



Practical Leadership:

Inspiring Action, Achieving Results

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

January 2004, Issue 10 ~ View on-line at www.clemmer.net

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What Lies Ahead?

Happy New Year! Twelve fresh, new months lay ahead of us like a newly paved road stretched out and inviting our travel. What is around the first corner or over the next hill? What will 2004 bring for each of us?

Around this time of year I am often asked to write articles or columns predicting the year ahead. What a useless exercise that is! I have no idea what lies ahead of us. Researchers, such as William Sherden in his outstanding book, *The Fortune Sellers: The Big Business of Buying and Selling Predictions*, prove that forecasters, economists, futurists, planners, and other such soothsayers are less accurate than flipping a coin. Of the sixteen different types of forecasts he analyzed over a twenty year period, only one-day-ahead weather forecasts and the aging of the population were accurate beyond pure chance.

But there is one prediction method that's eerily accurate. It's often called imagery, visioning, or self-fulfilling prophecy. We foresee our preferred future and then make it so. Psychology, science, medicine, sports, and other fields are just beginning to tap into this incredible life force.

This is the where my major life change from a high school drop-out, Mennonite farm boy began. Vision, values, and purpose make up what I have been calling Focus and Context for over 15 years of speaking, workshops, consulting, and writing. Focus and Context have been at the core of my last three books and the hub of our "Leadership Wheel" for *Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success* and *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*.

Focus and Context are the very heart of leadership.

Here are some of my favorite articles on visioning or imagery. Most are excerpted from *Pathways to Performance: A Guide to Transforming Yourself, Your Team, and Your Organization*.

How Visioning Changed My Life

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/how_visioning.shtml

Visioning is where my personal effectiveness quest began, in 1974. Even now, as I recall that turning point in my life, a shiver runs up my spine.

How Visioning Helped My Passion and Persistence

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/powerful_pictures.shtml

Create strong passion with a clear and compelling vision, and hang in there during the inevitable downs and defeats until dreams are realized.



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Personal Visioning Pathways and Pitfalls

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/p_visioningpp.shtml

Discover the personal visioning approaches that can help you avoid the pitfalls and pave your organization's pathway to success.

Visioning Harnesses the Power of Our Pictures

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/vision_harnesses.shtml

The "power of positive pictures" is a skill, habit, and technique often called visioning, imagery, and visualization. It has a power for change, improvement, and energy creation that we're only beginning to understand.

What We Get is What We See

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/whatwe_are.shtml

Personal effectiveness efforts should include changing your personal pictures and self talk. Changing input changes output.

Yield of Dreams

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/yield_dreams.shtml

Extensive research in the last few decades on peak performance, leadership, personal effectiveness, adaptability to change, world-class athletes, and even the healing process, clearly shows the central role vision plays in success.

Visioning and many powerful strategies for leading ourselves and others are the focal point of my new workshop and follow-up process, entitled **Practical Leadership Strategies for Peak Performance**. [Click here for details](#).

Keys to Effective Reward and Recognition

A reader from Australia e-mailed me:

"to seek your professional opinion on the current situation I am facing as the R & R strategy leader for a large organisation and its customer contact call centres.

My question to you is, is it best to slowly eliminate ineffective parts of an R & R program or just start totally from scratch with a brand new concept? We obviously would like a strategy with the least impact on our people and their high expectation (developed over the years) that rewards are for 'everyone,' regardless of performance levels.

My proposed strategy is to re-educate our people first on what R & R is all about, and then go out with a brand new program. What are your thoughts on this?"

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Here's my response:

You're asking me to give you a prescription without a thorough diagnosis. That's a dangerous thing to do. I can only give you a generalized answer to your specific situation.

One of the two main factors in deciding whether to completely reengineer any process or program versus incremental improvement is just how badly broken your existing Rewards and Recognition process really is. If it's creating a huge amount of distraction and really getting in the way, it probably needs to be started from scratch. But don't allow a few managers or support professionals to make that determination. Ask a good strong cross-section of the people in your call centers.

Another key consideration is how strongly the operational managers and their senior management owns and uses whatever new system you create. A deadly situation is to boldly declare to the call centre people that you have a new Reward and Recognition program and then have the organization's key managers treat it as a "bolt-on" program rather than a process built-in to the way they manage the organization. In my second book, *Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Corporate Performance*, I presented this "commitment continuum" chart to clarify this critical change leadership issue:

Assessing Management Commitment

A woman rushed up to famed violinist Fritz Kreisler after a concert and cried, "I'd give my life to play as beautifully as you do." Kreisler replied, "I did."

There's commitment and then there's commitment. Here's a **scale of the wide range of executive commitment** we often encounter:

1. **Permission** - allows managers or staff support people to proceed as long as it doesn't cost too much and disrupt the "real business."
2. **Lip Service** - gives speeches and writes memos exhorting everyone to improve. Some budgets and resources are allocated to a piecemeal series of programs. There is no strategic improvement plan, the process is not part of operational management's responsibilities, and the executive is not personally involved in education or training.
3. **Passionate Lip Service** - the executive attends an abbreviated overview of the program being given to everyone else. Some elements of an implementation plan are shakily in place. Passionate Stump Speeches urge everyone to "get going."
4. **Involved Leadership** - the executive attends all training first in its entirety, then gets trained to deliver sessions to others. The improvement process is the first item on all

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meeting agendas and priority lists. Managers are held accountable and rewarded for their contributions to the efforts. The executive group is actively leading the way.

