

SIGMA Assessment Systems
Talent Development

How to Boost Response Rates in 360-degree Leadership Evaluations



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360-degree leadership assessments are indispensable tools for every leader who wants to instigate transformational change, and every human resources (HR) professional dedicated to facilitating a culture of giving feedback. These assessments provide a powerful way to gather insightful, balanced, and comprehensive feedback that can support individual growth, improve team dynamics, and contribute to organizational success.

What is a 360-degree Assessment?

A 360-degree assessment is a method of evaluating an individual's performance within an organization. It provides a comprehensive view of an individual's skills, performance, and working style. The feedback generated from a 360-degree assessment encompasses supervisors, peers, subordinates, and sometimes external sources like clients and vendors.¹ In some cases, the individual also completes a self-evaluation. This breadth of perspectives provides a comprehensive, well-rounded review of an individual's performance, hence the term "360-degree."

The Importance of High Response Rates

To get the most out of 360-degree assessments, it is important to administer the process carefully and thoughtfully, ensure confidentiality, communicate the purpose clearly, and provide support for feedback interpretation and next steps. In addition to these prerequisites, a 360-degree assessment's effectiveness hinges heavily on a critical factor: securing high response rates from raters. High response rates in a 360-degree assessment are crucial for three fundamental reasons:

1. **Accuracy.** When more raters provide feedback, it ensures assessment results are comprehensive and representative, reducing potential biases and enhancing reliability.
2. **Fairness.** Increased participation bolsters the perceived fairness of the process, making it more likely that the assessed individual will accept and act upon the feedback.
3. **Balance.** High response rates ensure a comprehensive perspective of performance from all stakeholders, delivering balanced insights into strengths and areas for growth.

For many HR professionals, achieving high response rates on employee assessments often feels like a Herculean task, yet with the right tactics, the challenge can be turned into an opportunity. In this guide we will outline seven key strategies you can use to amplify response rates in your next 360-degree leadership assessment.

Seven Strategies to Increase 360-degree Response Rates

1. Cultivate transparency through clear communication.

Transparency is the cornerstone of any effective feedback process. Before raters begin their assessment journey, ensure they fully understand the purpose, the process, their individual role, and most

importantly, the significance of the exercise. Clarifying these elements reduces ambiguity and paves the way for informed, meaningful participation. A comprehensive briefing, either through a detailed guide or an orientation session, can work wonders in setting the stage for the assessment.

2. Harness the power of timely assessments.

Timing is an often-underestimated factor influencing response rates. Imagine asking someone to recite every item on their grocery list from two weeks ago — the likelihood of an accurate account is slim. The same principle applies to leadership assessments. Try to send the assessment questions soon after communicating the purpose and process of the assessment while it's still fresh in the raters' minds. This way, raters are likely to provide more detailed, valuable feedback that can lead to more nuanced insights about a leader's effectiveness.

3. Embrace simplicity.

A complicated assessment can deter raters faster than a confounding manual deters someone from assembling furniture. To keep raters engaged, simplicity is a key ingredient. Choose assessments that are user-friendly, avoiding overly complex terminologies and redundant questions. SIGMA's [SIGMARadius](#) is known for its ease of use, reliability, and validity. With the use of a clear and straightforward tool, raters are likely to complete the assessment instead of getting lost in a maze of complexity.

4. Personalize.

In a digital world filled with generic requests and standardized communication, a dash of personalization can go a long way. Tailor your reminder emails or messages to show raters that they're not just another cog in the wheel, but an essential part of a comprehensive process. Studies have shown that personalized emails have 29% higher open rates and 41% higher click rates than non-personalized emails.² This statistic emphasizes the impact of personalized communication. A personalized reminder can increase engagement, improve response rates, and foster a sense of connection throughout the process.

5. Be persistent.

Patience and follow-up are vital for increasing response rates. Consistently reminding raters to complete their assessments can boost participation, although care should be taken to maintain a respectful and considerate tone. Although it might feel redundant to send multiple reminders, evidence suggests that this approach can significantly increase response rates.³

6. Use incentives.

Incentives can act as a catalyst for encouraging raters to participate in the assessment process. A token of appreciation or recognition, whether it be a discount coupon, a chance to win a gift card, or some additional time off, can nudge raters toward completing the assessment. Incentives do not need to be extravagant; any small recognition of the time and effort invested by raters in completing the assessment can enhance participation rates.⁴

7. Express gratitude.

After assessments are completed, expressing gratitude for raters' time and insights can reinforce a positive feedback culture. Consider sharing a summarized version of the results, while maintaining confidentiality, to let the raters see how their input contributes to the bigger picture. This gesture emphasizes that their feedback was not just a drop in the ocean but a wave that can lead to significant organizational change.

So, why is it important to improve response rates? High response rates are instrumental in painting an accurate and comprehensive picture of leadership capabilities. They offer a wealth of insights that can guide individual growth, team development, and organizational success. Successfully increasing response rates leads to the administration of meaningful leadership assessments, contributing to better-informed decisions, the enhancement of leadership effectiveness, and a more robust organization.

