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CHAPTER 11

Morale

The Essential Intangible

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We knew going into Ramadi that it was going to be a gunfight. Weekly updates and reports from Ramadi painted a picture of tough days for units in the city. Although the city was small and densely populated (500,000), it was all two battalions—one Army in the east and one Marine in the west—could do to conduct offensive operations.¹ Hotel Company was tasked to provide a mobile unit for security as the battalion commander circulated the battlefield. Because we were the forward command post (CP) during battalion operations, our call sign was “Blade Jump” or as we called ourselves, “The Jump.”

Morale was high in The Jump. We were a highly trained and experienced organization. Hand selected for the task, our mission was important and relevant. As a group, we had been together for several months and had forged bonds and a sense of togetherness through the crucible of training for combat and combat itself. Individually and collectively, our will and spirit was far above that of the average unit.

Throughout the deployment we did many things typical of other companies in the battalion; however, because of the operational tempo and our requirement to circulate throughout the entire city, we became very good at identifying and destroying improvised explosive devices (IEDs). We were so good that we became the asset of choice for the explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team’s escort and route clearance when high-level general officers or State Department officials would visit our area of operations. I must admit that even with practice, this skill, which we never took for granted, took time to develop. In fact, early in the deployment we were more lucky than good. On a few occasions we were hit by an IED planted

only a few feet from us. With one exception, when a Marine in the gun turret had his hand ripped in half, we never received a serious casualty. Our success can be attributed to high morale, tough vehicles, a thorough turnover from the battalion we relieved, and our ability to capitalize and learn quickly from mistakes, thus ensuring we never made the same mistake twice. As good as we were at identifying IEDs, we never became complacent because we knew the enemy was always getting better and training to kill us.

Current research on morale points to an important and defining characteristic of this phenomenon that is especially critical to those who find themselves in organizations operating in a high-threat environment. Specifically, morale has been found to be motivating, leading to perseverance and presumably success at group tasks, especially under trying circumstances.² Morale is potent in the face of external challenges, defined by difficulties, danger, high stress, and adversity. The defining characteristic of morale is that it is a “force multiplier”—that is, high morale has a positive impact on performance, and low morale has a negative effect on performance. The Marine unit in the opening vignette was good at their job, in fact very good. What allowed it to be successful was its members’ superb equipment, meaningful mission, ability to learn from and adapt to the environment (enemy, people, and terrain), and their high level of mutual trust and confidence in themselves. Quite simply, they had high morale.

In World War II, the combat flying personnel in the Army Air Corps possessed unusually high levels of morale. Their duty entailed some of the highest risks of death, even higher than that for ground troops. Their bombing runs against the German war machine, often initiated from England, required missions across enemy-controlled territory within enemy-controlled air space, oftentimes in daylight. The crews that flew these missions knew that their chance of survival was miniscule, yet they continued to fly and continued to have high morale. These results contradict perceptions of common sense. Unlike in some other Army elements, the soldiers in the Air Corps volunteered for this service once they were in the force. They tended to be more educated overall and viewed their unit as elite and their missions as directly contributing to the war effort. Others viewed them as superior because of their selection and skills training.³ While all of the above were contributing factors to the overall success of the mission, it was their morale that allowed them to fly day after day with incredible results.

Each aircrew was unique, and the relationships within the crews were special, allowing them to handle the dangers, stress, and adversity of repetitive daytime bombing missions into enemy territory. Similar to *The Jump*, the

bomber crews were a highly trained and experienced group. As volunteers, they were self-selected for their task (unlike the hand-selected Marines in The Jump), and their mission was relevant, purposeful, and important. Morale was high and had a positive impact on the crews' positive performance.

