

Andy: Welcome everybody to another Reboot Podcast Extra. My name is Andy Crissinger and the director of coaching here at Reboot. And today I'm here with my colleague and friend Courtney Joyce. Courtney, it's good to be with you.

Courtney: It's good to be here.

Andy: Courtney is a coach and also the Director of our Assessments program. And the reason Courtney is here with me today is we wanna talk a little bit about 360s. If you've listened to many of the Reboot Podcasts, or if you've heard Jerry speak or read his book or familiar at all with the work that we do at Reboot, you probably have heard us talk about this term called radical self-inquiry, and really radical self-inquiry has to do with a kind of, you know, deep growth mindset, a recognition that in order to grow and develop as leaders, we need to not just be building skills on top of skills, but we need to be growing up as human beings and so radical self-inquiry factors into everything that we do at Reboot, it's core to our approach, to this work.

And one of the really amazing ways that we bring radical self-inquiry work, uh, into our work with clients is through 360s and for years now, 360s have been right there as sort of this add on service that we do with coaching. Not everybody that works with us gets a 360, but many do. And we found that they are incredibly powerful in supporting folks who wanna do that self-inquiry work, who wanna grow as leaders. And so we thought, well, let's take a few minutes to talk about 360s and to share a little bit more about our approach and, uh, how we go about this work, so that folks who are listening, even if you don't decide to get a Reboot 360, maybe this just puts 360s on your radar as a thing that you might want to pursue in some form or another in your leadership journey. So maybe we can start, Courtney, by just addressing first of all, what is a 360 review?

Courtney: Yeah, sure. So a 360 review is a review that really looks 360 degrees around someone. So up, maybe that's a manager or maybe if you're the CEO, that's your board, um, across, if you have peer relationships, maybe a mentorship or a friendship or even down so your reports, and some people even include skip levels too. So we get feedback from 360 degrees around you and we interview and survey the people that are close to you. Typically we do about a dozen people and this allows us to get a complete picture of what's happening for you in this organization at this time.

Andy: Yeah. And I think the keyword there is feedback, right? It's- it's what's happening in the organization around you as seen and felt and perceived by the people that you're impacting through your leadership.

Courtney: Absolutely.

Andy: So, yeah, so it's not a review, like a performance review would be, it's really a review of the impact that you're having on the system around you.

Courtney: Correct. You can, you can have a thought or an intention for how you are showing up, but maybe you don't have a full picture of how that's actually being received on the other side. So the goal is with the 360 to unpack that and make that more clear.

Andy: So maybe you can say a word or two about how we at Reboot approach 360, 'cause there's a lots of different approaches. We won't go into all of them, but ho- how do we do it?

Courtney: So the Reboot approach to 360s is what I would call qualitative, or maybe even bottoms up. Some might approach it more quantitatively, they maybe have leadership categories that they're working with, or they're even putting a numeric rating on things, but we ask open questions. It might be similar to what you would consider a journalistic approach. We're leading with curiosity, we are really trying to understand what is the story that is emerging here? What is actually happening for this person?

And the bottoms up approach is that we then sit down with all of this information af- after we ask these open questions we make sense of the information that's provided. We analyze the information and then put it into themes that are easy to digest and process.

Maybe a lot of people are talking about communication as an issue. And we put that into a theme and a theme title that somebody can easily digest and understand. And as you mentioned before, we also believe that 360s are best employed with the support of a coach and a coaching relationship. We have found that 360s, there's a lot of nuance to them. And a lot of times people's strengths show up on the other hand as weaknesses. So it's really helpful to have a coach help you through that because sometimes it isn't as simple as starting or stopping a behavior. Something that's showing up really strong, or maybe as a superpower of someone also shows up on the shadow side over on the weaknesses. So working, having a coach to help work through that is enormously helpful.

Andy: Yeah. I love that you brought in the aspect of nuance. I think that's so important here. And one of the reasons why I've always appreciated the qualitative approach to 360s, as opposed to say the numeric scoring against the, a set of categories is that, um, these human systems that leaders operate in are really complex. And sometimes you'll hear your board saying, "You need to do X, Y, Z." And your team saying something that's maybe the opposite.

And that's hard to work with, if all you're looking at is a, you know, uh, a sheet with numeric grades on capacities, but with the help of a coach to dive into something like that, to pick it apart to then- then put the onus really back on the client and say, "What do you wanna do here?" You get to choose, you have some agency, how do we wanna navigate this so powerful?

Courtney: Right. And the, and the contextual conversation in that, we've see this a lot where maybe the board will say, "You're not being assertive enough." And then the leadership team is saying, "They're too assertive." And like you said, that can be confusing, but then that's a great conversation to have with your coach to say, "Why am I showing up this way in one-

Andy: Yeah.

Courtney: ... environment and not another."

Andy: Yeah. Context matters. Right? And this allows context to be sort of a discussable, uh, thing that we might see a little bit clearer through the review and in the conversations.

Courtney: Yes, absolutely.

Andy: Yeah.

Courtney: I mean, that basically the short, short answer here is if you've ever really wondered, how am I doing, or how are people perceiving me, you will, with a 360 review, have that answer.

