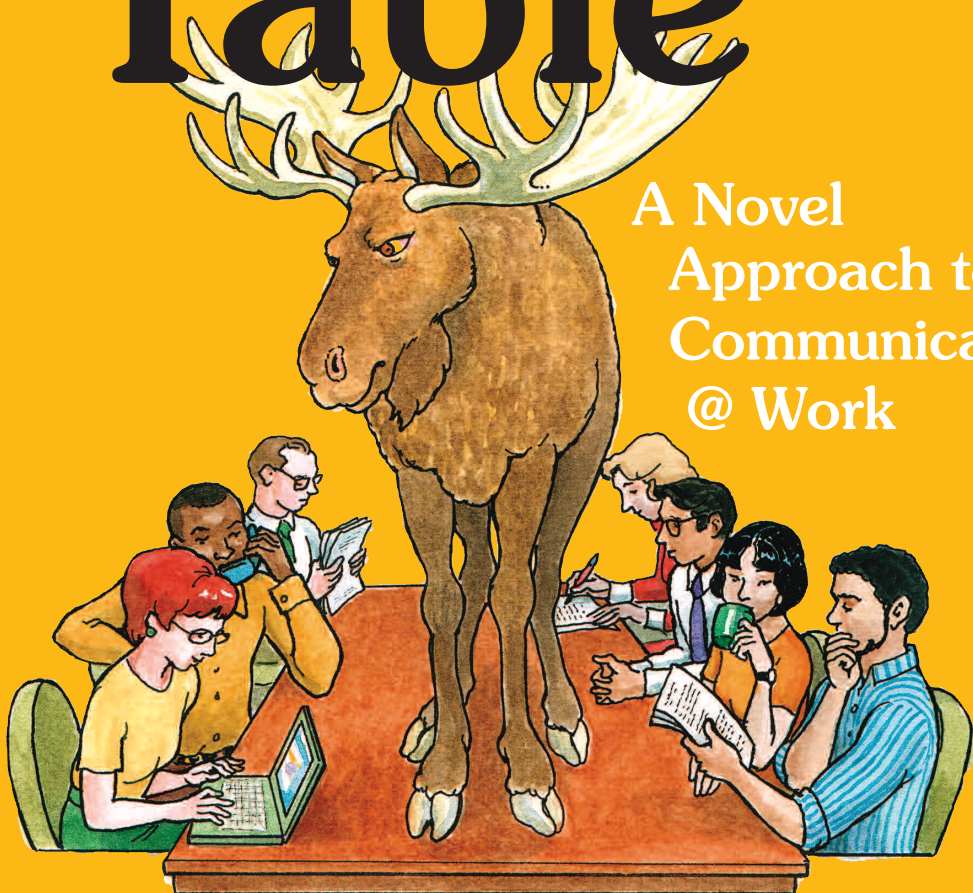


# Moose on the Table

A Novel  
Approach to  
Communications  
@ Work



*Jim Clemmer*

Author of

The VIP Strategy  
Firing on All Cylinders  
Pathways to Performance  
Growing the Distance  
The Leader's Digest



# **Moose on the Table**

## **Also by Jim Clemmer**

### ***THE LEADER'S DIGEST***

*Timeless Principles for Team  
and Organization Success*

### ***GROWING THE DISTANCE***

*Timeless Principles for Personal,  
Career, and Family Success*

### ***PATHWAYS TO PERFORMANCE***

*A Guide to Transforming Yourself,  
Your Team, and Your Organization*

### ***FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS***

*The Service/Quality System for  
High-Powered Corporate Performance*

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*Leadership Skills for  
Exceptional Performance*

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**A Novel Approach to  
Communications @ Work**

*Jim Clemmer*



**BASTIAN  
BOOKS**

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*To Heather, Chris, Jenn, and Vanessa*  
*And to our family, friends, and associates*



# Contents

Preface	ix
1 Running on Empty	1
2 The Call of the Riled	13
3 The Dread POETS Society	25
4 Of Moose and Managers	35
5 Elf Perception	47
6 Heart Failure	59
7 The Mighty Maynard	71
8 Moose Tracks	85
9 That Slinking Feeling	97
10 Facing the Bull	111
11 Two Steps Forward, Four Hooves Back	125
12 The Last Re-snort	135
13 To Boldly Grow	147
14 Taming of the Zoo	153
15 In the Winner's Cycle	163
16 Hat Tricks	171



## Preface

No moose were harmed in the writing of this book!

I started using the Moose-on-the-Table metaphor in the mid to late nineties as I helped management teams identify and address the issues that were getting in the way of higher performance. Just like dysfunctional families, many such teams find it easier to avoid tough conversations. But rarely do problems get better when left unaddressed. Rather, the moose grow larger, breed, and increase the size of the herd.

A Moose-on-the-Table section in the Authenticity chapter of my previous book *The Leader's Digest*, along with evolving moose-hunting workshops and executive retreats, accelerated The CLEMMER Group's use of this metaphor and approach with our Clients. I have amassed a collection of moose memorabilia in my office and T-shirts in my closets. Some have come from friends, family, and associates, because I seem to have become known as "the moose guy."

During a summer family vacation in Prince Edward Island, Heather purchased a fridge magnet for me. It couldn't have been more timely or appropriate, since I was just finishing this manuscript. A cartoon on the magnet showed two moose sipping brews (likely Moosehead beer) in a bar. One of the moose is pointing at a moose's head mounted on the wall behind them. The bubble above his head reads, "Hey! Wait a minute! That's *Jim!*" What are the odds?

