

Merging 360 Feedback with 360 Reflexivity:

A User's Guide

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Rethinking 360 feedback exercises

The environment in which we find ourselves is not a thing ON which we can reflect because it is not separate to us, something that can be viewed in an abstract fashion.

We are an intimate part of it, impacting it and being impacted by it. Instead, we can reflexively look at this environment in fine detail, with a clear sense that we are integral to the environment where we are sense-making.

In cases where we actively seek 360 feedback from respondents alongside whom we find ourselves in the workplace, it is vital to remind ourselves that their observations may offer us some insight into ourselves...but equally they will say a great deal about the person themselves, their circumstances and their perspectives on the context in which we co-exist.

That which they share can be deeply personal, occasionally emotionally and negatively charged, and invariably reflective of the mesh of power in which we find ourselves, to which we very rarely refer.

In that sense, their responses will also offer us a rich perspective on the dynamics of the place where we come together to work, from which we can learn a great deal about that environment.

In so many cases, at a deep personal level we are profoundly aware of how we turn up in the workplace. Far too often, we fail to acknowledge that we know these things – and instead defer to the supposed neutrality of the 360-feedback exercise.

As a result, it seems apparent that a great deal of 360 feedback tends not to reveal anything new to us but rather it reinforces for us what we tacitly know about the positives and negatives of our being in the workplace.

The starting point for personal insight and professional development as a result should be an active engagement with an observational and reflexive exercise.

A 360 exercise might be used to supplement this, mindful of the caveats outlined on this page, but ultimately the act of knowing oneself starts with the individual – which can be supported by the questions that appear on the next page.





If I take a reflexive view of my presence in the workplace, what thoughts, sensations, and emotions arise for me in response to that consideration?



What is that I would hope people say about me in light of an invitation for feedback...and what would I be disappointed to hear?

What behaviours and attitudes might undergird the things I want to hear and the things I am disappointed to hear about me?

And what changes in terms of presence and practice in the workplace could I embrace to amplify the positive and minimise the negative?

What might help me and hinder me in terms of making those changes?



If I spoke to people above me, what might they say they saw in terms of how I turn up in the workplace – and what might lead them to make those observations? (They could be led to suggest these things by things that I recognise that I do at work...or, equally, by values and opinions that they bring to work, which may or may not be appropriate.)



What if I applied Q2 to people who those work immediately alongside me – and with whom I connect and network in order to support work getting done?



And what if the same question was applied to those who work below me in the hierarchy: what might they say privately about me between one another – and how might I be experienced by them, particularly in respect to power, in light of my position?

Mark Cole has 42 years' experience of the workplace – and, over the course of the most recent ten of those years, he has through a number of published books developed a distinctive view of organisational life from a human perspective.

In light of this, he is more than happy to support people in their self-development through offering thinking partnership. This is a useful way through which to explore your responses to the questions herein.

If you would like to discuss working with Mark on this, just drop him a line at radicalod@colefellows.co.uk.

To find out more about him, check out his website – www.markcole.org – and his blog – www.radicalod.org



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