# 360-degree Feedback: Best Practice Guide

TeamMate360

Disclaimer: This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This document reflects the views only of the author and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which might be made of the information contained herein.

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This Guide has been developed based on the Erasmus partner's experience of developing and using TeamMate 360 with over a thousand participants, respondents, trained facilitators and organisations. The results of the testing of the tool are available in a series of TeamMate 360 National Benchmark Reports (see www.teammate3360.eu)

## Who is this Best Practice Guide For?

This guide designed for vocational education trainers, coaches and mentors, Human Resource experts with responsibility for developing managers and employees and are interested in delivering 360-degree assessments and feedback.

# Contents

# 1. What is 360-degree Feedback?

The term 360° assessment refers to the practice of gathering and processing assessment feedback from multiple sources. The term 360° feedback refers to the de-briefing of and discussion with managers about the results of the 360° assessment.  It is quite simply:

> "The systematic collection and feedback of performance data on an individual or group, derived from a number of the stakeholders in their performance."

The aim of 360° feedback is to obtain performance information about an individual from those with whom the individual interacts. In the case of managers, the feedback is usually obtained from a senior manager (i.e. the manager's own line manager), junior personnel (i.e. a member of the managers' own team) and other people working at a similar level as the manager (i.e. a colleague or a peer).

The use of 360° feedback models has grown in popularity in recent years. One of the reasons for this growth in popularity is the fact that the assessment involves and engages a range of stakeholders, such as line managers, peers, team members and in some cases, customers and suppliers.

Assessment and feedback systems based upon 360° models have many characteristics in common with other skills assessment techniques such as employee surveys, ability tests and conventional performance appraisal systems. The table on the following page provides a brief comparison of the main uses, characteristics and similarities of each of these techniques.

| | Employee Surveys | Ability Tests | Personality Inventories | Performance Appraisal | 360° Feedback |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To diagnose organisational issues | Selection or promotion | Selection, development & counselling | Performance improvement, rewards, motivation, succession planning, identifying potential | Multi-purpose, excluding selection. Can be used on teams & individuals |
| **Coverage** | Almost anything (e.g. opinions, attitudes, safety, training) | Specific Skill areas (e.g. verbal or numerical ability) | Personality or cognitive style | Results-based, achievement of objectives. | Competencies broken down into detailed behaviours |
| **Method** | Questionnaires, sometimes augmented by interviews and focus groups. | Questionnaires or exercises which invite people to demonstrate specific skills | Questionnaires which invite people to describe their feelings, preferences or typical actions. | Discussion between manager and appraisee based on appraisal documentation. | Questionnaires on disk, paper or network. |
| **Respondents** | Answered by all or a sample of employees | Answered by participants themselves | Answered by participants themselves | Usually manager and appraisee. | Participant, boss and selected others, |
| **Administration** | Questionnaires distributed with explanatory letter. Answers from individuals kept confidential. | Administered by trained personnel in strictly controlled conditions. | Administered sometimes by self, sometimes in controlled conditions. | Usually organised by the HR function. | Questionnaires usually sent out by the participant. Collected externally or at a central point. |
| **Answers/ Scores** | Questionnaires use a rating scale for perception on opinions. | Questions have a right answer. Can also have a pass or fail element. | No right or wrong answers. | Assessment by the opinion or observation of the manager and appraisee. Performance rating scales often used. | Rating scales used to show perception of how effective the behaviour is, or how often it occurs. |
| **Feedback** | Initially to those who commissioned the survey and sometimes other parties. | To HR functions or line management. Not always to the participant. | Generally given to the participants face to face by a facilitator. | By the manager to the appraisee. | Individual feedback report discussed with a trained facilitator. |

**Table 1: Comparison of A Variety of Assessment Methods**

Erasmus+

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## 1.1 Why Use 360-degree Feedback?

The value of the 360degree assessment and feedback process lies in the fact that you get a balanced view due to the feedback coming from multiple sources as opposed to just one source such as a line manager. This has arguably become of even greater value in today's workplace with the increase in remote working and home working - increasingly managers and their teams not only work in different geographic locations and even in different countries. Managers may, therefore, not always be best placed to provide feedback on a person's day to day behaviour.

By inviting people who you work closely with and who have plenty of opportunity to observe you, you're more assured of getting valuable, well-informed developmental feedback. And, when acted upon, this can prove a great catalyst for personal development.

Whereas a traditional performance reviews focus on what individuals have achieved, a 360-degree review is more about how they work and behave. It can be particularly effective in helping to improve key 'soft' or transferable skills such as leadership, working collaboratively and communication.

## 1.2 Should 360 feedback be used for development or appraisal?

It can be either but should never be both. More commonly, 360-degree feedback is considered a development tool. However, it can be useful as part of a performance review too, but it is critical that the organisation has a culture is mature enough for this

## 1.3 Can It Help to Establish A Feedback Culture?

Fostering a strong and open feedback culture promises numerous benefits for both individuals and organisations. Receiving regular, constructive feedback about how you're doing in general or how you fared on a recent project is something we could all find helpful. Ideally such formal and informal feedback conversations should be happening at all levels between peers and between managers and subordinates as this will help to improve things like employee engagement and performance. For its part, a 360 process can help to establish a level of comfort with the idea of giving and receiving feedback so that this becomes the norm.

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## 1.4 Which job levels is 360 feedback most useful for?

