MULTISOURCE FEEDBACK: LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

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Organizations around the world are using multisource, or 360-degree, feedback. Although many HR practitioners embrace it as an important mechanism for leadership development, organizations must attend to and address several issues in order to maximize the utility of multisource feedback (MSF). We discuss current research findings and highlight issues for managers to consider both before starting a multisource feedback process and after the feedback is given, plus we review potential outcomes of the process. We also describe lessons learned from an intensive three-year investigation of an MSF implementation in two organizations. © 2007 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Introduction

Multisource feedback (MSF), also known as 360-degree feedback, is a process in which a leader receives anonymous feedback from subordinates, peers, bosses, and customers. MSF is pervasive throughout U.S. organizations and is spreading to other parts of the world. Estimates indicate that as many as 29% of U.S. organizations (Church, 2000) are using this process. Many organizations embrace the 360-degree feedback process as part of their overall leadership development programs. However, recent research suggests that results may be modest. Smither, London, and Reilly (2005) analyzed the results of 24 longitudinal studies on MSF and concluded, “Practitioners should not expect large, widespread performance improvements after employees receive multi-source feedback” (p. 33). While their results found modest, yet positive improvements in employee behaviors and attitudes, practitioners that seek ways to increase the effectiveness of their firm’s MSF interventions can look to the existing and current research on MSF processes.

The purpose of this article is to outline recent studies on MSF in order to inform practice and increase the likelihood that more leaders and organizations will benefit from this developmental process. Our intentions are threefold. First, we highlight research knowledge in the area of MSF. Second, we describe all we have learned from
an intensive three-year investigation of an MSF implementation in two organizations. Third, we discuss the implications of MSF research for leaders and human resource professionals in the field. Where appropriate, we indicate where MSF research has relevance to performance appraisal (PA), since both processes involve feedback.

Figure 1 presents a framework for presenting recent research on MSF. The framework includes factors that HR practitioners should consider prior to implementation, factors to consider about the actual MSF process, factors to consider after leaders receive feedback, and outcomes that organizations can anticipate. For each of these topic areas, a table summarizes the MSF findings and applications for practice. The issues noted in italics in Figure 1 and the tables indicate results from our three-year study.

We also highlight those areas in which findings from the literature on performance appraisal (PA) and MSF are similar. While this article is not intended to summarize the vast literature on PA, there are areas in which practitioners interested in MSF can learn from the PA literature. However, for the most part, MSF has been designed and implemented as a developmental rather than evaluative process. Unlike MSF, PAs are often linked to administrative purposes and have consequences for merit increases and promotion and layoff decisions. In addition, PA traditionally relies upon a supervisor evaluation, whereas MSF relies on multiple, often anonymous sources. Because of these differ-

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Note: **Bold** indicates findings that apply to PA and MSF; *italics* indicate findings that were part of the three-year study described in this article.

**FIGURE 1. Issues to Consider in a Multisource Feedback Process**

*Human Resource Management DOI: 10.1002/hrm*
ences, many of the findings pertinent to MSF are not particularly relevant to PA (e.g., anonymity, confidentiality, time involved in the process, method of feedback distribution). In addition, one of the purposes of this article is to highlight findings from a three-year study of MSF that has limited relevance to PA. Throughout the article, however, we will indicate findings that should have relevance for both MSF and PA.

Factors to Consider Before Feedback

Organizational Context

MSF can be initiated by an individual leader as a means of self-development. More commonly, an organization or unit embarks on an MSF process because of pressing needs for its leaders to engage in different behaviors to respond to organizational challenges. Often, an MSF process becomes one of several approaches to resolving organizational issues. Under these circumstances, developmental feedback may reinforce positive leadership change or may garner resistance. How well the feedback process works depends, in part, on the organizational context surrounding its implementation. For example, organizations considering serious restructuring or downsizing are not in a good position to begin implementing MSF, because they will have difficulty garnering the trust needed from participants in the midst of serious organizational change. Additionally, organizational cynicism (e.g., employees believe efforts to change are not worth it, or positive change is not possible) can interfere with the success of the MSF intervention. Atwater, Waldman, Atwater, and Cartier (2000) found that MSF participants who were cynical were less likely to improve following MSF ($r = -0.25, p < .10$).

In a study of MSF practices in more than 100 organizations (Brutus & Derayeh, 2002), 19% of the companies indicated that the absence of integration of the MSF process with other human resources systems (i.e., development, performance appraisal, training support) created resistance to the MSF process. HR practitioners must do more than obtain organizational commitment to the MSF process; they also need to assist all MSF participants in understanding how the feedback intervention fits with the organizations’ initiatives and goals and how the process aligns with other HR activities. This finding holds for performance appraisal as well. In a review of the PA literature, Bretz Jr., Milkovich, and Read (1992) concluded that we need a better understanding of how organizational context affects performance appraisal issues. Employees need to see how the results of their PA fit with rewards and development opportunities offered in the organization (Heneman & Gresham, 1998).

Research also suggests the importance of clear and careful implementation strategies (e.g., meetings with leaders and their raters to discuss the process, its purpose, and implementation) (Waldman & Atwater, 1998). In these meetings, leaders and raters can ask questions and should have their anxieties relieved about anonymity, confidentiality, and the developmental purpose of the process.

London (2001) addresses the lively debate surrounding the decision to use MSF for development or administrative decisions. He concludes that “feedback can be used for both developmental and administrative purposes, but this takes time” (p. 383). MSF works best when used (at least initially, e.g., for 2–4 rounds) for developmental purposes rather than evaluative purposes. That is, organizations should not require feedback recipients to share their feedback results with bosses, nor should they use their ratings for decision purposes such as raises or other outcomes. Once managers and employees are able to trust the process, it can be carefully (e.g., used in addition to other indicators) incorporated into personnel decision making. Managers tend to want to rush into using MSF for evaluation, as they often believe that without accountability managers will be less likely to change. Patience is encouraged.
Perceptions of the Process

Consistent research findings indicate that acceptance and trust in appraisal and feedback processes are critical for those involved in a feedback process (cf., Longnecker, Sims, & Gioia, 1987). Several factors influence acceptance and resistance to the process.

