



**Head
Light**

Maximising Your ROI: Enhancing the Quality of 360-degree Feedback

part of our We think... series

The Talent Cloud Platform

Developing Skills. Encouraging Performance. Boosting Recognition.





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A common problem

When talking through 360 degree reports with people, we often find that there is a varying quality in the feedback that has been provided. Regardless of how sophisticated your 360 process or software is, if reviewers don't take the time to provide considered, balanced, constructive and honest feedback at the time of the feedback, the usefulness of the reports will be limited and it is the usefulness of the reports which ultimately stimulates personal change – and the return on your investment.

But how often do you check the input (i.e. the feedback) to make sure it is 'good' feedback? Rarely? Is that because it's too difficult to get at? Or would take too long to go through each completed 360 assessment to find out the low quality submissions?

It's probably all of these things and does the tool you use help or hinder? In fact, most systems include the feedback verbatim and have no concept of what 'good' feedback looks like.

Consequently, common gripes from feedback recipients are:

- *"I don't understand why I've been rated so low in this area. What have I done that's caused them to give such a low score?"*
- *"It's all very well getting high scores, but I can't really tell where my key strengths are, nor is it clear what I should develop further."*
- *"I think they have just rushed through it."*
- *"The comments are really useful; I wish more people had provided them."*
- *"It looks like they couldn't be bothered to think about it and just gave me middle scores all the way down."*
- *"I have lots of data missing because people have said 'not applicable' or 'I don't know'. I don't have much feedback to go on...."*

Of course, an effective communications plan which educates potential raters on the value of good feedback and how to provide it can help to improve the utility of 360 degree reports. Training those who are going to provide feedback enhances the quality of the process, but this can be a hit-and-miss, expensive and resource-intensive approach and not always practical if you are gathering feedback from non-employees.

A solution

Having a 'quality control' process in place – an algorithm written into the 360 degree software which monitors the feedback provided using a number of criteria and then provides 360 sponsors and raters with 'feedback on the feedback' – would help. A key question leads on from this: what does a really good review (i.e. a completed assessment) look like? That is, what would you expect to see if the feedback provider had put a lot of thought in to the feedback they give?

We know that there are a number of criteria which indicate that the feedback provided is considered, constructive and supported. These criteria include obvious areas such as the time taken to complete the review, the use of the rating scale and the length of the open-ended comments – but our experience tells us there are other criteria too, and some influence the overall rating more than others.



Our approach

Our thinking in this area has led us to develop an important feature in our software to evaluate the responses given by feedback providers so that the Administrator can see at a glance if there are any potential 'quality' issues with the feedback submitted.

This is a two-level quality checking process;

1. Firstly each submitted assessment is examined and scored against a set of criteria and given a percentage and a colour code. Those that are 'green' might not warrant examination. Those that are 'amber' or 'red' have a list of 'quality issues' shown. The Administrator could then choose to examine the feedback, request that it be revisited or even excluded.
2. Secondly, a 'Quality Score' and colour is given for the all the feedback received for a specific person. Again, should it result in an 'amber' or 'red' then further inspection may be warranted. The feedback provider can be sent an e-mail which explains how the quality of their feedback can be improved, e.g., by providing explanatory comments to support their low ratings.

Considerations

This approach can improve the quality of the feedback received from the rater and yet, you will still need to bear in mind;

1. **Software cannot judge the validity, accuracy and meaningfulness of the comments written.** For example, an algorithm can tell you if there's a pattern to the ratings but it won't be able to determine whether that pattern is actually an honest reflection of the recipient's behaviour.
2. **The 'quality score' should only be used as a guide.** It is a visual warning system for you, as an Administrator, to keep an eye on how valuable the resultant feedback reports are likely to be and take action if people appear not to be giving the process appropriate care and attention. A 'low' quality score doesn't mean that the feedback report is useless or that the (critical) feedback can be ignored, rather it highlights how the feedback provided could be enhanced to have a greater positive impact.
3. **A 360 degree review is not a 'test'**, and you wouldn't want to put people off filling in an assessment if they think there's a pass-mark associated with it.

A final word

Carefully applied and sensitively used and communicated, this functionality will help to improve the utility of 360 degree feedback by driving up the quality of the inputs, which can in turn drive up ROI in 360 systems and, ultimately, encourage and educate people in how to provide higher-quality feedback.



Next steps

If your current systems don't provide you with this type of quality assurance support and you are interested in our thinking, please do contact us.

About Head Light

Head Light is an award-winning talent management and talent retention software and consulting firm that works with clients to define and implement impactful talent management strategies.

Talent Cloud® is our cloud-based portfolio of integrated talent management platform tools designed for those who expect the maximum return from talent management processes. Our training and consulting services uniquely complement our platform that engages employees, managers and senior leaders in the selection, development and progression of people in their businesses.

Companies in the FTSE 350, public sector, large and small, from retailers to high tech innovators have all benefitted from our tools, techniques and expertise. Founded in 2004, we are headquartered in the UK.

Head Light has attained the ISO27001 standard for Information Security. Certificate No 217613.





How do I...

transition to Continuous Performance Management

How do I...

introduce robust Succession Planning

How do I...

spot High Potentials and Future Leaders

How do I...

boost Recognition

How do I...

drive Engagement through Career Conversations and Development

How do I...

embed new values and improve culture

How do I...

develop Skills of the Future

E: info.request@head-light.co.uk

W: www.head-light.co.uk