



## Learning and Development Case Study - Wyeth Consumer Healthcare - An all-round appraisal success

Mary Carmichael, 01 July 2009

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### Adding 360-degree feedback to its performance management process gives Wyeth Consumer Healthcare insight into how staff achieve as well as what they achieve.

#### The challenge

Wyeth Consumer Healthcare (WCH) wanted to improve its performance management process but found judging some aspects of it presented a real challenge. "Besides specific achievements, the review also records ratings of support for the company's values of quality, integrity, respect for people, leadership and collaboration," says Don Sibley, the household medicine manufacturer's improvement manager, who has since moved on. "But, unlike performance objectives, these are not tangible but embedded in relationships and attitudes."

#### The programme

The company decided 360-degree feedback would strengthen the review process by providing insights into how employees achieved, rather than just what they achieved. Over a six-month period, WCH worked with provider Simply360 to develop a process for all 62 staff

Some managers were sceptical, so to create champions for the process, a pilot scheme focusing on five senior and middle managers and opinion leaders was developed. "It was important that executives showed commitment to it by using 360-degree feedback as part of their own performance management review," says Sibley. "If executives were excluded, the process would have lost credibility."

In the summer of 2007, the programme was extended throughout the company. "We addressed the issues of honesty and anonymity at short workshops," explains Sibley. "Some were concerned people would not give the critical feedback that might lower appraisal ratings, or that individuals might seek out those who gave them critical feedback. At the workshops, people were able to express those concerns, and get them resolved by reaching an understanding."

Questionnaires had to be pertinent for each level of staff and clarity was essential. Employees negotiate with their manager who their reviewers will be and are advised to select as broad a range as possible from people they work with on a regular basis. They are also advised to consider choosing someone with whom their relationship could be improved. The reviewers complete a short online questionnaire and the results form part of the report discussed at the review, along with their own views and those of their manager.

#### The results

Anecdotal evidence suggests the majority of managers and employees feel the 360-degree feedback has enhanced the review process and made it easier to identify personal development needs. According to Sibley, the feedback has changed the nature of performance reviews. "Reviews are no longer based on one or two individuals' perceptions," he says. "They have become much more open, honest discussions and, inevitably, some 360-degree reports have challenged managers' views about their team. The relationship between appraiser and appraised has become more equal."

#### THE HR VIEW

Don Sibley was improvement manager at the time the process was developed. He believes the 360-degree feedback really helped to open up a dialogue between manager and employee, by focusing on strengths that an employee may have shown that may not have been quantifiable and therefore could have been missed by their manager. "However, the programme has to be supported carefully and has to focus on people processes, not IT," he stresses. "About 90% of the project is about people discussing how they will use the information, asking for feedback, sharing reports and planning their personal development with others. At WCH that means training at all levels so people can feel confident their concerns are addressed. This ensures the process is transparent and readily understood. Sophisticated tools would be difficult to understand. Similarly, the administration process to manage the project needed thinking through and planning. We had to allow time to make things very, very simple," he says."

#### THE EMPLOYEE VIEW

James Watson is group brand manager, marketing. "I was aware of the concept of 360-degree feedback but had not experienced it before," he says and admits he found the prospect a bit nerve-racking initially. "Besides your own review and that of your manager, you agree on three or four other people within the company," he explains. "You're advised to go for a broad range. It is tempting to go for people you know you get on with who can be guaranteed to say positive things, but it is often more productive to pick people whose reactions you're not so sure of or who you feel are not so impressed. Last year, I benefited from feedback from the sales division that highlighted that I needed to get out into the field more often, as well as suggesting ways I could make their life easier. Coming at it from the other angle as a manager myself, and reading other people's views on my team, has given me a much wider understanding of how staff are delivering for others and where issues of confidence lie."

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