

Press for the People: 14A report and analysis of a new human rights organization for the protection of journalists

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ABSTRACT: In the context of human rights, freedom of expression is often emphasized but the major source of expression comes from journalism efforts. Yet, news media and journalists' expression continues to be constantly threatened. Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) is an organization that is designed to fight and uphold the rights of free press. However, we argue that RSF operations have been ineffective. In this paper, we propose a new organization called Press for the People (PFP) to address the shortcomings of RSF. An analysis of this new organization will be discussed using the VMCL approach as detailed in Flock Not Clock written by Derek and Laura Cabrera. Plectica was also used to outline our thoughts.

Keywords: VMCL | Vision | Mission | Capacity systems | Learning feedback loop | Checks | CBG | Journalism | Freedom

Background and Motivation

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REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS (RSF) is a French NGO that was created to protect press freedom. However, since it was founded in 1985, RSF has had limited success in protecting expression. From accusations of reporting bias to journalists still being detained or killed in the field, RSF advocacy efforts have been ineffective¹. Using a VMCL approach to examine the organization, it was discovered that the organization lacked several things including but not limited to a clear measurable vision, understandable and connected mission statements to the vision, and defined capacity systems that support each mission and eventually the overall vision. In short, RSF appears to be internally disconnected which has led to mixed or ineffective execution strategies aimed to uphold the United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 19: the right to form and share opinions freely. To address RSF's shortcomings, we propose an entirely new organization called Press for the People that we envision to be more effective in bridging the gap between the promotion of free expression and stakeholders who depend on these services. In essence, this organization reframes priorities to be centered around protecting journalists who are key players in bringing crucial updates to the public.

¹ Dan Steinbock, How the World Press Freedom Index Was Politicized – Long Before the New Cold Wars, , 2021, accessed: 2023-5-6; and 2



About Press for the People (PFP)

PRESS FOR THE PEOPLE (PFP) is inspired by the shortcomings of RSF. When designing PFP we used a VMCL approach to make sure that the organization's priorities are not only an improvement from RSF, but also aligned with our new stated vision and mission. Briefly, VMCL outlines four simple rules that an organization leverages to promote a mental model of learning and adaptation to achieve success². These are the four simple rules:

² 3

1. Vision: A statement that defines the future state of the organization
2. Mission: Repeatable actions that can be taken to achieve the vision
3. Capacity: Systems that provide the tools to support the mission(s)
4. Learning: Constantly taking external feedback to improve and adapt the organization

In the following sections, we will break down and discuss our reasoning and purpose behind each part of the VMCL. We will also discuss how well our organization's framework aligns with each VMCL check.

Vision

THE VISION OF OUR ORGANIZATION is as follows: "Protect and promote journalist freedom." This was developed by referencing the "Vision" checks of VMCL as detailed in Flock Not Clock. These checks are listed below [Table 1].

CHECK 1	"Our Vision Depicts a Desired Future State" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 38)
CHECK 2	"Our Vision is Intrinsically Motivating" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 40)
CHECK 3	"Our Vision is Short and Simple" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 45)
CHECK 4	"Our Vision is Measurable Ideally Binary" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 47)
CHECK 5	"Our Vision Lives in Hearts and Minds" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 50)

Table 1: Vision Checks



Check 1

THIS NEW VISION does satisfactorily depict a desired future state. Thinking back to RSF, there was a lack of a clear vision. The most they stated was that they were driven to uphold what we perceive as an abstract ideal stated in UDHR Article 19. We believe that this has contributed to the continued attack on journalists and journalism-related activities across the world because of their unclear future goals. PFP's first part of the vision expresses our organization's desired future to create a world where journalists are legally protected. In reference to the "promote" part of the vision, this expresses the additional desired state where journalist-related efforts and issues are finally a part of the mainstream discussion of human rights issues like how children's rights, women's rights, and labor rights currently are. This is how PFP's vision expresses a future world where journalists are protected.

Check 2

WE BELIEVE THAT the vision is fairly intrinsically motivating. Most people are informed of daily updates about their local community, country, or international situation through news media which are sustained by the contributions of journalists. Considering that much of our access to information relies on the efforts of these people, it would be in the best interests to see the vision succeed. At the same time, we do anticipate that not everyone will commit to the vision because some may not be totally convinced that journalists are key facilitators of information.

