ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

CONCEPT

#External Transparency

The openness of an organization with regard to sharing information about how it operates. Consider:

•How transparent is your organization about its business model, goals and activities? Are there issues of confidentiality, intellectual property, or sensitive data that could make transparency a challenge?

•How does your organization feel about publicly sharing its successes and failures?

•How does your organization regard sharing information externally when a client or customer is unhappy?

Conservative

Open

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#Internal Transparency

The openness of employees with regard to sharing information within the organization, for example, with members of another team or department. Consider:

•How often do you share information with people outside of your own team? What sort of organizational processes are in place to facilitate information-sharing?

•How well does your organization communicate internally?

•Are stories of successes and failures shared throughout your organization?

Conservative

Open

#Risk Tolerance

The amount of risk that an organization can withstand and/or is willing to take in order to meet strategic objectives. An indication of how sensitive organizations, stakeholders, and people are towards risks. Consider:

•How often does your organization take large risks?

•Are people in your organization rewarded for being risk takers? What if the risk ends in failure?

•When was the last time you worked on a project you considered risky?

Risk Takers

Risk Avoiders

#Process Flexibility

The level to which processes within an organization have been formalized and/or standardized. An organization with flexible processes might allow many pathways to reach a goal, while an organization with rigid processes might have clearly defined steps that need to be followed to achieve certain objectives. Consider:

•Are there required processes and procedures for getting things done in your organization?

•How adaptable and flexible are your organization's systems and staff to change?

•Can people at your organization come up with their own ways to do things?

•Are there many tasks that require multiple sign-offs?

Flexible

Rigid

#Pace

The speed at which an organization operates and makes decisions. Fast-paced organizations generally prioritize high levels of consistent outputs. A slower paced organization will generally allocate more time for decision making and project completion. Consider:

•Do you feel rushed to meet your deadlines?

•Do you think your organization moves faster or slower than other comparable organizations?

•How does your organization respond if there is a delay on a project?

Slow/Moderate

Fast

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#Decision-Making

Level of shared or distributed decision-making or leadership in an organization. Concentrated decision making involves very few people whereas distributed decision making involves the opinions of many. Consider:

•Are there many decisions that require multiple people to agree and sign off?

•Does your organization try to make decisions by consensus of a large group, or are most big decisions made by one person or a small team?

•How often does the average person in your organization get to participate in strategic decision-making?

Centralized

Distributed

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#Staff Mobility

The frequency with which any given employee will change positions within or outside of their current organization. For the purposes of this exercise, think of changes in job/role every 1-2 years as frequent. Consider:

•Have many people on your team changed roles/jobs in the past year?

•How often do new people join your organization? Your team?

•How do you ensure continuity and bridge knowledge and implementation gaps when team shifts occur?

Frequent Turnover

Long-Term Employees

#Working Style

The amount and type of interaction that takes place between employees as they complete work. Consider:

•How often do you collaborate with other people on your team or other teams?

•Are tasks usually assigned to individuals or to teams?

•Do you spend a lot of time working individually?

Autonomous

Team-Focused

#Partnership Experience

How much experience the organization has in engaging in partnerships, particularly if those partnerships have aimed to achieve similar objectives to the one currently being considered. Consider:

• Has your organization engaged in impact partnerships before?

  ○ If yes, were those partnerships similar to this one, either in goal or in type of partner?

  ○ If no, why do you think your organization has not engaged in similar partnerships in the past?

• In the past, has your organization shown too little, or too much, adaptation to the culture of your partners – and what were the consequences?

**Experienced**

Inexperienced

#Communication Style

The way people express themselves when engaging with each other and with others outside of the organization, both formally and informally. Consider:
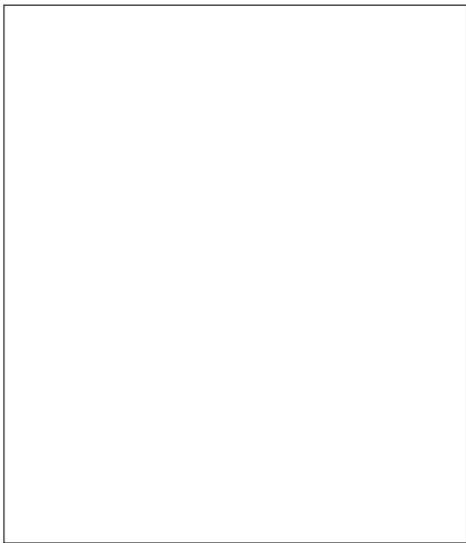
•Do you generally feel able to say what you're thinking at work, or do you keep it to yourself?

