



MULTISOURCE (360°) FEEDBACK THAT EFFECTS CHANGES IN LEADERS' BEHAVIOR

A MONOGRAPH BY

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INTRODUCTION

The success of most organizations is tied more closely than ever to savvy leaders, who are finding their role to be continuously more challenging and often infinitely more complex. Even leaders who have known only success are finding that they must constantly build on their current strengths and shore up their weaknesses if they are to maintain that level of performance.

How do leaders know what their strengths and weaknesses are? Many organizations turn to feedback from multisource (360°) instruments to provide such insights. But are the leaders getting the message from this feedback? Are they developing new skills and behaviors because of it? This monograph makes the case that, for the majority of multisource feedback recipients, meaningful change does **not** happen, and we cite the eight most common reasons for that. But do not despair! Significant ROI from multisource instruments is possible. To that end, we also describe solutions to overcome each of the common problems plaguing conventional multisource feedback systems.

This monograph is divided into three parts:

1. Summary of research into the accuracy of multisource feedback and the effectiveness of feedback from traditional multisource instruments in motivating recipients to ongoing behavioral change. (Appendix A provides the references.)
2. Description of the eight common problems we believe account for the failure of traditional multisource applications to create on-the-job behavior change. (Appendix B lists the research studies that have led to these conclusions.) Although most of the cited research deals directly with behavior change resulting from multisource feedback, in some cases we also have drawn insights from recent research into assessment center feedback. Our conclusions are based on this research as well as the extensive experience of Development Dimensions International, Inc. (DDI), in this area.
3. Explanation of actions that organizations can take to overcome the problems we have cited, including unique instrument design, guidance provided to feedback recipients (the subjects) and their managers, and changes in how to position and reinforce multisource instruments.

PART I

WHAT IS THE ROI FROM MULTISOURCE INSTRUMENTS?

ROI is difficult to calculate, but we can estimate it by answering four questions.

Are Multisource Evaluations Related to Important Measures of Organizational Success?

Mean multisource ratings have proven to be related to a number of independent criteria such as:

- > Compensation.
- > Organizational level.
- > Production/Profit.
- > Retail store revenue, gross margins, and sales of accessories and service contracts.
- > Bank customers' loyalty.
- > Turnover and higher service quality.
- > Engagement with work and turnover intentions.

There are also studies that show a correlation between multisource ratings and annual performance reviews by a supervisor as well as studies that show a correlation between supervisors' and direct reports' ratings obtained at different times. However, these are not truly independent observations because the same source (e.g., the supervisor) is providing the multisource ratings and the criterion ratings. They are more measures of the reliability of multisource evaluations.

Finally, there are three studies that relate multisource ratings to independently obtained assessment center evaluations (see Appendix A for references to the correlations noted above).

Does Performance Improve After Multisource Feedback?

Generally, behavior change stemming from the administration of a multisource instrument is evaluated by the subsequent administration of another multisource instrument six months to a year later. The research on the ability of multisource feedback to create behavior change is decidedly mixed. We have surveyed 10 research reports, including several meta-analyses covering 10 to 130 studies, to ascertain a consensus in the results (see Appendix A for the reference list).

Most studies show either very small or small improvement. Performance improvement varied greatly among subjects and was based in part on the personality of the subjects. About one-third of the subjects were actually rated lower by their managers or direct reports on subsequent administration. In general, overraters (compared to others) **decrease** their self-ratings over time, while under-raters **increase** their self-ratings.

Should We Expect Documented Improvement from One Application of a Multisource Instrument to Another?

Documenting improvement from one application to another can be problematic for several reasons:

- > Almost all published research into performance improvement used mean ratings (i.e., the average of all competency ratings or other ratings). This fact seriously reduces the chances that individual performance change will be documented. For instance, if a person who was rated on 20 competencies decided to work on 2 weak areas, he or she might show improved behavior in those areas but might have regressed slightly in 1 or 2 strength areas, resulting in no mean improvement.
- > Raters are often unreliable. Given the same behavior by the subject over time, raters often give different competency ratings or even categorize certain behaviors under different competencies than they did in earlier surveys (see Common Problem #1). Such unreliability severely diminishes the likelihood that a change in the subject's performance will be shown.

MOST STUDIES SHOW EITHER VERY SMALL OR SMALL IMPROVEMENT.

- > Using different raters from one multisource application to another makes it difficult to document improvement in the subject's behavior. When different raters fill out the feedback surveys, they bring to the process their own perspectives of the subject plus their own understanding of the competency and rating scale definitions. These unique viewpoints are reflected in evaluations that might show different results from previous evaluations or be unrelated to the subject's actual behavioral changes.

When all these measurement issues are factored in, considerable analytical power is lost and the true impact of feedback from multisource instruments is probably understated.

What Do Executives and Leadership Development Experts Think?

We have asked thousands of executives and leadership development experts the following question: *What percentage of the people who get multisource feedback in your organization actually change their behavior in a positive way and maintain that change for several years?* Their answers consistently are 5 to 10 percent, with almost no one reporting higher than 20 percent. If even a 20 percent success rate is accepted, the ROI for organizations administering multisource instruments for development purposes is not very high. Consider that most organizations would not buy a piece of equipment that produced results only 20 percent of the time.

Hope for the Future

Rather than continuing to despair over the dearth of positive findings regarding the impact of multisource feedback, in the last five years researchers have started to study the reasons for the lack of impact. These are summarized in the next section (with references provided in Appendix B). Based on these insights, we then describe in Part III how consulting, training, and an innovative new format for collecting ratings can materially increase the chance for meaningful behavioral change.

