



# **Excellence in the service in not-for-profit organization: a comparison of Médecins San Frontières (MSF) and Opera San Francesco per i Poveri of Miano (OSF)<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose of the paper:** *The purpose of this study is to analyze the service strategy of Medicines San Frontier and Opera San Francesco Dei Poveri of Milano. These organizations are chosen because they received some important prizes (Nobel Peace Prize 1999 for MSF, Premio Leonardo for excellence 2019 for OSF). Both these two service organizations are focus on helping persons with some medical problem or in difficult situations.*

**Methodology:** *This study adopts a comparative case study based on primary and secondary data. For primary data, ten interviews with the member of these two organizations are conducted. For secondary data, we use the reports and the communication to the press of these organizations.*

**Main Findings:** *The results show the difference between these two organizations base on a set of the processes and KPIs (strategy, organization, culture, strategy of empowerment of the member, CSR).*

**Practical implications:** *The strategy for the excellence of these two organizations can be useful for understanding the important role of empowerment and motivation in the service organization.*

**Originality/value:** *The framework presented in the paper provides an original analysis of these two excellent not-for-profit organizations and the implementation of main processes based on empowerment and culture of service.*

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks OSF and MSF and their members for supporting data collection.

*Type of paper: comparative cases studies*

**Keywords:** *service, not-for-profit organization, excellence, culture, empowerment, corporate social responsibility*

## **1. Introduction**

No-profit organizations have an important role in society (Al-Tabbaa et al 2013, Anheier 2005, Barenblat 2018, Kotler 1982, Dees et al. 2001, 2002; Riva 2007a,b). To our knowledge, only a few pieces of research are available on this important topic level on MSF and OSF. With this in mind, this study intends to investigate the interesting experience of these two not-for-profit organizations using benchmarking methodology (Gummesson 2002, 2008; Tuten and Solomon 2014; Bacarani and Golinelli 2011; Riva and Pilotti 2019).

### *1.1. Research question*

The key questions of the paper are based on MSF and OSF cases:

- 1) *What is the strategy for excellence in non-profit organizations comparing MSF and OSF?*
- 2) *What are the main critical success factors (FCS) for service excellence in not-for-profit organizations?*

For answering the first and second questions, we describe and analyze the case MSF and OSF based on the previous literature and using primary and secondary data.

The outline of the paper is as follows: the second section describes the theoretical review and the third the methodological aspects; the fourth section analyzes the case of MSF and the fifth case of OSF; in the sixth section there is the discussion and the last one concludes.

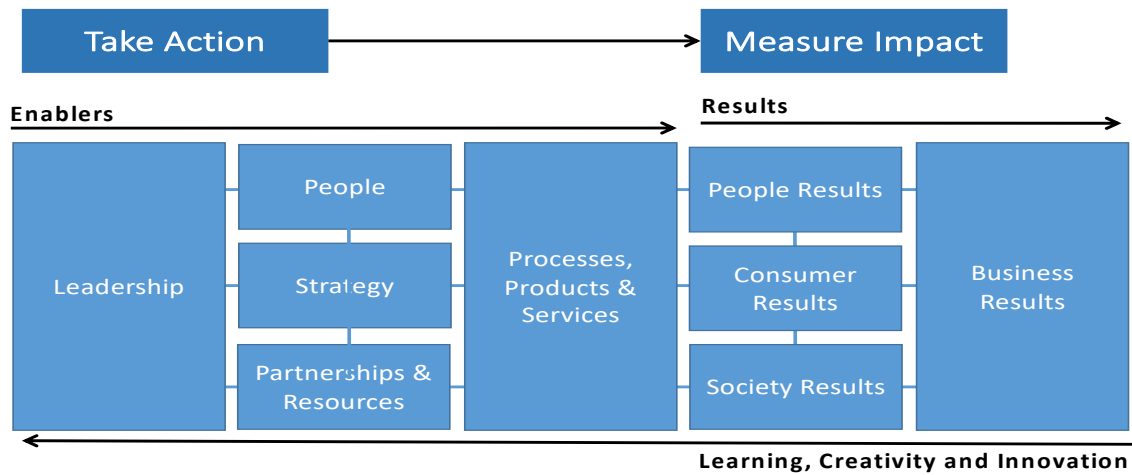
## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1 TQM framework for not for profit organization*

