



THE  
ART and SCIENCE  
*of*  
360°  
Feedback

SECOND EDITION

RICHARD LEPSINGER

ANNTOINETTE D. LUCIA

The Art and Science  
of 360-Degree Feedback



# The Art and Science of 360- Degree Feedback

Second Edition

Richard Lepsinger  
Anntoinette D. Lucia

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*For my father, who believed all things were possible—R.L.*

*To Al, Ben, and Jesse, with love—A.D.L.*



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# Preface

It's hard to believe that it's been more than ten years since we wrote the first edition of *The Art and Science of 360-Degree Feedback*. To our surprise, the book has continued to be in demand, and we are pleased to report that it is considered one of the best and most complete resources on the topic.

Because of that, our editor asked whether we would be interested in writing a second edition. Initially we both hesitated. Would there be anything new to say? We hadn't actually looked closely at the book in several years and we were shocked at how dated the material had become. Some of the companies we used as examples no longer existed, and we never even mentioned the Internet or the use of web-based technology. As it turns out, we found that the book needed a serious refreshing, so in this edition you'll find new examples of companies that are using 360, information on how the Internet has revolutionized the 360 process, and tips for getting the most out of this exciting technology.

But we were still concerned that there might not be a lot new to say about 360. To answer that question we decided to survey both line managers and HR professional as well as our colleagues to see what their experience has been over the last ten years. We were glad to learn that the uses of 360 have expanded as people have become more comfortable with the process and experienced its benefits. We were also glad to learn that, despite the many advances and the increased number of organizations using 360, the questions and client needs on which we based the first book are still relevant today: "How do I go about selecting the best approach

to 360 for my needs?” “How can I ensure that we get the most out of a 360-degree feedback process?” With this as confirmation and reinforcement, we decided to plow ahead.

The book is written with three audiences in mind. The first consists of human resource professionals who are just beginning to look at 360-degree feedback as a means to address the business needs of their organizations. These are people who have not had much experience using 360-degree feedback to solve business problems and have many basic questions that require answers if they are going to use the technology successfully.

The second audience consists of line managers who have heard a lot about “this 360-degree feedback stuff” and want to understand it well enough to determine whether it is the right approach for their organizations. They also want to be able to have an intelligent conversation with the “experts” who are suggesting that it is. These people need enough information to assess what is required to make the investment in 360-degree feedback pay off and to determine whether the costs are in line with the benefits.

The third group consists of more experienced HR professionals who would like a comprehensive reference work on 360-degree feedback that makes it easy to access the information they are looking for without having to skim through dozens of magazine and journal articles and textbooks.

We organized the book into two parts. Part One—Preparing to Use 360-Degree Feedback—includes everything you need to know and do to start a multi-source feedback process. The first two chapters will help you clarify the business need and determine how 360-degree feedback can help.

*Chapter One, The ABCs of 360-Degree Feedback.* As the title implies, this chapter offers basic information, including a definition of 360-degree feedback and a brief overview of its history and evolution. It also describes how multi-source feedback is being used, and with whom. The chapter ends with a checklist to help you determine whether you and your organization are ready to use this technology.

*Chapter Two, The Uses of 360-Degree Feedback: A Tool for Strategic Change.* This chapter contains case studies that illustrate how a diverse group of companies has successfully used 360-degree feedback to address different organizational issues. These issues include achieving business strategy, supporting culture change, fostering individual development, and enhancing productivity. At the end of the chapter, we summarize the lessons that these companies and others have learned in the course of their experience with 360-degree feedback and offer advice on how to implement the process successfully in your organization.

The next three chapters will help you determine the best method for collecting 360 data and for building support for the process among key decision makers.

*Chapter Three, The Most Important Decision You Will Make: Choosing a Method for Collecting the Feedback.* This chapter discusses and compares the two most common methods for collecting 360-degree feedback—interviews and questionnaires. A list of the pros and cons of each will help you gauge which approach will work best in your situation. The chapter also provides a detailed look at the factors you need to take into account when selecting a questionnaire and provides guidelines you can use to evaluate the questionnaires you are considering.

*Chapter Four, Using Interviews to Augment 360-Degree Feedback.* This chapter focuses on the use of interviews alone to collect data or as a supplement to the data provided by a questionnaire. The advantages and disadvantages of the interview method are described in detail, with advice on how to ensure that the process yields the desired results. Guidelines for conducting an effective interview, preparing reports of your findings, and presenting the feedback to recipients are included.

*Chapter Five, Creating Champions: Selling the Idea to Others in Your Organization.* The last chapter in this section deals with a topic that is not often discussed in the academic or popular press: how to enlist support and commitment for the use of 360-degree feedback among key stakeholders. We outline a strategic process

for achieving this goal, which includes techniques for identifying key stakeholders and their level of support and for overcoming common objections to using 360-degree feedback.

Part Two—Implementing a 360-Degree Feedback System—includes information you will need to help ensure that the process goes smoothly once you have chosen your approach and that it achieves its intended short- and long-term results.

*Chapter Six, Gathering the Feedback: Tips on Administering the 360-Degree Process.* This chapter focuses on how to administer a 360-degree feedback process in a way that increases people’s enthusiasm and ensures a high degree of confidence in the results. It is designed to help you avoid the most common pitfalls encountered during this stage by both describing them and offering tips on how to avoid or overcome them. We also describe several effective techniques for increasing recipients’ sense of ownership of their feedback.