PART II

COMMON MULTISOURCE PROBLEMS

Our review of published research (see Appendix B) and our experience in providing multisource feedback to hundreds of thousands of subjects have revealed eight common problems that explain the failure of multisource feedback to effect change in leaders' behavior:

1 Evaluation of competencies by raters (i.e., manager, direct reports, peers, others) is often unreliable.

Factor analyses of multisource ratings usually show that the raters consider only a limited number of factors—not the much longer list of competencies provided in the multisource instrument. This means that raters are not differentiating among all the competencies provided. They might categorize a behavior under a certain competency in one multisource survey, and then categorize it under another competency when repeating the survey, thereby obscuring a positive or negative change in the subject's behavior. Often, the poor reliability of ratings results from raters' lack of training in both the competencies being evaluated and the rating scale. Also, raters often are asked to evaluate competencies for a subject that they have not directly observed. Finally, some competency sets used in multisource instruments are poorly researched, shoddily validated, or not clearly defined.

Other sources of ratings' unreliability are the differences in interpreting the factors evaluated in the multisource instruments and the differing rater standards in countries around the world. For instance, managers in the United States generally get higher ratings than their counterparts in other countries.

WHEN IT COMES TO ACCEPTING FEEDBACK, SUBJECTS SOMETIMES HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING THE BIG PICTURE.

2 Subjects see feedback as a “report card” rather than a road map for development.

The blame for a “report card” mentality usually rests with the culture in which the evaluation is done or the way the methodology has been introduced. Research has shown that when feedback recipients understand the results will be used for their development rather than for a future promotion or their compensation, change is more likely to occur. Also, when the multisource instrument’s development goals are incorporated into subjects’ job performance expectations, their behaviors are more likely to improve.

3 Subjects who have low self-esteem do not think change is possible and show less interest in improvement.

No one likes to get developmental feedback—especially people who are not confident about their skills or performance. Also, people lacking in self-esteem tend to feel they are unable to do anything about their feedback results. However, individuals are less likely to reject negative feedback if they believe that its long-term benefits will outweigh the immediate negative feelings associated with receiving and acting on that feedback. Without a positive feedback culture and well-positioned coaching, the performance of subjects with low self-esteem might actually decline even further after they receive multisource feedback.

4 Subjects often have difficulty accepting the need for action on their multisource feedback.

Such recipients frequently make comments such as:

- > *“All my ratings are in the favorable range. I’m just dealing with different degrees of goodness.”*
- > *“All my ratings are above average or above the norms presented with the feedback.”*
- > *“My average rating is favorable, even if some competencies are low.”*
- > *“I’ve made it to where I am without (specific competency), so I don’t really need to change now.”*

In general, subjects who overrate themselves compared to their leaders, peers, or direct reports (i.e., they have poor self-insights) often dismiss others’ ratings as inaccurate and fail to take meaningful development action. In fact, the more they overrate themselves, the more negative their reaction to others’ feedback becomes. Some rationalizations we have heard include:

- > *“I had the wrong raters.”*
- > *“These raters don’t understand why I do things.”*
- > *“I’ve changed since they rated me.”*
- > *“Poor morale, caused by things outside my control, influenced these ratings.”*

When it comes to accepting feedback, subjects sometimes have difficulty seeing the big picture; often, a more holistic interpretation of their competency profile is appropriate. In a holistic view the interrelationships of the competencies are taken into account. Sometimes one competency will compensate for another or a combination of strengths or weaknesses will lead to a discovery of an underlying personality factor, a behavioral habit, or another cause of the strength or development need.

5 Subjects choose too many development goals.

Often, individuals look at a list of development needs identified by their multisource feedback, and then attempt to go after all of them at once. But, someone who chooses a dozen goals for development is almost certain not to improve in any. Development is hard work, and very few people can improve in several leadership competencies at the same time. Feedback subjects need to meet with their manager so that together they can prioritize their development goals relative to what is immediately important to their organization and their unit.

6 Skills are not acquired before application.

Even when people accept negative feedback from a multisource survey, they probably won't know what to do differently as a result. Without coaching, training, or another such intervention, they blindly try different methods or behaviors, and they might actually regress in the competency they were trying to improve upon. Two research studies have documented this phenomenon with leadership skills.

On the positive side, research has shown that executives who receive coaching after their multisource feedback do better than those who don't receive coaching. And that training can materially improve their behavior.

7 Subjects do not involve their manager or others in choosing development goals, planning their skill acquisition, or implementing development plans.

When left to their own devices, subjects often choose development goals that are easy, convenient, or socially acceptable (e.g., when a person who has no exposure to international operations chooses international expertise as a goal), or they choose targets that are of particular interest to them without regard to what would have the greatest impact on their own or their organization's performance.

Their manager usually has a broader view of the needs of the unit and organization, which leads to having a more accurate insight into the likely payback from alternative development goals. The manager, by considering group and organizational factors, is in a better position to see when an individual's chosen development goal might not be the highest-priority development need. (A goal in which the person can develop a skill or competency while also having a significant impact on his or her unit or organization is better because more people would have a vested interest in the person's success.) Managers are much less prone to pull a person from a training program or cut off a development opportunity when they see the individual's development as a tangible benefit for them or for their unit.

