

Essere Animali's Reporting of Leadership, Strategy, and Culture (2020)

This document contains responses written by the charity. ACE has made no content changes other than the removal of confidential information.

Workplace Culture

How would you describe your organization's culture?

- Informal: no one needs to be addressed as “the boss” or “the manager” and junior staff can talk even to our president frankly and friendly. Everybody is part of a team and no one just gives orders, everybody helps when needed (even leadership and managers can be seen helping out volunteers cleaning after an event if needed).
- Open to discussion and disagreement, even with the board and their decisions.
- Fit for everyone, whatever their background, gender, sexual orientation and so on. Not fit only for those who do not appreciate an open and diverse culture, of course.
- Hard work and commitment are required, but we do it with low pressure and in a positive environment.
- We want people to come here not only to help a mission but also to grow both personally and professionally.
- We encourage building friendships among workers.

Do you regularly conduct surveys to learn about staff morale and work climate?

We never conducted surveys yet, but this is one of the projects we have been discussing lately in order to improve internal leadership and management. The ACE culture survey is the first one our staff is taking, and we have to say when we announced it everybody here was happy and excited about it. We will use part of the questions to create our own annual internal surveys from 2021 on!

(How) do you integrate and encourage diversity practices within your recruitment and hiring process?

During recruitment we actually do not have formal or written diversity practices to follow, since being open and diverse is really at the heart of our organization and its founders lives and background. Part of our workers and many of our volunteers are active members of the LGBTQ+

movement, most of our staff (also in active management roles) is female. As for race equity, the animal rights movement here is 99.9% white since unfortunately Italy is not yet a multi ethnic enough country (people of color are for the vast majority immigrants, and we will need at least one generation for them and their families to have a more active role in society).

After recruiting a candidate, during our recently improved and refined training process for new employees, we always discuss the values and ethics of Essere Animali. In this part of the training we explain our view on diversity and equity and our open and active support for all causes among the human rights movement, which is also clearly written in the Statute of the organization.

What areas of your organizational culture have room for improvement?

One issue we have to work on more is actively sharing leaders' knowledge and experience with workers, with the goal to see them develop furthermore and hopefully take managerial roles in the future. Most of our co-founders and leaders have 15 to 23 years of experience in the animal rights movement. We learned a lot through trial and error and our strategy and expertise definitely comes from all the years campaigning for animals before Essere Animali was created and then starting this organization from scratch. We definitely think this experience is a precious value our staff cannot find anywhere else, and feel passing on this information as our duty. We are discussing how to start including specific trainings and collective moments on these issues, since it is obviously already partially shared, but only in an informal and not planned way.

Do you have a workplace code of ethics or a similar document that clearly outlines expectations for employee behavior?

In early 2020 we published and discussed with our staff an anti discrimination and harassment policy, in which we also explicit the ethic we expect from all workers of Essere Animali. This is now mandatory to read and sign for all workers and interns in the organization. Along with this document we also made clear the process for reporting such cases and denominated the figure of "internal assistant", a person in the board of directors who workers can rely on for their complaints. In case they need it we also have an anonymous reporting system.

We are in the process of editing another document that is actually a "worker's handbook". It will be discussed and improved with the help of our staff at our next national staff retreat at the end of September. In these documents all staff rights, duties and expectations are clearly outlined.

How much time and funding is allocated for the professional development of staff?

In 2019 thanks to ACE's grant we managed to allocate up to \$14000 in management and staff trainings. This has been vital for the development of our leadership and internal management and greatly helped the newly upgraded Communications Manager and one of our campaigners.

This year we are allocating a total of \$15,000 just for our staff. About \$9,000 will be spent in the communication department, in which we are training workers on specific skills for project management, social media analysis and advertising. The remaining has been recently funded by EA Funds to support our fish corporate campaign, where more scientific knowledge proved to be critical during meetings and talks with representatives of the industry and retailers.

We actually never counted the time allocated for development and training. We decide the budget and plan where to focus it. Whenever interesting courses or opportunities are found (staff is prompted to actively look for their own training opportunities), if they fit with the plan and budget we just go for it.

Do you offer a health care plan or a healthcare reimbursement account?

