360° Feedback Reviews

Powerful and Effective Tools for Change

The Napier Group

MANAGEMENT MONOGRAPH
Volume III

Contents

Chapter 1

The Evolution of the 360° Feedback Review[1]

In 1975, the world of management underwent one of those seminal events that changed how we look at leadership and its role in the management process. Following World War II, the idea of leaders receiving feedback on their performance had become part of the mainstream, primarily through the efforts of NTL (The National Training Laboratory), which ran a wide range of intensive workshops exploring how leaders influence each other. It was a period of extraordinary openness as a nation when long-held, rigid, Victorian norms gave way to new attitudes and behaviors about race, gender, sex, education, parenting, and, yes, even management practices.

Until then, management had been mostly directive, using *telling, demanding, top down, command-and-control* behaviors in work environments where authority was rarely questioned. Suddenly, everything was questioned. Sensitivity workshops encouraged people to come together to explore the nature of relationships, intimacy, how groups worked, and how participants "felt" about nearly everything. Encounter groups flourished, supporting frankness to the point of abuse, as centuries of armor fell away and people were given permission to share both their feelings and ideas about each other, the group, and its leaders. The Center for Creative Leadership, in North Carolina, attempted to translate many of these ideas into the language of management, holding intense programs where leaders would explore their influence on groups of strangers or, sometimes, within an existing group.

Birth of the 360° Feedback Revolution

At Temple University, during that period, we began successfully to explore providing feedback to people in their place of work, among those they most influenced. For whatever reason, until that time, working one-on-one in the sanctity of the workplace had not been considered or even acknowledged. In 1975, a small group of us left to start a small, boutique, consulting firm, The Athyn Group. Our primary mission was to bring much of what we had learned in public workshops into the world of work. After all, other than in the military, most leadership occurred within the confines of business management. Yet, it was a world without internal coaches or personal feedback and had rigid expectations of who did what and how they did it. It was fertile ground for our work in a time of rapid change.

[1] 360° feedback is an almost-universally applied means of measuring leadership effectiveness. It is the result of collecting a wide range of data from people who are familiar with the behavior of the individual being evaluated. The data collection methods tend to vary, as does the amount of data gathered, the means of analysis, and how the individual receiving the feedback eventually utilizes the data. The analysis and interpretation provide the individual with new behavioral choices that can improve their performance.

Long before the Industrial Revolution, the rules guiding leadership in the workplace had been clear: do as you are told, do not complain, and never question authority. Such command-and-control leadership styles fell on a continuum from benevolent to malevolent. Unions had been the response of workers to abuse and unfairness on the part of management. Yet, the movement had not resulted in greater introspection or openness on the part of business leaders. Instead, the very thought of their leadership and the inviolability of management's authority being questioned only deepened the chasm between the two parties. While the influence of labor unions has waned over the past seventy-five years, the adversarial nature of the relationship between management and labor still simmers on many fronts. In fact, it has been resurgent in recent years as technology, competition, and 24-hour access have resulted in a new kind of management-labor conflict.

Forty years ago, if management were to entertain new approaches and begin taking advantage of new ways of motivating employees, including its own leaders, it would not come through the threats and antagonism often engendered between management and labor.

Sneaking into Management

The notions of sensitivity training and feedback were driven by the middle class, not by labor. It was teachers, psychologists, trainers, managers, housewives and many more, who, together, became the human potential movement of the 1960's and 70's. Even though it ran out of gas in the 80's—and such groups were eventually cast out of most business settings where they tried to gain a foothold—the idea of feedback remains a fixture in the lexicon of management practices. Like most such movements, spinoffs occurred and societal vestiges can be seen thirty-five years later in the form of wide - ranging types of group therapy, organizational development (OD) within many businesses, and, of course, 360° feedback reviews.

Whereas unions were a threat to power and the status quo, the practice of healthy feedback was related to personal development, team building, and improved management practices.

Still, a hard sell

For many in management, there was something incongruous about the very idea of scrutinizing a leader's behavior. It was a private domain outside the bounds of normal examination. After all, leadership was one of those things you simply learned by observing and being a leader was usually earned after years of hard work and loyalty, often labeled as a natural act. Either you had "it" or you didn't—especially if you didn't fool with the hallowed notions of authority and entitlement that went with traditional leadership and the management process.

Our first cold calls to businesses, to discuss our idea of feedback, were met with either suspicion or skepticism. That anyone would care what others thought about their influence on those they led was, at the very least, novel. Our John Wayne, rather militaristic history of leadership suggested that individuals “just do it” and, eventually, if good at it, they would get their turn at leadership. The thread of such a historical view can be seen in the “authority” of the classroom teacher, parents in relation to their children, and in bosses over their employees. “Don’t you question my authority,” translated into, “Don’t question what I do or how I do it.”

Such psychological and practical resistance to feedback in the workplace could be seen in the disbelief of one manager thirty years ago. “You mean you’re going to have ‘those people’ make judgments about my leadership? You’ve got to be kidding. Do you want to undermine my authority and my ability to lead?” As he talked, he became more agitated at the thought of someone looking at his domain of power. Later he stated, “All you have to do is look at my results, that’s all the feedback I need.”

The same attitude is still embraced by many teachers who are to this day dismayed that they should actually solicit feedback from their students—after all, what could the students know about teaching anyway. In addition, parents taking feedback from their children is, for most, a patented absurdity.

Our First Forays into the World of 360° Feedback

Initially, we began approaching potential clients by saying something like, “Say, do you want to learn about your impact as a leader?” It made sense to us, but not to many others. Necessity changed our approach, however. We started saying, “Say, give me a few days and I’ll guarantee that I can save you time, while increasing both your efficiency and productivity.” That became our key to management’s door.

Typically, we would shadow our client for two or three days, bolstering our observations with a variety of interviews. This was long before the availability of sophisticated instruments for measuring leadership effectiveness. Because most of our training had been in the world of small group and organizational behavior, it was easy to understand the dynamics that we saw playing out before us, and the impact of a particular leader in that unfolding dynamic. Time management shifted to people management.

But How Authentic Would the Client or Those Being Observed Be?

During the early period of our work we, and much of the nation, were captivated by a documentary that is being called the first true “reality” TV program. *An American Family*, a show dedicated to the observation and understanding of a “typical” American family, the Lauds, aired on PBS in 1973. Most people would, quite naturally, have doubts about how authentic the members of this family could be, if they were being observed, televised, and discussed across the country.

Surprisingly, what became evident almost immediately was that the family had such strong reactions to everything and were so tied into their own predictable individual habits and family patterns (norms) that there was little that was not available for the country to see and scrutinize. It was as if nothing could stop the train the Lauds were on. Any effort to play nice for the cameras and hide the "truth" of the family's dysfunctions was trumped by the impending "unfinished business" of the family itself. In the course of a few months, the obvious contentiousness between the parents reached a captivating crescendo. They eventually separated and divorced. One of the children came out of the closet, at least a decade before such behavior was even on the horizon. It was all shocking and fascinating. The program became a study of just how difficult it is to conceal such patterns and personal habits.

For us, it demonstrated what we knew about most groups. Norms and characteristic individual behaviors will not stop—even when being observed. We quickly learned that being present with a client for several days and then hearing about them from others provided vivid portraits of individual and group behavior. Of course, the more we knew the more we could help—if, that is, the individual was committed to taking a deep look at their rather predictable patterns of behavior.