While traditionally 360 feedback was a tool for senior leadership development, it can be invaluable for many other employee groups too. People managers at all levels are one such example. Developing managerial capabilities and behaviours in this group has the potential for far reaching benefits both for the individual and the organisation. While the population you target will depend on the aims of the programme, most multi-rater feedback processes tend to start with the senior team before being cascaded down the management levels. The benefit of this approach is that others see senior leaders taking part first, building confidence and buy-in to the programme.

# 2. Designing 360-degree Assessments

## 2.1 Drafting Questions and Behaviour Statements

There is no a ‘one-size-fits-all’ set of questions to use in a 360-degree assessment process. The questions needed to be specific to the purpose of the assessment. A common starting point is to either use an existing competency-based framework as the starting point for a 360 questionnaire and then to define the key behaviours, skills or traits you want to measure – only then should the assessment questions or the statements that will be used to assess respondents be drafted.

The 360-degree assessment model is most commonly-used typically to collect feedback about the following:

- Management/leadership capability
- Alignment with business strategy/goals/vision
- Communication skills
- Creativity/innovation
- Interpersonal or ‘soft’ skills
- Teamwork and/or collaboration skills.

When drafting either questions or behaviour statements on which you want feedback to ensure that they are simple, clear and address a single behaviour or observable trait or quality. It is also important that the behaviour or trait lends itself to one or more actions that can be taken to improve performance in the behaviour or trait being assessed. AVOID introducing multiple concepts into a question as it dilutes the accuracy of the feedback.

## 2.2 Selecting a Rating Scale

No one rating scale that is better than all others. However, there are several options and different rating scales will have different pros and cons. Scales can be related to effectiveness, observed frequency scale, importance and other criteria. TeamMate 360 uses a scale based on the frequency each behaviour is observed. It s also good practice to avoid a rating scale where respondents can select a ‘middle’ answer (e.g. in a 1 – 5 scale, often respondents gravitate to 3).

## 2.3 Introducing a 360-degree Assessment?

It almost goes without saying that it is essential to have the support and commitment of senior level management when introducing a 360-degree assessment tool – if for no other reason than they are likely to need to complete 360-degree questionnaires on the people they manage. It is also important that other employees see senior leaders taking part in the assessment process as this will help to embed the process and encourage uptake elsewhere. For this reason, when introducing it for the first time, it is often worth starting the process with the senior management team and then to cascade it down to middle and junior managers.

A key element of any new initiative or assessment strategy is to re-assure people and to communicate, communicate and communicate. People need to understand and believe that their feedback will be confidential and that the assessment will NOT be used to evaluate people's performance relating to salary or bonus payments or for the purpose of selecting people for redundancy.

As with any significant project a simple project and communication plan is important. Such plans should explain the aims and objectives of the 360-degree assessment, key timescales and how the results will be shared and used.

## 2.4 360-degree Roles and Responsibilities

Irrespective of which 360-degree system is being used, there are a number of different roles that need to be undertaken including:

**Administrator**

This is the person charged with setting up the 360-degree assessment. It might be someone from the Human Resources department, a manager heading up a talent programme or a training officer or it might be an external training and assessment agency. The administrator looks after the process from start to finish and is usually a central point of contact for respondents.

**Participant**

The participant (often referred to as the 'subject' or 'ratee') is often asked to nominate colleagues, team members and other people to assess them. The participant will be required to complete a self-assessment including a background questionnaire. By completing a self-assessment, they will be able to compare their self-perception with those of the other respondents.

**Respondents or Rater**

Respondents usually include team members, colleagues and the manager(s) of the responded. Usually, there will be between 4 – 8 respondents per participant. They may or may not learn of the results of the assessment: it is good practice for the participant to share the results with them, but this is optional.

**Manager**

The participant's manager will be one of the respondents as their opinion and feedback is important.  chosen raters. Although not essential, it is good practice to involve the participant's manager in the feedback process and in the development planning post assessment since they will play a key role in developing the participant's skills and behaviours.

