

Penguin Random House

How 360 degree feedback is driving cultural change

Penguin and Random House came together in 2013 to form the world's largest publisher, employing over 10,000 people worldwide. They appointed ETS as a partner in 2015 as they were keen to introduce a 360 degree feedback programme for employees.

Challenge:

Following the merging of the two publishers, and against a backdrop of a rapidly-evolving consumer marketplace and publishing industry, Penguin Random House needed to adapt its people strategy accordingly. Claire Thomas, Head of organisational development at Penguin Random House, explains:

“ With the degree of change we were undergoing, we knew we needed to define the new organisation, to create a strong identity, to embed new values and to bring about a cultural shift. We saw 360 as a key development tool to help us achieve this and aid a smooth transition to our new culture. ”

In introducing 360 degree feedback, they hoped to learn what they do well, what they could do better and to gain an insight into the behaviours that would make a real difference to their organisation and all stakeholder groups.

➔ Solution:

Establishing their values

A foundational step for the organisation and, for the design of the 360 programme, was the creation of their values. They wanted the values to reflect what employees most enjoy about working at Penguin Random House as well as encouraging behaviours that high performing organisations exhibit. These values – purpose, adventure, openness, trust and heart – were to underpin the 360 questionnaire to help make them meaningful and relevant for employees.

Designing the questionnaire

Our business psychologists first conducted a number of key stakeholder interviews at Penguin Random House with executives and high potentials. These sessions were to help us understand what makes Penguin Random House special and what a great Penguin Random House employee looks like.

We next ran several employee workshops to validate these insights, asking the groups to review the behaviours and descriptors to make sure it resonated with them and reflected the organisation they know. We led a final workshop with their organisational development team to agree the final questionnaire. This involved mapping the successful behaviours back to the behaviours they'd previously identified as underpinning the values.

Introducing 360 degree feedback

The 360 process was first rolled out to the executive team, who then invited their direct reports to take part. It has also since been introduced to their flagship leadership programme

Supporting a smooth rollout

The team at Penguin Random House was keen to put the person before the process. This meant supporting participants so they really know why they're taking part in the 360 programme and how it will benefit them and the organisation. They encouraged teams to brief would-be participants in person, where possible, in order to provide context, answer questions and allay any concerns.

The organisational development team created guidelines for the team briefings, which included guidance on having the right mind-set, choosing the right raters and being open to the feedback.

➔ Result:

To date, just over 100 employees have taken part and there are plans afoot to roll out the 360 much more widely in 2017. There's already enough data though to see emerging trends. They've used this to build an organisational view of the values, to see where strengths and opportunities lie and, as a base line, to compare and contrast trends across the company. Furthermore, they've also:

- Used aggregate-level data from the leadership groups to create team profiles
- Run team-level 360 with some of their divisions and, following this, sought their ideas on making the most of their strengths and addressing the lowest-ranking behaviours
- Used some of the behaviours identified in the framework to run a quarterly values employee 'pulse check'.

➔ Business impact:

Claire Thomas talks about the impact 360 degree feedback is having:

“ *Whilst we'd of course thought the feedback would help lead to behavioural change, we hadn't expected the 360 process itself to drive some of the cultural change we were hoping for. But it has helped us to foster greater trust and openness among our people, which has been a real bonus.* ”

Another example of the shift towards a more open culture can be seen in employees' willingness to share feedback. This is something the organisation has actively encouraged in those receiving 360 feedback. The aim of doing this is to help employees to better understand one another and to seek colleagues' support in making any desired changes. The executive team has led the way here by openly sharing their feedback, which is a great example to set.

If you'd like help with a 360 degree feedback programme or a related development challenge, please contact us:



Call us on **+44 (0)1932 222700**



Or e-mail us at **info@etsplc.com**