



Who Plays the Role Play?

Using professional actors in Talent Management

We have recently been involved in several Talent Management programmes at a senior level.

We designed the programme with the client and then wrote Role Plays and Case Studies to fit the need. Using actors for the role plays made the whole process feel much more real, yet still professional and objective. Our actors prepared fully for the roles and had time before the event to clarify with the client any corporate details about policies or other current issues that may affect their attitude or behaviour.

Participants found the role plays extremely powerful and valuable as they saw the impact of their own style and performance perhaps for the first time.

Welcome to our first Newsletter. We've had a terrific year with launches of new products, features and online surveys—so this is an opportunity to keep you up to date on the products and services you may be interested in. We will also include topical articles that we hope will also be of interest to you.

Who needs Christmas anyhow? Delivering the goods in double-quick time

A new client – Michael Esau, the Advisor on Organisational Effectiveness of leading electronic component distributor Premier Farnell, called on the Wednesday before Christmas: “Are you able to help me Elwa?”

An ominous start...we had been building him a bespoke online 360° feedback tool for a January deadline for 200 managers—what on earth did he want so close to the holidays?

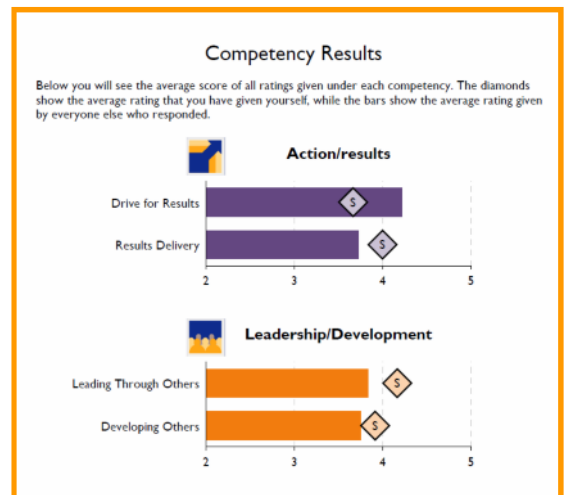
“We are looking to run a separate 360 for our CEO based on our new leadership profile. The fact that we are able to automate the questionnaire and run online really appeals to her. It fits so well with our “e-life” initiative which is to help the organisation become more efficient in how we work, communicate and perform. She would like to begin the process next week. Can you help?”

After I had fallen off my chair (for those who know me well this won't be too surprising!), I mentioned that this gave us only 3 and a half working days. He had realised this of course... But Premier Farnell as an organisation are very high performing and often work to a very fast pace

Nothing like this sort of request to challenge and motivate the team! After a couple of hours of consideration and persuasion we had

re-created our schedule for the coming fortnight and we could commit to delivering this exciting new project.

The model needed to be reviewed, the questions needed drafting and adaptation to make sure they were going to work well, all the parameters of the questionnaire needed decisions, graphics needed loading, email wordings needed changing, coding was done and tested and the report format was designed.



Extract from Premier Farnell 360 feedback report

A trial version was soon ready. By Thursday it was live and 18 days after kick off the CEO had her full 360° report. And the end product received some excellent feedback, much to Michael's delight!

Elwa Ainsworth,
Managing Director



How long is a piece of string?

A key decision in any 360° feedback project is how long to make your survey. We show how smaller isn't always better.

The obvious argument for making a 360° survey smaller is to save people time, but this can come at the expense of depth, breadth and clarity of feedback. And we often see customers try to 'squeeze together' behaviours to reduce the number of questions. Here's a real example we've seen from the standard 360° questionnaire (a mere 24 questions long) used by one of the biggest retailers in the UK:

"Gains commitment to achieving results through simple communication, actively listening and by adapting leadership style to the needs of others".

I spot at least 4 different behaviours in there! A manager could easily be good at some but poor at others. This complexity makes it difficult for reviewers to understand and score the question, and hard for the recipient of the feedback to interpret the results. Both practically and psychometrically it is virtually useless!

Our approach is to work with our clients to develop a set of items that are simple and easy to understand, measure observable behaviours, and have the breadth to cover all of the important competencies. This can make for a

Auto-save saves the day

The average survey completion time hides great variation – one person recently spent 2 hours writing 1,700 words of feedback on a colleague! That's why our software features an 'auto-save' feature – all of the questionnaire data is automatically saved to our server every 5 minutes, to protect against the risk of things like the user forgetting to click 'submit' or their computer crashing.

longer survey, so what's the time impact of all those extra questions?

We've been tracking how long people take to do their questionnaires, and have found some interesting results. The time taken to complete different aspects are as follows:

- Each rating on a 1-to-5 scale: 6 seconds
- Each word of written feedback: 8 seconds

It's the written feedback that makes the biggest difference. Here are two real example projects we recently implemented:

Project	Rated Items	Total written feedback (average)	Average time taken
HR Consultancy	44	177 words	19 mins
Engineering Company	104	42 words	14 mins

Despite having less than half as many items, the HR consultants took longer to complete their surveys than the engineers!

So fewer questions does not necessarily mean less time, but as seen above, fewer questions can result in unclear, incomplete and hence less insightful feedback.

We are committed to enabling truly powerful feedback. Demands for "quick and dirty" solutions are best met with the question "what do you really want to achieve?"

Mark Ainsworth,
Technical Director



Thank you for reading our first newsletter. We welcome your feedback, so please do send your comments or ideas for any future article or topics you would like us to include. We also plan to have a Q and A section, so if you have any questions let us know! I look forward to hearing from you at bridget@talentinnovations.co.uk.

Bridget Williams, Marketing Manager



Our Products and Services

TalentFocus

Our fully customisable on-line 360° feedback software.

Project Support

Dedicated project management and bureau support services

360° Coaching

Facilitation by qualified Business Psychologists

Talent Management

Bespoke programmes to develop future leaders

Wellbeing Coaching

with our specialist consultants



AppraisalFocus

integrated performance management module

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