

1. Philosophy

In order to define a chosen course for the work being done at Estefa, the founder of the Estefa philosophies, Amer Al-Alim, has combined central themes from many belief systems from around the world. These themes have specific elements in common; for example, they do not arise from vengeance and they do not deny the existence of a spiritual reality. The philosophies give reason to Estefa's existence. In order to define its purpose, its reason for existing, Estefa has an ethical foundation that is not connected to a specific religion. Instead, the ethical foundation lies in a network of philosophies that can co-exist effectively with most personal choices of belief or religion.

1.1. The Name, Estefa

The name Estefa is derived from the Arabic term (الاصطفاء), a word with historical origins dating back to the 7th century AD. One possible translation into English is "the reaching for purity". In a somewhat religious sense, the word is closely linked to a process of careful selection of those pure elements that work towards a destiny into eternal bliss. This process of selection is described as a continuous development, which does not reach its conclusion during the lifespan of a single entity. It embodies the concept of identifying the most productive and effective aspects of the people and processes involved in any operation and facilitating convergence into the most practical application possible, eliminating irrelevant elements that detract from the whole. It also describes an ongoing development in which the journey is as important as the destination.

The name describes the company's ongoing and ever-continuing quest to develop and improve its professional existence. Estefa symbolizes something that is desired and longed for, while it can never truly be attained. Estefa believes that development is a continuous process that is essential for progress. Once an entity believes it has achieved professional excellence, it will inevitably stop reaching for the knowledge and interaction that will sustain its development.

1.2. The Ant and the Design

An ant has no self-interest. As an individual, an ant has a fragile existence. It can carry several times its own mass and works in a team within a highly structured organization. Although not unique, it is indispensable. It is small, and will always remain small. The ant symbolizes Estefa's nature of working hard in a co-operative structure to build something without feeling the need to change the identity of the whole within which it works.

Estefa strives for clarity and simplicity, without flourish or curlicue. The sleek, unadorned icon of the ant amplifies recognition. It is plain and clear, eliminating superfluous details. In the logo design, the ant's antennae stretch out of the frame, symbolizing the approach of thinking outside the box and connecting to the outside world.

Studies have concluded that ants can inspire large companies in finding management solutions without resorting to authoritarian direction¹. Some international companies have taken an example from ants in adapting their organizational structure. Estefa uses some of such theories in taking decisions related to its management structures.

The logo design was originally a conceptual visualization for a project, The Management Support Group (MSG), which gave birth to many of the concepts on which Estefa is founded. The original design by Sebastiaan ter Burg was in black and white, to keep the concept as straightforward as possible. As the concept of Estefa developed, it became clear that the use of the colour blue would be inevitable, representing the company's strong ties to Europe. The colour green appears in some of Estefa's styles, symbolizing the Arabic and Islamic world in which Estefa has a solid network of business relations. Estefa chose its image to be clear and unambiguous, symbolizing the approach that Estefa strives to achieve.

1.3. Optimizing Financial Structures

In order to achieve the greatest portion of its goals, Estefa has developed a financial strategy to secure its own expansion, while supporting related movements and organizations that share similar goals. This financial strategy is divided into two stages. The first stage takes place when the capacity of an organization does not allow it any concerns other than survival. In most organizations, this phase would occur at the start-up, or after dealing with a crisis. The second stage is

¹ See Appendix 2, The Message of the Ant

when the organization reaches its full operational capacity. In this second stage, the organization would be producing at a level that produces profit, allowing it to allocate funding to its secondary priorities.

In the first stage, the financial structure would be divided into three segments: management, operational costs and growth and expansion. Each of these segments would receive a third of the organization’s income. Considering the primary concern during this phase is meant to be sheer survival, it is assumed that there are no profits left after dividing the finances over those three categories.

Management	Operational Costs	Growth & Expansion	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management salaries and bonuses - Dinners & meetings - Gifts - Accountancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-management salaries and bonuses - Daily supplies - Rent, energy, water - Maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Furniture, electronics - Design & image - Advertising - Website improvement - Advertising 	
1/3	1/3	1/3	Survival & build-up

In the “survival and build-up” stage, a simple calculation should show if the financial structure of an organization is balanced or not. If the organization starts to make a profit, it can be divided over two other segments: “charity and support” and “security and insurance”. Ideally, the organization would aim to achieve a financial structure in which a third is spent on each of these, while the remaining third would be spent on the continued survival and expansion of the organization.