## 2.5 Preparing Participants

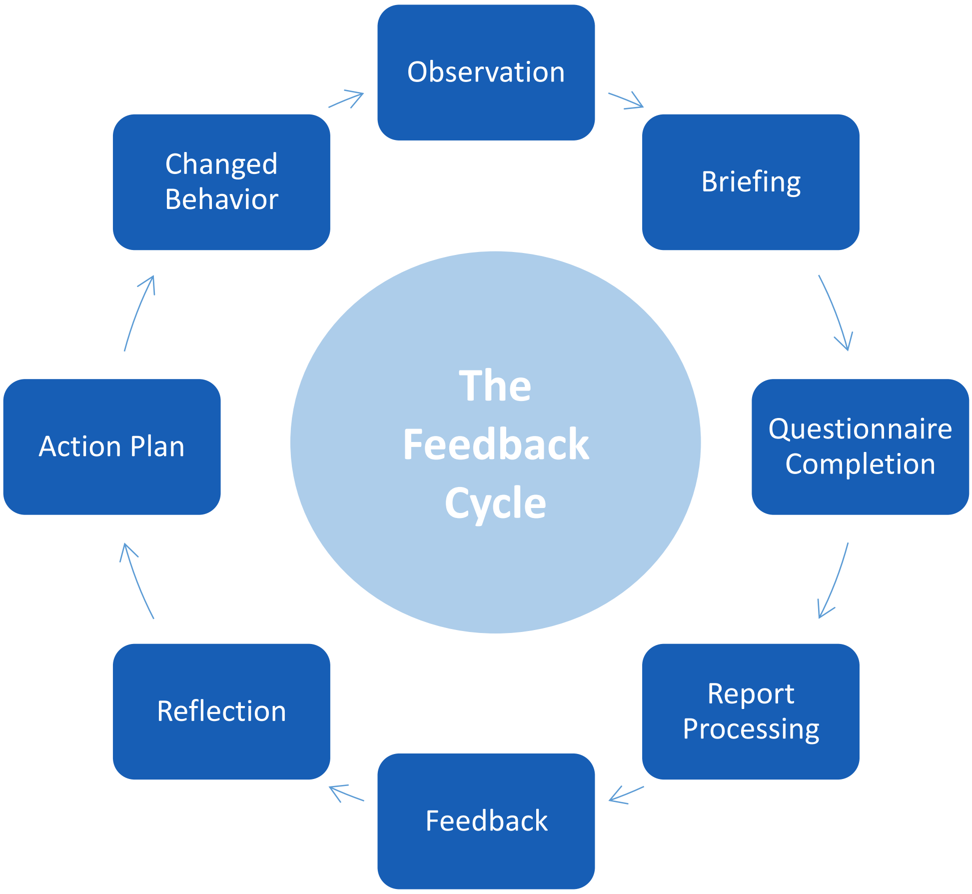
Participants may experience a range of emotions and feelings about taking part in a 360-degree process. They might be concerned about the results, worried about who will see the results and anxious about what will happen after the assessment. There is no denying that having other people evaluate you can be an uncomfortable experience. However, it can also be a richly rewarding and enlightening one too. Here are some key messages that should be shared when planning a 360-degree assessment:

- "Nobody is judging you. They are simply offering their views based on what they have observed"
- "You do not have to agree with all feedback. There is no right or wrong and everything is open to your interpretation"
- Embrace this as a learning exercise that gives you pointers of what to consider changing in order to develop and achieve your goals"
- You are free to decide on what you do with feedback, what aspects you agree with and what to act on, but please, be open-minded!"
- The results are confidential and will only be shared with  <insert names>".

# 3.Providing 360-degree Feedback

## 3.1 The 360-degree Feedback Cycle

All 360-degree assessment and feedback models are broadly based upon the following feedback loop.




**Stage 1: Observation** formalises the natural process of observation. People observe each other all the time, either consciously or unconsciously and systematically and unsystematically. These observations combine to form impressions and opinions about people and their behaviour. Some of these observations are remembered and others are forgotten, but collectively they combine and result in a perception of people.

**Stages 2 and 3 (Briefing and Questionnaire Completion)** of the feedback cycle formalise the observation process as individuals are selected and briefed to record their observations systematically using a standard 360 questionnaire.

**Stage 4: Report Processing** involves the processing of the data generated from the questionnaires being processed and collated resulting in an assessment feedback report.

**Stages 5, 6 and 7 (Feedback, Reflection and Action Plan)** involve providing managers and/or organisations with face-to-face feedback during which they are encouraged to reflect upon their report and to identify specific actions.

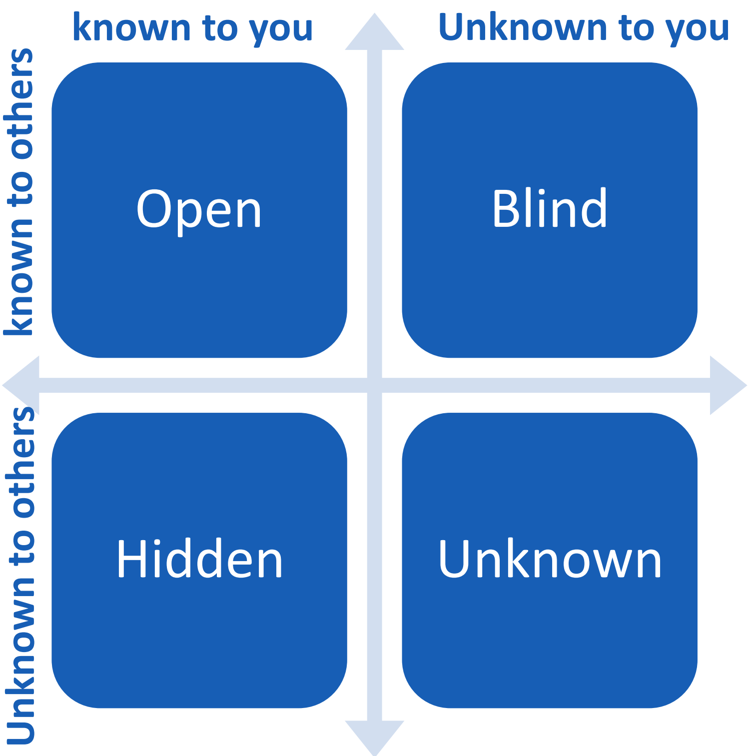
**Stage 8: Changed Behaviour** involves managers making changes to their behaviour and performance which can be observed by others thereby making a permanent impact upon their performance.

This section focuses primarily on stages 5, 6 and 7; preparing for a feedback meeting and the skills required for providing effective feedback.