*Chapter Seven, Holding Up the Mirror: Presenting the Feedback.* The emphasis of this chapter is on what you can do to ensure that people get the most out of the 360-degree feedback experience. It describes and compares three methods for delivering the feedback—group workshops, one-on-one meetings, and self-study—and provides criteria for assessing the appropriateness of each method for your situation and audience. Two types of group work sessions are also described in depth—one that focuses on making participants aware of their development needs and one that also provides an opportunity for skill development. The importance of the coach-facilitator is stressed, with advice on how to choose a coach who will best meet the needs of your target population.

*Chapter Eight, Creating Lasting Change: Follow-Up Activities.* In this chapter, we review what needs to be done after the feedback is collected and reviewed to ensure that recipients absorb the messages they have been given and take appropriate action. We describe several techniques that can be used for follow-up, specific strategies for change, and suggestions for making the development

plan a document that drives real learning and change, not just an intellectual exercise.

*Chapter Nine, Enhancing Performance Management Systems.* The most frequently asked question we hear is, “How can 360-degree feedback be used with our HR management systems?” In this chapter, we discuss the benefits and obstacles to using 360-degree feedback in development, appraisal, and compensation systems. Recommendations are provided, along with a list of what is required to make 360-degree feedback a value-added part of each system.



# Acknowledgments

As with our first edition, we spent a fair amount of time planning and researching the topic and choosing what material would be most relevant. And like our work then, the best part was learning from others and using their feedback to help us shape the content of this book.

We are grateful to many people for their help and support during the writing of this book. In particular, we would like to thank:

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Finally, we thank you, the reader, for choosing this book as a resource for yourself and your organization. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it.

July 2008

Richard Lepsinger  
Anntoinette D. (Toni) Lucia

## About the Authors

**Richard Lepsinger** is president of OnPoint Consulting and has a twenty-year track record of success as a human resource consultant and executive. The focus of Rick's work has been on helping organizations close the gap between strategy and execution. He has served as a consultant to leaders and management teams at the American Heart Association, Astra-Zeneca, Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Citibank, Coca-Cola Company, ConocoPhillips, Eisai Inc., GlaxoSmithKline, Goldman Sachs, Johnson & Johnson, KPMG, Lehman Bros., Merck & Co., the NYSE Euronext, Northwestern Mutual Life, Pfizer Inc., Pitney Bowes, Prudential, Siemens Medical Systems, Subaru of America, and UBS, among others.

Rick has extensive experience in formulating and implementing strategic plans, managing change, and talent management. He has addressed executive conferences and made presentations to leadership teams on the topics of leader effectiveness, strategy execution, managing change, performance management, 360-degree feedback and its uses, and developing and using competency models to enhance organizational performance.

Rick has co-authored three books on leadership, including *Flexible Leadership: Creating Value by Balancing Multiple Challenges and Choices* (co-authored with Dr. Gary Yukl), published by Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer; *The Art and Science of 360-Degree Feedback* (co-authored with Toni Lucia), published by Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer; and *The Art and Science of Competency Model*, (co-authored with Toni Lucia), published by Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

He is also the author of several book chapters, including “Performance Management and Decision Making” in *The Handbook of Multisource Feedback*; “The Art and Science of Competency Modeling” in *What Smart Trainers Know*; and “Using 360-Degree Feedback in a Talent Management System” in *The Talent Management Handbook: Creating Organizational Excellence by Identifying, Developing, and Promoting Your Best People*, as well as numerous articles on leadership and organizational effectiveness. His most recent article, “Why Integrating the Leading and Managing Roles Is Essential for Organizational Effectiveness,” appeared in *Organizational Dynamics* and is one of their most frequently downloaded articles.

**Anntoinette D. (Toni) Lucia** is president of West End Consulting, Inc. Toni’s consulting work has included facilitating strategic organizational change, team building for senior management teams, ensuring the successful integration of teams following mergers, designing, conducting, and evaluating executive and management development programs, one-on-one executive coaching, using feedback systems to help individual executives improve their effectiveness, and linking human resource plans to strategic plans.

Toni has most recently served as a consultant for Colgate Palmolive, HSBC North America (formerly Household International), Gartner, GE Commercial Finance, JP Morgan Chase, Lehman Brothers, McGraw-Hill, MetLife, New York Life, the NYSE Euronext, UBS, and Warburg Pincus. She worked as a consultant for GE’s Work-Out! and Change Acceleration Process. Toni designed a program for the Center for Creative Leadership that focuses on career and professional development planning for high-potential managers. She has co-authored two validated 360 feedback instruments and has also made several presentations on leadership to a wide variety of audiences, including the World Business Forum in New York City.

Toni is the co-author of two books, *The Art and Science of 360-Degree Feedback* and *The Art and Science of Competency Models*, both published by Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer and both translated into

Japanese. She has also contributed to numerous publications, including *The Practice of Management Development*, *The Impact of Leadership*, *Training* magazine, *Training and Development* magazine, *The Handbook of Multisource Feedback*, *What Smart Trainers Know*, and *The Talent Management Handbook: Creating Organizational Excellence by Identifying, Developing, and Promoting Your Best People*.

Toni has contributed significantly to the training and consulting industry. Association members elected her to two terms on the board of directors of the Instructional Systems Association, the premier association of learning and performance improvement consulting firms. She was recently presented with a prestigious award for contributions that have advanced the association's vision and strategic direction.