How to get more out of 360 feedback: TalkWise Worksheet

The best way to get feedback about our impact on others, and whether it corresponds with our expectations and intentions, is to talk to those others about it. Given that this ideal is likely to remain the exception rather than the rule, at least in the inevitably hierarchical and competitive world of organisations, written and usually anonymous 360 feedback remains the most common form of multi-perspective feedback. So how do we get the most out of it?

One frequent shortcoming is that we're given feedback which tells us something about what the other party is experiencing, yet still does not reveal enough about what they're looking for. This informational gap becomes even more profound when we take into account that different stakeholders - managers, peers, team members/reports and others, such as clients and suppliers - are likely to have significantly different expectations. Ideally, we would collect input from all of our stakeholders about their expectations, and use these to guide our actions and behaviours. In practice, seeking this level of feedback is not always possible or realistic.

This worksheet provides a series of reflection questions to help you think through what key stakeholders expect from you, and which voices can support you to provide them with this.

Your Managers
Your Managers probably want to see (and hear) you not only making a distinctive contribution, but also demonstrating range, flexibility and further potential. They are likely to be interested in how you deal with complex, uncertain, ambiguous and volatile issues, and in how you arrive at and demonstrate judgements.
- Which voice/s do I use more strongly than most people?

- What is the distinctive contribution I can make with these voices?

- How do I maintain awareness and skill to ensure I don't overuse these voices and turn them into weaknesses?

Your Team/Reports
Your Team/Reports are probably most interested in whether you communicate with clarity. They are also likely to be concerned with whether and how far you provide the direction, guidance, support and development that they need to do their own work and to progress, giving them autonomy, significant responsibility and recognition.

- What voices do your Direct Reports want and need from you?

- How does this align with, or differ from, your preferred leadership style?

- How well do you vary the balance of Articulate and Advise, depending on the needs of individual team members?

- What role can the Exploring voices take in developing your people?

- What role are the Controlling voices taking in the way you make decisions and focus actions?

Your Peers

Your Peers are probably most interested in how you go about working with them and responding to their needs and concerns. They are likely to be particularly concerned about how you handle differences of opinion and disagreements. Their feedback about you is going to be shaped by what you do (or do not) do and say towards building trust, collaboration and joint problem-solving.

- To what extent are you using Inquire for open-minded exploration with your peers? In which relationships or situations could you usefully dial this up?

- What role do the Positioning voices have in your relationship with your peers? Is there any danger that you are under- or over-using any of them?

- How often do you use the Evaluate voice either to provide an objective view in support of your peers' thinking or to encourage a process of joint assessment?

- How well do you use the Challenge voice to improve the quality of conversation with your peers? Are you unwilling to Challenge and so missing opportunities to improve the focus of the discussion? Or are you willing to Challenge but too blunt and insensitive in how you do it? Challenge needs to feel respectful and beneficial for the conversation as a whole in order to be appreciated.

VoicePrint's Map 8 illustrates 3 patterns of collaboration which may be particularly useful when working with your peers. Study the map then consider the questions below.
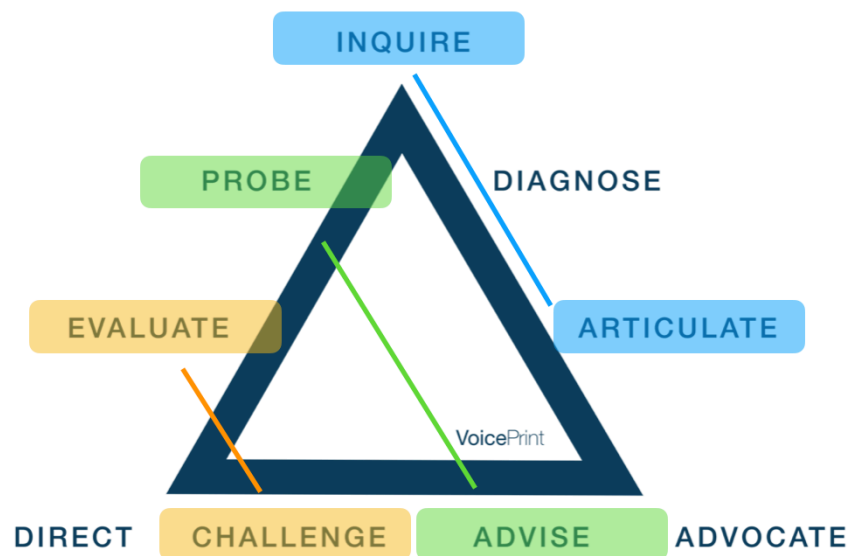
- Are any of these patterns strong in your profile?

- Could you usefully dial up any of these patterns? Which one? How would that sound?

Other Stakeholders
Your other stakeholders may include customers, suppliers, regulators or professional bodies and may therefore have very distinct priorities and concerns.
- What sorts of conversations does each type of stakeholder expect to have with you?

- Which voices do you need to bring to these interactions to make them productive for all concerned?