Skill or knowledge acquisition is another area in which the subject's manager should be involved. When attempting to coordinate their own development, people often lack insight regarding the range of available options, their efficiency, or their feasibility. Thus, subjects often gravitate to relatively painless paths for skill acquisition, such as reading a book or listening to an audio recording, eschewing more effective—yet more taxing—skill-building alternatives. Also, they soon recognize that they have a very limited window to take advantage of the best skill acquisition opportunities. For instance, without the help of higher management, subjects cannot put themselves on a task force, unilaterally give themselves a new assignment, or choose a coach. They can't even participate in most training programs. Experience has consistently shown that individuals who discuss their skill acquisition needs with their manager, a mentor, or some other significant person in the organization are more likely to have a well-conceived development plan and the necessary resources and authorizations to follow through on it.

Even when subjects obtain an accurate diagnosis of their development needs from the multisource feedback and when an excellent development plan has been drafted, inevitably there are problems with its execution. Priorities change and emergencies crop up. People get pulled from training programs or have their development curtailed before they can achieve maximum learning. Sometimes this is unavoidable, but disruptions can be minimized if an individual's manager is fully committed to his or her development. This commitment reaches its zenith when the manager has had a hand in helping subjects define their development needs and plan their development actions, has anticipated possible problems, and is determined to help minimize them.

The availability of executive coaches and subjects' participation in post-multisource feedback workshops also have been linked to the improved implementation and follow-through of development plans, but the manager's role in the process is clearly the most important factor.

8 No measurements of success are established.

Most studies have shown that if people set development goals without having specific, measurable achievement targets, they likely will not meet those goals.

During the first implementations of their new skills (e.g., the initial attempt at using newly acquired negotiation skills on vendors), individuals should measure their achievements. This important measurement often can take the form of feedback from their managers, peers, customers, etc. Then, to continually reinforce the use of skills on the job, ongoing outcome measures, such as turnover or quality statistics, are essential.

PART III

DDI'S SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOMING THESE COMMON PROBLEMS

DDI offers an unmatched variety of multisource survey options, services, tools, and training to facilitate follow-through on feedback. This section describes these solutions, and then explains how each of them can help overcome the common problems with multisource feedback we have just described. A grid illustrating how the solutions match to the common problems is provided in Appendix C.

Common Elements of DDI's Multisource Tools and Services (Leadership Mirror® platform)

A. Implementation and Realization Consulting

DDI is not just a provider of multisource instruments; we also are dedicated to their effective use to initiate meaningful behavioral change by enabling people to build on their strengths and develop their growth areas.

DDI's consulting support helps assure that multisource instruments are implemented and administered most effectively. This includes:

- > Selecting competencies and key actions for the survey.
- > Configuring survey design and distribution methods.
- > Sending communications to subjects, respondents, and the client organization as a whole.
- > Training participants to use the instruments and response options.
- > Deciding who will get individual and group reports.
- > Aligning organizational systems to support the use of the multisource instrument data.
- > Helping management use and understand group reports.

DDI consultants stay with clients through the implementation and follow-up phases of the multisource project.

B. *What Now?* Booklet

The *What Now?* booklet is available in both online or hard-copy formats to all individuals who receive a multisource feedback report from DDI. It lays out a strategy for understanding the report and using the insights gained from the feedback. The booklet also focuses on aligning the individual's and organization's needs in planning and implementing development activities and on involving the individual's manager for insight and support.

For those who need help only in preparing for a follow-up meeting with a manager, an abridged version of the *What Now?* booklet (i.e., 14 versus 38 pages) is available online.

C. Development Guides

DDI offers online access to a library of development suggestions and resources for each of the more than 100 competencies in the DDI competency taxonomy. Our development guides serve as excellent aids for individuals who want to improve in a given area. For each competency, the guides not only elaborate on the competency's definition and contain bibliographies of books and magazine articles pertinent to development, but they also cite appropriate training programs and on-the-job suggestions for improvement. The rich assortment of developmental resources tied directly to the subject's survey results keeps the spotlight squarely on future-oriented development and decidedly away from the feel of a numeric report card that would evaluate the past. Development guide content is available in multiple languages, and the system supports any level of customization.

D. Training Programs

DDI offers two training experiences specifically designed for individuals involved in multisource feedback:

- > ***Achieving Your Leadership Potential*** is aimed at subjects who have received their multisource feedback, and then need to interpret it and prepare for a meeting with their manager.

- > ***Developing Others*** is designed to help managers be more effective in their discussions and support strategies with their subjects.

Group training can be provided in close proximity to subjects' receiving their feedback or, in the case of managers, after direct reports have received their feedback. Both courses are available in multiple languages.

In addition, DDI offers an extensive array of training programs (classroom and online) that can provide the skill-acquisition component of training plans by developing subjects' interpersonal, leadership, and management skills. For more information, visit the DDI web site (www.ddiworld.com).

E. Feedback Coaching

DDI coaches can provide one-on-one feedback from multisource surveys as well as coaching in person or by phone. The focus is on helping the subject completely understand the competency feedback report and the interrelationships among the competencies. After this is achieved, the coach then works with the subject to consider possible development actions and how the most productive development discussion can be held with the person's manager. DDI also can train others in the client organization to conduct this feedback and coaching.

F. Ongoing Coaching

Sometimes it is appropriate to provide ongoing coaching to subjects of multisource feedback to help them implement the plans they have agreed upon with their manager. DDI can provide such coaching based upon specific, measurable goals, or we can train members of the organization's HR department to fill this role.