TQM frameworks about not for profit organization and these can be summarized into three main areas:

A) Quality award models; for example, European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM model, the Deming Prize, MBNQA model or Baldrige Excellence Criteria). The EFQM model can be used to evaluate the strategy and performance-based the idea of the improvement the right actions for better results (see fig. 1)

**Figure 1. EFQM model (European Foundation for Quality Management) for excellence**



Source: EQFM

B) Academic-based framework (for example, the UMIST quality improvement model, Kanji's Excellence model).

C) Consultants/experts-based frameworks (Riva 2007a, b; Riva Pilotti 2019).

## 2.2 Theoretical review of non-profit organization and communication

The no-profit organization has some specific strategy and organization factors different from the profit organization (Anheier, 2005; Barenblat 2018; Barthélémy and Slitine 2011; 1982; Quéinné and Igalens 2004; Atkinson and Waterhouse 1977; Dees et al. 2001,2002). Carroll and Buchholtz; (2015) Amanda et al. (2015) analyze the importance of communication toward all stakeholders. It is possible to define four dimensions of CSR: social-economic - legal- ethical- philanthropic responsibility

Chen and Popvich (2003) consider communication as a combination of three main parts: people, processes consider also the process and culture. Schmitt (2000) underlines the importance of understanding how consumers experience is critical for communication. Almotairi (2009) study the main communication success factors and the importance of the integrated framework to analyze the strategy and process of communication implementation and the importance of control many critical factors. Asorwoe (2017) underlines the importance of communication in a nonprofit organization. Wang and Feng (2012) analyze the critical success factors for communication. They must comprehend the relation of resources, capabilities, and performance in the different moments of customer interaction and relation. Payne and Frow (2005) analyze and develop a global model to understanding the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and CRM framework they underline the importance of the organization of a strategic development process, value creation, multi-channel process, and performance assessment.

## 2.4 Different streams of research on excellence in not for profit organizations

In conclusion, we focus on two important streams of literature about excellence in not-for-profit organizations and it seems that quality and communication are key elements.

## 3. Methodological approach

### 3.1 The reasons for the selection of MSF And OSF, and the phases of the process of research

MSF is considered a case of excellence as a matter of fact in 1999 it received the Nobel

Peace Prize for its ability to solve important acute crises for medical care. Also, OSF won Premio Leonardo for excellence in 2019. Both these two service organizations are focus on helping persons with some medical problem or in difficult situations.

The empirical method of this analysis follows the logic of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) developing a case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989; Mella 2015; 2012).

About primary data we collect data and information of MSF; the company performance by contact and discussion with the manager to understand the evolution of strategy (Edelman and Singer 2015). The research approach is based on some steps (tab.1).

**Table 1. Steps of research approach**

<b>PHASE</b>	<b>1) LITTERATURE REVIEWS</b>	<b>2) ANALYSE SYNTHESIS</b>	<b>3) COLLECT DATA</b>	<b>4) DATA ANALYSIS</b>	<b>5) SYNTHESIS</b>
<b>TARGET /AIM</b>	Literary review of research questions (RQ1 and RQ2)	Develop first version research model	Analysis based also on the EFQM model	Discussion and interpret data	Develop a second version of the model (benchmarking FCSs and EFQM)
<b>ACTION</b>	Identification of main relevant resources and concepts	Develop a basic general framework	Understand the secondary data and conduct interviews	Create a general framework and comparison	Theorize prepositions and concepts

Source: Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Eisenhardt, 1989

### 3.2 The EFQM model as a framework for the profit organization

The global model to analyze the data is based on the EFQM Model base on some principles:

- a) understanding of the cause and effect relationships established;
- b) understand how their key results compare to similar organizations;
- c) develop a set of key performance indicators and related outcomes;
- d) set clear targets for key results;
- e) segment results to understand the performance of specific areas of the organization.

