

OVERVIEW OF 360° FEEDBACK PROCESS

The Thornhill 360° feedback system allows people to gather information about themselves online, through a self-questionnaire and a questionnaire sent to others, in a professional way that allows for anonymity.

It is called 360° feedback because it invites comprehensive feedback on behaviour from people all around you in your work context – yourself, above (manager), below (direct reports) and from the “sides” (peers, or other stakeholders, depending on the chosen raters).

The feedback from each of these groups is collated into a report that highlights strength and development areas in a person’s leadership and interpersonal abilities. Questions are typically multiple-choice, allowing scores to be compared across items, with the option of open-ended questions that allow individualised feedback. This feedback is used to assist the manager in improving his/her leadership performance.

BENEFITS OF 360 FEEDBACK

Business leaders and managers become more effective in achieving their goals when they gain insight into what they are doing well and what they still need to learn to do well. How others perceive them can contribute valuably to this insight, but most people need help to discover how they are perceived - research shows that most people are quite poor at accurately recognising how they come across to others.

The 360° feedback process begins with a self-assessment. The self-assessment is very important, as it allows participants to reflect honestly on their strengths and development areas as they perceive them, giving them a basis from which to compare the feedback they receive from their raters. It also shows participants the questions that their raters will be answering.

The questionnaire comprises behavioural statements which simply describe performance rather than trying to explain it. This has a number of advantages:

- There is no mystification of the feedback – the person receiving the information simply knows how other people observe him/her, and thus can decide for him/herself what to make of it.
- There is a direct and obvious link to what is expected of the person on the job.
- The list of items provides a checklist of leadership behaviours that can be used in training, and can be integrated with performance management.

The intention of behavioural statements is to point people in the direction of effective performance in a particular context. The person receiving the feedback can be helped to interpret the meaning and significance of what is said in terms of the environment he/she shares with the observers, and his/her personal goals.



THE PROCESS

Critical to the success of the process is a pre-brief to those who are participating in the 360° feedback, as this encourages buy-in and builds trust. Thornhill suggests that the client organisation communicates internally to prepare participants and raters before the launch. This pre-briefing should:

- introduce Thornhill as the external service provider of the 360 process, and let them know to expect an email from Thornhill which will contain a link to the questionnaire
- explain the purpose and benefits of the process, as well as how the results will be used and who will have access to the reports
- encourage constructive feedback from raters and assure them that their responses are confidential, unless agreed otherwise and stated in the email (e.g. managers)
- introduce the concept of individual feedback coaching sessions with a coach to debrief the report
- address any questions or concerns.

The questionnaire will be put online using the Thornhill multi-rater system. We will agree with the client the wording of the Thornhill emails. To satisfy ethical and legal requirements, it is mandatory to include information in the emails regarding the purpose of the project, rater anonymity, and who will have access to the reports and data. From there on our system will send the introductory emails automatically.

The system will generate emails to the participants, and their pre-entered raters if required, according to the participant list provided by the client. The emails will invite the participants to click on a link that will take them to the questionnaire, which they will complete online. The system will also automatically send reminder emails to those who have not responded by a specified date.

After the closing date for rating, the administration is closed and reports can be generated and printed soon thereafter by the person designated to do so. This can be done by an authorised person anywhere in the world. Report generation is described further on the next page.

ADMINISTRATION OPTIONS

Thornhill offers clients the option of selecting raters for the participants or allowing them to select their own raters. There are three standard options for administering the 360° questionnaire online:

- **Participants forward the link to their raters:** Thornhill sends an email containing a link directly to participants, who then select their own raters by forwarding the email to those they want to give them feedback.
- **Participants and pre-entered raters:** You pre-select the raters you want to give feedback to each participant, in which case Thornhill will send an email to participants and each of their raters too.
- **Participants enter their rater details on the system** (also used for pre and post administrations): Thornhill sends an email containing a link to participants, which allows them to enter their raters directly on the system. The system will then automatically email the raters with a link to their questionnaire.

We also offer **pre and post administrations**. Post administrations can be used to determine changes which have taken place since the first administration, in order to easily track progress and to assess the impact of interventions.

The client administrator provides Thornhill with a single complete Excel spreadsheet with separate columns for the first name, surname and email address of each participant. If the client chooses to pre-select the raters to give feedback to each participant, then the client administrator also provides the raters' first name, surname and email address, plus their category (manager, peer, direct report or other) in separate columns next to each participant. Thornhill will provide an Excel template for this purpose.

RATERS

Thornhill only charges for the participants loaded on the system to receive feedback. There is **no charge** for raters providing feedback.

Selecting raters: It is best to select people whom you believe will provide honest and constructive feedback, and who ultimately have the participant's best interests at heart. Also try to select a range of people whose views represent various different, **but frequent**, interactions and experiences with the participant. It is important to consider the overload factor for raters – please be careful that the same raters are not providing feedback for too many participants.

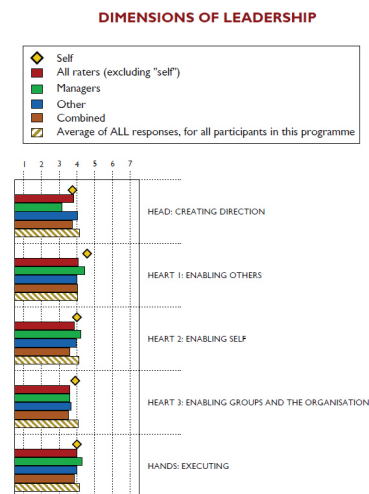
Number of raters: When using 360° questionnaires for developmental purposes, Thornhill recommends that, in addition to him/herself, each participant be rated by his/her manager, at least three peers, and at least three direct reports. The report will only distinguish between these categories if there are at least three raters in each (other than manager), so it would be safer to have more than three in each category. You may select as many raters as you like, but naturally the more responses received the richer and more insightful the information appearing in the report is likely to be. However, care should be taken not to include raters who do not know the participants well, as their responses will dilute the more useful feedback of those who do know them well.

MONITORING PROGRESS AND PRINTING REPORTS

To enable you to have control over the process, Thornhill will provide the client administrator with a log-in to monitor progress towards completion of the project in order to follow up personally if required. This log-in also allows the client administrator to generate and print the reports direct from the website when ready. For ethical reasons the person(s) with this log-in will be required to sign an undertaking to treat this personal information in confidence.

REPORTS

Thornhill provides individual reports, generated in real-time, for the participants. The report provides leaders with anonymous feedback from their peers, direct reports, and others. The leader also rates him/herself to provide a comparison that helps to increase self-awareness and facilitates development. The report provides a detailed breakdown of responses, organised by the rater category. At least three people (other than the participant) need to provide feedback before a report can be generated. Note that to preserve anonymity, the report will only display a category if there are at least three raters in that category. The exception to this is the manager, who may choose whether to have his/her responses displayed separately or, if not, combined with the others. Furthermore, the report will not display a category if it leaves an isolated rater whose responses could consequently be calculated.



FEEDBACK COACHING

Making effective use of the feedback received is as important as collecting it. A key component of the 360° process is correct management of how feedback is communicated. As per best practice and in order to gain maximum learning from the feedback process, it is recommended that the contents of the report are debriefed with the participant by a qualified HR practitioner/coach. This facilitator will go through the report with the participant to explain how to interpret the feedback and guide the creation of a personal development plan (PDP). Thornhill can facilitate feedback either onsite or online. We can also provide feedback facilitation training if required.

Improving performance through feedback