

Running head: Part II – Esprit de Corps – The New Connection Culture

Community Enrichment for Workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Part II

Esprit de Corps

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## Abstract

The objective of this paper's focus is to the desire is to create an open-mind in leadership, management, employees and our peers as the movement from the lukewarm economy of today to the future of a new society in the workplace as we begin to move into the 21st century. How do we bring meaningful work front and center to the five generations, the Millennials, the Generation Ys and the Generation Xs, the Baby-Boomers (all three-tiers) and the Traditionalists? How do we reenergize the workforce as a new connection culture via the concept of Esprit de Corps which means "Union in Strength"? How is this done? How does our leadership engage with the culture and change management required? Change is difficult for anyone especially if their lives personally have not been affected by the economic blunders in the past several years that have set wheels in change for the other guy. How do we get those to see the value in looking at the opportunity for change as a true benefit for them as well – not just the other guy?

Keywords: Esprit de Corps, Enrichment and Passion – igniting the fire, Culture Change within the C-Suite, Increased Performance and Retention.

## Introduction

The objective is to provide evidence and resources to substantiate the argument that reenergizing the workforce as a connection culture, a whole entity and bring together the concept of Esprit de Corps, which means “Union in strength.” Fayol (1916) wrote the proverb of Esprit de Corps in his General Principles of Management description. As we will discuss in our review of literature, divide and ruling our employees and teams may cause dissention among other employees, as this practice may be as seen as preferential practice. As Fayol says:

Business heads would do well to ponder this proverb. Harmony, union among the personnel of a concern, is great strength in that concern. Effort, then, should be made to establish it. Among the countless methods in use I will single out specific to one principle to be observed and two pitfalls to be avoided. The principle to be observed is unity of command; the dangers to be avoided are (a) misguided interpretation of motto “divide and rule,” (b) the abuse of written communications (p. 59-60). This proverb leads me to a moral taken I believe from an Aesop fable, United we stand, United we fall.

In preparing our leadership and managers for the next ‘wave’ of change in the workplace it may be of value to work with the talent managers, change agents and their executive coaches to learn the engagement and enrichment practices of the connection culture as we review noted literature from our thought leadership in the field.

Review of the human potential leaders such as Maslow, Senge, McLagan, Gosling, Mintzberg, and continue to look at others such as Fayol, Stallard, Ulrich, Goldsmith, Gezzell,

Worley, Lawler, and Dixon will focus on the value of how our leadership can seek value in their own growth to enable the new workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We will look at specific instances of the effects of an economic crisis have provided and possibility of new tenants and causes and on how our leadership can foster the connection culture at their organizations to reignite the sparks of the human passion. Additionally a review of several tools to aide our communication with our colleagues and management borrowing techniques from the Improv artists. Lastly, the reviewing the ideology of the market value of the person rather than the job and the emotional drivers that articulate the why of work, and the hint it probably is not just the money that provide the drive of work.

#### Value to the Audience

In the past decade, we have seen great changes from the early years in recovery to the dot.com bust, many mergers and acquisitions and the later years of the deceptive practices of the mortgage industry and financial collapse of Wall Street. All of these issues have taken a toll on our organizations, the employees and the decisions that were made by the leadership of these organizations. During this period there were decisions by leadership to outsource jobs and employees for inexpensive labor. More recently there have been fewer employees at work due to the huge lay-offs, those employees who remain become overworked and overburdened, and the affect has undermined the employee's level of engagement.

Additionally, there has been a continued focus of leadership to invest less in their human capital resources and notwithstanding the continued demands of the global economy to be competitive; all of this is causing fatigue fractures in the workforce. How all of these factors

have added to the burnout of the American workers and the employers 'worry' about their high performers exiting their companies. The opportunity for these organizations will be a review of the motivators to reignite the flame of passion for our workers in order for them to feel connected to the vision and leadership of our organizations again.

The hope intended is the call to action to our leadership to change their organizations focus and realign how they we will engage and enrich the lives of all their fellow workers. In essence, to realign their organizations priorities; put their employees first and help them feel connected again so they can support the vision of the organization. The overall benefits for the organization are better skilled, connected, and motivated workers who are engaged in their jobs. The real value for the organization will be the performance results that have increased for all their workers up to 2-3 percentage points with the result met with fewer employees departing and retention of workers maintained.

In an interview with Dave Ulrich, Norm Smallwood, and Kate Sweetman, Marshall Goldsmith (2009) asks the co-authors of *Leadership code: 5 Rules to Lead*, several pertinent questions about their new book about leadership for his article that appeared in *Business Week Online*. Marshall's questions focus on the principles described in the leadership book and how the authors recommend applying those principles during the recession. Ulrich states, (2009)

“The main premise of writing this book is due to the sheer number of books on leadership available. What do leaders do in time of crisis and make order out of the current recession the world is in. The book reflects a synthesis of what they know about leadership” (p.1).

The authors boiled down five rules that all leaders must have in order to be effective.