## 3.2 The Johari Window

Most 360-degree assessment feedback tools use the Johari Window for understanding the differences between people's own image and perception of themselves and how they are seen by others is the Johari Window.

The Johari Window is a schematic reproduction of an individual and consists of four windows as shown in the diagram below:



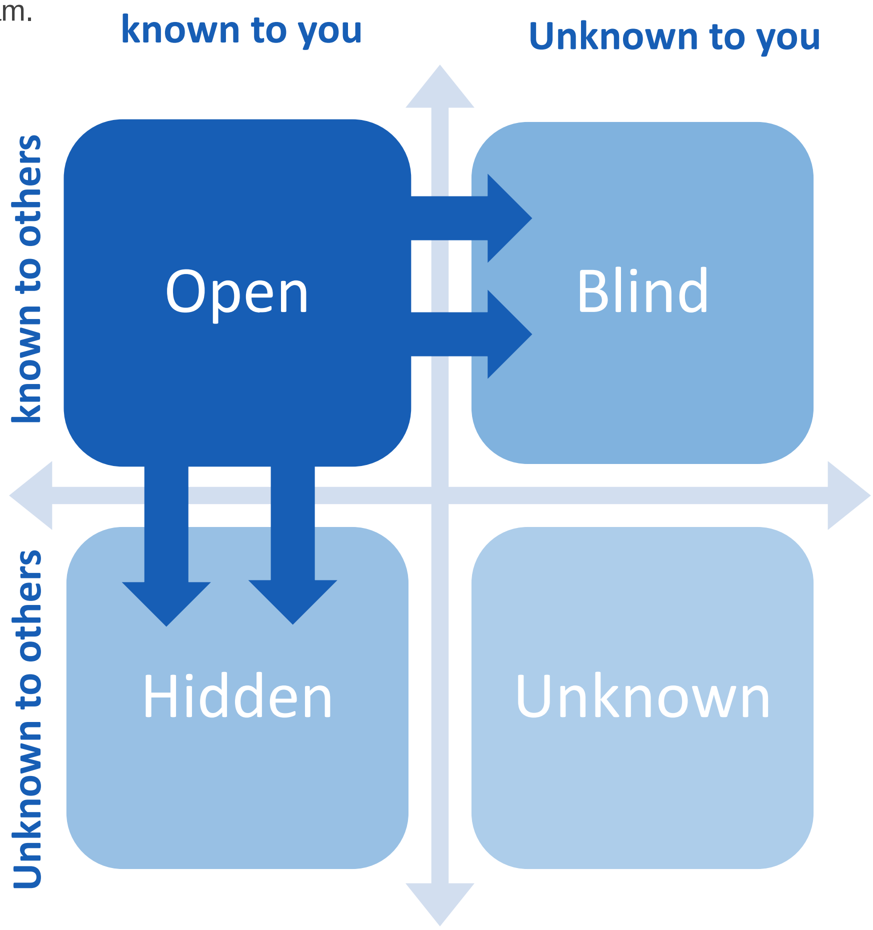
- **Open Area:** This window contains information, characteristics, qualities and behaviours that are perceptible to others, but of which the manager is also aware.

- **Hidden Area:** This window contains information, characteristics, qualities and behaviours that are known by the manager, but unknown by other people.

- **Blind Area:** This window contains information, characteristics, qualities and behaviours that are known by others, but of which the manager is unaware.

- **Unknown Area:** This window contains information, characteristics, qualities and behaviours, which neither the manager nor other people are aware of or perceive.

The aim of the 360-degree assessment and feedback is to expand the participant's open area. This is achieved by discussing and re-locating observed information, characteristics, qualities and behaviours from the hidden and blind areas into the open area as shown in the following diagram.




Understanding the Johari Window is critical to the effective feedback of the results of a 360-degree assessment.

## 3.3 Preparing for a Feedback Meeting

Perhaps one of the most important stages of 360-degree assessment exercise is feedback. Preparation is the key to delivering effective feedback.

The first step of feedback is to understand and to review the 360-degree assessment report before holding a feedback meeting. Prior to the feedback meeting, 360-degree facilitators need to look for any patterns such as particularly high or low scores or relationships between the different Specific Skills. It is often useful to read 360-degree assessment report in the context of the assessments of other managers from the same organisation (e.g. comparing profiles and scores against organisational benchmarks).

It is likely that some parts of a report might appear to contradict other parts or are puzzling. There may be inconsistencies or confusing results. Do not be surprised or alarmed if there are some things in the report cannot be explained – the role of the 360-degree facilitator is not to explain the results, but to help the manager explore the report and to raw their own conclusions. It is important to understand that the report may result in identifying further issues and questions for discussion. The role of the facilitator is not to provide a detailed interpretation of the report.

Preparation is not all about completely understanding the report and then explaining it to the manager. Similarly, it is not all about graphs, numbers and definitive narrative explaining the results of the assessment. 360-degree assessment and feedback are about discussion and developing a more complete understanding of the perceptions that other people hold of the manager, thereby extending the open window.

## 3.4 The Feedback Meeting

At the start of a feedback meeting, it is important to explain the purpose of the meeting and the 360-degree assessment tool. Even if managers were fully briefed at the start of the project, it is worthwhile reminding managers about the process.

