LEVERAGING MULTIRATER FEEDBACK TO FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

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Despite the popularity of multirater feedback for coaching and talent development, there is a paucity of research supporting its effectiveness for sustained behavioral change. Meta-analytic studies on feedback interventions suggest that these interventions have significant, albeit small, effect sizes and often sizable negative impact on emotions and behavioral change (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005). This article presents a new integrated 3-step theoretical model for individual behavioral change and practical suggestions for leveraging the impact of multirater feedback to facilitate successful behavioral change over time.

Keywords: 360° feedback, multirater feedback, coaching, behavioral change, talent/leadership development

The use of multirater, or 360°, feedback—the process in which managers, direct reports, peers, team members, and customers provide anonymous feedback to others—continues to grow in popularity. Pfau and Kay (2002) suggested that 65% of all companies were using this intervention in some manner. Increasingly, multirater feedback systems have proliferated and are being used for diverse purposes and interventions (e.g., executive coaching, performance evaluation, talent management, succession planning, team building, and leadership development). However, what is somewhat atypical is an emphasis on sustaining successful behavioral change over time as a critical outcome of feedback interventions by coaches and consultants using these interventions.

The current practice and use of multirater feedback by coaches and consultants is often based on expert opinion, vendor's recommendations, or suggested fads rather than on evidence-based empirical research findings or applied evaluation studies. In fact, there is a paucity of well-designed longitudinal research and evaluation studies to guide practitioners in the effective design, administration, reporting, interpretation, and use of multirater feedback systems for initiating and sustaining new behavioral change over time.

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Even when practitioners have tried to evaluate the impact of developmental and performance feedback for behavioral change, the literature is challenging to interpret because of the use of diverse and nonstandardized competency models and definitions, different purposes and goals of the feedback process, use of 360° feedback with multiple job levels, and established response scale and measurement issues inherent within the actual assessments being used (Caputo & Roch, 2009; English, Rose, & McLellan, 2009; Roch, Sternburgh, & Caputo, 2007).

Despite the limitations of multirater feedback, coaches and consultants can leverage this type of intervention to maximize both awareness and behavioral change by understanding and using comprehensive feedback and individual change models that build on the theoretical work of others (Gregory, Levy, & Jeffers, 2008; Joo, 2005; London & Smither, 2002; Nowack, 2008). This article attempts to provide an integrated and theoretically derived individual change framework for coaches to extend more traditional uses of multirater feedback interventions beyond just insight and awareness to facilitating successful short- and long-term behavioral change despite realistic barriers and challenges.

The Limitations of Multirater Feedback

Does Multirater Feedback Do More Harm Than Good?

Trying to distill the multirater feedback literature into evidence-based practice is challenging, but coaches and consultants are encouraged to review some of the most recent recommendations and suggestions by Fleenor, Taylor, and Craig (2008), who have written about "best practices" in using 360° feedback for effectiveness; Morgeson, Mumford, and Campion (2005), who organized current 360° research into 27 questions that focus on practical applications; and Craig and Hannum (2006), who attempted to summarize relevant research findings since the year 2000. These reviews do a good job of summarizing the conditions under which multirater feedback interventions can maximize insight and awareness, and they highlight why it is not unusual to find differential outcomes in light of a variety of important factors such as personality differences of the "coachee," aspects of the client system to reinforce change, and the competence of the coach. Despite the widespread use of multirater feedback, coaches still seem to largely ignore some of the potential issues, challenges, and evidence-based research highlighting the possible risks and dangers of this type of intervention for coaching and performance improvement, which all contribute to the small effect sizes seen in previous longitudinal studies.

As an example, feedback to others might be purposefully untrue, skewed to be overly critical or flattering, accurate but hurtful, or vague and of limited value for desired behavioral change. It is not at all uncommon for recipients to experience strong emotional reactions to both the quantitative and qualitative sections of multirater feedback reports generated by organizations and vendors selling these assessments (Ilgen & Davis, 2000; Kluger & DeNisi, 1998). Smither and Walker (2004) analyzed the impact of upward feedback ratings as well as narrative comments over a 1-year period for 176 managers. They found that those who received a small number of unfavorable behaviorally based comments improved more than other managers but that those who received a large number (relative to positive comments) significantly declined in performance more than other managers. Newer neuroscience research sheds some interesting light on why negative feedback is potentially emotionally harmful. Recent studies confirm that emotional hurt and rejection, whether part of social interactions or poorly designed and delivered

feedback interventions, can actually trigger the same neurophysiologic pathways associated with physical pain and suffering (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003).

Current findings suggest that people report higher levels of self-reported pain and have diminished performance on a cognitively demanding task after reliving a past socially meaningful event than after a past physically painful event (Chen, Williams, Fitness, & Newton, 2008). Additionally, interpersonal judgment and social evaluation tends to elicit strong stress reactions, with cortisol levels in our system being elevated 50% longer when the stressor is interpersonal versus impersonal (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004).

