



Running a large-scale **360° Feedback** project

How to help 100s or 1000s of employees to
get great feedback and turn it into real action

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SPIDERGAP

and



Your guide to scaling up

Big projects lead to **big** challenges.

With a small group - say up to 30 - it's possible to build a relationship with everyone participating. This makes it easier to spot issues and react to any concerns.

When we scale up to 100s of participants, this isn't possible anymore. And if we're not careful, the administrative tasks will take up all of our time. If you're lucky, the project will finish on schedule, and everyone will have received feedback. **But will they have felt a positive impact?**

With modern tools like **Spidergap**, it really is possible to manage 1000s of participants, *and* to ensure your 360° Feedback project is a success for everyone involved!

So, we've created this short guide to help you to:

- **Stay focused on the goal** (page 3)
- **Get a 99% response rate** (page 7)
- **Automate and delegate** (page 14)
- **Tackle big changes with small trials** (page 18)





Stay focused on the **goal**

When planning a large-scale 360° Feedback exercise, it's easy to focus on the administrative tasks. Communicating with hundreds or thousands of participants and making sure they provide feedback ahead of a deadline is certainly a challenge!

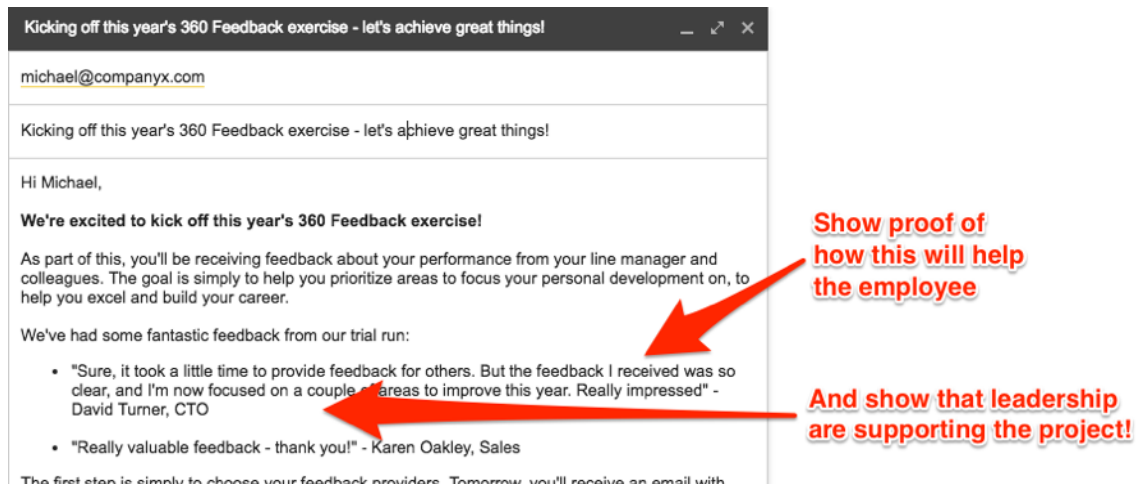
But collecting and sharing the feedback is not the end-goal of the exercise. **What we really want is for employees to use the feedback, prioritize the areas that need most improvement, and - *most importantly* - to take action.**

With a handful of participants you can talk to each and reactively take steps to help if there are any issues.

In a large-scale exercise, you need to consider anything that might prevent an employee from taking action *before* you start.

Make sure participants 'buy-in' to the project.

The best way to get 'buy-in' from new participants is to be clear on how it's expected to help them, and to show how it's helped others in the past. You could share the impact that a smaller exercise has made - quotes from happy participants work really well here! It also helps a huge amount if it's clear that leadership are actively supporting the project.



If employees are selecting their own feedback providers, you can increase buy-in further by getting the employees to speak to the people that will be providing feedback about them to explain why they chose them, and what they plan to use their feedback for.

Hold participants accountable

As part of a 360° Feedback exercise, employees need to provide feedback, review their own feedback reports, potentially provide coaching to others, and make sure they take action. All of these actions are vital. Making the actions part of their performance appraisal makes it easier to give praise to those participants that excel, and manage participants that do not!

