

RBS

Enabling people development using 360 degree feedback

We've worked in partnership with RBS since 2009 when they undertook a wide-ranging search for a technology provider for a bespoke 360 degree feedback programme. Since then, we've become a long-standing strategic partner to RBS, supporting leadership and wider employee development across the bank.

Challenge:

RBS launched a new business strategy and 'blueprint' early in 2015 to support its aim to become the number one bank for customer service, trust and advocacy. To help meet this target, RBS recognised the need for a change in culture to better support and enable its employees.

Making sure employee development was on-going and not seen as an annual process was a high priority. The first task was to put in place systems and simple processes to enable employee development and a consistent feedback methodology.

360 degree feedback was seen as an important tool within this shift but it too needed to evolve to align with the new business strategy. It had previously been linked to performance assessment and was used by only senior leaders at RBS, so a change of focus was required.

➔ Solution:

Providing world-class feedback tools

We created an entirely bespoke feedback platform for RBS. This was designed to fit their needs and to look and feel like an RBS 'house' tool.

Despite offering powerful functionality and complexity behind the scenes, it was important the tool be very quick and intuitive for end users. With this in mind, the system sends out prompts asking people if they've yet created an action plan, how they're progressing with actions or asking whether they want to reprise the 360 process.

The evolution of 360 degree feedback at RBS

As 360 degree feedback has become more embedded at RBS, they've extended its use to a wider population. Significantly, RBS has also decoupled 360 feedback from the performance review cycle; so, for the vast majority of staff, feedback is used purely for development.

Our business psychologists have worked with RBS to assist with the evolution of the programme. Their focus has been on ensuring it remains relevant, that it supports their business needs and that it reflects the latest best practice.

Feedback, on-demand

As part of their strategic focus on great leadership, RBS has recently introduced a transformative leadership programme called 'Determined to lead'. This encourages a continual approach to feedback and having quality conversations. The 360 feedback process is positioned to leaders as an enabler to having these kinds of conversations. As such, the feedback tool is accessible 'on demand' all year round, and self-registration means individuals can initiate the 360 feedback process themselves. All they need to do is first gain approval from their manager to cover the cost.

Questionnaire design

The content of the 360 questionnaire is fundamental to the success of the programme. Until recently, RBS had two different behavioural competency frameworks: one for senior leaders, and one for all other employees. These were the basis of two 360 questionnaires. In updating the programme, this was an area RBS reviewed, as Claire Smith, People Strategy & Insight Manager at RBS, explains:

“ *Having two different frameworks implied different assessments and desired behaviours depending on peoples’ job level. On reflection, we felt this didn’t fit culturally with our value of working together and having a consistent measure. So we re-worked this to have a single set of competencies or ‘standards’ as they’re known.* ”

To ensure alignment with the new unified standards, RBS updated the 360 questions so the underpinning competencies and behavioural statements being measured are fit-for-purpose. Our business psychologists helped ensure each question led to one clear actionable behaviour that can be easily addressed.

Reporting power

The system allows RBS different levels of reporting to support individual and team development and to provide business-wide insights.

For individuals, the reports are clearly structured with key information and there’s even a ready-made action plan included, which participants can discuss with managers and turn into a development plan. It’s designed to really encourage the individual to take responsibility for their own development.

Claire Smith explains:

“ *We wanted to make it easy for people to understand what the results are telling them and what they should do about it. That’s the principle that underpins the reports and guides people to make changes to affect behavioural change that will help both their own career development while also enabling us to serve our customers better.* ”

RBS also wanted to help managers to support teams and increase effectiveness. To this end, we devised short aggregate reports specifically for line managers. This gives them a great oversight of collective strengths and development areas across their team and a comparison of the team average and the RBS overall average.

Managers are encouraged to use the team reports in conjunction with the individual report – not instead of it. This way they can use the context of team results to better inform and coach their people.

➔ Result

360 degree feedback is very well embedded at RBS. In 2015 alone, around 5,100 employees participated. RBS uses results from the programme to drive performance improvement at three levels:

1. **For individuals**, giving them an overview of their strengths and development areas to inform their development plans
2. **At a team level**, highlighting team development needs and enabling managers to better support direct reports' progression
3. **At a business level**, offering insights into trends and themes across the business, and how they're delivering against the strategy. This is reported to the CEO and Executive Committee. These aggregate insights are also triangulated with analysis of customer and financial data, and other people metrics such as engagement and leadership indices to drive bottom-line business results.

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



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