In the mix of the limited number of well-designed longitudinal studies showing the benefits of multirater feedback, there are other studies that suggest potential harm, danger, and potential limitations of its impact on both awareness and effectiveness. In one of the most widely cited meta-analyses on performance feedback (607 effect sizes, 23,663 observations), Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that, although there was a significant effect across all studies for feedback interventions ($d = 0.41$), performance actually declined in one third of all studies analyzed for various reasons, such as depth of the feedback process, how feedback was delivered, and the personality of the recipient. Additionally, a more recent meta-analysis of 26 longitudinal studies of multirater feedback indicated significant but small effect sizes, suggesting that performance improvements will be practically modest for even those most motivated and capable of changing behavior over time (Smither et al., 2005). Atwater, Waldman, Atwater, and Cartier (2000) reported that improvement after an upward feedback intervention only resulted for 50% of the supervisors who received it. Even a "glass half full" interpretation of this finding is not something with which coaches should be satisfied, as the ultimate goal of feedback is to help translate awareness into successful behavioral change.

Other studies have also shown that individuals can experience strong discouragement and frustration when multirater feedback is not as positive as they expected (Atwater & Brett, 2005; Brett & Atwater, 2001). It appears that personality appears to moderate the extent to which feedback affects motivation and commitment to change behavior. For example, as Bono and Colbert (2005) observed, the core self-evaluations (CSEs; meta-constructs consisting of self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, and negative affectivity) of individuals receiving feedback seem to significantly affect the participants' emotional reaction, as well as their motivation to want to change behavior after feedback.

Congruence between self and other differences also seems to be an important factor affecting the translation of feedback into behavioral change, and it appears to be related to cultural characteristics (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Atwater, Waldman, Ostroff, Robie, & Johnson, 2005; Atwater, Wang, Smither, & Fleenor, 2009; Ostroff, Atwater, & Feinberg, 2004). As an example, Brett and Atwater (2001) found that managers who rated themselves higher than others rated them (overestimators) reported significantly more negative reactions to the multirater feedback process. They noted specifically that "negative feedback (i.e., ratings that were low or that were lower than expected) was not seen as accurate or useful, and it did not result in enlightenment or awareness but rather in negative reactions such as anger and discouragement" (Brett & Atwater, 2001, p. 938). In a recent study of 172 middle managers involved in a developmental assessment center (DAC), participants were significantly more likely to engage behaviorally in aspects of the DAC program when they received favorable feedback and when they received feedback that was consistent with their own general self-evaluations and ratings (Woo, Sims, Rupp, & Gibbons, 2008).

In summary, research on multirater feedback suggests that some feedback recipients experience little benefit or are actually harmed from the process, whereas others demon-

strate significant improvements in performance (Atwater, Waldman, & Brett, 2002; DeNisi & Kluger, 2000; Reilly, Smither, & Vasilopoulos, 1996). The potential impact of adverse impact or emotional harm from such feedback interventions has often been imprudently overlooked by many coaches, despite a common focus on enhanced insight and self-awareness as major goals of the process.

What Vendors Won't Tell You: Limitations and Challenges in Multirater Feedback Systems

Cigarettes in the United States all come with health warning labels on boxes—perhaps vendors should do the same in marketing and selling multirater assessments that are so commonly used by coaches, consultants, and organizational practitioners. These same cautions also apply to multirater assessments developed "in house" by many organizations using their own competency models. At least five important factors should be considered when using and interpreting multirater feedback interventions if the proximal and distal goals include increased awareness, behavioral change, enhanced individual effectiveness, and positive organizational impact (Joo, 2005).

1. Ratings Between Rater Groups Are Only Modestly Correlated With Each Other

Research consistently shows that ratings between direct reports, peers, supervisors, self, and others overlap only modestly (e.g., Conway & Huffcutt, 1997; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Facteau & Craig, 2001; Woehr, Sheehan, & Bennett, 2005.). Self-ratings are typically weakly correlated with other rater perspectives, with greater convergence between peer and supervisor ratings (Mabe & West, 1982; Nowack, 1992). These diverse perspectives amount to different perspectives held for the coachee by the different rater groups. As Brutus, Fleenor, and London (1998) noted, ratings from different sources are not necessarily expected to be interchangeable or even highly correlated with each other, despite the finding that multirater assessment instruments generally demonstrate equivalent functioning across the traditional rating sources (Craig & Hannum, 2006).

It seems intuitive to expect that some differences in perspectives will occur across rater groups. In general, direct reports tend to emphasize and filter interpersonal and relationship behaviors into their subjective ratings, whereas superiors tend to focus more on "bottom-line" results and task-oriented behaviors (Conway, Lombardo, & Sanders, 2001; Nowack, 2002; Porr & Fields, 2006). Tornow (1993) suggested that, for practical applications of feedback interventions, differences between raters are not necessarily due to error variance but perhaps to important perspectives that are useful for professional development.

