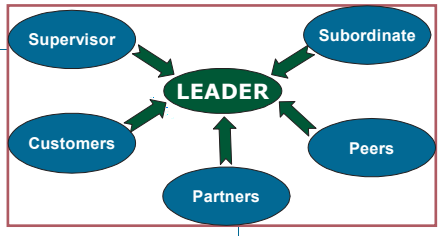
A 360° Leadership Success Story

A Senior Vice President of the SembCorp Group of companies has a powerful story to tell about his own personal development journey. In fact, his measurable results were so significant that the Director of NBOGroup, Gary Nelson, requested a personal interview to learn exactly how he had achieved such outstanding results in less than one year.

The story began in December 2003 when he participated in an NBOGroup 360° survey which was part of the SembCorp Leadership Development Program. A second survey was done in September 2004 to measure whether tangible progress had been achieved. The results were outstanding. In fact, he had improved in virtually every competency area measured by the 360° Survey.



The Leadership 360° process was structured so that the senior executive identified a list of people who could rate him, and then gave that list to his manager for input. The final decision on who would rate him was left to his manager in consultation with the Human Resources department. The group of raters included not only his superiors and peers, but some partners and customers as well. The survey was structured to provide total anonymity for all participants to encourage candid feedback. After the results were received and compiled he was given a comprehensive written analysis on his Survey scores and comments. His initial reaction to the results?: "In some areas I found it rather surprising, and felt that it can't be. I thought I had done enough in certain areas".

In addition to this initial 360° survey, NBOGroup also had him complete the Thomas DISC personality profile to provide another view of his behavioral style at work.

To gauge the value of this additional instrument, Gary Nelson asked him for his feedback. "*What were your perceptions of the Thomas DISC tool?*" His response was: *"I think my first reaction was shock. To know a tool (DISC) that talks to you, and tells you what you really are. Then trying to see whether in fact it truly reflects who you are. In some areas you agree but in others you disagree."*

He then described how he personally used the DISC information to help him in his management and leadership development activities. He said he was able to see the areas where he needed to take stock of his personality and its impact, especially where it might effect current business issues.

His personal DISC results were helpful enough to encourage him to take the tool a step further. He asked all of his direct reports to complete a DISC profile. His initial goal was to see whether his views of these direct reports were similar to the DISC report analysis.

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He ultimately used the DISC information in a team session to ensure a better understanding of each team member's personality style. He also started using DISC as part of his recruitment process and finds that, to a large degree, it is accurate in identifying individual personality styles and strengths.

Having done the profiles of his direct reports he was then able to determine how he could be more effective with the people around him. Asked whether he found some of his direct reports profile a surprise, he mentioned that *"this was true with some of the quieter individuals"*.

The next question for him was whether he felt the DISC profile results correlated to his 360°-survey results? He said there was a definite correlation. In fact he even asked one of SembCorp's Human Resource specialists on DISC to sit down with him and discuss more specifically the areas that correlated.

He realized that the 360° showed that different people had varied perceptions of him. He agreed with some, but also disagreed with others. Despite this, he knew that he needed to change his approach, so that others would notice a change. He decided that his top priority was to focus on the area of communication with regard to his customers. The questions he asked himself were: *"Do I listen enough?"*, *"Do I give enough?" "Do I make a dictatorship kind of decision, or is it by engagement?"* The answers to those questions helped him define the changes he would make.

He decided to make a conscious effort to be different in interacting with others. He started to smile a lot more when he was talking, to listen more, and even when he did not agree, he would say so in a different way. Gary Nelson then asked him how these behavioral changes related to his DISC profile? His profile showed him to be very high on the "C" Factor (Logical, analytical, precise, detailed, intolerant of error). He confirmed that he used his High "C" logic to make conscious decisions on specifically what and how he would make changes. He knew analytically that business changes would require him to show a different style. He also realized that he felt more comfortable in dealing with large Multi National Corporations (MNC's) because they tend to approach issues in a way that was similar to his natural style. Leveraging on this compatibility as much as possible was an effective strategy. Additionally he was even more aware of consciously modifying how he dealt with non-MNC clients.

Having identified the behavioral modifications that were required, the next question was to find out what he found most difficult to change. He reflected on this question and said that *"in reality nothing was 'most' difficult"*. One of the things that made all the changes easier for him was the ability to be honest with himself, as well as a lot of coaching and support from his wife. *"She provided a lot of positive encouragement"*. Not only did he share his 360° results with his wife, but also his DISC profile. *"How did she view these results?"* With much laughter! (and agreement).

