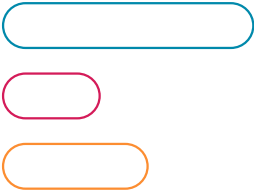betterworks®

# FREQUENT CALIBRATION

Guide to Making Better
Talent Decisions

**A**s the war for talent rages on, calibration is a critically important process used to inform career and leadership development. Unfortunately, because calibration is traditionally process heavy, the exercise is limited to once or twice a year with the upper echelon of leaders. In order to better groom talent and become more agile, organizations must transform their calibration process through a new generation of tools that can simplify and enrich the process. Being "data rich" allows for a lighter process overhead and better talent decisions.

# THE VALUE
# OF CALIBRATION

In order to better manage and optimize the workforce, organizations must understand how employees are performing and the value they bring to their roles. Many organizations rely on calibration to provide this understanding. The goal of a calibration exercise is to ensure that high-performing employees are appropriately compensated and promoted.

During calibration, managers evaluate employee performance and come to an agreement on overall performance appraisal ratings. The practice helps identify high-potential talent and those employees who are ready for the next step in their careers.

*Calibration also increases the visibility of high-potential talent beyond the employees' direct managers and provides a more nuanced view of the workforce since it brings together a variety of perspectives.*
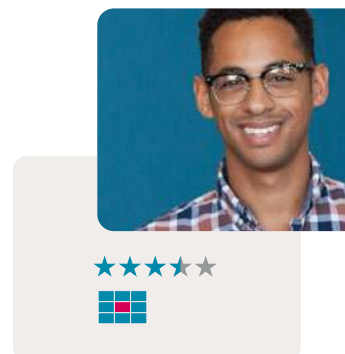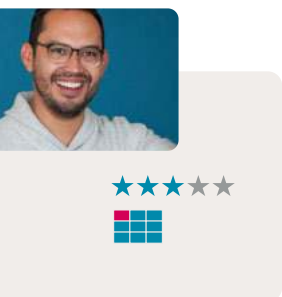
# TOP CHALLENGES WITH CURRENT METHODS OF 9BOX CALIBRATION

The 9box is a common approach to calibration that's intended to help organizations identify their top talent and up-and-comers. Unfortunately, the 9box can create more problems than it solves. The 9box exercise involves defining employee potential and performance, and measuring individuals accordingly. This is difficult to impossible. Managers are expected to bring their own perspectives on employee performance based on feedback sessions, but these perspectives are generally based on light interactions taken out of context. In addition, the discussions in calibration meetings are often fraught with bias. Some managers are easy "graders," others are hard, and still others have biases against certain populations or specific employees. It can be difficult for HR to facilitate these meetings. As a result, the loudest voice and/or highest rank in the discussion often tends to sway the room, and their subjective opinion becomes fact.

Another significant challenge with the 9box approach to calibration is the time and effort required to do it well. 9box calibration is a process-heavy exercise, requiring managers and HR personnel to invest a lot of time into assessing and rating employees.

*While the 9box approach should be a means to an end—the end being the ability to make informed talent decisions—completing the "box" often becomes the objective, versus taking action. And when all is said and done, the value of the exercise is questionable.*

# TAKING A NEW APPROACH TO 9BOX

For 9box calibration to be effective, organizations must take a new approach so that it can deliver its intended value with less overhead. A continuous approach to employee and operational performance involves having frequent, lightweight discussions about employee contributions and performance. Data is a natural byproduct of these conversations. When incorporated into the 9box exercise, this actionable data enhances calibration and reduces the process overhead associated with it, thereby reducing prep time for managers and HR.

*Performance, feedback, and recognition data are automatically available for calibration meetings, thereby helping to reduce bias and keep discussions focused.*

When changes are made to the 9box during a calibration meeting, those changes are tracked so that HR can see what an employee's manager suggested versus where that employee was ultimately placed. HR professionals can easily translate meeting outcomes into goals and conversations/feedback, making it *actionable.*

With process overhead and bias significantly reduced, calibration can finally deliver on its promise. Organizations gain visibility into the workforce and can more easily identify their next-generation leaders. Furthermore, a data-rich approach enables organizations to do calibration more often, even continuously, and bring it to the entire organization—not just the upper levels of leadership.

With the right technology, calibration can be driven by the up-to-date data gathered from a continuous process with insights into goal achievement, development feedback, and recognition, thereby making prepping and running calibration meetings *easier, less biased, and more effective* for the business.

# ABOUT BETTERWORKS

Betterworks is the leading OKR and Continuous Performance Management solution that helps enterprises achieve agility, align their organization and accelerate business and employee growth. Our award-winning software products deliver the critical insights, conversations, feedback and recognition needed to align, engage and develop today's complex workforce. With Betterworks, organizations can ensure alignment, transparency and accountability across the enterprise for sustained competitive advantage.

Based in Redwood City, CA Betterworks has received more than $65M in funding and is used daily by employees and managers from 119 countries in more than 20 languages.

For more information about the latest business and people management strategies and best practices visit our resources library.

### Goals and Alignment

Align teams and individual goals to the organization's top priorities

### Conversations, Feedback, Recognition

Facilitate continuous coaching, skill development goal progress

### Calibration

Up-to-date, real time insights into employee performance
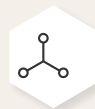
### Insights and Analytics

Actionable program and workforce insights, at a glance

### Engage

Listen to employees at all stages in their lifecycle and take action

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