



**Head**  
**Light**

# Good Practice Guide for using 360 degree feedback

**Talent Cloud®. Breakthrough software. Raise expectations.**



## Contents of the complete Guide – available on request

Contents	2
Foreword	5
What is 360 degree feedback?	6
<i>The benefits of a great 360 programme</i>	6
<i>Useful reading</i>	6
Starting out	7
<i>Engage with and obtain support from senior stakeholders for 360</i>	7
<i>Build the case for 360</i>	8
<i>Take stock of where you are as an organisation</i>	8
<i>Start small</i>	8
<i>Establish how often you will carry out a 360 review, with whom and a clear rationale for its purpose</i>	8
<i>Communicate</i>	9
<i>Useful reading</i>	10
Designing the 360 assessment	
<i>Useful reading</i>	
Prepare the participant, reviewers and line manager for the 360 degree feedback process	
The participant	
<i>The line manager</i>	
<i>The reviewers</i>	
<i>Useful documents</i>	
Managing the programme or review process	
<i>Make use of the functionality within your online 360 system</i>	
<i>Improve 360 response rates</i>	
Generating the reports	
Preparing for the feedback session: the facilitator	
<i>Decide and agree the overall format and structure of the session</i>	
<i>Decide how and when the report will be accessed by the participant</i>	
<i>Structure the content for the feedback session</i>	
<i>Prepare by reviewing the report</i>	

*Prepare beyond the report*

*Prepare the participant*

*Useful reading*

#### The feedback review session

*Manage reactions to, comments on or questions about the content*

*Useful reading*

#### After the feedback session

*Timeline*

*Share feedback headlines with others*

*Mentors or coaches*

*Translate the feedback into meaningful development plans*

*Take action*

*Discourage the participant from following up with reviewers after the session*

#### Applications of 360

*More difficult, or challenging uses of 360*

*For high stakes review*

*Useful reading*

#### Ongoing use of 360

*Understand the value of 360 in your organisation*

*Ensure consistency, fairness and standards between facilitators*

*Refresh your skills and learn from others*

#### Useful documents

##### Checklist for a 360 review system

##### A Participant's Guide to 360 – example

*Why use 360 degree feedback?*

*Your responsibility as a participant in this 360 review*

*How does it work?*

*Your reviewers*

*The online process*

*Your commitment to the feedback and planning*

*The timeline*

*Questions*

##### A Reviewer's Guide to 360 – example



*Why use 360 degree feedback?*

*Confidentiality and anonymity*

*Your responsibility as a reviewer in this 360 review*

*The online process*

*Completing the review*

*The timeline*

*Questions*

Next steps

About Head Light

11



## Foreword

Achieving 'Good Practice' should be the aim of all 360 degree feedback users. Too often though day-to-day practicalities dictate that processes do not flow as we want them to, or challenges are faced which bear no resemblance to the 'best practice' we read about.

As part of our commitment to share and explore the use of 360 degree feedback across organisations, we have built on the collaborative work from the Police Talent® User Group which originally developed the *Good Practice Guide for the Use of 360 within the Police*. We have progressed this further to take into account the usage of 360 within other sectors to create this Good Practice Guide.

We made a clear decision not to present this as a 'Best Practice' guide as the term itself suggests a single paramount approach to adopt. Instead, we see this as an evolving set of principles which will be refined, adapted and amended as working practices develop and review situations change.

Throughout this guide, you will find signposts (📄) to other Head Light resources which are available in the Useful Documents section of this Guide, or on our website ([www.head-light.co.uk](http://www.head-light.co.uk)).

We welcome any learning points or insights to progress this Guide and to build a better resource of shared practice thus enhancing good practice in using and applying 360 degree feedback.

Please contact us should you have any comment or addition to make and, to learn more about how we work with organisations, please visit our website.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ian Lee-Emery'.

Ian Lee-Emery, Founder and CEO, Head Light Ltd

## What is 360 degree feedback?

*360 degree feedback is...*

*... the process or practice through which feedback ratings and comments are provided to an individual by his or her colleagues, clients and work partners.*

Typically it involves: the immediate line manager, a range of peers and colleagues and direct reports and, in some instances, external partners, suppliers, clients and customers.

The results from a 360 review are often used to plan and map specific paths for development, and for some organisations, are also used to identify high potential, and used as part of a wider assessment process.

## The benefits of a great 360 programme

In our experience, a successful 360 process:

- **Articulates the competencies** and sometimes values needed for each role;
- Recognises areas of strength in behaviours and competencies for a role;
- Pinpoints areas needing **further development**;
- Provides a foundation on which to build an individual development plan;
- Identifies those with high potential or promotion capability;
- Provides an opportunity for **open, honest feedback**;
- Increases **individual self-awareness, capability and performance** on an individual, team and organisational level;
- Supports the development of a **feedback culture** across the organisation;
- Provides **data to enable the organisation to evaluate progress** on learning and development initiatives and demonstrates return on investment in talent management.

Supporting a great 360 programme of activity typically requires an easy-to-use, flexible online 360 system which provides access to all those taking part and gives self-sufficiency to the organisation.

## Useful reading



Resource: *Checklist for a 360 review system* – a checklist to help you look for the features in an online system that will give you this can be found in the Useful Documents section at the back of this Guide.



Resource: *The Impact of Feedback* – available in the Resources section of our website.



## Starting out

Whether you are embarking on 360 for the first time in your organisation or updating a current process, spending time at the start of the programme with the right people leads to good engagement, strong buy-in and solid support amongst the important line manager population. So, invest time in identifying the key stakeholders, explaining the process, and outlining the outcomes and impact on the business.