Rater anonymity among peer and subordinate raters has been shown to be important to promote honest responding (Brutus & Derayeh, 2002). Subordinate raters are often wary that the leader will somehow trace their responses back to them. If their ratings are low or unfavorable, raters may fear retaliation. Thus, if raters do not trust that ratings will be anonymous, they may choose not to rate the leader, or may inflate their ratings to avoid confrontation or reprisals. Antonioni (1994) found that employees who believe their ratings are anonymous are likely to give more honest feedback than are employees who think their responses will be associated with them. To increase raters’ perceptions of anonymity, HR practitioners may want to ensure that only leaders with feedback from three or more subordinates participate in the MSF process. Facilitators working with feedback recipients should emphasize to them that it is problematic if they try to attribute ratings or comments to one of their subordinates, as they are very often wrong.

Recipients must believe in the confidentiality of the feedback and that they are the only ones who will see it if they are to trust the process. If they believe that the feedback will be shared without their knowledge, it will create distrust and problems for accurate rating and effective responses to the feedback.

Individual Differences and Responses to Feedback

Characteristics of the leader may influence how he/she responds to and uses the feedback. Funderburg and Levy (1997) reported that individuals with high self-esteem reported more favorable attitudes toward the MSF system than those with low self-esteem ($r = .27$, $p < .05$). Feedback recipients that rate themselves higher on receptivity and the desire to make a good first impression were perceived by feedback providers as having more positive reactions to their feedback (Ryan, Brutus, Greguras, & Hakel, 2000).

Smither, London, and Richmond (2005) examined the influence of leaders’ personality traits on their reactions to MSF. Extroverted leaders who were open to experience were more likely to perceive and view negative feedback as valuable. Additionally, they were most likely to seek further information about their feedback. Leaders with an internal locus of control (i.e., those who believe they have some control over what happens to them) also reacted to peer and subordinate feedback more favorably and intended to improve their skills (Funderburg & Levy, 1997; Maurer & Palmer, 1999). Colquitt, LePine, and Noe (2000) found that people were more motivated to use PA feedback for development when they were conscientious and when they had high self-efficacy, an internal locus of control, and low anxiety.

Dispositional goal orientation also may influence whether an individual views feedback as a development opportunity or a challenge to his or her self-perception. Individuals with a learning goal orientation tend to hold a view of ability as modifiable and believe they are capable of improving their level of abilities. Individuals with a performance goal orientation view ability as fixed and uncontrollable (Dweck, 1986). These goal orientations are associated with different responses to feedback (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Brett and Atwater (2001) reported that goal orientation was not related to immediate reactions to MSF. However, several weeks later, those with a learning goal orientation believed the feedback was more useful than those with a performance goal orientation. Heslin and Latham (2004) found that leaders with higher learning goal orientation showed higher ratings than those with lower learning goal orientation. However, six
months later, learning goal orientation did not moderate change in behavior between their initial and subsequent ratings.

Self-efficacy is an individual’s belief in his or her capability to engage in actions required to achieve successful performance levels (Bandura, 1997). Individuals with high self-efficacy focus attention on analyzing solutions to problems, whereas those low in self-efficacy have evaluative concerns and dwell on their personal failures. Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to cope and engage in activities in response to the challenges and adjustments at work (Raghuram, Wiesenfeld, & Garud, 2003). Maurer, Mitchell, and Barbeite (2002) found that those with higher self-efficacy held more positive attitudes toward MSF \((r = .32, p < .001)\) and participated more in developmental activities off the job \((r = .19, p < .05)\) than those with lower self-efficacy. Heslin and Latham (2004) found that after controlling for initial feedback those with higher self-efficacy showed more improvement after six months.

The research on individual differences and responses to MSF and PA feedback suggests that individuals will differ in their reactions and responses to developmental feedback. Individuals who conduct feedback sessions and deliver feedback should be sensitive to individual differences. Some individuals are proactive in their response to feedback, while others will need assistance in using the feedback for development. Facilitators will need to spend more time with some leaders to assist them in overcoming their initial reactions to the feedback. They should discuss strategies for overcoming any initial negative reactions and motivate leaders to focus on the developmental aspects of the feedback and the actions they could take in response to the feedback.

**Actual Process**

Time and effort associated with MSF may deter continued use, particularly due to the overloading of the bosses of the leader participants. Bosses may have 10 or more individuals reporting to them. A boss that rates each employee would incur a substantial burden of time and effort. One practical solution is to have the boss rate only half of the supervisors each year. This tactic works quite well when the MSF process has been in place for some time (Brutus & Derayeh, 2002).

Some researchers suggest that in addition to internal stakeholders, external stakeholders should be a part of the MSF process. Testa (2002) suggests that along with employees, an MSF leadership assessment should include customers, suppliers, and business partners. Testa (2002) contends that MSF will identify misalignment between internal and external stakeholders, which in turn can help develop relationships between them. However, HR practitioners should evaluate whether the costs of gathering external data justify the benefits.

Many companies seeking to minimize the time and costs associated with paper feedback surveys have turned to electronic means of data collection. Companies, such as Otis Elevator Co., that use the Internet as the primary response mode believe that it adds security and confidentiality to the MSF process, while offering a more speedy and convenient method (Huet-Cox, Nielsen, & Sundstrom, 1999). Smither, Walker, and Yap (2004) found no differences in ratees’ feedback scores as a function of how the data were collected (e.g., electronically versus paper and pencil). Although electronic data collection has merits, we caution against using this as the sole means of feedback distribution.

**Factors to Consider About Feedback**

**Characteristics of Feedback and Recipient Reactions**

The MSF process is a very different experience for leaders who receive positive feed-
back compared to those who receive negative feedback. Feedback recipients view positive ratings as more accurate and useful than negative ratings (Brett & Atwater, 2001; Facteau, Facteau, Shoel, Russell, & Poteet, 1998). Reactions to positive and negative performance appraisal feedback also vary widely (Taylor, Fisher, & Ilgen, 1984). In a review of the performance evaluation and pay-for-performance literature, Rynes, Gerhart, and Parks (2005) state that stronger performance gains may result after negative feedback, but this finding does not hold when an individual focuses on the self and not the task or task learning.

