

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter



JimClemmer.com

[Online Version](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[Practical Leadership Blog](#)

In this issue...

April 2010, Issue 85

[Don't Be Fooled: Why Most Training Fails](#)

[Deciding How to Decide: Three Levels of Effective Team Decision Making](#)

[Are You Prepared for Recession-Recovery and Growth?](#)

["Soft" Skills Lead to Big Improvements in Productivity](#)

[Your Team Members' Opinions are Worth More Than You Think](#)

[Nine Simple Steps to Make all Your Meetings More Effective](#)

[Complimentary Monthly Podcast of Firing on all Cylinders Excerpts Now Available \(No Charge\)](#)

[Thoughts That Make You Go Hmm...on Living Organizational Values](#)

[Doing Good is Good for Business and How We Do Anything Means Everything](#)

[Engaging in the Pursuit of Excellence](#)

[Check Out My Coming Events](#)

[Twelve Ground Rules to Keep Meetings and Conference Calls on Topic and Productive](#)

[18 Book Reviews Now Available on My LinkedIn Profile](#)

[Practical Leadership Development for Peak Performance Archived Webcast and Slides Download Now Available](#)

[Read It Here or Hot Off My Blog](#)

[Most Popular March Improvement Points](#)

[Feedback and Follow-Up](#)

APRIL 2010, ISSUE 85

The Danish philosopher, theologian, and psychologist, Soren Kierkegaard once observed, "There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't so. The other is to refuse to believe what is so." For centuries, April 1 has been celebrated in many countries with pranks, hoaxes, and practical jokes.

Wikipedia has a fascinating collection of well-known April Fool pranks. What's equally interesting are the examples of real news stories that happened on April 1 but were so strange they were believed to be April Fool jokes.

This month's issue is full of ways many of us - and especially managers - fool ourselves. This includes training, living values, leading meetings, and increasing productivity. Other items in this issue cover coaching, affirming team members, and pursuing excellence. These are based on best practices that really are so. No fooling!

DON'T BE FOOLED: WHY MOST TRAINING FAILS

Many managers and training professionals fool themselves into believing they provide effective training. One of the most popular articles on our web site is "[Why Most Training Fails.](#)" After reading it, [Mark Christie](#) sent me this [LinkedIn](#) message:

"Just read 'Why Most Training Fails.' I feel that I've written the same article myself...many times over!"

The only issue I have with it is the statement that the research is ignored by many training professionals. I would submit that the true training 'professionals' aren't ignoring this research at all, but the challenge is in getting the client to accept the findings. I'm fully aware of all of the pitfalls of running the 'spray and pray' workshops, but unfortunately that's what clients insist on having, despite my pleas to the ineffectiveness of such practices. I've heard arguments from other consultants that a true professional just wouldn't take that engagement, but when there's 100 guys lining up behind you that will do it, the alternative is to starve...not my preferred option.

I am interested to know how you deal with clients that - despite all the evidence - simply want the 'spray and pray?'"

At The CLEMMER Group we deliver one time training events and activities. There are times when that's about the most that the senior

Permission to Reprint

You may reprint any items from *The Leader Letter* in your own printed publication or e-newsletter as long as you include this paragraph:

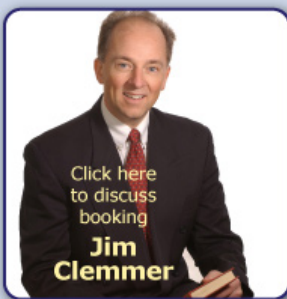
"Reprinted with permission from *The Leader Letter*, Jim Clemmer's free e-newsletter. For over twenty-five years, Jim's 2,000 + practical leadership presentations and workshops/retreats, six bestselling books, columns, and newsletters have been helping hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. His web site is www.jimclemmer.com."

Connect with Jim on...

facebook

twitter

YouTube™



manager sponsoring the training effort is willing to invest. Other times we provide a keynote or workshop that's part of a staff or management conference or meeting. And that's better than no training at all.