Within five years, without publishing our efforts, it was as if we were on the crest of a wave. Suddenly 360° Feedback, or what we called Role Counseling at the time, was all the rage. It was the principle of the 100th Monkey[2] realized—a larger, collective unconscious seemed to take hold of a new thought and turn it into an acceptable, even desired, idea across many previously resistant, impermeable boundaries. For many businesses, it became the new thing to do. We proceeded to see it like a work of art—not only for each individual client but as a process, fine tuning it over the years as a means of helping individuals change.

As one of the founders of the 360° Feedback movement, we remain excited by its huge potential. Conversely, we are appalled by its misuse. Smart packaging and ritualized methods have, as might be expected, drawn into the marketplace vendors more interested in exploiting profits than on maximizing the benefits of the 360° process in helping individuals change their behaviors. Many consumers seem to be more interested in following the fad, rather than doing it right—or they simply do not know the difference.

The remainder of this paper will focus on our tailored approaches to 360° Feedback and on the questions that should be asked to avoid the disappointment so many now experience and maximize the benefits this powerful process can provide.

[2] The tale is that a young monkey on a remote Japanese island began to wash sand off a sweet potato left on the beach by scientists, making it easier and healthier to eat. Other monkeys in the troop soon followed. Suddenly, monkeys on another island separated by miles of water and no means of communication began to wash their food, as well. This is often used to explain the presence of a collective unconscious.

Chapter 2

How 360° Feedback is often Misused

Commonly in business, time is money. Thus the assumption is that if 360° Feedback can take less time on the part of the client as well as less time by a vendor, that should be value added to both parties. The problem is that 360° Feedback is designed to focus on individual behavioral change. Considering how difficult it was for the Lauds to change their collective or individual behaviors, even in the face of a national TV audience, it is just as difficult to change individual behavior and to sustain such change over time. Most individuals undertaking a 360° review for the first time have never taken a hard look at their own behavior. By the time they receive their feedback, they are "run" by certain habits and certain stylistic behaviors they could benefit from changing—perhaps interrupting, talking over others in conversation, not listening, being disorganized, or a hundred other possible behaviors that reduce their effectiveness. Yet changing any of these is challenging. Following are some of the critical reasons that 360° Feedback often fails or falls short of its desired outcomes.

> **The number of individuals surveyed is not sufficient to provide an accurate 360° picture of the client.**
> Many vendors use an insufficient sample. They will ask a client to submit data from, perhaps six to ten people—two or three subordinates, a boss, a couple of colleagues, and an outside associate or two. So, on what basis is this select group chosen? How can there be any patterns revealed based on the data available? What real conclusions can be drawn? Having a small sample of participants is more convenient for both the vendor and the client, but the results are both less reliable and less valid.
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> Our process demands twenty to thirty participants, or more. This insures that vivid patterns are forthcoming from the data and provides sufficient information from each of several work categories.
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> **How an individual is asked to participate is critical.**
> Twenty participants require twenty personal requests by the client, either in person or by telephone. Too often, a casual e-mail or note substitutes for a direct, personal contact with those providing data for the client. If these individuals do not feel the importance of the 360° Review experience for the client, it decreases the rate of return and the quality of the responses for the client. We find that a personal invitation increases the percentage of people completing the process by nearly a third. Moreover, the motivation to be meticulous in response to each question also rises.

At the time of the request, we also suggest that the client tell the participant that they will receive a summary of the client's critical learning, along with what they plan to do as a result of the process. The client's appeal must make the request special.

In many organizations, 360° Feedback has become ritualized and part of an obligatory feedback process.

The result is one of routine evaluations of any kind—they become undervalued by those involved both at the participant level (those providing the data) and at the client level (the one receiving the information), with feedback becoming just one more obligation among many.

Our belief is that the 360° Feedback process should be held as a high-level management function, taken seriously by recipients, and seen as a desired opportunity for those involved. Increasingly, this is not the case as the process becomes routine and more a pain to be tolerated than something that is truly valued.

Without observing the individual in action, an important part of the leadership puzzle is missing.

There is no question that witnessing a client is a critical element of a 360° process. While two or three days shadowing a client is no longer practical, observing the client at work is. Thus, watching them in a one-on-one dialogue with an employee, running a meeting, interacting socially in the office or with their boss, etc. provides amplifying information that supports and informs the data from the surveys. For example, we find the opportunity to observe the client in a few meetings for which they are responsible is invaluable. As with the Lauds, even knowing they are being observed, it is almost impossible to for the client to alter habits and attitudes in the moment. It is not surprising that under stress, rigid people become more rigid, domineering ones become more controlling, and impatience is often married to quick overreactions.

To not have such information available in the 360° process is to not have a complete picture. Yet, all too often, because of the time requirement and cost to obtain such important information, it is factored out of the equation.

The failure to use "friends and family" in the data gathering pool.

The use of this category of participant in the 360° Feedback process is important. But there is a natural resistance on the part of many clients to include such people in their pool. Either they do not see the sense of it ("I separate my work-life from my home life."), or they do not want to bother friends or family members. The problem is that good friends know us in ways that many people at work do not, and such informal relations are among the most accurate sources of information we receive. Additionally, because they are asked and because they care, such participants are often more earnest in their desire to help. Over the years, in- depth interviews with such individuals have paved the way to important insights that have substantially altered our coaches' approach to helping their clients.

Imagine that a client is seen as a rather tyrannical taskmaster, with little humor or fun in the workplace. Yet, at home, out of the "role" and expectations of work, the client is seen as relaxed, charming, and fun to be with. It is much more difficult to elicit new behaviors from a client at work when such behaviors are not already in their repertoire. In this case, knowing the client has access to these very behaviors in another setting makes the change process less onerous. Having the complete picture of an individual can dramatically alter the recommendations and strategies for change.

Interviews cost time and money to conduct and are often excluded from the 360° process—yet, they offer keen insight into the client's behavior.
People love to talk. In 80% of our interviews for 360° Review clients, we experience individuals who want to be honest and helpful. We estimate that only about 20% are less than forthcoming. A creative interview can build on "clues" from other data and raise hypotheses or suggest the need to probe more deeply into particular areas. It can result in crucial information that would never see the light of day in a questionnaire. It usually takes a person being interviewed about two minutes to decide how honest they want to be, based on their sense of the interviewer and their understanding of the value of the experience and how much it might be helpful to the client. Four or five thoughtfully selected interviews can be a huge asset in helping to understand an individual through the eyes of a boss, a sister, a parent, a spouse, a close colleague, a secretary or assistant, or a knowledgeable subordinate. We find most people want to be helpful—especially if they feel they have been "chosen" by the client. These interviews almost certainly add both substance and luster to any 360° process.

Too much data and overwhelming the client.
The way many vendors sell expensive 360° Review packages is by making them a hundred pages thick, full of graphs and analyses. There is no doubt that data can be helpful. Our experience is that thick packages are often a means of justifying a high cost. People are capable of handling only so much information. Not only this, but we find that most people have a few serious flaws, usually they know them and the data will offer dimension and further understanding more than it will add new insight.

Usually, the challenge is correcting what we have avoided changing for ourselves in the past. That the problem is so very obvious to many people can often trigger the interest and *will* essential for meaningful change to occur by the client. It is not the weight of the feedback package of data that counts, but, rather, the quality of the information solicited and the manner in which the data are presented so that the client will be able to internalize the information and want to take action.

The lack of time spent in helping the client digest difficult data.