Most of my moose memorabilia are from Clients. Many have used the moose approach to playfully open up tough

conversations and deal with long-standing issues that had been avoided, ignored, or glossed over. But some teams actually made their situation worse by turning everyone's attention to communication issues and then doing little or nothing to dig out and address the root causes of their problems.

## **Cowardice and Courage**

This book explores the fear–courage continuum through the struggles and experiences of the central character, Pete Leonard. We all have fears of some sort, and what a cunning and stealthy force they are in our personal and organizational lives. Fear is the major cause of most of our stress and worry. And it's an inside job. No one else can make us stressed or worried without our agreement. When we allow fear and worry into our thoughts, they cast huge shadows over our lives and block out the light of the daily enjoyments we could be basking in. These shadows can creep over us and reduce our lives to just barely coping or just getting by. Fear kills team and organizational effectiveness as communications close down and conversations become ever more guarded and shallow.

Like a spotlight cutting through darkness, courage shines brightest in the presence of fear. It's easy to boldly march forward when we're filled with confidence and the way forward is fairly smooth. It takes real courage – and strong leadership – to navigate our way when we're full of negative fantasies and everything seems to be against us. True courage is to master, rather than be mastered by, our fears.

Victory in difficult circumstances starts with our own victory over self. The best way out of a tough situation is working through it. Thucydides, the ancient Greek historian and the

author of the *History of the Peloponnesian War* (covering the battle between Sparta and Athens from 431 to 404 B.C.), declares, “But the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet not withstanding go out and meet it.”

## A Novel Approach

As the subtitle indicates, I’ve taken a very different approach with this book. This is my first work of fiction. I began loosely assembling ideas, possible storylines, and potential characters a few years before beginning to write. But I struggled with how to pull it all together.

Then I saw a promotion for a writer’s workshop featuring Hollywood story consultant Christopher Vogel. He has evaluated over ten thousand screenplays for major motion picture studios and is the author of the extremely helpful book *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Christopher’s consulting success and book are based on a simplification and modernization of Joseph Campbell’s 1949 classic *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. I had previously been inspired by Campbell’s study of the hero’s journey and transformation through virtually all the mythologies of the world across all cultures and throughout time. He identified one archetypal hero in all of them. George Lucas based his *Star Wars* series on Campbell’s work. Since I had found those movies to be profoundly spiritual and entertaining – and Lucas did okay with them – I thought there might be something to learn at the workshop.

Featuring Christopher Vogel and led by writing consultant Sam Horn, the workshop clicked all the pieces magically into place for me. And it didn’t hurt that the session was at a lush Cancun beach resort in January either! I came back from the

writing retreat inspired and began to spin the tale now before you whenever I could squeeze in a few early-morning hours of writing (my most creative time of the day).

I've thoroughly enjoyed studying and applying the timeless art of storytelling to allow you to be a fly-on-the-wall witness to many of the kinds of ineffective and effective conversations and actions I've seen during my twenty-five years in the personal, team, and organizational-development fields. I had lots of fun writing this book and tried to balance a humorous and engaging story with leadership learning. I hope you find it highly "edutaining."

## **With Gratitude**

It's always tough to acknowledge everyone who has contributed to a book like this, but let me mention the main ones. Heather, my wonderful life and business partner, is my best friend, confidante, counselor, and highly valued business co-owner. She's also the nurturing mother of our three terrific offspring (it's hard to call them kids now), Chris, Jenn, and Vanessa. We are truly blessed to have been entrusted with their childhood and to have seen how they have courageously dealt with life's adversities and challenges as they have grown and matured into thoughtful, successful adults. The closeness and love of our immediate and extended family is a continuous source of energy and renewal for both of us.

Scott Schweyer and Karen Lee have been doing an outstanding job of helping CLEMMER Group Clients blaze their own pathways to higher performance as described in the later chapters of this book. Our years of successful progress have been mutually rewarding for everyone involved and have helped shape many of the key effective approaches

described here. Mark Henderson and Derek Mendham contributed highly useful experiences to our early consulting and training work.

Betty Kaita, Darlene Mashinter, Gini Kechnie-Williams, Joanne Savoy, and Cara Tavares provide the invaluable administrative backbone that holds our business together. We have built much of this infrastructure, along with our web site and digital communications, on the great pioneering work of Julie Gil.

I am very thankful to Aidan Crawford for his rare combination of technological expertise – used in our web site and digital communications strategies – and writing skills. His creativity in polishing the rough manuscript and now promoting this book has been invaluable. Don Bastian, an excellent thirty-year veteran editor, was very helpful in streamlining the manuscript. He gently pried the stuffy sections, puffy paragraphs, wandering sentences, and what I thought was a killer ending worthy of a major literary prize from my clenched hands.

In nearly three decades of work with hundreds of Clients, I've been privileged to learn so much from thousands of keynote audience members, workshop and retreat participants, web site visitors, and monthly e-newsletter and book readers. The characters and situations found in this book come directly or indirectly from that deep flowing river of experience. Some of the people you'll meet in this book are composite characters cobbled together from this rich and varied "database."



If you want to know what I'm up to today, you can always visit my web site, [\*\*www.clemmer.net\*\*](http://www.clemmer.net). Along with my blog, you'll find dozens of video clips, hundreds of free articles, and

information about my other books, workshops, keynotes, and The CLEMMER Group's consulting services. You can also subscribe to my popular monthly newsletter and Improvement Points e-mail tips service (both are no charge).

I'd love to get your feedback on this book. Visit **[www.mooseonthetable.com](http://www.mooseonthetable.com)** to send me your comments and to get further background on this book, purchase multiple copies at steep discounts, and explore our related moose-hunting products and services.