

# 360 Emotional Intelligence Assessment

Dr. Dick Thompson, High Performing Systems, Inc.

Originally published in *The Emotional Intelligence Insider Report*



Henry L. Thompson, Ph.D.  
HPS, Inc., President and CEO



Follow Dr. Thompson  
on Twitter



Link with Dr. Thompson  
on LinkedIn

*“One of the primary reasons behind using a 360 is to uncover the feedback from direct reports, peers, the boss and other raters.”*

Dr. Henry L. (Dick) Thompson is a leading researcher with a focus on the interaction of EI, stress and leadership and is the creator of the Catastrophic Leadership Failure™ model. Further work includes pioneering the use of the Tandem Model with the Bar-On EQ-i® and Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test® in combination. As a consultant, he has also focused on using 360° assessments (360s). It is his work in 360s that led us to ask Dick to share his thoughts on 360s in the workplace.

## What is the top reason why organizations or individuals you work with choose to conduct a 360?

One of the primary reasons behind using a 360 is to uncover the feedback from direct reports, peers, the boss and other raters. This feedback from a 360 tends to be much more complex than feedback from a self-report assessment. For this reason, we usually dedicate a specific period of time to work with the individual. By doing so, it gives more time for the individual to understand the information, create a development plan and be coached.

## What would you say is the key difference a 360 makes in the life of the participant who receives multi-rater feedback?

A 360 gives individuals an opportunity to do a comparison of their self perception to the perception of others. Organizational members typically don't give each other feedback this specific or talk about these types of issues in a face-to-face manner. Part of the value of a 360 like an EQ 360® is in making the perceptions visible and the subsequent development that follows. It's not an abstract process; it's "on paper." Even the raters can grow from the process.

It is important to remember that the perception of the raters does not invalidate the

results of an EQ-i 2.0®. It means that the raters are seeing the individual from a different perspective.

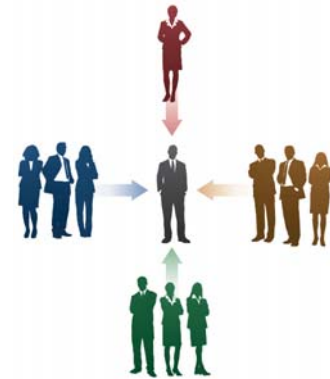


Figure 1  
360° Review / Assessment

## How do you set a 360 up for success? What criteria do you look for in the individual or organization who is about to embark on a 360 initiative?

We believe the first step is to meet with the client and stakeholders, especially those higher up in the organization to have a detailed discussion around a 360. This meeting is critical because buy-in is necessary for an effective 360 process. Answering their questions ensures that everyone goes into the process with their eyes open. Examples of questions to explore include: "What can it do? What are the possibilities? How can it affect the organization and the individual? What can a 360 do for the organization's objectives?" Consider the following pieces of advice:

- Ensure that the consent forms including a list of those allowed to see the results are authorized and signed.
- Tie a 360 to the organization's business strategy. This helps the organization be more open to having others use a 360.
- Understand the timing of a 360 and the impact it may have on the organization. You might have to adjust your schedule to allow for what the organization has on

*“Be careful as a consultant not to say, ‘we are going to raise everyone’s empathy and change the culture of the organization.’ You have to focus on what makes them successful.”*

- its plate (e.g., busy seasons, audit, etc.).
- Ensure accurate and redundant communication with everyone involved.
  - Choose the right raters – people who can accurately rate the individual. Think about this question: is there a case where the wrong raters exist? For example, there could be a rater (or raters) with a grudge against the leader, or the other way around, creating a situation where a fair rating isn’t given to the ratee.
  - Get involved in the rater selection process.
  - Collect information from multiple sources (e.g., HR and other instruments).
  - Remember that a 360 is not a tool for promoting or demoting a person.
  - Be committed to the process. A 360 is part of a long-term development process. It’s not just an hour of feedback.

**What is the best 360 process that you have seen either with an organizational team, executive, leader or manager in terms of impact on work performance? Please explain the scenario in terms of desired outcomes and actual outcomes.**

We worked with an IT division in a large, multi-million dollar manufacturing company based in the United States. These people weren’t just fixing computers; they were also customer-facing people. They were critical to the organization, and they were struggling to meet their objectives.

In the first meeting, the head of the IT group told me, “you know, this organization would be a lot better place to work if we could get rid of all the people.” He continued to say, “but I know that’s not the right attitude and I need you to help me.”

He saw the value of the people and of the organization’s need to change. As for his executive team, they were very logical and objective leaders. After they completed their 360s, they were shocked with the feedback. They had a high level of assertiveness and a

low level of empathy, and they were proud of this. Unfortunately, it was having a negative effect on performance.

Be careful as a consultant not to say, “we are going to raise everyone’s empathy and change the culture of the organization.” You have to focus on what makes them successful.

We spent about 18 months working with the organization all the way down to the managerial level. We even helped them develop their mission statements and business strategy. During the 18-month project, there was significant improvement. Performance metrics improved as a result of the use of emotional intelligence and knowledge of how it impacted their interactions with colleagues, customers and the overall organizational performance.

In the end, they were happy with the outcome. We’ve continued to do numerous projects for them.

**What would you say are the key benefits of a 360 dedicated to measuring emotional intelligence?**

A 360 like an EQ 360 gives you an opportunity to increase individual and organizational performance including trust and communication. The benefit you get from doing a 360 for one individual impacts the whole organization. Further, emotional intelligence allows one to focus on dimensions that really influence interpersonal interactions including how people lead. There are correlations between emotional intelligence and leadership. It’s hard to be an effective leader without the emotional intelligence component.

A 360 is a valuable tool, but keep in mind that you have to schedule enough time for feedback and for creating and implementing a development plan to help an individual create positive change in the organization.