



LEADERSHIP PAPERS

360-Degree Feedback in the Context
of Leadership Development in the ADO



CDCLMS - Centre for Defence Command Leadership and Management Studies
ADC - Australian Defence College





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Report on the use of 360-Degree
Feedback Tools in the ADO



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A DISCUSSION PAPER ON 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK IN THE CONTEXT OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN THE ADO

The end of the Cold War produced a seismic shift in the global political situation. The prevalence of regional wars, increases in religious and ethnic tension, and rapid technological development represent but some of the factors that swept aside the certainties of a bipolar world. These winds of change also added a hitherto unseen complexity and fluidity to the Australian Defence and strategic environment. For the military, Krulak's three block war became a reality, where conceivably forces might switch between war and peacekeeping all within one street. Consequently, military leaders of the 21st century require the capacity to adapt or transfer their skills across the spectrum of conflict. Increasingly, leaders need both the conventional skills of a warfighter and the relationship building skills of a peacekeeper and bureaucrat.

Each of these roles requires a different set of leader behaviours, especially since Clausewitz's fog of war is replicated within all types of conflicts and operations. A leader can mitigate or reduce this chaos and uncertainty through effective management of human relationships. The development of an effective leader in these terms requires developing a versatile range of leader behaviours and attitudes.

The Australian Defence Organisation leadership development programs have tended to focus on a leader's knowledge and skills. These leadership development programs assume that attitudes will automatically change in support of knowledge and skills. More recently, some Defence educational institutions have incorporated or increased experiential programs into their curriculum to address the most difficult aspect of leadership development; changing and developing behaviours and therefore, attitude.

Self-assessment questionnaires and, more recently, the use of 360-degree feedback tools are utilised to assist behavioural change in leadership development programs in Defence. The use of such tools requires an understanding of their utility, effectiveness and importantly their limitations. A learning organisation tracks the practical application of leadership development tools to maximise learning throughout the organisation. This project captures the use, utility and effectiveness of these tools and their application in the Australian Defence Organisation. This project is presented in two parts: a discussion paper and a report.

Part One is a discussion paper to explore the role of 360-degree feedback in leadership development. This paper will:

- describe role of self awareness and emotional intelligence in leadership development;
- discuss the utility of 360-degree feedback in leadership development, with particular focus on transformational leadership;
- describe the implementation of 360 degree feedback instrument in a leadership development program;

- discuss the benefits, limitations and effectiveness of 360-degree feedback; and
- provide a set of guidelines for maximising the effectiveness of 360 degree feedback

Part Two is a an organisational specific report on the current use of 360-degree feedback in Defence based upon the survey, follow up interviews of 10 organisations that are using or have used 360-degree feedback, and individuals who have undertaken 360-degree feedback processes via external courses. The emphasis of the report is on organisations rather than individuals.

The report concluded that a diverse number of organisations within the ADO utilise self-assessment and 360-degree feedback instruments. The majority of organisations utilising 360-degree feedback are broadly following best practice guidelines, resulting in very few problems. There are, however, a number of areas in which a closer adherence to guidelines can improve the effectiveness of implementing 360-degree feedback.

The three issues of most concern are the validity of the instrument, the extent of developmental support following use of such instruments and the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of the instruments. Separate recommendations were provided to the Department.