Check 3

THE VISION ALSO MODESTLY PASSES the short and simple test outlined in Check 3. If a 9-year-old were to look at the vision, they should be able to understand the significance behind "protect" even if they don't quite understand it in the context of journalists as long as they considered how their parents would protect them from harm. Same thing with the word "freedom." What most children like most is being free to eat as much chocolate or go on a fun ride all the time without their parents breathing down their necks all the time. However, the issue that we may run into is people may perceive that this is what we mean by journalist freedom which is not the entire story. While our organization is expressing a desire for free



expression without an individual or group greatly hampering its ability to do so, there also needs to be guidelines in place to ensure free and protected thought. This may be a difficult concept for a 9-year-old to understand. The other issue that may hinder a 9-year-old's understanding of the vision is the verb "promote."

What exactly does it mean to promote freedom and what does it look like? In short, this vision has room for improvement. Answering some of these questions would be a good next step.

Check 4

A SIMILAR CONCERN regarding the ambiguity of the vision brought up in Check 3 is also brought up again under Check 4 which is as follows: Our vision is measurable and ideally binary³. "Journalist freedom" is binary because there is either journalist freedom or no journalist freedom. A huge focus of our vision is being able to measure it. Indicators for freedom could be something along the lines of the number of journalists successfully defended against threats to their expression, the number of truthful reports published on the web, or a number of policies passed to protect journalists. At the end of the day, though, it is difficult to measure freedom because there is no agreed perception of how and what it means to measure freedom. This would be an important area to improve on to strengthen PFP's vision and create a clear distinction of what it means to measure a world of journalist freedom.

Check 5

THE LAST CHECK is as follows: "Our Vision Lives in Hearts and Minds⁴." The analysis in the last four checks indicated that PFP's vision is on the right track to being collectively understood and shared by all members. The vision somewhat passed Check 2, 3, and less so with Check 4. This is why it is anticipated that the current vision will have some trouble building a collective mental model that everyone strongly believes in. To address these shortcomings, it would be helpful for the organization to incorporate some of the ideas "L" or Learning of VMCL. The idea is for PFP to utilize feedback to inform the next steps that can continue to adapt its vision so that it truly leads to the desired future state. All in all, compared to RSF, PFP's vision does provide a much more concrete goal to achieve in regard to journalist freedom.

Mission

PFP's MISSION is to "Mobilize partners to protect journalists." This mission is made up of two main components, Advocate and Monitor. These two components are actionable and repeatable functions of the organization that help facilitate PFP's vision. (i.e., Protect and promote journalist freedom). The first component of "Advocate" consists of three key actions: Developing Policy, Initiating Discussion, and Consultation. These three actions are meant to mobilize leaders to implement external policies and practices that help to support and facilitate PFP's vision.

Developing Policy

BY PARTNERING WITH other entities such as NGOs, Governments, and other organizations PFP is able to coordinate and help develop comprehensive policy within partnered entities to further secure the protection of journalists.

Initiating Discussion

THE INTENTION IS to bring the dialogue of protecting and promoting journalistic freedoms into the mainstream.

Consultation

WE BELIEVE THAT consultation is a key action in PFP's advocacy component because some of PFP's partners might already have policies or plans on developing policies pertaining to journalism. By having consultation as a key action in PFP's advocacy component the organization will be able to better influence partners' policy development and actions that will lead to the protection and promotion of journalist freedom.

The second component of our mission is to "Monitor." This component consists of two key actions: Inspection and Execution. These actions are in place to make sure that our mission is not only actionable but also measurable.

Inspection



BY MONITORING the number of reports related to the suppression of journalism PFP will be able to consolidate and analyze these reports in a measurable manner that allows for feedback on the effectiveness of our mission.

Execution

THE INTENTION of this key action is to simply inform PFP's key stakeholders (i.e., Journalists, Partnered NGOs, and Governments) about the critical information collected.

The Mission of our organization is as follows: "Mobilize partners to protect journalists." This was developed by referencing the "Mission" checks of VMCL as detailed in Flock Not Clock. These checks are listed below [Table 2].

