Benefits, Use Case, and Scientific Value of 360° Feedback

An article by

Zoé Dolder, Consultant

Claudia Vinsent, Senior International Consultant

Abstract

Providing feedback in an organizational context holds many benefits – it not only increases the individual's performance via initiating development actions, but it also fosters a culture of transparency and feedback in an organization. Considering feedback from various perspectives, known as 360° feedback, can multiply the beneficial features of feedback, especially when the comprehensive results are facilitated with a professional feedback coach. papilio's 360° feedback solution provides an all-inclusive service to evaluate, analyse and develop relevant competencies for individuals and companies looking to encourage talent development.

The Science behind Feedback

What is feedback?

Feedback is defined as input individuals offer to the person holding a certain position regarding their performance outcome, behavioural tendencies, competence, thoughts, and actions (Vohra & Singh, 2005) in a considerate and constructive manner (West & Markiewicz, 2004). One of the main purposes of the feedback is to enhance professional growth by identifying an individual's strengths and areas for development. In the same vein, feedback is also used to ensure all employees are aligned with and meet expectations at work.

Why is feedback important?

Feedback functions as a compass, motivator, and enforcer of productive behaviour, while also eliminating unproductive behaviour. Decades of feedback-focused literature point to its added value (Bailey & Fletcher, 2002; Burke, 1999; Drouvelis & Paiardini, Feedback quality and performance in organisations, 2021; Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Lepine, Colquitt, & Hedlund, 1998; Jabri, 2004; Passos & Caetano , 2005).

- Increased performance and productivity

- Awareness of expected and rewarded behaviour by the organization

- Amplifies learning by providing informative benefits

- Enhances motivation by encouraging people to put in more effort

- Encourages communication among team members and simplifies the discourse of divergent opinions

Key elements of feedback

Feedback processes can be rather tricky to get right and consequently vary greatly in quality. To reap the above-mentioned benefits, there are several elements that optimal feedback processes must accomplish:

- o Paints a holistic picture of an individual's performance (strengths and development areas)

- o Maintains a balance – feedback should present both positive and negative aspects to enhance its acceptance by individuals

- o Assesses specific behaviours that are observable while also enabling participants to connect these behaviours with on-the-job effectiveness

- o Is structured instead of scattered to allow individual's a clear understanding of their strengths and development areas based on crucial competencies/themes

- o Is thorough and comprehensive

- o Takes into account feedback from various individuals or stakeholders the person works with

- o Maintains anonymity to safeguard those providing feedback; participants and raters are more likely to offer candid evaluations when assured of confidentiality (Brutus & Derayeh, 2002)

- o Is directly linked to developmental planning to secure commitment to behavioural change from participants

- o Prioritises important developmental objectives rather than superficial change

What is 360° feedback?

Within the framework of the 360° assessment approach, input is sought not solely from an individual's superior, but also from the individual themselves, their subordinates, colleagues, higher-level authorities (colleagues of the supervisor), and additional/external parties, including customers (Testa, 2002).
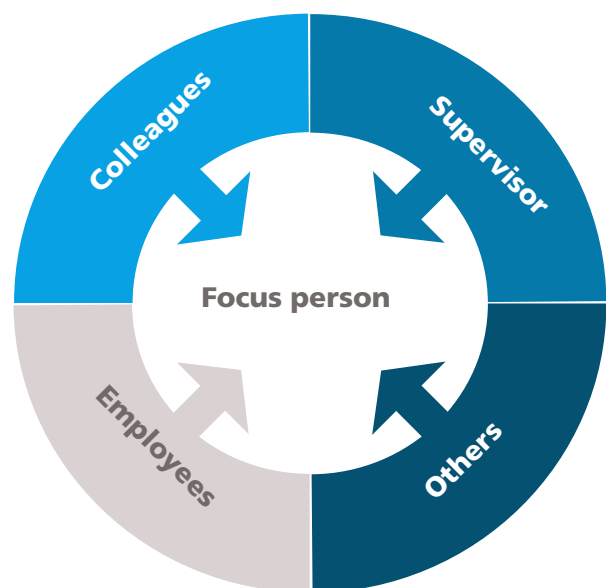
Why is 360° feedback useful?

Research indicates that the utilization of 360° feedback has the potential to enhance performance and induce changes in behaviour over a period of time (Atwater, Waldman, Atwater, & Cartier, 2000; Dean, Myles, Tichelle, Parris, & Spears-Jones, 2021; Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005; Walker & Smither, 1999). Collecting feedback from a variety of perspectives offers individuals a comprehensive view of how they are perceived from multiple vantage points – creating a genuine feedback loop. With this awareness, they can assess their proficiency in vital competencies essential for organizational success.

