

Background

Memo

To: Sales and Marketing staff

From: Heidi Bauer, Head of Human Resources.

In last year's questionnaire concerning existing appraisal procedures we detected a generally negative perception of how the process was conducted. Accordingly, and in a spirit of openness we will be introducing a new method of appraisal to replace or sit alongside the existing system and we will be trialling it this year with the Sales and Marketing Departments.

This new method is commonly called 360-degree feedback and gives more than just our line manager a say in how we are performing. With your agreement and participation, it will form part of our desire to create a more open, participative, and supportive working culture. This proposal has already been discussed with the union and staff association, and neither body has raised any substantial objection to the scheme. If you have any immediate misgiving then you should contact your representative directly.

This short summary explains a little about how the process works:

360-degree feedback is a paper-based system where your co-workers, above, below, and alongside you will give their candid assessment of you and your work in the form of a questionnaire. You will also have the opportunity for self-assessment. The appraisals are entirely anonymous and will be filtered by a facilitator. The facilitator will then give feedback to the member of staff concerned. This will be a totally private and confidential meeting. The underlying idea is to give an appraisal that draws out general points about a person's performance and general behaviour.

In accordance with the wishes of staff representatives, it has been decided that this system will be on an entirely voluntary basis during the experimental and introductory stage. In addition, participants will be allowed to select their own appraisers, and where possible, facilitator. If this experiment is successful it is envisaged that this could eventually replace our existing forms of appraisal throughout the whole company.

We would like to assure everybody involved that designated facilitators will receive the necessary training to lead the feedback. We have drawn on the advice and expertise of a leading firm of human resources experts. We have also spoken to other organizations where this appraisal method is in place and the response to it has been overwhelmingly favourable.

The aim of the exercise is to help all of us perform better through being more self-aware. It is not intended to intimidate or undermine individuals. Appraisals will focus on people's perceived strengths as well as their weaknesses. Appraisers should not use the process as a way of mounting a personal attack.

There will be a series of meetings scheduled where we can discuss this proposal further. Nothing has been settled and everybody will have the opportunity to make his or her opinion heard.

Exercises

1 Work with a partner and discuss these questions.

- 1 In your job how do you know how well you are doing?
- 2 How fair is the system used in your company?

2 Read the text and decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The system depends on colleagues speaking to the facilitator.
- 2 The facilitator eventually speaks to the member of staff in question.
- 3 The facilitator tells the person exactly what has been written about him/her.
- 4 Staff members don't have to participate if they don't want to.
- 5 Participants will always be able to choose their appraisers and facilitator.
- 6 The process should help people understand themselves better.
- 7 The new system is an opportunity to take your revenge on colleagues.
- 8 There will be a single meeting where people can express their ideas.

3 Work with a partner. Create a flow chart of how the system works.

4 Word-building. Follow the instructions for 1–3.

- 1 Make nouns from these verbs.
appraise _____ facilitate _____ behave _____
perform _____ participate _____ represent _____
- 2 Make adjectives from these verbs.
participate _____ support _____ introduce _____
experiment _____ volunteer _____
- 3 Make nouns from these adjectives.
strong _____ weak _____

5 Complete the sentences by solving the anagrams.

- 1 Have you had any _____ about the new proposals yet? FECDEBAK
- 2 We _____ a lot of people resisting the suggested changes. EINASGVE
- 3 You can't repeat exactly what was written, you need to _____ it first. ITLFER
- 4 Her constant criticism has _____ his self-confidence. DUNERMIEND
- 5 As far as I am concerned, the subject is _____, I don't want to talk about it any more. ESTLTED
- 6 What is the _____ philosophy behind this change? DUNELRYIGN

6 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.

7 Work in small groups. Discuss these questions.

- 1 How well do you think the 360-degree feedback would work in your company?
- 2 Are there different countries or cultures where you think it would work better?

8 The Scottish poet Robert Burns thought that self-knowledge was a good thing. What do you think he meant when he wrote this? How far do you agree with him?

“ Oh wad some power the giftie gie
us, to see oursel's as others see us! ”

“ Oh would some power the gift give
us, to see ourselves as others see us. ”