



# Recalibrating 360° feedback for the modern, mobile workplace

---

## How social networking and cloud technology are shaking up performance management practices and changing the face of employee engagement

It's an ongoing conversation in business, and it gets louder every year: With a rapid-paced, socially connected economy flattening the world around us, why are so many businesses content with using outdated, top-down performance management practices?

As Robert Sutton, a professor and organizational psychologist at Stanford explains: "If performance evaluations were a drug, they would not receive FDA approval because they have so many side effects, and so often they fail."<sup>1</sup>

The HR Policy Association's annual survey of chief human resource officers (CHROs) has found that talent management ranks as the top most concern for CHROs.<sup>2</sup> If that's the case, then what's the answer for improving performance evaluation processes? According to Sutton, many organizations would be better off with a continuous feedback process.

Table of Contents

---

**3**      Continuous feedback in action

---

**3**      Putting social networking and cloud  
technology to work

---

**4**      Remember the 360°? Now, forget  
everything you know about it

---

**4**      Millennials: The high-expectation,  
“check-in” generation

---

**5**      What can a new open door feedback  
system mean to an organization?

---

**6**      Change is hard. It’s time for a change

---

**6**      A new age in performance  
management can start today

---

## Continuous feedback in action

Four years ago, an online global travel conglomerate opted out of a once-yearly formal review and rating process because it no longer matched the speed or the culture of its business. Instead, the company formulated a new approach, using a combination of real-time continuous feedback married to a mid-year formal review so it could stay in sync with its business goals and the needs of its employees.<sup>3</sup>

Motorola® made a similar sea change in 2012, trading in a traditional review methodology for a softer “coaching and learning model” that focused more on employee development and less on an arcane set of after-the-fact measurements. Adobe®, the creative suite software giant, went one step further by jettisoning the concept of performance reviews entirely, installing a new system it calls “The Check-In” instead. Now the talk of the HR world, The Check-In is based on frequent, informal, even unplanned conversations between manager and employee that are just that—a brief check-in that can result in immediate course corrections, accolades, and learning opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

Even with outliers who are embracing progressive new processes, the modernization of performance management may still be hindered by the status quo and remain outside the capabilities of many businesses. Yet there are two readily available tools—social networking and cloud technology—that if more widely embraced, could represent an opportunity to drive rapid organizational change, and offer a way to take advantage of Dr. Sutton’s advice.

## Putting social networking and cloud technology to work

Driven by a new social construct fed by the instantaneous nature of mobile communications, today’s employees are carrying external real-world, real-time expectations into the workplace, seeking continuous dialogue, social collaboration, and instant feedback. Employees are no longer making a rigid distinction between their work lives and their private lives. Technology has made these barriers less abrupt, blurring the edges between work and play, the public and the personal. It’s a 21st century reality, and it’s part of a new paradigm that can have a significant effect when applied to performance management practices.

The tools to do this are at hand. By using cloud-based technology, and by following the cues of social networking, businesses can implement more collaborative, immediate and inclusive employee reviews, offering managers and employees a 360° framework for continuous improvement, while anchoring organizational goals to the process.



## Remember the 360°? Now, forget everything you know about it

Traditional, top-down employee evaluation processes are ineffective for today's workforce. The often-maligned 360° multi-directional feedback mechanism is in theory more beneficial in providing a holistic performance assessment. In its purest form, a 360° review can be a valid method for involving all key stakeholders in an employee's evaluation circle. In actual practice, however, it falls far short of its promise because it's based on forced one-way conversations, and uses antiquated and limited tools that make implementation and reporting difficult.

Contemporary workplaces thrive on dialogue, immediacy, and inclusiveness. Not top-down or even bottom-up architecture, but lateral, collegial, and collaborative structure. In many modern business environments, the world is flat. Technology has removed physical constraints, so the door can always be open, literally and figuratively, between management and its workforce, creating an opportunity for a more impactful 360° performance assessment method.

When recalibrated for the modern workplace, the old 360° feedback mechanism could become a new open door performance management process—a process that could:

- Use cloud-based technology and tools, including mobile, to engage employees the way they are used to being engaged; not in a formal, 9 to 5 orientation, but in an informal, real-time, real-life and productive way.
- Be centered on communication and information sharing that fosters recognition and coaching, leading to incremental employee growth and improvement, with small course corrections that are more easily digested and implemented.
- Involve all key stakeholders in an employee's framework in a continuous two-way conversation that produces accurate and enlightened real-time data, reports, and desired outcomes.
- Acknowledge all generations within the workplace, while addressing the particular needs of Millennials, a growing force for change in business.

## Millennials: The high-expectation, “check-in” generation

Here's an important fact about the millennial generation, a group that comprises 36% of the US workforce. By 2020, that number will swell to almost half, or 46% of all US workers.<sup>5</sup> Their size is not the only thing worth noting. They also think and behave differently from preceding generations. A few important distinctions: Millennials are collaborators who view managers as coaches and mentors, not as experts. As such, they appreciate teamwork and value constant and immediate feedback. Once-yearly performance reviews are not effective with Millennials. This is the “check-in” generation.

- They've grown up with technology and expect their workplace to be as tech savvy as they are, and they place a very high value on innovation and creativity.
- They look outward and interact with a personal network of communities that extends far beyond their employer. Social networking is simply a part of who they are, how they communicate, and how they connect.