Negative reactions to less-than-positive feedback may reflect transitory mood states or may have serious ramifications for how feedback recipients will use their feedback. Smither, London, and Richmond (2005) found that leaders who received unfavorable feedback initially had negative reactions, but six months later they had set more improvement goals than other leaders. They suggested “negative feedback may take awhile to sink in or recipients may need some time to reflect and absorb the feedback” (p. 203) after the initial emotions have subsided. Brett and Atwater (2001) found that individuals who received negative feedback from bosses and peers were discouraged and angry ($r = −38$, $−.25$ respectively, $p < .01$). These same individuals also perceived the feedback as less accurate or useful. However, the impact of initial reactions dissipated after several weeks, and feedback sign was not related to perceived feedback usefulness. These research findings suggest the special challenges HR practitioners face in getting recipients to respond constructively to negative feedback (whether PA or MSF) and highlight the importance of planned interventions to assist feedback recipients in working with their feedback.

Managers’ reactions to feedback may relate not only to the positive and negative nature of the feedback, but also to the extent to which the feedback is discrepant from the manager’s self-view. Several theories, such as control theory (Carver & Scheier, 1990) and feedback intervention theory (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), suggest that when individuals detect a discrepancy between behavior and a personal standard, they are motivated to reduce the discrepancy. Taylor et al. (1984) proposed that when self-ratings and other ratings are discrepant, individuals may make changes in order to align their evaluations from others with their self-view, or they may rationalize or discount the ratings from others. Brett and Atwater (2001) found that overratings on a 360-degree instrument (self-ratings were higher than those from others) were related to negative reactions ($r = .26$, $p < .001$) as well as to perceptions that the feedback was not accurate ($r = .16$, $p < .05$). Individuals who gave themselves lower ratings than those received from others reported fewer negative reactions. With respect to PA, Klimoski and Jones (1989) found that when self-rating is substantially higher than supervisor ratings, it may strengthen the rattees’ confidence in his or her own ratings and decrease acceptance of the supervisor’s rating.

Factors to Consider After Feedback

**Method of Feedback Distribution**

Two themes emerged from the limited literature on the methods of MSF distribution—ease of process and inducement of trust. Operations and management science scholars have investigated online feedback distribution in the context of online transactions. They found that online feedback mechanisms promote anonymity, which in turn increases the amount of trust among the users (Bolton, Katok, & Ockenfels, 2004; Dellarocas, 2003). Online MSF delivery may increase employees’ perceptions of trust in the authenticity of their feedback.

Kamen (2003) discusses several benefits to online MSF distribution. In a case study and in interviews with MSF users and consultants, he suggests that online distribution
facilitates the ability to integrate with HR software and technology, to invite and facilitate participation, to submit feedback data online, and to have speedy data analysis and distribution. Kamen further suggests that off-site processing and the integrity and respectability of the in-house contact person (receiver and distributor) increases the confidence and trust of those receiving the feedback. This may be an effective distribution method; however, we do not recommend online feedback delivery without facilitation and support in processing the feedback.

**Organizational Support**

Many organizations spend considerable time and money in the data collection phase of an MSF process, involving employees throughout all levels of the organization, yet pay little attention to encouraging or requiring feedback recipients to participate in any developmental activities or discussions using the feedback they received. The same is often true of performance appraisal feedback (Levy & Williams, 2004; London, 2003). Healy, Walsh, and Rose (2003) conducted a survey of 53 companies using MSF and found that the majority did not require follow-up activities, and as few as 20% required feedback recipients to discuss their results with a supervisor. However, according to their survey, many organizations provide voluntary opportunities for feedback recipients to receive coaching (55%) or attend developmental workshops (70%). In a survey on MSF practices, Brutus and Derayeh (2002) found that the majority of MSF programs (70%) had some tie to development activities. While many companies rely on voluntary participation in follow-up and developmental activities, our experience is that they are rarely used. The following research suggests that follow-up activities after feedback are critical.

Feedback recipients who perceived support from coworkers and supervisors for development-related activities reported more positive attitudes toward the feedback system and were involved in more on- and off-the-job development activities after the receipt of MSF (Maurer et al., 2002). Mabey (2001) studied participants in an MSF program compared to nonparticipants in terms of their perceptions of the training and development offered by the organization. Participants in the MSF process believed that they received more regular feedback on performance, received more recognition for developing skills, and had more opportunities for training than nonparticipants. Participants also were more satisfied with their training and their employer than were nonparticipants. This suggests that the MSF process can have benefits that extend beyond individual awareness and development.

Reinforcing MSF with training or coaching has been found to enhance the benefits of the feedback process. Seifert, Yukl, and McDonald (2003) examined the effects of MSF and a training workshop on managerial influence tactics. They compared managers in three conditions (no MSF and no training, MSF and no training, and MSF and training) and found that managers who received MSF and training on influence tactics increased their use of influence tactics with direct reports. Managers who worked with an executive coach to understand their feedback set more specific rather than vague goals, solicited more ideas for improvement from others, and improved more in terms of subsequent subordinate and supervisor ratings (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003). Luthans and Peterson (2003) reinforced this finding and found that an MSF coaching session that analyzed self-other rating discrepancies in detail encouraged managers to analyze discrepancies and set goals based on what they learned about themselves. Those who received coaching saw significant improvements in their own job attitudes (i.e., satisfaction, commitment, and reduced intent to leave), as well as in the attitudes of their employees (Luthans & Peterson, 2003).