### 3.3 The sources of the data

About secondary data, we study also the public balance sheet (Riva 2011) and other documents (see tab. 2,3). The method of case study is used because it permits to underline the main innovations in the strategy of the company.

**Table 2 Secondary data used in this research for MSF**

<b>MAIN SECONDARY DATA ABOUT MSF</b>	<b>FOCUS</b>
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<b>INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ANNUAL REPORTS 2009-2020</b> <i>(Source: MSF)</i>	focus on strategy and economy
<b>INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY ANNUAL REPORTS 2009-2020</b> <i>(source: MSF)</i>	focus on strategy
<b>MSF ITALIA Report 2020</b> <i>(source: MSF)</i>	focus on strategy
<b>MSF LOGISTIQUE</b> (source: MSF)	focus on organization and management

Source: Our elaboration and Riva 2011

**Table 3. Secondary data used in this research for OSF**

<b>MAIN SECONDARY DATA ABOUT OSF</b>	<b>FOCUS</b>
<b>BILANCIO SOCIALE 2018</b> <i>(Source: OSF)</i>	focus on strategy and economy
<b>PREFAZIONE SINDACO MILANO ABILANCIO SOCIALE</b> <i>(source: OSF)</i>	focus on strategy
<b><i>Housing First. Una storia che cambia le storie</i></b> <i>(source Padgett et al. 2019)</i>	focus on strategy

Source: Our elaboration and Riva 2011

About primary data, we collect data and information by contact and interviewees with the experts (see tab 4) about the areas of research (see tab. 5)

**Table 4. Interviewees**

Expert about the organization	9 interviews
Economic journalist	1 interview

Source: Our elaboration

**Table 5 Areas of research**

<i>1) What is the strategy for excellence in non-profit organizations comparing MSF and OSF?</i>	-Strategy Management - Communication - Innovation
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	-EFQM factors
2) <i>What are the main critical success factors (FCS) for service excellence in not-for-profit organizations?</i>	-Best practices -History and innovation - General framework for innovation strategy Main FCSs EFQM framework

Source: Our elaboration

## 4 The case of Médecins Sans Frontiers

### 4.1 *The history of the organization*

MSF (Doctors Without Borders) is an international humanitarian organization. It is founded on 22 December 1971, with headquarter in Ginevra, Switzerland. The company considers communication a very important tool for the strategy. Its main aim is to deliver impartial medical care to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from health care in over 70 countries (see tab.6).

**Table 6. No-profit organization in France**

Importance	Organization
1	Restaurant du cœur
2	La Croix- Rouge
3	Secours Catholique
4	ARC, Secours Populaire
5	<i>MSF Doctors Without Border (Médecins sans Frontières)</i>

Source: Hingre V. (2000)

### 4.1 *The CRS (Corporate Social Responsibility) values and strategy of communication*

The analysis of the CRS strategy of MSF gives us a clear example of how the relationship with the stakeholder (Edelman and Singer 2015) is very important and the system of values can be experienced by the entire organization as an imperative characterizing the culture (see tab.7). (MSF International Activity Report 2018). MSF is responsible for raising over \$400 million annually in funds to meet the financial needs of our organization. The phase of data collection is a fundamental and essential prerequisite for knowing and managing customers. Marketing Development Department is very important in this no-profit organization.

**Table 7: Value in MSF**

RESPECT
TRUST
INTEGRITY
EMPOWERMENT
ACCOUNTABILITY
TRANSPARENCY

Source: MSF

The Marketing Team in MSF is responsible for executing integrated marketing efforts, including prospect, renewal, and cultivation campaigns and it uses all communication channels to maximize the revenue and increase awareness of MSF's activities. After identifying the information is important to collect within the integrated database, (Kotler 1972, 2014; Nonaka 1994; Edelman and Singer 2015). The priority is therefore placed on understanding customers' needs and expectations and on defining suitable services to meet these needs. The implementation of relational marketing (Gummesson 2002, 2008) is present in MSF.

