

► Getting 100% from 360°

by Verity Bissett-Powell, Consultant, DDI

Imagine. A child returns home from school with their report card. They are scoring high in English but struggling with math. Having scanned the report, and acknowledged the grades, the report is filed away. There is no further action, but an assumption that the child will now make improvements before the next semester's report card. Seems unlikely doesn't it? That simply knowing strength and development areas is enough to cause change? Yet this is a common misconception with 360° assessments and frequent barrier to the value they bring organizations.

How can individuals change their behavior based on a 360° assessment when they have:

- Misleading or confusing messages from their individual feedback report?
- No discussion about their unique assessment results and implications for development?
- All "whats" and no "hows" on their development areas?
- Little support from their manager resources to learn and apply new skills?

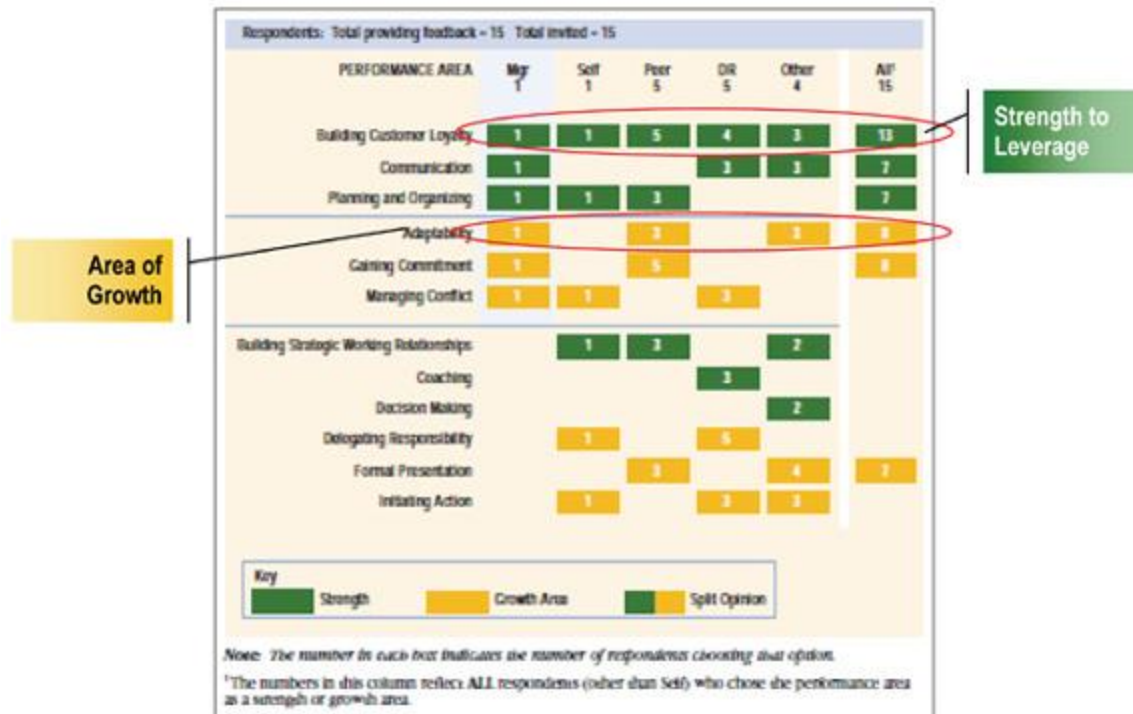
They can't. We asked thousands of development experts: *What percentage of the people who get 360° feedback in your organization actually change their behavior in a positive way and maintain that change for several years?* They consistently reported a mere 5%-10% of individuals making the behavior change. How satisfied do you think the organizations receiving this minimal ROI are? How satisfied would you be?

Let's explore how to remove each of those implementation obstacles, with an aim of getting 100% from 360° assessments.

1. Misleading or confusing messages from their Individual Feedback Report.

Recipients of 360° assessments can often be heard making statements such as: "All my ratings are above average" or "I don't understand what this feedback means to me". Recommendations for erasing these issues include:

- Including assessment rationale and value to the participant in the rater invitations can help encourage open, honest feedback. Sharing that the information is being gathered anonymously, and used for development and not for disciplinary purposes increases the validity of feedback.
- Clear individual reports with suggestions for how to interpret the results. For example, including a reminder of the survey rating scale labels, suggestions to review qualitative data as well as quantitative information, and guidance to focus on 1-2 development goals as a next step for development actions.
- Consider taking the numbers out of the process by only requesting that raters provide feedback on areas of strength and areas of development. So there is no opportunity to rate everyone a 3+ because the system forces you to choose a growth area. Kristin Nelson, manager of Learning & Organizational Development at East Jordan Iron Works and user of DDI's *Targeted Feedback*® 360° assessment explains how "the subject's strengths and growth areas were clearly indicated in their feedback reports, which lent directly to their individual development planning".