In those situations we'll invest time probing and understanding the larger context of the organization's culture. We'll try to uncover whatever strategic plans, values, core competencies, or performance management system might exist and link the training event to those.

What we try to avoid are senior managers who believe it's all about hiring someone to change and "fix" everybody else. This becomes especially apparent when we're asked to "teach them" how-to communicate, be more accountable, or increase trust. Deeper probing often shows that the senior manager is not prepared - and won't tolerate - efforts to get at deeper processes, management systems, or leadership practices underlying and causing most of the communication, accountability, and trust problems. This is not a training issue. Training will not only fail, it will be a scab-picking exercise that only causes further irritation and often causes the underlying infection to spread.

Training is most effective when it's part of a bigger culture change and leadership development effort. Often this will be a step by step process that begins with a single event. As managers increase their learning and effectiveness, they develop a deeper understanding of the interconnections between management systems and leadership behaviors. You can see some of this relationship outlined at [The High-Performance Balance](#) and a few video clips on [The Performance Balance](#).

The one short article where I've tried to most succinctly summarize the difference between training as an event and as a culture/leadership development process is at [Bolt-on Programs or Built-In Culture Change](#). Training professionals may start with a bolt-on program that begins as "spray and pray." But with the end goal of culture change, we can look for opportunities that help the senior managers we're working with move toward a deeper and more lasting process of continuous development.

DECIDING HOW TO DECIDE: THREE LEVELS OF EFFECTIVE TEAM DECISION MAKING

You probably spend large chunks of your day in meetings or on conference calls. That's especially true if you're in any sort of management, project, or team leadership role. Whether in person or using communication technology, meetings, conferences calls, or webinars are more important than ever in our increasingly complex and interconnected world. Research clearly shows that when run effectively, groups make better decisions than individuals. Effective team sessions involve and engage participants in problem-solving and planning.

But most group sessions are poorly run. Many are a disaster. That's why so many people dislike them. Symptoms are comments like, "I could get a lot more of my work done if it wasn't for all of these bloody meetings." Participants who continually experience poorly run group sessions see them as a waste of time. Many are. Managers, project, or team leaders who lead or participate in well-run and effective team interactions get the bulk of their work done through virtual or physical meetings. These don't get in the way of their work, this is their work.

Deciding How to Decide

Many groups get tripped up by confusion around whether and how decisions are made. There are three basic ways along the "3 C continuum" for a team or group to make a decision:



Command - made by the manager, project or team leader with little input from other team members.

Consultative - made by a team member (often the manager, project or team leader) after consulting others who have knowledge or who must be committed to the decision.

Consensus - made by the entire team as a group either through "majority rules" or unanimous agreement.

The further the team moves toward the consensus end of the continuum, the more buy-in or commitment there is to the decision. Decision-making time is longer. But implementation time and effectiveness dramatically improves.

A common source of frustration and conflict in teams is when the type of decision-making method being used is not clear to everyone at the outset of the discussion. Managers, project, or team project managers will often add to the problem by leading what seems to be a consultative or even consensus discussion when he or she has already made up his or her mind. This comes across as a "guess what I am thinking" exercise. Or it can look like the leader is trying to manipulate the team into the "right decision." Some less effective managers, project or team leaders with weak leadership skills will intimidate team members into "forced consensus" (an oxymoron) and leave the discussion genuinely believing that the team is united in the decision.

Some agenda items are for information and some are updates. But whenever decisions are needed, avoid confusion - and lots of frustration - by ensuring everyone is clear about the type of decision making process you're using.

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR RECESSION-RECOVERY AND GROWTH?

An e-mail inquiry and a *Globe & Mail* article last month converged to illustrate the rapidly growing need for organizations to significantly boost their coaching and development skill-building efforts.

