Organizational Culture

Training Manual for Political Parties

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| **Title of the training** | Organizational Culture for Political Parties |
| **Targeted Trainees** | * Party Leadership (Members of Presidency / Executive Board, Secretary General) * Regional elected officials * Regional party officials * National and regional staff members * Representatives of Women and Youth Forums |
| **The rationale for the training** | Political parties can easily overlook building an organizational culture characterized by integrity during a hectic electoral calendar. Parties that neglect to develop a robust organizational culture can become dysfunctional over time, leading to lower election results and high turnover rates among elected officials and staff. Most importantly, parties that do not exhibit integrity in practice will weaken the trust in political parties and other political institutions in the county.  It is, therefore, essential for political parties to develop the capacity how to identify harmful cultural practices and strategies for changing these. This training aims to provide insight into organizational cultural models and best practices, identify organizational cultural gains and gaps within individual parties, and provide tools for developing strategies for improving the culture within one's own party. |
| **Training Outcomes** | * Knowledge of organizational culture and how it relates to political integrity is improved * Party organizational culture mapped out * Strategy to improve the party's organizational culture created |
| **Training Topics** | * What is Organizational Culture, and why is it important for political parties? * Models for Organizational Culture * Political Party Case Studies * Change Management and Organizational Culture |
| **Duration** | 4 - 4,5 hours |
| **Training Methods** | Presentations, Brainstorming, Breakout Groups, Guided Teaching, Case Studies |
| **Resources Needed** | PowerPoint Presentation and Projector, Flip Chart, Printed Annex A4 papers |

**TRAINING AGENDA**

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| **Unit** | **Time** | **Agenda Item** | **Resources** |
| 1 | 20 min. | **Introduction and expectations for today's session** | Lead Trainer |
| 2 | 60 min. | **What is Organizational Culture, and why is it essential for our party?**   * Define the concept and how it is related to political integrity * Introduction to Organization Culture models for political parties * 2-3 breakout groups to discuss gaps/gains in the current organizational culture | PPT presentation or Flip Chart  A4 handouts |
| 3 | 20 min. | **Breakout groups present key conclusions from their discussions**   * Note the main successes and failures |  |
|  | 20 min. | **Coffee Break** | Refreshments |
| 4 | 30 min. | **Organizational Culture Case Study**   * Presentation of a relevant case from a political party * Guided discussion teaching the main lessons learned from this case | PPT presentation or Flip Chart |
| 5 | 30 min. | **Managing Organizational Culture**   * Presentation of models to change organizational culture in political parties | A4 handouts with summaries |
| 6 | 45 min. | **Exercise: Improving Party Culture**   * Breakout groups develop proposals for the party to adopt * Each group presents a proposal and asks for constructive feedback | A4 Template for proposal |
| 7 | 15 min. | **Conclusions and way forward**   * Summarize the main learning points from the day, and share how the party will follow up the proposals |  |

**Unit 1. Introduction and expectations for today's session**

*The trainer welcomes the participants and introduces themselves. Next, the participants should introduce themselves by stating their name, position in the party, and what they think is a positive aspect of their party's organizational culture.*

*Kick-off by answering this yourself. Keep the pace of responses fast-moving. This exercise should take about 15 minutes, depending on the group size. Note the main aspects of the responses and save these for later.*

**Unit 2. What is Organizational Culture, and why is it essential for our party?**

*Trainer leads a presentation using a PowerPoint or Flip Chart. The presentation should not exceed 45 minutes.*

Any party that wishes to achieve good electoral results and political influence should have a party culture that builds accountability and trust internally and externally. Developing a positive organizational culture is thus a form of organizational development. In addition, good party culture is a great marketing tool for any political party - beyond the party's policies. If the party is seen as having high integrity to outsiders, then the threshold is lower to vote for the party.

A good party culture promotes recruitment and contributes to the members thriving and remaining in the party over time. Moreover, it will promote efficiency through inclusive discussions that lead to broad support for part decisions. Finally, it prevents and reduces the time spent on conflict management and internal disputes and motivates members to give their valuable time to the party throughout the electoral cycle.

In theory, Organizational Culture is the basic pattern of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which are considered the correct way of thinking and acting on problems and opportunities facing an organization. Organizational Culture is "*The way we do things around here.*"

Organizational Culture is most easily understood with the classic Iceberg Diagram, with three levels: **(1)** **Artifacts** are the top of the iceberg: what we can see; **(2) Values** are just below the water: what we can vaguely see; and **(3) Underlying assumptions**: these are invisible from the outside.

**Artifacts** are the visual symbols of an organization. They are what people outside associate with your political party. This might be your party logo or colors, the language or slogans your party is known for, or specific rituals that some may associate with your party, like a party event or celebration at the end of a legislative session.