CHECK 6	"Our mission is action(s) done repeatedly" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 65)
CHECK 7	"Our mission brings about our vision" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 67)
CHECK 8	"Our mission explains WHO does WHAT for WHOM" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 71)
CHECK 9	"Our mission is clear, concise, and easily understood" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 73)
CHECK 10	"We measure our mission" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 75)
CHECK 11	"We ensure our mission lives in hearts and minds" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 77)
CHECK 12	"We ensure the mission moments are sacrosanct" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 81)

Table 2: Mission Checks

Check 6

WE BELIEVE THIS NEW MISSION satisfactorily meets this check. PFP's mission is actionable and repeatable. The mission's repeatability is feasible: advocate partners to develop policy, initiate discussion, and act as a consultant for partnered NGOs, Governments, and other organizations. While working with partners is not always the most stable method of repeatability we believe it is still reasonably repeatable because of our second mission component, monitoring.

Monitoring serves two main purposes: to inspect and execute. Inspection allows PFP to track and monitor instances of suppressed journalism such as the imprisonment, censorship, or killing of journalists. This data is measurable and is a part of the learning feedback loop for PFP that allows the organization to constantly adapt to feedback and keep its mission not only effective but repeatable. Secondly, the execution aspect allows for PFP to have more information to share with key stakeholders (i.e., Partners and Journalists) which can be crucial to achieving the vision.

Check 7

NEXT, CHECK 7 is something that we believe could use some work. While PFP's two mission components (Advocate and Monitor) are a great start, PFP's mission currently does not fully meet our standards for Check 7. This is because we anticipate that PFP's advocating component is too heavily reliant on the cooperation and action of its partners to fulfill the stated vision. In essence, the mission fails if there is a lack of actors to drive mobilizing efforts to fulfill the vision. But assuming that there is no such limitation, the mission statement should still be repeatable to serve the vision.

Check 8

MOVING FORWARD WITH CHECK 8, we believe most of our mission easily meets the check. The question "for whom" is easily the largest stakeholder for PFP, Journalists around the world. PFP's entire vision is to protect and promote journalist freedom. However, the "who does what for whom" is less straightforward. As stated in both Check 6 and 7 the partnerships in PFP's mission are not the most stable method of facilitating a mission. Since PFP is reliant on partners for actually implementing policy and practices at times it could be quite unclear which NGOs or Governments would be partners at a particular given time, making it difficult to fully answer if PFP meets Check 8.

Check 9

WE BELIEVE THAT the mission meets this check. For one, the mission makes it clear what needs to be done: "to mobilize partners to protect journalists." The mission is also concise given that is one short sentence. Finally, the stated mission is also easily understood:



PFP will mobilize partnered NGOs, Governments, and other organizations to protect journalists.

Check 10

AS MENTIONED in Check 6 monitoring is built into the mission specifically to measure outcomes and adapt the mission accordingly. By consolidating and analyzing reports of journalism suppression PFP can take that feedback as a measurement of how well the mission is bringing about the desired vision. As such, we believe this mission is measurable.

Checks 11 and 12

THE MISSION COULD use some more adjustments for Check 11. We believe that while it does adequately meet the check, the mission of mobilizing partners to protect journalists is certainly not a thought that often is in the hearts and minds of everyday people. This is also apparent in Check 12. Since it is difficult to ensure that PFP's mission lives in the hearts and minds of everyday people, it is hard for us to claim that all the mission moments are sacrosanct. However, it lives in the hearts and minds of those within PFP and it is an interest for NGOs, Governments, and other organizations that value PFP's mission and vision statements. Since these partners do have a stake in being concerned with the issue of protecting journalists and since PFP seeks to mobilize these partners to meet this mission objective we believe the check is adequately met but would need to adapt after feedback has been collected.

Capacity

THE CAPACITY of our organization was developed by referencing "Align Capacity" checks of VMCL as detailed in Flock Not Clock. These checks are listed below [Table 3].

To support PFP's mission statements and its overall vision, there is a capacity system supported by four systems that have been designed to meet the needs of and help drive the organization's mission. These four are developed based on the four checks within the "Capacity" section of VMCL. They are as follows: Operations System, Public Relations System, Research System, and Training System.



