

Workplace Enhancement Notes

A Tip Sheet for Organizational Leaders & Managers

Volume 6, Issue 1

In this Issue

360° Feedback Page 1

Performance Partnership Page 1

Your Personality at Work Page 4

About Russell Consulting Page 4

Assessing Your Leadership with 360°

How well do you provide the leadership that your team or organization needs to be most effective? What do people really need from you as a leader? You have probably pondered these questions from time to time, wondering how you could improve as a leader. Well, why guess?! Ask the people you lead! What are *their* perceptions of your leadership behaviors and style? Your effectiveness as a leader is actually best assessed by those with whom you have frequent contact. Because they know what they need from you to be successful in their jobs—and because they are in the best position to assess whether you follow through on your leadership commitments—hearing their assessment of your leadership behaviors is essential to really improving the quality of your leadership.

Given the name “360° feedback” because it collects and then summarizes data on your leadership behaviors as perceived from multiple sources and all directions—your direct reports, your peers, your boss, and even yourself—this method can give you powerful insights into opportunities for your personal change and improvement.

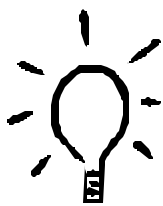


The Benefits of 360° Feedback

Exploring different perceptions. Perhaps the most important value of 360° feedback to you is that it offers a view of your performance from multiple perspectives. Since different people both expect and experience different behaviors from you, the multi-rater feedback process ensures that the feedback data you receive reflects this diversity of perspective.

Personal improvement plan. Another important benefit of 360° feedback is that it gives you valid data on which you can build a plan for personal improvement. Without feedback on specific leadership behaviors, it’s hard to know what you need to change to enhance your leadership style. With data that indicate both specific areas of strength and areas for

(Continued on page 2)



Read this Issue to . . .

- Request a sample 360° feedback survey & report
- Build a strong partnership with your employees
- Find out how to discover your workplace personality

Strengthening Your Performance

When the working relationships in your organization are productive, employees tend to bring quality to their work and treat customers well. As a manager, you want performance *commitment* from employees, not just their compliance. Strengthening employee commitment to your organization and customers, however, doesn’t happen by accident. Commitment emerges from the investments *you* make in creating a strong and productive partnership with your employees.

What is required for a strong performance partnership? How can you increase employee commitment to customers and your organization? What actions can you take? Here are our ideas:

Share your great expectations. Employees need to know what you expect before they can meet these expectations. While it seems like an obvious requirement, it is surprising how often employees are forced to figure things out on their own. When you clarify your expectations for both *outcomes* and *processes*, employees are able to work with greater

(Continued on page 3)

360° Feedback, contd.

improvement, you can begin working on improving your leadership behaviors.

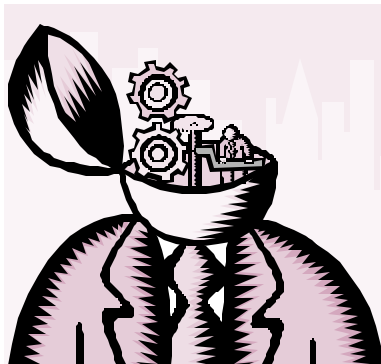
Focus on the right behaviors. Without this information, grounded in the perceptions of the people with whom you work, you are simply stabbing in the dark. By providing you with specific data on specific leadership behaviors, 360° feedback helps you focus on improving the behaviors about which people care most.

Conducting 360° Feedback in the Right Way

Focus on *development* rather than *evaluation*. Multi-rater feedback is most effective when it focuses on leadership *development* rather than *evaluation*. While leadership evaluation is important for a leader's growth, the 360° process is designed to work best as a developmental tool. You are more likely to listen to the data that you get from the multi-rater process if the focus is not on "how am I doing?" but rather on "where can I improve?" The primary purpose of 360° is to give you data on your leadership behaviors to enable you to improve your leadership. It's *not* intended to replace the performance review or appraisal.

