



What Is MRA?

*This document is available at the **Spaulding Associates, Inc.** web site (www.spauldingassociates.com.) Once at the site, follow the links on the left-hand side of the home page toward MRA Services and What Is MRA or go directly to:*

<http://www.spauldingassociates.com/WhatIsMRA.htm>

If you would like to see an example of how MRA can be used in executive development, follow the links toward MRA Case Study or go directly to:

<http://www.spauldingassociates.com/MRACaseStudy.htm>

MRA stands for "multi-rater assessment".

MRA is a process which allows a person, team, organization or other entity to receive performance-related feedback in anonymous form from peers, supervisors, subordinates or other constituents; to compare this data with self-ratings; and to develop action plans for continuous improvement. In the multi-rater assessment model, feedback from all those having input is consolidated and used to generate a feedback report for the person or entity being assessed. Because information is consolidated, the confidentiality of each individual reporter is protected, and the person or entity being assessed can be assured of receiving candid feedback. The multi-rater assessment model has been used successfully as a way to gather information for:

- Performance Appraisal
- Upward Feedback
- Customer Satisfaction
- Needs Assessment
- Values Alignment
- Team Development
- Project Management
- Cross Functional Effectiveness
- Climate Surveys
- Executive Development
- Team Leader Development

and a host of other performance enhancing applications.

To be successful, MRA must be conducted in a manner that assures the information



gathered will contribute to a desired business objective. This involves careful selection of items for the assessment instrument and careful preparation of all participants in the assessment process.

To help assure a successful assessment outcome, **Spaulding Associates, Inc. (SAI)** uses a flexible six-step methodology for each assessment project.

Spaulding Associates, Inc. Six-Step Assessment Methodology

1. Create an environment conducive to assessment
2. Develop assessment items
3. Create assessment instrument
4. Prepare participants and contributors
5. Conduct assessments
6. Feedback results and develop action plans

1. Create the Environment

Assessment can be a scary word in some cultures. For some, it may be synonymous with "surveillance" and smack of gathering data to support a preconceived punitive action. Others may view assessment as an opportunity to gain new insights with respects to one's unique skills and abilities. With a well-planned and administered MRA tool, assessment can truly be an opportunity to "see ourselves as others see us." The attitude that participants adopt with respect to assessment is largely a function of their past experiences and current preparation.

SAI provides a number of services to ensure a climate that is conducive to a successful assessment. We will conduct interviews with appropriate staff within the client organization to determine the intent and purpose of the assessment effort. These interviews generally include those executives sponsoring the assessment, those who will be assessed, those completing the finished assessment and other relevant constituents within the organization.

During these meetings, participants have the opportunity to discuss past experiences with assessment and to learn the intent of the current effort. In addition, participants can also learn how the current effort will be conducted and how to offer constructive feedback to their colleagues. Fears and concerns, if any, with respect to how the information will be used can also be addressed. We can also share how this type of information has been used by other organizations to increase professionalism, morale and performance.

2. Develop Assessment Items

To get the right answers, you have to ask the right questions. The value of MRA feedback is largely determined by the items you develop. To develop assessment items that are



specific to your company and unique to your business need, **SAI** surveys at least three levels within your organization: the managerial level being assessed (Managers), the managers' direct reports (Direct Reports) and the executive level to which the managers report (Executive.) The goal of this survey would be to determine what are the appropriate categories to assess and what are the appropriate questions to include within each category.

Involving all levels in the development of survey items helps guarantee that participants develop ownership for the assessment process rather than see themselves as being subjected to it.

3. Create the Instrumentation

Once the assessment items have been determined and approved, **SAI** creates an instrument that can be administered through a variety of formats: paper and pencil, diskette, e-mail, Intranet or Internet. Assessments can be completed on-screen and returned to a system administrator who can then generate the assessment reports. Both numeric feedback and comments are included in assessment reports. Feedback can be aggregated at various levels so that data can be reported according to your needs. For example, each person being assessed can get a detailed individual report that includes specific feedback on any number of items within any number of categories. At the same time, other executives can see data that is summarized by item or category reflecting the results of the entire group. Check out the sample report at the **SAI** web site at:

<http://www.spauldingassociates.com/CaseStudy.htm>

SAI can administer your entire project as well as train an internal system administrator. At the conclusion of your project, you will have the option of owning the capacity to administer your future assessments. This will give you the capability to measure your progress by conducting future assessments without external resources. With appropriate preparation of your system administrator, you will also have the capability to design and administer any other MRA assessment instrument that you wish in the future.

4. Prepare Participants and Contributors

Before assessments are completed, **SAI** will prepare managers and contributors by conducting training sessions covering how to use the assessment instrument and how to provide constructive feedback. Participants will learn the importance and value of the information being collected as well as the mechanics of the assessment process.

5. Conduct Assessments

With proper preparation, conducting the assessment is a simple administrative procedure.



Each person having input into an assessment will receive either a diskette, a paper-and-pencil instrument or an assessment via e-mail. SAI feeds all completed assessments into a PC-based software system and prints your results. Again, at the conclusion of your project, you have the option of transferring all capacity to your internal resources so that you can do future assessments without unnecessary reliance on external resources.

6. Feedback Results and Develop Action Plans

After reports are printed, they are distributed to participants and the results interpreted. **SAI** can conduct training sessions to help participants understand their feedback and develop individual action plans for continuous improvement. These sessions can be in group or individualized sessions, depending upon the needs of your target audience. Based on the reports, participants develop action plans for continued improvement.

After the assessment, **SAI** will help your organization initiate steps to develop all staff as directed by the aggregate feedback. You may reassess at any future date to check your progress.

MRA is the most effective way to measure performance in today's complex organizations. The single perspective of the "supervisory review" has always had limited value and is especially inappropriate today.

Beyond measuring performance, **SAI's** MRA services provide a number of other significant benefits:

- Providing a baseline measure for assessing future improvement efforts
- Generating performance information in varying degrees of detail for multiple levels within an organization (i.e. high detail for individuals, moderate detail for teams and aggregate data for executive levels)
- Protecting the confidentiality of all contributors
- Segmenting input by category (boss, peer, customer, subordinate or any other designation)
- Guiding developmental efforts
- Providing a mechanism for comparing performance across teams, divisions or organizations

We can customize assessments and create instruments that are unique to your needs. Additionally, **SAI** can prepare clients to conduct their own follow-ups and other future



assessments at the end of their first project. With this capacity, you may re-assess at a later time, create new assessments or assess new populations, all without unnecessary entanglements with external vendors.

**To learn more, call Bill Spaulding at:
(336) 288-8713**

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