CHECK 13	"We build capacity in order to do our mission" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 87)
CHECK 14	"We build capacity through a system of systems" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 100)
CHECK 15	"We map capacity to understand and better design systems" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 109)
CHECK 16	"We use learning to expand our capacity" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 116)

Table 3: Capacity Checks

Check 13

THIS CHECK IS ABOUT BUILDING capacity to do the mission. In other words, it is about ensuring that an organization is ready to commit to the mission (e.g., physically and mentally). In order to do that, the Operations System was primarily designed to be the key main fuel system that provides the energy to the rest of the systems within the organization's Capacity system. The flow of energy would then go to ensure the mission can be repeated. Within this system, there are currently three subsystems within it: Financial, Logistics, and Architecture. In this organization, the Financial System manages budgets and expenses to ensure that the money is being efficiently used to support the agenda of the mission statement. The Logistics System is designed to handle things such as organizing travel accommodations, on-site field plans, meal plans, and staff hiring and management. Finally, the Architecture System is in charge of identifying and managing the development of infrastructure such as field offices. In short, the organization's capacity confidently passes Check 13 because the Operations System's three internal systems work together to produce the necessary tools that are intended to provide the basic needs (e.g. people, physical working locations, etc.) to support advocacy and monitoring efforts that will then drive the mission statement.

Checks 14 and 15

CHECK 14 CHECKS if capacity is built through a system of systems. This means that the Capacity System that is supporting our mission should be supported and built by multiple systems. In our case, our organization's capacity system is indeed being sustained by the interactions of four systems with additional interactions between



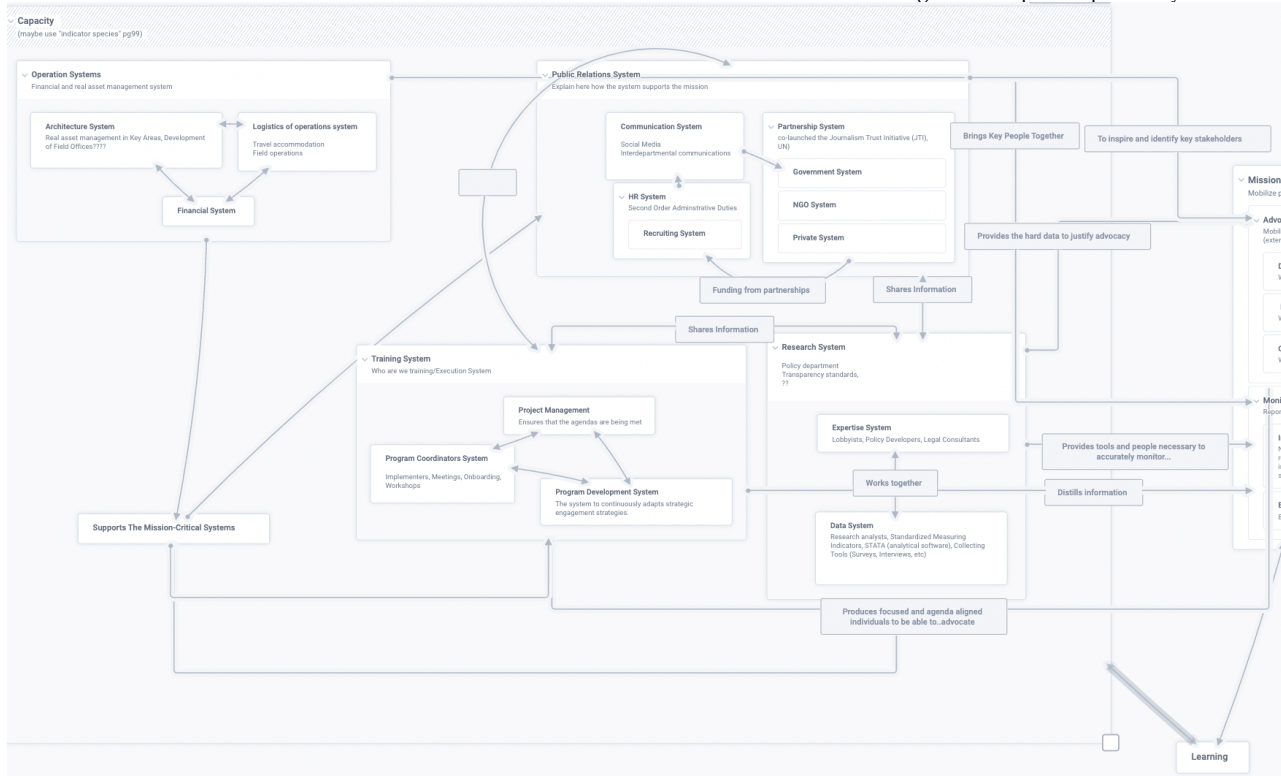
subsystems within each of these systems. As discussed just earlier, the Operations System is designed to be a second-order system where it provides the basic physical resources needed to support the other three main systems' roles to advance the mission.

