

POLICY
THUMBNAIL

Conservative MP Culture Reset

Reforming Ourselves Before We
Reform The Country



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THE PROBLEM

The Conservative Parliamentary Party hasn't been working as an effective team. Positive behaviours and loyalty have not been systematically recognised, developed or reinforced, while negative behaviours and factionalism have often been effective and rewarded. Functional or subject expertise (particularly from previous roles outside Parliament) has rarely been recognised. Front bench roles have often been filled based on factional or personal affiliations rather than ability or specialist understanding of an area, and then reshuffled before occupants have developed deep policy understanding or sectoral contacts. Individual strengths and weaknesses aren't systematically identified, communicated, developed or addressed. Political advisors ('Spads') undertake many tasks which junior frontbenchers would previously have done, making skill development harder and increasing the chances that Conservative MPs will reach senior roles which they aren't ready or equipped to perform.

The result has been a consequence-free culture amongst some Conservative MPs, where bad behaviour doesn't harm their prospects, and good behaviour doesn't improve them.

THE SOLUTION

We need a culture reset within the Conservative Parliamentary Party. This will include:

- Identifying specific behaviours which deliver the cultural norms and skills we want to foster (eg team loyalty & integrity; understanding of key issues; oratory & debating skills; followership & influence with stakeholders & other MPs; evidence-based problem-solving; media handling skills), with details of how to recognise good or bad examples in each case.
- Regularly discussing and agreeing with every Conservative MP who wants to be considered for senior roles which behaviours they are good or less good at, and agreeing a development programme to develop their performance in any areas they want to improve.
- Refusing to promote or recognise anyone who isn't performing well by exhibiting these specific behaviours in their current role.
- Capping the maximum number of Spads, in the same way as the maximum number of Government Ministers has long been capped too.
- Replacing disruptive and distracting mass reshuffles with individual job moves when needed to manage performance, so talent management becomes a steady & continuous professional HR process rather than a moment of Westminster theatre.
- Reducing the 5 current levels of frontbench roles (Parliamentary Private Secretary 'PPS'; Whip, Parliamentary Under-Secretary 'PUS'; Minister of State 'MOS'; Secretary of State 'SoS') to 3 (eg PPS, Parliamentary Secretary, SOS) & including PPS as unpaid whips, to create flatter teams with more development opportunities.



THE BENEFITS

- Turns the Conservative Parliamentary Party into a stronger and more effective team for both Opposition and Government which uses everyone's abilities to the full, and where talent and merit are systematically recognised, developed and rewarded so it can become admired and respected for the way it performs and behaves.
- Focuses on prompt, practical, professional & effective ways to improve team performance, rather than creating hostages to fortune by moralising or preaching about personal behaviour.
- Creates "show not tell" evidence the Parliamentary Party is reforming itself, to prove it is ready & able to take on the task of reforming the country.
- Enriches frontbench and other senior roles to develop essential skills and knowledge, rather than allowing poor performers to cover shortcomings with spads.
- Strengthens legitimacy, trust and belief amongst current and

future Conservative MPs that professional HR processes of recognition and career development will recognise and encourage talent and effort rather than negative behaviour or factionalism.

THE SOUNDBITES

We want the Conservative Parliamentary Party to be a strong team, where everyone's abilities are recognised and developed so we can serve the country better.

There's nothing magic or unusual about this. It's just normal leadership, nothing more or less.

United we stand, divided we fall.



THE REBUTTALS

1. Isn't this just a lot of management-theory guff? Why will it make any difference?

Most modern teams do something like this, whether they are in business, sports, charities or any other sector. Politics isn't inherently any different. This is just normal leadership, nothing more or less.

2. Isn't this an admission of how badly split the Conservative Party is?

This is recognising the very clear message which voters sent us in the General Election about how they want us to change, and doing something practical to solve it.