Implicit in the notion of morale, particularly as the term has been used in military organizations, is the idea that high-morale groups are especially likely to perform more effectively than low-morale groups when confronted with severe obstacles and adverse conditions.⁴ The current nature of war indicates that units operating outside the large forward operating bases (or "outside the wire") are the only forces capable of causing soldiers to expose themselves consistently to enemy fire. The same can be said for police, fire, and other para-military organizations in their relevant contexts. The confusion, danger, hardship, and isolation of the modern battlefield have exacerbated reliance on the small groups to which soldiers belong. Although there is no ironclad framework for asserting the importance of one factor over another in assessing the individual and unit performance of these groups, the impact of morale on group effectiveness in terms of courage, discipline, enthusiasm, and willingness to endure hardship is clear.⁵ It is impossible for the military to function, particularly during highly stressful and demanding missions, without support, trust, unity, and esprit de corps at the small-unit level.⁶ No doubt, there are many reasons why a unit or organization performs well (or poorly) under stress. Undeniable, though, is the importance of morale as a key variable that influences both motivation and performance. Put simply, morale matters.

WHAT IS MORALE?

What is morale? On the surface, this seems like a question with a simple answer. There are, however, differing perspectives based on a vast amount of research and the extensive literature of the different disciplines of the social sciences. Although behavioral scientists have long used the term "morale," there is little agreement about what exactly it does or should mean. Morale, as described by military authors, seems to be a complex construct that includes an array of attitudinal, motivational, and social predispositions. It is more general than the concepts of motivation and satisfaction in the psychology literature but encompasses major elements of both concepts as well as the notion of group cohesiveness.⁷ The word "morale" is of French origin and entered English common usage in the mid-1700s. Originally indicating morality or good conduct, the word soon came to mean confidence and was applied in particular to military forces.⁸

As used today, morale is defined as a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward goals and tasks. It encompasses confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and loyalty. In group situations, the focus here, it also includes a sense of common purpose. In organizations, morale entails how one thinks and feels about the group's task, mission, and purpose, which greatly affect the group's motivation to perform, especially in dangerous environments. Morale is both an indicator of group and individual well-being.⁹ Although an individual's morale is certainly relevant to the overall morale of a unit or organization, in a high-threat environment the larger issue is how group (two or more people) morale affects organizational effectiveness. Most sizable groups can sustain good morale with a handful of alienated or disgruntled members.¹⁰

The components of morale are multifaceted and include confidence, enthusiasm, optimism, capability, resilience, leadership, mutual trust and respect, loyalty, social cohesion, common purpose, devotion, sacrifice (selfless service), compelling history, honor, and moral rightness. These elements exist on a continuum of degrees. They are desirable in their own right, but they are also valued because of their presumed consequences—perseverance, courage, resilience, and, of course, success—for the group and its members.¹¹ The Marines in the opening vignette clearly exhibited these characteristics: they were successful, persevered in difficult situations, were courageous under fire, and resilient in spite of setbacks. The Jump was not your typical Marine infantry unit, comprised solely of infantry specialists. Instead, it also consisted of Marines specializing in supply, communications, and motor transportation. This configuration could be cause for concern to those outside of the unit, but to Marines, who they are and what they represent, that is, warriors is what matters. True to the warrior ethos, The Jump organized, trained, and fought as such. Because of the diverse specialty backgrounds of each Marine in the unit, the motto "Every Marine a Rifleman" resonated more with them than in typical Marine outfits.

The Marines in The Jump were hand-selected for the unit and given the toughest and most important missions; they were elite. They had a swagger that spoke to the confidence and pride that came from their being well-trained and having a compelling mission and purpose so strong that others were attracted by it and wanted to be part of something as great. The bonds of trust forged through shared hardships during tough, demanding, realistic training and other perilous, real-life situations enabled The Jump to not merely survive, but to thrive. The individual Marines knew that the company commander was in charge, but more importantly they knew and believed in each other and what they were doing. They held each other in high regard, with mutual respect and trust. During the events described in the vignette, young

privates stood with the more senior sergeants, corporals stood with captains, and none was more safe or less at risk than the other. Success bred success, which in turn contributed to high morale and effective unit performance, as evidenced by the unit's success in locating and destroying IEDs or as the unit of choice for high-visibility missions. Each component of morale was manifest in this group, thereby resulting in very high morale and increased group effectiveness.¹² Table 11.1 summarizes the key factors that affect morale.