- They want to work for organizations that are flexible and purpose-driven and they aren't afraid to move on if their needs aren't being met or if they sense timidity or a lack of focus on the future.<sup>6</sup>

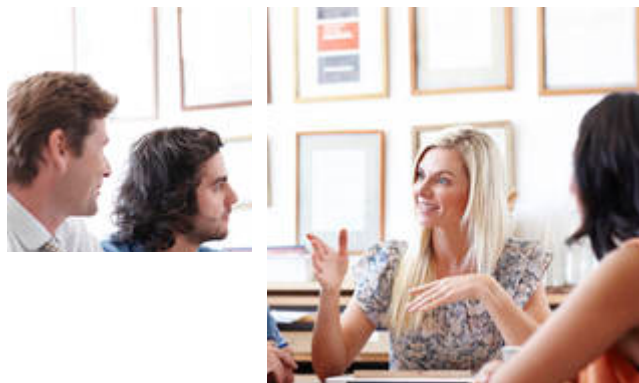
Millennials have particular engagement needs and are driving change within many organizations, while others are struggling to keep up with their expectations. However, they are not the only ones engaged in the social space. The majority of today's workforce participates in social networking activities. For example, Facebook estimates that in September 2014 alone, there was an average of 864 million daily active users.<sup>7</sup> Businesses would be wise to leverage the social language that is already being spoken across multiple generations and use it within the feedback process.

## What can a new open door feedback system mean to an organization?

This is not your grandfather's 360°-feedback system, so we will leave that moniker in the past where it belongs. Instead, the idea is to create an open door, open portal system using HR analytics, cloud technology, and social tools to create a more engaged and engaging environment for both managers and employees. Every business has to have an employee evaluation plan and every business has a choice to make as to how it will be implemented. Today, the smarter choice puts all available tools to work on behalf of a more engaged workplace.

The case for an open door feedback system:

- In the race to the cloud, it's important to get there first and stake your claim. Using current generation technology to optimize a workforce can actually be a competitive advantage because it drives engagement, which can lead to a heightened level of performance.
- Talent analytics, coupled with socialization, opens up new avenues for reaching employees at every level, aiding in the alignment of organizational goals through clear and specific communications. A 2012 study estimated that by fully implementing social technologies, companies could see as much as a 25% rise in the productivity of interaction workers.<sup>8</sup>
- Real-time HR data and reports provide managers with current, not rear-view mirror information, which can lead to more honest assessments and more actionable knowledge. This can help create a more engaged employee who may become more motivated to shape their own career experiences, reducing disconnect and aiding in retention.
- Anytime, anywhere access is the key to a continuous learning, review, and development process, and it holds everyone accountable for his or her role in the process. And, using social tools for communication is easy to do for everyone in the employee's sphere of influence.



## Change is hard. It's time for a change

The need for change in the performance management arena has been repeatedly acknowledged. A 2012 Harvard Business Review blog noted that 45% of HR leaders did not think the traditional annual performance review was an accurate appraisal for an employees work.<sup>9</sup> And, as noted earlier, only 6% of companies think their process delivers a high level of value. So what's the holdup? Why isn't change happening?

For many organizations, change is difficult. They have not developed the necessary skills or technology infrastructure to facilitate information sharing between employees and managers, nor have they made the connection between performance, workforce turnovers, tenure, and wage growth.

To do this, they will have to change the way they think, moving from a top down orientation to a more collaborative approach that promotes both a "pro-company" and a "pro-employee" mentality at the same time. And they will need to embrace the tools and processes that make this shift not only viable, but also a wise business decision. Moving to a cloud-based, socially motivated open door system allows a company to merge talent analytics with key performance indicators for a holistic alignment of critical and emerging business goals. And, it just may herald a new age in performance management.

## A new age in performance management can start today

Recalibrating the outdated 360°-feedback system for the modern, mobile workplace gives rise to a transformative definition of feedback and ushers in a new age of technology-infused workforce review processes and opportunities. A new age in performance management can start today, and change the face of employee engagement.

- Forget everything you know about traditional 360° Performance Reviews.
- Put social networking and cloud technology to work on behalf of the entire organization.
- "Check-in" with the highly sociable Millennials for collaborative engagement.
- Use a progressive feedback system with real-time data, anywhere to support your strategic goals and initiatives.
- Deliver high-value; make the connection between performance, workforce turnovers, tenure, and wage growth to transform your business.



Learn more about  
performance management



<sup>1</sup> Phyllis Korkki, "Invasion of the Annual Reviews," The New York Times, November 23, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> HR Policy Association, Principal Chief Human Resource Office Concerns in 2013, [www.hrpolicy.org](http://www.hrpolicy.org).

<sup>3</sup> Julie Cook Ramirez, Rethinking the Review, Human Resource Executive Online ([www.hreonline.com](http://www.hreonline.com)), July 24, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Julie Cook Ramirez, Rethinking the Review, Human Resource Executive Online ([www.hreonline.com](http://www.hreonline.com)), July 24, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, Maximizing Millennials in the Workplace, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, Maximizing Millennials in the Workplace, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Facebook, newsroom/company info ([www.newsroomfb.com](http://www.newsroomfb.com))

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas D. Evans, "How Disruptive Technologies Can Contribute to U.S. Innovation and Productivity," Computerworld ([www.computerworld.com](http://www.computerworld.com)), January 9, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Mosley, "Crowdsource Your Performance Reviews," web blog post, Harvard Business Review ([www.hbr.org](http://www.hbr.org)), June 15, 2012.

Share this :   



Copyright ©2016 Infor. All rights reserved. The word and design marks set forth herein are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Infor and/or related affiliates and subsidiaries. All other trademarks listed herein are the property of their respective owners. [www.infor.com](http://www.infor.com).

641 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10011

INF-1458989-en-US-1216-2