*4.2 Member, volunteering and project for the mission of MSF*

Volunteers are an essential part of MSF. It benefits from a strong group of regular volunteers who support the permanent staff and team

The communication strategy intends to research new members. Volunteers work in many positions in the organization. The volunteers operate for some time in MSF and learn how the offices operate so after they are included in more challenging projects (MSF International Activity Report 2018).

*4.3 The strategic role of multi-channel contact to contact the stakeholder*

A virtual community that has been created around MSF. The site is the largest channel of communication of MSF both to provide information and permit communication and fundraising (see tab.8).

**Table 8: Strategy and communication and fundraising**

A	80% advertising
B	10% of legacy
C	3 to 5% Partnership (down 3 years)
D	3% sales
F	2% of non-marketing-related donations (MSF events, eg: marathon).
	the first fund-raising campaign by mailing started in the 1980s provide, in 1995, 64% of private resources

Source: elaboration from MSF and Hingre. (2000)

The site is organized in many sections and it communicates the mission of the MSF and the program in every country (Africa, America, Asia & Pacific, Europe & Central Asia, Middle East, and North Africa). MSF develops a multi-channel contact center, which will follow the logic of personalized communication (MSF International Activity Report 2018) (see tab.9).

**Table 9 Strategy for specific stakeholder group and influence –power used by MSF**

TOOLS	SEGMENT
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FACE BOOK	Large public
TWITTER	Users looking for personal interaction
GOOLGE+	Alternative to FaceBook
INSTAGRAM	Mobile Users Like photos
LINKEDIN	Professional networking

Source our elaboration from MSF

In MSF, the stakeholder engagement strategy is based on some phases (Farinet and Ploncher 2002):

- 1) analyze the stakeholder groups as part of your environment;
- 2) identify who the stakeholder representatives are for non-profit organizations;
- 3) create a system to solicit their feedback;
- 4) incorporate their feedback into your strategic planning process (Edelman and Singer 2015).

## 5. The case of Opera San Francesco dei Poveri (OSF)

### 5.1 *The history of the organization*

The origin of this organization can be considered 1878 when the first Capuchin friars entered the convent in Viale Piave in Milano. Material and spiritual poverty has always found concrete answers and gestures of charity.

### 5.2 *The main activity of the organization*

OSF is organized to permit to offer many activities (see tab. 10). It is not only focused on medical care but intends to give global help to poor people.

**Table 10 Main activities of OSF**

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Number in 2020</i>
HOT MEALS	643069
SHOWERS	28527
CHANGE CLOTHES	3107
MEDICAL VISITS	26998
PEOPLE WELCOMED	19668

Source our elaboration from OSF

### 5.3 *The culture and values of the organization*

The organization is based on some values and cultural philosophy based on Frati Capuccini (Friars Minor Capuchin) philosophy (see tab.11)

**Table 11 Values and philosophy of OSF**

<b>VALUES OF THE ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>FRATI CAPUCCINI PHILOSOPHY (Friars Minor Capuchin)</b>
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Hospitality without distinction of religion or culture	Love for the poorest people
Free of the service	Humility
attention to the person	Care the persons
Professionalism	Catholic value and Bible

Source our elaboration from OSF

#### 5.4 The importance of the website and communication

The organization uses site communication based on the real description of the activity and the internal organization. In developing the website there is the use of technology for performance tracking systems, web page statistics, and landing pages. It is important to use social media to communicate with the volunteers.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Main analogies and difference between MSF and OSF

We can find some important analogies and differences between MSF and OSF (see tab.12).