G. A Flexible Platform with an Array of Survey Formats and Options

With our **Leadership Mirror** solution, DDI offers a robust platform that provides a variety of content and options. Leadership Mirror helps organizations create, distribute, collect, and analyze perceptual

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE LEADERSHIP MIRROR PLATFORM ARE THE BREADTH OF ITS EMBEDDED DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES AND ITS FLEXIBILITY TO EASILY LINK TO EXTERNAL RESOURCES.

data on all sizes of subject populations. The specific features of this platform are designed to enhance the quality of the feedback and subjects' acceptance of it. For example:

- > Leadership Mirror includes several **well-researched competency libraries**, representing more than 100 competencies that are suitable for most environments and levels and that have been refined by thousands of organizations over time. This researched, field-tested content helps assure that raters and subjects will **easily understand and use** the competencies and key actions.
- > The platform provides **built-in customization tools** for either a partial or complete content customization. Virtually any competency model can be used. This content flexibility helps organizations tailor the survey content to **address the target population's unique, specific needs**. Raters and subjects will be more likely to respond when they see the survey's **relevance** to their world.
- > Leadership Mirror's user interface and all survey content are available in **multiple languages**. The customization tools also support multiple languages. In fact, the same survey content can be presented simultaneously to raters in several different languages, with the results being expressed in the language preference of the subject or administrator. This assures that most raters will not need to deal with content nuances in a foreign or second language, thus **increasing the reliability** of the **feedback** while **decreasing the tedium** and **time** necessary to provide ratings.
- > The platform fully automates invitations, participation, reminders, and reporting functions, all of which help administrators provide the **smooth logistics** critical to getting timely, **full involvement**.
- > Leadership Mirror is **scalable for any size implementation**. It has been used to assess a single individual and also has been implemented in an organization with more than 500,000 users. Again, speed, automation, and smooth logistics help ensure rater and subject involvement, support, and trust of the process.

- > The platform **supports numerous organization-specific and survey-specific configuration options**, including rating scale type, size, and wording; e-mail invitation wording; universal norms; survey averages; report types and styles; self-evaluations; the ability to decide when to hold and release the results, etc. It supports full customization of the number, types, and descriptions of respondent groups (e.g., "subordinates" or "direct reports"). The platform also allows custom settings for the "anonymity threshold"—the number of respondents required before results for a given group will be reported. (Anonymity is always maintained except for the subject's manager.)
- > Perhaps the most important features of the Leadership Mirror platform, in terms of development focus and behavior change, are the **breadth of its embedded development resources** and its **flexibility to easily link to external resources**. For all survey formats and content, Leadership Mirror provides developmental resources that let subjects leverage their strengths and address their developmental needs. These development aids are prescriptive to the survey results and include such embedded resources as development guides, reading lists, skill-building courses, suggested targeted activities, and electronic links to other related content such as *What Now?*—the online booklet described earlier. Beyond its own vast array of embedded material, Leadership Mirror can hyperlink to virtually any online development resources (including audio or video) deemed valuable by the client, whether they be on the client's intranet (e.g., a video presentation by the organization's CEO) or on the Internet. To further expand the platform's unmatched flexibility and breadth, clients also have the option of seamlessly linking Leadership Mirror—at the competency or behavior level—to **OPAL**[®], DDI's online performance and learning system.

Two Major Multisource Survey Formats

Traditional Format

Leadership Mirror supports traditional multisource surveys—that is, surveys in which multiple raters evaluate each competency and its attendant key actions. It uses a 3- to 10-point Likert scale that allows respondents to rate proficiency, frequency, and/or importance of the items.

Targeted Feedback Format

The Leadership Mirror platform also supports **Targeted Feedback**^{SM/Patent Pending}, an innovative format specifically designed to **avoid** most of the **common pitfalls** inherent in traditional, rating-intense approaches. At first glance a Targeted Feedback multisource survey looks like a conventional multisource instrument, complete with a list of competencies and their definitions. However, the Targeted Feedback respondent's task is different from that of all other multisource instruments. Instead of rating each competency on a numeric scale, respondents are asked to simply **select up to three strengths and up to three areas for growth (weaknesses)**. Next, the computer displays the key actions (i.e., sub-behaviors) for each of the chosen strengths and growth areas and asks the respondent to indicate **which ones either contribute to the subject's strengths or need to be developed** in the areas for growth. Respondents also are asked to further describe the strengths and growth areas by writing behavioral examples. Finally, they are asked whether they would be **willing to help** the subject develop each of the competencies selected if it is possible and appropriate. (After the initial selection of up to three strengths and three growth areas, each of the other steps can be optional or skipped, depending on how the survey creator configures Targeted Feedback for the intended audience.)

Targeted Feedback's simple design streamlines the process and removes the tedium and repetitiveness of more traditional multisource approaches, which can take respondents up to an hour to complete

for each subject. (In the traditional multisource approach, raters are sometimes asked to evaluate each person on one or more multiple-point rating scales for each of up to 100 items.) The simplicity of the Targeted Feedback process markedly speeds up the respondents' task and makes it easier for them to send a clear message to the subject. In fact, Targeted Feedback might require anywhere from one-half to one-fifth of the decision entries common in other approaches.

Targeted Feedback Reports

Outputs from Targeted Feedback are considerably different from those obtained from traditional multisource instruments because they **focus subjects' attention on fewer areas** and help them clearly understand their most important strengths and growth areas.

One report type available in Targeted Feedback shows the subject the three competencies that were most frequently chosen as strengths and growth areas by individual respondent groups. That is, on the report (online or printout) the subject sees (at both the competency and key action levels) his or her own choices, the manager's choices, and those selected by peers, direct reports, customers, and any other relationship groups surveyed. (The manager's views are always given preeminent position in Targeted Feedback reports to help keep the focus on the partnership with the manager. This helps avoid some of the pitfalls discussed earlier.)