Instead of creating anxiety and defensiveness in the leader (which could happen if the feedback were used to determine a person's pay raise or future with the company), the multi-rater process should create understanding and lead to action for change.

Guarantee confidentiality. If the people giving the leader feedback on his or her behaviors believe that the leader will know who said what about them, these people may be less than honest in giving feedback. Honesty is the foundation of an effective system. If they shade or misrepresent their perspective due to a desire to avoid conflict or concerns about retaliation, the feedback won't be helpful to the leader. For this reason, the 360° process must ensure absolute anonymity and confidentiality.



Follow-through. Leaders who go through a 360° process can benefit from just understanding how they are perceived. Since the purpose of the feedback process, however, is on *action* and *change*, the feedback must lead to creating and implementing a leadership development plan. Development of the plan, in turn, should be followed by a facilitated follow-up session where the leaders discuss (a) how they shared their insights from the feedback with others and (b) the actions they have taken to address areas for improvement. Without a formal follow-through by the organization, the leader may lose his or her focus on improvement and slip back into old patterns.

A follow-up discussion seminar reinforces personal accountability for change and improves the effectiveness of the process.

Your Options for 360° Feedback

To ensure confidentiality, the 360° process should be administered by an objective outside party and follow a process that protects the anonymity of respondents.

Computer-based or paper survey. The process can involve either a standardized or customized set of questions that explores people's perceptions of the leader's behaviors. Russell Consulting provides 360° feedback services through both standardized and customized leadership assessment surveys. RCI also offers both a computer-based and network version (where the respondents complete an electronic survey) or a paper and pencil survey.

Free sample 360° survey & report. Contact Russell Consulting for a free sample leadership assessment survey and an example of a typical leadership feedback report. We can help you develop a *customized* leadership assessment process for your organization.

The difference
between
leading and
managing is
seen in the
commitment of
those who
follow

Call Russell Consulting
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report

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Performance Partnership, contd.

clarity and focus.

Encourage employees to set their own performance goals.

Commitment to a goal is strengthened when people feel that it's *their* goal, not one that's simply imposed upon them. A strong performance partnership—and good employee relations—depend upon employees feeling some control over their own future.

Identify how you can support their success. Meet with your employees to find out what each person needs to be successful in the job. One employee may need training in how to better use a computer, another a complete review of the company's product line, while another needs weekly feedback sessions with you. Although the list of possible employee performance support needs is endless, you can only find out what people *actually* need by asking.

Find out what turns your employees on. An effective performance partnership depends upon each party both giving and getting something of value. You provide resources and support and, in return, you get an employee's time, energy, and ideas. Defining your expectations up front helps ensure that what you *get* from an employee is what your company needs. Defining what employees want in return for their labor is another critical part of building their commitment to your company.

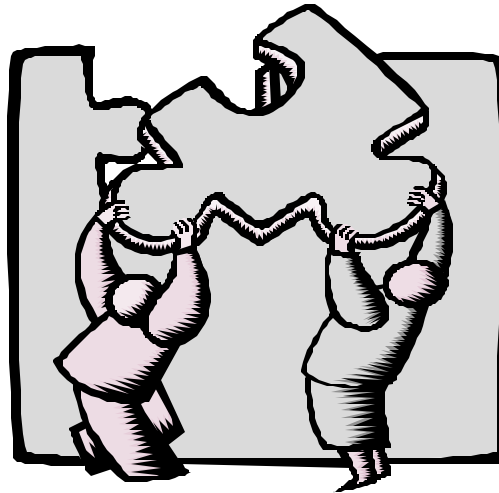
Hold frequent and informal discussions about performance. One of the biggest mistakes business owners or managers make is assuming that after goals are set and expectations known, their job is to stand back and let things happen. While giving people freedom to perform, solve problems, and serve the customer is critical to employees feeling ownership for their jobs, they also need a continuing connection with you. A strong performance partnership results from an ongoing relationship with employees. Performance isn't a once or twice a year event. It's a daily occurrence.