**In terms of Organizational Culture, a party defines valu**es as right and wrong – they are measures of moral judgment. Values are highly linked with norms of behavior within the party and by party officials more generally. Simply put, these are the "unwritten rules of action." For a political party, values should be underpinned by the political ideology that policies are built upon.

**Underlying Assumptions** are those beliefs we have about how the world works. We often take these for granted, and they provide the basis for what we perceive and how we think. Underlying assumptions are often related to human nature, human activity, reality, truth, and existential questions. For political parties, this is often highly linked to our political ideology. For example, does our political ideology place more emphasis on individualism or collectivism? These ideological assumptions may very well be how the party leadership structures the organization and how they assume staff or party officials will act.

**Other factors shaping organizational culture in political parties**

**Cultural Dimensions:** Political parties are inevitably influenced by the prevailing local culture in their county. Awareness of the cultural dimensions that shape political party behavior will help parties be aware of the expectations placed upon them by the citizens and how interactions with other parties are likely to be conducted. Investigating Hofstede's theory on [Cultural Dimensions](https://www.simplypsychology.org/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory.html) may be an exciting exercise to supplement the analysis of an organization's culture.

**Organizational Structures:** The type of structures political parties have can significantly impact internal communication routines, who receive essential information, and when. Or how geographical units are organized; what kind of regional representation is there in vital party organs? Very often, parties attempting to change their organizational culture will start by changing their internal structures. However, while formal structures play a significant role, informal systems often show how decisions are made within political parties.

**Power and Control Systems:** Organizational Culture can be used to control people and resources within the political party. This may be through finances, how rewards are distributed, or how people are measured for success or failure. Understanding these systems and those people who have the greatest influence on decisions made within the party is important if a party sees a change in its organizational culture. This is because the control systems must be aligned with any change objectives the party may have.

**Organizational Culture and Political Integrity**

Political parties are one of the key linkages between citizens and government. If trust in political parties is weak, the legitimacy of the political system as a whole can be questioned. Moreover, political parties themselves contribute to shaping the political context by their actions or inactions. For this reason, political parties must strive to achieve an organizational culture that promotes integrity and strengthens citizens' trust in the political system.

In general, integrity for political parties has three dimensions: (**1) the behavior of those who are members, elected officials, or staff within the party, (2) how the party responds to misconduct, and (3) how party leadership behaves.**

**Political Party Behavior**

* Code of conduct: sometimes, politicians speak or act in a way that is not in line with the party values. In cases like this, does the political party have a code of conduct that regulates the behavior of party officials?
* Equal opportunity: are there equal opportunities for advancement within the political party — either as candidates or party personnel — between women and men, regardless of age?
* Communication: does the party share relevant information with the public transparently? Does party leadership openly share information with the appropriate party structures, or is information kept for only a select few?

**Response to Misconduct**

Because political parties are made up of humans, mistakes or unfortunate incidents will inevitably happen. How the party responds during these times shows whether they have an organizational culture that shows integrity. For example, when someone experiences or finds out about a critical issue within the party – criminal offenses, corruption, gross misuse overpower – it is important that the **Whistle Blower** will be protected and feel safe to tell about what they have seen. Therefore, political parties need to develop **procedures** for handling Whistle Blowers and ensure that everyone in the party is aware of them.

How political parties handle internal disputes will also tell the outside world about your organizational culture. For example, if internal power struggles are fought out in the media, or if a disgruntled party member chooses to take another party member to court, the public will lose confidence in the party and their chances of success during the next elections will increase become weakened. A political party should therefore have **clear rules and procedures for handling internal disputes that may arise during nomination** proceedings or other important party processes.

**Leadership Behavior**

Leadership in political parties, as in other organizations, requires strong **ethical reflection** over decisions that are made. Leaders, therefore, have a special responsibility to be aware of the power imbalance between themselves and others within the same organization.

Leadership is always responsible for ensuring that the entire organization is aware of the ethical standard that the party requires. To realize this, the party leadership must systematically provide **information, raise awareness** and conduct other p**reventative measures** in the organization.

*The trainer divides participants into 2-3 small groups depending on how many participants are present. Give each group 20 minutes to discuss the following:*

*Group 1 – Describe the organizational culture of your party when it comes to Political Party Behavior (Codes of Conduct, Equal Opportunity, and Communication). Focus on the current gaps and gains. Please draw the scheme on a flip chart.*

*Group 2 – Describe the organizational culture of your party when it comes to Responding to Misconduct (dispute resolution, whistle-blowing, etc.). Focus on the current gaps and gains. Please draw the scheme on a flip chart.*

*Group 3 – Describe the organizational culture of your party when it comes to the behavior of party leadership (Accountability, attention to asymmetry, providing information, awareness, and prevention). Focus on the current gaps and gains. Please draw the scheme on a flip chart.*