Here are some additional unique features of the Targeted Feedback reports:

- > **No statistics**—The report design completely avoids the numerical complexity of traditional multisource feedback: There are no averages, ranges, norms, or dispersion statistics. Subjects do not get lost in slight or obscure variations across a large list of competencies and key actions. The simple listing of three primary strengths and three growth areas provides clarity and ensures self-evident understanding.

- > **Actionable feedback**—The significance of each strength and growth area is enhanced by the feedback provided at the key action level. Seeing which behaviors are key to the subject’s success in his or her strength areas and which are contributing to the need for growth provides the subject with insights to take action on.
- > **Unique, “at a glance” comparison report**—Targeted Feedback also offers another unique report: a **graphic comparison** of the choices made by the various respondent groups. The subject can see at a glance their agreement or variance. The report arranges the results into a

series of color-coded blocks displayed across rows by competency and in columns by respondent group (peers, direct reports, customers, etc.). Areas of agreement (consistent color) and areas of disagreement (mix of colors) clearly stand out. The graphic representation ameliorates the complexity and confusion of the traditional statistic-centric approach. This simple, unique report makes it much easier for subjects and their managers to focus on priorities and create more effective development plans. Figure 1 shows a sample Targeted Feedback Comparison Report.

FIGURE 1: A Sample Targeted Feedback Comparison Report

Respondents: Total providing feedback = 15 Total invited = 15						
PERFORMANCE AREA	Mgr 1	Self 1	Peer 5	DR 5	Other 4	All ¹ 15
Building Customer Loyalty	1	1	5	4	3	13
Communication	1			3	3	7
Planning and Organizing	1	1	3			7
Adaptability	1		3		3	8
Gaining Commitment	1		5			8
Managing Conflict	1	1		3		
Building Strategic Working Relationships		1	3		2	
Coaching				3		
Decision Making					2	
Delegating Responsibility		1		5		
Formal Presentation			3		4	7
Initiating Action		1		3	3	

Key

Strength

Growth Area

Split Opinion

Note: The number in each box indicates the number of respondents choosing that option.

¹The numbers in this column reflect ALL respondents (other than Self) who chose the performance area as a strength or growth area.

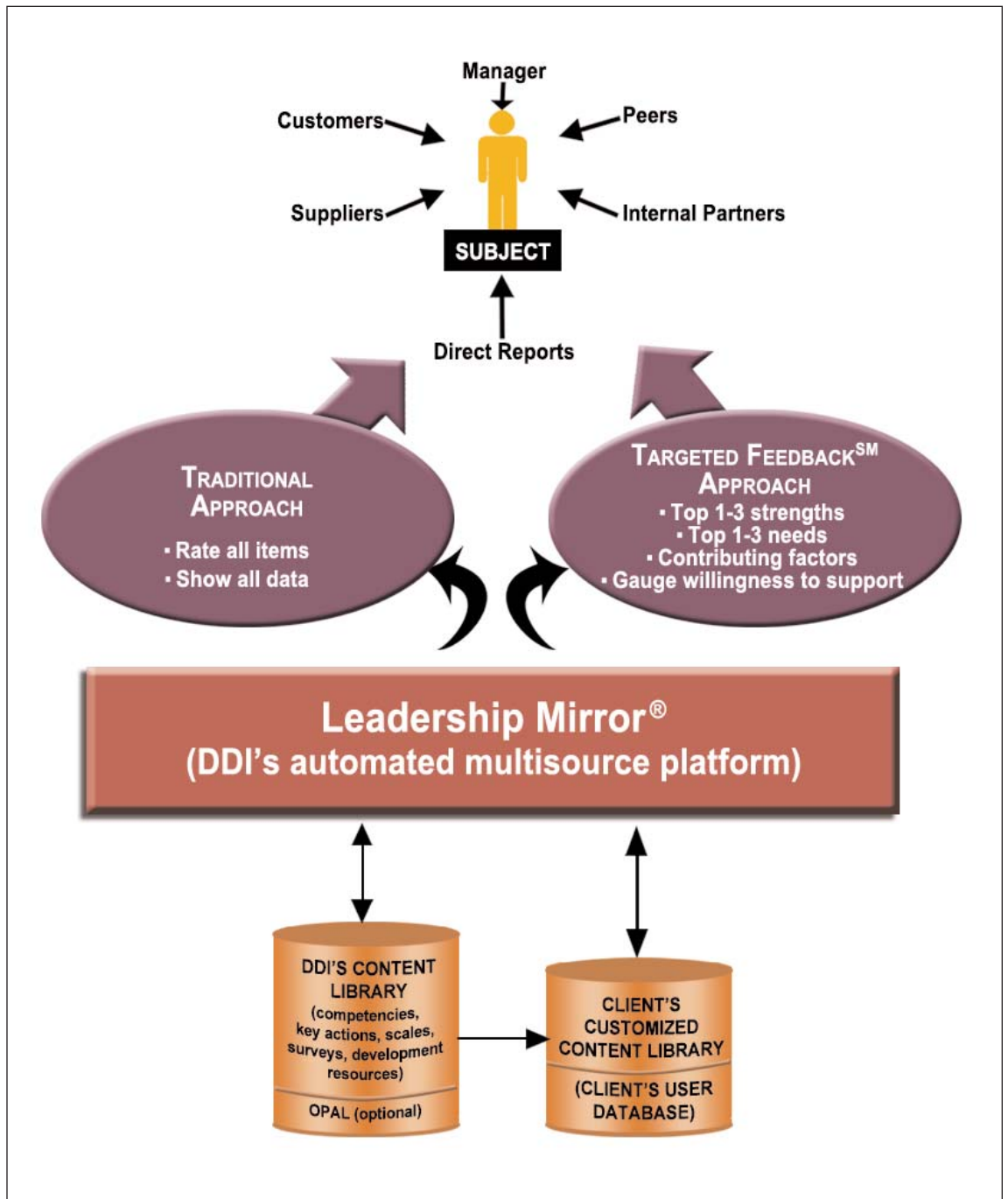
- > **Written feedback**—Through its “Additional Comments” feature, Targeted Feedback encourages respondents to provide open-ended feedback related to a given competency. Their comments are sorted and displayed with the competency when chosen as a strength and displayed **separately** when it is chosen as an area for growth.