Table 11.1 Factors Affecting Morale

Trust between leaders and members	Member selection
Respect	Mission clarity, purpose, and moral rightness (task cohesion)
Tough, realistic training to enhance capabilities, which boosts confidence	Sufficient material resources
Past successes; emphasizing the organization's past history	Positive, caring leadership
Strong social relationships based on respect and loyalty (social cohesion)	Sacrifice for the good of the group (selfless service)
Honorable performance of duty	Optimism about the future
Commitment to excellence	Devotion to the cause

CULTURE AND MORALE

I took command of a mechanized infantry company in East Baghdad in September 2005. At the time, my battalion was about two-thirds of the way through a twelve-month deployment and my initial concern was that morale was low, and even worse, complacency was high. It had been a frustrating deployment in that we were not finding and killing the enemy. My battalion task force was assigned a sector in east Baghdad just south of Sadr City and during the year had seen the rise and proliferation of the explosively formed penetrator (EFP). The EFP had been the cause of several KIAs [killed-in-action] and WIAs [wounded-in-action] in my battalion, and frustrations were high because we were not finding and killing the IED builders, financiers, and emplacers. Instead, soldiers in my company were responsible for securing portions of a main supply route (Route Plutos), which at the time had been a fertile route for placing IEDs to kill U.S. troops.

I knew I was taking command of my company at a critical point in the deployment. Soldiers had less time remaining in Iraq than they had already spent in theater and my greatest fear was complacency causing the death or serious injury of any of my soldiers. On my first day of command, I walked around the company just trying to soak things in and see what I was getting myself into. What I saw only concerned me more. I saw soldiers walking around in mismatched uniforms and many walking around the company area in civilian clothes. The general cleanliness of the company CP and adjacent living area was a complete mess. Overall standards and discipline in the company seemed to be low. I sensed a level of fraternization between the NCOs and junior enlisted soldiers when I overheard privates calling their sergeants by their first names. The outgoing company commander and company executive officer had the filthiest rooms in the company. My initial assessment of patrol orders and pre-combat inspections conducted prior to going outside the wire was that these vital processes were being “finger-drilled.” Soldiers felt like they had gone on too many patrols to remember and consequently they knew what they needed to do without having to use a checklist or spot-check subordinates.

My concern was what I called “creeping complacency,” which was complacency starting out as something small and then turning into something large with the potential to cause the death or injury of one of my soldiers. For example, seemingly small uniform violations or minor lapses in standards and discipline were to me indicative of greater problems to come. I knew that something needed to change and this change needed to happen fast!

According to renowned social psychologist Edgar H. Schein’s classic definition, and those of other theorists, culture may be said to refer to the structure of organizations rooted in the prevailing assumptions, norms, values, customs, and traditions that collectively, over time, have created shared individual expectations among the members. The culture’s meaning is established through socialization of the identity groups that converge in the operations of the organization. Culture includes attitudes and behavior about what is right, what is good, and what is important and is often manifested in shared heroes, stories, and rituals that promote bonding among the organization’s members. Culture is, in short, the “glue” that makes an organization a distinctive source of identity and experience. Thus, a strong culture exists when a clear set of norms and expectations—usually a function of leadership—permeates the entire organization. It is essentially “how we do things around here.”¹³ In the end, morale is rooted at the core of organizational culture. In order to assess and affect morale, leaders need to begin with an understanding of the immediate climate and long-term culture of the group they are leading.

High or low morale can often be traced to the strength of the culture of a unit. In order for a positive morale to be internalized and ingrained in the unit's fabric, the culture of the organization needs to be one that promotes, promulgates, and supports a high-morale environment. Before a leader can influence the unit morale or the personal morale of its members, he or she first needs to assess the organization. In the vignette above, the new commander recognized that he needed to immediately address some issues in his unit because tangible indicators pointed to a culture in which indiscipline and low morale had become problematic. A high-morale environment, as it relates to the preceding story, would be a unit where leaders set the example and support the parent organization's goals and values. In a high-morale unit, subordinates identify and internalize the unit goals and values, such as discipline, mission readiness, and high performance and conduct.

