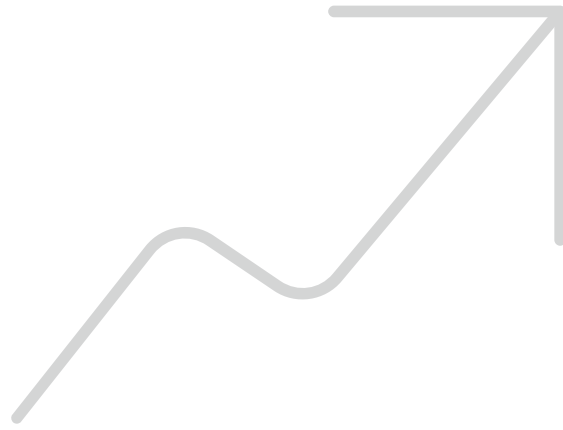
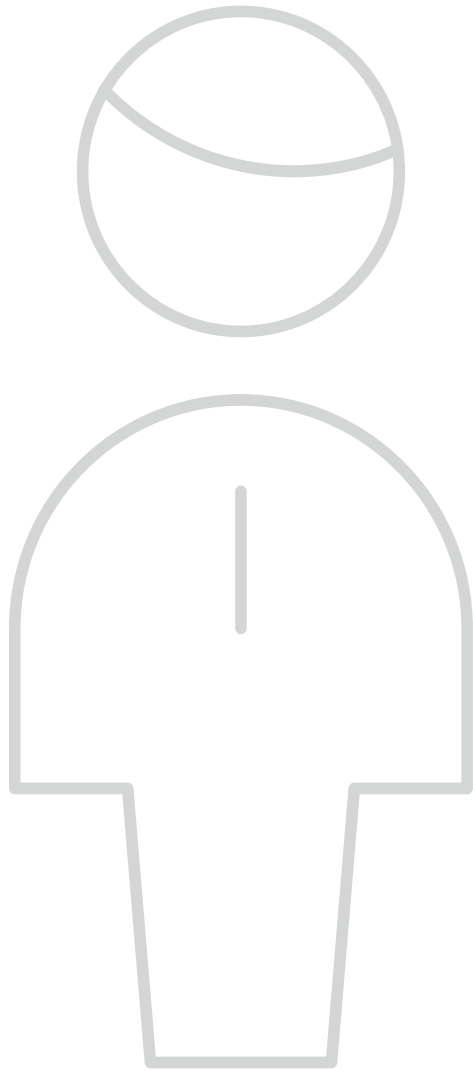


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## 8 Steps for Turning 360 Feedback into Results

## **8 STEPS OVERVIEW:**

1. Effective 360 survey
2. Initial debrief/coaching session
3. Develop action plan
4. Review action plan and initiation
5. Check-in meeting (30 days)
6. Maintenance meeting (60 days)
7. Accountability meeting (6 months)
8. 360 repeat (1 year)

360-degree feedback is a validated development process whose roots go back over 60 years. In a typical 360 feedback process, data is collected, reported, and acted upon with the intention of bringing about increased professional effectiveness on the part of the participant.

Too often 360 initiatives fail to produce change as organizations put more emphasis on administering the survey, but do not place priority on coaching, goal setting, and requiring accountability from participants. Long experience and independent research both confirm this and further identify two crucial elements that separate successful 360 processes from ones that produce little or no change.

First, recent DecisionWise research shows that for participants who did not set goals or receive follow-up coaching, only 34 percent indicated that the experience was effective. Conversely, 94 percent of participants who set goals and received regular follow-up with a coach or supervisor reported the 360 process as effective. Imagine implementing a program in your own organization where only one-third of the participants felt it was effective and saw any measureable benefit. Both DecisionWise research and outside academic studies confirm that participants in any feedback process benefit immensely from coaching and follow-up.

Second, obtaining support from senior staff directly impacts the effectiveness and participant “buy-in” of the 360-degree feedback process. This is true for any leadership development initiative.

