

Microsoft Scraps Its Internal Feedback Tool Perspectives: Is This the End of Formal Employee Feedback? - UC Today

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Executive Summary

This article addresses Microsoft's decision to retire Perspectives, its internal peer feedback platform, as part of a broader overhaul of its employee performance management system. The author argues that this move signals a shift away from structured, tool-mediated feedback and toward informal, real-time manager-employee conversations, coinciding with Microsoft's transition to a five-category performance rating model. Key evidence includes an internal memo confirming the platform's shutdown timeline, context about Perspectives' 2018 launch as a replacement for an older feedback tool, and commentary from Merrill Fernando, a former Microsoft employee. The article also frames Microsoft's decision within a wider technology sector trend toward accountability and measurable performance outcomes following periods of rapid workforce expansion. The implied conclusion is that formal feedback platforms may create administrative behavior rather than meaningful dialogue, and that Microsoft is repositioning feedback as a cultural practice rather than a process artifact. The article stops short of offering a definitive verdict on whether this approach will be more effective.

Key Insights

1. Microsoft is retiring its Perspectives feedback platform, shifting from structured peer feedback requests to informal, real-time conversational feedback between managers and employees.
2. The retirement coincides with a broader simplification of Microsoft's performance review system into five rating categories, reflecting a trend toward clearer employee differentiation and accountability.
3. The article raises the concern that formal feedback tools may generate obligatory, low-quality responses rather than meaningful input, potentially undermining their original purpose.

Practical Takeaways

- Organizations relying on dedicated peer feedback platforms may observe a gap between tool usage and genuine feedback quality, as formal processes can normalize performative rather than substantive responses.
- Microsoft's experience illustrates that retiring a feedback tool does not necessarily indicate deprioritizing feedback itself, but may reflect a repositioning of feedback as a managerial behavior rather than a system feature.

Critical Analysis

The article presents a coherent narrative about Microsoft's platform retirement but relies heavily on a single internal memo and one attributed quote from a former employee, without independent verification or data on Perspectives' actual usage or effectiveness. The article is incomplete — the quote from Merrill Fernando is cut off mid-sentence, indicating the source text was truncated. The framing that formal tools produce 'administrative' rather than meaningful feedback is presented as a widely accepted concern but is not supported by cited research. The broader industry trend claim is asserted rather than evidenced. The article is journalistic in nature and reflects editorial interpretation of limited primary sources. No counterarguments are presented regarding the value of structured feedback mechanisms, creating a one-sided framing that favors informal approaches.

Organizational Practice

Microsoft operated Perspectives, a peer feedback platform launched in 2018, allowing employees to request input from colleagues, managers, and collaborators during review cycles. Responses were visible to both the employee and their manager. The platform is being retired in favor of informal, real-time conversational feedback. Concurrently, Microsoft is restructuring its performance rating system into five categories to increase differentiation between employees.

Strategic Implications

The retirement of a dedicated internal feedback platform by a major technology company points to a possible inflection point in how structured peer feedback tools are valued at scale. The move toward informal, conversation-based feedback embedded in daily work — rather than periodic tool-mediated requests — reflects a repositioning of feedback as a managerial competency rather than a software-enabled process. The simultaneous introduction of a more differentiated rating scale suggests a dual movement: reducing process complexity while increasing outcome accountability. This pattern, if replicated across the sector, could reduce demand for standalone feedback platforms in favor of feedback features embedded within broader performance or communication tools.

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