Email Communication Templates

To help boost 360-degree feedback response rates, SIGMA's experts have drafted the following two types of email communications:

1. The first is an introductory email that outlines the purpose and process of the evaluation. The email reassures recipients that the rating process will be straightforward and won't demand too much of their time. Additionally, it underscores the invaluable role that the rater's perspective plays in leadership development.
2. The second communication serves as a follow-up reminder, emphasizing the urgency of completing the evaluation ahead of a scheduled debrief session.

Together, these emails are intended to make the process of giving and receiving feedback efficient, effective, and valuable to all who are involved.

Email #1 — The Introductory Email

Subject: Your Valuable Input Needed for My 360-degree Leadership Assessment Feedback

Dear [Rater's Name],

I am writing to you today as someone whose perspective and opinion I truly value.

As part of my ongoing commitment to professional growth and development, I am currently in the process of completing a 360-degree leadership assessment. This assessment takes insights from individuals I work closely with, like yourself, to assemble a detailed account of my leadership skills. Your input will provide an outside perspective of my performance, which will be used to help me identify strengths and opportunities for growth.

To ensure this doesn't feel like a daunting task, I want to assure you that the process is quite straightforward. I would greatly appreciate it if you could invest 15-20 minutes to complete my assessment. Please know that your feedback will play a significant role in shaping my professional growth, and I deeply appreciate your effort in the midst of competing demands.

Please note that your responses will be confidential; I will only receive aggregated feedback in the final report.

The deadline for completing the assessment is [insert date]. I understand that this is an additional task on your plate, so as a small token of appreciation for your time, I have arranged for [insert incentive, if any, like a coffee gift card, additional break time, etc.]

The link to the assessment will be sent to you soon by our HR department. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me or our HR Manager, [HR Manager's name].

Thank you in advance for your time and your valuable insights. I am looking forward to learning from your feedback and working towards becoming a more effective leader.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

Email #2 — Communicating a Sense of Urgency

Subject: Action Required: Your Input is Urgently Required for My 360-degree Assessment

Dear [Rater's Name],

I'm hoping all is well with you. This is a friendly reminder about my pending 360-degree evaluation which requires your feedback.

I have an upcoming SIGMARadius debrief session scheduled for [insert date]. This meeting is a significant opportunity for me to review results and pinpoint areas for leadership development and growth.

However, to make the most out of this debrief session, I need to ensure all evaluations are completed beforehand. The insights obtained from the assessment will not only guide our discussion, but will also lay the groundwork for actionable insights and strategies. Without your feedback, the effectiveness of this session will be significantly diminished.

I recognize that time is at a premium and want to assure you that your feedback is valuable. The assessment is as straightforward and user-friendly as possible, so it should only take between 15 and 20 minutes of your time.

If you have any questions or need assistance with the process, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you in advance for your time and input.

Kind regards,

[Your Name]

Customization of Email Communications

Use these emails as a foundation for crafting your own, customized communications. Remember to adjust the text to suit your organization's culture, the relationship you have with your raters, and your own personal style. The key is to show genuine appreciation for their time and make them understand their critical role in your professional development.

Ready to Get Started?

SIGMA offers several talent development assessments built to help you develop your leaders for tomorrow. Our assessments are simple, scientifically validated, and reliable screening tools. Browse our catalogue of [assessments](#) or start with [SIGMARadius](#), a 360-degree assessment of leadership skills that can be used to guide leadership development efforts. The test scores individuals on 50 leadership competencies including cognitive, personal, interpersonal, and senior leadership skills. Every SIGMARadius participant receives a Leadership Effectiveness Report. This synopsis not only summarizes scores from all sources but also offers an analysis of these results and actionable steps for a personalized development plan. If you're ready to get started, place an order online or [contact us](#) today.

Talk to an Expert



If you would like to learn more about SIGMA's leadership assessments, contact Glen Harrison. Glen is an organizational transformation consultant and leadership assessment expert. Over the course of his career, Glen has worked with one-third of the Fortune 500 list and with every level of government in Canada and the United States. Glen has extensive experience in the application of SIGMA's products and services to help organizations realize their people potential.

Glen Harrison

[Email Glen](#)

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¹ Fleenor, Taylor, S., & Chappelow, C. (2008). *Leveraging the impact of 360-degree feedback*. Pfeiffer.

² Services, E. M. (2018, June 30). *Experian Marketing Services Study finds personalized emails generate six times higher transaction rates*. PR Newswire: press release distribution, targeting, monitoring and marketing. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/experian-marketing-services-study-finds-personalized-emails-generate-six-times-higher-transaction-rates-243742311.html>

³ Sahlqvist, S., Song, Y., Bull, F. et al. Effect of questionnaire length, personalisation and reminder type on response rate to a complex postal survey: randomised controlled trial. *BMC Med Res Methodol* 11, 62 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-62>

⁴ Rose, Dale S., Stuart D. Sidle, and Kristin H. Griffith. "A penny for your thoughts: Monetary incentives improve response rates for company-sponsored employee surveys." *Organizational Research Methods* 10.2 (2007): 225-240.