The mission-critical systems that directly relate back to the mission are the Research, Public Relations, and Training Systems. All three of these systems depend on the Operations System to provide the manpower and financial power to run. Within the Research System, there are two subsystems that we refer to as the Expertise System and Data System. Using professional insights and hard data, these subsystems work together to provide analyzed key evidence to be used towards the mission by justifying advocacy efforts that lead to increased engaging discussions, reliable consultation service, and best informs policy developments around journalism freedom. It also consolidates information to feed into the monitoring component of the mission. In addition, this system coordinates with the other two first-order systems by providing key points to strengthen the contributions of these systems to the mission. For instance, the Public Relations Systems is where strategic engagement (e.g., creating and maintaining partnerships) is developed which then feeds into the advocacy component of the mission. The information is used to inspire and engage key stakeholders to fulfill the mission of mobilizing partners to protect journalists. Between the main systems, the feedback flow can go both ways. For example, data produced from the Research System subsystems could be used to inform the Public Relations System on how to best identify and develop a profile of key stakeholders. At the same time, the success and failures of these strategic engagements can be used to refine the research approaches of the Research System. The last capacity system is the Training System which consists of three subsystems: Project Management System, Program Development System, and Program Coordinators System. Each of these works to ensure that agendas are being met, engagement strategies are being developed, and equip organization members with the skills to facilitate the mission. The interaction of these three subsystems aims to produce focused and specialized individuals armed with the most effective tools to efficiently advocate and monitor the mission's mobilizing efforts. Of course, as with the other systems, this does not operate alone. It works with the Public Relations and Research Systems to obtain and share information that can enhance its or other systems operations. Below are the mapped-out primary systems that lead to the mission.

From this discussion, we believe our organization's Capacity system also fairly passes Check 15 because each of the systems and subsystems has a pretty straightforward function that contributes



Figure 1: Map of Capacital System.



to and ensures that the mission can be done repeatedly. That said, there are still several unclear connections that may make it difficult to build a shared mental model. Specifically, our systems somewhat struggles to contribute to the monitoring component of our mission statement. There may be challenges to determine effective monitoring strategies that would mobilize partners to protect journalists because there needs to be a clear and collective consensus on indicators for protecting and promoting journalists' freedom.

Check 16

FROM THE ANALYSIS of the last checks, we believe our organization has passed them pretty well, but they can still be strengthened. It is crucial for our organization to consider and adapt to the interests of its stakeholders to carry out the mission repeatedly and thus bring about the vision. Considering that there are many different perspectives about journalists and freedom of expression, data and tactics must also be comprehensive to address these differences. As such, learning is a crucial and necessary component of our organization's

capacity system. It was mentioned in the analysis under Check 14 that the feedback flow is fluid between all the systems within the capacity system. The Capacity system as a whole also receives feedback from the success and failures of the mission and the vision. Depending on the feedback, the Capacity system is designed to be flexible to changes or additions within it in order to meet new demands.

Learning

THE CAPACITY of our organization was developed by referencing “Love Learning” checks of VMCL as detailed in Flock Not Clock. These checks are listed below [Table 4].

CHECK 17	“We harness the power of mental models” (Cabrera, 2018, p. 124)
CHECK 18	“We train people to think in order to learn” (Cabrera, 2018, p. 138)
CHECK 19	“We constantly evolve our mental models” (Cabrera, 2018, p. 148)

Table 4: Learning Checks

Earlier in the analysis of our organization’s capacity system, we explicitly said that learning is a crucial component to our organization considering that it is directly and constantly interacting with many mental models.