**Unit 3. Exercise: presentations of key conclusions from group discussions**

*Take 20 minutes and invite representatives of small groups to present their findings in a plenary. The trainer should encourage discussion after each presentation, focusing on the following questions:*

* *Do you believe that something is missing here?*
* *Anything to add?*

**Unit 4. Case Study: Organizational Culture in a Political Party**

*The lead trainer should find information about a situation (preferably not from one's own party) related to a critical integrity issue and how it was handled in a political party. This can be any form of misconduct; financial, ethical, sexual, etc.*

*Share the following information with the trainees, and be sure to have a PowerPoint or a handout with the details:*

* *The type of misconduct in the case*
* *The actors involved*
* *The sequence of events leading to the misconduct*

*Next, let the trainees imagine they are the party's secretary general in the case. In a group discussion, ask participants to share how they would manage such a case happening. Ask them to focus on the rationale behind their decision-making.*

*When several participants have shared their perspectives, share what actually happened with that party. Then, focus on what we learned from this case and what it says about organizational culture. Critical questions for reflection might be:*

* *Did the party adapt to bad circumstances rather than clarify the expectations of a party showing integrity?*
* *Did party loyalty and a mistaken belief in "we know what is best for our people" stand in the way of changing the culture?*
* *What is the difference between political parties and other places of work?*
* *Were routines, systems, and procedures in place to take over when humans fail?*

**Unit 5. Managing Organizational Culture in Political Parties**

*This section contains a simple model for embarking on changing the organizational culture of a political party. Present this model to the group with a PowerPoint presentation and ask for feedback about if this model would work in the political party.*

**Define Party Values**

A political party likely has a set of values, principles, or underlying ideology on which they build their policies. But these alone may not suffice to create the internal culture you want to have among party staff, elected officials, and members. Values like "*we trust in one another*" or "*we celebrate each other's victories*" are values that organizations can work towards; however, these are unlikely to have come from a political ideology. Therefore, a process of defining the core values and principles for persons within the party organization should be the starting point of changing the party culture. This process should also consider any codes of conduct or guidelines in the party.

**Creating a Party Culture Document**

Political party culture is unwritten - the norms found within the party. There is nevertheless a benefit in documenting the party culture, as there will be many different aspects to cover. It may be difficult to give precise descriptions of the desired culture, and in the end, it is about individuals in the party accepting this form of latent competence.

A party culture document can be composed of:

* Definition of the party's culture
* Examples of good organizational culture
* Description of party values
* Leadership roles
* Ethical guidelines and codes of conduct
* Whistle-blowing routines

**Training programs**

Creating awareness throughout the entire party structure is one of the main ways a party can embark on changing culture internally. One of the best ways to create awareness within a party is to set up a structured training program that gives new and old members knowledge about how to create a good party culture.

Changing party culture is often about changing the behavior of the individuals or groups of individuals within the party. Therefore, developing training programs about understanding the behavioral norms (the unwritten rules) that need change is usually an excellent place to start. After identifying behavioral norms that need change, party members can ask themselves how other groups in the party might perceive this change.

For example, if the party has a culture of excluding youth from decision-making processes, what is the perspective of traditional elders on accepting and encouraging youth as political leaders? What do traditional elders stand to gain or lose from a change in this area? What would they need to learn to make this change happen? What values and deeply held beliefs are driving them?

**Party Leadership**

Party leadership has a special responsibility; they need to set the agenda for changing the party culture, and their behavior needs to reflect the desired culture. Local, regional, and central party leadership should use common sense, show integrity, and handle critical issues immediately. Ultimately, creating a good party culture that shows integrity starts with the party leadership. It is unlikely to succeed if it is not led and owned by the highest levels of the political party.

**Unit 6. Exercise: Improving Party Culture**

*The trainer divides participants into 2-3 small groups depending on how many participants are present. Give each group 20-30 minutes to develop the following:*

*Group 1 – Define the party values they want to see present within your party as relevant to internal party culture—at least three values, not more than six. The values should be statements, not paragraphs.*

*Group 2 – Develop examples of good party culture that are relevant for your party. To show participants what types of examples may be relevant you can share the following:*

* *Having no internal party battles or personal conflicts.*
* *Never speak negatively about party colleagues in public*
* *Be cooperative and willing to find solutions with other political parties*
* *Talk about our own political solutions, rather than criticizing other politicians or parties*
* *Be trustworthy*

*If a 3rd group is needed, ask them to define 3 values, and the first group to define 3 values.*

***When all groups have finished, ask them to share the results with the entire group. Be sure to document the results.***

**Unit 7: Conclusions and the way forward**

*When concluding the session, try to summarize the main points from the day. Be sure to tell participants about how their input will be used in developing a party culture document that will be adopted by the party. Finally, answer any questions participants may have about the training or future events before concluding.*