However, these meaningful rater group differences might also be a point of confusion in the interpretation of their data for coachees who are trying to use the results to determine specific behaviors to modify and which stakeholder to target. This possible ambiguity in understanding and interpreting multirater feedback is important in light of recent research suggesting that people who are even mildly neurotic report more distress by uncertainty within oral and written feedback than given even direct negative feedback (Hirsh & Inzlicht, 2008). At a practical level, it means that coachees might be challenged to understand how to interpret observed differences by rater groups and whether to decide to focus their developmental "energy" on managing upward, downward, and/or laterally in light of these potentially discrepant results.

2. Ratings Within Rater Groups Are Only Modestly Correlated With Each Other

In one meta-analytic study by Conway and Huffcutt (1997), the average correlation between two supervisors was only .50; between two peers, it was .37; and between two subordinates, it was only .30. Greguras and Robie (1995) explored within-source variability in a study of 153 managers using 360°-degree feedback. Using generalizability theory, they analyzed the number of raters and items required to achieve adequate reliability in practice. These researchers suggested that, if a 360° feedback assessment has an average of five questions to measure each competency (not uncommon in practice), it would require at least 4 supervisors, 8 peers, and 9 direct reports to achieve acceptable levels of reliability (.70 or higher). Because our coachees rarely can find that one "all knowing and candid" rater to provide them with specific and useful feedback, it suggests that having an adequate representation and larger number of feedback sources is critical to ensure accurate and reliable data to be used for behavioral change efforts.

From a practical perspective, because reliabilities set an upper limit for validity, having too few raters providing input to the 360° feedback process might actually minimize the usefulness of the feedback that is given back to participants. Given these findings, vendors who do not provide a way for participants to evaluate within-rater agreement in feedback may increase the probability that average scores used in reports can be easily misinterpreted—particularly if they are used by coaches to help coachees focus on specific competencies and behaviors for developmental planning purposes.

3. Perceptual Distortions by Participants and Raters Make Interpretation of 360° Feedback Results Challenging

A triad of "positive illusions" have been previously posited by Taylor and Brown (1988) that appear to be important moderators of multirater feedback interventions: (1) People tend to inflate the perceptions of their skills and abilities; (2) people typically exaggerate their perceived control over work and life events; and (3) people generally express unrealistic optimism about their future. As Sedikides and Gregg (2003) pointed out, most individuals report being less prone to each of these three positive illusions, even after they are informed about them.

The prevalence of self-enhancement is not hotly debated, but there is continued controversy on whether it is essentially adaptive or maladaptive, which has important implications for understanding and interpreting multirater feedback. If self-enhancement is conceptualized as seeing one's self generally more positively than others, then the outcomes (performance, health, career, and life success) are frequently more favorable, but if it is defined as having higher self-ratings than others who provide feedback (self–rater congruence), then the outcomes are frequently less than favorable (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003; Taylor & Brown, 1988).

Coaches should also keep in mind that people generally tend to forget negative feedback about themselves, specifically in areas that matter most to them, and they typically remember performing more desirable behaviors than other raters can later identify (Gosling, John, Craik, & Robins, 1998). It is also important to point out that people usually define their strengths on the basis of traits they already possess and define their developmental opportunities more in terms of traits they lack at the moment (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). Research suggests that people compare themselves not only with others but also with how they used to be in the past. In general, individuals

evaluate their current and future selves as better than their past selves (Wilson & Ross, 2001).

Of practical significance is the meaningfulness of self and other rating differences and its relationship to receipt of feedback and actual performance on the job (Nowack, 1997; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). For example, Atwater, Ostroff, Yammarino, and Fleenor (1998) found that when self and other ratings are in agreement and high, effectiveness is generally also high. Effectiveness on the job tends to decrease as self and other ratings disagree and become lower. In-agreement/low-performance participants were less motivated than to improve their performance than overrater/low-performance employees (Atwater & Brett, 2005). Additionally, Brett and Atwater (2001) found that managers who rated themselves higher than others had more negative reactions to the feedback process, had lower motivation to improve, and were significantly less likely to show improvement when they were reassessed.

Finally, in our own coaching practice, using diverse multirater assessments measuring different competency models, we have repeatedly observed that underestimators (those whose self-ratings are meaningfully lower than others) tend to be highly perfectionist, self-critical, overly achievement striving and likely to focus on their perceived weaknesses rather than leveraging their "signature" strengths in developmental planning discussions. Despite trying to help our coachees interpret the feedback findings in a more balanced manner, these overestimators appear to be hypervigilant to the perceived "negative" information contained in their report and often "fixate" on the lowest average scores on rating scales and the open-ended comments that appear to be "neutral or critical" in tone relative to other more positive comments collected within rater groups. Our observations support previous research showing that individuals with negative self-views (e.g., those who are depressed) tend to tune into feedback that portrays them critically as opposed to positively (Giesler, Josephs, & Swann, 1996). These findings, although interesting to note, merit further review and study to validate these preliminary findings.