Use employee-friendly feedback reports

I won't linger on this point for too long - you're probably aware that we're proud at Spidergap to have the **best feedback reports** on the market!

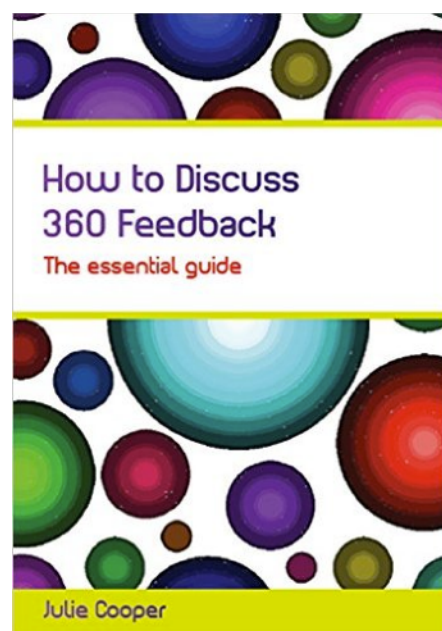
But as this is a guide on how to scale up any 360 Feedback project, it's worth noting that the feedback reports need to be *really* easy to understand and use. A poor feedback report will take up more time, require more external support, and will get worse results for your employees. And this will hurt even more with a large scale project.

Train your coaches

When running a large-scale project, it often makes sense to use staff to provide coaching, rather than hiring external coaches. This is great, but it's really important that your staff receive training on how to be a good coach.

If you don't have any experts currently, then consider reaching out to one of our **Spidergap Partners**. Over time, they'll be able to help train the people in your team who can run future coaching training courses. This will reduce the long-term consultancy fees and also develop coaching experts within your business.

You might also want to share Julie Cooper's book on **How to Discuss 360° Feedback** with your team. It's a valuable read, and **Julie's actually one of our partners** and will be happy to discuss any questions you have.





Review progress throughout the year

Collecting and sharing 360° Feedback may only happen once a year but employees should be taking action on their personal development continuously. This means you will need to integrate the process with other development and management processes, and ensure that participants are receiving ongoing coaching and feel supported throughout the year.

Get feedback and measure success

Done well, 360° Feedback and the subsequent coaching will make a lasting positive impact on both the employee and your organization. But don't just assume that's happening - you'll want to proactively get feedback and at-least find anecdotal evidence that participants are seeing a really positive impact.

A light-weight but effective way to do this is to use a **Net Promoter Score (NPS) survey** - it's just 2 quick questions but could give you all the feedback you need:

1. How likely is it that you would recommend doing this 360 Feedback project to colleagues?
2. (If 6 or below:) "Sorry to hear that. What was the main issue?"
(If 7-8:) "Sounds like we could do better. What would make the biggest difference?"
(If 9-10:) "That's great! What could make it even better next time?"



Get a 99% response rate

If we want participants to make use of their feedback, we need to make sure the feedback is useful. So, we need:

1. A well designed feedback questionnaire
2. Respondents that buy-in to the exercise and take the time to give fair answers with helpful explanations
3. Enough responses to give a well-rounded view of each person's performance.

It's this third point that can be scary when managing a large-scale 360° Feedback project. It sounds like a massive administrative burden to chase up thousands of people being assessed!

Well, at Spidergap we've recently supported a customer in getting a 99% response rate with 700 people being assessed across 10 locations with over 6000 requests for feedback. Here's how they went about it...

Be clear on expectations

We talked in the previous chapter about getting participant ‘buy-in’ and holding them accountable. As part of this, we need to be clear on our expectations.

It’s great to aim for a 100% response rate, as then the expectations are clear: Everyone *must* provide all of their feedback *before* the set deadline. Participants should understand that this is essential in order to help the people being assessed to prioritize the areas they will focus on in the year ahead.

Don’t let people ask for too much feedback

With any 360 Feedback project, it’s important that each person receiving feedback gets *enough* feedback. When running at scale, it’s also important to make sure people don’t ask for *too much* feedback.

Doing so will lead to respondents being overwhelmed with feedback requests, and they’ll have less time to spend giving good quality feedback to each person. So, be clear on how many feedback providers each participant should choose!

