

THE REAL DEAL

LET'S TALK ABOUT 360° FEEDBACK

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Tom Dawes

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Moderator



Nisaba Godrej

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Nisa thinks the most important thing about 360° feedback is what we individually do with it, it's the growth mindset that you have when you receive that report.



Shailesh Deshpande

Head - Learning &
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Shailesh believes 360° feedback is very useful in a rapidly growing organisation like Godrej, where most roles and the context of every role changes so much, each year.

The Real Deal is our in-house talk show that encourages open conversations on important topics.

Tom

Hello Godrej, my name is Tom Dawes, and I am The Real Deal!

The Real Deal is an opportunity for you to ask any question your heart desires. You heard something by the water cooler that you were too afraid to ask, you come through me. Every question that you were too afraid to ask, we now ask. This week, we speak to Nisa Godrej and Shailesh Deshpande about the 360 degree feedback process.

Tom

Why do we do 360 degree feedback?

Nisa

It's really simple. Leading Others is super important at Godrej. We believe that it helps not only us, be successful individually, but as an organisation, you need leaders who can influence, who can inspire, who can motivate, and 360 degree is one tool that helps leaders get that feedback on Leading Others.

Tom

Why do we need to do it every year?

Nisa

This is a debate that we have quite often. People have suggested to do it every two years. We run a one year cycle for pretty much everything, and we feel getting this data in every year is just very useful.

Shailesh

For a rapidly growing organisation like ours, most of our roles and the context of the role changes so much every year. So it's always useful to get feedback from what you got last year.

Tom

Why does it have to take so long?

Shailesh

One thing that we've tried to do over the past few years is be more granular, more analytical with our



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people processes. So if you want to generate good insights and high-quality data, it will need some investment of time and effort into giving that feedback.

Tom

In many companies, 360 degree is used for developmental purposes only. At Godrej, it seems that we have a hybrid approach for developmental and assessment?

Shailesh

Practices vary. Organisations use it for both purposes. And we don't think it's an either or debate, we actually call it a diagnostic process that can be used as an input for development, and also as one input for important organisational needs.

Nisa

It is used as one data point. Most people have multiple 360 degree data points. So we don't take one year. Because sometimes one year can be an aberration. And we look much harder at the data point when it's either very low or very high, where we want to just make sure that that's right. And very often we'll go back and get qualitative feedback from people to understand what this score means.

Tom

The reports are quite long, and can be seen as a bit boring. How do you view that? Why percentiles?

Nisa

I only think it's boring if you consider it not valuable to you. I find the reports extremely valuable to give you a reality check on how people are thinking of you, what they want you to stop, start, change. A lot of people have been asking why we put these percentiles in. And frankly, the first year I saw my report with that, it was very revealing. My 360 degree reports tend to be in a pretty high percentile overall, but when I looked at my Leading Others score, I had a 3.8 or a 3.9. And it sounds fine, it's pretty much at a 4. But actually if I looked at it as a percentile, it was at the fiftieth percentile. So actually compared to not just senior leaders, but compared to Godrej as an average, my direct reports didn't think I was doing such a good job. And that's a wake up call.

Shailesh

If we look at before the percentiles, on 10 GCFs or 12 GCFs all my scores would range from 3.3 to 3.8. That doesn't tell you anything much. I can see some nuances, but the same data, if you see from a percentile lens, looks like some are at eightieth percentile, and some are at twenty-fifth percentile. And we've seen people really get up and say: 'Oh wow! While the raw score looks okay, percentile has given me as much sharper range of what I'm doing well and what I can do differently.' So it's a lens. And to your first point, you know, I've not met anybody who doesn't like to read 30 pages about himself or herself. Honestly.

Nisa

The 360 degree process was actually brought in by Adi Godrej, who still does it, till date. Who still, uses it as a tool to improve and change. So I think that if he has this willingness to learn, even at his

age and stature, I think we should all have the humility to learn.

One of the things that I struggle with, is that I see a lot of men at that age of 48-50, saying 'I don't need to change, there's nothing to change', without the understanding that what got you here won't get you there. This is not a school report, and we're not the principals trying to catch you out. This is actually a tool for yourself. If you're ambitious, you want bigger leadership roles, this is a tool to just help you get there.

Tom

Okay, so then do we use this as a tool for promotions?

Nisa

No, it's a data point that would play perhaps into promotions. But I'll give you an example. I had someone on my team who got an extremely low score one year. And it was because that particular person was doing a turnaround change piece. But if you looked at the five year data, this was a sudden drop, and the next year it was back. That one data point is going to make no difference. But if I have someone over three years who's getting bad data points on values and stuff I'm not going to take it literally, but we are going to circle back and ask people, 'Is everything okay?' 'What is going on?'

The way we do our promotions is that you go through a leadership feedback process. So, it's very qualitative, people are involved. There's no system that we have where we put numbers in - whether it's your 360 degree, your performance, and then it comes out and says, 'promote or not promote'. And frankly, if you are doing a good job you should be very confident that you'll get the feedback.

