

33. Cultural exploration in ten minutes

Challenge

Quickly gain a practical insight into the way in which soft controls/behavioral elements of an integrity organizational culture are experienced.

Solution

You can easily gain an insight into how the (organizational) culture is experienced by the people of a team or a department. Recommended group size from 5 to 18 people. For groups of 19 people or more, this short cultural exploration is also possible, but this requires a slightly different approach during the guidance of the discussion (see further for explanation).

Preparation in advance:

Make sure that the soft controls you want to work with in your organization are on the wall in clearly readable format (for example, a poster in A0 format).

In this toolbox we use the soft controls developed by Kaptein and Wallage: clarity, exemplary behaviour, involvement, feasibility, transparency, negotiability, approachability and enforcement. You can also use the behavioural dimensions from DNB's culture house: balanced action, consistent action, negotiability, exemplary behaviour, feasibility, transparency and enforcement. With both, you can print an image in large format, to give some more context to the words.¹

During the meeting:

You can quickly and easily gain a global insight into the functioning of soft controls / behavioralelements (or how employees experience the operation), by giving a team or department a brief explanation of the meaning of the soft controls / behavioral elements.

¹ Institute of Internal Auditors Netherlands, Discussion paper Soft Controls. What are the starting points for an internal auditor? - June 2015.



Then ask the team/department the following questions:

- Consider which soft controls/behavioralelements within your team strengthen the integrity culture.
- Consider which soft controls/behavioralelements within your team hinder the integrity culture.

Many people find it difficult to make a link between the soft controls/elements and an integrity (organizational) culture. If that is the case, you can submit the following questions:

- Consider which soft controls/elements within your team reinforce the strategic objectives.
- Consider which soft controls/elements within your team hinder the strategic objectives.

Then ask if everyone wants to provide the element that reinforces the objectives with a green sticker and the element that hinders it with an orange sticker.

In almost all cases, a 'red thread' can be seen in the elements that are predominantly scored green or orange. By scoring elements with colors, it becomes clear within a few minutes which elements strengthen and which hinder.

Then you ask a number of people who have given the green scores to a soft control / behavioral element that has been scored green by many people what their motivation for this is. As a workshop supervisor, you test this motivation with the other participants. Create the space for a conversation and for different ideas. In the conversation with the group, make it concrete to what extent this element strengthens the integrity of the culture/ strategic objectives.

Repeat this exercise for the element that is predominantly orange scored. Also in the 'orange part' that is made concrete, make sure that this element hinders the integrity of the culture / strategic objectives. Although these 'orange outcomes' lend themselves to naming improvement measures, it is usually not the setting for doing so during the same meeting. You can possibly work this out later in another meeting (possibly with other attendees).

In addition, it is interesting to mention which elements have not or hardly scored (green or orange). Investigate within the team whether this is justified.

When you supervise a cultural exploration with a group of 19 people or more, you can possibly choose to divide people into subgroups or you can opt for an online measurement via, for example, Kahoot, Mentimeter or another online tool.



The title of this tool is 'cultural exploration in 10 minutes'. In 10 minutes you can explain the soft controls / behavioral elements and you can also let the people score. Having the conversation (which is often the most valuable) takes place outside those ten minutes.

Please note, a culture measurement - no matter how small - does raise expectations among participants. In the event that a certain cultural element stands out with orange stickers, you can discuss whether a follow-up is necessary and what people can do themselves to contribute.

After the meeting:

Ensure follow-up. For example, discuss with the manager of the team or department which follow-up steps are needed and offer to help with this.

Actors

- Compliance professional
- Executives
- All employees

Techniques

Leading a conversation on the basis of posters with soft controls / behavioral techniques that can be scored with green and orange stickers (e.g. post-its).

Role Compliance Professional

- Facilitating in (facilitating) leading the conversation and explaining the soft controls / elements.
- A second variant is that you teach managers how to carry out these types of cultural explorations, so that they can take this further.