4. There Might Be Limits to the Magnitude to Which We Can Expect Leaders To Actually Change and Improve Effectiveness After Multirater Feedback

We have already noted that Smither et al. (2005) found that, although feedback does result in significant performance improvement, effect sizes are relatively small, which suggests that "zebras don't easily lose their stripes." Arvey and colleagues, based on twin studies, estimated that about 33% of the variance in holding leadership roles across diverse organizations can be attributed to genetic factors (Arvey, Zhang, Avolio, & Kreueger, 2007), and findings from numerous studies of personality show that genetic effects account for approximately 50% of the variance in five-factor model (FFM) domains (Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001).

Gregory et al. (2008) described the critical importance of feedback in coaching, and their revised model points out the complexity of optimizing feedback interventions for maximum effectiveness even with the most highly motivated and insightful coachees. It appears that we must accept that all of us have some skill and ability set points that may provide an upward ceiling to the growth and development of many coachees.

5. Feedback Combined With Structured Follow-Up and Coaching Leads To Better Performance Outcomes

All too often, vendors and some practitioners espouse the "diagnose and adios" approach to multirater feedback, hoping that self-directed insight alone will result in motivated

behavioral change efforts. As previous research suggests, this approach could actually contribute to more negative affect and behavioral disengagement.

In one of the few empirical studies recently conducted on the impact of executive coaching, Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, and Kucine (2003) reported that, after receiving 360° feedback, managers who worked with a coach were significantly more likely to set measurable and specific goals and solicit ideas for improvement, and subsequently they received improved performance ratings. Thach (2002) found that, in 6 weeks of executive coaching after multirater feedback, performance increased by 60%, and in a much-cited study in the public sector, Olivero, Bane, and Kopelman (1997) found that employee feedback and coaching for 2 months increased productivity over the effects of a managerial training program (22.4% vs. 80.0%) for 31 participants. These coaching studies all support the importance of supportive follow-up after feedback is received to help facilitate developmental action planning and practice of targeted behaviors.

Some limited support for other approaches to structured follow-up comes from a recent doctoral dissertation study evaluating the effectiveness of 360° feedback interventions in 257 leaders in diverse organizations (Rehbine, 2007). In this study, over 65% of those surveyed expressed strong interest in utilizing some type of an online follow-up tool to measure progress and facilitate their own individual behavioral change efforts. Taken together, additional research appears useful in further investigation of the use of such online developmental planning and reminder systems to help translate awareness from multirater feedback into deliberate practice facilitated with internal/external coaches as well as the participant's manager.

A New Integrated Individual Behavioral Change Model for Coaching

One important fundamental goal of multirater feedback, particularly within coaching interventions, is actual change of behavior on the job that has not been highlighted enough by coaches and consultants (Joo, 2005; London & Smither, 2002). Initiation of new behaviors and sustaining them over time is particularly challenging for most individuals. The likelihood that an employee will engage in a particular behavior is influenced heavily by their predictions of the effects and consequences of that behavior in relation to their own professional goals and objectives. Behavioral change efforts are often not linear but tend to be progressive, regressive, or even static. It seems intuitive that focus on a single behavioral change is easier to initiate and sustain, but surprisingly, multiple simultaneous efforts (e.g., behaviors planned to improve multiple competencies at the same time) tend to be equal or even more effective because they reinforce quick benefits (Hyman, Pavlik, Taylor, Goodrick, & Moye, 2007).