Table 1 provides some guidelines around when to use Targeted Feedback and when to opt for a more traditional approach. Figure 2 depicts DDI’s flexible multisource architecture relative to Targeted Feedback and Leadership Mirror.

TABLE 1: When to Use Targeted Feedback or a Traditional Multisource Approach

Use Targeted Feedback when you want to:	Use the traditional approach when you want to:
> Simplify/Accelerate the feedback process.	> Receive detailed data on each competency and key action.
> Capture attention; give focused feedback.	> Compare trend data over time.
> Avoid a “report card” feel.	> Obtain numerical group data across all competencies.
> Allow raters to stay within their unique areas of knowledge.	> Generate reports with bar graphics.
> Engender awareness and use of a support network.	> Make comparisons to norms and group averages.
> Get a fresh start using a unique approach.	> Use survey data beyond development (e.g., performance management). (Not recommended.)
	> Integrate the multisource data with assessment center data.
<i>Note: Does not provide time advantage for surveys with fewer than seven competencies.</i>	<i>Note: Can work with small or large surveys.</i>
DDI has applied for a U.S. patent for the unique characteristics of the Targeted Feedback approach to multisource feedback systems.	

FIGURE 2: DDI's Flexible 360° Architecture



How DDI Solutions Help Organizations Overcome Common Problems with Multisource Instruments

COMMON PROBLEM #1

Evaluation of competencies by raters (i.e., manager, direct reports, peers, others) is often unreliable.

DDI's **consultants** work to establish an optimum environment for development, making certain that the developmental purpose of the feedback survey is clear and that obstacles to evaluation are minimized (e.g., providing clear competency definitions and behavioral examples [key actions] and clearly defining appropriate rating scales). Our consultants underscore the importance of respondents' not trying to evaluate competencies they cannot directly observe. Another key element of consulting is resolving the issues of who selects the raters, if and how they will be trained, and how feedback will be provided.

For organizations electing not to use our consultants for custom competency modeling, the **Leadership Mirror competency libraries** have been scientifically developed and extensively refined in field applications. This assures that the supplied competencies, when used, are easy to understand and are more likely to elicit valid responses. And the **Targeted Feedback** format focuses respondents' attention on only a few competencies. Raters are asked to clarify each competency's importance by defining the behavior (key action) that causes it to be considered a strength or a growth area. To further illustrate the competency, raters are asked to provide behavioral examples. Consistent clarity of communication from the respondent to the subject is the goal.

International application of multisource instruments must be carefully considered if the performance of managers in various countries will be compared for promotion or other purposes (which we do not recommend). In these situations the ratings and their factor structure need to be investigated for culture biases.

COMMON PROBLEM #2

Subjects see feedback as a "report card" rather than a road map for development.

DDI's **consultants** assure that subjects understand that their survey results are to be used for their development, rather than for promotional or pay purposes, and that the organization expects meaningful action based on the feedback results. The *What Now?* booklet details how the feedback instrument can help subjects propel their development in a positive way and reinforces the overt expectation for their development.

Targeted Feedback eliminates comparisons to norms or among the competencies being evaluated and communicates a clear message: *These are the areas that need to change, as seen by important respondent groups.* In fact, it eliminates ratings altogether, which goes a long way toward removing a "report card" feel. Additionally, **Targeted Feedback** respondents can indicate their willingness to help a subject in developing an area. This further emphasizes the developmental purpose of the feedback.

The **development resources** that accompany **Targeted Feedback** and **Leadership Mirror** feedback reports, including development guides and **OPAL** (online support), further position the multisource feedback away from the graded "report card" feel and more toward its purely developmental intent.

Finally, the assignment of a formal **coach**, whenever feasible, also sends a message that the subject's development is the focus.

COMMON PROBLEM #3

Subjects who have low self-esteem do not think change is possible and show less interest in improvement.

Many people who stand pat on their multisource feedback rationalize their inaction by convincing themselves that competencies are impossible to change. Often, these people have low self-confidence. There's no question that some competencies are, in fact, difficult to change, but there's also very good

evidence that, with enough effort, they **can** be changed. The challenge is to convince these individuals that change is possible for them and worth the effort. This can be accomplished by providing the organization with **consulting** relative to establishing a positive expectation of change (e.g., saying that the competencies **can** be developed, giving examples, etc.). Consulting also can help foster a climate that minimizes the perceived stigma of asking for help (i.e., admitting weakness).

Further, the *What Now?* booklet gives specific examples of successful development and provides step-by-step recommendations for how development can be achieved.

