

# Successful launch

## of a 180° management feedback process

Developing and establishing a feedback process to  
define management profiles and integrate an open feedback culture

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## 180° management feedback process at Axel Springer

Axel Springer is one of the biggest media houses in Europe. With the creation of the Hamburger Abendblatt, the founding of Hörzu and Bild and the acquisition of Die Welt, Axel Springer laid the foundation for his company's success.

Through consistent internationalisation and digitalisation, Axel Springer SE has become more than just the leader in the German print industry. The company is active in 44 countries when you take into account its subsidiaries, joint ventures and licences.

An established working relationship between cut-e and Axel Springer helped pave the way for a successful launch and integration of a 180° management feedback process.

## The challenge: feedback process to define management profiles and integrate values and an open feedback culture

Axel Springer has been carrying out 180° management feedback processes in cooperation with cut-e since 2011. The feedback process serves two main purposes:

- ➔ To determine individual strengths and the need for the development of the management team.
- ➔ To support the implementation and strengthening of internal management principles and a culture of mutual feedback.

The managers are assessed online by their subordinates and also their superiors. The managers also carry out a self-assessment in order to compare their own and external views. Third parties can be invited to take part in the feedback. Participation in the 180° feedback process is voluntary for both the person receiving feedback and the one providing it.



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## The solution: embedding management principles, feedback and confidentiality into the process

Axel Springer's management principles provide the basis for the questionnaire. Using the management principles creates transparency in relation to the demands and expectations facing managers. Every competency included in the management principles is covered in the online questionnaire. This is based on several behaviour-based statements.

Two open questions complete the multiple-choice questionnaire. The feedback-giver has the option of answering the following free-text question: 'Which modes of behaviour should the managers keep and which should they change?'

### Clear communication to ensure acceptance

The aims of the management feedback process are communicated in a clear and open manner from the beginning and throughout the process to the feedback-givers and feedback-receivers. All participants know what is expected of them and what they can expect from the feedback process. This is an important factor which contributes to success. This success is evident with a participation rate of consistently over 90% – indicating a high level of acceptance.



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## Confidential and personal feedback through external coaches secures more buy-in

At the end of the feedback process, each manager has an individual development conversation with an external coach to discuss the feedback and agree on any necessary measures to address relevant issues. A special pool of coaches is created for this purpose. The coaches are thoroughly briefed about the formal process and the goals of the 180° feedback conversation.

Confidential processing of results takes place between the coach and manager (feedback-receiver). Only the manager and their coach have access to the results. Based on these, they determine concrete development measures. Coaching interviews form the basis for the manager's individual development plan. Participation in a 180° feedback process is not possible without coaching.

## Structured follow-up leaves nothing to chance

Follow-up coaching is an integral part of the process. After approximately six months, a short follow-up online survey is conducted regarding the feedback process (three multiple choice questions). In this short survey, the feedback-givers (subordinates) assess whether the manager has dealt with the feedback evaluation. They also assess whether or not the feedback process has had an effect on their superior's management performance.

This follow-up survey aids Axel Springer by ensuring a higher degree of sustainability. Employees' impressions are captured and the coaches are given good input for subsequent follow-up coaching with the respective manager.



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## The outcome: key success factors of a successful feedback process

The 180° management feedback process at Axel Springer is characterised by meticulous project management and a thorough evaluation among managers. The project's success is ensured by the fact that, at all times, Axel Springer keeps in mind the important factors of a good feedback process and implements them in a mindful manner.

- ➔ Include everyone and inform them in a thorough manner (feedback-givers and feedback-receivers, company's works council, data protection supervisor and IT security)
- ➔ Allow voluntary participation and ensure confidentiality
- ➔ Discuss the results in feedback interviews with a coach and implement any necessary measures

*"We are delighted that, with the voluntary 180° feedback process, we have been able to create a development measure in a format that suits our company culture so well. The extremely positive evaluation results regarding our information events, the online platform, the questionnaire and the performance of the coaches confirms the success of this measure just as impressively as does the return rate of over 90%. Thanks to the professional and ever-uncomplicated cooperation with cut-e, our feedback processes always go without a hitch and are of great value to everyone involved!"*

Nina Schimkus,  
Management development, Axel Springer

## About cut-e

Founded in 2002, cut-e (pronounced 'cute') provides online tests, questionnaires and gamified assessments for attraction, selection, talent management and development. The company's smart, valid and innovative psychometrics have made it the preferred partner of multinational organisations.

In May 2017, cut-e was acquired by Aon plc, a leading global professional services firm providing a broad range of risk, retirement and health solutions. cut-e now operates as part of Aon's global offering in talent solutions, helping clients achieve sustainable growth by driving business performance through people performance. cut-e and Aon, as Aon's Assessment Solutions, undertake 30 million assessments each year in 90 countries and 40 languages.