Managers who take action, whether this involves participation in a training program or developmental activities (such as receiving coaching or reviewing progress), were more likely to improve than those who did not...
In a study of over 100 companies (Brutus & Derayeh, 2002), every organization that failed to meet the objectives of the MSF process also failed to facilitate the feedback process. That is, recipients received reports in the mail without individual or group discussion with a trained facilitator. Those organizations that were successful in meeting their objectives for the program (63%) facilitated the feedback process. Facilitation sessions are critical to help the individual identify goals and strategies for needed behavior change indicated by the feedback.

**Individual Attitudes and Behaviors**

**Perceived Need for Change**

In order for an individual to make the recommended changes as indicated by their feedback results, they must perceive that there is an actual need for change. Smither, London, and Reilly (2005) suggested that improvement is more likely to occur when organizational members perceive a need for behavioral change. They proposed that the organization can play a role in the way that organizational members perceive a need for change, by providing feedback in a nonthreatening manner and by rewarding participation in activities that promote learning and self-development.

Other studies have also addressed the importance of one's perceived need for change. London and Smither (2002) argue that discrepancies between self-ratings and other feedback ratings catalyze the employee’s perceived need for change. Several studies indicate that leaders who receive feedback that is lower than their self-ratings may improve more than others (Atwater, Roush, & Fischthal, 1995; Johnson & Ferstl, 1999).

**Goal Setting**

Goals have an effect on employee behaviors, efforts, and levels of task persistence (Locke & Latham, 1990). While many studies have addressed the value of goal setting in the contexts of employee performance appraisal (Roberts, 2002) and group-based feedback (Mesch, Farh, & Podsakoff, 1994), there is limited research on MSF and goal setting. Mesch et al. (1994) found that leaders who received negative feedback set higher goals. Similarly, Smither et al. (2003) found those who received negative feedback set more improvement goals than individuals who received positive feedback.

**Meetings with Raters**

Many facilitators provide leaders with guidance and assistance in how to discuss their feedback ratings and follow up with the individuals who rated them. Walker and Smither (1999) conducted a five-year study of an MSF program and found that leaders who met with direct reports to share their feedback improved more than those leaders who did not. In addition, leaders improved more in the years when they met with direct reports to discuss the prior year’s feedback than in years when they did not do so. Goldsmith and Underhill (2001) reported that when raters were asked about their leader’s improvement 3–6 months after feedback, 84% of leaders who followed up with raters reportedly improved, whereas only 67% of leaders who did not follow up improved. Follow-up consisted of sharing with followers what the leader learned from their leadership feedback. Further, managers that shared their feedback with raters and asked for input were more likely to improve over time (Smither, London, Reilly, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2004).

**Outcomes of the Feedback Process**

Organizations embark on MSF processes as a means to increase self-awareness of critical leadership performance dimensions in a developmental context. Recent research suggests that the MSF is related to a variety of other types of evaluations. These findings highlight the validity of MSF.
Change in Ratings of Leaders

Generally, studies suggest that with multiple MSF administrations, leaders will improve performance (cf. Luthans & Peterson, 2003; Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005). However, not all leaders improve. Atwater et al. (2000) found that only half of leaders receiving feedback improved significantly after one year and one feedback session. Results vary some from study to study, but the general conclusion is that, over time, MSF results in improved leader ratings from other sources and more accurate self-ratings (in greater agreement with others). The results from studies of PA and improvement are less optimistic. Kluger and DeNisi’s (1996) review found improvement in only one-third of the cases, and in another one-third, performance actually declined following feedback.

Assessment Center/Performance Appraisal Ratings

MSF ratings by peers, supervisors, and subordinates predicted assessment center ratings of the manager’s competence that were generated by trained assessors not involved in the MSF process \( (r = .29, p < .05; \text{Atkins} \& \text{Wood, 2002}) \). Self-ratings collected as part of the MSF process were nonlinearly related to assessment center ratings. That is, managers giving themselves the highest ratings scored the lowest on the assessment center ratings of competence. Those who rated themselves in the midrange were more likely to be high performers than those who rated themselves at the top or bottom of the scale.

In a study with more than 2,000 insurance employees, MSF boss and peer ratings were compared to three- and four-year-old performance appraisal ratings (Beehr, Ivanitskaya, Hansen, Erofeev, & Gudanowski, 2001). As expected, MSF ratings from bosses and peers were moderately correlated with the performance appraisal ratings. Self-ratings were not correlated with performance appraisals, even though the employees had knowledge of their past performance appraisals. However, Bailey and Fletcher (2002) reported the value of MSF in raising leaders’ awareness regarding critical performance appraisal criteria. They found that participation in an MSF process strengthened the relationship between leaders’ self-ratings and their formal performance appraisal ratings. At Time 1, leaders’ self-ratings were not related to performance appraisal ratings; however, at Time 2 a significant positive relationship was observed for self-ratings and formal appraisal ratings. Thus, MSF helped managers become more aware of the behaviors that the organization valued and rewarded (Bailey & Fletcher, 2002).

The implication of these studies is that leaders are not good assessors of their own leadership behaviors and others are better judges of the leader’s managerial competence. These results suggest that MSF may be a better approach to identifying a leader’s development needs than relying on a leader’s self-assessments of his or her competencies. Additionally, self-ratings may become more in line with others’ ratings when the leader receives MSF.

Results from a Three-Year Intensive Field Study in Two Organizations

We have learned a great deal about the MSF process and its outcomes as part of a three-year investigation. We were interested in factors that influenced reactions to the feedback as well as outcomes for the individual leaders and the organization. We embarked on an intensive study of an MSF process in two separate organizations that had no prior experience with MSF. One was a retail organization headquartered in the southwest and a second was an elementary school district, also in the southwest. One hundred forty-five leaders participated in the process at two periods approximately one year apart. Leaders were rated by their peers, subordinates, and managers and also provided self-ratings on 47 leadership items that
measured aspects of consideration, performance orientation, and employee development. In each organization, all leaders with three or more direct reports were asked to participate in the process. HR personnel in each organization prepared a master list of leaders, their manager, peers (ranging from 6–9 peers) and all direct reports. Top managers in each organization sent a letter that explained the 360-degree process to all followers, and leaders were briefed in meetings. Approximately 70% of the leaders were male.