> *"Given today's digitally connected work environment, where an individual's collaborators might be in a neighbouring building or even a different continent, the virtual nature of the 360° feedback process can serve as an advantageous tool for enhancing performance. "*

In achieving the aims of the key elements of feedback, innovative tools like a 360° feedback tool provide the optimal way to achieve this.

o   Participants are able to gain insights into their own strengths and development areas, bringing those areas to awareness to kick start further personal and professional development

o   Effects of personal bias are kept to a minimum as multiple individuals are providing feedback on an individual and therefore increasing the reliability of identifying a person's strengths and development areas. If a certain competency is described by multiple raters as a key strength consistently, it is more likely that it is one.

o   Offers a structured method for gathering and analysing data, providing an opportunity for contemplating valuable performance effectiveness insights

o   The structured format and unbiased nature of the tools foster objectivity, concurrently mitigating the interpersonal challenges of conducting face-to-face feedback

o   The formal feedback process also focuses on the valid assessment of behaviours that hold significance to the organization

o   Promotes a culture of secure feedback exchange. While offering feedback can occasionally have repercussions in various organizations, a 360° feedback process that prioritises the anonymity of the feedback providers mitigates this risk and encourages employees to give input within a psychologically safe setting

o   Upholds organizational principles of open communication, appreciating employee contributions, and fostering the belief that individuals should take control of their career trajectories

Why is a 360° feedback facilitation session beneficial?

The benefit of feedback depends very much on the quality of feedback that is delivered. Drouvelis, M & Paiardini, (2022) show that when poor quality feedback is delivered, there isn't a significant improvement in performance compared to when high quality feedback is given to employees.

With the assistance of a professional feedback coach, participants analyse both their elevated scores (strengths) and lower scores (areas for improvement), along with disparities between their self-assessment and external viewpoints regarding their performance. At-water, Brett, and Charles (2007) also advise against providing participants with feedback reports without the involvement of a coach to guide feedback assistance.

Additionally, it is not uncommon that conflicting themes emerge in the outcome of a feedback process. After all, with a rich and comprehensive feedback tool, rich and diverse outcomes are to be expected. As the 360° assessment revolves around perceptions, a notable illustration is that not everyone working with an individual perceives them in the same manner. Hence, a proficient feedback coach can play a pivotal role in guiding discussions with the participant and delving into the multifaceted explanations for the complex information presented. Feedback coaches also support with analysing the results and any score differences presented. For example, the varying expectations of the different rater groups and differing interpretation of a specific behaviour.

Therefore, feedback coaches work with individuals who have received the feedback to pinpoint strategies through which these participants can change their behaviour to enhance their performance effectiveness.

Several research studies indicate that employing feedback coaches to guide the feedback process yields a more favorable impact on both the leader and the organization (Luthans & Peterson, 2003; Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003).

Participants who collaborate with a coach are more inclined to establish objectives, discuss the feedback with their supervisors, and improve their ratings in a subsequent 360° evaluation (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003).

The presence of facilitation sessions is crucial in helping participants pinpoint goals for necessary behavioral changes. The absence of such facilitation has also been highlighted in research. In particular, a study by Brutus and Derayeh (2002) noted that every organization that fell short of achieving the goals of their 360° feedback process had neglected to facilitate the feedback procedure.

"A proficient feedback coach can play a pivotal role in guiding discussions with the participant […]"

Benefit of papilio's 360° feedback solution

papilio offers a 360° feedback solution that is thought to fulfil all the elements of feedback as well as providing the benefits of the 360° feedback approach. papilio tries to combine relevant scientific knowledge, modern technological tools, and maximum flexibility to consult the client and provide a valuable result with their 360° feedback solution.

- Entirely digital process for all parties involved

- Full-service model provided by papilio – minimal administrative effort on the clients' side

- Close collaboration before, during and after the 360° feedback process to ensure achieving the desired results – including order clarification, testing, updates on process status, coordination of facilitation sessions, debriefing of the experience

- Facilitation sessions for candidates after the feedback process

Features

papilio created a 360° feedback that provides the candidates and the organization with a comprehensive and scientifically sound tool. The 360° feedback questionnaire contains the following elements:

- o Rating of chosen competencies, i.e., feedback is provided regarding concrete behaviour of the candidates

- o Relevancy rating of the chosen competencies to evaluate if the rated competencies are relevant for the candidates' job

- o Open ended questions for the feedback providers to provide any additional feedback to the candidates
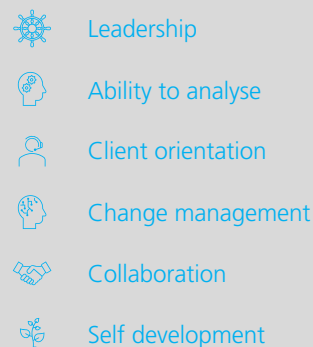
Professional 360° feedback support

