

Raising awareness at the start of a coaching relationship – using 360-degree feedback

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Purpose

This strategy, used at the start of a coaching relationship, aims to identify the coachee's current performance levels by gathering 360-degree feedback. By collating and feeding back this information, the coachee gains a more accurate view of their levels of performance than just their own self-perceptions.

Description

Some coaches conduct diagnostic interviews over the telephone or have a number of face-to-face meetings at the beginning of a coaching relationship. To find a less time-consuming solution, a number of web-based questionnaires have been designed, which focus on specific areas of performance linked to the coaching objectives that often crop up such as leadership, personal impact or influencing styles. These web-based questionnaires are circulated to the coachee, their subordinates, peers and superiors. The system collates the results into a report and this is fed back to the coachee.

Process

The results are often fed back at the beginning of the coaching programme and the following approach used:

- **Step 1 (when working with a coachee's leadership style)**
Discuss recent leadership theories. Ask the coachee about their beliefs about leadership – what aspects of leadership do they admire or reject and why?
- **Step 2**
Ask the coachee who they chose to complete the report, and how they thought they might be seen by their respondents. How would they rate themselves as a leader?
- **Step 3**
Review the feedback and discuss the findings.
- **Step 4**
Agree actions and next steps.

Pitfalls

- Respondee might not be honest in their feedback (although with enough respondees it is easy to see a pattern emerging).
- Some 360-degree questionnaires can be overly complex.
- Coachees might not initially recognize the feedback they are receiving and can be defensive.

Bibliography

Cooper, H. (2009) 'Using 360-degree feedback improves self awareness', *Coaching at Work*, 3(6): 10.