Administration of Surveys

The researchers prepared the survey packages for each leader and his/her raters. Raters received the surveys via internal mail. Participants mailed the surveys directly to the researchers in prestamped and addressed envelopes. All subordinate and peer surveys were anonymous. Return rates at Time 1 were self = 100%, managers = 98%, peers = 83%, and subordinates = 68%. Corresponding return rates at Time 2 were self = 92%, managers = 95%, peers = 75%, and subordinates = 58%.

Feedback Delivery

Researchers delivered the feedback reports to leaders in groups ranging in size from 6 to 15. All leaders were guaranteed confidentiality of the data in their feedback reports. The data in their reports were explained, and efforts were made to help leaders react constructively to the feedback. After a discussion of how to interpret and use the feedback, the recipients completed a survey describing their reactions to the feedback. Recipients indicated the extent to which they were experiencing 24 emotions. Three categories were created from these data: “positive reactions” (e.g., pleased, proud, happy, encouraged, grateful), “negative reactions” (e.g., angry, frustrated, disappointed, unhappy), and “motivated” (e.g., motivated, aware, enlightened, inspired).

In addition to leader behavior measures, we also collected personality and attitude data (e.g., self-efficacy, usefulness of feedback) from the leaders during the first feedback session before leaders received feedback. Outcome data were also collected from subordinate raters (intent to leave, employee engagement, and job satisfaction) as part of the leadership feedback surveys.

We highlight the major findings from this study and their implications for managers. Incidentally, the major findings of the study were consistent across both organizations. The areas highlighted in italics in Figure 1 and Tables I–IV show the contributions to new knowledge gained from this intensive field study.

Will Individual Differences in Emotional Stability, Trust, Openness to New Experiences, and Self-Efficacy Influence Reactions to Feedback?

Based on the research on individual differences, we expected differences in how individuals would react to MSF depending on their levels of emotional stability, trust, openness to new experiences, and self-efficacy. We found individual differences generally unrelated to reactions to feedback; however, those with higher self-efficacy were more likely to engage in follow-up activities (e.g., meet with rater groups, set goals, discuss feedback with supervisors). Individuals with higher self-efficacy took more positive steps toward change. Most likely, they felt more confident that they could realize positive changes in their leader behavior and thus were more likely to take steps in that direction. It would be worthwhile to increase self-efficacy by letting recipients know that there are resources available to help them achieve their development goals.

Will Feedback Format Influence Reactions to Feedback?

Positive behavior change and self-awareness often result from feedback; however, a number of studies have cautioned that reduced
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<td>Atwater, Waldman, Atwater, and Cartier (2000)</td>
<td>Participants who are cynical about the organization or who are unclear about how MSF fits into organizational goals are less likely to improve with MSF and may resist the process.</td>
<td>Implementation of MSF interventions when the organization is undergoing restructuring and downsizing is not advised.</td>
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<td>Brutus and Derayeh (2002)</td>
<td>It's important to have clear and careful implementation strategies with MSF.</td>
<td>Establish a clear purpose for MSF and adequately communicate to employees how it fits into organizational goals.</td>
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<td>London (2001)</td>
<td>Multisource feedback can be used for both developmental and administrative purposes, but it takes time.</td>
<td>Use MSF for developmental purposes first before implementing MSF for evaluative and administrative purposes.</td>
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<td><strong>Perceptions of the Process</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brutus and Derayeh (2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inform employees about the process to assure anonymity and confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Differences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funderburg and Levy (1997)</td>
<td>High self-esteem individuals reported more favorable attitudes to MSF.</td>
<td>Be aware of individual differences when considering potential reactions and responses to MSF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smither, London, and Richmond (2005)</td>
<td>Extroverted leaders who were open to experience were more likely than other leaders to react to negative feedback as valuable and to seek more information about their feedback.</td>
<td>Spend time with leaders to discuss strategies for overcoming the initial reactions and to motivate leaders to focus on the developmental aspects of the feedback and the actions they could take in response to the feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funderburg and Levy (1997)</td>
<td>High internal locus of control leaders reported more favorable attitudes toward the 360-degree feedback system.</td>
<td>Facilitators delivering the feedback should be sensitive to individual differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurer and Palmer (1999)</td>
<td>Leaders with an internal locus of control reacted to peer and subordinate feedback more favorably and intended to improve their skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett and Atwater (2001)</td>
<td>Individuals with a learning goal orientation perceived feedback as more useful several weeks after feedback than those with a performance goal orientation.</td>
<td>Consider focusing on the developmental aspects of the feedback process, particularly those with a performance goal orientation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
motivation and performance can result when individuals receive negative feedback or feedback that is more negative than expected (cf. Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). The format of the feedback is one of the factors that may influence how individuals react to the feedback. Earlier work tentatively suggests that not only is the amount of negative feedback relevant (more negative feedback being reacted to more negatively), but a scoring format, which is typically used in MSF, also may contribute to more negative reactions (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). This scoring format may be particularly problematic when it is combined with comparative information where the recipient is given data to compare his or her ratings with the ways his or her peers were rated on the same dimensions. Scores draw the recipients’ attention to themselves and their evaluation rather than to the behavioral statements and what these might suggest about needed changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Our Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maurer, Mitchell, and Barbeite (2002)</td>
<td>Self-efficacy was related to positive or negative evaluative feelings toward MSF and to off-the-job development activities.</td>
<td>Consider interventions to enhance individual self-efficacy to assist low self-efficacy leaders in using the feedback for developmental purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heslin and Latham (2004)</td>
<td>Self-efficacy moderated the relationship between ratings and improvement in ratings six months later. Those with high self-efficacy showed a greater increase in performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atwater and Brett (2005)</td>
<td>Those with higher self-efficacy more likely to report follow-up activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No relationship found between personality characteristics and reactions to feedback.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE I**