No, we don't, since the healthcare system in Italy is providing universal coverage to citizens and residents, with public healthcare largely free of charge. Treatments which are covered by the public system and a small co-payment include tests, medications, surgeries during hospitalization, family doctor visits and medical assistance provided by pediatricians and other specialists. Furthermore, medication, out-patient treatments, and dental treatments are also available. Public healthcare facilities in Italy vary in terms of quality depending on the region, and our 2 offices are located in the regions with the best healthcare systems, at top european level quality.

How many days of paid time off, sick days, and personal leave do you offer full-time employees per year?

28 days for leave/holidays are paid by us. In Italy, all workers have the right to be paid by the State for sick days for as long as their doctor thinks is needed, even up to months.

List of Policies

Please indicate which of the following policies your organization is committed to, in writing.

Please note: while we think it is generally better to have more of these policies rather than fewer, we do not expect every organization to have all or even most of these policies in place. We do not currently require organizations to have a certain number of these policies in order to receive a recommendation from us.

Checklist:

- ✓ Regularly scheduled performance evaluations
- ✓ All positions have clearly defined essential functions with written job descriptions
- ✗ Staff salaries are determined by a formal compensation plan

- ✓ A written statement that your organization does not discriminate on the basis of race, sexual orientation, disability status, or other characteristics
- ✓ A written statement supporting gender equity and/or discouraging sexual harassment
- ✓ A simple and transparent written procedure for filing complaints
- ✓ An optional anonymous reporting system
- ✓ Mandatory reporting of harassment or discrimination through all levels of the managerial chain, up to and including the board of directors
- ✓ Explicit protocols for addressing concerns or allegations of harassment or discrimination
- ✓ All reported instances of harassment or discrimination are documented, along with the outcomes of each case
- ✗ Regular, mandatory trainings on topics such as harassment and discrimination in the workplace
- ✓ An anti-retaliation policy protecting whistleblowers and those who report grievances
- ✓ Flexible work hours
- ✓ Internships are paid (if your organization has interns; leave blank if it does not)
- ✓ Paid family and medical leave
- ✗ Simple and transparent written procedure for submitting reasonable accommodation requests
- ✓ Remote work option is available
- ✓ Audited financial documents (e.g. for U.S. organizations the most recently filed IRS form 990) are available on the charity's website
- ✓ Formal orientation is provided to all new employees
- ✓ Funding for training and development is consistently available to each employee
- ✓ Funding is provided for books or other educational materials related to each employee's work
- ✓ Paid trainings are available on topics such as: diversity, equal employment opportunity, leadership, and conflict resolution
- ✗ Paid trainings in intercultural competence (for multinational organizations only)
- ✗ Simple and transparent written procedure for employees to request further training or support

Does your organization have any other important or unusual policies you'd like us to know about?

No

If your organization has an employee handbook or written list of policies, please provide a link here or email it to us.

<https://www.essereanimali.org/policy-molestie-e-discriminazioni/>

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your organization's human resources policies?

We did not check a couple of the policies above because we actually do not have a written procedure but we do have a more informal one-to-one request system with the worker's manager. This applies for reasonable accommodation requests and further trainings or support. They are both areas where we are very open to talk and help our workers, we just never installed a written procedure, so we preferred not to check them.

Leadership and Strategy

Please identify 1–5 key members of your organization's leadership team.

Leader 1

Please list this leader's: (1) name, (2) role, (3) the number of years they've been with your organization.

Simone Montuschi - co-founder and President
working as Press Officer and corporate outreach supervisor
9 years in Essere Animalì

Leader 2

Please list this leader's: (1) name, (2) role, (3) the number of years they've been with your organization.

Claudio Pomo - co-founder, Head of Development
9 years in Essere Animalì

Leader 3

Please list this leader's: (1) name, (2) role, (3) the number of years they've been with your organization.

Brenda Ferretti - co-founder, Outreach Manager
9 years in Essere Animali

Leader 4

Please list this leader's: (1) name, (2) role, (3) the number of years they've been with your organization.

Francesco Ceccarelli - co-founder, Head of Investigations
9 years in Essere Animali

Leader 5

Please list this leader's: (1) name, (2) role, (3) the number of years they've been with your organization.

Martina Scalini - Communications Manager
2 years in Essere Animali

Questions for Primary Leader:

What do you consider to be your organization's major strengths?