The Globe & Mail article proclaimed that "a growing number of employees now want a lifetime commitment with one organization." The piece cites recent studies by Towers Watson and Kelly Services showing that "after years of workers thinking of themselves as free agents the tide has turned." Around the world a rapidly shifting number of people are looking for long-term relationships. That conclusion forms the article's title, "Employer, will you marry me?" [CLICK HERE](#) to read it (as long as [The Globe & Mail](#) keeps the link freely available.)

Just as our economies begin to recover, the bulge of aging baby boomers will begin to retire. So a new generation of frontline and management staff will rapidly need to be developed. That newer generation is now yearning to love their work and organization in exchange for genuine care and commitment from the company in return.

This serves as both a tremendous opportunity and a critical threat for forward-thinking executives as they prepare their organization for growth over the next few years. The CLEMMER Group is getting a rising number of inquiries for help with coaching, training, succession planning, personal growth, and leadership development.

Last month's e-mail inquiry for consulting and training help read in part:

"...we're heavily invested in the talent management process. Similar to many organizations, many of our managers are getting close to retirement and we realize the urgency to identify high potentials within the organization and be able to provide leadership opportunities for them through formal methods as well as through informal processes such as coaching and mentoring.

We are looking for help with coaching skills for our 75 managers and creating a culture of coaching."

This Client's inquiry is very timely since we've developed an extensive series of highly customized modules, programs, and services around coaching skills and culture in the past few years. One critical question is whether this organization wants a training workshop to build awareness and the need for coaching on a leadership foundation (such as connecting around organizational competencies, values, performance management system, etc.) or a narrower and deeper dive right into practical coaching skills.

In the first case, the broader awareness session can be done with 75 participants at one time. The second approach is much more effective if the group size is about 25 participants, so they can get into more intimate and tailored practice and application sessions.

Another critical element in building a culture of coaching is involving senior management in before and/or after preparation and follow-up sessions to increase culture alignment and accountability.

You can peruse a series of my articles and excerpts on [Coaching and Developing](#) and [Training and Development](#).

"SOFT" SKILLS LEAD TO BIG IMPROVEMENTS IN PRODUCTIVITY

During the last few weeks, signs of Spring such as March/Spring Breaks have been breaking out in school districts across many areas of North America. There are also promising signs of global economic recovery - "green shoots" - breaking out and starting to grow. But indicators point toward a long and challenging recovery.

A key issue in organizational recovery and growth is productivity. Real productivity growth takes disciplined management and strong leadership. Politicians, economists, and media commentators often talk about productivity growth from capital investments in equipment, technology, and other physical assets. Those are important factors in increasing productivity, profits, and quality of life.

But it's an organization's "soft" culture and leadership behaviors that will ultimately decide whether those "hard" investments will cause productivity to sink or soar. Many departmental, divisional, or corporate management teams proclaim their commitment to productivity improvement. But there's commitment and then there's commitment.

We developed our "Commitment Continuum" when helping Clients with service and quality improvement as outlined in my book, [Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Corporate Performance](#). The continuum shows that as we move across the first three stages - service, quality, productivity - other organizational results may slowly increase. It's only when management teams break through to stages four and five that the results or changes they are looking for really start to take-off.

Here's the five stage continuum applied to a management team's focus on productivity growth:

1. **Permission** - provides capital/technical investments and authorizes managers, outside experts, or support staff to implement productivity improvement programs such as Lean/Six Sigma.
2. **Lip Service** - gives speeches and writes e-mails exhorting everyone to improve productivity. Budgets and resources are allocated to a piecemeal series of programs. There is no strategic improvement plan integrating these efforts, the improvement process is not part of operational management's responsibilities, and the senior managers are not personally involved in education or training.
3. **Passionate Lip Service** - senior managers may get an abbreviated overview of the training program being given to everyone else. Some elements of an implementation plan may be partially in place. Senior managers ramp up their rhetoric urging everyone else to make big changes and improvements while their own management methods and leadership behaviors remain unchanged.
4. **Involved Leadership** - senior managers attend training first in its entirety then often deliver (or co-facilitate) sessions to everyone else. The improvement process is actively integrated with management team decision making, daily operations, and other strategic key initiatives. Follow-ups, regular reviews, and re-adjustments are used for learning, recognition, and holding everyone accountable for their contributions. The management team is visibly using the tools and approaches and leading the way.
5. **Integration** - there is no longer a stand-alone effort or special initiative/program. The approaches and changes originally taught are now part of daily operations and strategies. The majority of senior management's time is spent with customers, suppliers, staff, and supervisors supporting the work of frontline individuals and teams.