Furthermore, papilio supports the client in creating a psychologically safe, open context for the 360° feedback process. This takes away the candidates' and feedback providers' fear of negative consequences when giving or receiving honest feedback. Some of the measures include:

- o Encouraging the client to highlight the developmental focus of the 360° feedback to partic- ipants as well as that there are no negative consequences

- o Briefing the client (HR) comprehensively on the process of the 360° feedback so they can pass on the information to the participants

- o Providing the option of sending out an informational email explaining the process and the purpose of the 360° feedback, so this information is also received from an independent party

- o Anonymizing the ratings of the feedback providers, e.g., names of the feedback providers whose rating are displayed in the report are not known to the candidates, as well as having a minimum number of feedbacks needing to be provided in order for the rating to appear in the report

Fit for purpose solution

Feedback needs to be relevant to the person receiving it – there- fore, papilio's 360° feedback solution offers many options to tai- lor it to the clients' and candidates' needs. One main element of the solution is the competencies that are being evaluated. papilio offers the clients the flexibility to implement their own compe- tency model to be evaluated or supports the client in developing relevant competencies for implementation. Moreover, papilio has its own elaborate competency framework containing fifteen dif- ferent competencies for the clients to choose from.

| Leadership |
| Ability to analyse |
| Client orientation |
| Change management |
| Collaboration |
| Self development |

Receiving feedback is crucial for everyone across all job types and hierarchical levels. Being able to have a clear idea of what is expected of one and what one's strengths and development areas are can initiate essential steps for one's career. papilio's 360° feedback solution can be implemented with any target group – from executive and management boards to first time leaders to contributors and blue-collar workers.

To optimally address any of these target group, it is possible to flexibly define the types of feedback provider groups (e.g., employees can be left out for candidates without management role) and number of required feedback pro- viders per group (e.g., a minimum of three feedback providers is recommended to ensure anonymity).

360° feedback report and facilitation

The 360° feedback results depict the feedback providers' individual perceptions of the candidates – these might very well be conflicting or even contradicting. To achieve optimal developmental value from the 360° feedback, papilio offers facilitation sessions with trained professionals. During the feedback session, feedback coaches pursue a clear development focus while targeting the candidates' preferred topics in a challenging, but appreciative manner. Furthermore, feedback coaches, especially when external to the organization, can effectively manage the various emotions that come up in a feedback session, including resistance.

In line with research, papilio's feedback coaches facilitate the results with the candidates regarding various topics during the session, such as:

- o Aspects the candidate is not satisfied with and would want to change in the next year
- o Patterns visible in the results
- o Big differences in ratings between the different feedback provider perspectives (including self-ratings)
- o Reasons for noticeable differences
- o Translating the feedback into development goals and actions

Furthermore, for the client to be able to carry on the effects of the 360° feedback process, papilio offers trainings to HR and/or supervisors. These trainings target better understanding of the 360° process, the report, and the optimal handling of feedback within a company. The goal of the training is enabling the client to provide follow-up guidance to the candidates after completion of the 360° feedback process and initiate an effective and long-term development path.

At the end of the feedback process, the automatically aggregated feedbacks are displayed in a PDF report and made available to the candidates directly. The report indicates the following conclusions:

- o Overall ratings of the competencies
- o Highest and lowest item ratings
- o Differences between self and external rating
- o Rating of each item
- o Rating of relevancy
- o Open text feedback
- o Template for concrete development planning

Case Study – 360° Feedback for an Organisation in the Automotive Sector

The Scope

In the context of internal leadership development course for first-time leaders, the organisation implements 360° feedback.

Issues

- How can the administrative effort be minimized on client's side while keeping the client up to date?
- What aspects of the candidates should be assessed to achieve added value for candidates?
- How can the received feedback results optimally be integrated in the leadership development course?
- How can other people from the organisation also profit from a talent development perspective?

The Solution

The papilio service

- Full-service solution with administration from beginning to end with minimal effort on client's side
- Consistent updates on status of process
- Choice of specific competencies targeted to leadership skills to assess in 360° feedback
- Combination with personality questionnaire ADEPT-15 for candidates to reflect on personality aspects within leadership context
- Setup according to predefined specifications for short-notice implementation
- Training the client for optimal facilitation of the results during the leadership course
- Extension of application within organisation to also enable individuals' development path

The Outcome

In place since
2021

170
overall candidates

Meeting the client's requirements

- Decreased admin labour for HR
- Versatility in application in terms of language, definition of feedback provider groups, timeline
- Means to identify unused potential, development areas and measures for development
- Client's ability to facilitate and reflect results on their own with the candidates

Candidate Case

Candidate received 360° feedback in the leadership development course and later again in their new leadership role in context of their individual development. Improvement of some key competencies observable.

