Issue 153 - December 2015

The Leader Letter

Heather and I love to travel. A great perk of my work is that I am invited to speak or lead workshops and retreats in some beautiful places around the world. Heather carefully selects which ones she joins me for. Northern Canada in winter rarely makes the cut! When we travel to a new city, we start our stay with a city tour. This gives us a broad overview of the area and helps us decide where we want to spend more time.

In some ways, this issue -- and many issues -- of *The Leader Letter* is like a city tour. It highlights a few areas in the vast territory of leadership and culture development. As you read through each newsletter item you can jump off the bus, take a quick look around, snap a few photos, and then re-board for the next destination. Or you can treat this as a "hop on and hop off" bus route allowing you to click deeper and deeper into links for further exploration of a topic area before returning to this issue.

To help your organization/culture development journey, this issue provides a "compass" to chart your location and map out the next legs of your route. This multi-layered tool allows you to drill down ever deeper into those areas you're most interested in or feel the highest need to explore and improve.

You can also determine if you've fallen into one of the deadly time traps that ensnare so many leaders in today's overloaded and over accelerated world. Communication is critical. Are you balancing electronic tools and human connections?

Leadership is more critical than ever. Good managers must become great leaders if our organizations are to thrive in today's ever tougher conditions. That calls for more effective approaches to leadership development that leverage strengths (proven to be 2 to 3 times more effective than fixing weaknesses) and build extraordinary coaching skills.

Far too many Learning and Development professionals are badly off track using old approaches that don't work. Our webinar on how Wilfrid Laurier University is blazing new trails in strengthening leadership skills and culture shows a much more effective pathway to peak performance.

Jesse Lee Bennett, an early 20th century American author, advised, "Books are the compasses and telescopes and sextants and charts which others have prepared to help us navigate the dangerous seas of human life." Today, blogs, newsletters, and websites, provide new navigational tools to navigate the dangerous seas of organizational life.

May this issue provide a useful "city tour" opening up connections to deeper destinations that guide your journey.

Webinar on Strengthening Leaderships Skills and Culture Now Available

Last month Melanie Will, Manager of Learning and Organization Development, Wilfrid Laurier University and I delivered a **one hour webinar on Strengthening Leadership and Culture**. Melanie provided a case study using many examples and research data from their organization's use of *The Extraordinary Leader Development System* for over 160 leaders throughout the university.

We covered a lot of ground during this broad overview and fast-paced webinar. This included the challenges and power of focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses, key competencies that produce measurable results, overcoming the common problems of 360 multi-rater assessments, how to use cross-training versus traditional linear approaches to build leadership skills, and how Laurier used peer coaching and a follow up process to boost ongoing leadership skill building.

Melanie reported that Laurier is shifting its culture toward building a strengths-based foundation. Participant comments like "this type of program is very valuable in keeping morale and motivation up in difficult times." Like many organizations, Laurier has used traditional 360 assessments with their focus on fixing weaknesses. The experience left a negative legacy and apprehension about using another 360 assessment process.

However, using a strengths-based 360 proved to be quite a different experience. In follow up surveys:

- 82% of participants indicated the 360 assessment was the most valuable component
- 90% focused on strengthening a strength
- 93% indicated the investment of the leadership development program has been valuable
- 98% indicated self-awareness increased
- 93% feel they have walked away from the program with increased capacity as a leader

Laurier is now reviewing and putting together further organization development plans based on a rich set of aggregated data such as employee engagement levels, results at different management levels, most common strengths, and competencies rated as most important across the organization. This also includes moving toward a strengths-based approach to performance management.

Melanie concludes that "letting go of weaknesses unleashes the energy to act on a personal development plan because the structure of the program is very motivating and inspiring…when participants find the 'sweet spot' (intersection of strength, organizational need, and passion) if feels easy -- people are too busy for difficult."

A big thanks to Melanie for sharing Laurier's successful approaches with us. Click on **How Laurier is Strengthening Leadership Skills and Culture** to view the archived webinar.

Looking Forward to Facilitating Another Extraordinary Leader Public Workshop

As organizations thin their ranks to run leaner the need for building highly effective leaders becomes a strategic imperative. Stronger leaders create stronger organizations. This creates even stronger leaders across the organization in an upward spiraling circle toward peak performance.

Registrations for my facilitation of the **January 27 public workshop of *The Extraordinary Leader* in Toronto** are now coming in. We're already over half way to filling all spots. As discussed in our webinar on "How Wilfrid Laurier University is Strengthening Leadership Skills and Culture," *The Extraordinary Leader* is customized and delivered internally. We rarely run public workshops and often they're sold out.

