

Profiles CheckPoint 360° Competency Feedback System

History, Development and Research Information

The Need for 360° Instruments

Beginning in the early part of the Industrial Psychology movement, methods were sought that could help managers perform one of their most difficult tasks: evaluating employee performance. Traditional performance evaluations were implemented, but halo effects soon rendered them not useful. Supervisors came to apply them in ways that served little additional purpose but to reinforce their single-point assessments. In an effort to add another level of review, peer-assessments were initially attempted. This trend lasted through several iterations, but with some of the same inadequacies. Impact was also felt from a variety of self-report measures (psychological tests, interest inventories, skill measures, etc.), with the addition of more observers. These other perspectives added something to the process, but not all that was necessary.

Observations made from the use of both organizational surveys and employee opinion surveys also added an element to 360° assessments. They contributed by demonstrating the benefit of using a group of information providers to add to the accuracy of the obtained information. This new knowledge leads easily to the use of a focused, smaller group to voice observations and opinions concerning the individual or “self.”

360° instruments, so named because they take their view from a “circle” of observers, were developed to accomplish several objectives:

1. To add another level of objectivity to an often subjective process
2. To solicit input from those who work with and for the individual, creating a wider perspective
3. To minimize the impact of a single observer’s overly biased view
4. To fulfill a need in perceived accuracy (therefore lending credibility) and the fairness necessary to hold support

Development History-- Profiles CheckPoint 360° System™

The development of the *Profiles CheckPoint 360° Competency Feedback System™* began in 1992 when a major oil company asked us to create a custom 360° instrument for use by their Corporate Management Development Team. The project development team consisted of two internal industrial/organizational psychologists and one I/O psychologist from Reid, Merrill, Brunson and Associates. Focus groups (which were cross-functional groups of employees from various levels) were organized to define and develop the critical competencies needed in the organization to sustain the competitive advantage in the marketplace.

The core competencies sought were to be somewhat different than those used in the past. The development team was charged with naming and defining competencies according to this definition: measurable, observable behaviors (skills, traits, and characteristics) that are subject to modification or change.

Inherent in this definition is the notion that before you measure competencies at all, there must be a reason. Part of that reason is to assess where gaps occur in the various observations, but most of the reason is centered on the potential to make changes where needed. Where gaps occur in defined competencies, there should be a way to make a change that is good for both the individual and the organization.

As “core competencies” that supported the visions and values of the organization were identified, the focus groups also developed statements associated with each of them. These brief statements were written clearly in the active voice and became the basis of the survey for gathering input from a group of raters.

The survey questions were refined to achieve content validity, measure the determined competencies and distinguish the performance level of individuals against these competencies.

This survey was then reviewed and critiqued by the design team, senior management, the legal department, human resources and the functional users to determine suitability for the organization. Next, a pretest was done to determine readability, completeness and clarity. A pilot of 40 people was

completed, refinements were made and the survey was used company-wide for line, middle and senior managers. A total of 450 people participated. Following the completion by all members in the organization at these levels, feedback was solicited and refinements were made, as appropriate.

Independent measures of performance such as productivity figures and Supervisor's appraisals were used to determine the validity of the feedback. Using this model, similar projects were completed for the leading call center operation in the United States (TeleTech), the largest regional specialty equipment distributor and installation company (I.S.E.C.) and one of the largest producers of social greetings products in the world (American Greetings).

By 1994, the expanded design team for the 360° project was established. It consisted of clinical psychologists, industrial/organizational psychologists, business people, graphic designers and software designers (with well over 60 years of combined professional experience in assessment design, validation, use and implementation). This design team completed extensive research into the utility, implementation, theory and pertinent literature published on 360° instruments. Also studied were general leadership development processes, features used in current 360° instruments, the clarity and usability of existing survey instruments and various feedback reports. Research and meta-analysis techniques were used to refine the survey and the report. This process allowed the removal of duplicate items, selection of items that contributed uniquely to the scales, a strengthening of the scales and a movement toward clear, behavioral statements.

The result was a standardized survey consisting of:

- 1) Eight Skill Clusters (core competencies)
- 2) Eighteen Skill Groups
- 3) 70 survey questions

The Eight Core Competencies

The structure of the instrument defines the eight “core competencies” which represent the most critical leadership performance areas. These core competencies are:

- **Communication** – Including the skills of listening to others, processing information and communicating effectively.
- **Leadership** – Covering the abilities of instilling trust, providing direction and delegating responsibility.
- **Adaptability** – Encompassing the skills of adjusting to circumstances and thinking creatively.
- **Relationships** – Assessing the capabilities to build relationships and facilitate team success.
- **Task Management** – Gauging the level of aptitude for working efficiently and competently.
- **Production** – Appraising the ability to initiate action and achieve results.
- **Development of Others** – Measuring proficiencies in cultivating individual talents and in motivating successfully.
- **Personal Development** – Including the behaviors of displaying commitment and seeking improvement.

