

## Project ELFIS – Development and implementation of a company-wide 360° feedback



In 2006, BASF planned to extend their online-based 360° feedback system in terms of content, cross-tier and functions. Based on meta | 360 – meta | five's online tool to handle feedback processes efficiently – the Electronic Leadership Feedback Information System (ELFIS) was developed and implemented in close cooperation. The result was an online platform employed throughout the entire organization and in accordance with BASF's specific features regarding process and project design.

Many work facilitating and efficiency enhancing special functions, as well as the high degree of user-friendliness, led to a high acceptance within the organization. In addition to the projects main objective, examples for the most important ELFIS features for the different user groups are presented.

### The initial situation

BASF SE attaches great importance to long-term and sustainable personnel and organisational development. For instance, BASF has a long history in conducting web-based management feedback sessions at all levels within the context of company-wide personnel devel-

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### The Group (at time of project)

With a workforce of about 105.000 as well as customers and business partners virtually all over the world, BASF is the worlds leading chemical company. As one of the biggest Dax listed companies – with more than 300 group companies – BASF produces in roughly 380 locations across the world. The six main business segments are Chemicals, Plastics, Performance Products, Functional Solutions, Agricultural Solutions as well as Oil & Gas.

### The objective

The purpose of the project was to implement a web-based 360° feedback system comprising several special functions throughout the entire organisation and in compliance with BASF's specific corporate features. Processes were integrated jointly into an online platform, which also depicts administrative, as well as internal project controlling procedures involved.

### The approach

The conception of new and integration of existing feedback processes were carried out jointly via a comprehensive online platform. ELFIS was implemented on the basis of meta | 360 through an iterative process marked by close collaboration.

### The benefit

Each user receives specific access to areas and functionalities of the system relevant to his/her tasks. Initiating individual feedback processes according to specific requirements as well as coping with other administrative tasks can be done in two ways: via the company head-quarters or via the individual group companies. Thus, the optimised internal workflow coupled with the simple handling of the transparent feedback process leads to a high level of acceptance within the entire organisation. Additionally, the flexible and open system architecture of meta | 360 enables a continuous enhancement of ELFIS.

opment measures. Due to the tools positive response, a cross-regional and technical update was agreed on in 2006. This was the starting point of ELFIS, a company-wide “Electronic Leadership Feedback Information System“. meta | 360, the flexible online feedback system developed by meta | five, constituted a high-performance and adaptable basis to depict BASF’s specific requirements.

### Main objectives

Based on the existing 360° Feedback, the goal was to standardize processes. A big challenge associated with this was to consider all specific corporate features – ranging from the HQ to the more than 300 companies operating internationally within the BASF Group. Relevant system and process-related requirements led to the following main objectives:

- | Smooth replacement of the existing feedback system and transferring inventory data to the new system
- | Introducing a new questionnaire for managers from lower to medium management levels
- | Process supplementation in the form of a standardized but in individual cases optional review questioning 8 months after carrying out the 360° feedback
- | Ensuring the current and future international applicability of all processes by continuously adding new languages
- | Optimizing the front end usability for all user groups and guaranteeing worldwide availability
- | Compliance with very high standards concerning data security and anonymity

- | Developing and implementing a comprehensive roles and rights concept to control access purpose rights

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meta | 360<sup>®</sup>

- | Unlimited availability (location and time)
- | Complete online administration
  - Drafting questionnaires
  - Informing and inviting participants
  - Automated monitoring
  - Systematic reminder management
- | Very few system requirements necessary:
  - Internet access with a conventional up to date browser
  - E-mail access
- | High security and anonymity standards
  - SSL encrypted data transfer (128 BIT)
  - Individual access data stored encoded
  - Daily backups (data security)
- | Simple and intuitive handling
- | Optional integration of paper-pencil processes
- | Individual structure, e.g.:
  - Free choice of question types and scaling
  - Specific definition of competencies and accompanying items
  - Adaptation to the corporate color scheme
  - Unrestricted adaption of e-mail texts
  - Available in many different languages
- | Flexible definition of starting-dates for individual feedback processes
- | Immediate availability of reports after ending of the feedback processes

fig. 1 ELFIS-Homepage: Administrator access



### Customizing meta | 360: The ELFIS - Platform

These global objectives were specified in close cooperation between BASF and meta | five and turned into concrete, realizable solutions from an IT- perspective. Adapting existing and devising new processes was a

fig. 2 | Information administration in ELFIS



joint and iterative procedure. New system dialogues and procedures were adapted and optimized in the context of a pilot questioning. A further aspect of the customization was to depict all dialogues according to the Corporate Identity (see fig. 1). The following project specific innovations and special functions of different user accesses serve as an example of how main objectives can be realized:

### Administrators

One of BASF's basic requirements is that all processes can be administered in-house. To meet the demands of the complex organizational structure, individual administrators' access rights are differentiated individually based on a highly detailed roles and rights concept, e.g. according to company, division, region and country. For instance, a project manager only has access to and can steer feedback processes that are in accordance with his/her administrative competency and specific division. Nevertheless, user administration remains highly user-friendly and neither IT-specific expertise nor background knowledge is required.