Targeted Feedback focuses the subject's attention on where development is most needed and provides a reminder that help is available from his or her manager, peers, and direct reports, thereby encouraging development. Also, Targeted Feedback subjects see that **everyone** gets feedback for growth. In this sense Targeted Feedback is egalitarian in its effect: Everyone knows that everyone will have development areas. There are no artificially high or "north of norm" ratings that would make some people look superior to others; thus, those with fragile self-esteem feel less vulnerable because the perception of others' superiority is minimized.

An **executive coach** can do much to help raise a subject's self-esteem, ensure he or she takes on initial development projects that will be successful, and guide the individual through the steps of change.

For people in lower-level, larger populations, individual coaches might not be a practical solution. For these groups DDI's online coaching system, **OPAL**, provides a wealth of coaching advice at an economical price. It is also less conspicuous for subjects with low self-esteem to access this online help as needed. Also, DDI offers *Achieving Your Leadership Potential*, a half-day **training course** specifically designed to help people recognize opportunities to change and plan their development.

COMMON PROBLEM #4

Subjects often have difficulty accepting the need for action on their multisource feedback.

People frequently look for reasons not to take self-development action—and the most common one is that they do not really think they need to be developed. Instead, they see themselves as already good or, at least, good enough.

Targeted Feedback excels in counteracting this problem because it is much more explicit in focusing subjects on development areas that are important to constituency groups (e.g., their manager, direct reports). The development targets are much clearer and more specific because they do not have to be discovered through analysis of a long list of competency ratings. Further, the Targeted Feedback format helps individuals better understand the relative importance of competencies.

One-on-one coaching can help individuals gain holistic insights and focus on appropriate development targets. A coach can ask penetrating questions that will help subjects see themselves as they really are, rather than how they **hope** they are. Even more, a coach can deal with areas such as self-awareness and arrogance as possible inhibitors of development and suggest ways to double-check the survey insights by collecting additional data.

DDI's *Achieving Your Leadership Potential* course elicits peer feedback on development plans and helps subjects obtain holistic insights from their **Leadership Mirror** reports.

COMMON PROBLEM #5

Subjects choose too many development goals.

This is one of the easier problems to overcome. Through **consulting** help, we recommend that the organization explicitly ask subjects to focus on one strength to be enhanced and one growth area (weakness) to be developed. This is then reinforced through the content of the *What Now?* booklet, the *Achieving Your Leadership Potential* course, and the **coaching** provided to multisource feedback recipients.

●
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AND DIRECT REPORTS.
●

It is worth noting that this restriction on competency development sometimes has exceptions when subjects can enhance several competencies at once through the same training experience and the same application experience. Also, an individual might have additional development goals in terms of organizational experience or knowledge.

The Targeted Feedback report format keeps the list of competencies short—never exceeding six (i.e., three growth areas and three strengths). This helps prevent excessive “gap lists” from tempting subjects into long lists of developmental goals.

COMMON PROBLEM #6

Skills are not acquired before application.

In most instances some form of skill acquisition is required before initial application (practice) of a competency. Even in situations where people know what to do, they may well need skill development to give them the confidence they need to do it.

Both the *What Now?* booklet and the *Achieving Your Leadership Potential* course emphasize the need to acquire skills before attempting to apply them. They also help multisource feedback recipients in choosing the most effective development courses of action (e.g., training programs that offer skill practices are preferable to reading a book).

OPAL and/or **development guides** provide specific training recommendations relative to the competencies being evaluated. Moreover, a DDI **coach** can help the feedback recipient determine the most appropriate development activities and align them with the planned initial applications. It is important not to have the development take place too far in advance of application.

COMMON PROBLEM #7

Subjects do not involve their manager or others in choosing development goals, planning their skill acquisition, or implementing development plans.

DDI believes that the involvement of the subject’s manager, and sometimes others, in **choosing development targets** is a critical step in achieving development. We encourage this involvement in a variety of ways.

Just as critical is the involvement of the manager, and sometimes others, in determining **how skills will be acquired**. In most cases individuals have little control over the best development opportunities (e.g., special assignments or changing job responsibilities); for this reason, the planning of skill acquisition needs to be a shared responsibility. Often, the manager’s much broader understanding of options available for a skill acquisition plan can reveal opportunities that are unknown to the subject.

The manager’s involvement also must include planning around the initial use of the subject’s newly acquired skills. Without the buy-in and input of the manager and other groups, initial application targets can be ill conceived or poorly defined. This can short-circuit the application and prevent the subject from ever achieving the desired development, as other organizational priorities intervene and gain a higher priority.

DDI’s **consultants** guide client organizations into establishing and communicating a clear expectation that multisource feedback reports will be discussed with each subject’s boss within a specified time period. Moreover, providing a summary feedback report to the manager (if the organization chooses to do so) strongly reinforces the idea that a meeting on the subject’s feedback is required. DDI emphasizes that such a meeting is not an option—it is an expectation. Additionally, by receiving the summary feedback report, the manager gains insight into the subject’s reported strengths and growth areas, which then can be covered in a discussion even if the subject neglects to mention them.

WHAT NOW? CITES EXAMPLES OF DEVELOPMENTAL MEASURES AND ENCOURAGES THEIR USE.

Both *What Now?* and *Achieving Your Leadership Potential* emphasize the importance of subjects' gaining others' help in planning their skill acquisition. **Coaches** can help with additional recommendations. These resources not only provide the rationale for involving the manager and others, but they also give specific directions on how to do so effectively.

