendency for people to inflate self-ratings and that they should be tempered in their self-assessment.

- Do not burden any single rater with too many surveys at one time.

If you want participants to accept their feedback (rather than explain it away)…

- Ensure the participant receives guided feedback from an accredited, trusted coach.
- Allow participants to select their raters, but not 'load the deck' based on a desire for only favourable ratings.
- Participants should be very honest. If not, they will see inaccurate blind spots and/or hidden strengths.
- Build in accountability for development planning as an outcome.

If you want a system that encourages development (rather than a single activity)…

- Position 360-degree feedback as one source of information in a broader strategy to develop people; show how it links.
- Create a climate for honest conversations to happen between participants and their managers.
- Provide visible recognition for people who are serious and intentional about their development.
- Be disciplined in tracking and measuring what's changed as a result of the process.