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# REVIEW & Comment

As I visit practices and talk with veterinarians, practice managers, and team leaders, I hear many colleagues speak of our shared commitment to practicing the best possible medicine and to working hard to help each other in that process. If we aren't working well together as a health care team, how can we hope to achieve unparalleled positive clinical results?

How are you working as a team? When I ask that question, I often hear, "Great!" I generally respond with a positive comment and then ask: "How do you know?" It seems that many folks just feel that they "know" how they are doing. Likewise, many know the positive way they feel about others and assume they are seen in the same light. As scientists however, we can appreciate that the bigger question must be: "How do we know that we really know what we think we know?" How can we be sure?

The follow-up question is even tougher: How are you doing as a team member? Whether you are the boss, the animal care specialist, ICU nurse, receptionist, associate doctor, or veterinary technician, you have influence—positive or negative—on those around you. Is working with you uplifting and encouraging, or depressing, stifling, or deflating? What would others say? Do you know?

I asked myself these questions about my relationship with my work group last year and ultimately chose to engage in a 360° assessment, giving my colleagues both my permission and a welcoming opportunity to tell me how I was doing as a teammate and partner. More important, it would allow them to help me understand how I could do better as their teammate, colleague, advocate, and supervisor.

being accomplished professionals, they might be part of a problem that others struggle with all day long! At some level, I wasn't sure I wanted to hear what I wasn't doing well...but then again, if I were frustrating or impeding my teammates, I could possibly lose them.

As a leader, particularly as a situational leader such as a boss or supervisor, you must know how effectively you are working with and caring for your team. In my case, all of those with whom I work are direct reports. It was therefore critical that I create a safe and confidential way for them to provide feedback in a way they could remain anonymous. I had to be brave enough to hear where I could do better and be strong enough to change what I could.

So...I met with my team and explained that I wanted them to answer two questions. First, *"What do I do well that helps you individually and us collectively to be more effective in meeting our unit's mission?"* I needed to know what my colleagues think I did well. Clearly I didn't want to lose that attribute, whatever it turned out to be.

The second question was: *"What one thing, if successfully addressed, would allow me to be an incredibly effective and enjoyable partner at work?"* I didn't know what their answers would be so I had no preconceived notion as to whether I could even hope to change anything problematic in my work life effort.

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**A 360° review includes a self-assessment and input from subordinates, peers, and supervisors.**

 Go to [myEVT.com/handouts](http://myEVT.com/handouts) for instructions on how your team can conduct a successful 360° evaluation.

### Decision Time

Make no mistake, this step took self-reflection, faith, some bravery, and a lot of planning. It's not easy for high-achieving situational leaders to believe that, despite