360° Feedback, when done properly, can be a shock to anyone's system. It can create anxiety and fear in the recipient. It casts a net over one's life at a point in time and forces scrutiny in a manner that often never occurred before. It is challenging for most individuals and an easy opportunity for defensiveness and resistance to overcome good will, curiosity, and interest. As one client said, "I don't mind the feedback, I just don't want to be hurt or to look stupid."

We take the delivery of the data seriously and with a sense of great responsibility. We give it essential time and create a process that usually requires a full day of sharing, analysis, integration, and problem solving. It is recognized as the first step for the client in an extended process of change.

Many 360° Review vendors do a required data dump—a two or three hour purging of an enormous amount of information, pointing out strengths and areas of development for a passive client. Then, with requisite information shared and questions completed, the client is left to deal with their data and the mixed emotions generated from what can be a trying experience. We do not kid ourselves. The receiving of such a body of information, to us, is a therapeutic act that can provide great help if skillfully delivered and tended to with sensitive follow-up and follow-through. If done poorly, it can result in damage, creating an open sore that is difficult to heal. The recipe for change, again, is much more than new -found knowledge or insight. For us, where many 360° reviews end, is where real change and needed support begins.

The focus of most 360° feedback is on the data and not the process of change.

If a client has two or three important behavioral or stylistic areas of change they wish to undertake, that is huge. Winnowing down several dozen pages of information into two or three desired changes can be challenging. Change does not occur because of insight or new information. It results from a client, for whatever complex set of reasons, suddenly wanting to create a change. Here is the rub: Insight will not mitigate against years of habit, years of conditioning, and years of being supported for annoying, dysfunctional behavior. Most change in an organization or team fails at the point of implementation—regardless if using a 360° process or other approach.

Applying insights that have been derived from the gathered data is where the proverbial rubber hits the road, and often where the greatest resistance will occur. It is only here that the individual has to give up something and has to pay the price for something new. Yet, for most 360° reviews, it is all about the data and not about the changes implied. Minimal time is usually spent on the part that is most demanding and challenging—that which demands serious change for success to be gained.

Beyond sharing important data, it is what is done with the information to help the client "own" the data that is most crucial to the success of the 360° review. What we know is that while insight is important, it usually is not sufficient to catalyze a client into action. Nor will intellectual understanding alone result in an owning of the issue so that the client will be motivated to actually undertake what is required for real and lasting change to occur.

Studying how this best occurs has led us to implement a three- step process that requires the better part of a day. It is a far more demanding and integrative process than currently exists in most other 360° feedback vehicles.

Step 1. Using a four-hour "reversal" strategy, the client must organize, interpret, and report the data to a consultant and/or one or two peers whose role is to challenge both the interpretation of the data and its implications for the client.

Step 2. One of the key issues the client is committed to changing becomes the focal point of an intensive problem solving effort intended to address the issue creatively and result in meaningful change.

Step 3. The client prepares a synthesized version of the data for their boss, along with a series of critical next steps. This is intended to engage the supervisor in the development of the client over time and be integrated into the client's supervisory cycle.

We believe that without being tied to a supervisory process or some other legitimate source of accountability (See the example of the LDI in Chapter 4, as one example) that is ongoing and goal-directed (both product/outcome and behavioral in nature), little or no substantive change will result from the 360° process.

A fallacy—your information is secret unless you choose to share your data with your boss or others.

One of the rarely discussed problems relating to why many 360° processes fail has to do with who sees the data. A fallacy has been perpetrated to clients that the information gathered in the 360° is for their eyes only, that no one will see it if they do not wish it, and only they or the consultant from the vendor company will be privy to the data. For us, this is unrealistic. It is often rationalized by suggesting that the client may not trust their boss. That is like saying, "because a system is broken and the boss hasn't built a trusting relation with his subordinate, that we should support what we know is an ineffective 360° process." We know that a valuable 360° review is predicated on the fact that a boss and his or her employee can have a positive experience that will strengthen and develop the employee and, in the process, strengthen their relationship. Further, it is assumed that the supervisor has the skills, time, and commitment to work with and help the client over time. The 360° Review is not a quick-and-dirty "one, and done" experience. Rather, it reflects an institutional commitment toward the development of all of its leaders—from the very top, down.

Yes, data from a 360° Review can be personal and feel threatening. But if an organization is going to use the process, it must be prepared to provide supervisors with the skills and accountability to work with the 360° results at a high level. Often this is not the case. In the end, a dysfunctional process can create more mistrust than positive change.

We believe that the client/employee is being paid to do good work by the organization. If the 360° Review data are not very positive, it needs to be known and used as a basis for leveraging positive change. It is a tool for improving performance. It is not a pulse check, an institutionalized process that suggests individual are receiving feedback periodically, with no commitment or support by the organization to work with the individual to increase their effectiveness.

Generally, being involved with a 360° Review process within an organization creates an assumption about "what" is to change rather than whether to change. It should be part of a process that supports personal development and generates a curiosity about how the organization can improve its individuals, teams, and the organization itself. Lacking such institutional-wide support, especially without effective supervisory training and development, it is predictable that in a relatively short time, few in the organization will take it seriously. Instead, it will become a charade in the eyes of many with little serious attention being given to providing feedback and even less to acting on it.

The importance of support groups in maintaining change efforts.
When medical patients with life-threatening coronary disease were left to their own devices in monitoring their own medicine or sticking with a chosen exercise and diet regimen, only a third of them maintained the recommended changes in the first six months—even though their very life depended on it (as reported in an article, *Change or Die*, by Alan Deutschman in *Fast Company* magazine, December 1, 2005). When, however, a similar group was placed in a small support group of individuals with a similar ailment, they doubled the number who sustained positive change in their life preserving habits over a period of two years.

We agree that change is hard. Working with a support group whose participants know and trust each other and understand each other's effort, leads to significantly more positive changes. Even though physicians are aware of the benefits of such support groups, few recommend them in support of these lifesaving changes. The same is true of most 360° Review vendors. Few actively identify and encourage the importance of such support groups in the change process. We recommend and actively support such efforts in a variety of our 360° change strategies.

The importance of public-ing (or sharing) client data and commitments after the 360° Review analysis, whenever possible.

So what happens to the information, once the client has understood the data and committed to whatever he or she believes will help them help themselves and contribute positively to the organization? What happens to those who took the time to support the client's growth and development? Moreover, how can both of these lend themselves to meaningful change on the part of the client?

We have a suggested approach that we share with clients prior to undergoing a 360° Review process. It is predicated on the good will of the data providers who make the entire process possible. It assumes they have invested in the client and in the process. As a result, we recommend an individual send a thank you note that includes a personalized summary by the client of important elements that he or she learned, along with some examples of what they are going to do about it. While not necessarily the complete story, it supports the seriousness of the effort.

Psychologically, such public commitment to the information and to strategies of improvement act to help mobilize the client in their change effort. This is more than an obligatory and gratuitous acknowledgment of help. It also speaks of a psychological commitment to change and to others' investment in them. By putting it out into a public forum, what it is you plan to do, we have found that it is both supportive of the client's effort and positive intent, as well as a motivational factor for the client.

In the world of "private" 360° Review data and closely held information, we find this reflects a refreshing openness to what should be an ongoing effort at self – improvement, feedback, and candor.

