

At home or in the workplace, change is an inevitable fact of life. How we choose to respond to it — as leaders or as followers — determines our personal and professional growth.

# The Way of the Leader

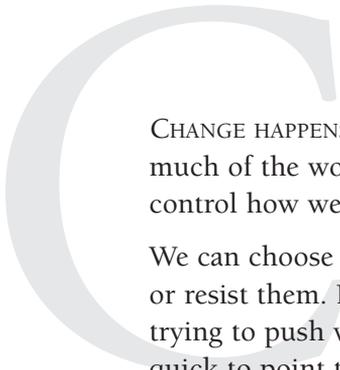
*All things change, nothing is extinguished. . . .*

*There is nothing in the whole world which is permanent.*

*Everything flows onward; all things are brought into being with a changing nature; the ages themselves glide by in constant movement.*

Ovid, Roman poet (43 B.C. – A.D. 17)





CHANGE HAPPENS. And while we can't control much of the world changing around us, we can control how we respond.

We can choose to anticipate and embrace changes or resist them. Resisting change is usually like trying to push water upstream. Generally we're quick to point to others who resist change. It's much harder to recognize or admit to our own change resistance.

Searching for stability and predictability can be one way we resist change. Stability is when everything is settled. It's when little new can happen to me. But that means there's no growth, no development, no exciting new gains that might result from unexpected pains. A condition of predictability and stability is the denial of life. It also means that the faster the world changes around me, the more likely I am to become a victim of the changes I am trying to deny.

We don't see the world as it is, we see the world as we are. If I am an unchanging stability seeker who just wants to maintain the status quo, most change is a threat. If we're constantly seeking new challenges and opportunities to grow, most changes are an opportunity.

Some people call change progress and celebrate the improvements that it brings. Others curse those same changes and long for the good old days. Same changes, different responses.

The choice is ours: We can be leaders or we can be followers.

There are two kinds of people — those who are changing and those who are setting themselves up to be victims of change.

## Change or Be Changed

“Every moment of one’s existence, one is growing into more or retreating into less. One is always living a little more or dying a little bit.”

Norman Mailer

George was 53 when he had his first attack. He’d smoked for almost 40 years, was badly overweight, had an extremely high-fat diet, and handled stress poorly. This warning shocked him into joining a smoking-cessation program. George and his wife also learned about healthy eating and improved their diets. Within a few months, he’d lost his huge stomach, was very cheerful, and full of new energy.

He was a changed man.

But slowly the memory of his big scare faded. He started having just a cigarette or two. His between-meal snacks turned into high-fat meals. As his health deteriorated and his mood blackened, he needed more cigarettes and food to cheer him up. By the time he approached his 59th birthday, he had convinced himself that he’d never had a heart attack.

That Christmas his family questioned George’s return to his old destructive habits. They begged him to return to a healthier lifestyle. George defended his overeating and smoking by saying, “If I can’t live the way I want, then life’s not worth living.” Three months later he had a massive heart attack and died.

He chose not to change. So he was changed.

SOME CHANGES APPEAR UNEXPECTEDLY as a sudden crisis. An accident, act of violence, death, or natural disaster may come out of nowhere to hit us when we least expect (or deserve) it. But most crisis points come with warning signs — if we choose to see them.

**A**fter he lost his job, a production worker at a manufacturing plant said he could “see the writing on the wall” four years ago when the company set up a flexible manufacturing pilot project to experiment with how to automate his circuit-board assembly task, among other jobs.

So what did he do during that time? Curse, pray, and organize his co-workers to decry how unfair things were? Did he try upgrading his skills while the “writing was on the wall”? He sat and waited for four years to have his fate decided for him. He chose not to change — so he was changed.

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MANY “SUDDEN CHANGES” ARE really the next big step in a series of activities that we may have helped to create or allowed to continue. These changes may be the result of our failure to change our habits, lifestyle, growth patterns, or skills.



UNLESS A CRISIS ACTUALLY kills us (often it just feels like it will), it’s an opportunity for us to change. It’s a chance to choose a new path.

But those change choices are seldom easy. Sometimes I can be like one of those old spring-powered pocket watches: I have to be shaken hard to get me going. However, when we choose the road less traveled, we’ll reflect back years later and say that, while we wouldn’t want to live through the pain again, it was nevertheless an important turning point. It was one of the best things that happened to us. It seasoned and strengthened us.

Responsiveness to change is as important to organizations as it is to people. There are two kinds of organizations in today’s world: those that are changing and those that are going out of business. The business and government graveyard is filled with the corpses of organizations that failed to respond to inevitable changes.

Similarly, there are also two kinds of people: those who are changing and those who are setting themselves up to be victims of change. As the world continues to march on around us, if I am only maintaining the status quo — if I’m not growing — then I’m falling behind.