These universal competencies were determined to be the most suitable based on the research completed by the design team. The individual survey questions were designed to define the actual measurable skills and behaviors for these core competencies.

The *Checkpoint 360*® Feedback Report

The *Checkpoint 360*® Feedback Report was developed with the goal of distilling and presenting this complex data in a meaningful, simple, and graphic way. The usability of the report by the actual user was of paramount importance here.

The report is structured to appeal to all types of users by revealing an increasing level of detail, page by page. For those who prefer the summary format, the opening pages reveal only big picture information. For those who

want all of the details and specifics, there are complete descriptions and statistics. This detail begins with comparisons of self with all other observers. Then, it progressively works through more levels until finally, the items themselves are ranked.

The design team researched other 360° feedback products and found that most 360° reports are based on compiled survey results, perceptual differences and comparisons to normed data. The team's goal was to present data in a clear, concise, complete report, avoiding the confusing formats and presentations of other 360° products that often exhibited serious flaws such as omissions of essential information.

The ***CheckPoint 360° Feedback Report*** took the unique approach of presenting the information in color using simple graphical comparisons with detailed explanations relevant to each page. This use of color, the graphical presentation style and simplicity has made ***CheckPoint 360°*** stand out as a unique and superior 360° report. (Please see sample report for complete view.)

In addition, when completing the user research for ***CheckPoint 360°***, it was determined that one of the most important and desired features was the *Development Suggestions* section, containing action steps. Our design team solicited the help of experts in the field of leadership development and management training to design and write the action steps and development summary pages. They are considered to be one of ***CheckPoint 360°***'s most useful features.

Use for self-improvement was a major design consideration of the ***CheckPoint 360°***. The reports needed to allow managers to understand areas for improvement and let them focus on appropriate methods to accomplish these improvements.

Another goal was to provide a method of assessing and aligning the perceptions of the "BOSS" and the "SELF" in the areas of objectives, concerns, and need for improvement. It was decided that six critical skill groups would be selected independently by SELF, and six independently selected by the BOSS. These are then compared and contrasted as Critical Skill Groups, special areas for consideration and development.

Features and Benefits of CheckPoint Reports

1. Simple sources of input using paper and pencil, Internet, or computer
2. Behavioral focus assuring credibility of responses
3. Ramp-up training and usage training follows report style
4. Self-improvement for the user
5. Reports are clear, visually pleasing and technically sound
6. Readability aimed at all types of consumers.

Psychometric Properties

Reliability

Three studies were conducted to establish the reliability of *CheckPoint 360* for both internal reliability and test-retest reliability. The internal reliability sample consisted of 1,573 observers who had completed the *CheckPoint 360* and were randomly chosen from the Reid, Merrill, Brunson and Associates database. The surveys had been conducted from 1994 through 1996. The purpose of internal reliability is to insure that there is homogeneity of content within the Skill Groups. It is important that the items within each Skill Cluster correlate, and that conceptual clarity is maintained. Results of the internal reliability analyses (*Table 2*) were that the inter-item correlation ranged from $r = .12$ to $r = .85$, with $p < .05$ on all but eight items. In further research using factor analytic techniques, the results yielded a seven-factor solution with alphas ranging from .75 to .90.

To assess the reliability measure of test-retest (the stability of an instrument over time), data were collected from 49 managers during two time periods, at intervals of approximately eight weeks each. Looking at self-ratings, the test-retest reliability for the 8 Skill Clusters ranged from .21 to .83, with a 95% or greater level of confidence. While nine items did not prove to be stable over time, the overall Skill Clusters that contained each of these items were found to maintain good stability (*Tables 2 and 3*).

Validity and Norms

The normative *CheckPoint 360* database consists of over 3,600 raters of leaders and managers from a variety of companies and industries. As a matter of routine, concurrent validation research is conducted periodically.

This is accomplished by comparing results from the *CheckPoint 360°* with performance review criterion data designed to measure the same leadership competencies in a more general way the same leadership competencies. Overall, the results indicate a useful relationship between performance evaluation competencies and *CheckPoint 360°* results (See Table 4).

Favorable Zone

The development of the *Favorable Zone* was a positive result of this research. This zone was formulated to collapse the comparison data into a simple band, indicating an expected result for a *CheckPoint 360°* completed for a good-performing manager. The width of this zone represents the average standard deviation of all responses to all survey items by all respondents reporting on these good-performing managers.

The placement of the zone is around the average, or mean, for participants who were judged to be successful according to the above mentioned performance review measures. This includes managers and leaders in a wide range of industries and organizations. The *Favorable Zone* is not meant to be a standard for individual companies, or a “must-achieve” target, it simply reports collected information. Each user of the *CheckPoint 360°* system is encouraged to review the results for their employees with this *Favorable Zone* to determine its effectiveness with these key competencies.