To us, 360° reviews represent serious work. There is an implied commitment to acting intentionally in relation to the information gathered. If the process is undertaken as an obligation, its value will be lost. Resentment usually accompanies anything undertaken for the wrong reasons. Personal change that often results from such an investigation is only successful when it is fully embraced. Because 360° reviews are often not voluntary or can be seen as a threat, it is little wonder that they lose their value over time. Regardless, if done well the experience can be life changing if the recipient sees it as a gift, an opportunity to enhance their skills, attitudes, or perspective.

Chapter 3

Fundamental for 360° Reviews

What makes our approach to management consulting different from many organizations is that we have no one particular way to do anything. Our strength is creating well-designed strategies that imaginatively help meet the needs of a particular individual, team, or organization. With that said, there are some fundamental values and procedures that we are committed to, that also tend to differentiate us from our competition. Some of these relate directly to the way we utilize the 360° Feedback review process we have already been exploring.

Feedback is a gift

This sounds almost gratuitous because, for most of us, the idea of *feedback* is built on the notion of criticism, based on what we do that is wrong rather than right. To see it as a “gift” means reframing how we think about such information. For us, feedback gives us choices, direction, and a means of measuring progress in relation to our behavior and the way we live our lives in the eyes of the world. In order for such information to have credibility and meaning, we turn to a set of tenets that shape our beliefs in relation to giving and receiving feedback. These and a few others are foundational and keep the muddiness of feelings and opinions at bay. Essentially, feedback is information someone would make available to us about how we affect him or her. It has to do with our behavior—not our ideas. We try to separate our feelings about the behavior from the action or the behavior itself.

Watching someone who is adept at giving feedback is like an artist skillfully painting a still-life picture and presenting it to us as a gift. It may not be perfectly exact, but there is no doubt about what the picture represents. We may not even like the picture provided, and we may not keep it, but we can recognize the intention with which it is given. With feedback, theoretically, it is our choice whether we internalize it and use it—or not. It is, for our purposes, only information. One of the sources of resistance to feedback is that the person delivering it has an agenda and is telling us to “change.” Theoretically, it is not for the person delivering the feedback to prescribe alternate behaviors to go beyond the sharing of the impact of the behavior as they experience it.

There is, of course, exception to this rule. For example, a boss knows that one of his or her direct reports is engaging in behavior that is jeopardizing their position on the team or in the organization. It is necessary, then, to discuss the consequences if such behaviors continue. Still, the individual has the choice of whether to listen or not, to change or not.

For feedback to be useful, some time-honored and simple rules need to be followed:

1. The information should be **descriptive** rather than judgmental. The behavior should be described, as well as its effect on the receiver. It can include how the behavior makes the sender "feel." Even then, the primary focus is on the behavior. Thus, the notion of "positive" or "negative" feedback is a misnomer, because it is up to the receiver to decide whether he or she "likes" the feedback. For example, I could be told something that I do not like to hear about myself (such as I interrupt a lot), but I may appreciate the information because I have not been aware of that behavior and its obvious negative consequences. Is that "positive" or "negative" feedback? Clearly, the answer is in the eye of the beholder.

2. Ideally, the recipient of the feedback has the opportunity to check it out with others in order to determine if it is an isolated opinion or others share it. In 360° Feedback, the idea is to provide patterns of behavior across a spectrum of individuals, allowing the client to determine whether the behavior being described is true across many different groups or is used predominantly with a certain group.

3. The person giving the feedback should be specific, providing an example of the behavior. Our rule is, if you can't give an example of the behavior, don't give the feedback.

4. When possible, the feedback should be given as close to the time of its occurrence as possible. Clearly, in the case of 360° Feedback , some of the feedback may relate to patterns of behavior that occur over time. Still, "specific" is the operant word.

Feedback should relate to something the person is capable of changing—again, a behavior, a habit.

In our effort to provide useful feedback in our 360° reviews, we frame the information according to these rules.

Feedback as a key element of management

One litmus test we have for whether a management team is effective has to do with whether giving and receiving feedback is a natural part—a norm -- of how team members treat each other. Rather than being an onerous, feared process, it is seen as essential to honest and open communication and, ultimately, outcome based goals. In conflict averse organizations, such skilled behavior is increasingly rare. Since one usual characteristic of a high performing team is candid, open communication, to not have it implies a low degree of trust. Similarly, high performing teams provide feedback in relation to team and individual goals, as well as successes and failures. It is ongoing, constructive and accepted as integral to how business is conducted. The trust essential for the use of feedback, sadly, cannot be mandated. It has to be earned. In many organizations where the bottom line rules, constructive feedback and individual development have given way to the use of easily tabulated "scorecards" and minimalist performance reviews. The "what" of performance trumps any desire to look at the "how" or process part of the equation. The problem is that such success can act to reinforce ineffective behavior.

In light of this, it is assumed that performance management practices in relation to accountability and personal development (the two sides of the supervisory coin), are built on a foundation of ongoing feedback which is not based on once or twice a year feedback dumps. (See our professional monograph, *The Supervisory Dialogue—the Key to Successful Performance Management).*

Ideally, 360° Feedback is tied to performance management

Many organizations now use 360° Feedback on a periodic basis, tracking how an individual is progressing along their particular career path. Done well, such a process occurs every three or four years, identifying areas of strength and needed development. The problem is that with downsizing and financial belt tightening, such supervisory practices have fallen to the wayside, with supervisors not being rewarded for supervision, but, rather, for "doing." The result is that it is increasingly common that 360° Review practices become routine, superficial, and lack the essential coaching and tracking of individual performance, which is essential in successful teams. Planning, problem solving, and collaborative practices give way to individualized performance. Competition among team members accelerates as numbers rule and rewards are related to normal performance curves with individuals on the same team competing for a few high-level rewards. Finally, in such an environment, long -term goals give way to short-term objectives and an increasingly crisis-reactive management.

For us, the use of 360° Feedback implies a long-term view of management, goal setting, and performance management—where personal development is seen as an integral part of long-term growth.

The Ingredients of 360° Review Best Practices

Our first forays into the new world of 360° reviews, over thirty-five years ago, were creative acts. We were learning as we went, by doing. Now, these many years later, there are common elements that we tend to use, since we know they add value to a developmental process in which behavioral change is a key ingredient. That said, we also realize that each individual client or client group has different needs, resources and time constraints. We attempt to accommodate those needs, as long as we are not creating a detriment for the individuals receiving the 360° Feedback or the organization itself. It is the unique combination of these instruments and processes that in some meaningful combination will meet the needs of the individual client or the client team.

Following are some of the elements we draw on to meet the challenge of different 360° reviews and client interests.

- **Individual and group interviews.** Such interviews are creative acts that allow for in depth probing as information unfolds. Usually structured in relation to a handful of relevant questions, the meat of the interview involves taking advantage of the unique insights of the person interviewed who is helped to believe that their views will be pooled with others to paint a vivid picture of the client's leadership / management behaviors and consequent impact. While many of those we interview would not require confidentiality, we guarantee it.

- **Selected observations of the client at work.** Watching people at work is to watch habits and rituals that are often unconscious, regardless of how cautious they are with their observer in tow. Debriefing after meetings or other situations during the course of a workday can provide opportunities for "teaching moments" and discussions that offer further rich insights useful in the 360° review.

- **The GMQ—Group Management Questionnaire.** This seventy—two statement instrument of best practices provides, in about ten minutes, a vivid understanding of how a team or group functions in relation to eight essential categories that we believe are critical to successful team performance. These include ***Goals, Climate, Ability to Manage Conflict, Rewards and Recognition, Patterns of Communication, Meeting Effectiveness, Leadership of the Team, and Performance Management or Supervisory Practices.*** The positive statements are so specific that they lend themselves to answers so that the tool is both diagnostic and a guide to team-based solutions.