What Now? directs the subject to meet with his or her manager to get insights and help in prioritizing development targets and planning development. The booklet stresses the importance of choosing targets that will meet the needs of the subject, his or her manager, and the organization. Development objectives that meet these various needs are much more likely to be reinforced and achieved.

Targeted Feedback allows managers and others to indicate whether they would be willing to help an individual develop, thereby providing overt encouragement for subjects to get suggestions from others about appropriate developmental alternatives. Thus, the **Targeted Feedback** format helps subjects overcome their fear of or reticence about asking people for help. In addition to generating good ideas and support, an important part of asking people for help in defining development goals—and most importantly, in defining development actions—is the learning tension it creates. The subject will not want to fail or in any way underperform for those who have offered their help. Knowing that these supporters will be watching for signs of the intended development will motivate the subject to maintain the effort.

OPAL, DDI's online performance support system, can help managers prepare to support subjects and serve as a resource for advice and tools to pass on to them.

DDI's **development guides**, which are built into **OPAL** or can be obtained independently, steer subjects' development plans by suggesting a variety of alternative learning activities, such as training workshops, possible assignments, partnerships, and readings. The possibilities are vast—DDI has a development guide for every competency in our high-performance and executive libraries.

COMMON PROBLEM #8

No measurements of success are established.

Most people understand the importance of measurement. The old saying, "If you can't measure it, you can't change it," is common currency among most managers. And yet, measurement is conspicuously absent in most development plans.

Multisource instruments can be run multiple times to track change. The **Leadership Mirror** multisource platform makes this easy in two ways. First, it supports "retrospective" scales, which ask respondents how subjects would have been rated prior to a developmental intervention and afterward. Second, **Leadership Mirror** can be licensed for unlimited uses, making it logistically easy and affordable to use its survey engine repeatedly over a series of performance cycles.

Both *What Now?* and *Achieving Your Leadership Potential* distinguish between measures of initial applications of a skill—called *developmental measures*—and measures of ongoing applications—known as *outcome measures*. Developmental measures are particularly important because they provide immediate feedback while the individual is trying new behaviors or skills.

What Now? cites examples of developmental measures and encourages their use. **Targeted Feedback** facilitates the collection of these measurements by asking respondents if they would be willing to help the subject improve in a designated growth area or strength. One of the best ways to provide this help is to give feedback on a subject's initial skill application (e.g., a person developing team leadership skills might get feedback from his or her team). In a similar vein, *Achieving Your Leadership Potential* lets participants check their measurement methods with other training program participants to gain valuable insights. Implementation **coaches** also can help subjects define and establish developmental measures as well as establish and reinforce long-term measurements.

Both *What Now?* and *Achieving Your Leadership Potential* also discuss outcome measures, such as the measurement of turnover, quality, and customer service. Outcome measurement is important to the long-term commitment of management and others to an individual's development. People want to see that the individual is improving, and each report or observation of improvement encourages them to do more to help the person. That's why the sharing of development progress, particularly with the manager, is encouraged.

DDI also offers an innovative, web-based simulation/assessment platform called **Assessing Talent: People LeaderSM**. This system provides an ideal approach to measuring important competencies; thus, it can be used as an additional method for measuring behavior competence and change.

See Appendix C for a summary of how DDI solutions overcome common problems with multi-source instruments.

APPENDIX A

REFERENCES ON THE ACCURACY OF MULTISOURCE FEEDBACK AND ITS POWER TO CHANGE LEADERS' BEHAVIOR

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APPENDIX B

REFERENCES USED IN IDENTIFYING COMMON PROBLEMS PREVENTING THE REALIZATION OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE FROM MULTISOURCE FEEDBACK

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APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF HOW DDI SOLUTIONS CAN OVERCOME COMMON MULTISOURCE PROBLEMS

The chart below summarizes the impact of the various interventions offered by DDI. The number of Xs indicates the relative strength of the intervention. For example, three Xs denote a very strong or necessary way of overcoming that particular problem.

Common problems: Why people do not change

	DDI INTERVENTIONS						
	A. Implementation and Realization Consulting	B. <i>What Now?</i>	C. Development Guides	D. Training Programs	E. Coaching—Understanding Feedback and Planning Development	F. Coaching—Implementing Development Actions	G. Targeted Feedback Multisource Format
1. Evaluation of competencies by raters is often unreliable.	XXX						XXX
2. Subjects see feedback as a “report card” rather than a road map for development.	XX	XX	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
3. Low self-esteem; do not think change is possible.	X	X	X	X	XX	XX	X
4. Have difficulty accepting the need for action on their feedback.			X	XX	XXX		XXX
5. Too many development goals.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX		XXX
6. Skills not acquired before application.			XXX	XXX	XXX		
7. No involvement of manager or others in choosing development goals, planning skill acquisition, or implementing development plan.	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XX		XXX
8. No measurements of success are established.	X	XXX		XXX	XXX	XXX	X

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For additional information about DDI and our multisource consulting and tools, call 1-800-933-4463.

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ABOUT DDI. Since 1970 Development

Dimensions International has worked with some of the world’s most successful organizations to achieve superior business results by building engaged, high-performing workforces.

We excel in two major areas. Designing and implementing selection systems that enable you to hire better people faster. And identifying and developing exceptional leadership talent crucial to creating a workforce that drives sustained success.

What sets DDI apart is realization. We focus on the needs of our clients and have a passion for their success.

The outcome? You bring the best people on board, who get up to speed faster, contribute more, and stay longer—giving you the ultimate competitive advantage.