1/3	1/3	1/3	
Survival	Charity & Support	Security & Insurance	Operating at full capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management - Operational costs - Growth & expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active involvement - Product and service provision - Sponsoring (financial support, organizational support, affiliation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insurance - Legal services - Savings 	

Although the older financial management models ignore the importance of charitable involvement and consider charity to be nothing more than an ethical option, modern financial theories show that charity and support of external factors is vitally important as long as it is both strategic and well considered. Giving support to external organizations and entities would not have to be limited to financial donations; it could also be offered by providing products and services that would otherwise be considered non-profitable for an organization. This would ensure that the organization remains in favour with its direct environment, while building up a reserve of staff that knows the company policies and can cover vital gaps in the organizational structure when staff members become ill or non-operational. In other words, providing free products or services increases the stability of an organization.

Another form of support that could benefit an organization is sponsoring organizations or individuals who share common goals with the organization. Such sponsoring creates allies, opens the doors to potential co-operation and allows for a general favourable atmosphere to surround the organization. Careful sponsoring can be considered a safe and profitable form of advertising, generating reliable positive publicity and increasing brand awareness. It is important, however, to analyze the prospects for sponsoring carefully. It is absolutely crucial to analyze the image of a sponsorship candidate and the options they have for switching sponsorship to a competitor very thoroughly. Organizations often make the mistake of forgetting that a sponsorship is a formal agreement, often requiring a water-tight contract.

The third form of support is active participation in instigating or becoming involved in steering another organization. An organization could choose this form of support in order to develop the missing elements it needs for future expansion. Direct involvement in guiding a potentially interesting development can be used as a trial run, allowing an organization to explore possible strategies for expansion without the risk of harming its image if the development acquires unfavourable elements.

1.4. The Connection between Art, Culture and a Professional Approach

Art is a word that touches on and influences many different fields, including but not limited to music, literature, painting, visualization, sculpturing, architecture, methodology and philosophy. A successful work of art is one that connects well to a range of targets. The more that art intrigues or attracts its target, the more powerful it is. In understanding art, there is a lesson to be learned in understanding intercultural communication.

The approach of an artist is often different from that of a manager. Successful managers tend to reason by putting the interests of the company first. Following protocol exclusively on the basis of management decisions can create a rigid structure. To avoid causing stagnation in a professional environment, it may sometimes be necessary to involve an artist. Placing an artist in the core of an organizational structure may cause a manager's task to become more challenging, but it may also increase the stability of the company's progress. It goes without saying that the artist needs to fit into the company philosophy and ethics. Finding suitable artists and finding a way to connect them to the company is a challenge that requires careful planning.

The different forms of art can be seen as tools, used to attract attention to or distract unwanted attention from a specific object, goal or thought. Moreover, artists can be seen as the inspiration and stimulus to help the organization maintain its needed progress. In carefully choosing forms of art to suit the target audiences of its clients, Estefa enhances its efforts to improve intercultural understanding on an ongoing basis. By combining art and culture with professional activities, Estefa believes it can deliver its intercultural services and products more effectively.

Aside from the direct effect of linking art to cultural business elements, art is a tool that serves many important purposes. It helps open doors that would normally be closed, sometimes even swaying opinions in a specific direction. In a business, this direction can be analyzed and decided upon in advance, creating a situation in which the business and the art form are mutually beneficial.

1.5. Pure Art

One of the recurring themes in events organized by Estefa is the concept that has become known as Pure Art. This magical formula combines an artistic value, cultural interaction, and the support of international charity organizations with professional endeavours. Pure Art causes events to be pleasurable, yet professional.

Originally, Pure Art (Formerly known as Clean Art) was inspired by studying the reaction of Arabic people to Traditional Portuguese music known as Fado. It was observed that even the most conservative men and women of the Arab and Islamic were open and receptive, specifically to the music of Fado singer Mariza. The development of Estefa's involvement in the Fado world, primarily through Mário Pacheco's 'Clube de Fado', has led to Estefa's increased interest in seeking cultural co-operation through art that is generally accepted by most population groups. Estefa has developed the concept of Pure Art on the basis of its findings.