•How would you handle a situation where you disagree with a colleague?

•When was the last time you received direct feedback from someone at work?

Assertive

Indirect

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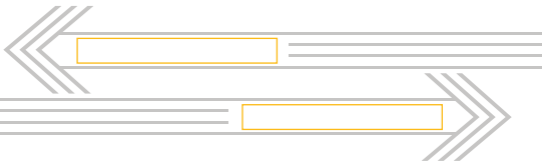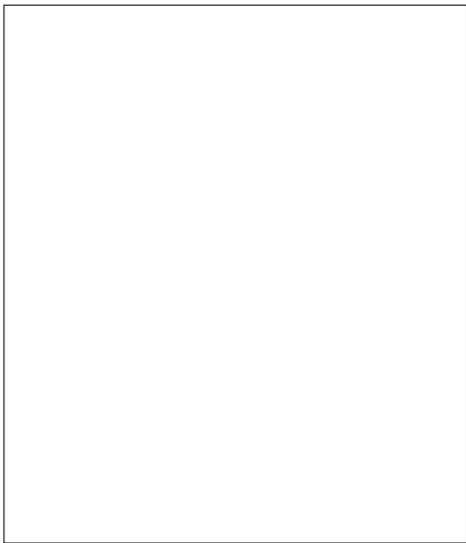
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

CASE STUDY

#External Transparency

In 2012, Logistimo, a supply chain logistics platform, partnered with the Indian Government and a local NGO to set up an online, real-time vaccine logistics management system. A number of other partners such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, GAVI, and UNDP financed and supported the effort. As operations grew, so did the interest in the sizable datasets being collected by Logistimo. UNDP, the gatekeeper of the data, initially placed limits on sharing it. UNDP had legitimate grounds for concern due to the sensitive nature of the information collected on immunization records and coverage. Other partners, however, demanded more transparency, arguing that restricting data-sharing could compromise key learning around health outcomes. After external pressure increased, UNDP eventually allowed for limited release of the data. This partnership compromise resulted in delivering a much-needed evidence base to strengthen the vaccine delivery value chain in India.

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#Internal Transparency

When social venture **X** partnered with **Y** multinational to get low-cost health products into hospitals and clinics in India, they found themselves maintaining and attempting to coordinate complex relationships with multiple **Y** teams in the US and in India. To address this challenge, **X** worked to simplify the relationship and engage a more appropriate business unit within the large corporation. Communication flows improved when **X** senior leadership began to engage with **Y**'s new business initiatives team. This business unit was appropriately sized, it was focused on new growth initiatives, and it shared a similar go-getter culture with the start-up.

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#Risk Tolerance

Tulaa is a mobile-based social venture that helps smallholder farmers in Africa access affordable financing, quality agricultural inputs, and markets. Tulaa acts as a virtual marketplace – it does not provide the goods and services itself but instead partners with other providers who do so on its mobile platform. However, as a young and untested organization, providers were reluctant to take the risk and try Tulaa's service. In an effort to attract the more risk-averse companies and financial service providers to its platform, Tulaa put its risk-embracing, learning culture to work. In contrast to other providers that often charged subscription fees, Tulaa structured its business model around commissions, which meant that their business did not grow if their partners did not make a profit. In this partnership, coordinated action became possible because Tulaa absorbed the biggest risks and laid the groundwork to prove the business case and build trust.

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#Process Flexibility

When social venture **X** partnered with **Y** to get their low-cost health products into hospitals and clinics in India, they were happy to have a well-established corporate partner on board to disseminate their products. Early into the partnership, however, **X** struggled to understand the corporation's complex internal processes and was not always sure who the final **Y** decision-maker was. **X**'s solution was to invest in finding a project champion within a smaller business unit and cultivate a strong relationship with this individual and the new team. **X** found that although smaller units do not always provide the greatest access to markets up front, they can ensure more process flexibility, which matters a lot when getting a new partnership relationship off the ground.