We normally recommend one Line Manager, one Self-Assessment, 2-4 Peers, and 3-6 Direct Reports. This will give enough feedback to be useful, but avoid creating too much work for feedback providers.

Manage people who are too popular (!)

If you're asking participants to choose their own feedback providers (which we do recommend at this scale), then you're going to find that some people are too popular for their own good and may quickly receive 20 or more feedback requests.

This is one of the few occasions where you do need to get actively involved. You'll need to find out who has requested feedback, and in some cases you're going to want to remove the requests. This may mean asking someone being assessed to nominate an alternative feedback provider.

Fortunately, in Spidergap, it's really easy to spot people that have too many feedback requests:

1. On your **Feedback** page, click to **View feedback providers**.
2. Then click on the **Feedback requests** column header to sort the feedback providers.

360 degree feedback assessment

Help My projects Paddy Mann

Collect feedback

Participants Activity

View feedback providers

Q Add people Actions

Feedback provider 50 of 1480	Feedback requests	Outstanding requests	Response rate	Last active
Carol Spencer	24	0	100%	2 weeks ago
Ivan Roberts	23	0	100%	1 week ago



In our experience, people prefer the beach to 360° feedback during their summer holidays

Give respondents 3-4 weeks (and avoid holidays)

There's pros and cons to both short- and long-deadlines. I'm a big fan of shorter deadlines as it leads to an increased sense of urgency and people are more likely to take action before they forget about it.

But, when you're working at scale, you need to take vacations, illness, work deadlines and so on into account. When working with our customer, we found that 4 weeks was sufficient.

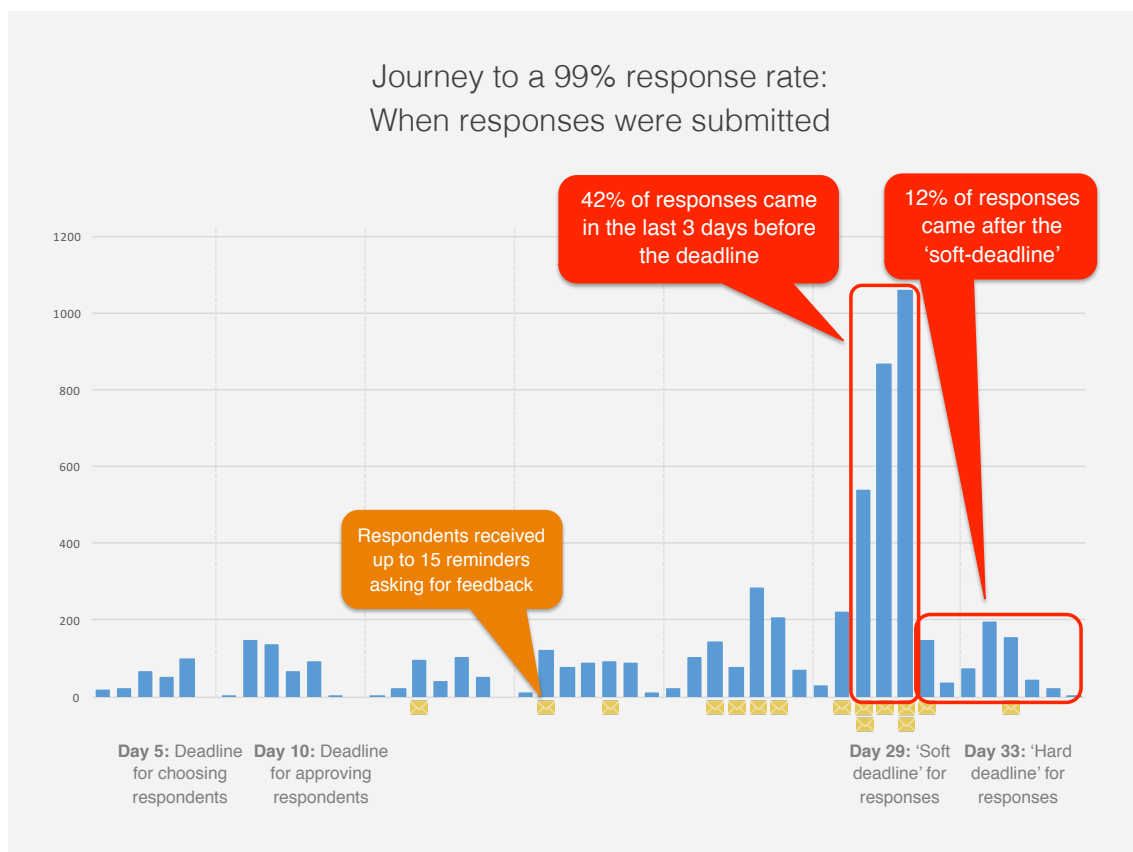
Try to avoid:

- Summer holidays. This is particularly an issue in certain countries like Sweden (where I live!) as the entire country tends to take July off
- Christmas and other known seasonal holidays
- Key work deadlines - e.g. the financial end-of year. It's worth talking to your business leaders to find out when these are, but you might not be able to please everyone

Expect responses to come in at the last minute (don't stress!)

There's no changing human nature. Regardless of how long people have to submit their feedback, their other work deadlines, and the number of reminders you send, you'll always find that the majority of people leave responding until the last minute.

When we achieved a 99% response rate, almost half of the responses came in the last 3 days. So don't get stressed if you've only got 50% of your responses with a week to go - this is normal.



Use a soft-deadline

When you start the project, you should communicate a deadline for people to submit their feedback. As far as communications goes, it's the only deadline that participants should know about.

But, at the end of the project, it's probably worth having a final push for responses, for those few people who had left it until the last minute and then got sick!

As you can see in the graph above, we took our response rate from 87% to 99% *after* the initial 'soft-deadline' had passed. We then introduced a final 'hard-deadline' for the following week. Once the hard-deadline had passed, we stopped accepting responses as it was time to share the feedback.

Send frequent reminders with increasing urgency

Did you spot that we sent a whopping *fifteen* reminders asking respondents to submit their feedback?

This might sound like a lot, but we can automate this (see page 14), and we're not spamming participants asking them to sign up to a service they're not interested in. We're asking them to complete an action they *have* to complete as part of their job. And, as any marketer or survey-professional will know, it's incredibly common that the first few emails will be ignored!

No one was sent the same email twice. Each time, the subject and email content was tweaked in the system's reminder emails. For example, when there was 5 days to go the subject started with "5 days to go!". When there was 2 days to go it became "URGENT: ...". This really helps you get their attention and, in turn, get results.

The top priority is that everyone gets some useful feedback

With a week to go, you should prioritize making sure that every single person being assessed reaches a minimum threshold for sharing the report.

For example, you might decide that the feedback report shouldn't be shared unless the self-assessment, line manager assessment, and at least 2 other responses have been submitted. If this is the case, you need to start identifying which participants haven't yet hit this goal, and focusing your attention on getting these responses submitted.

While your boss will be impressed if you get a 95% **response** rate, it's much more important to be able to **share feedback reports** with 100% of the people being assessed.

Remove people who can't participate

Despite your 4 week deadline, there will be some people that can't participate. Anyone on maternity/paternity leave for example, or those taking a sabbatical.

It might sound like a trivial task, but it's worth removing these people from the process as soon as possible. If you don't, you may find it hard to report to others on your response rate, and you'll waste time chasing up people who aren't going to respond!



Automate *and* delegate

It's certainly possible for one person to administrate and support participants in a 360° Feedback project. But when operating at scale, it's always worth looking for opportunities to *delegate* tasks to other people, and - where possible - *automate* tasks completely.

Let's start with the tasks you can automate...

Automate invitations and reminder emails

When you've got a series of invitations and reminder emails, it helps to automate them as much as possible. Spidergap takes care of most of this - sending invitations and reminders is just a few clicks of the mouse.