All three levels of culture—artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions—must be congruent and consistent with respect to what the institution is promoting.¹⁴ In evaluating culture, on the first (or surface) level lie artifacts, that is, all the phenomena that one sees, hears, and feels when encountering a group with an unfamiliar culture. Artifacts include the visible products of the group, such as the architecture of its physical environment; its language, its technology and products; its artistic creations; its style, as embodied in clothing, manners of address, displays of emotion, and myths and stories told about the organization; its published list of values; its observable rituals and ceremonies and so on. The important point about this level of culture is that it is easy to observe and difficult to decipher. In the case of the new commander, the artifacts—lack of orderliness and cleanliness of the CP and living areas, soldiers in mismatched uniforms and civilian clothes, privates calling sergeants by their first names—paint a picture of an ill-disciplined and complacent unit. The commander could interpret these artifacts to mean that the soldiers in the company were tired from months of long, repeated missions or that unit morale and overall satisfaction with the mission was low.

At the second level of organizational culture are the espoused beliefs and values of the organization. High-morale units espouse beliefs and values that stress loyalty, competence, affiliation with the primary group, discipline, and trust.¹⁵ All group learning ultimately reflects someone's beliefs and values, the sense of what ought to be, as distinct from what is. Beliefs and values at this conscious level will predict much of the behavior that can be observed at the artifact level. If the beliefs and values are not based on prior learning, however, they may also only reflect espoused theories, which predict well enough what people will say in a variety of situations but may be out of line with what they will actually do in situations in which those beliefs and values should, in fact,

be operating. If espoused beliefs and values are reasonably congruent with the underlying assumptions, then the articulation of those values into a philosophy of operating can be helpful in bringing the group together, serving as a source of identity and core mission.

As the new commander began to “peel back the onion” with respect to the company’s culture, the observed artifacts revealed an unhealthy organization where the espoused beliefs and values were not congruent with the parent (battalion) organization or what the members knew to be right (as learned through basic training, unit training, and other forms of institutional and organizational socialization). The vignette portrays an organization with potentially incongruent espoused beliefs and values and likely low morale. In an Army that teaches and values loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage, the artifacts indicate that this is a company that has lapsed into indiscipline, individuality, carelessness, and selfishness, thus fostering a culture of low morale.

To get at the deepest level of cultural understanding and to predict future behavior correctly, one must understand the level of basic underlying assumptions. When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it comes to be taken for granted. What was once a hypothesis, supported only by a hunch or a value, gradually comes to be treated as a reality; people believe that nature works that way. When basic assumptions are taken for granted in an organization, one finds little variation within the group. This degree of consensus results from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values. In fact, if a basic assumption comes to be strongly held in a group, members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable. Therefore, basic assumptions can be thought of as the implicit, core assumptions that guide behavior, that tell group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things.

Basic assumptions tend to be non-debatable, and hence are extremely difficult to change. To learn something new in this realm requires reexamining and reconstructing existing paradigms. The role of leadership is especially critical to a successful reexamination and reconfiguring of basic assumptions, and therefore, to the overall morale of the unit. In the vignette above, it is essential that the new commander determine whether the basic underlying assumptions of his organization are functional or dysfunctional. Because the artifacts appear to paint a picture of dysfunctional espoused beliefs and values, it is vital that he quickly determine whether this cultural dysfunction has permeated the organization to the point where its underlying assumptions have become misaligned with the parent organization’s.¹⁶

Culture is to a group what personality or character is to an individual. Closely associated with an organization’s culture is its climate. In contrast to

culture, climate refers to environmental interactions or behaviors rooted in the organization's value system, such as rewards and punishments, communications flow, and operations tempo, which determine individual and team perceptions about the quality of working conditions. It is essentially "how one feels about this organization." Climate is often considered to be alterable in the near term and largely limited to those aspects of the organizational environment of which members are aware.

Unit culture allows for high morale to exist. Good unit culture creates the conditions for good unit morale, and vice versa. In the opening vignette, there are several key indicators that highlight the low morale in this unit (see Table 11.2).