Many managers will be feeling a little anxious or apprehensive about the feedback process, therefore start the meeting with a brief introduction covering the following points:

- Who you are, your role as the 360-degree facilitator
- How you intend to carry out your role (i.e. help the manager to understand their report and begin planning improvements)
- The purpose of the meeting and assessment exercise
- Who will see the report and the confidential nature of the process
- The structure, format and duration of the meeting

It is important that the facilitator reassures managers and helps them to relax. Building rapport at the beginning of the de-brief meeting is important.

## 3.4 A Typical 360-degree Feedback Model

**Set the Scene:**

The Facilitator should open with an introduction. Explain the report is based on the manager's own self-assessment and the assessment of three people who work with them. The questionnaires completed by themselves and their colleagues are identical. In this way the report can show any differences between their self-perception and the perception of those around them. It is quite normal for there to be gaps in perceptions. What the report endeavours to do is increase awareness, thus helping you to close the gaps and improve overall performance.

**Discuss the Result:**

This gives the opportunity to discuss relative strengths and areas for development. Experience has shown that most managers score lowest in Planning and Managing People and highest in Leading and Team Working. This section of the report is concerned only with the perceptions of others and does not consider the self-assessment. You may wish to compare the difference between each core skill. It is usual for there to be a 20% differential between your lowest and highest score.

**Look at the Skills Profile:**

Explore the relationship between the self-assessment and the assessment carried out by others. Initially, the Facilitator should discuss how closely the two profiles mirror each other, as the closer they are in shape, the more aware the manager is of relative strengths and areas for development. Any significant differences need to be explored, to understand why this is the case. A useful way to approach this is for the Facilitator to ask the manager to give examples of situations and behaviours within the Specific Skill. It can be helpful to refer to the narrative section for details of the behaviours, which make up each Specific Skill. Discussion can then focus on how apparent these behaviours are to others.

**Explore and Refer to the Development Actions:**

In some 360-degree assessment reports such as TeamMate 360, there is a detailed narrative for each skill. The TeamMate 360 report includes several statements for each of the 24 Specific Skills. There is a set of proposed development actions for each Specific directly linked to the manager's assessment score. The higher the score the more advanced the proposed development action will be. Discuss how the manager can find the opportunity to undertake the actions in their current role. Remind the manager that it is normal to feel apprehensive about doing things they may not have done before, but by expanding our experiences they will soon increase in confidence. You may find it helpful to look at what the report says about areas the manager scored highest in. If these are areas the manager excels in, they may be able to use these skills to improve in other areas.

**Agree Development Actions:**

Choose 5 - 7 Specific Skills and list on the 'Action Plan', along with the timescale in which the manager will aim to implement the development actions. If the discussion has highlighted other development actions, which would be appropriate for the manager to carry out, these should be recorded under 'Other Actions'.

## 3.5 Avoiding Uncomfortable Feedback

It is not uncommon for people to try to avoid feedback, especially when it might make them feel uncomfortable. This is often the case when an individual's self-assessment is significantly higher than the assessment made by others, in the TeamMate 360 Specific Skills Profile. Experience has shown that often people will overestimate their perceived skills, compared to how others perceive them. This is a classic example of the Blind Spot and therefore can be difficult for them to accept. The facilitator needs to be aware that this may mean that a manager may not want to listen to or accept the results of the assessment. It is important for the facilitator to explain that this is often the case and is not a poor reflection on the manager.

It is also the case that people will underestimate their skills compared to how others view perceive them. This too is a Blind Spot and may require the facilitator to devote some time to helping them to understand and appreciate the feedback. The facilitation process is about helping the manager to interpret and contextualise the feedback and NOT about explaining or justifying the result.

Denial is the refusal to acknowledge the existence or severity of unpleasant external realities, feedback or internal thoughts and feelings. Denial often serves as a defence mechanism. When presented with an observation or a set of facts that make a manager may feel uncomfortable and rather than accepting, they might choose to reject it: despite evidence to the contrary they may insist that it is not accurate.

There are varying degrees of denial such as **‘simple denial’** where the manager refutes the reality, validity or accuracy of the facts or feedback totally. Alternatively, they might acknowledge it, but deny its seriousness: this is known as ‘**minimisation’**. Finally, they might admit both the facts and the feedback and the seriousness but deny responsibility and possible transfer the ‘blame’ to someone or something else: this is known as ‘**transference’**. When using an assessment tool such as TeamMate 360, the following strategies mayabe used by managers to mitigate or refute the feedback:

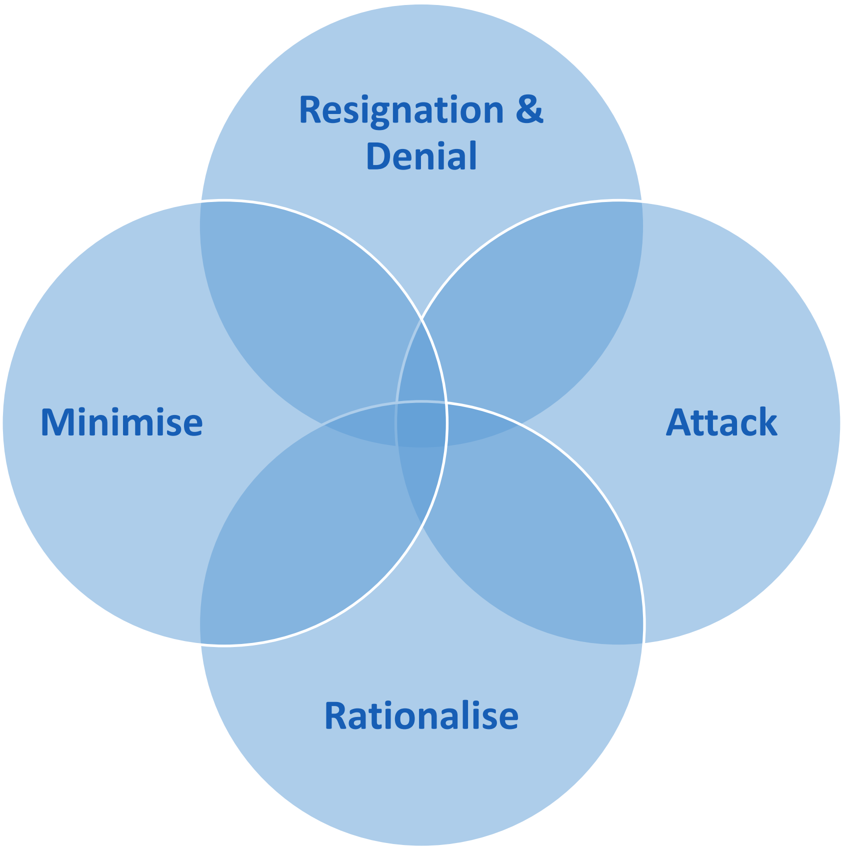



**Exhibit 1: Strategies to Mitigate or Avoid Feedback**

## Denial/Resignation:

In other words: “I hold my hands up”; “It is not my fault.” or “That’s just not right”

Examples of comments:

- “I didn’t understand the questions.”
- “The questions do not relate to my job.”
- “They don’t know me well enough.”
- “Okay that’s me!”
- “It’s not my fault, the problem is…”

## **Attack:** (The questionnaire, the respondents or the process)

Examples of comments:

- *“I don’t get on with these people.”*
- *“I normally score better on this sort of thing.”*
- *“The questionnaire was too long/short/ambiguous.”*
- *“I do wish personnel wouldn’t keep dreaming up these things.”*
- *“Other people would have said something different”*

## **Rationalise:** (They try to explain the feedback away)

Examples of comments:

- *“I knew this all along.”*
- *“My respondents did not understand the questions in the same way that I did.”*
- *“The reason for this score is …”*
- *“Fine, but I can’t action this because …”*
- *“I agree with the feedback.”*

## **Minimise:** (It is not an issue or important)

Examples of comments:

- *“It could have been worse.”*
- *“I think people are exaggerating.”*
- *“It really isn’t an issue for me”*
- *“There’s not much wrong with my planning”*
- *“With a few changes, things will get better”*

There is no guaranteed way of handling any of these forms of denial other than discussing and exploring the context of the assessment. Whilst some facilitators might feel more comfortable developing a response to each of these denial statements, the danger is that they might produce counter arguments, leading to more disagreement and denial.Facilitators need to aim to keep the discussion alive and not to allow the manager to use their denial strategy as a way of deflecting or diverting the feedback from exploring the core issue.

One strategy is for the facilitator to respond politely to objections and answer some but not to seek to win the argument every time. The facilitator should not get upset or defensive but invite the manager to explain their point of view and then to summarise or paraphrase the key points. Often this can curtail the discussion and/or provide the facilitator with an alternative way of exploring some of the issue raised in the report. If this shows signs of going on for too long, an alternative strategy is for the facilitator to give the manager some feedback that describes what they are doing:

> *"I have noticed that there are several ways in which people respond to their feedback. Some ask a lot of questions, some dive straight into the detail, some spend a lot of time talking about other things. There are many ways to avoid talking about the feedback itself, and that is where I think we are. Let's look at one Specific Skill in detail, for example, Developing Teams and see where we go from there."*

This is not a fail-safe diffuser but can work with some managers.

## 3.6 Types of Feedback

If the facilitator is to give feedback effectively, it is important to be aware of how actions and attitudes are perceived by others. The way we imagine ourselves to be is seldom how others see us and our actions and words are not always taken as they are intended.

The skills of both giving and receiving feedback are fundamental to effective relationships. Delivered skilfully, it conveys the idea that you want the person to improve and that you value their contribution. However, feedback given clumsily can be destructive. It has the effect of eroding self-esteem and making the desired performance improvement unlikely.

There are many ways in which feedback can be given, some more helpful than others, for example:

- **Positive Feedback** praises strengths and achievements. It is possibly the easiest form of feedback to give, but nonetheless extremely important.
- **Negative Feedback** involves commenting on problems and areas for improvement – more difficult to give, but important and useful if given skilfully.
- **Constructive Feedback** is a combination of positive and negative feedback which focuses on suggestions for dealing with problems. This is probably the most productive way of giving feedback.

- **Destructive Feedback** consists of criticism with little or no emphasis on positive suggestions. It is to be avoided, as it dampens enthusiasm and reduces commitment.

