



# ESPRIT DE CORPS

## BEYOND TEAM BUILDING

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Esprit de corps  
/eˌsprɛ də ˈkɔːr/

A feeling of pride, fellowship,  
and common loyalty shared by  
the members of a particular  
group.

Every organization, military or not, has something in their mission statement that tries to conceptualize what esprit de corps is. Esprit de corps is typically thought of military organizations but even the ancient Greeks and Romans knew that esprit de corps was necessary in developing a strong and unified organization. During this presentation we are going to look at different mottos that are related to the military but all of them have one thing in common. They are a “rallying cry” to bring people from all walks of life to come together and be a cohesive team to get the “mission” done.



Semper Fi

**“Always faithful”**

Marines official motto



Non sibus sed patriae

**“Not self but country”**

Navy's unofficial motto



**This we will defend**



Army's motto



**Aim High . . . Fly, Fight, Win**

Air Force's official new motto



Semper Paratus

**Always ready**

U.S. Coast Guard's motto



Semper Supra

**Always above**

Space Force's motto



Foreign Legion  
Honneur et Fidelite

**Honor and fidelity**



The Legion is today known as a unit whose training focuses on traditional military skills and on its strong [esprit de corps](#), as its men come from different countries with different cultures. Consequently, training is often described as not only physically challenging, but also very stressful psychologically. French citizenship may be applied for after three years' service.

The military has one advantage in building esprit de corps – there ability to segregate new recruits from all of their former life. There is no family, media, escape from the military life. You are “theirs” for the next 6-8 weeks – lock, stock, and barrel. Everything thought, movement, conversation is ordered, expected, and demanded of you. Within those 6-8 weeks you will go from a rag-tag bunch of recruits that come from all walks of life to a cohesive military unit towards one common goal.

In organizations we cannot “force” our employees to go through that rigorous training but we can still build esprit de corps within the organization with the right tools and resources.



# What do all these military slogans have in common?

1. They were used to build a team unit
2. They were a "common" goal
3. Instilled pride and honor with all members
4. Can build a huge number of people into an agile, dynamic and unstoppable force
5. Can increase motivation, higher employee engagement, improved results and a real sense of fun, worth, and belong.

**Let me tell you about “The Bundle of Sticks” It is a story about how when we come together so much more can be accomplished.**

A father had a family of sons who were perpetually quarreling among themselves.

When he failed to heal their disputes by his exhortations, he determined to give them a practical illustration of the evils of disunion; and for this purpose he one day told them to bring him a bundle of sticks.

When they had done so, he placed the bundle into the hands of each of them in succession, and ordered them to break it in pieces.

They tried with all their strength, and were not able to do it.

He next opened the bundle, took the sticks separately, one by one, and again put them into his sons' hands, upon which they broke them easily.

He then addressed them in these words: **"My sons, if you are of one mind, and unite to assist each other, you will be as this bundle, uninjured by all the attempts of your enemies; but if you are divided among yourselves, you will be broken as easily as these sticks."**

**Union gives strength.**

# Esprit de corps

Goes beyond "**morale**", which is highly personal. **Morale** is the **"mental and emotional condition of an individual or group; level of individual psychological well-being based on such factors as a sense of purpose and confidence in the future."** Merriam-Webster

Esprit de corps is a **"common spirit existing in the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group."**

Esprit de corps is the foundation of all successful organizations and can affect individual morale in a way that positively changes attitudes and behaviors.

To shape or affect morale, emphasis must be placed on the greater good of the organization where a collective challenge exists and all people have a role in that challenge; a collective challenge can be a positive goal or vision that senior leadership has stated as a priority. This would be called "embracing the goal." It's relevant to point out that "when times are unavoidably challenging, but shared by all, morale may not be adversely affected." Teams that focus on supporting one another are in parallel shaping the morale of everyone along the way.

In essence, esprit de corps is "your personal integrity, mutual confidence, and focus on contribution rather than personal gain." Morale is individually focused on a personal level whereas esprit de corps is team focused and mutually supportive of the individual's needs. Therefore, leaders should prioritize esprit de corps in their organizations and allow it to shape and impact morale.

To start, as a leader incorporate the phrase "Just do!"

This simply means that if you're a leader, then lead. Lead from the front of your organization. Focus on honesty, timeliness and being genuine. Work collaboratively but make decisions. Display and exhibit energy, enthusiasm and happiness. Leading is never about popularity. Set your priorities and be agile as the environment changes. Clearly articulate no more than five points that make up your strategic vision.

Here's a strategic vision example:

**People And Culture:** The organization is defined by the quality of the team. Be people-focused, and the culture will be the foundation for success.

**Communications:** Embrace a culture of trust, mutual vulnerability and accountability, communicating openly and freely and focusing our attention on active listening.

**Agility:** Be an agile organization that easily makes changes demanded by the market.

**Be Customer-Centric:** Train the team to be customer-centric. Business success resides with clients and directly reflects on the organization's reputation.

**Produce Quality Products:** This can mean ensuring that our product (employees) are trained, coached, and taught in a timely manner and with quality trainings/leaders.

- Build your team around the vision and collective goals.
- Organize properly, get the administrative house in order and be especially diligent with recruiting.
- Focus and act on the professional development of your team.
- Individual morale is shaped by genuine care, predictability and stability in organizations.
- It's also critical to have a clearly defined path to success.