**Factors to Consider Before Beginning MSF Process (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Our Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brutus and Derayeh (2002)</td>
<td>The time required to rate several staff burdens managers.</td>
<td>Consider having the manager only rate a subset of the leaders each year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testa (2002)</td>
<td>External raters can provide valuable insight on the manager.</td>
<td>Weigh the value of feedback from external raters against the time and cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huet-Cox, Nielsen, and Sundstrom (1999)</td>
<td>Some organizations use the Internet to increase confidentiality, timeliness, and convenience of the process.</td>
<td>Electronic methods can be used to collect ratings for convenience and to increase confidentiality and perceived trustworthiness. We caution using electronic means to return feedback results without facilitation assistance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Italics* indicate findings that were part of the three-year study described in this article.
### TABLE II  Factors to Consider About Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Our Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback Format</strong></td>
<td><strong>Findings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Our Recommendations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atwater and Brett (in press)</td>
<td>Text feedback was reacted to significantly less favorably than numeric feedback.</td>
<td>Provide numeric feedback that is specific, easy to read, and clarifies strengths and weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics of Feedback and Reactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett and Atwater (2001)</td>
<td>Feedback recipients with positive ratings viewed the process as more accurate and useful than those with negative ratings and reactions.</td>
<td>Consider how managers may respond to feedback before sharing it so that feedback validity does not come into question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atwater and Brett (2005)</td>
<td>Leaders with more positive attitudes toward the process were more motivated and positive following feedback.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facteau, Facteau, Shoel, Russell, and Poteet (1998)</td>
<td>Feedback recipients with fewer negative emotions used the feedback more constructively.</td>
<td>Recognize that some managers may react negatively to feedback. Consider strategies to assist managers in overcoming these reactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, and Kucine (2003)</td>
<td>Managers receiving negative feedback had negative initial reactions but set more goals six months later than other managers.</td>
<td>Consider strategies to assist managers in overcoming reactions to feedback and to set development goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett and Atwater (2001)</td>
<td>Overraters reported more negative reactions and viewed the feedback as less accurate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atwater and Brett (2005)</td>
<td>Leaders’ reactions to feedback were more strongly related to direct reports’ ratings of leadership than to ratings from peers and managers. Immediate reactions do matter and they likely influence how the leader responds to the feedback.</td>
<td>Understand that leaders may react when they receive negative ratings from their direct reports. Provide support to leaders to overcome initial negative reactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atwater and Brett (2005)</td>
<td>Leaders who received low ratings and overrated themselves were more motivated than leaders who received low ratings and gave themselves low ratings. These overraters were more disappointed and angry than those who did not overrate.</td>
<td>Facilitation and coaching may be important to reduce negative reactions by overraters. Provide individuals with leadership weaknesses encouragement and support to engage in developmental activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atwater and Brett (2005)</td>
<td>Leaders who overrated relative to their managers’ or direct report ratings were more motivated than underraters.</td>
<td>The discrepancy between self and other, when other ratings are low, appears to be motivational.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Italics indicate findings that were part of the three-year study described in this article.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Our Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method of Distribution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamen (2003)</td>
<td>Proposes that online rating will improve the feedback process.</td>
<td>Consider online MSF rating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brutus and Derayeh (2002)</td>
<td>Many MSF programs have some tie to developmental activities, but do not require follow-up or developmental activities.</td>
<td>If organizations want to recoup their investment in MSF, they should do more than suggest that leaders hold follow-up conversations with their employees and their supervisors or engage in developmental activities and coaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healy, Walsh, and Rose (2003)</td>
<td>Managers who perceived support from coworkers and supervisors for development-related activities reported more positive attitudes toward the feedback system and were involved in more on- and off-the-job development activities.</td>
<td>Provide support for development activities following feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurer, Mitchell, and Barbeite (2002)</td>
<td>MSF participants, compared to nonparticipants, believed that they received more regular feedback on performance, more recognition, had more opportunities for training, and were more satisfied with training and the employer.</td>
<td>Be aware of the positive impact of MSF on participants and organization beyond individual awareness and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabey (2001)</td>
<td>Managers who received MSF and training on influence tactics increased use of influence tactics.</td>
<td>Using MSF along with training or coach may lead to more positive impact on the leader and organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seifert, Yukl, and McDonald (2003)</td>
<td>Managers who worked with a coach were more likely to set specific goals, share feedback and solicit ideas for improvement from a supervisor and improve in direct reports’ and supervisor’s ratings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, and Kucine (2003)</td>
<td>Managers who worked with a coach were more likely to improve in self-awareness, employee satisfaction, commitment and intention to quit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luthans and Peterson (2003)</td>
<td>Every company studied who failed to meet the objectives of MSF did not facilitate the feedback process.</td>
<td>If organizations want to maximize improvements, it is advised that they facilitate the feedback process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE III**
Factors to Consider After Feedback
In our study, we created two different formats for providing MSF. Recipients were randomly assigned to receive either text or numeric feedback. In the numeric format, MSF ratings (averaged subordinate and peer ratings, self-ratings, and the manager’s rating of the recipient) were provided in numeric averages. The recipient also saw the normative data (averages) for the entire group of leaders who had participated in the process. Thus, leaders could compare their self-ratings to the ratings they received from their boss, peers, or subordinates, and they could compare the ratings they received from each rating source with the ratings other managers received. This format is the one typically used for providing MSF to leaders. Scores were color-coded such that high ratings were highlighted in light green, very high ratings were highlighted in dark green, development needs were highlighted in red, and serious development needs were highlighted in purple. We used average scores and standard deviations to set cutoff scores to determine strengths and development needs.

The alternative text format included words rather than numbers. In place of the averages, the recipient saw words that indicated whether his or her score from the rater group was a “high strength,” “strength,” “neither strength nor development need,” “development need,” or “serious development need.” The same cutoff scores were used to determine what color the words would represent. We hypothesized that feedback presented in words rather than numbers and without normative comparisons would be perceived as less evaluative and less threatening, and thus would be reacted to more positively or less negatively if scores were low. Based on earlier research (Brett & Atwater, 2001), we reasoned that if the recipient reacted to the feedback with fewer negative emotions, he or she would use the feedback more constructively.

