

A manager's process guide to the Culture Check dialogue tool

Culture Check is a dialogue tool that can help you start a productive conversation in your unit about your current and desired workplace culture. The aim of this conversation is to reach a shared understanding so that you and your team can decide on measures to support the professional culture that's right for you. Culture Check is a research-based questionnaire that reveals aspects of a workplace culture based on the factors "stability", "relationships", "development" and "results". These factors are explained further in the tool.

Recommended time use and process overview:

- **10-minute introduction to the tool and its objective during a meeting 1-2 weeks before the actual dialogue**
In this meeting, introduce Culture Check and the fact that it aims to zoom in on workplace culture. Follow this up with an email containing a link to Culture Check and instructions on what the participants need to do before the joint dialogue and what you expect to get out of the joint dialogue.
- **15-minute individual preparation before the joint process**
Participants complete the questionnaire individually.
- **60-minute joint process at a meeting**
In this meeting, focus on the overall team picture of your workplace culture that has emerged and how you can work with it.

Clarifying the process – before you meet

- **Why are you using Culture Check?**
*What will it be used for – and what do you hope to gain by using it?
Does your current work culture support or hinder your core tasks, strategy and future?
You must be very clear about this and clear in your communication in the unit.
If there are obvious conflicts in your unit, you should address these before you use Culture Check.*
- **When and how will you continue to work on your workplace culture after Culture Check?**
Do you already have an idea or a plan that you can share? Is Culture Check part of another initiative, for example translating strategy into practice or focusing on local issues (such as recruitment, well-being, diversity and equality, or workplace assessment)? The initiative in question should be viewed as meaningful and defined – not an "eternal project", even though working on work culture is never a quick fix.
- **Will you hold a virtual, in-person or hybrid meeting?**
To achieve a good dialogue, it is best to hold your meeting in person. But you can also have a virtual or hybrid meeting, especially if the participants are used to this format and have had good experiences with virtual dialogue processes.
- **Should the participants complete the questionnaire before or during the meeting?**
*It is better if the participants complete the Culture Check questionnaire before the meeting.
This way, they will begin to think about work culture earlier and kick start the process.*

- **Will you create/draw the overall team picture on the Culture Check wheel in advance?**
Should the participants send their scores to you in advance, or will you collect this information at the meeting?

The joint dialogue meeting

It is possible to conduct the joint process in one hour. But you can also divide the process into two meetings. In the first meeting, you can **draw up and examine the overall picture of your workplace culture** and explore the difference between the current and the desired culture with reference to your unit's core tasks, strategy and future (questions 1 and 2 in Culture Check). In the second meeting (around a week later), you can **decide on specific cultural features and measures/experiments** to promote your desired work culture with reference to your unit's core tasks, strategy and future (questions 3 and 4 in Culture Check).

5 steps for the meeting

Step 1: Welcome the participants and present the meeting objective (2 minutes)

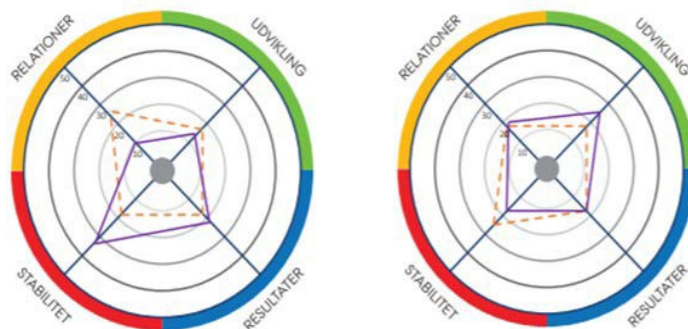
Step 2: If relevant, participants submit their scores/complete the questionnaire. Give instructions for submitting scores and allow 15 minutes for participants to complete the questionnaire (15-20 minutes extra). Or go directly to Step 3.