Building on the feedback process models of Smither et al. (2003) and Gregory et al. (2008), I propose a more specific individual behavioral change model here, based heavily on evidence-based research in the health psychology and behavioral medicine literature. The Enlighten, Encourage and Enable model (see Figure 1) is based on the most often applied theories of individual behavioral change, including the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), self-efficacy and social–cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), the health belief model (Becker, 1974), and the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Each of these theories should be useful to all coaches who are attempting to extend the utility of multirater feedback beyond awareness to enhanced effectiveness or impact.
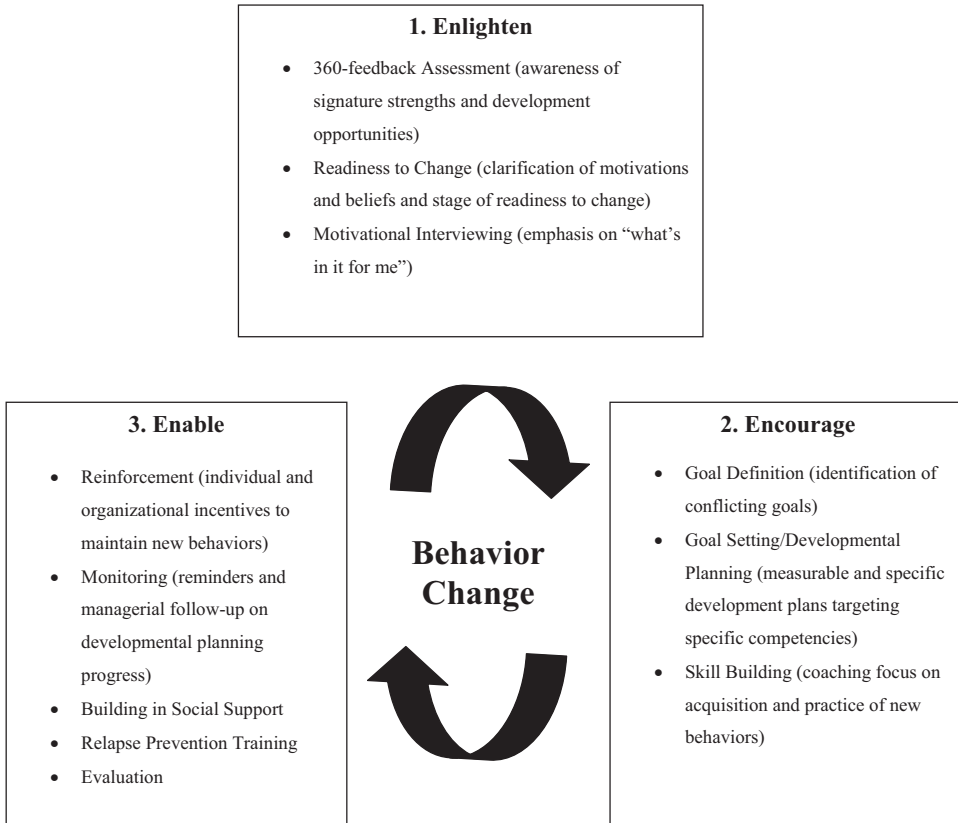
Figure 1. Individual behavioral change stages.

A large body of research has explored the importance of readiness to change, as described in the transtheoretical model (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). This readiness to change model has introduced specific stages in which people are thought to move from a state of no motivation to change to one of internalization of new behavior as a new habit that is sustained over time. The transtheoretical model (TTM) construes change as a process involving progress through a series of five interdependent stages (precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance), including the possibility of relapse, giving coaches an important approach for facilitating successful behavioral change efforts on the basis of intrapsychic factors such as motivation and CSEs (Bono & Colbert, 2005).

Stage I: Enlighten

The emphasis on "what's-in-it-for-me" is a critical leverage point for coaches to be successful in behavioral change efforts with their coachees using multirater feedback interventions. Helping coachees to become more self-aware of their intent to change and identifying "signature strengths" to leverage or developmental opportunities to work on, as well as clarifying potential derailment factors to be managed, can be useful in helping increase readiness for behavioral change. However, insight and self-awareness is only a

fundamental first step that is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for behavioral change to take place.

Motivational interviewing (MI) is a useful individual-based approach for coaches and consultants to assist coachees to reflect and target specific developmental goals to work on and a powerful way to enhance self-insight and commitment to change. It is a style that values and emphasizes the coachee's self-evaluations, values, interests and motives and utilizes reflective listening and probing to help the coachee make lasting behavioral changes. MI is a collaborative approach to identifying motivations to change, potential obstacles, targeted goal setting and reappraisal to ensure long term success without being overly directive with the coachee (Passmore, 2007). The coach must identify the key "readiness to change" stage from precontemplation (no intention to change), contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and relapse and apply specific approaches, techniques and strategies at each stage to help facilitate successful long-term success (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997).

From an MI perspective, coaches would diagnose to carefully understand the coachee-environment system. They would need to listen intently to the coachee's feelings, motives, fears and barriers to behavioral change. As an example, the coach would ask open-ended questions to help the coachee see an association between how one's ability to change specific leadership behaviors could be related to enhanced team performance and engagement of talent reporting to the coachee. The coach would help the coachee reflect on the advantages of committing to behavioral changes and facilitate the elicitation of "change talk" to increase readiness and motivation to try new behaviors on the job based on the multirater feedback results.

A technique suggested by Miller and Rollnick (2002) that a coach may utilize to assess a coachee's stage of change is to simply ask the coachee to rate his or her perceived readiness to change on a scale ranging from 0 (*not at all interested in changing*) to 5 (*coachee has already made change*). To assess confidence to change, the coach can use a confidence "ruler": "Why are you an X on the scale and not a 0?" and "What would it take for you to go from X to a higher number?"