Provide recognition and rewards for great performance. When people do good work, your job is to find a way to recognize it. When they do *great* work, you must find a way to *celebrate* it. You need to follow through on your promises—the things you told your employees you would provide for people who do great work. Rewarding great employee performance demonstrates your investment in the performance partnership. Rewarding great performance is also an investment in your organization's future. When people directly benefit from doing good work for you, your customers and the organization directly benefit too.

When things go wrong, explore *cause* not blame. The performance partnership is most challenged when an employee is having performance problems. Responding to performance problems is perhaps the most important thing you can do as a manager so focus on understanding the *cause* of the problem, not on blaming the employee. When you shift your attention away from fixing blame to discovering the cause, the employee will be less defensive. Less defensiveness, in turn, leads to the employee taking a more active part in understanding and owning the solution to the problem.

Without a good relationship with your employees, you don't have a performance partnership. And without a performance partnership, you can't serve your customers well.

Call us. Contact Russell Consulting for additional ideas to help build and strengthen your performance partnerships.



*It is commitment,
not authority, that
produces results*

—William Gore
Founder of Gore &
Associates

*Would you like to
strengthen **your**
performance
partnerships?*

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Note: a version of this article first appeared in the Madison Business Journal

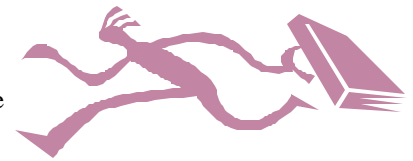
What is Your Work Personality?

Wisdom is not a product of schooling but the lifelong attempt to acquire it

— Albert Einstein
Nobel laureate in physics

Every day you come to work and interact with others. You meet and greet customers. You talk with your staff in giving directions or setting goals. You are actively involved with others in making decisions and solving problems. Each of these interactions provides an opportunity for achieving mutual understanding—or *mis*understanding. Your misunderstanding may come from poor communication—you or others may not be clear in what you or they want to say or the message may be “distorted” due to past encounters or assumptions. This misunderstanding may, however, also emerge from something deeper: fundamental differences in personality, behavior, and style.

There are distinct personality styles and behaviors at work. One study suggests that there are four broad personality behavior types. These are *dominance*, *influence*, *conscientiousness*, and *steadiness*. While there are aspects of each behavior type in each of us, certain behavioral tendencies are stronger than others. We may, for example, be high in *influence* and low in *dominance*—or the other way around. We may be very *conscientious* but have little inclination to *dominance* or *steadiness* in our daily work behaviors. It is the combination of the intensities of each of these four behavioral tendencies that lead to our overall personality, behavior, and communication styles in the workplace. Knowing our own unique combination of these four tendencies helps shed light on our working preferences, how we work under pressure, what we avoid doing, how we view others, how we communicate with others, and, finally, how we bring the greatest value to our organization.



Knowledge about your style improves your effectiveness. Once you know your personality and behavioral style you will have a better understanding of how you can improve your effectiveness at work. Each style has its strengths and weaknesses. Knowing your style enables you to prevent your weaknesses from being a barrier to your effectiveness.

Understanding the styles of others can improve communication and performance. When you see how the different behavioral styles operate in your workplace and how each contributes to your organization in its own way, you begin to appreciate the differences that people bring to work. The complementary styles enable better decision making, improved customer service, and enhanced performance and profits for your company.

What is YOUR work behavior and personality? Contact Russell Consulting to explore how to understand the different personalities at your workplace through the **DiSC™** self-assessment process. Call *RCI* and learn how to turn diversity in work styles into a strength for your organization.

Call Russell Consulting today to discover YOUR work style and behaviors and explore ways to improve your effectiveness



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Linda & Jeff Russell, co-directors of RCI

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