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#Pace

Tulaa, a mobile-based venture, and Musoni, a cashless microfinance bank, partnered to extend loans to rural smallholder farmers in Kenya. With income only coming in once or twice a year after harvest, the financing needs of smallholder farmers are both seasonal and highly time-sensitive. Tulaa's business model is driven by its ability to deliver a good customer user experience, so the social startup aims to make all transactions on its virtual marketplace platform quick and easy for low-income farmers. Musoni in contrast, as a large financial institution, is generally cautious and conservative when vetting potential loans, resulting in a slow loan approval process. To address this issue, the two partners had to work together to reach a common solution and serve farmers at a pace that was acceptable to both.

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#Staff Mobility

Personnel changes can add complexity when coordinating with a partner, particularly when a person key to the partnership moves roles or jobs. Social venture **X** faced this challenge in their partnership with **Y** corporation with which it partnered to distribute low-cost health products in India. To manage this challenge, **X** planned for personnel churn from the beginning, and worked to build relationships with new people quickly. In addition, **X** worked to help the new **Y** employees gain access to institutional learning by referring them to older staff in their organization.

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#Partnership Experience

In 2012, the European health, nutrition, and materials company **X** partnered with the international NGO **Y** and social venture to increase consumption of nutritionally improved foods by people at risk of nutritional deficiencies in Rwanda. The corporation had a lot of experience partnering as it had previously worked with the Government of Rwanda, the World Food Programme, CDC Group, IFC, and FMO (Dutch Development Bank). This experience motivated **X** to invest more time in their search for the right partner. Further, it understood from past partnership experience that significant time would be needed to get to know and onboard new partners, so it agreed to a two-year trial period with a formal review following the pilot.

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

DIALOGUE

#External Transparency

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•How will your respective organizational cultures and mandates regarding transparency influence this partnership?

•What level of transparency do you think is needed for a successful partnership in regard to 1) one another, 2) external stakeholders, and 3) the general public?

•How will you deal with anticipated challenges to achieving your mutually desired level of transparency in the partnership? How will you mitigate disagreement?

#Internal Transparency

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your respective cultures regarding information flows will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•What level of internal transparency do you think is needed for a successful partnership? Individual? Collective?

•How will you work together to achieve the desired level of coordination given your respective organizational cultures?

#Risk Tolerance

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Are your appetites for risk similar? If not, how will differing approaches to risk-taking, including planned activities and joint goals, influence the partnership?

•What level of risk-taking is needed to meet partnership goals? How will risk be shared or mitigated?

•How will you work collectively to achieve the desired level of risk tolerance for the partnership given your respective organizational cultures? When possible, how can you contribute to lowering the risk for your partner(s)?

#Process Flexibility

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your organization's culture regarding process flexibility will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•What level of process flexibility do you think is needed for a successful partnership?

•How will you work together to achieve the desired level of process flexibility for the partnership given your respective organizational cultures?

#Pace

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your respective cultures' norms for pace of work will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)?

•What pace of work do you think is needed to meet key partnership milestones?

•How will you work collectively to achieve the desired pace of decision making, implementation, and program delivery given your respective organizational cultures?

#Decision-Making

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your organization's culture regarding decision making will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•What style of decision making do you think is needed for a successful partnership?

•How will you work collectively to achieve the desired style of decision making for the partnership given your respective organizational cultures?

#Staff Mobility

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your organization's culture regarding staff mobility or turnover will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•Are you aware of any planned job/role changes for staff key to this partnership?

•What (if any) plans might you need to put in place to prepare for future staff changes?

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#Working Style

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your organization's culture regarding working style will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•What working style do you think is needed for a successful partnership?

•How will you work together to achieve the desired working style for the partnership given your respective organizational cultures?

#Partnership Experience

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your organization's past partnership experience, or lack thereof, will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•What lessons learned from past partnerships might be relevant here?

•How might you help set expectations for a partner with more or less partnering experience than you have?

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#Communication Style

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think your communication style will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•What communication style do you think is needed for a successful partnership?

•How will you work collectively to achieve the desired communication style for the partnership?

#Blank

Please discuss with your partner(s):

•Do you think this key organizational characteristic will influence this partnership (either positively or negatively)? If yes, how?

•Where could you be more flexible in the way you work with each other without disrupting core values or systems?

•How will you work together to achieve the desired level of coordination for the partnership given your respective organizational cultures? What adjustments need to be made?