CREDIBILITY CHECK

Purpose

This tool performs a check of how major stakeholders perceive the credibility of the organisation.

Use and description

It is quick and easy to use, and can be used to create overview or start discussion. It is a relatively easy way of gaining input on how different stakeholders perceive an organisation, and gives a good basis on which to decide whether it is important to address as part of organisational development.

⏱ Time

The accountability structure exercise can be used without a lot of preparation. Performing it will take minimum one hour, and to be thorough, can take up to three hours or more, depending on the number of participants and whether group work might be involved.

Resources

The exercise can easily be performed with the personnel available – for example a board or secretariat. That requires describing how the various bodies and personnel are involved, and decide self-critically whether it can be improved. The exercise will be improved by directly involving others, to get other perspectives directly represented in the analysis.
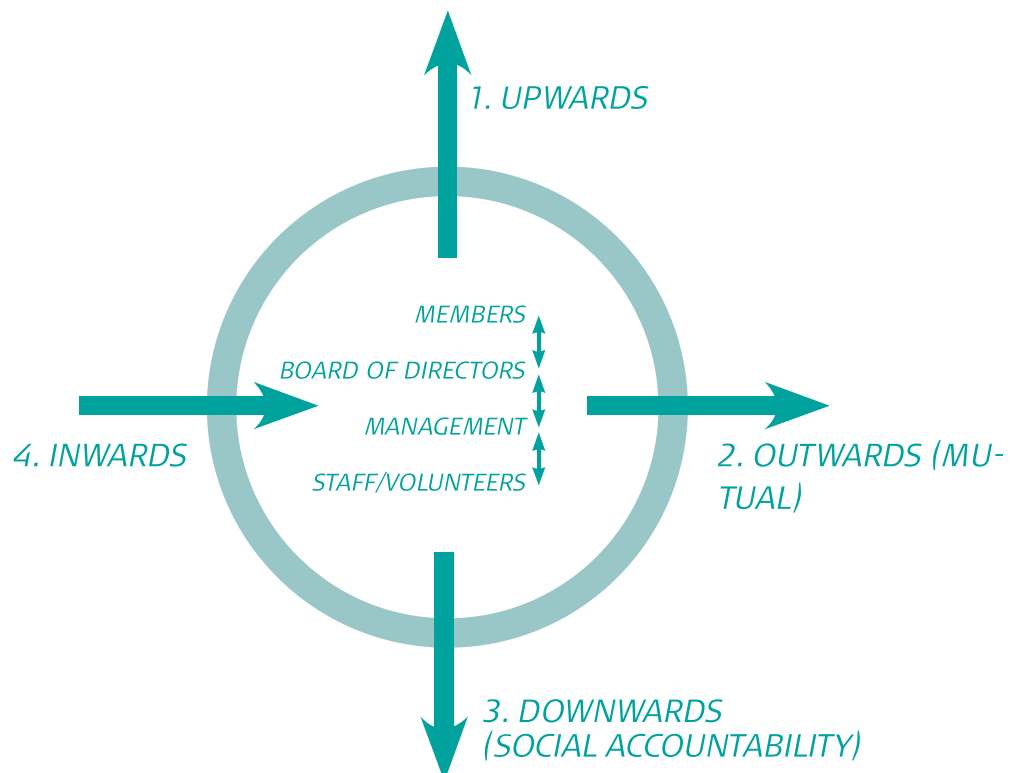
Procedure

Step 1. Explanation of exercise/figure

Draw and explain the figure. What the exercise will focus on must be made plain. E.g., how the organisation works at being credible in relation to various bodies.

Step 2. Put in the relevant bodies

Place the key bodies in relation to the organisation on the axes upwards - downwards and outwards - inwards (see illustration). Involve the participants in this part of the exercise and define who are the central bodies. The bodies should be placed according to affiliation - see the explanation below.

• Downwards. Bodies which expect services, inclusion or to be represented. Often described as target groups or participants.

• Inwards. Within the organisation. Members, staff, the board etc.

• Outward. Partners, other organisations, networks and resource personnel.

• Upwards. Those who provide resources or legal basis for the organisation's work. For example: donors, the authorities or the government.

1. UPWARDS

MEMBERS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MANAGEMENT
STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

4. INWARDS

2. OUTWARDS (MUTUAL)

3. DOWNWARDS (SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY)

A credibility check illustrates the various roles stakeholders can have in relation to the organisation, and highlight how the organisation works by including them.

Note: In some instances, it can be difficult to define where it is most relevant to place a body. In such instances, discuss where it is most relevant, and perhaps keep a body in two places, to be able to look at credibility in relation to the various places it is relevant in relation to the organisation.

Step 3. Describe credibility

When all the bodies have been found, ask each individual the following question: "How does body X perceive us, as more or less credible?" Note what strengthens or weakens credibility for each body. Falling credibility can be due, for example, to a lack of visibility, not performing well enough or simply a lack of openness displayed concerning the work done.

The answers gathered can identify areas where the organisation fails to appear as sufficiently credible in the eyes of the participants.

Step 4. Discussion of cause

When it is apparent where there are particular weakness and strengths in relation to credibility, how a positive situation is retained can be discussed, or how a negative situation can be improved.

and insight into the organisation can be addressed. It can of course also be a tool to highlight where there could be an argument for limiting the information under special circumstances. One example could be in strongly political or conflict-filled areas, where the security of the bodies involved is threatened.

- With regard to accountability, it can involve taking a look at which stakeholders we are obliged to report to at each level, or involve in decision-making processes. Information-sharing and openness are natural tools here.

Note: We use the terms "bodies" and "stakeholders" in this guide. Stakeholder is used to describe a person or organisation which has a specific interest in an organisation/theme/matter. We use bodies in a broader sense for a person or organisation in the context an organisation/person/theme matter operates in.

Good advice

- The focus word in the middle of the tool (in this instance, credibility) can be changed, to openness or accountability, for example.

- With regard to openness, which ways and which media can be used to give the various bodies information on