In the end, leaders must consider morale but focus on esprit de corps. Esprit de corps is developed and executed through a thoughtful plan. Building esprit de corps takes time and requires confidence and credibility in leadership. It boils down to a matter of trust

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2022/03/21/why-leaders-should-consider-morale-but-focus-on-esprit-de-corps/?sh=3f48798f37ac>

<https://medium.com/@martin.teasdale/what-is-esprit-de-corps-and-how-can-it-help-you-lead-your-team-a8791464cdd6>

# Esprit de corps

- Means “team spirit”
- “A sense of group cohesion in the organization and employees.”
- Loyalty
- Achieving common goals through collaboration
- Ability to feel more comfortable with fellow workers, know they have “your back”

Even when there are conflicts - such as jealousy, one-upmanship, or misunderstanding, they can be dealt with and still have Esprit de corps.



# Organizational Esprit de corps

“Gives a group of individuals belong to a special group or body and have strength in the knowledge that it forms part of what they stand for or believe in, how others (outsiders) perceive them, and how they relate to fellow members (insiders).”

-B. Houston, Harvard Business Review





# Organizational Esprit de corps

Henry Favol's principle of management states, "esprit de corps is the sense of unity and commitment to achieving a common goal. With this spirit, team members persistently pull each other together even in times of great adversity. It is a spirit of devotion and loyalty which each organization relies on to achieve success."

Favol also states that

“While it is important to recruit talents with significant expertise, a professional should also be able to fit into the organization’s ecosystem and should be committed to working with the team on a long-term basis.”



# Development of Esprit de corps in Organizations

1. Know your team
2. Be personal
3. Show appreciation
4. Set high standards
5. Develop morale
6. Open communication
7. Provide support
8. Create identity
9. Be a story teller.
10. Become competitive.
11. Always communicate
12. HAVE FUN!

1. Know your team as people and not just those that complete tasks.
2. As a leader be personal; talk about what the group means to you and do not be afraid of vulnerability.
3. Show personal appreciation
4. Set high standards for the group and follow-up on them
5. Understand that morale is extremely important and dedicate time to create, foster, and maintain it
6. Always maintain open communication
7. Provide support to all team members
8. Create a sense of unique identity
9. Be a story teller. Tell the team what is going on today, the end goals, and what part they play in achieving them.
10. Become competitive. Light a fire and encourage your team to take on challenges.
11. Always communicate – prioritize and make the time to communicate all the time.
12. **HAVE FUN!** Both in and out of work. Shared experiences in and out of work are the “glue” that holds the team together.



**Mahatma Gandhi stated “my life, my message” - great leaders lead by example.**

A young boy became so obsessed with eating sugar. His mother was quite upset with this and had tried so many ways to stop her son from eating it. However, none of them seemed to work, so she decided to take her son and go and see his idol – Mahatma Gandhi. In the hope that her son may listen to him. They walked for miles under the scorching sun to reach Gandhi’s ashram, there she shared with Gandhi her situation – “Gandhi, my son consumes far too much sugar will you please tell him it’s bad for his health?”

After listening to the woman patiently, Gandhi thought for a while and refused to give the boy advice and told him to return in two weeks. The mother left a little perplexed and wondered why Gandhi had not asked the boy to stop eating sugar straight away.

Two weeks later, they returned to visit Gandhi, this time Gandhi looked at the boy and said – “Boy, you stop eating sugar it’s not good for your health.”

The boy nodded towards Gandhi and said he would do his best to stop eating sugar. The boy’s mother was curious as to why Gandhi needed two weeks to tell her son that. Gandhi smiled to her and said, “Two weeks ago I had an obsession with sugar, I needed to cut back myself.”



# Building Esprit de corps

- Develop focus
- Create positive focus
- Keep your eye on the bigger picture
- Lead by example
- Maintain good communication
- Ensure there is clarity
- Use different platforms for communication

[www.businessweekly.co.zw/how-to-build-esprit-de-corps-in-your-business](http://www.businessweekly.co.zw/how-to-build-esprit-de-corps-in-your-business)

- Develop focus on a single and common goal.
- Create positive focus on a common goal. This will help each team member concentrate on how to achieve the goal and refrain from dwelling on unimportant matters.
- Keep your eye on the big picture
- Lead by example. The best way to show ethical values, commitment, and teamwork is by showing them yourself. A leader shows people they lead that they believe in them and is ready to support them.
- Maintain good communication. The goal of communication is SHARING.
- You need to ensure that there is clarity within the communication – otherwise it is not communicating.
- Use different platforms for communication – to ensure that everyone is well-informed and no miscommunication is presented.





# **Final Thought on Communication**

There once was a monastery that had very strict rules. The monks took a vow of silence and no one was allowed to speak at all. There was just one exception to this rule. Every year, the monks were permitted to speak just two words. After his first year at the monastery, one monk was summoned to his annual meeting with the head monk. “It has been one year,” said the head monk. “What are the two words you would like to speak?” “Bed hard” said the monk. “Thank you” replied the head monk. One year later, the monk was again summoned to the head monk’s office. “It has been one more year,” said the head monk. “What are the two words you would like to speak?” “Food awful” said the monk. “I see,” replied the head monk. Yet another year passed and the monk once again met with the head monk who asked, “What are your two words now, after these three years?” “I quit!” said the monk. “Well, I can see why,” replied the head monk. “All you ever do is complain.” You may well be wondering what has this to do with communication skills? The answer is simply this... The more you say, the less people will remember what you have said. If you found that story amusing, you will almost certainly remember it and be able to tell it to others. Had each of the three conversations between the monk and the head monk been a paragraph or two, you would probably struggle to remember it, and most likely not bother. Much the same goes for your communications with your prospects and customers. If you want them to remember what you said, aim to convey your message powerfully and with as few words as possible, and maybe with a short story. Stories sell.

<https://bruceking.co.uk/a-super-story-and-a-great-lesson-in-communication-skills/gh>

# Questions?

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