Andy: So Courtney and I, you and I could sit here and geek out about 360 for hours. I know we've done it in the past, we'll probably do it again, but rather than do that, we thought it would be great for our listeners to hear from a client. And so we have a conversation that we've recorded with one of your clients, Nick Francis, and we'd love to actually close out this episode hearing from Nick, hearing from someone who's done this and done this multiple times. So let's hear from Nick Francis.

Andy: So, we're really grateful to have Nick Francis with us, one of our clients, to talk a little bit about his experience with Reboot 360s. So, Nick, maybe you can just start by introducing yourself and who you are.

Nick Francis: Yeah, thanks, Andy. I'm a long-time listener, first-time caller. Happy to (laughing) to be here. I'm the Co-founder and CEO of a company called Help Scout. We make customer support software for small businesses. We have a 125 person distributed team. We've been remote-first for more than 10 years now, and, uh, yeah, we're having a lot of fun along the way.

Andy: Awesome. And thank you so much again for, for being here today. Um, as you know we're talking about 360s, and, uh, maybe you can start by telling us, what first prompted you to want to do a 360 review?

Nick Francis: Well, I think as a company grows, it becomes more challenging for a CEO to get great feedback. Uh, the power dynamics shift, and sometimes beneath your feet in ways that you're not quite aware of, until it, and, until you've had to learn so-the hard way. I found that in my work with Courtney, it just became clear that I wanted more feedback on how I could grow as a CEO. I'm managing a company at this stage for the first time. The learning curve is steep, that's why I'm an entrepreneur.

Nick Francis: But, I wanna be able to see around corners better, and, a 360... and repeating the 360 process on an annual basis has been a game changer for me, personally, and has just given me a road map to work towards.

Andy: Mm. Yeah. Yeah, I appreciate what you shared there as well, that you've actually done multiple 360s, not just one. And, so-

Nick Francis: I'm addicted, Andy. I can't get enough.

Andy: Yeah, you're (laughs) you're addicted. Maybe you could talk a little bit about the value of doing it that way, you know, kind of starting with the baseline and then returning to, to the re- review after that.

Nick Francis: Yeah, and I think I've learned this across many different facets of a business. It's not always the measure. It's sometimes just the trend that's-

Andy: Yeah.

Nick Francis: ... most insightful. And, with regard to a 360, we all have our edges, especially as entrepreneurs. I even call them demons, you know, these big challenging parts of our character that have really positive aspects, but, you know, can go negative as well if we're not careful and, and if we don't develop more self-awareness. And so, uh, for me, I- I wanna know that I'm making marked progress on an annual basis, that the, the trend is moving upwards in terms of my character development and my self-awareness as a CEO in terms of not only the way that I am working with my fellow leadership, uh, colleagues, but also with the board level.

I wanna, I want the, the real feedback, the tough feedback, uh, from our investors and from people at the board in terms of what they expect for the person in my role, and being able to see that trend year-over-year has just been kind of magic for me.

Andy: You know, I'm curious. Maybe we can get into some more specifics about two, two different perspectives, you know. I'm really curious about the growth that you've experienced specifically as you've done these reviews, you know. What have you noticed about yourself and how has that impacted... How you show up as a leader? And I'm also interested in what you've seen the impact to be on the rest of the organization as they watched you kind of model this process of a pretty regular steady drumbeat of 360s. What has that done for the rest of the organization for the CEO to do that?

Nick Francis: You know, one of the more powerful things that comes up for me as you asked that question is, when you get the 360 back, what's your action plan, and how do you share that with your peers and the people that participated in that process. Courtney encouraged me to share it, right? Share the results with, with all the stakeholders that contributed to the 360 and then create an action plan. And ask those people to hold you accountable. And so, in some way, I think it opened up a dialogue that may not have previously existed between myself and a peer where they know I'm working on this growth edge, right?

I'm working on backing away and maybe not being as involved in certain projects or details. I'm working on that micromanagement piece. At least I- I was. I think I'm doing way better today. But, by way of just starting a dialogue and saying, "Hey, I'm working on this. I could really use your feedback along the way," I think it just sort of breaks down some of those barriers, uh, or power dynamics that prevent you from getting feedback on an ongoing basis, and so I think it just opened up a dialogue with those stakeholders where I could ask, "Hey, how am I doing on this?" Right?

Andy: Yeah.

Nick Francis: And, and that was really powerful, uh, and just that drumbeat of an annual 360 and the annual getting the feedback and then developing an action plan, and then checking in with folks on an ongoing basis as to how I'm performing, that's just great, you know. That- that's really helped me. And so, uh, that's the most important thing that I've taken from it, is just how it opened up the dialogue.

Andy: I so appreciate, you know, the part that you're talking about where it makes the, the senior leader or the CEO's growth a, a shared, sort of speakable thing, like, "Hey, I'm working on this, and you, and you, team member, can be an ally in my growth and we can actually talk about it." I love that aspect of it.