## Engage with and obtain support from senior stakeholders for 360

### Identify your 'targets' – and use your networking and influencing skills to engage

Identify the people you need to reach, list them and then arrange face-to-face meetings with each one of them early on in the project to explain what it is you want to achieve, how it will impact the organisation and the timeline you propose. It will be easy to list the obvious senior stakeholders, but also take time to consider broader groups or associations with whom you need to engage.

### Tailor information to resonate with your audience

When starting to talk with your stakeholders, position the 360 in terms which are specific to your organisation to help senior stakeholders understand and 'buy into' the planned activity.

For example, if the term 'talent management' is not a well-liked or used term, try selling a 360 positioned around succession planning. Provide an example to 'paint a picture' which highlights the importance of succession planning in your organisation. This may require you looking at the age distribution across the business and the retirement plans and by having 360 reviews in place, identifying the leaders of tomorrow and working with them to develop the skills needed is seen as a sensible succession planning activity.

In addition, more senior people may require a different approach as they may have quite differing views of 360; some more senior managers and leaders may not recognise the value of this for lower levels of staff. Furthermore, there will be different exposures to, and experience of, 360 amongst your audiences; you will need to understand, and build on these.

### Embed a culture of feedback and coaching

Embedding a feedback friendly and coaching culture takes time – and requires support and investment from the senior team.

Some steps to support this include:

- **Shaping the structure of the HR or L&D department** so that anything related to personal performance and development – all the development psychometrics, high potential, development plans, talent management, 360 – is drawn together.
- **Ensuring that managers and leaders are supported in their understanding of talent management** – and in their feedback skills. Courses such as Head Light's *Talent Management for Managers course* and *Facilitator's Feedback course* can support you in this.
- **Utilising partnerships with other organisations** or across your organisation to share and develop coaches and coaching skills.
- **Starting at the top and cascading** by engaging early in the 360 degree feedback process, your leadership team can send a clear signal to the rest of the organisation about their openness to feedback and personal development.



## Encourage the implementation of a 360 review process to be an objective of one of the key stakeholders

A difficult action to influence but when a senior leader has a vested interest in seeing the successful implementation and embedding of a process, the road will be smoother.

## Build the case for 360

For some, you will need to demonstrate clearly the Return on Investment in adopting a 360 review programme.

Head Light's research in 2013 revealed that 46% prepared a business case to support their bid to obtain the budget needed – and 14% of those that did this, did so even though it was not required of them. 44% commented that whilst they did not prepare a business case, they thought it would have been interesting to go through this exercise.

Collect case studies and stories from organisations similar to yours and demonstrate the impact and benefits that 360 has had within your competitors' businesses or in other divisions or locations of your own business.

## Take stock of where you are as an organisation

Before you embark on a 360 programme, it may be useful to read the Head Light checklist (*Ready for 360? Think Again*) and understand how ready your organisation is to take on 360 degree feedback – and our view on what makes for a successful 360 programme.

## Start small

Good practice suggests that your journey to adopt a 360 approach is smoother when you run an initial pilot study. This becomes even more beneficial if you use this as an opportunity to obtain buy-in from senior managers and focus the pilot around them.

It is also a useful exercise to test and confirm the validity of your assessment.

## Establish how often you will carry out a 360 review, with whom and a clear rationale for its purpose

Research what other organisations do, discuss with your team internally and take external advice if necessary.

Typically, 360 reviews are carried out no more frequently than every two years unless you are looking at benchmarking and change.

To get the maximum value from an online 360 tool, consider the groups with which it can be used. The management and leadership population is usually the main target, but also consider your talent pools, key successors, customer-facing staff, graduates and business support groups.





## Communicate

Part of the success of the 360 programme will be based on the communication plan that you put in place and deliver. Consider using a variety of tools to get your message across remembering to tailor the message, language used and channel of communication appropriate to your audience.

You may want to consider:

- Including an article about the benefits of 360 in your staff newsletter;
- Utilising your Intranet pages;
- Hosting 'all hands' meetings about 360;
- Recording a webinar with a senior manager explaining process;
- Preparing an FAQ document, covering all the questions and concerns raised through your discussions with stakeholders;
- Amending induction materials to include your 360 approach;
- Designing a timeline with key dates so that everyone understands the schedule.

## Suggested timeline

Initial conversations with participants	Day 0
Participants decide on reviewers	Allow 2 weeks to consider and nominate reviewers
Participants brief reviewers	Allow 1 week to make contact and brief reviewers
Invites sent to all reviewers	Allow 1 week to send invitations
Reviews completed	Allow 2 weeks for reviews to be done
Carry out feedback review session	Allow 4 weeks after reviews completed
Create action and development plan and hold follow up call or session	Allow 2 weeks after initial session
Check-in with progress on some actions	Allow 4 weeks after development plan created
Check-in with progress	Allow 6 months after initial session
Review plan	1 year after initial review

## Useful reading



Resource: *360 – Keys to success* – available in the Resources section of our website.

### Key points

Arm yourself with the facts to build the case for investing in 360

Tailor your message to the audience

Find a champion

Carry out a pilot

Be clear with purpose

Communicate widely, clearly and reach everyone



Resource: *Ready for 360? Think Again* – available in the Resources section of our website.

If you would like to access the complete Good Practice Guide to using 360 degree feedback, please request it [here](#).



## About Head Light

Head Light is an award-winning talent management 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 software tools designed for those who expect the maximum return from talent management processes. Our training and consulting services uniquely complement our breakthrough software 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.



**What if...**

*you could build a feedback-friendly culture?*

**What if...**

*you could fill more positions internally?*

**What if...**

*you could reduce employee turnover without increasing pay?*

**What if...**

*you could increase productivity?*

**What if...**

*you could spend less on training and still develop potential?*

**What if...**

*you could determine who to develop into leaders for the future?*