During this *Enlighten* stage, the coach is using the data from the multirater feedback process to help the coachee to interpret the meaningfulness of rater perspectives compared with their own self-perceptions. One important role of the coach during this stage is to help manage potential coachee reactions to ensure that the feedback does not elicit disengagement or cause the coachee to ignore it or to overly emphasize it in light of multirater feedback research previously cited (Brett & Atwater, 2001; Sedikides & Gregg, 2003; Smither & Walker, 2004). Reactions from any multirater feedback process may range from being pleasantly surprised to experiencing hurt, anger, and even depression, with predictable consequences for performance, health, and psychological well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2003). As Joo (2005) has pointed out, the feedback orientation and personality directly affect the coachee's openness to the coach's input, suggestions, and feedback, which can affect the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

Recent research suggests that affect is actually more important than cognition in predicting both self-reported intention and behavior (Lawton, Conner, & McEachan, 2009). Their findings suggest an important role of coaches in targeting the emotional reactions and consequences for engaging in new behaviors as well as assessing readiness-to-change stages. Coaches should assess their own skills, training, and experiences and seek additional training and consultation if necessary to best help the coachee to understand and interpret their feedback.

Stage II: Encourage

One key to successful long-term behavioral change is in the planning process that should also include deliberate practice of newly acquired skills or leveraging of one's strengths. The coach's role is to ensure the translation of the *Enlighten* stage to the creation of a realistic, specific, and measurable performance development plans in the *Encourage* stage. Goal setting and developmental planning are generally addressed in most feedback models (Gregory et al., 2008), and as previously pointed out, coaching appears to significantly help the coachee translate awareness and motivation into specific behavioral change goals (Smither et al., 2003).

The *Encourage* stage involves gaining commitment with the coachee toward a collaborative and explicit behavioral change plan. The coach, during this stage, explores signs of resistance and actively strengthens clarity of action plan goals and commitment to implement them. The coachee's motivation to change is a function of the discrepancy between their action plan goal and current situation. Coaches also should help the coachee to see if the goal is realistic, as a large gap between ideal and current states may actually decrease confidence to sustain change over time, leading to possible relapse (Dimeff & Marlatt, 1998; Larimer, Palmer, & Marlatt, 1999; Parks & Marlatt, 1999).

After the clarification of the action plan, coachees are encouraged to consider specific methods to successfully achieve their goals including exploring potential barriers and challenges. This discussion leads the coachee to an explicit summary of why the goal is important, how the goal can be successfully achieved, and what metrics can be developed to track and monitor progress. The coach should secure a verbal commitment from the coachee to strengthen their intention to actually implement the behavioral change goal (i.e., making it public), as well as elicit verbalizations about the feelings underlying the stated intent to change.

Stage III: Enable

This is the stage in which coaches begin to actually help the coachee acquire new knowledge, increase self-efficacy, and reinforce deliberate practice of skills to initiate and maintain important new behaviors. In general, coachees are more likely to try new behaviors in which they are confident in a successful outcome and feel a sense of mastery in maintaining it over time, despite some possible setbacks and challenges. If the coachee is lacking confidence in his or her ability to implement the plan, the chances that he or she will maintain it over time will be low. It is the role of the coach to provide encouragement and support with their coachees to explore their feelings about their developmental journey through structured emotional expressive writing or by probing directly for reactions, reflections and insights in each session.

This *Enable* stage is critical for long-term success of any behavior modification program, and this stage is often overlooked or minimized by many coaches. When possible, coaches should be working during this stage to help the coachee manage lapses, recognize successes, enlist the power of social support systems (e.g., help educate the coachee's manager about what he or she can do to follow-up and reinforce key behaviors and learnings), and focus on progress through structured reminders, recognizing and rewarding goals, and to evaluating overall success. The coach's role is to assist the coachee with re-evaluating the importance of their goals and exploring some relapse prevention strategies to prepare the coachee for the inevitable lapses that accompany any behavioral change effort. For example, the coach could help the coachee anticipate future unavoidable high-risk situations and prepare for inevitable lapses with his or her boss or

work team. Encouraging ways for the coachee to reward sustained behavior is also something the coach can discuss during their follow-up meetings, along with an analysis of the coachee's professional and social support network and what role he or she can play in maintaining new behaviors over time.

Coaches should help facilitate the self-esteem of their coachees to help facilitate self-regulation and better to handle potential failure in light of the inherent challenges to both initiate and sustain behavior over time (Newton, Khanna, & Thompson, 2008). Self-esteem is a complicated construct (it can be stable or unstable), and it can facilitate goal completion but also increase the likelihood of failure by increasing the selection of risky options or unrealistic outcomes (e.g., in coachees with exaggerated self-efficacy). Coaches should attempt to help their coachees build stable self-esteem and explore areas of self-doubt that seem to be at the core of unstable self-esteem, which is commonly conceptualized and defined as fluctuations in reported self-esteem over short periods of time (Seery, Blascovich, Weisbuch, & Vick, 2004).