"We appreciate the personal, uncomplicated exchange with the papilio team and the fact that we can use the 360° feedback flexly for our leadership program as well as for individual development measures."
*- client*

About the authors

Zoé Dolder is a consultant for digital solutions at papilio. She is responsible for the 360° feedback solution and has implemented it with many clients, resulting in her vast experience in supporting clients in an optimal 360° feedback process. Above that, her background in I&O psychology allows her to apply scientific knowledge to the improvement of the 360° feedback solution as well as to her clients' projects. She always aims to deliver exceptional quality to her clients for them to experience a seamless process for their talent development.

Claudia Vinsent is a Senior International Consultant at papilio and her current role encompasses the leading, planning and implementation of recruitment and talent management initiatives internationally. She supports HR in key areas by overseeing as well as delivering for international assessment and development projects, including 360° feedback, with key focus on senior and executive level leadership assessments. She is a trained Management Psychologist and is deeply motivated to support her clients and participants with an evidence-based approach having been rigorously trained and educated in the art and science of assessment methodology.

Your contact
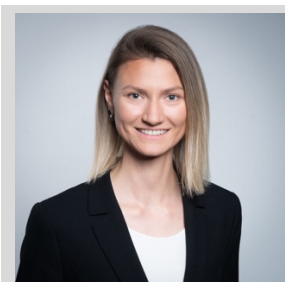
Zoé Dolder

Consultant | MSc Psychology

zoe.dolder@papilio.ch

044 442 22 72

References

Drouvelis, M., & Paiardini, P. (2021). Feedback quality and performance in organisations. The Leadership Quarterly, 33(6).

Vohra, N., & Singh, M. (2005). Mental traps to avoid while interpreting feedback: Insights from administering feedback to school principals. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 16*(1), 139-147.

West, M. A., & Markiewicz, L. (2004). *Building team-based working: A practical guide to organizational transformation* (2nd Edition ed.). Malden, MA, USA: BPS Blackwell.

Bailey, C., & Fletcher, C. (2002). The impact of multiple source feedback on management development: findings from a longitudinal study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 23*(7), 853-867.

Burke, R. J. (1999). Managerial feedback, organizational values and service quality. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal, 9*(1), 53-57.

Hollenbeck, J. R., Ilgen, D. R., Lepine, J. A., Colquitt, J. A., & Hedlund, J. (1998). Extending the multilevel theory of team decision making: Effects of feedback and experience in hierarchical teams. *Academy of Management Journal, 41*(3).

Jabri, M. (2004). Team feedback based on dialogue: Implications for change management. *Journal of Management Development, 23*(2), 141-151.

Passos, A. M., & Caetano , A. (2005). Exploring the effects of intragroup conflict and past performance feedback on team effectiveness. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 20*(3/4), 231-244.

Brutus, S., & Derayeh, M. (2002). Multisource assessment programs in organizations: An insider's perspective. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 13*(2), 187-202.

Testa, M. R. (2002). A model for organization-based 360 degree leadership assessment. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 23*(5), 260-268.

Atwater, L. E., Waldman, D. A., Atwater, D., & Cartier, P. (2000). An upward feedback fi eld experiment. Supervisors ' cynicism, follow - up, and commitment to subordinates. *Personnel Psychology, 53*(2), 275-297.

Smither, J. W., London, M., & Reilly, R. R. (2005). Does performance improve following multisource feedback? A theoretical model, meta-analysis, and review of empirical findings. *Personnel psychology, 58*(1), 33-66.

Walker, A. G., & Smither, J. W. (1999). A five-year study of upward feedback: What managers do with their results matters. *Personnel psychology, 52*(2), 393-423.

Drouvelis, M., & Paiardini, P. (2022). Feedback quality and performance in organisations. *The Leadership Quarterly, 33*(6), 101534.

Smither, J. W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y., & Kucine, I. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multisource feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology, 56*($1), 23-44.

Luthans, F., & Peterson, S. J. (2003). 360-degree feedback with systematic coaching: Empirical analysis suggests a winning combination. *Human Resource Management, 42*(3), 243-256.

Atwater, L. E., Brett, J. F., & Charles, A. C. (2007). Multisource feedback: Lessons learned and implications for practice. *Human Resource Management, 46*(2), 285-307.

Dean, H. D., Myles, R. L., Tichelle, P., Parris, S., & Spears-Jones, C. (2021). Changing leadership behaviors in a public health agency through coaching and multirater feedback. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, 27*(1), 46-54.