Table 11.2 Indications of Poor Morale

Factor	Indicator
Loss of mission clarity and purpose	"[The] battalion was about two-thirds of the way through a twelve-month deployment and . . . had less time remaining in Iraq than they had already spent in theater and my greatest fear was complacency."
Lack of past success	"It had been a frustrating deployment in that we were not finding and killing the enemy."
Lack of mutual respect	"I sensed a level of fraternization between the NCOs and junior enlisted soldiers when I overheard privates calling their sergeants by their first names."
Poor leadership	"The outgoing company commander and company executive officer had the filthiest rooms in the company."

To clarify the role of culture and morale, consider the indicator for the lack of respect, that is, the use of first names by the privates when referring to their NCOs. This is an artifact, a visible product of the group. An espoused belief and value associated with this artifact is that it is an acceptable norm to call the company leadership by something other than their military rank. Through socialization and prior learning at entry training and time spent in more disciplined units, the average soldier knows that the use of a first name when addressing a superior is not acceptable and that anything other than this is dysfunctional. Because the informality has likely occurred for most of

the deployment, the basic underlying assumption is that the privates do not respect their NCOs and, therefore, the implicit, core assumption that guides the behavior of the privates is to dismiss their NCOs as superiors and think of them instead as equals. The impact of such general lack of respect rooted in the culture of a unit can be catastrophic. Disrespect for unit leadership breeds a lack of trust and sows the seeds for insubordination and indiscipline. At a minimum, undisciplined organizations in high-stress environments are unsuccessful in mission completion; at worst, the death or injury of organizational members may result because of such indiscipline.

Table 11.3 Assessing Morale

<p>A member identifies strongly with his or her unit when the unit satisfies major physical, security, and social needs. A high-morale unit:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ provides adequate food, water, medical support, rest, and essential supplies and weapons.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ is the primary social group for the individual and controls his or her day-to-day behavior.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ provides the major source of esteem and recognition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ provides a strong sense of mutual affection and attraction among unit members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ provides the member a sense of influence over events in his or her immediate unit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ causes the member to identify strongly with immediate unit leaders at squad, section, platoon, and company levels.

When assessing the morale of an organization, Table 11.1, highlighting the factors affecting morale is a good place to start. There are some intuitive indicators in a unit that will lend themselves to these factors and whether morale is high or low. Table 11.3 offers another perspective on assessing unit morale and focuses on basic member needs and one's sense of belonging to a group.¹⁷

BUILDING HIGH MORALE

Early in my career [as a police officer], while on patrol during a hot summer night, a 10–13 [officer needs immediate assistance] came over the patrol radio. Several men armed with handguns and automatic weapons were being pursued by patrol officers; shots had been fired. Arriving upon

a dangerous and chaotic scene, I looked for guidance from one of the more experienced officers and was absolutely shocked when no one came forward. Unsure, I sought cover and waited for direction, as my partner and I were rookies. Shortly thereafter, an experienced officer arrived on the scene and loudly began to issue directions and make sense of the mayhem. I personally felt reassured; this veteran had returned a sense of control to this high-threat situation. I remember feeling there must be a competent leader to give direction and inspire the troops in the field. This veteran officer's clear competence and concern for a safe and timely resolution to the crisis was obvious.

As an officer on patrol, I have learned that through the daily danger, I must remain focused, calm, and always ready to take charge while motivating my squad to excel. I have always made it a habit to mentally rehearse each possible dangerous situation my squad may find themselves in. I consider tactics, personnel deployment, maneuvers, and how to best use the resources at my disposal. It is critical that the squad leader is knowledgeable and confident while making tactical decisions in the field. I once worked for a commanding officer (CO) who liked to respond to high-threat locations to lend a steadying presence. For example, there was a call for an armed robbery in progress at a bank. As I responded to the location, the CO had arrived there first, disarmed the perpetrator, and placed him in custody. As word spread through the command, we all knew exactly what was expected by his example. In my experience the competence of the leader establishes a benchmark for the performance of a department. This trust in his ability cannot be earned overnight but is the product of repeated positive examples and demonstrated caring for the well-being of his subordinates and organization.

