TOP 10 MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK - & THE ANSWERS!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

•

DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION SET UP & DELIVERY

TRACK 360
For Bespoke Feedback

Written by

Jo Ayoubi, Director
www.tracksurveys.com

Contact Info:

+44 (20) 8360 4455
+353 87 1679 026
Jo.Ayoubi@tracksurveys.com

TOP 10 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK & THE ANSWERS!

Written by Jo Ayoubi, Director
Co-founder of Track Surveys Ltd

At Track 360, we've been designing and implementing 360 Degree Feedback software for organisations for over 17 years. We've come across pretty much every type of 360 assessment and questionnaire there is, as well as every possible way of running the process but there's always something new to learn!

So today, we'd like to share the ten most frequent questions we get asked and give our expertise within the answers. Here are the ones we mostly commonly answer:

1. What questions should we ask?
2. Where do we start?
3. How many questions should we ask?
4. Ratings or text questions?
5. Should we use 360 Degree Feedback for performance?
6. Should 360 Degree Feedback be anonymous?
7. Who should choose the raters for each ratee?
8. What should be included in the 360 Degree Feedback report?
9. When should the ratee see their report?
10. Should the ratee show their feedback to anyone else?

FAQ 1. What questions should we ask?

The answer to this depends on what you want to use the 360 to measure – which in turn depends on your objective. 360 Degree Feedback is one of the few tools you have with which you can measure things that are, by their nature, hard to measure. That's why 360 is frequently run at the beginning and end of executive or management development programmes, measuring skills such as communication, leadership, self-management, leading teams, relationship building, influencing and innovation.

Similarly, 360 is an important part of ongoing performance reviews and discussions, helping individual employees and their managers to get a clear perspective on current areas of strength, and where training or development should be focused.

We recommend that you should backwards from your objectives to ensure that what you're going to measure with the 360 is what you want to measure, at an individual employee level, but also by team, group or other organisational unit.

Track 360 *allows you to easily generate aggregate feedback reports that help you track overall progress on performance and change.*

FAQ 2. Where do we start?

Following on 'What questions do we ask?', there are several places from where you can start designing your bespoke 360.

If the 360 is going to be part of a training or development programme, you can use the objectives of the programme to specify the behaviours you want to see, and use these as the basis for your 360 questionnaire.

If you already have a leadership or management competency framework, this can be great starting point for your 360. You may need to rework the competencies into observable, measurable questions or statements for the questionnaire. Job or role descriptions can also provide a good basis.

Track 360 *includes 360 feedback templates which you can use as a basis for your own bespoke 360s, and we also offer a question bank to our clients covering a large number of skills and competency based 360 questions.*

FAQ 3. How many questions in the 360?

When considering the length of the 360 questionnaire, it's useful to remember that ratees will only be able to focus on developing two or three key areas at a time, so there is no point in trying to cover every possible development area or skill in one go.

We recommend around 30-40 questions in total; longer questionnaires are difficult to engage with and the quality of the feedback can be affected. Remember that some raters will be providing feedback on more than one ratee. Also, very long questionnaires and hence feedback reports can provide too much information, rather than a focus on the key areas of strength and development need.

FAQ 4. Ratings or text questions?

A mix of rating questions and free text questions provides a robust and effective 360 Degree Feedback.

Ratings questions help to focus the attention of the raters on common areas, so that the feedback report will pick up common themes and messages. This will help to avoid feedback that is randomly based on raters' particular preoccupations at the time!

A rating question is a statement that is rated on a scale, e.g. '(how frequently does) Jack give constructive feedback: Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Never'?

Free text feedback helps to provide examples and context to the ratings feedback, and is helpful especially when it relates to a particular area or skillset. It gives the rater an opportunity to add their thoughts in their own words.

Examples of free text feedback questions include 'Provide some examples or observations to support your ratings', or 'What could your colleague do to become a better manager?', or 'What would you like your colleague to start/stop/continue doing?'.

Track 360's *flexibility allows you to choose the right combination of ratings and text questions for the most effective 360 for your programme or group.*

FAQ 5. Should we use 360 for performance?

In the past 360 Degree Feedback has been used primarily for development and learning programmes. There has been some debate about whether 360 is effective and fair when assessing people's performance in their roles.

However more organisations are now turning to 360 Degree Feedback to support a more dynamic and flexible approach to performance – where employees are having regular performance discussions with their manager (rather than once a year), ongoing feedback from colleagues, stakeholder and customers is more important than ever.

360 also supports the development planning that is part and parcel of year-end performance review – many organisations run the 360 Degree Feedback, followed by a 360 report that is part of the appraisal discussion and the plan for the following review period.

Care should be taken when using 360 and it should not be the single criteria on which to base decisions on pay, benefits or promotion.

Graffiti Feedback combines the ability to get in-depth feedback from multiple colleagues, with the need for immediate and on-demand feedback. Employees and managers can get feedback after projects, for training purposes, or to keep track on their performance goals.

FAQ 6. Should 360 Degree Feedback be anonymous?

One of the great benefits of 360 Degree Feedback is that colleagues can give honest and constructive feedback anonymously. This provides senior people with feedback from junior colleagues which those colleagues might not wish to give them face to face. Similarly, it allows colleagues and peers to provide useful observations to each other with a view to things they are great at, as well as areas for development.

Best practice is that the feedback ratings and text from colleagues are not attributable to individuals, apart from those of the line manager, who should be prepared to explain his/her feedback to the individual concerned. Anonymity is very important when you are first introducing 360 into an organisation. People need confidence and trust in the process to engage with it. As time goes on and where feedback is an accepted and regular part of the culture of the organisation, it can be useful to give raters the option of identifying their feedback if they want to.