Programs:

- Investigations and media work, which makes it possible to reach millions of people every year and to be the most important and reliable source of footage and information for reporters and journalists in our country. We are the organization doing more investigations in our country and one of the most prolific and with better media reach in Europe.
- Our vegan outreach campaigns are the biggest and most important programs of this kind in our country, creating a big audience of up to 50000 people this year taking pledges or downloading our vegan starter guide. One more positive effect is that these projects help grow our social media pages and email contacts, thus a lot more people sign petitions and join other campaigns.

In general:

- We are very flexible and ready to adapt to external situations, forced deadline changes or breaking news that can make programs and/or release dates change. We have a quite

agile organization and created a culture where it is clear that plans and release dates may always vary (especially where media collaboration is involved) and we need to work fast and as efficiently as possible with last minute changes. This flexibility helped us a lot with the Covid-19 pandemic too.

- Creating the organization from scratch has pushed the founders to learn and/or develop a lot of skills and especially to work on a very small budget. During these years the growth as a team and in terms of income made it possible to do more things and a lot better, but these developed skills, for example in communication and campaigning, makes our leaders experts who know well what needs to be done by all parts/members of the organization. The ability to try and work with a low budget has also made us much more attentive to cost effectiveness of all projects.

What do you consider to be your organization's major weaknesses?

All our leaders are still too much involved in daily work and programs and the time they can use to properly and deeply work on the management, leadership and long term strategic decisions and planning of the organization is limited. This is one of the main limits we are discussing quite often, trying to find out the best plan for the future, which will involve both hiring new staff, when the budget will be available, and work internally to promote at least one person in programs management positions (which we think as an even more important goal, in order to develop new young leaders).

What's the best decision you've made as a leader?

Working with all the leadership group to strengthen and professionalize our management of workers, help them grow in their profession and improve internal organization. We think there are still some adjustments to be made, but all systems we started implementing in 2019 are working and we see the positive results for all the team and individual workers, not only for leaders/managers.

What's the biggest mistake (or maybe hardest decision) you've made as a leader?

Our hardest decision: to cut contracts with a few of our workers after a couple years has been very very hard for all the leading teams. Being it the first time, we also had to discuss a lot of things: how many weeks before should we announce them, how to tell it in the best way, how to communicate it to the whole team and so on. Being a quite small team divided in two offices, we also feared this situation could create some tension or embarrassed situations for a few weeks of transition. It has been quite hard for a while to be honest, but hard decisions and hard conversations have to be taken for the good of the organization.

What changes have you made to your organization as a result of past successes?

In terms of programs: By analyzing our work, and seeing where we got more results, in the past two years we decided to allocate more resources to investigations and legal work, where in the last years even with a tight budget we managed to get incredible results. The goal has been to take some work off our head of investigations, reorganize the team and its work stream. Now from start to end any investigation goes on a lot more smoothly.

In terms of team and internal organization: we decided to invest more in our team retreats and to have two every year, since we could see the positive effect of bringing together all the people in the organization, usually working in two separate offices plus a few remotely. We also started using these moments for short trainings on time management and project management and as moments to discuss other topics, like inclusivity and the correlation of animal rights and human rights.

What changes have you made to your organization as a result of past failures?

I don't know if this can be considered a proper failure, but our communication team was not working smoothly enough, had some minor internal tensions and we did not consider their results good enough for the time/budget invested. It was a hard decision, but after several meetings, check-ins and attempts to improve the situation we decided to cut the contract to two persons.

As leaders we learned the critical importance of soft skills in workers.

What does your organization do differently from other animal organizations? How does your organization stand out?

In our country we definitely stand out for being the only Italian organization focused only (or almost completely) on farm animals. The other two are local chapters of international farm animal protection organizations.

And we definitely stand out for our work on fish farming: we consider ourselves at the forefront of fish farming campaigns in Europe with our investigations, the first ones to be released in the continent and considered vital by all organizations working on the issue. Our work, also on corporate asks and political campaigns, is helping strengthen the international fish protection movement as a whole.