The strategy of goal reappraisal should also be emphasized during the entire coaching process with a coachee (Tolli & Schmidt, 2008). The coach and coachee should mutually define ways to track, monitor, and evaluate progress on the specific goals that are set and sustained over time. Ideally, continuous reminders can be sent to the coachee to highlight progress and successful performance toward his or her development plan and involvement of all relevant stakeholders involved in the coaching intervention (e.g., the coachee's manger, direct reports, or internal mentors).

Leveraging the Impact of Multirater Feedback for Successful Behavioral Change

Implications for Practice

Feedback is one of the necessary conditions for successful behavior initiation and change over time. Although a number of other coaching and feedback models have attempted to outline the various proximal and distal outcomes, the Enlighten, Encourage and Enable model consists of three progressive stages, each affected by individual and organizational variables but focused on individual behavioral change and targeting enhanced effectiveness. Although all of the existing coaching models include feedback as an essential component, few have addressed the dynamic nature of feedback and the importance of the personality of the coachee, the feedback source, the social environment in which it is given, and how it is perceived cognitively and accepted emotionally to ensure that multirater feedback will result in sustained behavioral change.

This theoretically derived behavior model provides a context for coaches to understand the dynamics of the behavioral change process and the special role that feedback plays in facilitating a readiness and sense of confidence to begin a developmental journey. The importance of this model is that it highlights the diverse coachee, coach, and organizational factors that appear throughout the multirater feedback literature to facilitate accurate self-awareness, self-directed learning, goal-setting processes, and deliberate practice. The emphasis on more than just insight in this model is important in light of recent meta-analytical findings suggesting that effect sizes for transfer of management training interventions is generally low (particularly when seen by direct reports and peers) but can be improved significantly with opportunities for structured and deliberate practice (Taylor, Russ-Eft, & Taylor, 2009).

This new Enlighten, Encourage and Enable model also emphasizes the role of coach's skills and organization's culture (e.g., manager's involvement to reinforce and be held accountable for successful completion of development plans of their talent) to initiate behavioral change and attempts to recognize the fragility of sustaining these behaviors without relapsing. Finally, given the current issues, challenges, and concerns about the potency of multirater feedback processes, this new behavioral change model helps to leverage evidence-based research to guide practitioners in avoiding doing harm. The Enlighten, Encourage and Enable model is based upon established individual change theories and is adapted specifically for the process of coaching and performance feedback (Nowack, 2008) but merits further research to demonstrate its effectiveness to leverage awareness into long-term behavioral change.

On the basis of a synthesis of numerous multirater feedback reviews and our own 1-year evaluation study of diverse 360° feedback processes used within a diverse communications and entertainment organization (Nowack, 2005), it is possible to synthesize some best practices to leverage desired individual and organizational outcomes:

1. On the basis of Greguras and Robie's (1995) findings, ensure that an adequate number and type of raters (8 to 9 in rater groups other than one's manager) are invited to provide feedback to the participant and that the composition of the final rater pool is discussed and agreed upon with the participant's manager and/or coach.

2. Utilize either an internal or external coach who is knowledgeable of the assessment and multirater feedback literature to facilitate the interpretation of the multirater report and to minimize any negative reactions that might occur as a result of the feedback intervention.

3. Utilize a multirater feedback process that allows for both quantitative results (e.g., numeric data in the forms of graphs and tables) and qualitative feedback (e.g., open-ended questions).

4. On the basis of Rehbine's (2007) findings, hold the coachee's managers accountable for meeting with their direct reports to fully discuss and mutually agree upon a set of professional development action plans and then track and monitor progress over time with periodic follow-up discussions to ensure successful completion.

5. Focus the creation and implementation of an individual development plan on meaningful and measurable behaviors and activities that enhance individual learning and deliberate practice (e.g., special assignments, on-the-job experiences, tasks that build upon strengths and facilitate development opportunities).

6. Despite the recent popularity of focusing on strengths, keep in mind that not all coachees will interpret their feedback in "balance," nor should they be automatically encouraged to leverage their strengths as the overuse of these behaviors in some cases may result in fatal flaws as perceived by others (e.g., excessive use of participative or involvement-oriented decision-making styles might be highly ineffective in crisis situations).

7. Seek senior management support to repeat a multirater feedback process in 12 to 24 months after the first administration to create a mechanism to evaluate progress targeted toward leveraging or strengthening specific skills over time.

8. Evaluate the reaction (formative) and impact (summative) of the multirater intervention from multiple perspectives (e.g., coachee, manager, and raters) to

demonstrate the return on investment, individual behavioral change, and relevant organizational business outcomes.