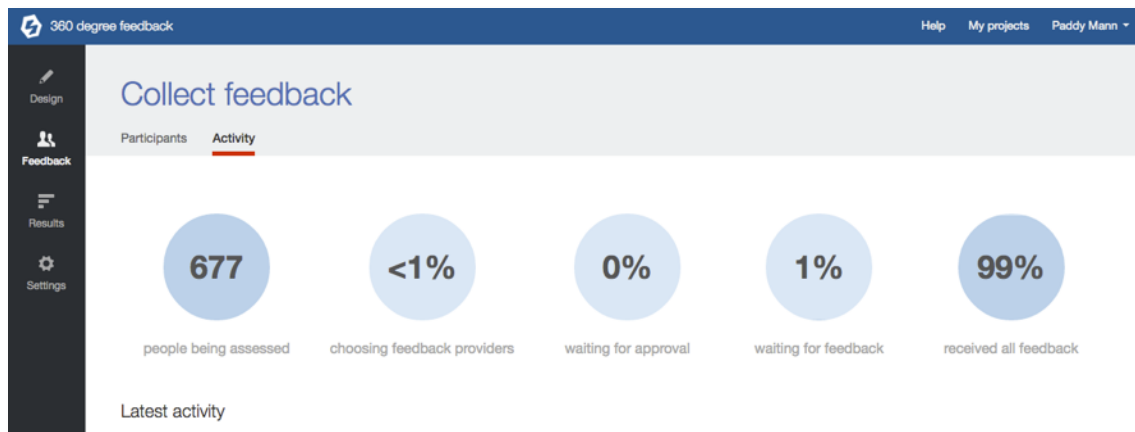
Plan and draft each of the emails that will be sent in advance, and then add a reminder to your calendar. Then it'll just take 30 seconds each time to get the emails sent out!

Automate progress reports

As the project progresses, you'll want to know:

- How many people still need to choose their feedback providers? Who are they?
- How many managers still need to approve a list of feedback providers? Who are they?
- How many people being assessed are still waiting for feedback? Who are they?
- Are any respondents likely to be overwhelmed due to having too many feedback requests?

Spidergap makes much of this easy using your **Participants** and **Activity** pages (as shown below).



You may well have more questions that you or other stakeholders want answered. For example, you might want to know how the response rates vary across offices.

To do this analysis, you'll need to go to the **Participants** page, click **Actions** and then **Export to Excel**. Using the Excel data - perhaps combined with other data such as the office for each participant - you can prepare a report that you just need to paste the update numbers into each day.

Plan how to handle errors

People make mistakes, and when working with 100s or 1000s of employees, you'll see a lot.

For example, if people are identifying their own feedback providers you'll need to plan how to handle it when they enter the wrong email address. Helpfully, Spidergap sends the project administrator an email whenever an email address is wrong (causing an email to 'bounce') with the suggested steps to address this.

But with lots of participants, you'll get a lot of these. A great recommendation from Susan Rochester at **Balance at Work** (a Spidergap partner) is to set up your email to automatically archive any 'bounce emails' in a dedicated folder. They're then ready to action in one batch each day, and you'll be less distracted by the notifications!

Delegate contacting respondents

In most cases, we can use the automated emails to chase up respondents.

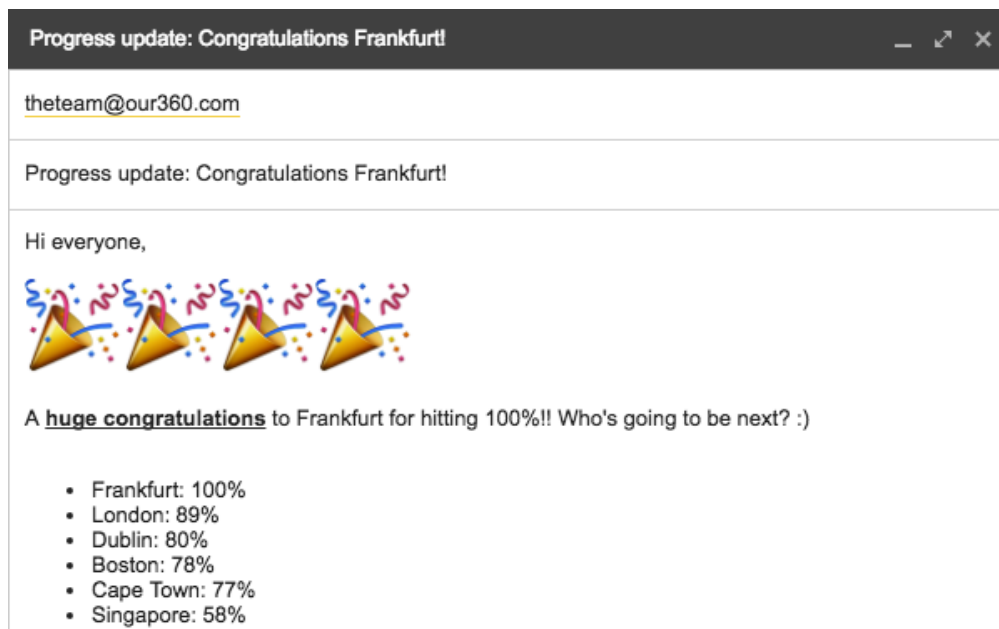
But, there are a few situations where you may need to really contact someone. For example, if they have a large number of feedback requests, but have not completed any with only a few days to go.