- **Scaled item questions.** Our research has identified between twenty-five and fifty powerful behavioral descriptors essential to effective management practices. Thus, our instrument can differ based on our understanding of a particular client and the kinds of information that will be most important for their learning. Each behavioral statement is on a **10-point scale.** It provides respondents the opportunity to express a full range of feelings about the individual on any particular item.

- **Open ended questions.** Again, these are often tailored to the interests and or needs of the individual when individualized coaching is part of the process. Our experience is that about five open-ended questions can capture about 90% of what people want to say. Most interesting for us is that respondents will find a way to say what they need to say, regardless of the questions being asked, often several times -- just in case.

- **The Leadership Wheel Style Inventory.** Virtually all effective 360° reviews include a descriptive style inventory that captures the characteristic behaviors that, together, comprise an individual's predictable style of leadership. Most sound similar because only a handful of variables describing behaviors have been factored out as basic to all individuals in our culture. Ours is particularly interesting style inventory, since it also has the advantage of identifying how the client responds under stress and in conflict situations. In addition, it identifies how certain behaviors that may have always been identified as strength are now being over used and have become detriments to an individual's success.

- **Supervisory Review.** We believe that anyone who has the nerve to supervise others, and potentially influence their lives, has the obligation to receive yearly feedback on their supervisory effectiveness, as part of their own annual review. This brief instrument focuses on the key elements that separate effective from ineffective supervisors.

- **Tough Questions.** One of our most successful differentiators in our 360° review is a series of "tough" questions that give the respondent permission to explore the client's use of contrasting behaviors often felt to be out of bounds in most surveys. Thus, words like *abusive* and *arrogant* are often excluded from such inventories. Some years ago, we experimented with a range of both positive and negative behaviors. To our surprise, they have provided some of the most distinctive results and have added an important dimension to our review.

- **Additional Questions.** Clearly, different clients have different interests and needs. We attempt to adapt our 360° Review profiles to meet these needs by generating additional questions or processes that they deem important.

The Great Reversal Design

One of the challenges in undertaking 360° Feedback reviews has to do with helping the client "own" the data generated about them. It is one thing to seek 360° information. It's quite another to internalize it as one's own and, then to respond to it in a manner that shows an interest in change. We have mentioned previously the great distance between insight and understanding and a commitment to actual behavioral change.

Add to this the widely differing resistances that can normally occur when different personalities are faced with the reality of their 360° data. For example, we all know individuals who are very private and protect themselves from disclosing anything personal. Or, what about someone who has the need to be perfect in the eyes of others and, perhaps, herself, only to discover considerable imperfection among the 360° data. Or what about the person who has a great need to control everything in his life and finds the data from the 360° is not only not flattering, but it's now going to be known by a consultant, and, perhaps, by others in a support group (see below) and by his boss? The permutations and combinations of possible resistances among such diverse recipients of this kind of very personal information can be extraordinary. Over the years we adapted a creative process for helping clients engage their data in a manner that helps them internalize the information, in a manner that generates a minimum of defensiveness. Only then, we believe, will it possible for them to focus on areas of change that their deliberations identify.

The Great Reversal is one approach we use that has had enormous success in helping to unravel the complexities among various data protocols along with the abundance of diverse personalities with whom we work.

The process takes time (up to three or four hours) for each individual to embrace their data, engage a structured, diagnostic process to guide them toward understanding, as well as providing them the emotional support necessary for them to be vulnerable and *dive deep* into their data. Given time to understand their information, the challenge for the client is to share their data based on a series of very specific and acute questions that focus on the data they received. The answers constructed by the client are reported back to a support person(s) who act as the client, with the client acting as the consultant expert responsible for helping interpret the data. This reversal is particularly effective since the client understands that someone in the process is also familiar with her data. This results in a level of honesty that is often remarkable. Establishing psychological distance between initial self-criticism and disappointment (a normal response to 360° data) allows for a more dispassionate "owning" of the data. Seeing the data for what it is rather than our projections is central to this activity.

The process can be likened to a detective sorting through evidence and drawing conclusion built partly on hypotheses, partly on intuition, partly on personal history and partly on new insights gained from seeing patterns across the variety of data available. We have found that without such intense, challenging, and demanding structure, it is much easier to avoid what is necessary to undertake this compelling but sometimes daunting task. The unceremonious data dump of many 360° reviews assumes that access to such personal knowledge will drive the change process. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Problem Solving Critical Issues

Ultimately, the goal of 360° Feedback is to provide the client with new choices of behavior and strategy. Once the issues are identified, the client is taught an in-depth problem solving strategy to help identify essential goals, resistances, and the necessary support to accomplish her desired outcomes. Attached to each strategy is both a timeline and contract along with agreed to follow-up sessions in support of the desired change.

Without this level of intense problem solving and follow-up, we find the possibility of regressing to old habits and behaviors to be high indeed. Kurt Lewin used to talk about "unfreezing" old behavioral patterns or habits, moving them to a new level of acceptance and, then, "refreezing" them. It is the last step that is the most challenging— the sustaining of meaningful change over time, once the immediate support, and attention is gone. As anyone involved in change management realizes, there is no risk, nothing to give up until the change is enacted. It is then that resistances come flying at the change effort. Without a plan, commitment, support, and follow-up, the chances are that meaningful change will not occur.

Chapter 4

Different Types of 360° Reviews

The vast majority of 360° reviews are relatively superficial sorties into the life of an employee. Rarely are there interviews or observations connected to the 360° experience. A computer-generated package of data goes to the recipient with directions for interpretation. More often than not there is little coaching accompanying the exercise. Rarely is the 360° Review, in this form, part of a developmental program tied into the person's supervision and depending on a special relationship with between the employee and supervisor. While not necessarily counterproductive, we find it is the rare client in this kind of process who has the discipline and will to dig deeply into their data and create a program of meaningful and sustainable change on his or her own. Our approach tends to be more rigorous and intense. Changing behavior is a serious matter and demands a mobilization of numerous resources.

Because clients have multiple agendas, we have created a variety of approaches to meet these differing needs. Several organizations desire a maximum of autonomy with us. While we conduct most of their 360° Review's, especially the integration and implementation aspects, they decide to work independent of us and use their own personnel who have been trained by us. Another of our programs requires intense time and follow-up with several participant clients simultaneously. Still another has the 360° Feedback as a portion of a larger leadership development program. Another approach provides intensive coaching experiences with a single consultant engaged in an evolving client relationship over time. Each has advantages and disadvantages. All assume some relations between the "client" and a supervisor. Most require an intense period when the client integrates their data and builds a clear set of strategies based on their new priorities and commitment to change. Following is a more detailed look at some of these alternatives.

The Traditional One-on-One Coaching Model.

This is the first, and still our most popular, model. It is most often initiated because someone in a leadership capacity is having problems in areas such as:

- Effectively integrating into a team
- Building a team
- Dealing with a difficult employee
- Difficulty planning and organizing
- Finding the role of team leader challenging, especially holding people accountable and measuring performance
- Problems with time and stress management
- Managing a conflict-riddled team and needing help rebuilding cohesion

In most cases, the problem arises through the concern of someone's boss who reports a symptom. Our job becomes understanding the entire problem. Our initial use of a 360° Feedback Review is to gain a clear picture of the individual's current reality. It is a diagnostic for us and for the client. We believe it as essential to observe the client at work, to interview colleagues, and then provide a relevant 360° Review experience as a kick-off into the work of individual change. With that said, because individuals and their organizations are so different, one shoe does not fit all. Being adaptable to the needs and constraints of the client and the client's work system is crucial. In each case, the length of the engagement is negotiated, based on the unique needs and interest of the individual client. There should be no boilerplate when it comes to such reviews, although certain aspects are interchangeable.