What it reminds me of is that sometimes when a leader does a 360 but there's no closing of the loop, it can actually make the entire situation worse because people might feel like, "Hey, I did this thing. I shared openly the feedback, uh, that I was asked to share, but it didn't do anything. It didn't make a difference." And so, I think it's incredibly powerful that you've set up kind of a, a, a cadence for returning to these.

I think it communicates something to the organization that, "Oh, this matters. This is something that Nick's committed to, and it's a process over time that plays out. It's not just a- a box that we all check to say, 'Oh, the leader did a 360, and now we can kind of move on with, with business as usual.'" So that's really powerful and important.

Nick Francis: Well, I think that's just it. A 360 is- That's why it can't just be, in my opinion, a one-time event. It is an ongoing, engaging feedback loop, right? Where I'm also in my ongoing coaching, you know, revisiting these things on an ongoing basis. I just feel like I'm living with that 360 at all times, and that's how I develop awareness of my edges, and learn to confront them in an honest and authentic way, but also get support and empathy from my teammates along the way. And, and that's, that's just been so powerful for me.

Courtney: Nick's also had a few people in his organization also get 360 reviews as a result of him getting them, which has been, uh, fun to see others in the organization step in as well.

Andy: Yeah. I've seen that a- across a number of our client organizations where the CEO goes first and it does a number things. First, it sets a really great example, and it also, uh, I- I think it can make things feel a bit safer for the rest of the leadership team, who may want, uh, to have, uh, ha- have similar, um, opportunities for growth. I think it, it helps cast it as an opportunity, okay? We get to do this. This is actually a gift that the organization can give you, an investment in your growth.

Nick Francis: Yeah, and I feel the need to, to talk about setting the right expectation. When you tell a member of your team that you'd like to get a 360, (laughs) that could go a few different ways, right? But it's important that they do see it exactly that way, Andy, as a gift. Like, "I wanna invest in you being able to see all of your edges so that I can be, I can be, uh, the partner to you, and I can help you get where you wanna go, right? This is an absolute investment in you that we're making and, as a company, and we wanna be committed to your success here." If that's not clear, it can feel like a report card.

Andy: Right. We were talking earlier, Courtney and I, about the difference between a 360 review in a, in a kind of inter-organization performance assessment, and they're very different things, right?

Nick Francis: Yeah.

Andy: Both important but serve different purposes.

Nick Francis: Yeah, you don't wanna use a, a 360 as leverage for some sort of decision.

Andy: Right. Right.

Nick Francis: I don't... At least, I don't think that's where it's most powerful.

Courtney: Yeah, we've had board members come to us and say, "We want you to do a 360 review of this CEO we're working with 'cause we don't really want him to be the CEO anymore." It's like, oof... that is not the right tool. You're gonna... If that really is how you feel, there's a m- there's a different way to approach that, (laughs) that may allow you to get to the same result.

Andy: Right. Yep, great point. Let's say you're in a conversation with another entrepreneur who's on the fence, thinking about, "Ah, maybe I'm curious about a 360 but I'm not sure." Uh, what, what advice would you give them, uh, to think about evaluating whether it's the right time, and what they might be thinking about in terms of that decision?

Nick Francis: I'd say that your future in a high-growth organization is directly correlated to the velocity of your personal development and growth.

Andy: Hmm.

Nick Francis: And you want every possible tool in your toolbox to facilitate that growth. And you wanna be able to, as I've said before, see around corners, you know, and understand your own edges and develop awareness of... places where you struggle, you know. Uh, conversations that you think went one way, they're actually going a totally different way in your (laughs) organization and being perceived a totally different way.

Andy: Mm.

Nick Francis: You've got to have visibility into that, and you need to treat that process with urgency because this is about trust. This is about building a trusted relationship with your peers, with your board, with other stakeholders in your business. So, getting that feedback early and often is so important, because what's playing out in your business from a day-to-day standpoint. It plays out no matter what. Whether you get the feedback that you need to develop is your choice, you know, and I, and I think without that feedback it is going to be really hard to scale with a high-growth company as CEO.

Andy: Yeah. I'm so glad that you use the word trust in this context, because I think that's so important. And it's one of the ways that these kinds of 360s are different from, say, a performance assessment.

Nick Francis: Mm.

Andy: That this really is about relationships and trust. It's about the impact of our behavior as leaders on the system around us. It's not even so much about right or wrong, or even about strengths and weaknesses in, in sort of a, um, objective sense. It's about trust and the ability for feedback to flow more freely in real time, and this is an instrument that helps us get to that, that place.

Nick Francis: When people know that you're working on these things, they become part of the solution with you. They become a partner instead of someone that's sitting on the other side of the table.

Andy: Mm.

Nick Francis: That makes all the difference in my experience.

Andy: Many thanks again to Nick Francis for having that conversation with us, and thank you, Courtney, for being here with me and having this conversation about 360s. And if folks are interested in perhaps a Reboot 360, uh, what can they do?

Courtney: So the best thing to do is to go to reboot.io and, uh, under services, you'll see 360s, and there's a place for you to read more about it. And also if you're interested, submit a form that will come to us and we can have a conversation, see if it is the right fit for you.

Andy: Wonderful. Well, hope this has been helpful for everyone and great to be with you today.

Courtney: Thanks Andy.