



Tips for effective 360-degree surveys

by Marie Dunshea on 13th September 2012

LDN has been conducting 360-degree surveys since 1996 and the numbers run to hundreds of programs for thousands of participants. Our experience shows that carefully managing certain steps - that look so obvious they're often overlooked – makes a huge difference to the quality of the results. These include:

1. Communicate with the whole workgroup

It can't be emphasised enough how important it is to communicate with everyone involved. Whether the pre-survey briefing is a face-to-face group meeting or a dial-up or teleconference, key questions need to be addressed or they may impact adversely on the survey process.

When raters are fully informed about the process, they have the right mindset when they are completing surveys. In one organisation, the volume of written comments by raters went from average 2 pages to 10 after the value of this input was highlighted in a telephone briefing!

2. Emphasise confidentiality and development

360-degree surveys are not purely about assessment – they are about assisting personal growth and development. When confidentiality is assured, raters are more confident in giving candid and honest feedback.

Confidential 360-degree feedback also allows participants to be able to absorb and process others' perceptions of them and plan for a good discussion with their boss on their best development opportunities. We have found this encourages a culture where development is valued.

3. Act on development

Global research on organisational climate surveys shows that asking employees what they think, and then NOT acting on the results has a very negative impact on morale.

Participants have different experiences of other 360-degree survey processes. Prior 360's might have been linked to performance, they might have been just 'token' activities, or more typically, nothing has followed them. It is important your business is ready to pick up on the learnings from the 360-degree survey process, both individually and collectively.

4. Ensure your participants are supported

While development post a 360-degree survey is the responsibility of the individual, we have found there are certain techniques that encourage managers to be directly involved with their people in a way that sustains development.

Some of these techniques include facilitated round-table review discussions between the participant, their manager and their feedback coach; a menu of accessible development options and resources and further coaching for participants.