



# TALENT JOURNEY

*Navigating in the Sea of Potential*

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## *Exploration of 360-Degree Surveys*

In seeking ways to further an organization's success and maximize its assets, starting with a realistic picture of what exists is critical. A very successful tool that is underused is the 360-degree survey, which we explore and highlight in this article.

The 360-degree survey is a request for feedback about performance from managers, direct reports and peers of the individuals being evaluated. Since the feedback comes from sources above, below and at the peer level, it is commonly referred to as a 360. This tool is designed to give individuals rich and broad feedback about specific strengths and weaknesses in their performance.

This is a simple tool to implement for immediate results. The growth of computerized systems make this administration tool very inexpensive and efficient. More importantly, 360-degree surveys help address some of the performance management time constraint issues that emerged with the down-sizing of organizations.

The tool provides a vehicle for identifying and addressing performance strengths and gaps, leading to better performance achievement and development discussions.

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*Are All of Your Employees Performing at High Levels?*

## *Top 12 Qualities of True Business Professionals*

Professionalism is a word embraced by many, but in all honesty demonstrated by far fewer individuals. Its Latin's origins come from the word profess which means, "to avow before." So the question is who are these individuals that believe themselves to be true professionals avowing before? Possibly the answer may be found within the word professional.

1. **P = Positively proactive.** Professionals demonstrate behaviors that are positive, proactive instead of negative, and reactive.

2. **R = Respect.** Through this ethic and value of respect, professionals are known and trusted within and without their respective organizations.

3. **O = Opportunities to help others.** Those who avow before understand they have a responsibility to help others whether it is to grow self-leadership skills or provide some expert advice.

4. **F = Follow-up.** No one likes to wait for un-returned phone calls or emails. Professionals make it a habit to follow-up on everything and accept responsibility when they fail to engage in that behavior.

5. **E = Empathy.** Professionals know how to be empathetic. This characteristic is a one of the signs of high emotional intelligence and a predictor for leadership success.

6. **S = Self-confident.** When individuals are self confident, they do not have to put others down at their own expense. These individuals have a high sense of balanced self-esteem and role awareness.

7. **S = Sustainable.** Professionals are truly sustainable in that they can continue forward when times become difficult. Their ethics and beliefs keep them focused.

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Finally, the 360-degree survey has become more prominent as leaders realize new levels of collaboration and alliance are required both internally and externally to the company. This tool captures the strength (or weakness) of those skills and reinforces the necessity of them.

Designed properly, 360's identify and measure the 7 – 10 most important competencies (see Talent Journey's June newsletter for definition of competencies) needed for business success. The unique strategy and culture of an organization are cornerstones to identifying the most relevant competencies. For this reason, "off the shelf" 360-degree surveys rarely fit the specific needs of an organization. It is to the benefit of the organization to customize the 360-degree survey to reflect its unique business success factors.



There are many advantages to utilizing a 360-degree survey. They include:

**More Accurate Feedback** Multi-rater surveys are more balanced and accurate. Without this type of instrument, it is at the discretion of the supervisor or manager to evaluate an employee's contributions to the organization. This can lead to either over or understated assessments of performance. Multi-rater input provides assurance that no single individual's perception "speaks alone". It is beneficial for both managers and employees to get this performance feedback from a variety of people with whom the employee interacts in order to convey an accurate assessment of the individual.

**Varied Perspectives** Multi-raters ensure the overall feedback is more comprehensive. Perceptions of behaviors often times differ across personality styles and work groups. The same behavior exhibited in one scenario can be perceived in a positive light and be deemed less attractive in another scenario. Often, these differences reflect the personality style of the person giving feedback or the departmental culture. For example, a manager may view the competency of "customer focus" differently than a colleague or customer would. The perception depends on the expectations, personality style, and type of exposure each rater has with the individual being rated. The opportunity to receive performance feedback from a variety of participants provides a more well-rounded view of the individual's competency.

**Approach Eases Anxiety and Engages Participation**

A carefully designed and communicated 360-degree survey provides anonymity and a collegial feel for participants. When designed well, much of the typically anxiety associated with evaluations can be partially diminished. The individuals being evaluated, as well as those providing feedback, are positioned to be treated fairly and objectively. This results in a safe learning environment where all parties have the opportunity to grow and develop without punitive repercussions.

**Opens Up Dialogue** The 360-degree survey tool provides companies with a launching pad to continue, or begin honest and caring discussions. Open dialogue emerges when feedback is treated as a learning opportunity and conversations are bathed in care, sensitivity, and truth. Though most employees can be somewhat nervous about their 360-degree results, they are also curious and interested. The majority of employees want to grow and develop and will respond well to feedback delivered in a positive environment. The dialogue can be even more successful and objective when the results are not tied to performance reviews and merit, but instead are leveraged as a pure learning and development tool.



**Appropriate performance and career development** The 360-degree survey adds perspective in assessing an individual's competency and career advancement potential. We have all seen examples where employees were promoted and precious dollars were spent training an individual for a job they were not well suited. The 360-degree survey can help corporations better position their employees for success. Taking it one more step, the 360-degree survey can be used to help place stellar employee in increasing responsible positions to advance the company's success. Development plans written in response to the 360-degree survey results motivate employees to grow, develop and stay dedicated to the firm.

**Assesses Strengths and Gaps in Teams** In addition to evaluating individuals utilizing a 360-degree survey, the results can also be tabulated to evaluate the strengths and gaps of a team or department. This analysis provides information to help assign projects and goals consistent with strength areas within the teams. The information can also be used to develop a group training plan.

In both cases, resources (whether people or training budget dollars) are utilized more intentionally and effectively when objective multi-rater performance data is collected.

