

TOOL DESCRIPTION

Our Secret Rules



Our Secret Rules offers a playful and easy way to explore organizational culture, inviting participants to make unwritten rules visible.





The organizational culture is based on unwritten laws that govern our behavior. For this reason, when intending to foster cultural change, a cultural diagnosis is recommended. The goal of performing this cultural diagnosis is to reveal relevant behavior patterns, mindsets and basic assumptions and to initiate a good dialogue between important stakeholders (top management, middle management, employees and partners). In this process, several tools can be applied to explore culture. Drawing Organizational Culture, Our Secret Rules or Cultural Probing are some of the most frequently used ones (see Tool Descriptions).

The Secret Rules tool can be used to create a joint understanding of culture and to identify beneficial and hindering cultural aspects. Still, the tool must be always seen as a starting point and a basis for agreeing on cultural development action areas, as well as for drafting specific cultural interventions.

The main takeaway points can be also presented in the form of sketches that display the respective situations.

Duration 45–60 min	Participants 5–25 people	Facilitation pens, posters
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Our Secret Rules | Process

Preparation 10 min 	Individual work 10 min 	Group work 15–20 min 	Evaluation 20–60 min 
<p>Before applying this tool, we recommend preparing participants to establish a joined understanding of culture. This can be done, on the one hand, by providing an input on the topic or on other by encouraging a short dialogue on this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Question of the exchange: “What is culture and how can it be influenced?”• Exercise: Dialogue on the topic in trios based on positive feedback or scepticism.	<p>After establishing a joint understanding of culture, the participants are first asked to reflect individually on the following task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Let’s say you meet a friend for coffee who is interested in joining your organization: What would you tell them about how to behave so that they don’t stand out and behave like everyone else at our company?”• Participants are asked to make a list of 3–5 dos and 3–5 don’ts they would recommend to the friend.	<p>Next, participants are asked to discuss their findings in groups of 2–3 people. The main discussion points in the small groups are documented on a flipchart.</p>	<p>At the end of the discussion period, an evaluation takes place in the plenary session: All groups are asked to present their main findings. As part of this process, similarities and differences are written down by the moderator.</p> <p>Optionally: The results are presented in the form of, for example, sketches of concrete situations in which undesirable and desirable behavior is displayed.</p>