Title

The possibilities of 360 degree feedback incorporated into school based performance management systems.

John Petrie   Principal   Gulf Harbour School

Sabbatical report Term 3 2009.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Board and staff in enabling this opportunity to be realised.

Executive Summary.

This inquiry into the value add of incorporating the practice of 360 degree feed back into performance management when reviewed within schools and business sectors found little evidence to suggest this is a valid and well supported approach. Further, it generated a number of thoughts to ponder on why education environments seem open to trialling the concept where corporate and not for profit contexts have expressed significant reservation and caution.

Purpose.

Increasingly within the education environment there was a move to align performance management and professional development, the inclusion of self review processes and the value add of peer coaching. There is an apparent lift in enabling the voice of the student to be more significant in the feedback and impact of the teacher, as well as a developing culture of direct feedback from parents. Accordingly, it seemed a small step to formally adopt a model of 306 feedbacks. The dominant structure, being the ability to generate a rich source of feedback from the various stakeholders and colleagues within the realm of influence held by the staff member.
Feed back is not uncommon in teaching, to formalise this and develop a structure then enabled this type of responses seemed worthy of consideration.

Activities undertaken.

This process of review was neither scientific nor exhaustive. It did however involve background reading, individual discussion and visits with a significant number of schools and a number of corporate and not for profit organisations.
Overall, the schools satisfaction with various individual approaches to performance management ranged from compliance predominant behaviours to reasonably effective structures. The majority of schools indentified the overall benefits of performance

management was overall less than effective to effective. Very few had a structure that both provided effective and honest feedback and significant improvement. Compliance and systemic driven processes were dominant approaches.

Overwhelming was, however the desired to encircle the staff with both qualitative and quantitative data and commentary that supported higher ownership, change management and self review.

Background Information

360-degree feedback, also known as "multi-ratter feedback," "multisource feedback," or "multisource assessment," is feedback that comes from all around an employee. "360" refers to the 360 degrees in a circle, with an individual figuratively in the centre of the circle. Feedback is provided by subordinates, peers, and supervisors. It also includes a self-assessment and, in some cases, feedback from external sources such as customers and suppliers or other interested stakeholders. It may be contrasted with "upward feedback," where managers are given feedback by their direct reports, or a "traditional performance appraisal," where the employees are most often reviewed only by their managers.

The results from 360-degree feedback are often used by the person receiving the feedback to plan training and development. Results are also used by some organisations in making administrative decisions, such as pay or promotion. When this is the case, the 360 assessment is for evaluation purposes, and is sometimes called a "360-degree review."

However, there is a great deal of controversy as to whether 360-degree feedback should be used exclusively for development purposes, or should be used for appraisal purposes as well (Waldman et al., 1998). There is also controversy regarding whether 360-degree feedback improves employee performance, and it has even been suggested that it may decrease shareholder value (Paul & Kay, 2002).

The consistent message from managers and heads of H.R (human resource) departments is that unless the culture of the business or organisation is both strong and positioned for such an approach the risks and negative impacts of this outweigh any advantages or opportunities.

 Corporate contexts are cautious in using the model and identify the need to have a strong culture and systems approach to enable and utilising the potential of this approach.

Not for profits showed no evidence of incorporating this into their practice (subjective analysis only).

Findings.

1. Not recommended unless strong systems, resourcing and culture to enable the approach.
2. The process would take least 3 years to bed down to release any significant gains.
3. Can be disempowering and produce the opposite to desired outcomes.

Thoughts.

The model of "raters" and 360 feedbacks is flawed and unlikely to produce the desired outcomes within the structures, resourcing and broad philosophy of most schools. There is however the opportunity to report, manage and review the "whole staff member". This would be consistent with the increasing shift to report to the "whole child".

To build a rich picture that can be laid out "around the staff member" and facilitated by a skilled up line manager is worthy of further consideration and shouldn't necessarily be packaged within the same model as the traditional 360 approach.

To build a "dashboard" of indicators that individually are valued and collectively significant is worth considering further.

Specifically, this could look like this:

Pedagogically
- A matrix of questions and challenges designed to highlight individual growth along a continuum of change.
- Self reflection and journaling.
- Recorded change stories
- Evidence in practice

Professional practice
- Meeting of professional standards
- Attestation processes
- Feed back on specific areas of development, priority or focus.

Operational influence
- Correlation between teacher and class (school) donations.
- Data reports around incident management.
- Print management reports
- Internet usage reports.
- Software usage reports.
- Incident management logs.

Administrative
- Data around dead line compliance.
- School systems compliance

Student outcomes
- Student movement / progress data
- Patterns of growth /weakness beyond a year
- Walk through feed back
- Class environment reviews
- Student Library books taken

Innovations
- Demonstration of innovations in practice
- IT goals
- Ability to reflect learning in a multi media contexts

Leadership and responsibility
- Peer support
- Roles undertaken

Management
- Efficiency strategies
- Self reviews
- Time and self management
- Management of class web sites reviews

Conclusions.

The "spirit" of 360 is to gather feedback from all around. To take this concept but not the:"raters" approach, build a rich picture beyond both compliance and achievement is worthy of further consideration.

As learning is influenced by many related and unrelated sectors, so to, to recognise that the role of a teacher is well beyond the classroom and student achievement data. That the whole child is catered for through and by a "whole teacher" operating with a huge range of both implicit and explicit skills in a broad range of contexts.

That an influential teacher is also measureable through engagement with community, ownership and alignment with the organisation and outworking of values and beliefs, gives rise to the suggestion that to built a rich picture of influence and impact around the individual teacher is a sound approach.

To lay this out as a "dashboard" around a teacher, facilitated by a skilled up line manager to fine tune, prioritise and provoke high levels of self review and reflection would bring both the performance management and professional development to the surface and alignment for change and improvement.

Wonderings.

Why are we in education so open to public scrutiny when in other service industries the level of public review is not as strong?

Sub thoughts:
> Apart from the obvious involvement of parents in their children and desire for high quality outcomes, have we in fact naively fostered the "decreased performance drop" evidenced in 360 feedback models? Has public scrutiny actually lessened and diminished quality outcomes? Have the self protection, evidenced based and appealing to stakeholders (raters) lessened outputs and outcomes?

Because performance review in education is not salary based does this make review process less or more open and honest?

Sub thoughts:
> Personal responsibility and ownership seems higher when remuneration is involved, complimented by the associated compliance, risk avoidance and individualism. However with the absence of linkage to remuneration is it any more honest, innovation friendly and self improvement driven?

Are schools as learning institutions further along the 360 continuum or further behind than the corporate contexts – who are leading?

Sub thoughts:
> In light of the minimal operations funding, training and skill base in human resource management within the education sector you would have to conclude schools are behind in this field. Administration is weighted more highly than human resource management. Because schools are generally under resource and skilled in H.R strategy and structure are we constrained to compliance behaviours?

Why do schools pursue peer coaching, review processes whilst most sectors chose an up line strategy?

Sub thoughts:
Is the by product of this approach tokenism and incremental improvement? Does this approach produce more or less leaders and pathways for improvement?

In summary.
The chances to stop reflect and discuss Human resource management strategies, ideals and possibilities is something we rarely get to do in school contexts. The opportunity, time to ponder and to have more questions than answers is possibly the true goal of a sabbatical for which I am grateful. We need more of this opportunity.

JG Petrie