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**Communicating Business Expectations** One “by-product” of instituting a 360-degree survey is that all participants clearly understand the company’s core competency expectations. A 360-degree survey powerfully communicates these expectations to all participants. As Demming states, “we improve what we measure.” Backing up a step, the actual process of defining and narrowing the core competencies generates consensus and alignment among the leadership team. The power of this discussion should not be underestimated. Through the 360-degree survey design and implementation process, everyone in the organization becomes acutely alert to the key performance drivers within the organization.

Although the main advantages are explored in more detail in this article, the trickle-down effects can also be beneficial. It is advantageous for corporations to use information gleaned from the 360-degree process to update job descriptions, improve internal relations, and bring teams back to the mission and goals of the organization. Implementation of this type of survey is for everyone. It clarifies strategy, improves performance and grows the competency of your people.

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8. **I = Integrity.** Integrity is putting your values into action; doing the right thing when no one else is looking without personal gain or benefit; and accepting a potential personal cost.



9. **O = Optimize all interactions.** This is critical because professionals do not negate the value of people. They look to see how one interaction can benefit someone else even before himself or herself.

10. **N = Nimble.** Being flexible and open to change allows these individuals to be quick on their feet and nimble to the opportunities that they encounter on a daily basis.

11. **A = Awareness.** Having a high level of awareness of themselves, the marketplace, the community and even the world helps these individuals continually stay on top of things.

12. **L = Leadership.** Last, but not least, professionals demonstrate exceptional leadership skills and even more importantly self-leadership skill. For if you cannot lead yourself, you cannot lead others.

**Leadership Coaching Tip:** Take a few moments to revisit this list and determine if there are any areas to be further developed. Remember the origins of the word professional – to avow before and are your actions in alignment with your beliefs?

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## One Minute Ideas

### Roadblocks to Success

Here are some career ‘mind-barriers’ found especially among new entrants to the workforce, from **News From Kaplan**, a fact sheet published by Simon & Schuster.

- ✓ **Waiting to be discovered.** Instead of making contacts, such people think they will be magically rewarded with fame and riches.
- ✓ **Impostor belief.** Some people feel they’re not really qualified to do the kind of work their employers want them to do. They’re afraid of being exposed as incompetent.
- ✓ **I shouldn’t get paid for what I do:** It’s easy for me. This belief usually crops up among people who are talented and love their work.
- ✓ **Fear of failure.** New workforce entrants often fear they won’t be hired or will end up penniless.
- ✓ **Fear of success.** Some people are afraid of doing well because they can’t imagine being recognized as an expert in their fields. They may even think that fame and fortune will hurt them in some way. They may think that family and friends will like them better if they stay “small.”

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# *The Spirit of Leadership Column*

## *Investing Your Time*

One of the greatest lessons in time management can be learned when you realize the difference between “spending time” and “investing time”. The dictionary defines “spend” as: to use up, exhaust, consume.

If you spend, you have no return. “Invest,” on the other hand, is defined as: to spend with the expectation of some satisfaction, of obtaining an income or profit.

Contrary to many other areas, with time, many people spend far more than they invest. Most of us talk about wasting time, but spend inordinate amounts in frivolous activities that do little or nothing to propel us towards our life achievement. For some reason, we don't have the same attitude about time as we do with money, electricity, food, even something as insignificant as paper clips. Most of us are trained not to waste paper, to turn off the lights so that we don't waste electricity, both at work and at home. Yet we continue to treat our time ... precious moments of our lives, that once spent, can never be retrieved ... as if we had an inexhaustible supply.



We have a funny relationship with time. We have a funny relationship with money. It's strange how we link the two of them. There is a saying that we hear all the time: "time is money". Time isn't money. In case you think that time is money, let me be the first to tell you that time is not money: time is time and money is money. They are very different. The problem is that we confuse them. The problem is also that we have a relationship with time and a relationship with money, and in many cases, they are backwards. If we saw some one with a stack of bills, throwing them down a sewer, we would believe he was crazy. Why? Because money is valuable, not that easy to come by, and you don't want to waste it. If you were to lose all of your money, all of your wealth was lost, you would be very upset, but tomorrow you could begin amassing it again. Money has this property of being infinite and plentiful.

You cannot compute how many trillions and trillions are out there. It adds interest while you count. For all practical purposes, it is limitless. For all intents, it is infinite.

Now let's take a look at time. It's very different. I suggest that time is very limited, very finite. The average life span is 74; let's give you 90. You can figure out how much time you have left. Take 90 and subtract your current age. Multiply that by 365; that's how many days. Multiply that by 24, which gives you the hours. Multiply that by 60, which gives you the minutes. Multiply that by 60 and that gives you the seconds. The number you have left is getting smaller with each passing second. It is finite. That number will come to zero, no matter how rich, powerful or famous you are.

Most people I know treat money with enormous respect. They budget, they read magazines, go to seminars, whatever. But ... time? Did you ever hear someone say that he killed a couple of hours at the airport? ... That's worse than throwing money in the sewer! To kill time makes no sense! It's backwards! If, when you were born, you were given 5 million dollars. And that would be your allotment for this lifetime. You can't get any more. You would budget and carefully allot the money because that's all you could get. Time is that: you have a certain limited amount. It's time to start budgeting, to begin to use it wisely. Once it runs out, that's it!

If you are not where you want to be, or who you want to be, make different choices. You have the power to choose where you live, with whom you live, and how you live. You have the power to choose where you work, what you do, and the quality of your work. You choose your level of success or failure. You choose to spend or invest your time.

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*"Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you've lost it you can never get it back."*

~ Harvey Mackey

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