What Is a 360 Review in the Workplace?
By Susan M. Heathfield, Updated August 01, 2016
https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-a-360-review-1917541

The 360 review is a professional feedback opportunity that enables a group of coworkers to provide feedback on an employee’s performance. The feedback is generally asked for by the manager to whom the employee reports.

Coworkers who participate in the 360 review usually include the boss, several peers, reporting staff, and functional managers with whom the employee works regularly.

Hence, the name of the feedback opportunity comes from the fact that performance feedback is solicited from all directions in the organization.

The 360 review differs from an employee appraisal which traditionally provides the employee with the opinion of his or her performance as viewed by the manager. These employee appraisals tend to focus on the progress the employee achieved on job goals.

The manager may seek feedback from other employees, especially managers, about the employee's performance, but it's not part of the formal system.

In contrast, the 360 review focuses more directly on the skills and contributions that an employee makes. The goal of the feedback is to provide a balanced view to an employee of how others view his or her contribution and performance in areas such as leadership, teamwork, interpersonal communication and interaction, management, contribution, work habits, accountability, vision, and more, depending on the employee's job.

The review allows coworkers to assess the employee’s impact on furthering goal accomplishment and positive customer results as observed by team members.

How Does 360 Review Feedback Work?
Organizations use a variety of methods to seek 360 feedback about employees. Some are more common than others and all depend on the culture and climate of the organization.

In most organizations that ask for 360 feedback, the manager asks for and receives the feedback.

The manager then analyzes the feedback looking for patterns of behavior to note. The manager searches for both positive and constructive feedback.

The goal is to provide the employee with the key and important points without overwhelming him or her with too much data. Often the manager has sought feedback in response to specific questions so the feedback is easier to organize and share.

Some organizations use instruments that are tallied electronically and that give employees a score in each area assessed. Some processes are completely online. Others still rely on open-ended questions.

Organizations also hire external consultants to administer the surveys, usually when managers are receiving a 360 review. The consultants then analyze and share the data with the manager and with the manager and staff in some cases. In the best of these circumstances, the manager and staff join together to plan improvements for both the manager and for the department.
Progressive Organizations and 360 Feedback
In more progressive organizations that have built a climate of trust, employees provide 360 feedback directly to each other.

The manager does not function as a filter or go-between to prevent employees from sharing their feedback directly with each other.

No matter how you collect and share the 360 feedback, you must always take care that the feedback is as descriptive as possible so that the employee has something tangible to improve. When sharing is open, make sure also that you solicit frequent employee feedback about how the process is working and affecting employees.

In any case, how you introduce, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of the 360 review process is critical to its success or failure. You will want to take a look at sample questions for 360 reviews.