Check 17

STARTING WITH CHECK 17, we believe that PFP comes close to meeting the check. While the power of mental models is harnessed to create a learning feedback loop it can be tricky due to the fact that it is hard to determine reliable monitoring indicators. For example, journalism suppression can be difficult to gauge accurately because individuals may perceive journalism suppression differently depending on the social, political, and cultural context of suppression in a community or state. A Westerner may believe that locking journalists are an act of suppression. But someone from the Arctic with different intel may believe that it was justified and not an act of suppression. With this in mind, this could make our monitoring component less effective in harnessing the power of mental models. Despite this, a part of the mission statement is to harness the power of learning



and monitoring. We designed "monitoring" to be a major player in the reception of outside feedback to then feedback into our Capacity System. We also briefly touched upon the monitoring component and the learning feedback loop earlier when addressing Check 6 for PFP's mission. Theoretically, by monitoring the suppression of journalists, PFP is able to measure how effective the overall VMCL map is. For instance, if a high number of journalists are imprisoned or killed within a year this outside feedback would be recorded through monitoring and sent through our learning loop back to capacity building. However, as mentioned earlier, journalism suppression can be difficult to gauge accurately and thus lead to disagreements.

Check 18

WE ALSO BELIEVE that PFP meets this check. As mentioned previously in Check 17 the monitoring component of the mission plays a crucial role in the learning feedback loop, this feedback loop not only allows for the adjustment of mental models but also feeds into the capacity as a whole. The Training System within our Capacity is focused on developing adaptive engagement strategies that can lead to more distilled research. This supports the mission by providing refined information to strengthen advocacy and monitoring efforts of PFP's mission. The mission then gathers external feedback that measures the degree of impact the mission had on the vision. This external feedback goes into PFP's learning loop where this process continues to repeat itself and trains people within the organization to think and learn as the organization itself adapts.

Check 19

FINALLY, we believe that PFP is able to constantly evolve its mental model and therefore effectively meets this check. As previously mentioned in both Check 17 and 18 the learning feedback loop that stems from the "Monitoring" component of the Mission allows for outside feedback to be measured and observed, and then adapted to in both the capacity and mission. This allows for a constant evolution of the mental models that are a part of the VMCL. So yes, we believe that PFP meets Checks 17, 18, and 19 by effectively harnessing the power of mental models, training people to think in order to learn, and constantly evolving mental models.



Cultural Building Graph (CBG)

THE CULTURE of our organization was developed by referencing Check 20 of VMCL as detailed in Flock Not Clock. The check is listed below [Table 5].

CHECK 20	"We create a culture of vision, mission, capacity, and learning" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 172)
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Table 5: Culture Check

When creating a VMCL for PFP we wanted to make certain that our VMCL met Check 20. Our capacity is made up of four systems: Operations System, Public Relations System, Research System, and Training System. These four systems were developed to support PFP's mission statements which are detailed more in our discussion of Check 13. These crucial capacity systems support PFP's mission to move the organization closer to meeting its overall vision. Whenever PFP's mission does not move the organization closer to the vision the learning system plays a key role. As detailed earlier in our discussion for Check 17, 18, and 19 the learning system acts as a tool for adaptation, allowing the organization to adapt its capacity and mission to better fulfill the vision. So while the VMCL for PFP is not perfect, it is a complex adaptive system.

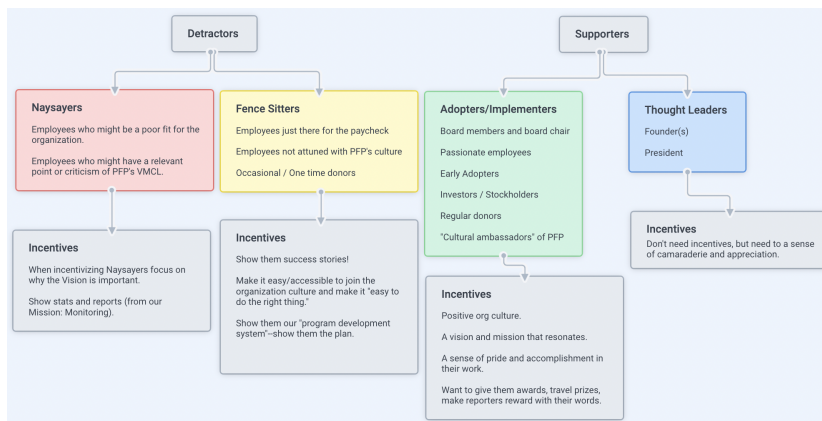


Figure 2: Culture Building Graph.