The results indicated that contrary to our hypothesis, text feedback was reacted to significantly less favorably than numeric feedback. When leaders received text feedback that showed that they had a high number of development needs as perceived by their
### TABLE IV  
Factors to Consider After Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Our Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walker and Smither (1999)</td>
<td><strong>Change in Ratings of Leaders</strong></td>
<td>Expect only modest positive improvement with MSF. MSF is not a quick fix, but a process that, over time, can have a significant impact on organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atwater, Waldman, Atwater, and Cartier (2000)</td>
<td><strong>Comparison to Other Ratings</strong></td>
<td>Supports validity of MSF ratings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atkins and Wood (2002)</td>
<td>MSF ratings predict assessment center ratings of the manager’s competence.</td>
<td>Be aware of using assessment of development needs or development activities that rely only on self-ratings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beehr, Ivanitskaya, Hansen, Erofeev, and Gudanowski (2001)</td>
<td>Self-ratings were not correlated with past performance appraisals. MSF ratings from bosses and peers were moderately correlated with the performance appraisal ratings.</td>
<td>MSF may be a better approach to identifying a leader’s development needs than relying on self-assessments of one’s competencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey and Fletcher (2002)</td>
<td>Self-ratings and formal appraisal ratings become more closely in line with one another after MSF.</td>
<td>MSF may help managers become more aware of valued and rewarded organizational behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldsmith and Underhill (2001)</td>
<td>Subordinate ratings of leaders did not improve significantly, but subordinates perceived some positive changes in most managers’ performance.</td>
<td>Although ratings may not significantly improve, subordinates may perceive positive results from the process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Employee Attitudes

**Atwater and Brett (2006)**  
*Changes in leader behaviors made a difference in employee attitudes.*  
*Intent to leave is most highly related to employee development behaviors.*  
*Leaders who became more encouraging of staff to learn and grow and gave them recognition and feedback had employees who were reportedly less likely to leave the organization.*  
*Leaders who improved on consideration had more satisfied employees.*  
*Leaders who improved on performance-oriented, task-related behaviors (decision making, communication) had employees more engaged in their work.*  

By providing the resources to facilitate MSF, the organization may benefit from the positive impact on leaders, as well as subordinates’ satisfaction, intent to leave, and engagement.

Note: *Italics* indicate findings that were part of the three-year study described in this article.
subordinates, their negative reactions were particularly severe, more severe than when either peers or managers suggested the leader had numerous development needs. In addition to more negative reactions, individuals receiving text feedback also had fewer positive reactions and were less motivated following feedback.

A year later, when the recipients received a second round of feedback, those who had originally received text feedback were presented with both text and numeric feedback and asked to comment on the two feedback formats. Essentially, their comments indicated that the text format was seen as vague and not concise. They preferred the numeric feedback because it was more specific, easy to read, and clarified strengths and weaknesses. In a society where many aspects of daily life are measured in numbers (e.g., blood pressure, IQ), we may now expect and be more comfortable with numbers. We recommend that MSF providers should provide specific, numeric feedback rather than text reports. This does not mean narrative comments by raters should be avoided, but rather used in addition to quantitative ratings.

Interestingly, however, when we assessed whether leaders in the text or numeric format groups changed more at the second administration of feedback (that is, did the text or numeric group get higher ratings at Time 2), the answer was that format per se didn't matter. However, initial reactions did matter. Those who reacted most negatively (e.g., angry, defensive) after receiving their first round of feedback had more development needs reported at Time 2, even after controlling for the number of needs reported at Time 1. In other words, they got worse. Similarly those who had the most positive reactions at Time 1 showed a decline in development needs at Time 2; they actually improved. Those who receive negative feedback and react negatively are least likely to demonstrate positive changes in ratings a year later, and in fact, they may get worse. Those who react positively to the feedback and feel motivated are most likely to see positive changes in ratings a year later. This finding suggests that HR practitioners carefully plan how to help leaders to minimize any negative reactions, perhaps by using a facilitator or coach.

What Factors Influence Negative Reactions to MSF?

We were interested to see what factors other than the format or sign of the feedback (positive or negative) would contribute to recipients’ reactions to feedback. For example, if leaders overrate themselves, does this affect their reactions to the feedback they receive? Are low ratings reacted to more negatively when the recipient rated himself or herself high? In what ways might the attitudes individuals hold about the feedback process influence their reactions to the feedback?

We learned that leaders who received low ratings and overrated themselves were more motivated than leaders who received low ratings and gave themselves low ratings. The discrepancy between self-ratings and other ratings can be motivational. However, these overraters also had more negative reactions (e.g., were more disappointed and angry) than those who did not overrate. This finding suggests that interventions (such as MSF) designed to create more self-awareness may help in the long term as leaders gain awareness of how they are perceived by others, and try to reduce the discrepancies between self and other ratings. However, we would advise HR practitioners to help overraters overcome any negative reactions that occur because of this new self-awareness.

Leaders completed attitude measures during the first feedback session, prior to receiving their feedback reports. Not surprisingly, those who held more positive attitudes toward using feedback also were more motivated and had more positive emotions following feedback, regardless of the type of feedback they received. We recommend that HR practitioners consider the importance of taking time to introduce the MSF process.
into the organization in a careful and thoughtful way so both raters and leaders feel comfortable with how the data will be collected and used, its confidentiality, rater anonymity, and so on. If leaders enter the process with bad attitudes about the feedback process, its validity, or its usefulness, they will not reap the most from the process. All efforts should be made to help reduce negative reactions to feedback. Coaching, counseling, and follow-up with recipients are advisable or the feedback may have negative rather than positive effects on those who react negatively.

What Are the Outcomes Beyond Changes in Leader Behavior?

