



ENLIGHTEN EXERCISE #30

360-Degree Feedback Case Study

PART I

Sam Sample is a 21-year employee of the *Full-Court Press* newspaper. Sam got a part-time job in the mailroom immediately out of high school while simultaneously attending Junior College. After getting an A.A. degree, Sam became a full-time employee in the Circulation department and later transferred to the Press Operations department. Sam had demonstrated strong technical competence as a press operator and was responsible, with the other press team members, for the daily printing of the newspaper. During this period, Sam obtained a B.A. degree from a local university.

Recently, Sam decided to give graduate school a try and has enrolled in an evening and weekend MBA program.

Over the years, Sam has achieved a series of excellent accomplishments that have resulted in significant cost savings for the newspaper. Five years ago, Sam became a first-level supervisor in the Press Operations department. About one year ago, Sam was promoted to manager.

Today, Sam has seven direct reports, two that are first-level supervisors. Sam's daily work activities include coordinating press operations with other important departments, including Editorial, Advertising, Transportation, and Plate-making.

Sam still prefers to do much of the technical work personally, mainly because his quantity and quality are better than the work of most of the front-line employees. Sam enjoys staying abreast of the latest technological changes and monitors the newspaper and telecommunications industry closely.

Sam has always had excellent technical skills and carefully monitors and checks the work of others. When work isn't completed on time, Sam spends considerable amounts of time checking with other departments. Otherwise, Sam has relatively little contact with employees in other departments of the newspaper.

Normally, Sam is extremely positive and supportive of *Full-Court Press*. However, over the past year, Sam has been more vocal about the problems caused by recent changes in the company, especially about the recent downsizings and cost-cutting programs, which Sam strongly feels affect the department's performance and employee morale. Sam's pet phrase has become, "How can the management expect us to get better if they keep taking people away?"

Sam has also expressed difficulty managing the younger workers, who don't seem to care about the company. Sam perceives that these less-tenured employees care more about making money than loyalty to the company and are willing to quickly jump to another job that seems more attractive, rather than sticking around and paying their dues, as Sam did. Sam seems to be struggling with why today's workers care less about putting in overtime, seem less loyal to the organization, and complain more about family issues than when Sam started over 21 years ago.

When the 360-degree feedback training program began, the instructor asked the class how they would use the insights from the Newspaper Management Institute Training Program and what their personal and professional objectives were for the workshop.

Sam jumped right in. "I think what we are learning is great. However, frankly, it is obvious to me that some of our senior managers don't follow these practices. Are they being exposed to the same concepts and approaches we are? Too many of them are too new. They don't really understand the culture of our company and the way it used to be around here. Maybe we ought to be more concerned about getting the paper out on time and with high quality, rather than getting a bunch of feedback from people who don't really know what we do."

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

Using the Johari Window illustration below, what do you think Sam's blind spots are? What is known to both Sam and Sam's co-workers?

Known to Sam	Not Known to Sam
Openly Known Information	Blind Spot
Hidden Information	Unknown Information

What advice would you have for Sam, concerning who should be attending the workshops and Sam receiving feedback on the 360-degree feedback instrument?

PART II

As the workshop progresses, each program participant receives his or her 360-degree feedback summary report.

Sam is genuinely perplexed by the differences in self-scores and those of others, including the boss, direct reports, and other team members.

After reviewing the summary report, Sam mutters, "I wonder who really filled these out? They must have mixed up my data with someone else's. Either that or the people filling out the instrument completely misread the directions. Or the instrument must not be very good. It's pretty subjective just circling numbers from one to seven. Some people really have different standards of evaluation anyway."

CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

What do you think is really going on with Sam?

What does the feedback report generally suggest? What patterns or trends do you see?

From what you have read in the case study, what might be possible explanations for the gaps between Sam's own views and how others see Sam?

What are the biggest gaps between Sam's views and the views of the boss? Direct reports? Team members? What areas of improvement would benefit Sam the most?

What are the most frequent behaviors that Sam demonstrates? The least frequent behaviors?

From this summary feedback report, how would you summarize Sam's strengths?

What two or three specific behaviors would most likely help improve Sam's overall managerial performance?