**Table 12 Comparison and benchmarking based on CSFs between MSF and OSF**

	<b>CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS</b>	<b>TARGET/AIM/IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>MSF</b>	<b>OSF</b>
<b>1</b>	CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY	-innovation and committed to help	*****	*****
<b>2</b>	EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE	-culture to find the best solution with professional skill	****	***
<b>3</b>	INTEGRITY	-carry out our daily activities with responsibility	***	*****
<b>4</b>	PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT	-favor an inclusive development that can generate shared and lasting value in all territories.	*****	*****
<b>5</b>	TRANSPARENCY	-committed to being engaged in continuous dialogue	****	*****
<b>6</b>	TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION	-work with passion, believe in team spirit, and value everyone's skills. recognize collaboration	****	***
<b>7</b>	PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS	-operate with respect for human dignity and Human Rights	*****	*****
<b>8</b>	GOOD WORK ENVIRONMENT	- ensure an inclusive work environment that values uniqueness and diversity.	****	****

<b>9</b>	<b>FOCUS ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY</b>	-reducing environmental impact and being attentive to the needs and expectations of our stakeholders.	*****	*****
<b>10</b>	<b>FOCUS ON FIND NEW MEMBER</b>	-work to support to find new members	*****	***

Source our elaboration from MSF and OSF

### 6.2. The strategic role of quality of the service and cultural value and communication

MSF uses an integrated set of a mix of communication to improve the communication of Corporate Social Responsibility strategy and develop many actions to follow its mission (tab.13).

**Table 13: Strategy and actions of MSF**

<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>NUMBERS</b>
COUNTRIES	74
OUTPATIENT CONSULTATIONS	11.2M
CASES OF MALARIA TREATED	2.4M
BIRTHS ASSISTED, INCLUDING CAESAREAN SECTIONS	309,500

Source elaboration from MSF

MSF has developed a strategy Corporate Social Responsibility strategy based on a set of core values. The aim is to improve the quality and service and improve the constant improvement of the stakeholder's satisfaction (Edelman and Singer 2015). On the contrary, OSF is based in Milano and it hasn't an international organization all over the world.

For MSF and OSF is important (Fabris 2009; Napolitano et al. 2018) to improvement the level of commitment of the stakeholders (Freeman 1984; Reichled 2016; Fontana 2013, Riva 2011, Mella 2012, 2015, 2017; Bhattacharya and Korschun 2008). The structure of the cost of MSE is divided into many areas (see tab 14).

**Table 14 Structure of cost of MSF**

<b>COST VOICE</b>	
PROGRAM AND PROJECT	89.4 %
MANAGEMENT & GENERAL	1,5 %
FUNDRAISING	9,1 %

Source our elaboration from MSF and DWB

Many tools permit communication with the virtual community in both the organizations (see tab. 15).

**Table 15 Tools in CSR**

1	ADOPTION OF FACEBOOK
2	ADOPTION OF TWITTER
3	SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT
4	SITE: EASY TO USE
5	PUBLIC RELATION
6	FUNDRAISING MECHANISM
7	PEER PRACTICE
8	FUNDRAISING DIVERSITY

Source our elaboration MSF And OSF

It is important to control (Edelman and Singer 2015) and try to expand the communication in the virtual community.

## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1. Strategy for excellence in service in MSF and OSF

Concerning the first question: “What is the strategy for excellence in non-profit organization comparing MSF and OSF?”, we discover that:

A- First, the results show the difference between these two organizations base on a set of the processes (see tab. 16).

**Table. 16 Benchmarking main difference between the strategy in MSF and OSF**

N°	OBJECTIVES	MSF	OSF
1	STRATEGY BASED ON A COMMUNITY OF VOLONTARIES	***	*****
2	ORGANIZATION BASED ON A INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION	*****	*
2	CULTURE-BASED ON SPIRITUALITY VALUE	**	*****
3	MEDICAL FOCUS	*****	**
5	MOTIVATION VOLONTEERS	****	*****
6	FOCUS ON DIGITAL COMMUNICATION	*****	****
7	STRATEGY FOR FINDING NEW MEMBERS	***	****
8	MOBILE APPS	****	****
9	STRATEGY MARKETING BY SOCIAL MEDIA	*****	*****
10	CREATION OF STORYBOARD	*****	*****
	Level : ***** HIGH, *** AVERAGE, *LOW		

Our elaboration from MSF and OSF

*B- Second*, MSF and OSF use a set of tools for the application of CSR and communication to improve stakeholder satisfaction by the creation of a virtual community (Edelman and Singer 2015). The strategy of customer satisfaction in MSE and OSF is aligned with the organization's missions, it permits a new form of relational marketing and collaborative interaction with all stakeholders (Gummesson 2002, 2008; Tuten and Solomon 2014; Baccarani and Golinelli 2011; Pilotti 2011). Important is a clear definition of the principle of CRS in its value system: a) trust and respect, b) integrity, c) accountability, d) empowerment, e) transparency.

