

### **What is a 360 Degree Assessment?**

360 degree assessments are an approach that provides individuals the opportunity to receive direct feedback from supervisors, peers, reporting staff members, coworkers and customers. The intent is to gather information that will help shed light on the participant's leadership skills and behaviors as viewed by the individuals they work with. The process is a valuable tool to help participants understand their effectiveness and ultimately provides new perspective that can help you to enhance your leadership approach.

### **How do you know that a 360 Degree Assessment the right tool?**

360 degree assessments are most successful when conducted in environments where a good deal of trust, respect and positive team interaction are already the norm. In this type of working environment there is much greater propensity to interpret 360 feedback as an opportunity for learning, individual improvement and advancement for the team as a whole.

If 360 degree assessments are conducted in working environments where mutual trust and respect has *not* been established, the process can sap morale, destroy motivation or enable disenfranchised employees to simply vent their frustration or provide less than constructive feedback.

Choosing to use 360 assessments as a professional development tool should be strongly influenced by your current working environment. The participant's willingness to self-reflect, positively engage in the feedback process and work within the context of improving their leadership skills is critical to getting the most out of the assessment.

### **Characteristics of 360 Degree Assessments**

#### **Selecting Your Raters**

360 degree assessments generally include feedback from 8 to 20 raters. If your organization is large enough, choosing raters that represent different sectors such as peers, reporting staff, coworkers, and supervisors can help to provide well-rounded more meaningful feedback. To maintain anonymity, each rater group normally must have a minimum of 4 raters.

#### **Customizing the Assessment**

The content of a 360 degree assessment should be consistent with your organizational goals. The competencies that you identify for feedback should be meaningful, relevant and reflect the competencies that are required to successfully meet performance objectives. Properly designed, the 360 feedback can be one of the best methods for understanding personal and organizational development needs.

### **Completing the Process**

Once the assessment is designed and the raters are selected, the 360 is electronically distributed to the raters via email. They each complete the assessment on-line and submit their responses back to the 360 administrator. All information provided by the raters is anonymous. Upon completion, results are then rolled-up into summary reports which are provided to the participant.

### **360 Assessment Debrief**

The 360 degree assessment will provide the participant a range of feedback on a number of key competencies. The debrief of the results is the most important step of the process and allows the opportunity to fully review the information and build a solid understanding of how to best leverage the feedback that has been received.

Debriefs consist of a one-on-one meeting with a coach that will allow participants to thoroughly review the information and begin to create a viable plan to move forward. A written summary of the 360 results will be provided just prior to your debrief session.

Follow-up coaching is also recommended to help the participants fully integrate what they have learned from the 360 degree feedback process.

### **Additional Items to Remember**

- 360 degree feedback is not the same as a performance management system. It is merely a part of the development process that a performance management system offers within an organization. It must be designed to function in support of your organization's strategic objectives.
- Prior to completing the assessment, all raters will be properly briefed so they fully understand the professional development objectives that are driving the process. Their honest feedback based on their personal experience is what is required. Artificially inflating or deflating their responses for any reason will, in turn, generate artificial results which, inevitably undermines the primary professional development goal.
- Since 360 degree feedback processes are usually anonymous, people receiving feedback have no recourse if they want to further understand the feedback at the individual level. They have no one to ask for clarification of unclear comments or more information about particular ratings and their basis. For this reason, integrating coaching and support into the system is important. This will help assist participants to understand their feedback and provides the tools to initiate positive changes.