Undertaking Two or Three 360° Reviews Simultaneously—A Support Group Model

There are multiple reasons an organization may decide to conduct two or three 360° Review processes at the same time. There may be significant cost savings by having the consultant combine trips and length of stay during the observation, interview, and feedback stages. The three clients may have similar roles in the larger organization or they may have similar problems functioning as leaders. One compelling reason not usually considered when such an arrangement is requested, is that small support groups generally are more productive, change that is more lasting occurs, and the "evolving team" is left with a permanent support group within the larger organization. We have even used the two or three person 360° Review model when the participants were in an antagonistic and combative relationship and it was crucial to the organization that they begin to work more effectively together.

The general steps outlined previously often will hold. However, in a recent program, we spent the better part of a day resolving individual conflicts prior to beginning any aspect of the 360° Feedback sequence.

Providing 360° Review Support for Autonomously Managed Supervisory Programs

Several of our clients utilize 360° Feedback as part of their yearly Supervisory Dialogue with individual contributors. In the first year of employment, an individual receives a regular Dialogue (goal setting, feedback, career counseling) along with a data-based 360° Review. Because of the nature of the organization, no interviews or observations are included, except in specific situations. In the employee's second year of employment, special focus is placed on commitments emanating from each individual's 360° Review data, along with the normal Dialogue goal setting and feedback discussions. The third year is a maintenance year and year number four begins the process again, with another 360° Review. Since few people leave this organization, the ability to track growth and development is easy because of the array of data gathered over time.

Our role, as consultants in this approach, is to provide an objective process for data gathering, tracking responses, and, eventually, interpreting the data. A detailed report is included with each 360° Review. In a given year, up to six or seven individuals will experience a 360° Review as part of their long-term development plan. We are a resource for the organization and have, historically, provided training to the organization's supervisors—in the interpretation and integration of the data, followed by skill building in the problem solving and subsequent coaching phases of the activity.

On occasion, the administration will prefer to have an outside person work with a particular client because of conflict of interests (internal roles and responsibilities) or the personal nature of the relationship between the supervisor and the particular client. Other than that, this particular organization is a home of a best supervisory practice combining periodic 360° Feedback with their yearly Supervisory Dialogues.

Integrating the 360° review Process into a Leadership Development Intensive (LDI)

Over the years, our consultants have found that integrating a 360° Review into our leadership development programs can maximize the training dimension while, at the same time, support critical team building activities. This approach began early in our use of 360° Feedback (1980) when we discovered that sharing 360° Review data in a team building setting had the benefit of creating a mutual risk among the participants, as well as building smaller support groups for problem solving and for providing further feedback. Our particular brand of leadership development created ongoing support within the team, while firmly establishing feedback as a natural and necessary part of their team building efforts. Following is an outline of the three, 3-day developmental sessions that comprise a typical LDI, in which 360° Feedback is integral to the overall program and ongoing team building.

Session One (3 day off-site)

- Focus on group dynamics as fundamental to all team building.
- Development of support groups of three within the team of twelve
- Skill building in areas of problem solving and decision-making, using "real" team-based issues.
- Introduction to The Leadership Wheel Style Inventory, which provides insights into the over-used strengths of participants and how they handle stress and conflict.
- An intensive feedback process occurs among the team, providing them the skills and understanding for their own team's ongoing feedback. In the course of this activity, they receive feedback from each of their team members practicing their new skills.

- An in-depth analysis of "design" as a critical element of all meetings is undertaken with each session of the LDI training laboratory used to demonstrate the principles of design.

Intermission 1

In the five weeks between training sessions, the participants each generate 360° Feedback from no fewer than twenty respondents. Data are collected, tabulated, and organized into a packet by our organization, with no effort to interpret the data. In addition, each participant conducts two extended meetings (more than two hours in duration), in which they are observed by one of their support group members from the LDI meeting and evaluated by the participants in the meeting. Their meeting is then critiqued in relation to their facilitation skills, the quality of their design, and whether the goals of the meeting were achieved.

Session Two (3 day off-site)

- Shared learning in relation to initial design efforts—what worked and what did not work.
- Simulation—an opportunity to practice previously developed skills in relation to group process, problem solving, and managing team differences.
- 360° Review data packets distributed to each participant—2½ hours to interpret their data utilizing the Great Reversal format.
- Support groups engaged in the analysis, interpretation, and questioning of team members' data (groups of 3).
- Strategic problem solving design introduced to the team, with individuals and support groups taking one of the issues through the problem solving process.
- Team is introduced to a number of conflict management strategies with opportunities to practice each. Areas of development are related to previously generated 360° Review data.
- Introduction to the Group Management Questionnaire (GMQ), which provides a snapshot of the team's proficiency in eight categories of best practices for high-performing teams.

Intermission 2

Between the second and third developmental session, each member is expected to share learning and strategies generated from their 360° Review with his or her "back-home" team that they lead. By modeling such a practice, it is a first step in legitimizing feedback throughout the organization. Before the third session, five weeks later, the members conduct and evaluate additional meetings, as well as resolve several internal conflicts on their team utilizing some of the strategies learned to date and applying the GMQ instrument.

Session Three (3 day off-site)

- Orientation to performance management as an ongoing process of accountability and personal development.
- Real time demonstration of the Supervisory Dialogue between the team leader and a member.
- Opportunity for team members to practice using elements of The Dialogue.
- Open discussion and critique of the Dialogue process.
- Review of the 360° Feedback Review as part of ongoing professional development within the Dialogue Process
- The role of strategic planning within the team and how it can positively affect each participant's own team.
- Introduction of additional conflict management skills and strategies (the use of paradox, spontaneous conflict, and dealing with difficult people).
- Understanding the nature of "trust" and its relationship to feedback, collaboration, and disclosure.

There is the assumption, in such training, that the norms in the participating team will shift dramatically because of the focus on individual behavior within the team and the use of candid feedback as an integral part of the team's behavior. Instead of an environment engendering personal competition, secrecy, and a focus on individual goals, the outcome tends to include greater trust, candor, and team-focused performance, with increasing collaboration and engagement among team members. The 360° Review intervention in the middle of this training tends to catalyze the team as they undergo intense personal risk and trust building, resulting in increased mutual support and problem solving at both the team and personal levels. This investment in the team is meant to offset the increasing mistrust and aversion to conflict occurring in many organizations as cooperation dissipates and the short- term focus on the bottom line eats away at both morale and longer-term productivity.

Finally, introducing supervisory practices at this level, demands maximum trust that will have evolved within the team because of the team building and mutual risk taking.

Internal 360° Feedback—A Team Building Intervention

A variation of 360° Feedback among an intact team can be a powerful catalyst for building trust, candor, and greater camaraderie. It is not a design for the faint of heart, but in a relatively short amount of time—a three day off-site—the team can develop openness to providing skilled feedback and, at the same time, deal with large amounts of "unfinished business" and conflict among the team. The result is the creation of a greater sense of both trust and team cohesion.