At **Leverage Your Leadership Strengths** you can watch a **brief video overview** of how *The Extraordinary Leader* has helped good managers become great leaders. Key points include:

- The huge difference between poor leadership and great leaders -- and the surprisingly large difference between good managers and great leaders.
- How do you develop great leaders (at the 80th to 90th percentile)?
- The worst person at predicting their leadership effectiveness is the leader.
- Fixing weaknesses is the wrong approach. All it does is point out what's wrong with leaders and is often a negative, punishing experience.
- Great leaders are not defined by the absence of weaknesses, but rather by the presence of a few profound strengths.
- Using a prioritization process that helps leaders choose a competency for further development based on what the organization needs from them and their passion for further development.
- Cross-training through non-linear development is a revolutionary new approach that creates powerful combinations taking a leader's strengths to the 90th percentile with the Competency Companion Development Guide.
- Customized to the individual by building strengths makes for a personalized competency model with assessment and feedback becoming a positive process.

Too often leadership workshops are inspiring but quickly forgotten. I love delivering this workshop because of its powerful and lasting impact on participant effectiveness. Everyone leaves with a personalized, action-oriented, development plan that facilitates goal setting and follow through. Leaders continue developing and strengthening leadership skills, and apply leadership development in daily, on-the-job activities.
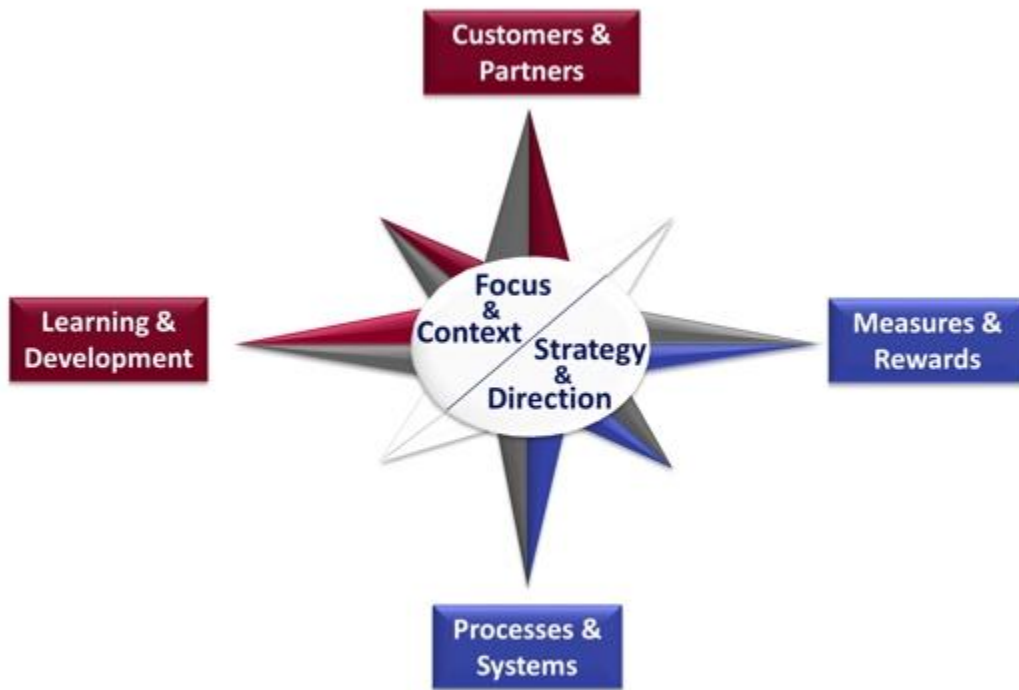
A Culture Change Compass for Assessment and Planning

One of the "**7 Reasons Change and Development Programs Fail**" is a partial and piecemeal approach to implementing programs like engagement, customer service, succession planning, safety, performance management, talent management, lean/six sigma, and IT.

Our "compass model" has evolved from culture development work with dozens of organizations. It's often used during **Leadership Team Retreats** for assessment and implementation planning. The model pulls together a series of "transformation pathways" to prioritize and map short and longer term leadership and culture development strategies.