***Definition:** Pure Art comprises any artistic format, which does not induce a feeling of violation within any individual with regard to their cultural identity, ethics or beliefs. It is art, which can unite all cultures positively, without offending any cultural society. The concept of Pure Art has an artistic identity as well as a practical value in a cultural context.*

In order to define the framework for Pure Art, three conditions decide on whether art is considered “pure” or not. These conditions are:

1. no nudity, sexual or suggestive content that may conflict with social norms and values of conservative communities

2. no use of vulgar or insulting language, or content that targets specific individuals or groups in society
3. no direct political association with one specific party or ideology, and no critical stance towards specific parties, individuals or directions
4. no direct inseparable affiliation with any specific religion or spiritual or idealistic group or ideology, nor any rejection or disapproval thereof
5. no violence, aggression, sadism or bloody content

As of 2008, Estefa has started an initiative to help improve the promotion of artists. By compiling the Artist Base Document (see downloads on the right), artist can present their information to Estefa to assess whether it can be considered Pure Art. In time, Estefa aims to use Pure Art and an initiative to organize events and raise a platform to improve the websites, promotion and presentation of artists. Furthermore, Estefa will attempt to use Pure Art to raise funds and increase awareness for Music in ME.

1.6. Simplifying Communication

Communication between cultures is often hampered by semantics. Finding common concepts and words is often more complicated than it may seem at first. These differences in definitions can lead to misunderstandings, and in some cases even to ideological wars. In order to bridge the gap between extremely different cultures, Estefa has two techniques to simplify intercultural communication. The first technique is to link non-tangible (or emotional) states of being to quantifiable concepts. Listing and ordering priorities plays an important role here. The second technique is simplifying complex concepts to break down discussions to basic definitions of their components. This last technique is especially useful in identifying the source of religious and ideological disagreements, which are inevitable in Estefa's sphere of work.

The first technique, connecting non-tangible states of being to quantifiable concepts, is useful for analyzing and assessing complex emotions such as happiness or love. Such concepts are important in finding what stimulates or obstructs co-operation between entities. Finding logical sources for emotional states of being is the key to finding how a person or entity can influence their long-term state of being. As a result, an entity can discover specific incentives or necessary buffers for co-operating with another entity. Finding a way to turn sadness or depression into happiness is considerably harder when the source of the emotions is unknown. Making the link between happiness and progress makes it easier to find ways to trade in sadness for happiness. Progress, as the opposite of stagnation, can be quantified and assessed by listing priorities and analyzing the change over time. An overall feeling of happiness often reflects a perception of progress. When this theory is used to analyze co-operation between two entities, it becomes possible to compose solid, well-founded reports can be composed showing the source of stagnation in the process of collaboration.

The second technique, breaking down complex theories into their basic components or definitions, can be used in complex discussions relating to religion or ideology. When discussing complex theories as coherent concepts, the differences seem tremendous and insurmountable. However, discussing specific aspects of the definition before moving on to the whole may help resolve some of the issues. Comparing the basic definitions of which such theories are composed often reveals the origins of differences, filtering out sensitive buzzwords and making it easier to see the similarities. Eliminating a distracting, over-used term from the discussion makes it possible to redefine it.

An example of this can be seen by comparing fundamental religious beliefs. A comparative analysis of how God is viewed in Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and New Age beliefs initially seems to indicate that these belief structures are mutually exclusive in many ways. Christianity describes God as having three aspects and close involvement in a human setting, while Islam argues that God is single, defined and separate from humans. Hinduism has a pantheon of individual gods representing different aspects of our existence, with a separate Supreme Being. New Age practices believe that God is revealed in the rhythms of nature and in energy flows. There are also many differences in how various religions and practices within the religions describe the relationship between God and man, some advocating a human intermediary to explain or interpret the will of God, others appointing an intercessor, while yet others emphasise personal interaction or, conversely, do not accept any intimation of direct involvement at all.

Another problem in communicating religious ideologies and beliefs is the literal translation of words used. For example, simply translating words such as profit or holiness from one language to another often points out the crucial differences in semantics. The Arabic translation of the word profit has more than one option, each having a completely different set of connotations. Each of these words is very different from the English word profit.