In organizations that customarily operate in dangerous environments, good morale is influenced by extensive training, sufficient material resources, and the sheer nature of the threat or scope of the task. Also contributing to military morale are good leadership, mutual trust and respect among group members, clarity of mission, perceived public support, past combat success (unit history), and low casualty rates. Military units with low turnover rates tend to have higher morale, as do units where members expect to serve a lengthy time in the unit.¹⁸ Those in the military do not fight for their flag or their country as much as for their brothers and sisters who share a trench with them.¹⁹

The actions of the New York City police officer who took charge in the preceding vignette illustrate the affect on morale generated by the actions of the leader; they cannot be underestimated. In fact, most research suggests that morale is best predicted by variables suggesting engagement in meaningful work and confidence in unit functioning and leadership.²⁰ In the

Israel Defense Forces (IDF), morale is sometimes referred to as their “secret weapon.” Historically, a high level of morale has been found in every IDF soldier surveys since its early years.²¹ How do units and organizations achieve this level of morale, which in turn allows them to be successful in environments characterized by stress, uncertainty, and danger?

In the IDF, two variables were found to be most strongly associated with personal levels of morale and perceived company morale: perceived unit togetherness and relationships with commanders.²² With respect to the former, collective efficacy is the belief that individuals hold concerning the ability of their group to successfully perform its tasks. Collective efficacy is considered a compilation of a soldier’s experience; the leader’s tenure, competence, and experience; the leader’s confidence in the group, unit discipline; and members’ identification with the unit.²³ Of these characteristics tested within the IDF, the strongest predictor of perceived combat readiness was the unit member’s identification with his company. A strong sense of belonging and shared beliefs and attitudes reinforced the trust members placed in each other and their

Table 11.4 Factors and Leader Actions That Build Morale

Factor	Leader Action
Trust in one another and confidence in unit leaders	Continuously improve competence, demonstrate honesty and integrity, protect and promote group members’ welfare, share hardships and experiences, conduct tough, demanding, and realistic training, and create opportunities for social and team-building events
Experience of leaders and subordinates	Provide a holistic training program involving physical, mental, and skill-specific elements
Discipline	Establish and enforce high standards, ensure that leaders model the standards at all times, and communicate to group members why it is important to adhere to the standards
Identification with the unit and its history	Instill pride in the unit and a sense of history about those who preceded the current members
Positive, cooperative, and interdependent relationships among group members	Trust and empower group members, share information, and promote participative decision making

leaders. Additionally, the tenure of the leaders and the experience of the soldiers increased perceptions of readiness, as did the level of discipline in a unit. Experienced formations have confidence in their skills and abilities. Leaders understand the value of discipline and the impact it has upon readiness and resultant morale. Therefore, the greater one's belief in the unit's ability to conduct the mission, the higher one's individual and unit morale. This belief is positively affected by a member's identification with his or her unit. Table 11.4 outlines factors that influence and actions leaders can take to build morale.

For the IDF, individual morale and the perceived unit morale were significantly correlated with the degree of confidence in the battalion commanding officer and in the company commanding officer.²⁴ In high-threat environments, the soldier finds that his or her survival depends mainly on the actions of the more immediate leaders. Other factors that directly affect morale (as influenced by the leader) are confidence in oneself, team, and weapons. For the Israeli soldier, his combat team, his weapon, and his sense of competence may frequently be determinants of his survival on the battlefield; the higher his confidence in these factors, the higher his morale, hence his combat readiness. In general, individual morale is characterized by "a sense of well-being based on confidence in self and in primary groups."²⁵ It follows that the impact on group morale is positive.