How's your team/organization doing across these six key areas? You can click on any sub-topic for an overview and options to drill deeper:

Focus and Context

- **Vision, Values, and Purpose**

Customers & Partners

- **Customers**
- **Internal Partners**

- **External Partners**

Strategy & Direction

- **Strategy, Structure, and Roles**
- **Goals and Priorities**

Measures & Rewards

- **Measurement and Feedback**
- **Reward and Recognition**
- **Review, Assess, Celebrate, and Refocus**

Processes & Systems

- **Process Management**
- **Systems**

Learning & Development

- **Education & Communications**
- **Skill Development**
- **Teams**
- **Innovation & Organizational Learning**
- **Improvement Infrastructure/Process**

Click on **Organization Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis** if you'd like to assess your current performance and rank improvement urgency for each of the topic areas. This will give you total gap points to determine your top priorities in your improvement journey. This is an especially powerful process for leadership team members to do individually and then aggregate scores for team development and planning.

If you or your team would like further context and applications for this assessment and planning tool you can review my recent 60 minute **Leading a Peak Performance Culture** webinar.

Seven Deadly Time Traps for Leaders

Recently I was asked to speak at a CEO forum on strategic use of the CEO's time. This was a great opportunity to review the common themes emerging from our **keynotes and workshops** and **leadership team retreats**.

These time traps apply to anyone in a leadership role, but especially to senior executives. How many of these traps have you fallen into?

1. Highly Reactive and Crazy Busy

- Is your day a blur of meetings, phone calls, and e-mails with almost no time for reflection?

- Are you living life from your inbox and overwhelmed by a blizzard of e-mails?

2. The Acceleration Trap

- Is your team/organization overloaded with too many priorities and conflicting activities?
- Are you loading new projects and goals on top of existing workloads without rigorous "stop doing" pruning to make room for them?

3. Low Culture/Capacity Development

- Does your team/organization invest little time in culture/leadership development because you're too busy or feel budgets are too tight?
- Is your planning focused mostly on budgets and operations?

4. Poor Monkey Management

- Are you loading more and more "monkeys on your back" as you solve problems for your team members?
- Are you micromanaging your direct reports? What do they think? How do you know?

5. No Time for Coaching Skill Development

- Have you developed your coaching skills and get regular feedback on the effectiveness of your coaching conversations?
- Do you use a coaching framework to focus your coachee on developing possible solutions and owning the issue?

6. Working *in* Versus *on* Your Team

- Does your team have an offsite retreat to reflect and refocus at least once per year?
- Does your team periodically ask what should we keep doing, stop doing, and start doing/do more to increase our effectiveness?

7. Falling Down the Meeting Sinkhole

- Do your meetings have clear goals/outcomes for each agenda item, ground rules to minimize disruptions, document decisions, agreed action plans, and rigorous follow through?
- Do you regularly review and adjust the purpose, process, participants, and effectiveness of all meetings?

Further Reading and Resources:

- The Positive Impact of Team Retreats (link direct to this pull down menu at **http://www.clemmergroup.com/services/leadership-team-retreats/**)
- **Goals and Priorities**
- "**Tips for Taming the E-mail Beast**"
- "**How Many Monkeys Are On Your Back?**"
- "**Reclaim Your Time, Reclaim Your Life**"
- "**Video Clip: Working ON the Team versus IN the Team**"
- "**Use Virtual/Physical Meeting Effectiveness Checklists to Boost Their Effectiveness**"

- "**The Acceleration Trap: Frantic Busyness and Priority Overload is Overwhelming Way Too Many Teams and Organizations**"

Communication Confusion: Balancing Electronic and Human Connections

Does your team/organization need more communication? Would you like to get more e-mails?

Most workshop participants give an emphatic yes in response to the first question and a deafening no to the second. Yet when told that team/organization members want more communication many leaders respond with ccing more people or sending more e-mails.

During the CEO forum mentioned in my last post ("**Seven Deadly Time Traps for Leaders**") we discussed the growing challenge of dealing with overwhelming volumes of e-mails and electronic messages. And how younger generations use electronic devices as their main communication tool.

The next day I was honored with a Communication and Leadership Award from Toastmasters International president, Jim Kokocki, at a ceremony in Toronto. Later Jim and I discussed the changes and challenges of developing communication and leadership skills in today's online world.

Like management processes and people leadership, it's all about balance. Information Technology is critical today. And so is the human connection of verbal communications:

Information Technology/E-Tools	Powerful Verbal Communications
Speaks to the head	Engages the heart
Quick and efficient	Establishes mutual interests
Impersonal and tone-deaf	Builds emotional/personal connections
Convinces with facts and analysis	Inspires with stories and examples
Easy to send negative/angry messages	Addressing tough issues with courageous conversations
Broadcast to large groups	Strengthens teamwork and engagement
Provides background and updates	Builds involvement and ownership

We need both IT/E-Tools and verbal communication. It's a matter of reaching for the approach that matches our objectives and the situation.