Estefa makes a point of stimulating co-operation between members of different cultures and beliefs. By comparing similarities at a basic linguistic level instead of a complex ideological level, Estefa tries to bridge the ideological gaps that separate the world. Finding the common links between beliefs is the key to helping people co-exist.

1.7. Progress through Cultural Education and Tolerance

Although politics and media often benefit from driving people apart, Estefa has a strong policy against gaining popularity at the cost of intercultural tolerance. Estefa regards intolerance as in direct opposition to life, and in the bigger perspective considers intolerance harmful for society. Intolerance has been the source of clashes throughout history, and the conflicts between cultural identities have led to devastating wars. However, intolerance often has deep-rooted origins that go far beyond a source of easy publicity.

Estefa considers an important part of its mission to be promoting communication with all different social and ideological groups, on two conditions. The first condition is that they understand the basic concepts of communication. The second is that they do not obstruct business progress or hamper the mental or emotional state of employees.

Understanding the basic concepts of communication requires a set of conceptual cornerstones. First, the interaction must have a goal or aim. Reaching agreements requires that the boundaries of negotiation and the framework of reference be prepared in the initial stages of the interaction. Only then is it possible to reach a conclusive agreement. Improving definitions is a continuous aim, which requires a framework for the argued terms and subjects. Second, communication requires two-way interaction. If one side refuses to even consider relevant arguments presented by another side before attempting to understand them, there is no foundation for communication. Ultimately, by agreeing on clear definitions and defining the exact subject of communication, differences are often worked out and mutual understanding often leads to tolerance and progress in all participating parties.

Estefa welcomes and encourages discussions about belief and culture within reasonable limits. Communication is the only path to mutual understanding.

1.8. The 3 Subdivisions of Home

One of the common problems that come with working in an intercultural setting relates to the question of one's home truly lies. In order to define the concept of "home", Estefa has an approach of breaking down the concept into its three constituent components: the roots, the base and the destination. In a way, these components represent the elements of a home dealing with the past, the present and the future.

The Roots

As a subdivision of home, the "roots" of a person or entity are the places in which the person or entity has previous history that can influence some aspect of their present. For a person, the roots are the places where he or she still has family members, friends, a house, land or an old source of income, which can suddenly play a role in the person's life.

The death of a friend or family member, a sudden change in the politics of that country or the bankruptcy of a business in such a place can suddenly cause a person's priorities to shift dramatically. Any consideration of the potential impact one's roots could have in relation to the current situation should include an analysis of the significant influences in that location that could affect the actions of the person or entity in question. If one is properly prepared, the effects of such influences can often be limited to short proceedings to wrap up changes in the place where one's roots lie.

The Base

The "base" is the main place where a person or entity operates most adeptly within the system and culture. For a person, knowing how to deal with daily or unexpected events decide where the person has his or her base. Knowing how to react, who to call and what to expect if a neighbour's house catches fire would be a typical question for identifying a person's base (or bases).

The base can function as a sanctuary to which a person can return if things do not work out in another place. It is the place where the person needs to expend the least amount of effort and consideration to know what to expect. Simple

actions like crossing a road require the least amount of active consideration in a person's base. Having a secure place to return to in a base is a form of insurance that can be prepared well in advance.

The Destination

The "destination" is a possible future base for a person or entity. It is the place in which a person or entity aspires to create a base. A temporary place to manifest oneself is not part of the concept "destination" in this context. The intent and desire to set up a long-term base in a specific place is an essential part of a destination in this perspective.

A destination is often a place that characterizes specific desires that a person finds lacking in his or her current base. Therefore, it is natural for a person or entity to test the waters before taking the step, trying out how it would feel to become part of the society in their destination. The destination is the first place a person or entity would consider if a major change in their base city or country would make the place feel unfamiliar. Keeping a path open to this place is a form of ensuring security.

Home

The intercultural nature of Estefa's activities often confronts Estefa with people or entities that have more than one place that defines their home. By analyzing each of the three components of a home separately, Estefa can analyze intercultural situations more effectively and elaborately. In tailoring products to its clients' needs, Estefa often analyses their target groups in terms of the three components of a home, thus attempting to provide better products and services to its clients.