Flags

While some 360° feedback reports describe a dispersion measure (the variability of the response data), the *CheckPoint 360° Feedback Report* only gives an indicator of this dispersion when the variability is significant. Our research suggests that a response pattern that varies by 3 points or more indicates significant dispersion on an item.

Flags are used to indicate this pattern on the *CheckPoint 360° Survey Summary* items. The flags show which reference group or groups have a “lack of consensus.” An example of a flagged item would be the response pattern for that item of 2, 3, 3, 5 from the Direct Report group of four respondents. The 2 and the 5 responses differ by 3 or more points, hence the setting of the flag. Flags in the All Observers category are set when a response pattern across reference groups varies by 3 or more points. For example, the response pattern of 2(DR), 3(DR), 4(DR), 5(Peer), 4(Peer), 3(Peer), 3(Boss) would yield a flag for the All Observer category (again a 3 or more point spread from the 2 in Direct Reports to the 5 in Peer).

Gaps

Gaps are arrows that indicate significant perception differences, or differences between reference groups. The distance between reference groups that triggers a Gap widens as we move from Skill Clusters to Skill Groups to individual survey questions. The reason for this is that the distance between Skill Clusters (aggregate score of all items within the 8 Skill Clusters) is more pronounced than the distance between Skill Groups or survey question responses.

Table 1
Alpha Coefficients

Skill Cluster Skill Group	Alpha's
Leadership	.86
Instills Trust	.63
Provides Direction	.62
Delegates Responsibility	.69
 Adaptability	 .69
Adjusts To Circumstances	.39
Thinks Creatively	.68
 Relationships	 .77
Builds Personal Relationships	.72
Facilitates Team Success	.55
 Task Management	 .78
Works Efficiently	.67
Works Competently	.73
 Production	 .61
Takes Action	.72
Achieves Results	.63
 Development of Others	 .58
Cultivates Individual Talents	.55
Motivates Successfully	.35
 Personal Development	 .55
Displays Commitment	.39
Seeks Improvement	.49
 Communication	 .81
Communicates Effectively	.59
Processes Information	.67
Listens to Others	.83

n = 1573

Table 2
 Test-Retest Reliability for Items
CheckPoint 360® Self Report

1) .41	21) .41	41) .73	61) .55
2) .52	22) .46	42) .34	62) .28ns
3) .78	23) .79	43) .74	63) .36
4) .24ns	24) .60	44) .55	64) .72
5) .77	25) .63	45) .41	65) .58
6) .38	26) .24ns	46) .56	66) .63
7) .47	27) .70	47) .30ns	67) .78
8) .49	28) .77	48) .51	68) .72
9) .52	29) .29 ns	49) .68	69) .39
10) .69	30) .38	50) .81	70) .77
11) .36	31) .52	51) .73	
12) .30ns	32) .29	52) .40	
13) .34	33) .24 ns	53) .52	
14) .77	34) .56	54) .29n	
15) .40	35) .72	55) .63	
16) .37	36) .83	56) .68	
17) .21ns	37) .68	57) .66	
18) .49	38) .59	58) .29	
19) .63	39) .66	59) .48	
20) .55	40) .47	60) .60	

Note: All items $p < .05$ unless marked ns
 n = 49

Table 3
Test-Retest Reliability for Skill Clusters
CheckPoint 360• Self Report

1. Communication	.48
2. Leadership	.52
3. Adaptability	.43
4. Relationships	.33
5. Task Management	.58
6. Production	.53
7. Development of Others	.50
8. Personal Development	.44

All items $p < .05$
n = 49

Table 4
Performance Review Criterion and
CheckPoint 360• Skill Cluster Correlations

	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	6*	7*	8*
Communication	.31**	.27**	.28**	.12	.19*	.21**	.20**	.19*
Leadership	.25**	.22*	.04	.17*	.09	.19*	.28**	.23*
Adaptability	.27**	.17*	.02	.19*	.07	.11	.22*	.26**
Relationships	.19*	.13	.01	-.03	.09	.19*	.25**	.15
Task Management	.03	.10	.33**	.29**	.16	-.01	.05	.13
Production	.23**	.11	.13	.11	.03	.13	.04	.20*
Development of Others	.26**	.19*	.03	.13	.09	.24**	.12	.11
Personal Development	.20*	.05	.03	.11	.02	.09	.13	.15

***Performance Review Criteria**

1. Management of People
2. Teamwork
3. Time/Task Management
4. Decision Making and Judgment
5. Technical Knowledge
6. Communication Skills
7. Interpersonal/Leadership Skills
8. Overall Job Effectiveness

* p < .05

** p < .01

n = 138