Step 3: Introduce the agenda any ground rules for the meeting (3 minutes)

Examples of good ground rules: *We respect each other's views, listen in order to understand, and say what needs to be said in this room and not elsewhere.*

Step 4: Complete the dialogue (55 minutes):

- A) Show the overall team picture of your unit's workplace culture on the Culture Check wheel (5 minutes). You can either show the joint scores for the current and the desired culture as averages, i.e. as two shapes on one circle. *See the examples below (the purple line shows the current culture and the orange dashed line shows the desired culture).*



Or you can show all the results in the form of dots that display individual scores. If you have decided that the participants should add their scores to the joint Culture Check wheel during the meeting itself, allow approx. 10 minutes for this.

- B) Ask all the participants to reflect individually on the overall team picture that has emerged (2

minutes):

- Do you think the overall picture of your workplace culture/the shapes on the Culture Check circle match your team's core tasks?
 - What are the similarities and differences between the participants' individual shapes and the overall shape?
- C) Participants are divided into groups of 4-5 people (min. 10 minutes). The groups discuss the questions you have selected, for example Culture Check's joint dialogue questions 1 and 2:
1. *Where is there the most and the least difference in the distribution of scores? What do we think about our different ways of viewing and understanding our workplace culture?*
 2. *What is the biggest difference between our current culture and our desired culture?*
- D) Presentations in plenum, in which each group reports on the most important points (10 minutes). Divide the speaking time equally between the groups. The groups' comments can be collected on a physical or digital poster. If you are conducting the process over two meetings, it will be necessary to document this stage in order to ensure a successful second meeting.
- E) Briefly introduce the context in which your workplace culture should be viewed (2 minutes) – take a few minutes to summarise your core tasks and strategy/future before the participants return to their groups. Explain that the next stage is forward looking and action oriented.
- F) The groups work on question 3 in Culture Check (5 minutes):
3. *What is the most important (and first) cultural feature we need to work on in order to get closer to our desired culture? Does this involve reducing, increasing, maintaining, initiating or stopping a certain type of behaviour?*
- G) Presentations in plenum, in which each group talks about the most important points. Divide the speaking time equally between the groups.
- H) Joint dialogue in plenum (5 minutes): Based on what you have heard each other say and your view of the unit's core tasks and strategy/future: What is the most obvious course of action? Which factor or cultural feature can we decide to work on? If relevant, supplement this with your own preferences and reflections as a manager.
- I) Introduce the final group task: Now we need to work on specific proposals or experiments in order to promote our desired work culture. Group work (5 minutes):
4. *How should we work on this in practice, and what can managers and employees do individually? How can we follow up on and hold each other to our agreements?*
(Ideas can be noted on post its/Mentimeter/Google Docs)
- J) Joint presentation and dialogue (10 minutes). The groups take turns to present their ideas. Divide the speaking time equally between the groups. It is only once all the groups have presented their ideas that you can give constructive and appreciative feedback.
- K) What have you decided to get started on? (5 minutes) Select 1 or (max) 2 initiatives to begin with. It could be a good idea to adopt an experimental approach, whereby you try something for a short period and keep an eye on the effects. Remember: "less is more" – it's best to start with a small and manageable initiative. Ideally, you should conclude this step with specific action points that can be carried out immediately.

Step 5: Wrap-up (3 minutes). Thank everyone for their efforts and encourage everyone to participate actively in the experiment. It is important to follow up on your agreements/experiments, so that the Culture Check process and the work you are doing on your workplace culture is a visible part of your everyday professional lives.

Possible ways to vary the dialogue

Discuss different questions: Perhaps there are other questions more relevant for you to discuss than the four proposed above. For example, perhaps you are facing a change in tasks or organisational structure and would like to focus on the obvious ways this will change your culture or collaboration.

Allow extra time: It could be a good idea to allow extra time, especially in parts H) and K)

Conduct the whole process as a joint dialogue: You could discuss all the questions in plenum (after the participants have considered them individually for two minutes). This creates an open dialogue, but it requires that the manager ensures that everybody has his/her say – and perhaps asks to hear from those who do not volunteer their opinion. This method is suitable for smaller groups.

Divide the process over more meetings: If you wish to go into depth with the dialogue, it is possible to extend it over 2-3 meetings, though this requires a coherent meeting schedule.