If you want to encourage people to maintain or develop their performance, your feedback should be:

- **Specific:** asking for specific examples of situations where the manager has experienced difficulty or performed well
- **Based on issues:** feedback should be directed at aspects of performance, not at the individual as a person
- **Helpful:** concentrating on behaviour which can be changed and offering alternative suggestions
- **Non-judgmental:** discussing unhelpful or unproductive behaviour, rather than judging it – ask rather than tell!
- **If possible, non-directive:** allow managers to choose, as far as is practically possible, their own route towards the desired improvement using the development actions for guidance
- **Forward looking:** the feedback should not dwell on the negative aspects of past performance, but instead, look to the future and developing solutions to problems
- **Comment on the positive as well as the areas for development:** do not forget to include praise and feedback on strong areas as well as areas where managers have not scored as well

## 3.7 Techniques for Effective Feedback

An effective feedback meeting requires the manager to feel relaxed, comfortable and confident with thefFacilitator. Building rapport during the meeting is therefore particularly important.  This can be achieved in many ways:

- By not interrupting
- By obviously listening rather than being preoccupied with something else
- By using a range of non-verbal skills or body language
- Using the manager’s name

- Making eye contact – too much is threatening, too little and you appear disinterested
- Body position – a relaxed posture encourages a relaxed atmosphere, a tense posture, a tense atmosphere
- Mirroring the manager's voice, language patterns and
- Facial expression – should reflect what is being said, not what you may be thinking. (i.e. a look of shock could act as a barrier to continuing talking)
- Nodding and smiling – indicate agreement and understanding
- Empathising with the manager
- By allowing silence – shows patience and gives thinking time

There are six techniques which are particularly effective:

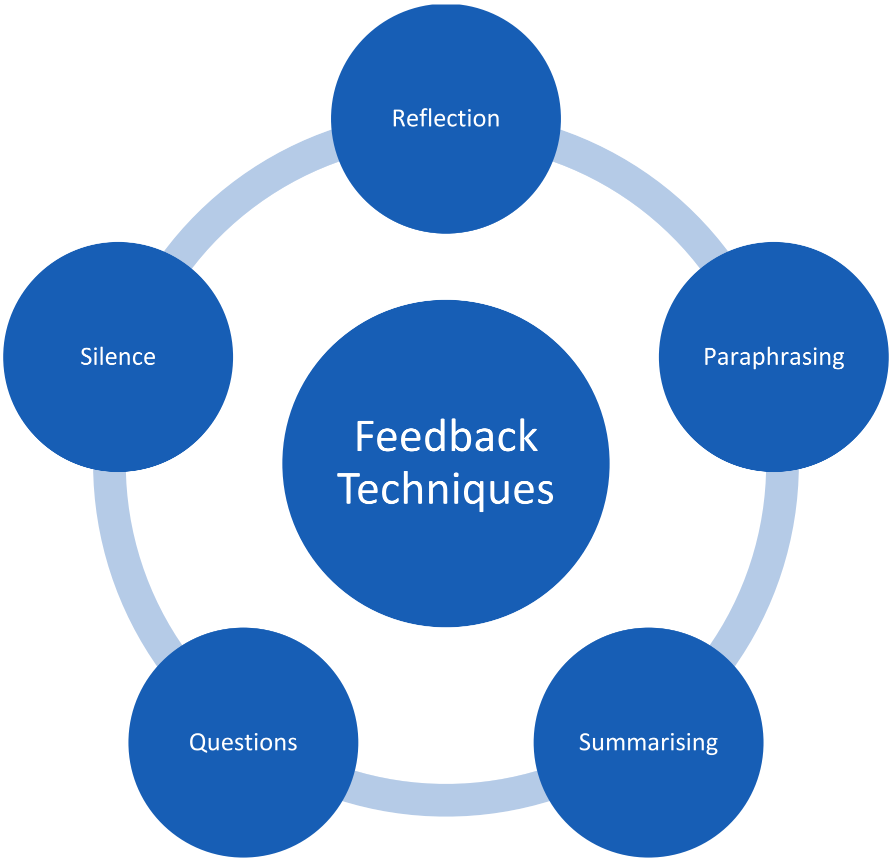



**Exhibit 2: Feedback Techniques**

### i) Reflecting feelings

You show you have been listening and understand how they feel by saying:

> *"So, you are feeling………"*

> *"You felt that………"*

### ii) Paraphrasing

This is a way of restating what has been said but in a different way. It allows you to check that you have heard correctly, confirms that that you are still listening and encourages further exploration of the issue, for example:

> *"As I understand it………"*

> *"You seem to be saying………"*

### iii) Summarising

This brings all the discussions into focus in terms of a summary. It again checks your listening and understanding and serves as a springboard for further discussion on a new aspect or issues, for example:

> *"These are the key ideas / issues you have expressed….."*

> *"Let me just check what we have talked about….."*

### iv) Focusing

This allows you to focus on issues by asking specific questions to get specific information, for example:

> *"Tell me about….."*

> *"What do you feel when….."*

### v) Questioning

The appropriate use of questions is an essential element in building relationships. There are several types of questions which can serve different functions. The skill is in knowing which type of question is the most appropriate and then using it. During a feedback meeting, the Facilitator needs to make extensive use of both open and closed questions:

## Open Questions Can Be Used in The Following Ways:

- To establish rapport with the manager. They can be introductory general questions or comments such as:

  *"Tell me about your role."*

  *"How do you resolve conflict within your team?"*

- To explore broad background information, for example:

  *"Please tell me about…."*

  *"What do you know about…?."*

- To explore opinions, attitudes and feelings, for example:

  *"How do you feel about…?"*

  *"What is your opinion on…?"*

These open questions leave the manager in control of how they answer the question, and how much they disclose about themselves. As it becomes evident that the facilitator is not threatening their privacy without their permission the manager will realise that the facilitator:

- Respects their feelings
- Accepts their position and values their opinion
- And as a result, the manager will:
- Become more confident and willing to share information and ideas
- Come to trust the facilitator.