Our modern and professional communication, especially on social media, is recognized by most as probably of the best and most effective in the country. The attention to details and informations, the balanced use of images, nice layouts and inclusive language are appreciated on all sides of the spectrum (animal friendly omnivores and vegan activists alike), and are helping our mission to open the minds and hearts of people to promote change, especially

when the involvement of individuals is needed (for example our highly participated vegan pledge campaigns).

Have you had a leadership transition since the beginning of 2019? If yes, please describe the transition process.

No

Please provide a list of board members and brief descriptions of their occupations or backgrounds.

Our official board is composed by 3 persons who are either founders or have active roles in the organization

Simone Montuschi – co-founder and President of Essere Animali, with the role of Press Officer and corporate outreach supervisor

Brenda Ferretti –co-founder and Board member, with the role of Outreach Manager in Essere Animali

Serena Capretti – Board member, with the role of local activities coordinator in the city of Brescia.

What does your organization do to create or revise your strategic plan? How often do your revise strategy? (If no formal plan is used please explain how you set strategy)

We started analyzing, budgeting and planning yearly activities back in 2014. At the moment we are able to plan some major strategic decisions and goals up to 3 years in advance.

During the year we have 4 formal leadership full-day meetings just to discuss and outline strategy, goal setting and future plans. In these meetings the first steps we take are (i) revisiting and updating our SWOT analysis; (ii) analyzing projects updates, to know how they are moving towards their goals and if there are important decisions and/or revisions to be taken; and (iii) discussing current internal and external situations and future possibilities, in order to revise our strategy.

Every year one of these meetings is mostly focused on:

- Discussing our global strategy, external threats, how to evolve as an organization and how to continue to be effective in all areas we are campaigning
- Brainstorm for the future: dreaming big on the organization and what we could be doing, major projects and results we would like to start and so on. This helps us to get ideas in order to write down or edit 3 year plans for growth.

Any major change in plans or strategy is then discussed and presented to all staff members.

How are the board and staff involved in the strategic planning process?

As said earlier, our board is made of people with active roles in the organization, taking part in all leadership meetings, whether to manage the organization or to plan and strategize.

With the rest of the staff we usually plan and strategize activities in a few steps:

1. During annual assessment or yearly plan meetings the leadership writes down considerations, expectations and goals for all areas of the organization and also for specific members of the team.
2. Individuals within the leadership team discuss goals and plans with staff they manage, in order to evaluate if they are reachable and/or ambitious enough. More details and ideas can be added to the plan.
3. Revised and finalized goals are then discussed again in a leadership meeting.
4. During one of our national staff retreats plans and goals are presented to all workers of the organization, in order for all of them to know what are the plans for the future of Essere Animali, even in departments they do not belong to.
5. After discussing it in quarterly check-ins with their direct manager or with the leadership team, during the next staff retreat all members of the team talk briefly and show how they or their department are moving towards planned goals. At this moment they can explain why they advise for a revision of goals or plans due to whatever factor.
6. A revision of yearly plans or future strategy can take place based both on managers and staff feedback.

How do you set goals and monitor progress towards those goals?

Goal setting for a specific year starts from accounting the results of the previous one and analyzing external/internal challenges, threats or positive changes.

Goal setting has to be ambitious, but we also want our goals to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time based). Thus project by project, campaign by campaign, this is done by the project manager along with all the leadership group, and the feedback of managed staff. We do not set just campaign goals but also personal goals for all the staff, with the long-term goal to develop new skills, strengthen those they have and lead them towards personal improvement. When these goals are set they are clearly explained to all the people in the organization.

An evaluation to monitor progress towards projects' goals takes place with all workers in a quarterly check-in, asking them first to fill a form with their inputs and data. Once a year a 360-degree feedback is used to analyze projects and all personal goals too.

Has your organization engaged in any formal self-assessments? How, when, and how regularly?

Not yet. This is something we are considering for the future.

Does your organization have retrospective or “post-mortem” meetings following major projects?

Yes, it takes place in three steps:

1. After a major project we ask the project owner to write a detailed report. We use a pre-written sample with questions on goals, activities, results, difficulties, suggestions and so on.
2. The report is then discussed during a leadership meeting directly with the project owner. This involves feedback and analysis on how the project was managed, room for improvements, setting new goals for the same project in the future.
3. The project owner will then have a quick debrief with all the people he involved and managed during the project.

International Operations

Do you operate in more than one country?

No