Your 360 Feedback system should be flexible enough to allow you to change the level of anonymity as your organisation's approach to feedback matures. Track 360 provides different levels of anonymization, depending on your requirements.

FAQ 7. Who should choose the raters for each ratee?

This is another question where the answer depends on your particular group's or organisation's approach to feedback.

Some organisations worry about giving ratees complete freedom to request feedback, as they may only ask their friends for feedback. This is a valid concern and one that can be mitigated by clear communication and instruction around choice of raters.

It's particularly important that ratees ask for feedback from *all* their direct reports. If they ask for feedback from some DRs and not others, the process will appear to be flawed and unreliable clarity around the purpose of the feedback. If it's clear that the feedback is to help the ratee, and ratees are encouraged to see the feedback as a positive activity, then they are more likely to ask for feedback from a wider group of colleagues who may not all give them uncritical feedback.

Another option that some of our client's use is that raters are pre-chosen (by line managers, HR or L&D) and ratees are only involved in their own Self-review. This is a good option to ensure that the right people are asked for feedback, however, this has two disadvantages: first, the ratee may feel a bit disempowered, and second, he or she may not fully accept the feedback they get if they don't know who has been asked to give it.

A good solution is a mix of both: the organisation can pre-choose (direct reports, line manager, and colleague with whom the ratee has a formal relationship), and then the ratee can be asked to get further feedback from peers or others with whom they have worked in the review period. This ensures that the ratee is more engaged in the process and the feedback they get.

Track 360 allows you to set the right 'rater choice' option for your 360 projects, depending on your requirements and preferences. These can be different for different 360s, and can be changed at any time.

FAQ 8. What should be included in the 360 Degree Feedback report?

The 360 report is the most important part of the 360 process, where the ratee gets to see her or his feedback, reflect on it, and decide what performance or development areas she or he is going to focus on.

Therefore, clarity and simplicity are essential elements of a good 360 feedback report. The report should highlight the key messages coming from the ratings given, and provide more detailed information so that the ratee (and their manager or coach), can dig more deeply into the specific behaviours or skills that are being discussed.

Reports that are graphical rather than just text based are easier for people to read and interpret, and good use of a limited colour palette can be helpful (i.e. not too many different colours and patterns).

We also know from seeing many different report types over the years that ratees can be put off by too many calculations and statistics.

The watchword is simplicity. A ratee should be able to identify key themes from their feedback report, without having to get their calculator and work out what the scores mean, or struggle to understand how the pieces of the report fit together. The report should help the ratee to link their feedback to their development and performance plan.

Track 360 *and* Graffiti Feedback *reports are clear, easy to understand and designed on the principle of key messages, details and development/performance planning.*

FAQ 9. When should the ratee see their report?

We are often asked whether a ratee should see their report before their debriefing or coaching session, or whether their report should be given to them at that time.

Best practice is that a ratee should have an opportunity to read their 360 report before their discussion with their line manager or coach. However, where 360 is a new process, or people are not used to working with feedback, we recommend that they are coached or debriefed through the feedback report as soon as they get their report. This provides them with guidance on how to read and interpret the report, helps them to put any unexpected feedback into perspective, and gives them an opportunity to discuss the feedback with an unbiased person.

Where a 360 is part of a development programme, and ratees are scheduled to review their reports as part of the workshop or programme, they should get their reports at that time, but additional time needs to be built in to allow them to read the report through at least once, so that they are prepared for using their feedback in the scheduled coaching session or workshop.

FAQ 10. Should the ratee show their feedback to anyone else?

Who will or should see the ratee's feedback report is a very important point to consider and should be clearly communicated throughout the 360 process.

Whilst it's comforting for the ratee to know that no-one else will see their feedback, this can be counter-productive as they may then choose not to do anything with the feedback.

Our experience has been that advising or instructing the ratee to share their feedback with their line manager, as part of a performance or development discussion, can be a more effective way of getting value from the 360 process. The line manager is in a good position to support with the feedback, and importantly, provide the ratee with the right opportunities to improve and develop.

It may be useful also for HR or L&D to view the individual ratee reports, and if this is the case, ratees should be informed that this will happen.
Aggregated reports, if anonymised, may also be very useful for HR or L&D to access to understand group or team trends and focus training more accurately.

Track 360 provides individual and aggregate feedback reports, as well as comparison reports that allow you to view progress since an earlier 360. Reports can be cut to provide bespoke group data and management reports.

SUMMARY

In this report, I have shared just some of the insight and knowledge gleaned from over 17 years' experience designing, developing and implementing 360 Degree Feedback programmes with hundreds of local, national and international organisations.

I hope that I've helped to throw some light on the most frequently asked questions around 360 Degree Feedback and shown that with the right planning, 360 can be a successful and highly effective tool for developing your key organisational capabilities.

At Track, we know how to use 360 Degree Feedback to understand peoples' capabilities and skills, enabling you to build on core strengths, identify training and development needs and successfully meet organisational goals. Our core products, Track 360 and Graffiti Feedback provide a platform to support 360 that is built around your organisation's needs.

If you would like a sample Track 360 or Graffiti report, or a demo, or just a chat about how you could use 360 in your organization, please contact me by email or by phone.

Jo Ayoubi
Director and Co-founder
www.tracksurveys.com

Jo.Ayoubi@tracksurveys.com
+44 (202) 8360 4455   +353 87 1679 026