Closed questions also have an important use in establishing specific information or facts. They are closed because they do not allow any further discussion, expansion or qualification. They demand either:

- A yes / no answer – *"Are you…?" "Do you…?" "Have you…?"* etc.
- Specific information – *"How many…?" "How long…?"*

However, if too many closed questions are used, the facilitator may appear to be too inquisitive and this can be threatening, and off putting.

Closed questions can, however, allow the facilitator to keep control of the discussion.  This may be the most appropriate strategy (in the case of a manager who keeps straying off the point).  Closed questions can also be useful when trying to clarify and focus on specific situations and when action planning.

### vi) Using Silence

Using silence means not interrupting or feeling uncomfortable, but allowing time for natural pauses, reflecting, finding the right word and deciding to say more. Most people find silences in conversation difficult and therefore try to fill them, by speaking themselves. By allowing silences, the facilitator can draw out additional detail and information from the manager and therefore the facilitator should be prepared for silences, as the manager reflects on the answers to questions.

# 4. Ten Top Tips for 360-degree Assessment

Here are ten tips for planning and implementing an effective 360-degree assessment and feedback project.

## Step 1: Planning

360-degree feedback systems can be an intensive and demanding process for both management and employees. Therefore, it is essential to undertake considerable planning considering questions such as:

- What are your goals and objectives?
- Who will be assessed and by whom?
- What skills or behaviours will be covered by the assessment?
- What system or tool should be used? (e.g. TeamMate 360)
- How will you communicate the assessment plans to participants and respondents?

## Step 2: Evaluate the Purpose of 360-degree Feedback

The purpose of a 360-degree feedback system is to stimulate employee development, productivity, and performance. Avoid setting up feedback metrics programmes to address bonus pay structures, disciplinary actions, or employee dismissal strategies. Conducting a 360-degree survey for the wrong reasons will cause employees to become disengaged with the entire process, and ultimately inhibit open and honest exchange of ideas and feedback.

An effective 360-degree exercise should be about continuous and personal (and organisational) development: it should NOT be not about quantifying a specific objective or one-time performance approval.

## Step 3: Support of Senior Management

Managers, employees and other stakeholders must believe in the value of the 360-degree assessment tool and feedback process – this means that senior management must communicate the advantages of assessment so that employees appreciate the merits of undertaking the assessment.

## Step 4:  Select Competent Administrators and Faciltators

Even though senior management is likely to set goals for employees, they are rarely the ones that implement the 360-degree assessment. The administrator could be a Human Resource specialist (e.g. personnel officer, trainer) or a senior administrator. The administrator MUST be trained in the use of the 360-degree assessment tool or system and trusted to ensure confidentiality as they will have access to the final 360-degree reports.

Facilitators must also be trained – in the case of TeamMate 360, facilitators must complete the Chartered management Institute Recognised Programme in order to deliver feedback to participants. Requiring facilitators to be trained and certified also ensures the consistency and quality of the 360-degree feedback and adds to the credibility of the assessment tool.

## Step 5: Establish Credibility

Communication an important first step before deploying any feedback management system. Credibility can be enhanced by communicating the aims and objectives of the 360-degree assessment exercise, sharing the plans for its implementation and having well trained  and well prepared facilitators and administrators.

## Step 6: Build Trust

It is imperative that both participants and respondents understand that the assessment questionnaires are anonymous and that only aggregate data will be shared with managers. Often organisation elect to outsource the assessment and feedback process to a third party thereby enhancing the quality and confidentiality of the exercise.

## Step 7: Maintain Consistency

An effective 360-degree feedback survey will ideally be repeated periodically to capture improvements in the individual manager’s benchmark scores and the organisation’s benchmark.

## Step 8: Question or Behaviour Formulation

Questions and behaviours must be stated in a positive manner avoiding negative constructs. This will help to drive improvements and to encourage managers to adopt positive behaviours in the future. The questions or behaviours MUST be based on observable criteria and criteria that managers are able to influence and improve.

It is also good practice to include related and overlapping control questions and behaviours within the assessment questionnaire. This helps to avoid participants and respondents being able to 'second-guess' how to score high and low. Whilst this might increase the number of assessment questions or behaviours that need to be rated, it will increase the accuracy of the assessment.

## Step 9: Avoid Assessment Overkill

Keep the 360-degree review forms simple and as short as practically possible without compromising the validity and accuracy of the tool. Make sure every question and behaviour are relevant and asked in the clearest, most concise manner. Ideally, questions and behaviour statements should be tested and validated before inclusion in the assessment survey.

## Step 10: Provide Feedback and Follow-up

Feedback should be provided to participants, ideally by trained and qualified facilitators. The feedback report should be clear and concise and contain ideas and suggestions on how to improve and develop. Any 360-degree assessment and feedback exercise should result in a simple development or action plan for the manager and ideally suggestions for senior management on how they can support and improve the performance of managers and the organisation in the future.

It is often valuable to repeat the 360-degree assessment periodically to monitor individual manager scores and the organisation's benchmark scores. Having a set of benchmark scores provides the basis for comparing results and driving improvements.