5. **Integration** - day-to-day operating decisions have been delegated to increasingly autonomous frontline teams. The majority of senior management's time is spent with customers, suppliers, teams, and supervisors, gathering input, long-term direction, and managing the organization's Focus and Context by providing meaning through the vision, values, and purpose.

The degree of commitment builds and accumulates from #1 through to #5. The effectiveness and lasting impact of your improvement effort is exponentially increased the closer you and your executive team are to point #5.

I hope this generalized advice is useful. On our web site, you can find a major section with about 10 articles on Reward and Recognition at www.clemmer.net/excerpts/reward.shtml. You can also check out this section with a selection of articles on implementing change plans: www.clemmer.net/excerpts/ot_transformation.shtml

The Motivation Myth That Won't Go Away!

In the movie, *Groundhog Day*, actor Bill Murray plays Phil, a weather forecaster who spends the night in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, where he is to do a broadcast the next day (February 2), broadcasting the annual ritual of the coming out of the groundhog. He wakes up the next morning, does his story and is annoyed to discover that he is trapped in Punxsutawney for a second night because of a snowstorm that comes in after the groundhog ceremony. Then the nightmare begins. Day after endless day he is faced with the very same scenario and can't change it.

When it comes to managers discussing how to motivate people, I often feel like poor old Phil. I am stuck in an endless loop of repetition over and over and over again.

Here's an e-mail I received recently:

I've just finished reading your article, "[Weak Leaders Try to Use Money as a Motivator](#)" which I think is very helpful.

I would really like your input on the following questions:

1. *How important is money?*
2. *In addition to money, what else motivates people to work hard?*

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3. *When is money likely to be one of the most important motivators (if not the most important) and when is it likely to finish way down the list? Based on your answers, what conclusions can be drawn regarding the use of money as a motivator?*

Here's my response:

I am glad you found my article useful. I addressed your questions in my most recent book, *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*. Here's an excerpt I pieced together addressing your question:

Beyond Manipulating and Motivating, to Leading and Inspiringwww.clemmer.net/excerpts/motivation.shtml

When confronting morale problems, managers will often succumb to the Victimitis virus and blame the declining work ethic, or any number of societal factors. But these factors are more imagined than real. Studies show that people's real needs are much less mercenary than most managers believe.

**The Great Debate Continues:
Giving a Team Member an Attitude Adjustment**

In November's *Leader Letter* I reported how a reader handled a situation with an administrative support person who often brought down the mood of the whole office. You can read/refresh the story [here](#).

In December's *Leader Letter* I reprinted a passionate response from another reader who felt very strongly about how poorly "Linda" handled the situation. "Susan" raised a number of very good points. You can read her views [here](#).

I then invited readers to send me their thoughts on whether they agreed with Linda's or Susan's approach to this difficult – and all too common – problem. The responses were split 50/50 in favor of Susan or Linda. Following is a sample of the e-mails I received. Thanks to everyone for your participation.

Business lunches/dinners are no place for discipline (evidence that this is what it was; "quite an afternoon" and "no tears"). Linda appears to have offered very little in the way of praise or support for her employee. Nor does she appear to have discussed performance: how well job objectives were met.

She went in with the agenda to change her employee's behavior, not partake in 2-way problem-solving. Basically: wrong setting, wrong time and wrong approach. I agree with Susan.

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Someone going in to a performance review has the expectation that they will discuss performance first, career second. While the three questions are great for individual contemplation, jumping directly to career before discussing current situations can put someone off guard by not setting ground work first.

"Is your future with (their organization)? If so, then we need to know where you are now, where you want to be, and the steps to get to where you want to be." This could be interpreted several ways depending on the employee-boss relationship. For example: "You're doing a good job and I'd like to help you advance," or "I really don't know how you're doing, why don't you tell me," or – "You're doing a really poor job, tell me why I shouldn't fire you right now."

Meetings called performance reviews are perceived as "formal" discussions and are no place for "surprises". It would have been better if she went into a separate meeting to truly listen to the employee's concerns and to voice her concerns. Then set a time to meet again for discussion after some reflection (by both) on what was said and heard.

- Manager

I think, for the most part, Susan has overreacted to Linda's approach. I think Linda restricted the topics of discussion to workplace issues only, which are certainly her purview. I think Susan is right to point out that, as her manager, she should also be sensitive to creating an environment where the subordinate should not feel pressured to respond. All this leads to is a response the subordinate feels the manager wants to hear, rather than a constructive dialog.

The fact the support staff feel a regular need for "the secretaries' huddle" suggests there might be other issues that need to be addressed within the office environment. It is good and fine to get them to cease talking, but what was the issue they felt the need to talk amongst themselves about in the first place?