Those five rules are: 1) Invest in themselves and constantly be learning, manage their

physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual selves. They can act quickly to make decisions and have great patience. 2) Be strategists, be pragmatic, work with others to find the path from here to the desired future. 3) Enable executions and understand how to make change, assign accountability, delegate, and make sure that teams work well together. 4) Talent managers engaging employee's personal, professional and organizational loyalty. 5) Human capital developers building next generation, skills, knowledge, behaviors and attitudes for future strategic success. (p. 1-2)

The combinations of all five areas are needed to position the company for recovery. Smallwood says, (2009) "being personally proficient, having integrity, being trustworthy, and willing to learn," (p. 2.) The observations from the reading of the five principles and to bring the connection culture into this equation would be the skill of empathy, being transparent and looking at the 'soft-side' of people and letting people know that we as leadership and management care.

In Ulrich and Ulrich's new book, *The Why of Work* (2010), the authors continue with the leadership theme yet they focus on why employees work and what we truly need to do to engage our workers and to find purpose in the work they do. Ulrich asks, "What are the most important skills that grease the skids of human connection?" Ulrich & Ulrich believe it is about building the relationships at work as the individual and the leadership learns from one another. The five skills sets are: 1) Make and respond to bids, 2) Listen and self-disclose, 3) Navigate proximity, 4) Resolve conflict and 5) Make amends. (p 107). These skills are what Stallard (2007) talks about in his book, *Fired up or Burned Out* and building the connection culture to help all people thrive. In today's work climate internally and in our extended world externally, politically the distrust of leadership appears to be setting a record for incivility towards each other and lack of

common respect. All we need to do is look at our weekly headlines in the news. What the leadership will do to reengage their workforces ultimately begins with themselves and showing that they [leadership] truly care about the employee and the provided work has meaning.

As Ulrich (2010) points out, during the past several years for those who have remained at work – if they have felt mistreated or taken advantage of they will begin to look for new work, as the economy gets better. “Meaning should be a real option for every worker who values it, and not just in not-for-profit organizations that have been its traditional province. Whether our future employees are graduating from the Harvard Business School or the local detention school, meaning matters (p 263)”.

In a communications article and providing us with a few great tools, we can improve our interpersonal listening and hearing skills to assist us in sharpening our own skills to show others we truly care about their concerns. In an article, *Am I talking to Me?* - the author Izzy Gesell, MS Ed, CSP is an organizational alchemist, keynote speaker and facilitator and he addresses the power of the internal dialogue to help us with ‘full-body’ listening. Mr. Gesell uses techniques from Improv Theater to aid in the transformational principles of self-discovery and improved interpersonal communication in conversational capabilities to bring these interpersonal skills to a higher level.

There are two foundational skills of full-body listening, they are focus and acknowledgement. Focus allows you to stay present in the moment. Improvisers clearly differentiate the concepts of acknowledgement and agreement; they deal with reality and respond to what it is, rather than what they would like it to be. The method they use is called, “Yes, and.” rather than “Yes, but” (p. 22). In a communication situation, focus leads to all conversers being present, meaning they exist in the here and now. Acknowledgement leads to the communicators’

connection, meaning each part of a co-creation team. Each is dependent on the other for flow and movement. This synchronicity of focus and acceptance is what results in full-body listening.

Using the focus and acknowledgement of this communication technique and adapting it into the new connection culture may bring full-body listening techniques and enable awareness in diversity and civility to stimulate meaningful conversations with our colleagues and management.

In an article written by authors, Worley and Lawler entitled, “Designing Organizations That Are Built to Change” (2006). They address several topics that are prevalent in our mobile economy and that is how salaries are attached to the job not the person and that leadership needs to be thinking organizationally to be able to react competitively. They propose the person based pay scheme, which simply states, “In work environments that call for changing task assignments, paying the person – as opposed to paying the job is a more effective approach, particularly with it comes to retaining the right people. After all, people have a market value; jobs do not. People can change companies for higher pay; jobs cannot (p 20).”

In other words, the person based pay scheme is designed to be effective because it is up to the individual person to take responsibility and be accountable for what they do to increase their own skill. If the leadership looks at the organization and engaged the employees holistically than they can be flexible in their growth prospective as they have provided meaning to their employees to do well.

Lastly, in the YouTube video on the topic of Leadership strategies and leadership styles, Patrick Dixon (2007) a noted Speaker and Futurist provides a lively discussion on motivation in leadership change management. Dixon states in his video performance:



“What drives strategy or vision at a company may be the best plan in the world, yet it will fall to pieces if the employees don’t support it and if the employees do not feel any motivation from the leadership and management. It is about ethics and values that reaches the individual personally where they can be ignited by the passion and join the vision. It is about passion. If the people you work with don’t care it doesn’t matter about the vision or strategy.”

## Summary

In summary, there are many books on the subject of leadership, retention, how to engage your workers yet none so powerful as true value in connecting with what is meaningful to our work and developing a culture to support engagement and retention of all workers. As we move forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our leadership needs to provide meaning, caring, quality communication and establishing a work/life balance to reignite the passion within all individuals. We need to do this now and provide our workers with the needed tools to compete with the global diversity of our world.

## Resources

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