In this case, the 360° Feedback aspect of this activity refers to 100% feedback among all the members of a team. The format involves verbal feedback rather than written, although, as we will see, preparation for each round of feedback demands thoughtful written work. It assumes, given the limited time of three days, that the team is no larger than nine or ten members. More than that would demand more time (usually a second session at some point down the road).

The Design

We call this a "classic" design, because when done well, it virtually never fails to have extraordinarily positive results. How carefully the independent variables of time, orientation of the team, and following the carefully crafted rules of engagement are managed, will determine the degree of success. Like most of our designs, success depends more on the structure and following carefully laid out instructions than on facilitator skills. Because of the personal nature and intensity of the activity, however, the use of a skilled facilitator is suggested in this instance.

Step 1. Conduct a warm-up activity that will help the group segue into the next step. For example, divide the participants into clusters of two or three members. Ask each cluster to develop six team-oriented skills they all can agree should be present among the members of a high-performing, cohesive, working team. They should be able to justify why each is important. (If there are three clusters, there will be 18 skills identified. However, it is assumed that there will be overlapping items that will bring the number down to about 12 or 13.)

Encourage each group to briefly describe the items on their list and why they agreed they are important. Ask each person to advocate for one or two items on another cluster's list. Once accomplished, give each member of the larger team ten red dot stickers that can be placed next to any of the remaining "skill" items. (For example, one person may place four of his dots next to the item "effective listening," leaving a total of six dots to spread among the remaining items.)

It is assumed that a number of the items will either name feedback directly as one of these skills or other skills will be listed that are necessary if feedback is to be present on a team. State that, "One of the critical skills or behaviors that differentiates a high-performing work team from others is the ability of team members to give and receive feedback easily and openly from other members of the team. Our time together these next few days will be to learn about feedback by doing it. Done well, it will increase our trust, openness, and candor—all prerequisite skills for a truly high performing team."

Step 2. Provide the team two large sheets of chart paper and two markers of different colors. Have them create the headings shown in Figure 1, below, on the first sheet.

Figure 1

THE 8 & 6 DESIGN Sheet #1

The 8 greatest strengths I bring to this team	What others on the team see as my 8 greatest strengths	What I believe others will say are my 8 greatest strengths
1.		1.
2.		2.
3.		3.
4.		4.
5.		5.
6.		6.
7.		7.
8.		8.

The second sheet will be completed in the same way except that there will be different headings and there will only be six items in the two outside columns, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

THE 8 & 6 DESIGN Sheet #2

What I see as my 6 areas of needed development	What others will say are my 6 areas of needed development	What I believe others will say are my 6 areas of needed development
1.		1.
2.		2.
3.		3.
4.		4.
5.		5.
6.		6.

Step 3. In a period of about thirty minutes, each of the team members will go off with their two sheets and complete them. For **Sheet #1,** they will identify the **eight strengths** they bring to the team. They must be able to provide a specific example in support of each item**.** Leaving the middle column blank, they complete the third, or outside column, in the same manner, but this time identifying what they believe others on the team will say are their greatest strengths.

Sheet #2 is completed in a similar fashion. This time, each member is to identify the **six areas of development** they believe would help them be an even better team member**.** Again, they complete the third column, projecting the six areas of development they believe their fellow-team members will identify for them.

An important note

Part of the reason for the success of this carefully designed activity is that every member is committed to identifying eight strengths and six areas of development. This equalizes the risk among members of the group. Each participant is treated the same. Individuals are often concerned that they will not be seen in as positive a light as other members of the team. The rationale for each part of the instructions is carefully explained to ensure the commitment of each participant to following the directions as closely as possible.

Step 4. Once the members have completed this initial task, they return to the group. The leader decides who will be first to try what we call the **8 & 6** design. The first two participants will be chosen in advance, according to criteria that follow: They will be talked to by the consultant/facilitator (and/or the team leader) so they can feel good about participating in the first round or two. We have found that the leader should wait for four or five rounds before going themselves, so that people have experienced the positive nature of the activity and there is little to fear. Giving feedback to the leader can be trying, and it is crucial that it is seen as direct and authentic. Thus, people need time to practice and feel comfortable with the process first.

Who goes first?

In every group there are individuals recognized as open, willing to share both ideas and feelings, and who feel good enough about themselves that being first in an activity that is personal will probably be seen, at the very least, as interesting. Such a person does not have to be fearless, just open to trying new things and willing to put themselves out there because they believe it will have a positive influence on the group.

How does the 8-6 process actually work?

A member of the group is chosen for the activity (see below). The session usually takes between 60 and 90 minutes. The other members have to come prepared. They will know that, for the sake of this example, Jack has been chosen in the first round. Time is given for the other members to write in their notebooks, identifying Jack's eight greatest strengths that he brings to the team. For each they must have an example in mind. During this same period of about twenty minutes, each member will also identify his six areas of needed development. Again, it cannot be emphasized enough that giving both eight strengths and six areas of development is crucial for the activity. Our experience over the years suggests that it is nearly impossible to work with someone and not know eight strengths and six areas of development. Knowing it is a firm part of the contract with the group for this activity, is essential

Note: When writing down the 8 strengths and 6 areas of development, keep in mind the two critical **rules of feedback** for this activity: First, whether describing a strength or area of development, **it, must be *specific*—not general.** Thus, he is a "good" listener is not satisfactory. What does he do that makes you feel or believe he is a good listener? Be specific. That he is a "nice guy" does not float, nor would the feedback that he always seems angry. What does he do to show this and what impact does that behavior have on the person—either positive or negative? If others have witnessed similar behavior, this is the time to acknowledge it. This leads to the second rule of feedback for our purposes: **The information has to be *descriptive***. This means the person giving the feedback has to be able to give an example of when he or she has experienced the behavior occurring. As we indicated previously, if you cannot provide a meaningful example, do not even try to give the feedback.

It is for the group members and the facilitator to be certain that these ground rules are being followed.

Another important note:
Because of the very personal nature of this design, it is advisable that a skilled team facilitator, consultant, or HR professional guide the process. Armed with the clear instructions and structure, it should not be a problem. The leader, who is part of the process, should be free of the need to facilitate so that he or she can fully participate.

Once the strengths and areas of development have been noted by each member, Jack places his **Sheet #1** (8 strengths) on an easel in front of the group. He will have folded the list of his perceived strengths so they cannot be seen by the group, and he will have folded the outside column (what he thought others would say) so they cannot be seen, either. This leaves the middle column open and without writing. He stands before the group, marker in hand, and one item at a time, team members share their list of his strengths—moving from member to member until all are listed. It is important that if he has questions of clarification, he can ask them—but the exercise is for gathering information and not for discussion or debating.

Although there will be, perhaps, fifteen or twenty different comments, it will be quickly observed that his strengths are readily perceived. Usually it is also possible to see areas of potential concern, where his overuse of certain strengths may show up on the “development” side of the ledger. Still, the purpose of this first part is to paint a vivid picture of his strengths and for Jack to hear them.

The second part of analyzing Jack’s strengths would have him unfold the left side of his chart paper and reveal his view of his own eight areas of greatest strength that he believes he brings to the team. It is for him to state each one and identify why. Finally, he opens the third column and reveals what he thought his team members would say.

Now comes the most interesting and challenging part of the exercise to this point. He and the group together are to assess:

1. Areas of mutual agreement in relation to what he and they agree are his strengths.

2. Areas that he saw as strengths, but his team members did not.

3. Areas they saw as strengths, but Jack did not.

Since our perceptions of ourselves often dictate how we act, where we risk and take the initiative, this information can provide great insight to Jack as a leader.

