



London HR Connection

MEMBERS of the London HR Connection meet monthly to network with their peers and hear from leading figures in the industry. January's event was a highly successful informal networking evening when over 50 HR professionals gathered in one of Soho's finest venues.

There was no formal presentation on the evening but Jo Ayoubi, the business development director at Track Surveys, one of the London HR Connection's new corporate sponsors and a provider of leading edge, online tools to support people development and talent management, has been talking to members about the use of 360 degree feedback.

If you thought that 360 degree feedback was just another psychometric tool that makes interesting reading (sound familiar?) and then gets shoved in a drawer until the annual appraisal, then think again! For the last six years we've been helping innovative and ambitious organisations use customised 360 degree feedback to make a visible and measurable difference to their people's skills and leadership.

» **So what exactly is 360 degree feedback?** 360 degree feedback, also known as multi-level or multi-source feedback, or 360 appraisal, is a way of getting evidence about someone's skills and behaviours, not just from their line manager, but from all the people he or she works with. These can include peers, reports, managers, coaches and customers.

360 degree feedback is structured – so everyone answers the same questions about the person being appraised. The individual scores

themselves too. That way everyone can reflect on the same skills and behaviours and the individual can see how their own perceptions compare with those of their colleagues.

» **What can you use 360 degree feedback for?** You can use 360 degree feedback wherever you need to help people to understand their own working styles, how they come across to their colleagues, and where their strengths and learning needs lie. And because it's customised, you can tailor it exactly to your organisation's needs, whether you're measuring new managers' skills, graduates or senior leadership behaviours.

And because it's a consistent communication tool, it can increase employee engagement quite dramatically.

» **How 360 degree feedback has benefited Plan.** One of the organisations Track works with is Plan, an international charity that looks after children in developing countries. Track helped Plan to develop the multi-lingual 360 degree feedback that now runs across the globe to develop their leadership skills in the non-governmental development agency sector.

Gary Ford, the e-learning advisor at Plan, explained how the charity uses the ongoing 360 degree feedback: "Initially, we use 360 to benchmark where our managers are in terms of their competencies. Then the feedback from their peers and subordinates is used to give us, and them, an idea where they currently are and helps us to assess their training needs."

Plan then runs the 360 again at the end of the Certificate in Management programme and is able to assess the uplift in skills for each manager and for the whole group.

Ford described two specific examples of how the 360 feedback made a difference: "In one of our Asian offices the feedback changed significantly. It told us that the manager in question was now easier to work with, more approachable and, put simply, smiling more whereas previous feedback had indicated that the person had not been approachable.

"Another example was during the Kenyan crisis when someone had been perceived as being a little too 'light-headed' about things. The 360 helped the person recognise this and make changes saying that "had I continued to manage in my previous style I would not have had the success I did in managing the team through this difficult international crisis".

Ford concluded by saying that "it's a great tool for showing senior managers and the programme sponsors what we're doing and the excellent results we're getting".

Jo Ayoubi can be contacted on 020 7206 7279.

The London HR Connection is a professional network providing regular informal lunch, breakfast and evening events – away from the daily grind – for anyone with a vested interest in HR, to network with their peers and hear from experts on challenging and stimulating topics. For membership information and details on our forthcoming events, please visit us at www.londonhr.org