The following eight steps serve as the optimal approach to implementing 360-degree feedback programs. At the foundation of this process is human interaction. Elaborate software, online development applications, or the latest trends in action planning tools can assist a feedback initiative, but do not replace the role of qualified project facilitators or coaches. These steps require personal interaction from the participant, their raters, and the organization to realize the most value and effectiveness. Simply conducting a 360 survey and handing out results does little to promote change and has the potential to do more harm than good.



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

## **1. USE AN EFFECTIVE 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK ASSESSMENT**

360-degree feedback acts as a catalyst for change by prompting individuals to evaluate their current behaviors and make plans for improvement. The survey results provide detailed feedback from supervisors, peers, direct reports, and others who are in a position to evaluate the participant's behavior or performance. The results are broken out by different rater groups so that a person can identify gaps in perceptions between the groups. The report also identifies a person's strengths and derailers, which are those things that will impede a leader from being successful. It is important that the 360 survey content is relevant and uses actionable questions. Otherwise, the participant may discount the feedback because the questions don't apply to his or her current situation or job responsibilities. This is why an organization may want to consider using a customized survey versus an off-the-shelf version where some (or most) of the questions do not directly apply.

## **2. DEBRIEF/COACHING SESSION (WITHIN 30 DAYS)**

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

- Helps participants to correctly interpret their results
- Provides a "sounding board" for participants to discuss their results and accept the feedback
- Mitigates negative or unproductive reactions to the feedback (e.g., vindictiveness, resistance, etc.)

- Helps identify natural strengths and talents, rather than focusing on only areas for improvement.
- Helps participants to focus on the real issues and not get sidetracked by minor concerns.
- Provides instruction on how to create a personal development plan based on the feedback.

Without this initial coaching session, the feedback will probably not be used, or worse, result in hurt feelings and vengeful behavior. Most often and especially with executives, the initial coaching session is conducted by an external coach, though trained internal HR professionals can be just as successful. Coaching is most effective one-on-one, though for many participants, group coaching in a workshop setting provides similar value. The initial coaching session should happen within 30 days of when the feedback is collected.

### **3. DEVELOP ACTION PLAN (DURING 2 WEEKS AFTER COACHING SESSION)**

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

## **4. ACTION PLAN REVIEW AND INITIATION (2 WEEKS AFTER COACHING SESSION)**

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

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

## **5. CHECK-IN MEETING (30-DAY FOLLOW-UP)**

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

## **6. MAINTENANCE AND RETOOLING MEETING (60-DAY FOLLOW-UP)**

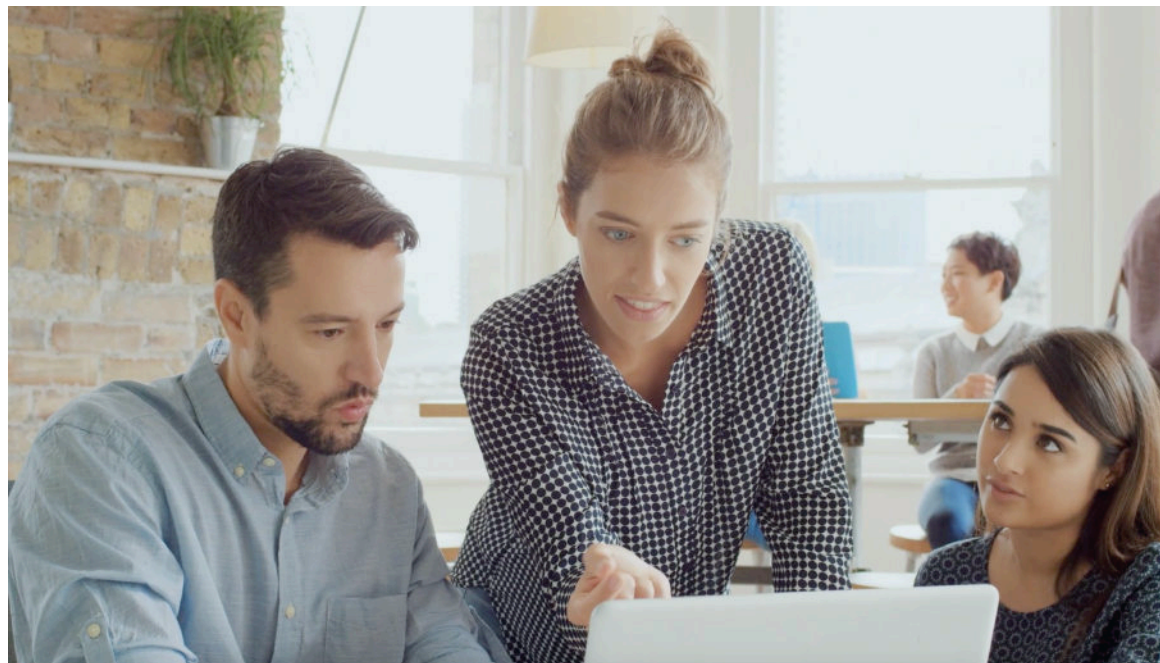
By this point, the participant should be well into his or her action plan. In addition, the participant should be at a point in his or her development where each action is becoming a consistent behavior. If the action plan is effective, the individual will likely need little guidance, and only reinforcement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