At this point, Jack replaces the strength chart paper with **Sheet #2** (his areas of needed development). The sheet is folded, again, with the center column blank, and the two outside columns covered, awaiting the feedback from the group.

Next, Jack solicits the perceptions of his areas of needed development, one at a time, moving around the group, and checking for areas of agreement. It is an active process of clarification but not discussion. Here is where people can begin to justify or be defensive. The facilitator needs to be clear about the ground rules so that the feedback is clarified for understanding—period.

Because the person receiving the feedback in this activity knows the group will be comparing his views with theirs, they tend to be extraordinarily honest, not wanting to be perceived as unaware or out of touch, or even in denial. Predictably, there are many more areas of agreement when the two outside columns are disclosed. It is difficult to be defensive with feedback when one’s own areas of feedback are in agreement with the points of view of your associates.

Of course, there are areas of disagreement, where Jack, for example, is out of touch or has a blind spot. Such a process makes these issues vividly clear to everyone at the same time. Denial is almost impossible under these conditions and that is a positive dimension of this process. It has been said many times that the first step to therapeutic growth is “owning” the problem and wanting to change. Here is that beginning. It is very difficult not to see and “own” what everyone else tends to know.

A final note

While the process tends to be serious, there is often humor throughout as people see the obvious or are enlightened by a new insight. With team members being equally vulnerable, by the time the groups completes each person’s 8 & 6 process, there is an openness to problem solving and to looking at change in a new light—this time with people who will support their efforts, especially since each of them has issues of their own. (For further examples of problem solving designs helpful in this 8-6 process, please see our Web site).

Conclusion

360° Feedback reviews are powerful tools that can help develop individual employees, build a greater sense of team, be part of ongoing supervisory reviews and act to build openness and trust among a community of employees. While it can be used for a variety of reasons, we believe it needs to be anchored in an organization where the leaders are themselves open to being scrutinized and see feedback as central to the building of openness and candor and, ultimately, trust among those involved.

It is built on the assumption that self- knowledge provides each of us greater choices and the opportunity to develop our selves fully. That means everyone in the organization. It reflects a way of thinking about leadership and the management of people. It assumes honesty and transparency—words often easily said, but more difficult to live. Doing it right, often goes against the grain of some institutional norms that tend to be “undiscussable,” such as secrecy, the abuse of time and family life, favoritism, glass ceilings, and the like.

Demanding individuals to be open but not understanding that there must be an equal commitment to organizational openness and integrity is to not understand the consequences of such a process. You cannot have *selective* openness and honesty. To expect that individuals will “deal” with their limitations is to expect that the organization will do the same. Otherwise, as occurs in many institutions, the 360° Review process, over time, becomes a charade with limited positive impact and, often, results in a sense of hypocrisy.

We believe it deserves more than that.

Appendix

The Napier Group Management Monographs

These are a series of small, focused volumes that are problem oriented and offer managers and leaders new ways of thinking and coping with challenging issues. Our goal is to provide specific strategies for dealing with specific problems. The reader should finish with additional tools and designs that will extend their repertoire of responses in the particular area under study.

I. **The Power of Design**
A conceptual understanding of the concept of "design" that will provide leaders new insights into their meetings, team building and managing the inevitable conflicts that arise on a daily basis.

II. **Ten Classic Designs for Running Better Meetings**
From our archives of more than a hundred design strategies, we have chosen ten that rarely fail. We take the user by the hand and lead them though each step of the design, offering advice and tips to insure success.

III. **360° Feedback Reviews—Powerful and Effective Tools for Change**
In the thirty-five years since we introduced this concept, 360° Feedback has become one of the sacred cows of business and industry. This offering will help leaders understand why it often fails and how to make it work, given their particular needs.

IV. **The Case of Jake—A Carefully Crafted 360° Feedback Strategy for Working with a Difficult Employee**
If you work in an organization of twenty or more, you are bound to have a Jake. He is smart, aggressive, competent, sometimes abusive and arrogant—and needs to change or go. He has been rewarded over the years, which makes him difficult to fire. What to do?

V. **The Window Shade Theory of Power and Authority**
It is the rare organization that does not experience conflict over what is Mine, Yours, and Ours. We find this conflict can be a major source of unresolved tension. Here we share a practical piece of theory that can be translated directly into success with your team members—a rarity indeed.

VI. **Fundamentals of Conflict Management**
Here is a primer that will help you see the managing of conflict through a different lens. It offers a good beginning for people interested in becoming better equipped for handling all types of conflict—with individuals, groups, organizations, and most importantly, within themselves.

VII. **Tools and Skills for Handling "In Your Face" Conflict and Difficult People**
Most of us have a narrow range of behaviors when dealing with conflict. We never had a course in managing conflict, yet we experience it every day. Here we explore some creative strategies that will bolster your repertoire of responses for handling conflict with subordinates, peers, and bosses—and even your kids and spouse. We include the use of paradox and other creative strategies.

VIII. The Key to Cultural Change: Altering Dysfunctional Organizational or Team Norms
There is a lot of talk about “changing culture.” Yet, there is extraordinarily little practical advice for well-intentioned leaders. Norms are the underlying stones of a culture. Changing them will move the culture to a new place. This volume is all about norms and how to change them in order to create a more productive and positive culture at work.

IX. Developing Membership: The Key to Organizational Morale and Cohesion
Membership among employees or team members is all about whether people feel they belong. When they do not feel like they belong or are part of the team, morale is guaranteed to decrease and, eventually, productivity. Most managers have not a clue about this critical concept. If leaders do not “get it,” it is predictable that membership will be something to address. We show you how.

X. Six-Step Problem Solving: A Tool for individuals and Groups for Solving Difficult Problems
Most leaders leap prematurely to solutions. The results are unanticipated consequences and mistakes overlooked in a disorganized and time-shortened process. Here we create an easy to follow, stepwise strategy for solving a wide range of problems. It offers a way of thinking about problems and how to engage others in their solution, while increasing their ownership.

XI. The Group Management Questionnaire (GMQ)—A powerful Tool for Measuring and Developing Team Effectiveness
It is rare that a diagnostic tool can lead you to immediate solutions. The GMQ is a 72-item instrument comprised of best practices based on eight team assessment areas. It is easy to score, chart, and graph. It can also be used to benchmark team leader performance over time. We have used it successfully in a hundred organizations over twenty- five years.

XII. Creating Effective Rules of Engagement for More Productive Teams
These behaviorally defined values guide a team in its action with its members and others with whom it deals. They are observable and measureable and without those, teams can lose focus and be unable to deal effectively with each other. They are for the team to develop and to manage them. They are foundational for all team building.

XIII. Tools and Techniques for Effective Strategic Planning with Your Team or Organization
Most strategic planning efforts—large or small—are a huge disappointment for those investing large amounts of time and dollars. Key to success is building creative approaches to engage the multiple constituents invested in a positive outcome. Our extended repertoire of different designs can be adapted to meet the special needs of your team or organization.

XIV. Seduction of the Leader—How to Build Trust and Speak the Truth in Your Team or Organization
Like it or not, the older we are and the more influence and power we have, the less those around us are willing to tell the truth. How to create a sense of openness and trust among those working for us is the bane of most leaders. The more trust, the more cohesion and the greater morale. In a bottom line driven, building such openness is increasingly a challenge. This will help.

The Napier Group