360 FEEDBACK REPORTS – WHO SHOULD SEE WHAT?

When used for personal development, 360 feedback participants are normally given 'control' over their report and what they do with it. This typically means that only one report is produced and the participant then decides who (if anyone) gets to see it and what actions (if any) they will take as a result of the feedback.

Whilst this works on lots of fronts, including reducing many of the concerns talked about by participants when they embark on a 360 review process for the first time. It also has the disadvantage of potentially restricting the ability for Line Managers to take an active role in helping to shape the ongoing development agendas of their people - a key Line Management expectation!

This article sets out to explore the practical challenge of how to provide participants with a sense of control/ ownership of their feedback, whilst at the same time ensuring Line Managers have access to sufficient data to enable them to take an active role in supporting development planning and its implementation.

When participants own their feedback data

Allowing participants to be 'in charge' of their feedback data provides several key benefits:

- **Uncontaminated responder motives** - Knowing that their feedback will only be seen by the participant means there is no pressure on respondents to be anything but honest and candid. They do not need to consider or accept any responsibility for the potential consequences or repercussions (influencing annual gradings, promotion prospects, bonuses etc) for the participants that could be associated with the organisation having access to the feedback they provide.
- **Participant engagement** - Having full control of the feedback data also reduces many of the concerns talked about by participants when they use a 360 tool for the first time. For many people, this means they can enter the process with an open and accepting mind, listening carefully to the messages they receive, without feeling the need to self justify or defend any critical feedback to others.

Why 360 degree feedback should be available to Line Managers

The case for using 360 feedback data within the organisation is based on sound and logical reasoning. After all, given the time, effort and cost of producing 360 reports and the richness of the feedback received, why shouldn't Line Managers be able to use the outputs of the 360 degree feedback process to drive and support the organisation's development agenda? The most common reasons cited for providing organisational access the feedback collected are:

- **Supporting individual development** - How can participants' managers provide coaching or appropriate development support if they don't have all of the

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available information to help paint a clear picture of the person's development needs?

- **Return on investment (ROI)** - How can ROI be measured if start and end point information is not available to those who need to account for the success of the intervention?

Whilst the above are sensible justifications for allowing the participant's line manager (and key HR / training professionals) access to the data, taking this approach changes the context in which feedback is given and received, as follows:

- **Feedback can become contaminated** - Our research and experience in this area proves that when respondents (particularly colleagues and direct reports) know their feedback ratings and comments will be seen by others within the organisation, their responses to questionnaires become contaminated and diluted. Typically, what happens is that scores go up, because respondents don't want to disadvantage the participant. In addition to the scores rising, the spread (or range) between highest and lowest scores reduces along with the number of critical feedback comments. The reality is that whilst the concept of using 360 data to support the organisational development agenda is conceptually sound, the application of it results in an inconsistent and watered down output
- **Participants can disengage** - For many there is a big difference between receiving private and confidential development feedback and entering a process where you think (rightly or wrongly) that the output could be used to score / rate you or influence the judgements of key stakeholders within the organisation. Even if this is not the organisation's intention, there will be those who believe it is, and their attitude and approach to the process could result in participants 'playing the scoring game' in relation to their own self ratings or through the development of scoring pacts with colleagues.

The Lumus360 solution

Adopting one (or several) of the following approaches will enable participant's to maintain control of their feedback whilst at the same time ensuring Line Managers can play a role in optimising the opportunities 360 feedback provides:

- **Sharing of outputs and drive to** action - By making it clear at the outset that, whilst participants have full control and ownership of their report and there is no expectation for them to share actual scores and comments, they will be required to take any key feedback messages and their concluding development thoughts into development discussion with Line Managers.
- **Training Needs Analysis Report** - The Lumus360 Training Needs Analysis Report combines 360 degree feedback data from a group of participants into one consolidated report. This is designed to provide strategic insight into management development themes, culture and performance trends whilst maintaining individual confidentiality. The report format is ideal for highlighting current group strengths, blind spots, areas for development and relationship issues between different reporting populations.

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- **Manager's Summary Report** - This unique approach provides Line Managers with the headline news needed to start a meaningful action planning conversation, without them having to plough through 40 pages of data. This three page summary report uses a development summary scale (key strength - development need) and does not incorporate comments or actual ratings, ensuring that the original context and motives of those providing the feedback are not altered.

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