## GROWING AT THE SPEED OF CHANGE

*“What is the most rigorous law of our being? Growth.*

*No smallest atom of our moral, mental, or physical structure can stand still a year. It grows — it must grow; nothing can prevent it.”*

Mark Twain

IF THE RATE OF external change exceeds our rate of internal growth, we’re eventually going to be changed. The “ghost of crisis yet to come,” similar to the third spirit that visited Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, is also as predictable. If I am a static person who hasn’t developed the habits of personal growth and continuous development, I may become a statistic. “Sudden” change will catch me by surprise.

We were meant to grow. When we don’t grow, we seek diversions — some harmless (if unproductive), others destructive — to fill the emptiness.

Continual growth prepares us for change. And preparing for change is like preparing for final exams. We know they’re coming well in advance; with good preparation and daily discipline, there’s no need to cram for the big event.



CHARLES DARWIN WAS A 19th-century British naturalist who revolutionized the study of biology with his theory of evolution based on natural selection. His most famous works include *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*. One of his key research findings was that “it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one that is most adaptable to change.”

Learning and personal growth are at the heart of an individual’s or organization’s ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. The key question is, “Does our rate of internal growth exceed the rate of external change?”

Whether in the context of family, community, or organization, leaders are defined by their action — not their position.

## What is Leadership?

“For what we’ve discovered, and rediscovered, is that leadership isn’t the private reserve of a few charismatic men and women. It’s a process ordinary people use when they’re bringing forth the best from themselves and others. Liberate the leader in everyone, and extraordinary things happen.”

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*

LEADERSHIP IS A VERB, not a noun. Leadership is action, not a position. Leadership is defined by what we do, not the role we are in. Some people in “leadership roles” are excellent leaders. But too many are bosses, “snoopervisors,” technocrats, “technomanagers,” bureaucrats, managers, commanders, chiefs, and the like. Conversely, many people who do not have formal leadership roles are excellent leaders. In today’s fast changing world, we all need to be leaders.

To lead is to show the way by going in advance. To lead is to guide or direct a course of action. To lead is to influence the behavior or opinion of others. We all need to be leaders, regardless of our formal title or role. This starts with inner self-leadership and moves outward to influence, guide, support, and lead others. The process of becoming a leader is the same as the process of becoming a highly effective human being. Leadership development is ultimately personal development. Leadership ultimately shows itself in what we do “out there.” But it starts “in here.” It’s something that we are, which then drives what we do.

This is a leadership book. But it’s not a book aimed just at those people with roles and titles such as manager, supervisor, executive, and the like. This book is about developing the leader within all of us. We’ll explore the key elements to leading ourselves and others in our families, communities, social circles, or organizations.

## THE MORE THE WORLD CHANGES, THE MORE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES STAY THE SAME

*There are no new truths, but only truths that have not been recognized by those who have perceived them without noticing. A truth is something that everybody can be shown to know and to have known, as people say, all along.*

Mary McCarthy, author and critic

I write these words as I sit in the office/study of my “electronic cottage.” One of the reasons I love our home is because it straddles the past and the future. The front of our house looks out upon a typical suburban street with a mixture of split-levels, bungalows, and two-storey homes.

Our house is wired for business (when the kids are excited, it’s just wired). Our personal computer and printer in the kid’s basement room is networked with my notebook computer, printers, and our other main office computers on the third floor. We have six phone lines that enable us to operate The CLEMMER Group through phone calls, faxes, e-mail, and internet access.

My office/study looks over my perennial garden in our backyard and across a river valley to the “Pioneer Tower” — erected to mark the site of the first settlement in this area almost 200 years ago. Among these settlers were my own ancestors. They cleared the forests and broke the soil for the first farms that built this community. Horses still run in the hillside field that rises from the tower on the river bank to the farm yard.

But the more things change, the more they really do stay the same. Those settlers were powerful leaders. The principles that both drove and guided their lives centuries ago are just as relevant today. They faced up to tough choices. They lived their values. They followed their dreams. They learned and adapted. They mobilized others to build a strong community. They persisted in the

face of many heart-breaking disasters. They committed their lives to a greater cause.

The reasons for their successes and failures are the same ones that determine ours today. Today’s tools have changed and our society is organized differently. But the human habits and characteristics that determine our success with today’s tools and society haven’t changed. Our organizing systems, technologies, and the type of work we do change. But people are still people. The human elements guiding our behavior are consistent.

Leadership principles are timeless. They apply to all of us, no matter what role we play in society or organizations. It’s those very personal and universal leadership principles that this book is all about.

From the center of our being,  
we grow the distance in six critical areas  
of personal development.

## Inside Out

“*The world can doubtless never be well known by theory: practice is absolutely necessary; but surely it is of great use to a young man, before he sets out for that country, full of mazes, windings, and turnings, to have at least a general map of it, made by some experienced traveler.*”

Lord Chesterfield, English statesman,  
*The Letters of the Earl of Chesterfield to His Son*

WOULDN'T IT BE EASY if we could all become leaders by following a simple sequence of steps? But the journey of personal growth means finding our own way. That's a big part of what leadership is. Life isn't one-dimensional, and neither is the process by which we grow and enrich our lives. That's why my firm, after many years of personal and leadership development work, has refined the following leadership model.



THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS why we decided to represent the key elements of leadership in this hub-and-spoke model. One is that the growth process is centered at the hub (the “core of my being”) and works outward through a variety of different paths or “spokes.” The other reason is that no one path is, in itself, more important than another. And each depends on the other to complete the whole.

The leadership “wheel” formed by the hub and spokes is also circular; it has no beginning or end. It is an endless journey of self-discovery and continuous personal growth.

The distance we need to grow along each path (or leadership dimension) will differ for each of us. Some people will have greater “growing distances” for certain elements, but not for others. The goal, of course, is to grow as much as possible along all paths.

And just as the cows on the farm where I grew up never stayed milked, our growth in any of these paths is never done. Defining and continually growing our distance is the way of the leader.

The heart of this book is the next seven chapters. Each chapter is written around one of the elements in our leadership framework. The core theme of *Growing the Distance* is that strong leaders are well-rounded and constantly expanding their personal “leadership wheel” across these key areas:

- **Focus and Context.** *THE CORE OF MY BEING:* Seeing beyond what is and getting out of my “reality rut” by seeing what could be, seeing and responding to the world as I am, clarifying why I am here, and shaping my family, team, or organization’s context and culture.

- **Responsibility for Choices.** *IF IT'S TO BE, IT'S UP TO ME:* Realizing that life accumulates, that choice more than chance determines my circumstance, and refusing to succumb to the highly infectious “Victimitis Virus” (“it’s all their fault” and “there’s nothing I can do”) while helping others battle this paralyzing affliction.
- **Authenticity.** *GETTING REAL:* Changing me to change them, ringing true to who I am through exploring inner space, and gathering feedback on my personal behavior for consistency with my stated values and priorities.
- **Passion and Commitment.** *BEYOND NEAR-LIFE EXPERIENCES:* Overcoming apathy and cynicism, developing a burning commitment to our cause, moving past the path of least persistence, deepening our discipline, and hardening our habits.
- **Spirit and Meaning.** *WITH ALL MY HEART AND SOUL:* Moving beyond ways of doing things to deeper levels of being by leading from my heart and being a purposeful leader who makes meaning for others.
- **Growing and Developing.** *FROM PHASE OF LIFE TO WAY OF LIFE:* Going beyond the stagnation of stability and change management to continuous growth by cultivating the learning habit, R & R (reflection and renewal), experimenting and active learning, and developing people into what they could be.
- **Mobilizing and Energizing.** *PUTTING EMOTIONS IN MOTION:* Moving beyond manipulative motivational programs to deeper and more lasting sources of energy and power by creating high-energy environments, improving communication skills, harnessing the power of achievement, and building teams.

## BLAZING OUR OWN PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PATH

*The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating.*

*The paths to it are not found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.*

John Schaar, American sociologist

IN 1985, WHEN I was writing my first book on leadership (*The VIP Strategy*), I discovered there were nearly 3,000 Ph.D. theses on leadership in American university libraries — and probably as many books. Today, there's probably two or three times that number.

Why so many? One of the reasons for all the different leadership models, formulas, advice, etc. is that when we talk about leadership we're talking about a way of being. With billions of people in this world, there are billions of ways of being. The leadership journey is about blazing our own pathway ever upward and outward toward who we are and the life of our dreams.

In my experience, many of the people who want “practical ideas” and concrete steps to improve their leadership skills are really looking for someone to give them the answers. They want the magic solution or quick-and-easy program. They are looking for a better way of doing things.

But leadership is first and foremost a way of being — one that shows up in how we do things. There are no formulas or shortcuts to being a better and better person. Leadership is a journey of personal discovery and learning. While we can pick up valuable travel tips from others who've been down their own personal pathways, it's a never-ending process of continuously searching for and blazing our own path.

So let's get started...

# GROWING POINTS

- Change happens. There are two kinds of organizations in today's world: those that are changing and those that are going out of business. There are also two kinds of people: those who are changing and those who are setting themselves up to be victims of change.
- Change can't be managed. If the rate of external change exceeds our rate of internal growth, we're eventually going to be changed. Learning and personal growth are at the heart of an organization's or individual's ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.
- Leadership is a verb, not a noun. Leadership is action, not a position. Leadership is defined by what we do, not the role we're in. Leadership development is ultimately personal development.
- Today's tools have changed and our society is organized differently. But the human habits and characteristics that determine our success with today's tools and society haven't changed. The human elements guiding our behavior are consistent. Leadership principles are timeless.
- There are no leadership formulas. Leadership is a journey of personal discovery and learning. While we can pick up valuable travel tips from others who've been down their own personal pathways, we can only blaze our own pathways to peak performance.