## 7. ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING (6-MONTH FOLLOW-UP)

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

## 8. ACTION PLAN COMPLETION AND 1-YEAR REPEAT 360

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



## DECISIONWISE SUPPORT

Reactions to feedback vary greatly by participant. When rater scores and comments are critical or at odds with a participant's own self-image, negative reactions can include shock, denial, anger, defensiveness, low morale, and even vindictiveness. On the other hand, feedback properly understood and accepted is a catalyst for lasting improvement. For these reasons and others, participants should receive some form of initial debrief and/or coaching upon receiving their feedback report—especially first timers.

The above eight steps require dedication, time, and an objective frame of reference by which to assess and interpret survey results. These steps are best implemented by an independent 360 administrator outside the participant's political, organizational, hierarchical, and interpersonal matrix.

At the core of the DecisionWise 360 service is the ability to provide expert, external coaching. DecisionWise consultants are professionally licensed in psychology, industrial/organizational development, statistical analysis, and assessment design, and receive further training and experience on how to turn 360-degree feedback into performance results.



# 360° Feedback Best Practice Recommendations

STEP	TIMEFRAME	GOALS	DURATION	DELIVERABLE TO HR
1. Effective survey administration		Develop relevant survey tool, communicate with participants, easy-to-read reports	4 weeks	Participation summary
2. 360 debrief	Immediately after reports are generated	Help participants understand their strengths, derailers, and gaps in perception	3-4 hours for groups 1 hour for individuals (one-on-one)	Summary matrix of each participant's strengths, derailers, gaps, and general observations
3. Action plan development	After report debrief	Provide guidelines and tools that will help participant gather additional feedback to incorporate into action plan	1-3 hours	Conducted by participant
4. Action plan review and initiation	2 weeks after debrief	Assess additional feedback gathered, complete action plan that will be used for next 12 months	45-60 minutes	Summary matrix of action plans
5. Check-in meeting	30 days after action plan initiation	Determine degree of action plan implementation; offer coaching on any obstacles or concerns	30 minutes	Summary of each participant's completed steps in each action item
6. Maintenance and retooling meeting	60 days after action plan initiation	Determine degree of action plan implementation; offer coaching on any obstacles or concerns	30 minutes	Summary of each participant's completed steps in each action item
7. Accountability meeting	6 months	Review action plan with participant and supervisor; administer short survey to raters about participant's success in following action plans	45-60 minutes	360 process effectiveness survey results
8. Action plan completion and 1-year follow-up 360	1 year after initial 360	Meet with participants and review progress. Review second 360 report and train participants on how to trend development and goals for next year.	1 hour individual meeting	



# About DecisionWise 360° Feedback Solutions

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

DecisionWise guarantees that this process, properly followed, is the most effective system for turning 360-degree feedback into actual results. Again, a properly conducted 360 process assists employees and organizations to realize significant outcomes with measurable, positive results.

## **INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES INCLUDE:**

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

## **ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES INCLUDE:**

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

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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500+ clients in 70 countries and 30 languages  
Over 70 million survey responses  
Coach executives around the world  
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"Turn Feedback into Results"



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