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He has also played an active role as the president of his Church community for the past 2 years. He mentioned that in this capacity, he found that one cannot always satisfy everybody. There will always be dissatisfied people. He found that it was how he deals with dissatisfied individuals, and the work that he wants to do. He learned that he can't focus so much on how the dissatisfied people continue to grumble. Instead, the focus must be the larger issues of building the community

The next critical question for him was, *"So, how are you going to keep it up?"* He replied that initially you make a conscious effort to change, but over time this conscious effort becomes the norm (a habit). Once you feel comfortable, you have confidence and satisfaction in what you do. It then becomes *"your way"*, and you will naturally, as a human being adopt it, and carry on with it in your life.

The tangible results of his efforts were clear when a second (identical) 360° Leadership Survey was conducted in September 2004 (10 months after the first survey). All the original participants were included in this second survey. In every single Leadership Competency the Survey measured, he showed significant improvement. In reviewing these results, we asked him if there was anything more he wanted to work on? His reply was that he feels he needs to do more in working with his peers and their perceptions. He did not see as much improvement in that area as he would like. He realized that often there is an element of competition with peers, but realizes that he needs to engage his peers more, as these relationships need to be established as one moves up the corporate ladder.

"Providing clear feedback and direction" was another area he highlighted for additional improvement. Here he felt that he was spending a lot of time trying to bring clarity by talking things through, to ensure people are comfortable.

The NBO 360° Feedback Process

He is still trying to grasp why the results did not identify how much additional feedback and direction he is providing. Differences in personality style and individual needs may be one factor. Another factor in his feedback and direction strategy is that he knows he sometimes avoids *"over clarifying issues"* to allow his subordinates to use their individual creativity. *"In Singapore, the culture has been more directive with very detailed guidelines and that is the comfort area for many."* But over time he believes there will be more creative thinkers.

Now what? He has the perspective of the two 360° Leadership Survey results and his DISC Profile. He is also aware that there will be even more business challenges in the year ahead

When asked how confident he is that the competencies he has worked on will remain with him, he confirmed that they would. He knows that he has been very results oriented, and that he will continue to be. He now realizes this drive for results must be balanced with other important factors. The changes he has made allow him to get along better with people. These changes did not mean he had to compromise his principles or values in any way, but rather to engage people more positively. He believes that positive change will be in his outlook continually.

The bottom line result, better scores in **every** 360° question measuring his Leadership competence.

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The NBOGroup Edge

The NBOGroup has been conducting leadership development, communication and interpersonal skills training across Asia since 1988. The NBOGroup is one of Asia's most respected leadership and communication consulting firms, with offices in Hong Kong, Singapore, the United States, and with partners in Europe, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and 30 other countries.

Each NBOGroup program is designed to fit the specific learning objectives of our clients, who include many of the Fortune 500. With worldwide experience, our programs and products are tailored for multi-cultural environments.

The NBOGroup employs leading edge tools in each customized engagement including: Thomas DISC, Thomas TST, 16PF and the NBOGroup's unique online 360º Leadership Survey. Our executive coaches add value to each personalized coaching experience by linking individual personality and behavior to desired performance objectives.

Our trainers emphasize the development of practical competencies, not stereotyped techniques. This approach delivers greater impact within a training session, a lasting application by the participant, and a return on investment for the organization.

The NBOGroup offers its clients a total learning resource with the philosophy that our client relationship is "a partnership that continues". We look forward to the opportunity of working with you.

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The NBOGroup

Leadership 360º

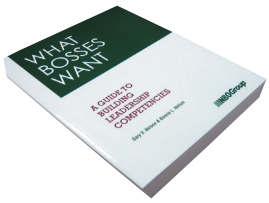
Designed for leaders at all levels. Focused and accurate feedback on competencies fundamental to success.

Team 360º

Effective for any type of team: executive teams, functional teams, virtual and project teams. Measures how teams are performing and how to maximize productivity.

Sales 360º

Targeted for sales, sales management, customer service and support functions. Comprehensive feedback on overall performance and identification of development needs.

"*What Bosses Want*" A Guide to Building Leadership Competencies

A unique and comprehensive book for personal development. As a stand-alone guide or when linked to the NBOGroup 360º results, individuals can create their own personal development plan for success.