Table 11.5 Leader Behaviors for Building and Sustaining Morale in a Dangerous Environment

Take charge	Remain calm to make good decisions
Project a sense of control	Remain focused
Give direction	Be a steadying presence (model confidence)
Inspire subordinates	Exhibit optimism
Share leadership (empowerment and participation)	Be loyal and attentive to group members' safety
Maintain unit integrity on missions	Provide resources needed for success
Share dangers and hardships by leading from the front	Perform missions in a moral and ethical manner
Ensure the organization continues to learn and improve	Be honest and transparent with group members
Communicate, explain, and live the shared values	Engage in selfless service

The group leader is directly responsible for developing the self-confidence of his or her subordinates, as well as fostering the subordinates' confidence in the leadership. A leader can take specific steps to build such confidence. Training, shared hardships, developmental exercises, and the like are a handful of examples. Equally critical, if not more important, is the leader's direct role in high-threat situations. The commanding officer in the NYPD earned the confidence and trust of his subordinates via his actions at the decisive moment of a high-stress event. In turn, he built and created an environment of high morale and a benchmark for better performance in the department. Table 11.5 notes behaviors most relevant for leaders in a dangerous situation.

CONCLUSION

Morale matters, especially in environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Morale is a "force multiplier"—high morale has a positive impact on an organization's performance, especially in a high-threat environment. As the essential intangible, leaders can harness this so-called X Factor to better ensure effective unit performance. Unit organizational culture, through the actions of leaders, directly affects unit performance in high-threat environments. Leaders have a responsibility and imperative to build high morale by developing their own proficiency and displaying confidence in themselves and others. A detailed knowledge of potentialities and the current mission is also critical. Individual expertise and the promotion of strong unit cohesion couples with these characteristics in the formation of high unit morale. A unit organizational culture that fosters high morale may result in high levels of unit performance in high-threat environments.

KEY TAKE-AWAY POINTS

1. Morale is embedded in the very culture of an organization. An organizational culture that fosters a positive, values-based framework will facilitate high unit morale.
2. Leaders have a direct role in assessing and building morale. Leadership is absolutely critical in creating the conditions for high morale, both prior to immersion in a hostile environment and in the hostile environment itself.
3. In a high-threat situation, leaders can affect morale by their actions during the crisis. There is no substitute for the positive, direct actions of the leader.

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NOTES

1. A battalion consists of approximately 600 to 700 soldiers or Marines and accompanying equipment, vehicles, and weapons.
2. C. Peterson, N. Park, and P. Sweeney, "Group Well Being: Morale from a Positive Psychology Perspective," *Applied Psychology* 57 (2008): 19–36.
3. Morten G. Ender, *American Soldiers in Iraq: McSoldiers or Innovative Professionals?* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
4. S. J. Motowidlo and W. C. Borman, "Behaviorally Anchored Scales for Measuring Morale in Military Units," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 62 (1977): 177–183.
5. W. D. Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1986).
6. S. Maguen and B. T. Litz, "Predictors of Morale in U.S. Peacekeepers," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 36 (2006): 820–836.
7. Ibid.
8. Peterson, Park, and Sweeney, "Group Well Being."
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Moral rightness is the least obvious component in this vignette. It is exemplified in the Marines' belief in the goodness of their mission and what they were doing.
13. Don M. Snider, "An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture," *Orbis* 43 (1999): 11–16.
14. Edgar H. Schein, *Organization Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).
15. Reuven Gal, *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).
16. While the artifacts and the espoused values and beliefs indicate dysfunction, this does not necessarily imply that the basic assumptions are consistent with these. It

is critical for the new commander to make this determination as soon as possible by looking at artifacts and espoused beliefs across the company. What is described in the vignette may be isolated to a handful of units, not representative of the entire company. If representative, it is understood that complacency, substandard performance, and half efforts are accepted means of behavior.

17. Henderson, *Cohesion*.
18. Peterson, Park, and Sweeney, "Group Well Being."
19. Henderson, *Cohesion*.
20. T. W. Britt et al., "Correlates and Consequences of Morale versus Depression under Stressful Conditions," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 12 (2007): 34–37.
21. Gal, *Portrait of the Israeli Soldier*.
22. Ibid.
23. B. Shamir et al., "Perceived Combat Readiness as Collective Efficacy: Individual and Group Level Analysis," *Military Psychology* 12 (2000): 105–119.
24. Gal, *Portrait of the Israeli Soldier*.
25. Ibid.