Default administrative tasks integrated in meta | 360 were extended within the ELFIS system to further facilitate internal workflow processes (data saving, administration and distribution of information; see fig. 2). Checklists can also be created that help depict an administrator's tasks systematically during the feedback process (both within and outside the tool). For controlling purposes (utilization of ELFIS) system statistics can be generated and exported from the tool. These

Excel-format sheets comprise descriptive values (e.g. overall number of feedback providers who participated, average response rate within certain regions, companies or management levels) and are updated on a daily basis. Additionally, the system also provides overall statistics on various criteria (e.g. period, division, and region or management level).

### Feedback recipients

As soon as an administrator has initiated a new feedback process, the feedback recipient automatically receives an invitation e-mail at a given time including log in data to his/her personal homepage in ELFIS. Here, the recipient can choose the language of the questionnaire (12 different languages are possible, e.g. Korean, Japanese or Brazilian Portuguese etc.). Additionally, feedback providers and recipients will also find relevant information, which they can download. This enables a smooth course of the process, but also increases its transparency for all participants.

fig. 3 | External assessment (Chinese version)



When specifying feedback providers, the user can define the degree of the feedback by choosing from up to 13 different groups of feedback providers. In case the pencil-paper option is activated, the feedback recipient can send a hard copy of the questionnaire to selected feedback providers. A review questioning is triggered 8 months later and feedback recipients and providers receive an automatic invitation to this follow-up question-

naire. Its' main purpose is success control, i.e. to monitor the progress of development measures pertaining to leadership, team and communication culture agreed on in a team workshop which has been carried out in the meantime.

### Feedback providers

Feedback providers find access to the assessment they have to accomplish through their ELFIS account (see fig. 3).

### External consultants

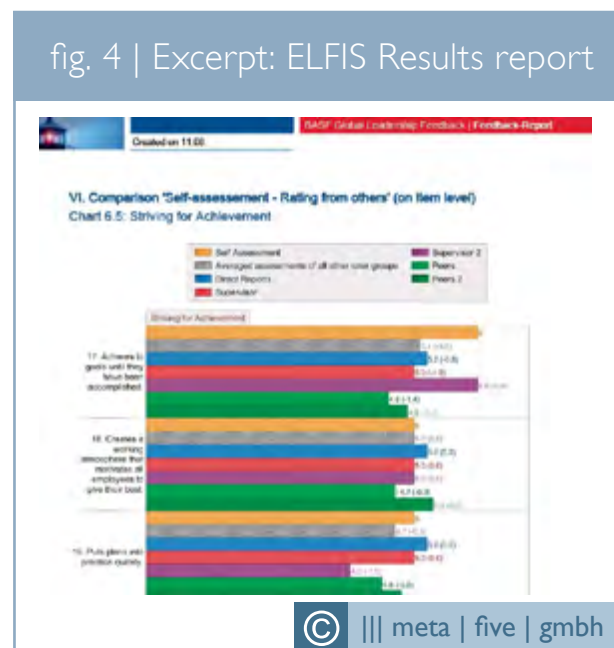
Apart from feedback recipients only external consultants – who support the recipients in revising their feedback – have access to the final reports (see fig. 4). They receive access via specific consultant accounts where they can open the respective recipients report.

### Conclusion

Since beginning the project in mid 2007 to today (spring 2010) more than 1.500 feedback processes have been carried out worldwide via ELFIS with more than 50.000 feedback providers. The considerable advantage of the online platform, its simple usability and facilitating addi-

tional functions are guarantors for the high acceptance by all user groups. Thanks to the tools open architecture, it can be adapted flexibly and at any time to the company's changing internal and external conditions (e.g. adding a further system language).

fig. 4 | Excerpt: ELFIS Results report



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### Contact us:

||| meta | five | gmbh  
human performace consulting  
deutz-mülheimer str. 183  
d | 51063 köln

phone +49 | 221 | 71615 | 0  
info@meta-five.com

### Further informations:

www.meta-five.com

### About us:

meta | five is a business consultancy with a team consisting of psychologists, economists and IT-experts. Our service portfolio ranges from the development and realisation of strategies and processes to the design and implementation of tools for personnel diagnostics and development to analyses of "soft" factors of success and aspects of organisational development. We always execute these tasks taking into account our customers concrete objectives and framework conditions. All trainers and consultants from meta | five have extensive experience from various projects for customers from diverse business areas.