Integrated CBG and Incentives analysis

AS WITH ANY ORGANIZATION, the success of PFP depends on the collective actions of the individuals within the organization. In order

to plan out strategies to incentivize individuals, we took inspiration from the CBG map in Flock Not Clock to map out what types of individuals need to be prioritized and what needs to be done to shift them towards a new organizational culture⁵.

⁵ 3

Detractors

WE ANTICIPATE MUCH of the focus will be on individuals who are opposed to PFP. These detractors consist of the Naysayers and Fence Sitters. The Naysayers make up a small portion of the CBG and consist of Employees who might be a poor fit for the organization and Employees who might have a relevant point or criticism of PFP's VMCL that we've created. The objective is to incentivize the Naysayers to move to the Fence Sitters group. This shift can come in the form of two incentives we have identified. The first incentive is convincing Naysayers to reexamine and focus on why the vision of PFP is important to the organization's culture. The second incentive is possible because of the learning feedback loop referenced in Checks 17, 18, 19, and 20. Naysayers are shown stats and reports that are consolidated and analyzed by the monitoring component of the mission. By presenting Naysayers with statistical data they can possibly be moved to Fence Sitters. However, we recognize that data alone does not necessarily sway people because an individual may just straight up refuse to believe any of it. Instead, it may be necessary to make clear connections that show how journalism freedom affects them personally. Such was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic where some people refused to believe that it was real until they or their family members got it.

The Fence Sitters make up a larger portion of the CBG. It is anticipated that this group consists of employees who are not fully committed to the vision, employees who are not attuned to PFP's culture, and occasional or one-time supporters/donors. The main way this group can be incentivized to move to the Adopters/Implementers group is by taking "party photos" or success stories⁶. By sharing these, Fence Sitters will start feeling left out of the fun. They will gradually begin to crave to be a part of the new culture and become more willing to change their attitude and shift to being a supporter. It is also important to make sure the organization's culture is easy and accessible to join. Lastly, it would be helpful to explain and demonstrate the organization's program development. In this way, the Fence Sitters will be able to clearly understand how PFP intends to build towards fulfilling the mission and vision.

⁶ 3



Supporters

THE SUPPORTERS we identified are the Adopters/Implementers and Thought Leaders. The Adopters/Implementers group is made up of passionate employees, board members, and the board chair, “cultural ambassadors”, regular donors, and investors/ stockholders. Much like the Fence Sitters, our Adopters/Implementers make up a large portion of the CBG. Unlike the Fence Sitters, they do not require the same incentives because at this point they are already pretty convinced with the new organizational culture. All that needs to be done is to show them that their support is appreciated and making real impacts. For example, one of the more commonly used systems used in a lot of organizations is a rewards system. One potential way this could look in the context of PFP is that members could be granted an extended vacation as a reward for the number of successfully resolved cases. PFP could also consider maintaining long-term communications with assisted journalists and invite them to speak on their experience with PFP to show members how their work has a lasting impact on real people. These are in no way perfect examples, but they are supposed to give a sense of how PFP could incentivize Adopters/Implementers.

For Thought Leaders, we imagine that this primarily includes leaders of the organization. This group is more straightforward and does not require incentives because they are already set on seeing the organization succeed. They only need a sense of camaraderie and appreciation.

Conclusion

THE RESULTS of our analysis have led us to conclude that there is room for improvement in our proposed organization. To briefly recap, Press for the People was designed to bring more concrete and effective efforts that would ideally better protect journalist expression. Even though our VMCL analysis showed that our organization still had some shortcomings, it also showed that it was on the right track to being a more effective player in the fight for press freedom. Regardless of whether an organization is new or old, VMCL has been an effective tool to test and refine the stability and flexibility of an organization’s culture.



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