Even if this is the only barrier removed, it does at least enable the participant to start taking some action with a comfortable understanding of the feedback they have received.

2. No discussion about their unique assessment results and implications for development.

When it comes to accepting feedback, 360° participants sometimes have difficulty seeing the big picture. A dedicated discussion with their manager, or member of the HR team, helps participants:

- Explore and understand the content of their feedback and their ratings;
- Relate data to current business, work, and interpersonal issues;
- Become motivated to pursue their own development;
- Understand the importance of developing strengths to leverage, as well as growth areas;
- Recognize how the 1-2 areas of focus will benefit their team, and the organization, as well as them as individuals.

Feedback sessions should be approximately 60-80 minutes in length, with a sample agenda for the discussion as follows:



3. All “whats” and no “hows” on development (i.e. Understanding what needs to be developed but not how).

According to Bersin’s *2009 Talent Management Fact Book*, development plans are prevalent in a little over half (52%) of the organizations surveyed, and only 8% of those organizations report having high quality plans. The above two best practices will help 360° participants uncover what behaviors they need to change but does not significantly assist them in understanding how to change the behaviors.

A variety of development suggestions can be provided through online 360° systems. For example, in DDI’s *Leadership Mirror*®, the participants are provided with:

- Recommended reading (books and articles) for all their survey competencies;
- Suggested activities per competency for self-directed, partnered, or targeted development;
- Possible workshop titles for each competency;
- A development action form with guidelines for completion;


- Client-specific information (i.e. links to an LMS or company leadership guides).

Development Resources
Fundamentals of Leadership Traditional Survey –Repeat


Managing Conflict

 OPAL (Online Performance and Support; available in English only)

Managing Conflict
Dealing effectively with others in an antagonistic situation, using appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to reduce tension or conflict between two or more people

 Development Guides


Managing Conflict
Defines the performance area and specific behaviors needed to be successful. Contains skill enhancing tips, descriptions of developmental activities, and suggested readings (for example, books and articles).

 Other

Corporate Calendar
Corporate Training Calendar for 2009

Recommended reading
"Good to great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't" - Jim Collins

Delegating Responsibility

 OPAL (Online Performance and Support; available in English only)

Allocating decision-making authority and/or task responsibility to appropriate others to maximize the organization's and individuals' effectiveness.

By leveraging the technology as a further enabler, participants have one username and password with which to uncover the whats and the hows for their professional development. These development suggestions can be incorporated into IDP forms, resulting in meaningful, measurable, and actionable plans.

If adding all these development resources into the online system is not possible, then organizations should consider creating a handbook or handout for subjects to use post-360° assessment. This would provide suggestions for where the subjects can find support in their development endeavors.

4. Little manager support for skills application.

Personal development doesn't have to be a solo job. While the 360° assessment results and taking action post-survey is in the hands of the participant, it is vital they have the support of their manager. Here's our advice:

- **Application Opportunities**—When attempting to coordinate their own development, participants frequently recognize that they have a very limited scope to take advantage of the best skill acquisition opportunities. For example, without the help of management, participants often cannot put themselves on a task force, nominate themselves for a new assignment, or register themselves in training programs.
- **Monitor Development**—By being aware of the 1-2 development areas that the participant has identified, the manager is able to provide ongoing feedback on their application efforts (see below sample evaluation card). Many times behavior change requires a reframing of habits, so it is valuable to receive pointers on the effectiveness when applying new skills or competencies.
- **Reward**—Further to the above, upon seeing the individual successfully show competence in one of their development areas, the manager can provide positive feedback to reinforce that behavior, perhaps even rewarding them for the accomplishment.

Experience has consistently shown that individuals who discuss their skill acquisition needs with their manager, a mentor, or some other significant person in the organization are more likely to have a well-conceived development plan and the necessary resources and authorizations to follow through on it.

Rewind. A child returns home from school with their report card. They are scoring high in English but struggling with math. One teacher makes a note that the child is motivated by the arts and aspires to teach at the elementary school level. Sitting down with their child, the parents explore how they can support the goals of developing English as their strength, and math as a growth area, explaining that passing math will be important to a potential career as a teacher. They brainstorm ways that the child can increase their knowledge on these subjects with additional English assignments, and after-school math classes. They also explore opportunities to shadow a teacher for career experience. Action steps and deadlines are established with an assumption that the child will now make improvements before the next semester's report card. Now, that doesn't seem so unlikely, does it?

About the Author:

Verity Bissett-Powell joined DDI in 2005. She served on DDI UK's Leadership Projects Team, coordinating and managing global training projects before moving to DDI's U.S. headquarters. In her current role as a member of DDI's Leadership Solutions Group (LSG), her clients and internal partners successfully implement and manage multi-rater and online learning projects by providing training, support, and technical assistance, and sharing best practices.