*C- Third*, the importance of an integrated system of communication based on a website and e-mail communication and a multi-channel contact center permit to communicate with all stakeholders. The development of a stakeholder engagement permits communication of the CRS mission.

The answers to the first question are consistent with past studies (Asorwoe 2017; Dees et al. 2002; Gummesson 2002, 2008, Al-Tabbaa et al 2013, Farinet and Ploncher 2001; Edelman and Singer 2015; Pilotti 2019; Riva 2007a,b; Baccarani and Golinelli 2011).

### 7.2 The critical success factors in MSF And OSF

For what concerns the second question: “*What are the main critical success factors (FCS) is not for profit organization?*”, we discover:

*a – First*, the main critical success factors (see tab.17) in both organizations can be analyzed by using the EFQM model for excellence.

**Tab. 17: Comparison of MSF and OSF based on EFQM Model**

	<b>EFQM MODEL FACTORS</b>	<b>MSF</b>	<b>OSF</b>
	<b><i>ENABLES</i></b>		
<b>A</b>	LEADERSHIP	****	*****
<b>B1</b>	PEOPLE	***	****
<b>B2</b>	STRATEGY	****	*****
<b>B3</b>	PARTNERSHIPS & RESOURCES	****	***
<b>C</b>	PROCESSES, PRODUCTS, AND SERVICES	****	*****
	<b><i>RESULTS</i></b>		
<b>D1</b>	PEOPLE RESULTS	****	*****
<b>D2</b>	CUSTOMER RESULTS	****	****
<b>D3</b>	SOCIETY RESULTS	*****	*****
<b>E</b>	KEY PERFORMANCE RESULTS	**	**
Level : ***** HIGH, *** AVERAGE, *LOW			

Source: our elaboration from MSF and OSF

*b- Second*, in MSF and OSF there is a focus for the application of social media for the communication with stakeholders and communicate the system of value by social media (*Facebook, YouTube*). The communication of CSR is important (Ringov, 2017) and it is based on: 1) focus new digital communication technology based on a database; 2) multichannel

marketing ; 3) intelligent website organization.

c -Third the integrity of communication and the process to create many volunteers are an essential part of the strategy. It can benefit from a large group of regular volunteers who support the permanent staff. The quality of NPO (not-for-profit organization) can be evaluated by monitoring the quality of management and the quality of the services).

The answers to the second question are consistent with past studies (Al-Tabbaa et al. 2013; Gummesson 2002, 2008; Dees et al. 2001; Pilotti 2017; Riva 2007a,b; Mella 2012; 2015; Pilotti and Riva 2019; Farinet and Pocher 2002; Asorwoe 2017).

### 7.3 Original contribution, limits, and future researches

The original contribution of this paper (highlights) and the production of new knowledge in the field are:

I) the original analysis and comparison of the strategy of MSF and OSF

II) to give a new practical framework for strategic implementation of sustainable strategy in long-range focus on not for profit organizations;

III) to analyze several tools and “best practices” that, although with some limitations, can be used by other not-for-profit organizations.

The limit of this study is to analyze only a few cases. Future research can study other cases of success and the impact in different contexts and the relationship between strategy and sustainability (Anheier 2015; Dees et al. 2001, 2002; Riva and Pilotti 2019; Gummesson 2002, 2008).

In conclusion, the philosophy of MSF and OSF is focused on improving the stakeholder's satisfaction based on a strong relation and system of value (integrity, accountability, respect, trust).

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