Further Reading:

- "**Tips and Techniques for Inspiring Through Verbal Communications**"
- "**Inspiring and Energizing with Strong Verbal Communications**"
- "**The Quality of our Communication Determines the Quality of our Lives and Workplaces**"

9 Key Behaviors Transforming Good Managers into Great Leaders

Balancing management and leadership has been a focus of our work stretching back through many of my books and our **keynotes and workshops** and **leadership team retreats**.

Zenger Folkman's research on the "differentiating competencies" that separate the bottom 10% from the top 10% shows that emotional intelligence is a major factor in leadership effectiveness. Good managers produce better results than poor managers. Employee engagement, sales, profits, turnover, safety, customer service, and discretionary effort are good or mid-range.

On the other hand, great or extraordinary leaders performing at the 90th percentile produce extraordinary results. Their results are exponentially higher than just good managers. It's been said that good is the enemy of great. As Michelangelo warned, "our greatest tragedy is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

One of the main reasons I reconnected with Jack Zenger a few years ago and The CLEMMER Group became a strategic partner of Zenger Folkman is their research-based methodology -- a road map -- for helping good managers become great leaders. Here's what we've seen emerge from this work:

Good Manager	Great Leader
Pushes for results	Inspires outstanding performance
Directs and controls	Coaches and influences
Solves problems	Guides problem solving and owning solutions
Gives feedback	Gives and asks for developmental feedback
Focuses on fixing weaknesses	Builds and leverages strengths
Sets high goals and standards	Energizes with compelling vision and strategy
Builds strong teamwork	Fosters a culture of extraordinary effort
Uses his/her technical expertise	Develops strong expertise in others
Reduces turnover and increases engagement	Attracts and retains the very best people

Are you working to be "good enough" to get the job done or to be extraordinary? What about the managers in your organization? If you could transform yourself and your managers from good to great leaders, what kind of impact would that have?

Research on the Dramatic Impact of Extraordinary Coaching Skills

Have you ever experienced a leader who's very strong at coaching and mentoring but doesn't get results? People feel great working with him or her, but the job doesn't get done. What's the likelihood this leader would be rated in the top ten percent of leaders?

How about a leader who is very good at getting results -- he or she really delivers -- but not much of a coach? How likely is he or she to be rated in the top 10 percent of leaders?

Zenger Folkman's research based on over 250,000 360 assessments of roughly 25,000 leaders shows that either of the above combinations produces leaders in the 90th percentile less than 10% of the time. How often do you think a leader who is strong at both energizing people to achieve results and coaching and mentoring others is rated in the top 10% of leaders? Hint; it's much higher than most people realize.

Click on **The Impact of Coaching Effectiveness** for a three minute video clip where I present the research behind this powerful combination and how dramatically these two competencies turbo-boost a leader to the very top. You can then see the dramatic impact of coaching skills on turnover, engagement, discretionary effort, and leader satisfaction.

As our infographic shows, no other leadership behavior is more correlated with increasing employee engagement than a leader's coaching effectiveness. Outstanding coaching skills rocket leaders to top-tier effectiveness.

Many crazy-busy, frenetic managers believe it's a trade-off: "Either I deliver results (often by micromanaging and pushing hard) or I coach and develop people. Which do you want me to do?"

Highly effective leaders get results through people. They understand that peak performance comes from empowering, energizing, focusing, and developing people to their highest potential to own and deliver outstanding outcomes.

Learning and Development Professionals Are Way Off Track

Last month I delivered a one hour webinar on **How Learning and Development Can Build Stronger Leaders and Cultures** (click on title to view it) sponsored by The Institute for Performance and Learning (formerly the Canadian Society for Training and Development). During the webinar we ran a poll on the research and best practices presented. The poor survey results show why L & D is often given lip service by senior operating executives but so easily crowded out by short term priorities and cost cutting. Most L & D professionals fail to connect their efforts with what's keeping executives awake at night.

Here are the poll results along with links to research and what's needed to boost effectiveness:

This shows how many L & D professionals are stuck in much less effective traditional approaches. As outlined at **"New Survey Showing a Strengths Revolution in our Workplaces"** a major shift from weakness or gap-based development to building strengths is now underway. **Focusing on Strengths** provides an array of blogs, articles, white papers, case studies, videos, and webinars filled with evidence that building strengths is 2 to 3 times more effective than fixing weaknesses.