Whose approach is right? Only time will tell. If the subordinate changes her attitude, feels more empowered with what she is doing, and better about her role and contribution to the organization - Linda wins. If the subordinate does not feel this, Susan wins.

- Richard Hewson CMA, Comptroller

You ask if Susan overreacted to Linda's story - well she seems pretty opinionated about quite a bit. I reread the original story and can't make the same assumptions that Susan made based on the information given.

For one thing, some employees would much rather be off-site than on-site in such a situation – especially if they are having problems with colleagues. They don't feel in the 'fishbowl.' Though what is right for one person is not necessarily right for another so I don't think we can decide whether that was the right call by Linda or not. It also doesn't say if

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Linda picked the restaurant or if the employee did, so that is another assumption that can't be made.

Linda did not say the employee is responsible for others' attitudes; she said create the situation within you that contributes to a positive environment. In other words, take responsibility for yourself and it may have an effect on others or not. Either way, if the employee is taking a positive approach and a take-charge attitude, what others do is their responsibility. But the employee is taking responsibility for her behavior.

Asking the person what her goals are – in other words, "Do you want to be in this workplace at this time in this role?" – is legitimate. Personal goals as they pertain to work, not personal goals as they pertain to your life when you are not at work, are indeed the manager's right to ask. Sometimes when people are prompted to think about whether the unhappiness can be fixed in situ or they need to move on elsewhere is a way to get them to take responsibility.

Maybe there are problems in the workplace but there is too little information to discern this. Sorry, I have to say that from what info was in Linda's story I just can't see some of what Susan is mentioning. It would be educational for all of us if Linda is willing to respond to some of the comments - clarity is a wonderful thing!

- Karin Wills, Human Resources Manager, MDS Nordion

Thoughts that Make You Go Hmm...on Imagery

"He who does not know where he is heading will take the longest time to get there."

- Chinese Proverb

"No one has yet computed how many imaginary triumphs are silently celebrated by people each year to keep up their courage."

- Athenaeus (Circa 200 A.D.), Greek grammarian

"See yourself and what you see you will become."

- Aristotle

"You merely picture in your mind having already accomplished or attained your goal, whatever it may be. Hold it firmly in your thoughts, picture it as already being yours, and amazing things will happen."

- Og Mandino, *The Choice*

"If you can dream it, you can do it."

- Walt Disney



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"Studies on the brain affirm...Imagining something in vivid detail can fire the same brain cells actually involved in doing that activity. The new brain circuitry appears to go through its paces, strengthening connections, even when we merely repeat the sequence in our minds. So to alleviate the fears associated with trying out riskier ways of leading, we should first visualize some likely scenarios. Doing so will make us feel less awkward when we actually put the new skills into practice."

- Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance*

"When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge."

- Albert Einstein

Improvement Points Subscribers' Top Picks for December

Of the eleven short quotes with links to full articles that were e-mailed out as complimentary **Improvement Points** last month, the most popular with subscribers were:

"An optimist believes no one ever ruined their eye sight by looking at the bright side of life. Research on Emotional Intelligence, Attribution Theory (see Martin Seligman's book outstanding book, *Learned Optimism*), and related fields show that optimists not only go further in life, they also have a much better time on the trip. Optimists are generally healthier, happier, and leaders in their fields."

- from *Choosing Our Reality*

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/choosing_reality.shtml

"Effective leaders use a lot of ways to build an atmosphere of accomplishment and pride through recognition and appreciation. But the leaders should not be the central figures in control of the goodies. They should encourage recognition and appreciation up, down, and across the organization and within and among teams."

- from *Exception is a Poor Rule*

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/exception.shtml

"Assuming we care (if not, we're in the wrong place), the leadership challenge - even obligation - is to help others care. In today's environment this is one of the toughest aspects of leadership."

- from *Decentralized Organization Structures Empower and Energize*

www.clemmer.net/excerpts/decentralized.shtml

Subscribe or view the archives by topic area [here: www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml).



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Practical Leadership Strategies for Peak Performance: How to Transform Yourself from a Good Manager to a Great Leader ...and have a life too!

If you're sick and tired of being overwhelmed and overworked, check out my new leadership/personal development process. Your next big step toward peak performance can start with my two-day intensive workshop and follow through/up process. It's jammed packed with as many self-assessment, reflection, and practical action applications as I can squeeze in.

[Click here for registration and an overview](#) (text and/or audio) of what we'll cover.

Your Information is Safe with Us!

In response to Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, we have expanded our Privacy Policy. As always, protecting your information is of paramount importance to us. Rest assured that we will not sell or exchange your e-mail address or contact information with anyone outside of The CLEMMER Group. You can view our expanded privacy policy [here: www.clemmer.net/privacy.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/privacy.shtml)

I would appreciate your feedback on this newsletter, and any issues or topics you'd like me to address in future issues. I also welcome conversations exploring how I might help you or your team/organization with a keynote presentation, management team retreat, or workshop.

Send me an e-mail at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net or call me directly at (519) 748-5968.

I hope to connect with you again next month!

All the best,

Jim

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