360 Evaluation

I gave the 360 evaluation to six people. Since I have no direct reports, I chose to give the instrument to three supervisory people (my department chair, my dean, and the provost). I gave the other three forms to three colleagues with whom I have worked closely in the past. While I have no employees who work for me, I have in the past led some department initiatives and meetings, so the colleague responses contain an element of a response from a direct report. Two of the evaluations were not returned in the week and a half available, so this discussion is based on four replies.

Before examining the replies I received, I took the advice of Yukl and Lepsinger in their article “How to get the most out of your 360° feedback” and completed the evaluation instrument myself. There were few items where I felt I excelled; the only items I ranked at their maximum score were: Considers the bigger picture as he looks at a problem; seeks first to understand, then to be understood; seeks to convince others, rather than coerce them into compliance; and exhibits a high level of personal discipline and sense of responsibility. There were several items where I felt myself to be weak, or just haven’t had enough experience to give myself a high rating. The lowest items I scored myself were: motivates others to implement change; communicates a sense of urgency toward achieving the mission; nurtures a spirit of cooperation and teamwork; intuitively understands other people’s unspoken meanings and feeling; helps others feel appreciated; strives to build a more positive community; effectively calms people; makes others want to do an even better job; and establishes a work environment that is challenging, satisfying and fun.

The first thing I notice in looking over the responses I received from others (see Figure 1 for my responses and the average responses of others) is that there is not a response less than a 3 out of 4. This is a little suspicious to me, since some items like motivating others I’ve had little or no opportunity to demonstrate (and would suggest that I haven’t done well when I’ve had any opportunity). In Yukl and Lepsinger’s terms, I see evidence for either the “halo effect”, where people have a generally good opinion of me, so they rate me highly in all areas, or for the “attribution error”, where people see my work as being effective so they rate me highly regardless of my actual behavior on an item.
The second thing I notice about the responses is that they are fairly consistent. There is never more than a range of one point, and on 11 of the 40 items all four forms had the same response. The areas where I received the highest scores (all 4's) were: demonstrates a Christian lifestyle; commits to serving the needs of others; treats others with dignity and respect; manages resources for the good of the institution; exhibits Christian faith; viewed as someone to be trusted; communicates a clear and consistent picture of the purpose or area for which he carries responsibility; exhibits a high level of personal discipline and responsibility. Of these eight items, I notice that most describe general personal characteristics rather than specific leadership behaviors. This is encouraging, and tells me that others have a generally positive view of me, but does not really suggest any actual leadership strengths. This is actually consistent with my own reflections, since I have had little actual opportunity to lead.

There were three responses that were all 3's, those were: motivates others to implement change; intuitively understands other people's unspoken meanings and feelings; and frequently communicates key ideas to everyone who needs to know. These were items where I had rated myself low as well. I need more experience and better social skills in order to better read, communicate with and motivate others.

It is instructive to compare my responses with those of my evaluators. (See Figure 2 for an overview of the difference between other's responses and my own.) It is obvious that I rated myself uniformly lower than did those evaluating me. There were only three items where I ranked myself higher than the average of my respondents. Those areas are: considers the bigger picture; seeks first to understand, then to be understood; and seeks to convince rather than to coerce others. These were areas where I had ranked myself with a 4, and three of the four respondents also ranked me as a 4, with one rating me as a 3. This is not a significant difference.

Comparing my rating with the average of my respondents on each item, I find that on 25 of the 40 items my respondents rated me higher than I did, by a significant amount. On none of the items did they rate me lower by a significant amount. The areas where others rated me much higher than I did myself are: Nurtures a spirit of cooperation and teamwork; effectively calms others in stressful situations; and communicates a clear and consistent picture of the purpose of the area for which he carries responsibility. I believe
the reason for this is seen in my strengths of “Analytical” and “Relator”. In meetings I try to understand others, and I think a long time before coming up with ideas. These lead me to make positive responses in meetings, and not promote a lot of dissent or make quick statements, as I work to figure things out. This reasoning is consistent with the next two highest items where I was ranked significantly more highly than I ranked myself: helps others feel appreciated for a job well-done; and strives to build a more positive community. I think this reflects my attitudes in meetings rather than any specific behaviors I use to make others feel appreciated or more positive.

Overall I’ve learned from this evaluation that others view me positively, with strong character traits rather than specific leadership behaviors. I believe this reflects the fact that I have had few opportunities for public leadership, but have rather worked hard behind the scenes. Still, it is encouraging that others see potential for leadership in me. I need to learn to communicate with others better, to learn to read others better, and how to better motivate others. Motivation is something in particular that I have never really practiced, especially in terms of colleagues, and I need to look for resources and opportunities to learn how to do this. I have also learned that others see my leadership potential more positively than I see it in myself. This means that I need to look more closely at my character, behaviors, and opportunities, and to view them with more of a view toward being a leader, rather than just working as a part of a team.
Figure 1. My responses (circles) and the average responses from others (squares) with error bars showing the range of responses.

Figure 2. The difference between the average response from others and my own response to each item. Error bars represent one standard deviation from the list of differences. The average difference between others’ responses and my own was 0.76, one standard deviation was 0.52.