To what extent is your 'soft skills' training linked to hard organizational outcomes?

- Somewhat 25%
- Occasionally 38%
- Quite often 37%

Legend:
- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Occasionally
- Quite often
- Always

Executives who see hard evidence that leadership development drives up sales, safety, profitability, customer service, engagement, or retention make it a critical investment and a strategic priority. See **The ROI of Leadership Development, How Extraordinary Leaders Double Profit**, "**Shifting Trends in the Leadership Development Industry**", or **Leadership Under the Microscope**.

Is your leadership skill building linked to culture building?

- Always 9%
- Not at all 29%
- Somewhat 19%
- Occasionally 24%
- Quite often 19%

Legend:
- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Occasionally
- Quite often
- Always

Stronger leaders create stronger organizations, and stronger organizations create stronger leaders. This generates an interdependent cycle that creates a flywheel effect. Too many L & D professionals are bolting-on development programs rather than building-in the values and behaviors that get the flywheel moving. This was the essence of this webinar and was taken further in the **Leading a Peak Performance Culture** (click title to view) webinar I delivered last June. Our recent "**Special Webinar on Developing Leaders at Wilfrid Laurier University**" with Melanie Will (WLU's OD Director) also strongly connects skill and culture building. There are lots more resources at **Culture Change**.

To what extent are you reinforcing leadership skill building?

Not at all 22%
Somewhat 22%
Occasionally 22%
Quite often 34%

Legend:
- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Occasionally
- Quite often
- Always

Do you have a framework for integrating leadership and organization development?

Yes 25%
No 75%

Underlying the "**7 Reasons Change and Development Programs Fail**" is the lack of a framework to integrate development efforts. This provides an implementation architecture to avoid partial and piecemeal programs, teams not pulling together, communication breakdowns, and failing to follow through. A **Leadership Team Retreat** has proven key to putting key success factors in place for leadership and culture development to build upon and reinforce each other in a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement.

Tweet Reading: Recommended Online Articles

This section summarizes last month's LinkedIn Updates and Twitter Tweets about online articles or blog posts that I've flagged as worth reading. These are usually posted on weekends when I am doing much of my reading for research, learning, or leisure.

My original tweet commenting on the article follows each title and descriptor from the original source:

Fascinating research showing that self-awareness isn't nearly as correlated to leadership effectiveness as often believed.

"**We Like Leaders Who Underrate Themselves**" -- Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman
https://hbr.org
Surprisingly, the most effective leaders did not have the highest level of self-awareness. Indeed, the more they underrated themselves, the more highly they were perceived as leaders.

Shows the power of 360 feedback in helping leaders leverage their strengths or address any fatal flaws impeding their effectiveness.

"**Humble Versus Egocentric Leaders: When Lacking Self-Awareness Helps**" -- Jack Zenger
www.forbes.com
"The most effective leaders don't have the highest level of self-awareness. Indeed, the more they under-rated themselves, the more effective they were perceived to be as leaders."

How unsupportive managers looking out for #1 end up hurting themselves and everyone they lead.

"**Would Your Boss Throw You Under The Bus? 8 Side Effects Of Irresponsible Managers**" --Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com
"Leaders who act irresponsibly are rated as very ineffective (5th percentile) and their direct reports have low levels of engagement (17th percentile)… 59% were thinking about leaving."

Step #1 is an especially powerful coaching approach that many managers struggle with but once used is highly effective.

Two Simple Ways to Increase the Effectiveness of Executive Coaching -- Jack Zenger
www.forbes.com
"Coaching leaders effectively is a complex and challenging skill. Yes, it can be learned, but like every other skill it requires deliberate practice with the intent of becoming proficient."

Read *The Leader Letter* in Twice Weekly Installments

The **items in each month's issue of** *The Leader Letter* **are first published in my twice weekly blog during the previous month.**

If you read each blog post (or issue of *The Leader Letter*) as it's published **over twelve months you'll have read the equivalent of a leadership book**. And you'll pick up a few practical leadership tips that help you use time more strategically and tame your E-Beast!

Feedback and Follow-Up

I am always delighted to hear from readers of *The Leader Letter* with feedback, reflections, suggestions, or differing points of view. Nobody is ever identified in *The Leader Letter* without their permission. I am also happy to explore customized, in-house adaptations of any of my material for your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail at **Jim.Clemmer@ ClemmerGroup.com** or connect with me on **LinkedIn**, **Twitter**, **FaceBook**, or my **blog**!

May the Force (of strengths) be with you!

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