Implications for Research

Despite the popularity of multirater feedback, there still exists a large gap between evidence-based studies and practical guidelines for coaches. The recent reviews indicate just how little is really known about maximizing the actual impact of this popular coaching and talent management intervention (Craig & Hannum, 2007; Morgeson et al., 2007; Rehbine, 2007). Indeed, practice has truly outstripped popular use despite evidence that multirater feedback is, at best, a modest intervention and, when collected and/or given poorly, can be potentially emotionally harmful to others.

Smither et al. (2005) discussed eight broad factors that play a role in determining the extent of behavioral change and performance improvement after multirater feedback that are important for coaches to keep in mind: (a) characteristics of the feedback, (b) initial reactions to feedback, (c) personality, (d) feedback orientation, (e) perceived need for change, (f) beliefs about change, (g) goal setting, and (h) taking/sustaining action. Future research should utilize this framework to continue to explore ways to optimize the impact of feedback on performance improvement. It would also be valuable at this time to have a much needed update of the earlier Kluger and DeNisi (1996) meta-analytic review on performance feedback interventions and a better understanding of the various factors that contributed to both successes and failures in those studies.

One area that merits further investigation is the intention–behavior gap in coachees and what factors are most important for actually initiating new behaviors versus those required to maintain them over time. Recent research suggests that attempts to change people's intentions alone may not always result in successful maintenance of behavior over time (Lawton et al., 2009). Many coachees often express a strong desire and intent to become more effective and to try new behaviors, but often they never really initiate or sustain a new change for very long (e.g., relapse). Some recent evidence suggests that perceived importance and concern for the desired behavioral change endpoint might be the best predictor differentiating non-intenders from those who are successful adopters of new behavior, whereas self-efficacy, perceived control, and being clear about the disadvantages—the "cons"—of behavioral change are more important in discriminating successful maintainers from unsuccessful maintainers (Rhodes, Plotnikoff, & Courneya, 2008). Future studies should explore what coaches can do to specifically help coachees move from successful adopters to successful maintainers within the Enlighten, Encourage and Enable behavior model described here.

Researchers should also continue to focus on the various individual–organizational interactions needed to reinforce behavior in light of a recent multirater evaluation study suggesting that over 62% of all participants reported strong dissatisfaction with the involvement of their manager in the process (Rehbine, 2007). Organizations that implement a systemic approach to talent development with support from their manager and follow-up development activities tied to performance improvement will have the most effective outcomes in leadership development (London & Smither, 2002). Better understanding of the role of the manager as an important internal coach and how organizational culture influences promoting and sustaining new behavior is in need of greater exploration. Investigations on how newer online developmental planning and reminder systems can help facilitate goal planning and follow-up to leverage multirater feedback interventions also appear to be valuable.

Additional studies are also needed to better understand diverse personality factors that affect the coachee, as well as understanding and acceptance of multirater feedback. Special attention should be focused on such factors as CSEs, cognitive hardiness, proactive personality, defensiveness/repressive coping, attributional style, stable versus unstable self-esteem, conscientiousness, and other FFM constructs. For example, inflated self-ratings (relative to others) are significantly associated with higher achievement, high social confidence, high impression management, and low anxiety. This is a very similar profile as that found in individuals expressing defensiveness (repressive coping) known to be significantly associated with a variety of cardiovascular and health risks (Goffin & Anderson, 2007; Schwartz, Schwartz, Nowack, & Eichling, 1993). Further research is required to explore whether individuals with a defensive personality style are not only at risk for potential derailment due to overestimation of their skills relative to others but also more vulnerable to adverse physical health outcomes as well.

Summary

Sustaining behavioral change for anyone is challenging in the most ideal situations. The evidence-based limitations of feedback interventions, along with an earlier meta-analysis by Kluger and DeNisi (1996), all support the idea that enhancing awareness and effectiveness of feedback depends on a complex interplay of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and organizational factors. Individual differences (e.g., personality) can affect the motivational level after feedback as well as the goal-setting process. Coaches and consultants who deliver feedback or utilize multirater feedback interventions should become familiar with the diverse individual change models and factors that affect participant reactions and be particularly vigilant for minimizing potential harm or actually decreasing engagement and performance after feedback.

The individual behavioral change model Enlighten, Encourage and Enable should be considered as an integrative way to leverage the impact of multirater feedback for facilitating both awareness and commitment to behavioral change efforts, with an emphasis on sustaining behavior over time. Hopefully, this model will extend current practice to focus more on the distal (behavioral change) rather than proximal (insight) outcomes inherent with the use of current feedback interventions by both coaches and organizations.

For researchers, the future is very open to adding tremendous value to coaches who continue to want and need more "evidence-based" findings for the purpose of guiding best practices in the use of multirater feedback processes and outcomes (e.g., "who" may benefit most, for "which" kinds of behavioral change efforts, and under "what" circumstances). It is time for researchers to do more to help current and future coaches move from using a modified version of Nike's slogan of "Just do it" to one that might aptly be renamed to "Just do it *correctly*."

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