The most common method used to assess the success of an MSF intervention is to compare the leaders’ ratings before and after he/she receives feedback. Generally, the literature shows modest positive improvement in ratings (Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005). In our study, when we compared Time 1 and Time 2 ratings provided by peers, subordinates, and managers across all leadership items, we only found significant improvement in bosses’ ratings of the feedback recipients (perhaps due to the fact that the bosses’ ratings were not anonymous). There are a number of possible explanations for this result. First, it may be that because we assessed so many items, even positive changes were washed out when overall averages were compared. Given that this is the first time MSF had been used, changes may be in the right direction, but it may take another year or two for the changes to be statistically significant, as per Walker and Smither (1999).

We also were interested in how changes in leaders’ behavior might influence outcomes other than their behavior or ratings of their behavior. While MSF has become very popular, little attention has been given to evaluating the effects of the MSF process on outcomes other than subsequent ratings. We reasoned that because there is a great deal of literature attesting to the relevance of supervisory behavior to employee attitudes, if leader behavior improves, we should expect employee attitudes to improve as well. The question arises, if MSF can improve leadership, will those changes translate into changes in employee attitudes?

We assessed employee attitudes as part of the MSF survey. Therefore, in addition to rating their supervisor’s leadership, subordinates rated their own satisfaction, intent to leave, and engagement at both Times 1 and 2. Our primary question was if the leader’s behaviors improve, do employee attitudes also improve? We adjusted the Time 2 attitude and leadership scores for their Time 1 values so we could explain change in attitudes with change in leader behavior. We learned that positive changes in the leader’s consideration behavior (e.g., listens, is tactful and sensitive, accepts feedback) were related to positive changes on each of the three attitude measures. The biggest impact for changes in consideration was seen in improved employee satisfaction as compared to engagement or intent to leave. Positive changes in the leader’s employee development behavior (talks to direct reports about progress; encourages direct reports development) also were related to positive changes on each of the three attitude measures, with the strongest effect for intent to leave.

Positive changes in leaders’ performance orientation (e.g., sets goals, follows up, makes tough decisions) were related to positive changes in employee engagement (e.g., know what is expected, receive recognition or praise, and have necessary materials and equipment to do the job). MSF can be a useful method for improving leader behavior and ultimately influencing employee attitudes in a positive way. If leader behaviors improve, we can expect employee attitudes (job satisfaction, engagement, and intent to leave) to improve.
Summary and Conclusions

In sum, our study reinforces the implications of prior research on MSF practices and adds new insights. First, the positive relationship between attitudes toward using the feedback and reactions emphasizes that human resource professionals should understand the importance of paying attention to how they introduce and implement the MSF process in their organizations. Second, reactions to negative feedback were not transitory mood states with minimal implications for leadership development, but rather influenced subsequent behavior. These findings reinforce the need for organizations to consider how they facilitate feedback distribution and how they encourage developmental activities following feedback.

Our findings show that those leaders who improved were more likely to see subsequent changes in employee attitudes. This result indicates that with regard to organizational outcomes, MSF can do more than just develop leaders. It can have a positive ripple effect upon others in the organization. Understanding and implementing the practical findings from the research summarized and presented in this article should assist organizations in reaping the rewards of their investment in a MSF process.

However, clearly the costs and benefits of implementing MSF should be considered. For example, Bettenhausen and Fedor (1997) suggest a number of potential benefits of MSF such as higher-quality feedback, input for employee development recommendations, and uses in performance coaching. However, they also highlight some possible downsides, including fostering defensiveness and creating situations where leaders become overly concerned about pleasing employees. In all cases, the goals of implementing MSF should be clear and should align with the organization’s goals and personnel practices.

Research can inform and enhance the benefits organizations derive from their investment in MSF. However, many questions remain regarding the MSF process that could provide additional insight to practitioners. Rynes et al. (2005) suggest that future MSF research focus on better understanding the individual or program characteristics that are most likely to improve the returns from this process. Likewise, Smither, London, and Reilly (2005) suggest that we move from asking “Does MSF work?” to asking “Under what conditions and for whom does MSF work?”

As indicated from our summary, the role of organizational context is critical to the success of MSF. However, we need a better understanding of what organizations can do to create an environment and culture that supports feedback, whether it is performance appraisal or multisource feedback (Levy & Williams, 2004; London & Smither, 2002; Rynes et al., 2005). We need research to illuminate how the feedback culture in organizations influences “how feedback is sought, perceived, processed, accepted, used and reacted to” (Levy & Williams, 2004, p. 895). For example: How do perceptions of the motivation for the MSF process (i.e., individual initiative, new boss, organizational change, or decline in organizational performance) influence acceptance and commitment to the process? How do perceptions of others in the social context influence the process (i.e., is the boss supportive or negative toward the process or is the process companywide)?

Some individuals benefit from the MSF process and others do not. We need a better understanding of why some individuals use feedback and take actions and others do not. Recent work on feedback orientation (i.e., responsiveness to feedback and evaluation) may provide answers to these questions (London & Smither, 2002). In addition, research is needed that examines the combined effects of individual differences and organizational support for development on the reactions to and use of feedback (Smither, London, & Richmond, 2005).
Performance appraisal and MSF research indicates that when individuals focus attention on the self and not the task, negative feedback is debilitating. We need a better understanding of how the 360-degree process creates a self-awareness that is motivating versus creating a self-focus that is debilitating. For example: Are we overwhelming managers with too much information when they receive self, other, and normative feedback? What role does each of these feedback components play in improving performance versus overwhelming those who receive negative information?

It is clear from research that MSF alone may not be enough to motivate changes in a leader's behavior. How do interventions such as coaching, goal setting, and training complement and reinforce leadership change? Do coaching, goal setting, and training enhance MSF because it helps managers move from a self-focus to a task focus? If the ultimate goal of an MSF process is leadership development, the questions may not be limited to how coaching and training facilitate the value of MSF, but how the MSF process can facilitate training, executive coaching, and other leadership development interventions to be more effective in developing and changing leadership behavior. Finally, we need more research that demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of MSF. What are the organizational and bottom-line costs and benefits to organizations undertaking an MSF process?

While we wait for researchers to address these issues, we encourage practitioners to consider how the research discussed in this article can improve the MSF process in their organizations and, ultimately, the effectiveness of leaders and organizations.

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