

HOW SERIOUSLY SHOULD I TAKE MY 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK?

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“How Seriously Should I take my 360 Degree Feedback?” A Curious Question

Many times people ask me this question. My answer is simple. Take the feedback very seriously for a few positive reasons and not so seriously for other negative reasons.

What is a positive reason?

- **Awareness:** If you want to be more aware of the way your actions or lack of actions are being perceived, use feedback to create and discover the new perceptions you would like to create.
- **Change:** If you want to change your way of doing things or way of thinking based on the feedback for maximizing your impact on others
- **Self-control:** If you want to exercise more control over yourself or your behavior
- **Initiation of new activities:** If you like to undertake new activities that you have not been undertaking so far. Like a new habit of communication, vision or time management, planning, smiling, sharing a meal or a joke, taking morning walks together with someone else or alone, reading a new book, etc.

What is a negative reason?

- **Brooding over the same feedback or comment again and again: Trying** to justify that you are right. You are right any way at all times on all that you have done. If you were not right you would not have done it. This is not in the past. There is no point brooding over it. In the future, you may want to do it differently or you may not want to do it, or if you want to continue doing that you should work out methods of containing or minimize the negative effects on yourself, your team, your image etc.
- **Trying to identify who has said it or made the comment:** Our research shows that it is futile to embark on a match the following exercise and it can prove to be quite dangerous. Most people do not use the language you are familiar with. Familiar comments are not most likely from the familiar people as they are smarter than what you think they are. So do not get misguided by your mind.
- **Reacting and taking our on them:** Justification of your behavior. While the communication of your intentions behind certain behaviors may be understood over justification may go against you. People think you are not willing to change rather than developing a new admiration for you based on what you say.

Not doing anything about your 360 is better than doing negative things. An attitude of ‘let go’ may help. However, it may not be the most desirable thing. After undergoing 360 feedback, you are not the same individual you were before. Whether you like it or not this is true. All of us are changing from moment to moment. Your awareness goes up and you are at least older by a few minutes now than a few minutes before. Hence change is a continuous process. How visible you want to make it and how much you want to use the 360 to your advantage is what you need to answer after a 360.

Changing Perceptions of Others

Remember sometimes it is difficult to change perceptions. I live in Ahmedabad for the last 35 years. While I frequently visit Hyderabad, I have never stayed there longer than a total of two to three weeks. There is a certain individual in Ahmedabad who believes that I live in Hyderabad. No matter how many times I explained to him, he always wants to know when I came from Hyderabad. What have you been doing all these days in Hyderabad etc.? Somehow it does not get into his mind that I have been staying in Ahmedabad all my life. He has such strong beliefs that he may not even be listening to my answers. Some individuals brand you or stereotype you and sometimes the 360 DF is a reflection of the brand position you enjoy in the minds of some of those individuals. If you have to change the brand you can do it. But may not succeed with everyone, like my good friend. You need other tactics to change such stereotypes and branding. Sometimes the beliefs of people are so

strong that they only take in data that fits in with their perceptions and not those that did not. It serves as a self-perpetuating mechanism.

The Indian mind is Classificatory

The mind classifies the other person on so many dimensions and attributes characteristics as per the classification. Everyone has a dictionary in his mind. This dictionary gets developed in India from early childhood, from the family, society where we live, the school, the media and many other sources. This dictionary is very peculiar. It gives meaning to every individual according to what has been imprinted in it from early years. Hindus should be like this... Muslims are like this... Christians are like this... Biharis are like this. South Indians are like this... Goans are like this... Punjabis are like this. IIMA students are like this, HR professionals are like this. Thus many imprints exist. Sometimes it becomes difficult to change these. The dictionary however may get revised occasionally and marginally with new experiences. Your 360 feedback sometimes is a reflection of the dictionary that another person is using to interpret your behavior. He then perceives your behavior based on this dictionary. His dictionary may not even be sensitive to some of the other behaviors you exhibit.

If you have to change the perceptions you have to change the dictionary he is using. It needs time and continuous education. Sometimes it may not be worth it. However, if you find that the dictionaries used by most people are giving the same meaning to your behavior then it is a matter of concern. If they give good meaning continue to reinforce the same and if they are giving the bad meaning you may have to change. Understand the dictionaries used by other people to assess you.

You can prevent people from perceiving what they want to perceive by sending strong signals. Weak signals may not change much. 360 thus is a tool to understand the dictionaries of other people and create the right dictionaries in them through your effort. This needs effort and sustained effort.

You also may need to change your Dictionary. This needs introspection. What dictionary are you using to judge yourself and others? Is it a good dictionary? Is it leading to positive consequences? Do you also have stereotypes and tunnel vision?

Indian Minds-Highly Projective

Our minds may also often liberally project our motives and values on others. Most interestingly some of us project our negative desires and values to others and see in them things that we wish to do but are unable to do due to social pressure or whatever. Thus for a person with high value for money, every action of another person seems to be linked with money. Or a commercially oriented person reads only commercial motives in what most others do. The corollary of this is that 360 DF is, therefore, a good tool to understand what people are interested in. When you get your 360 next time use it to understand yourself as well as others. It should make you wiser than before.

Leadership is the art and science of influencing other people to do things the way you like them to do. You can influence the thinking of others first if you understand your thinking and the thinking of others. A 360 Degree Feedback is a great tool to understand what other people think, as well as the way you think, plan strategies to influence their thought or change your thought. Changing 'thought' is the first step to changing behavior and enhancing one's impact.