GUIDELINES FOR THE ETHICAL USE
OF KDVI'S DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

KDVI strives to ensure the ethical use of our development tools. As such, these guidelines provide a form of quality control so that clients properly administer the tools and respondents receive accurate and clear information about the purpose and meaning of their results, aimed at improving their lives. Also, ethical use is intended to prevent abuse of feedback (coercion into behavioural change, punishment or discrimination) and/or inadequate follow up.

1. Using 360° feedback

Development, not assessment

For any 360° feedback system to be successful, it is advisable that KDVI development tools be used only for developmental purposes, not for making administrative decisions about promotions and remuneration. The focus is not to impose a judgement on individuals but to open up possibilities for development and change.

Open environment for critical and honest feedback

Executives who hope to implement a 360° feedback system in their organisation also need to design and carry out an organisational development programme that allows executives to practise honesty in a safe environment and guarantees that people will not be punished for telling the truth. This will ensure that observers provide critical and honest feedback to the participants, aimed at improving their professional and personal lives.

Broad organisational engagement

In order to reap the full benefits of 360° feedback, people at all levels of the organisation must feel free to express their opinions openly, and the participants in this feedback process must be willing to listen and respond to what is being said.

2. Administering the Development Tool

Voluntary participation

Tell participants that taking the questionnaire is always voluntary. Participants also choose their own observers. In order to preserve anonymity in the GELI and LAQ™, ask participants to choose *at least two observers per observer* category. The responses of an observer category with only one observer responding will not be visualised in the personal chart, although the responses will be taken into account in the group observer average. As such, it would be prudent to ask several observers for each category taking into account that not all observers may respond to the questionnaire.

Ensure confidentiality

Ensure that the 360° results are confidential and not given to anyone other than the respondent or client without the respondent's express permission. The exception to this is the OCA™.

The GELI, LAQ™ and OCA™ are also designed so that observers remain anonymous (except for "Superior" scores in the GELI, where only one "Superior" responds).

Inform clients/participants that the results may be used for research purposes, but only after all personal and identifying information (demographic information and comments) have been removed.

Non-anonymous feedback

Unlike the other development tools, the observers answering the PA™ and ITI™ are not anonymous. Keeping names attached to scores helps the participants recognise and understand differences in perceptions. Of particular interest is the potential divergence in the perceptions of behaviour in the private and public spheres. Participants can also go back to the observers to follow up on specific areas for improvement.

3. **Providing Feedback**

The real challenge of 360° feedback is not to label, evaluate or limit the respondent in any way. Rather, it offers a jumping-off point for reflection and discussion leading to a development plan for improvement.

It is human nature to want to know which observers rated a person highly and which did not. But it is far more useful to keep one's attention on what the ratings imply about the respondent's behaviour. The objective is to use feedback constructively to give respondents valuable insight about potential developmental areas.

No such thing as a perfect score

KDVI development tools provide a snapshot of the individual at a certain point in time and within a particular context. No individual will ever attain a perfect score in all the dimensions; indeed, there is no such thing as a perfect score. The dimensions on each of the questionnaires are largely independent, and many different combinations of scores can make for leadership, team or organisational effectiveness.

Percentile ranking against high performing peers

The Percentile Ranking in the GELI, PA™ and LAQ™ compares rankings not to a random sample of the workforce but to an extensive database of highly successful and global senior executives. Thus, if a score is ranked at the 50th percentile, it suggests that the executive is a pretty effective leader.

Gaps or blind spots

The differences among the scores of the observers and the scores of the participant,

what we call "blind spots", can be very revealing. Some people behave differently toward different groups of individuals, e.g. superiors vs. direct reports or work vs. personal realm. Interpretation and discussion of such variances may trigger a dialogue about why an individual may act differently in different contexts.

Consider context

Behaviour is contextual. Some dimensions will be more relevant to one participant than to another depending on their life phase, nature of their job and organisational culture. Participants need to consider which dimensions are most relevant to him or her, their role, their business and their organisation's current and future challenges.

Cultural variations

Keep in mind that cultural differences may have an effect on how respondents answer the survey. Some people tend to overestimate themselves while others have a tendency to underestimate. To some degree, national culture influences people's ratings. People from more individualistic cultures, like the United States, tend to be over-estimators, while people from more collectivist cultures (i.e. some Asian cultures, Northern Europe), tend to under-estimate.

4. Coaching with KDVI Instruments

In general, discoveries about one's behaviours are difficult to process alone. Thus, an individual's journey toward self-discovery can be enhanced with the help of a professional coach who can provide a safe space for assessing leadership strengths and weaknesses, testing new behaviours, and experimenting with new ones. Coaches can also guide coachees through the process of making sense of critical but negative feedback.

As such, we recommend that individuals work through the results of the KDVI development tools with a certified coach.

Mutual trust and respect between coach and coachees

Create a caring, understanding relationship between coach and client, a relationship that is made safe by professional ethics and restraints.

Coaching contract

Both the coach and the client need to clarify expectations and establish ground rules for practicalities such as the scheduling of appointments, the handling of cancellations, and the amount of time that coach and client will spend together.

The coaching contract should also establish clear conditions of confidentiality. Even if an employer is paying for the coach's services, a coach's first duty is to respect the confidentiality of the coachee.

Feedback as a starting point for development

Make sure the client sees the feedback session as the beginning of the process, not a conclusive assessment of the individual. Present results as working hypotheses and as a starting point for further exploration.

Coachees play an active role in sense-making

Allow respondents to self-assess prior to giving results of the development tool. During the coaching session, encourage the clients to see their behaviour in their social and professional contexts.

Encourage clients to develop their own solutions and resist the temptation to provide answers. Only very rarely should leadership coaches prescribe what their clients should do. The task, instead, is to encourage clients to find their own solutions.

Dealing with negative feedback

Address defensive reactions immediately. An executive coach needs to acknowledge and address negative feelings as soon as they arise and in whatever form they appear.

Do not become defensive if the coachee disagrees with the report results. Help the coachee explore his or her reactions and to account for why the results may be either positive or negative.

Understanding the basics of psychotherapy

The leadership coaching process can awaken deep-seated psychological issues to do with the person's character – problems that are deeply ingrained – creating a situation that needs much more than a simple intervention. Leadership coaches who do not have sound psychological training are ill-equipped to handle such problems. They may not recognise the severity of a problem or they may ignore it.

Thus, it is advisable for leadership coaches to understand the basics of psychotherapy by undergoing the experience themselves. In addition, they may find it helpful to discuss issues concerning their clients with experienced coaches who have a psychotherapeutic background.

For more information, please see KDVI's Facilitator's Guides which are available for purchase through our website – www.kdvi.com.