I hear people game the system... then how come there are some people who get 4.5 and 4.4 and we know that they are not gaming the system? They're good leaders and if you circle back, and ask people they work with they will tell you that qualitatively. The problem is, we can't go and qualitatively ask for thousands of people each time, so you put it in a form, and a process.

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Tom

So one bad score doesn't mean you get fired?

Nisa

No. I'll tell you especially when it comes to values, you will get things highlighted in 360 degree and then we will definitely go and check back on that. But I can put my hand on my heart, and say that no one's ever been fired on 360 degree.

And I'll give you an example of myself. Earlier on in my career when I was working on the turnaround, I actually got a two-point-something score. So it was well below three. ABG didn't fire me, so I'm still here. But I think there were two insights to that. One is that sometimes in a difficult situation, you will get a bad score. The other insight was that I had a long way to go in terms of influencing people, taking people along, and it was a wake up call.

Shailesh

One thing that we believe is that in any development process we want people to invest in their strengths also, as well as their areas of improvement. But I think awareness and acceptance is the beginning. And 360 can be a very good tool for you to do that.

Nisa

I'm quite introverted. And year after year, I get in my feedback, that you take advice from a small group of people. I think it's a perception. But I am now actually saying that I have to talk a few hundred people in the organisation every year. We've structured it in, we've put it into a process. So actually, the more senior that you get, the more seriously you need to take that feedback, and the more you need to change.

And getting rid of 360 degree is not a question. I still want that individual feedback and I still want to make sure that leaders are growing and changing. And this is the best tool that we have to get there. Is it perfect? No, but there is nothing that's really a 100% perfect.

Tom

Is this anonymous?

Nisa

It is.

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Shailesh

Shailesh

Completely anonymous. Nobody has access to who said what. Definitely nobody. And we can both vouch for that.

Nisa

Including me.

Tom

But if we wanted to forge a more open, honest environment, maybe it shouldn't be anonymous. Will that force more open and frank feedback?

Nisa

So we've debated this. We feel as an organisation we're perhaps not mature enough to do this. Especially in countries like India that tend to be quite hierarchical. We feel that sometimes more junior colleagues will not be as expressive if it wasn't anonymous. We made a small shift where we do put the names of the people giving you feedback. There's some amount of choice you have in the people who give you feedback.

I was chatting with Naveen, and he wants to give the feedback very openly. So he's just going to put his name in the form. So it'll be From Naveen, and his feedback. So if anyone wants to give that feedback, and it not be anonymous, the choice is there to do that.

Tom

And some people play politics and try to manage their feedback. What do you say to that?

Nisa

I think it's very, very hard to do. I've heard stories about someone sitting next to someone while filling their 360 degree form. I've heard of people calling other people and berating them because they got a bad 360 degree form. Do we know about 100% of these cases? Probably not. But I think whether it's 360 degree or other data points, at some point it filters up, and basically, they're just roadblocking themselves. So, do we make mistakes on sometimes promoting someone with the wrong values? Yeah, we do. And we do correct them. So, some people might get away with some of this behaviour occasionally, but I think at a 98% or a 99%, most people are doing this authentically. And I would encourage people to do it authentically. Because, for example, if I tell others to give me a really good Leading Others score, and a person does it out of fear, it might work once with one team, it's not going to work the next time with the next team. And most likely, if you do things like that, we will hear about it.

Tom

Do you have any final thoughts, about your own experiences that you want to share about 360?

Nisa

I found it hugely useful as a tool for myself. I don't think everyone is going to come up to me necessarily, and say some of those, even small things that help you be more conscious. Like stop being on your phone. I know that I'm being on my phone, but when three people write it, that we feel that you are not paying attention to us, you realise - maybe I'm the most senior person in the room, and it really matters to people. So it's from the small to the larger, I think it can really help you be more effective. And if there is one thing that I would look at in terms of putting people in leadership positions, is seeing those people who take feedback, grab it and actually show growth from it. That's the data point that I would look at much more than the absolute score.

Shailesh

I made a fairly major career change four, five years ago. I used to do generalist work, and I moved to specialist work, and some of that actually had come up in my 360. And anyways, I was in that process, then I connected back with some people, and that helped. So you do hear things which make you really kind of take a pause, and think differently.

Nisa

And didn't your 360 degree scores also change dramatically from doing that? So sometimes a score is not a reflection of you as a person, but it could be that you need to be in another role where you're bringing your best self out.

Tom

So if could just recap some of the points that you've covered today. One, its completely anonymous. Two, it's not a way to hire or fire. Three, this is not a one moment in time activity – it's taken across the years, so one try must try and approach it in an open and honest way as possible.

Nisa

I think the most important thing about 360 degree feedback is what we individually do with it. So if the organisation looks at anything – it's are you growing year by year, are you able to lead others, influence them, get things done better? It's not the data point, it's the growth mindset that you have when you receive that report.

Tom

Thank you for joining today. Tune in next time, for the Real Deal!

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