

Establish a rallying cry to unite a project team

If you ask a sampling of employees to describe the purpose of their jobs or the reason they're assigned to a project, would you hear the same answer from all of them?

Ideally, you want everyone to say the same thing. That shows they're all aware of what's at stake and why it's important to the bottom line.

A rallying cry gives you a foundation to lead around. It brings everyone together and channels energy into achieving a central task, mission or challenge.

To develop the right theme, make it concrete and actionable. Avoid clichés such as, "Become best of class!" or "Solve problems by innovating!" Such self-evident statements not only fail to motivate but also fuel cynics' scorn.

The best rallying cry captures the emotion behind a project as well as its purpose. If you want to prod people to excel, choose verbs that excite them. Examples include "to develop systems that outshine our competitors" or "to unleash enthusiasm for our products."

Invite input from employees to compose a rallying cry for a particular project. Create a contest and reward winning entries.

Once you finalize your theme, make it visible and audible. Reinforce it in memos and presentations. Design banners emblazoned with the rallying cry and hang them in the break room. Begin brainstorming meetings by leading the group in a quick cheer (corny but surprisingly effective).

Every six months or so, review your rallying cry to confirm it's still relevant. As circumstances change and projects ebb and flow, update your messaging accordingly.