With hundreds of participants, it's definitely worth delegating some of this work. The best way I've seen to do this is to split the participants by office or department, and make one or two HR representatives responsible for getting a good response rate and supporting participants in each area.

Add a little competition!

Our customer actually went a step further. As well as making the local HR representatives responsible for the response rate in their country, they added a little friendly competition.

This was simple but incredibly effective. They emailed the list of countries and the response rates in each. When a country hit 100%, they sent congratulations and an amusing image. It's not hard to imagine how this helps to excite and incentivize the local teams!





Big changes, **small trials**

The message for this final chapter is all in the heading: Before you make big changes, run a small trial first.

Just imagine our customer with 700 people being assessed and 6000 responses. If a few questions are not clear in the feedback questionnaire, the extra time it takes everyone to fill in the questionnaire can quickly add up to days.

And for some people, this could even change what areas for improvement come out top - this could have huge implications!

Make sure you run your trial with a sample of stakeholders you'll be inviting to provide feedback. This means not just getting managers to test it out, but direct reports, peers, and other stakeholders too.

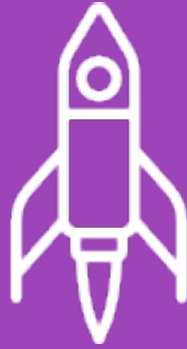
Always test changes to the questionnaire

It's particularly important to test any changes made to the feedback questionnaire. You'll want to collect feedback about at least one person to find out:

- Do respondents completely understand how to answer all of the questions?
- Do the people receiving the feedback understand how to use the feedback and find it useful?
- Were the recent changes seen as an improvement as expected?
- Could it be improved further?

It's also worth testing smaller changes

As well as testing bigger changes, it's worth testing out the smaller tweaks too. For example, if you decide to update the email that's sent out asking for feedback, then be sure to ask a colleague to review it first. For example, are they clear on the definitions of different relationships (e.g. 'Peer') when they are being asked to identify feedback providers.



Ready for take-off?

We hope this guide has helped to lead you towards 360° Feedback success, but we're here to help if you need it!

Find out more about Spidergap

Want to find out more about Spidergap? Visit www.spidergap.com for a free trial, or email us at support@spidergap.com to arrange a demo.

Get support from an expert



Julie at Spring Development is your local Spidergap partner. She'll be happy to help you with coaching, training and other services.

Call +44 845 5197 571 or email
hello@springdevelopment.net

About the author

Paddy Mann is a co-founder at **Spidergap**, the world's top-rated 360 degree feedback tool¹.



He currently combines the roles of lead designer and customer happiness king. Since 2010, Paddy has helped hundreds of customers to set-up and manage their 360° Feedback projects, and has seen time-and-time again what works well, and what does not!

Paddy lives in Sweden, which he bemoans as being too dark and cold for much of the year, but wonderful in summer. He loves mountain biking, skiing, snowboarding, and enjoying life with his wife, young twins and new baby.

Acknowledgements

Our special thanks to the following experts who helped to review this eBook:

- Susan Rochester & Paula Ford, Balance at Work
- Julie Cooper, Spring Development
- Shaun Beck, Inspire - Ignite
- Ana Cecilia Rasgado, Talent Lab

¹ See: <http://www.capterra.com/360-degree-feedback-software/#product-131885>

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