The degree of commitment builds and accumulates from #1 through to #5. Most management teams don't make it past stage #3. The effectiveness and lasting impact of any improvement or change effort is exponential in stages #4 and #5. That's why smart investors look most closely at a company's management team or "leadership brand" when deciding where to place their money.

A key part of this discussion involves culture. [CLICK HERE](#) to peruse a series of articles on Culture Change. Click on the article entitled "Bolt-on Programs versus Built-In Processes" for a chart we often use with management teams to show the critical difference between stages #1 - 3 and #4 and 5.

You can also go to [Lean Leadership: Energize Lean, Six Sigma, and other Quality/ Productivity Improvement Initiatives](#) for an outline of services The CLEMMER Group provides to integrate the "hard" elements of management with the critical "soft" issues of leadership.

YOUR TEAM MEMBERS' OPINIONS ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOU THINK

Chris sent me this e-mail putting his finger on a vital coaching and developing skill:

"In your March newsletter, you reference your leadership wheel and I enjoyed reading the results of your findings as

put into that model. I am currently working with a person who is in a leadership role and while he is very dynamic and committed to the organization, I find that he displays a bit of a defensive attitude to ideas that are presented in our meetings. It tends to come across as a 'yes, but' type of comment. It is my experience that this slowly causes people to adopt the attitude 'Why bother making suggestions, his mind is made up.'

It appears to me that one additional characteristic of leaders is the ability to affirm team members in such a way that they feel their ideas are of merit and have been acknowledged. I was wondering where that fits in your model."

[Chris Prosser](#), Director of Canadian Operations at [The Adler Group](#)

Chris is referring to "[Characteristics of Admired Leaders](#)" from last month's issue of *The Leader Letter*.

An effective leader is open to feedback and builds an environment where people are encouraged to speak their truth, share their honest views, provide constructive push-back, and engage in healthy debates. That's the essence of Authenticity and [Courageous Conversations](#). I've written a few articles on [Fostering Openness and Transparency](#) and do see it as a core leadership skill.

How a supervisor or manager makes a team member feel is at the heart of defining [Management versus Leadership](#). Strong management skills will often make a team member feel like the boss is capable and effective. Strong leadership skills will make a team member feel like he or she is capable and effective. Strong leadership increases confidence and can-do spirit.

Making team members feel that their ideas have merit and have been acknowledged is an outcome from skilled application of many of the Timeless Leadership Principles. It most clearly fits in my model as part of [Coaching and Developing](#). I've written quite a bit about this vital area. [The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success](#), identifies nine best practices of highly effective coaches. You can read a summary of them at [A Coach's Playbook for Leaders](#).

NINE SIMPLE STEPS TO MAKE ALL YOUR MEETINGS MORE EFFECTIVE

Are meetings or conference calls a good way for you and your team to get work done or are they black holes sucking vital energy and scarce time out of your day? Many managers, project, or team leaders practice very poor "meeting hygiene." People drift in and out, side conversations distract from the main discussion, discussions drift off track, meetings don't start or end on time, decisions and next steps are unclear, there's a mini-meeting happening among a small group of participants with everyone else as spectators, conflicts simmer and occasionally flare up to burn group members, or sessions are a meeting of the bored.

Whether meetings are with everyone in the same room, on a teleconference call, or coordinated online, the most effective ones follow disciplined processes. Whenever you're running a physical or virtual meeting, use this checklist to keep you on track. If you're a participant, raise questions or make suggestions for what you think will help your group have the most productive time together.

Meeting/Conference Call/Online Process Checklist

- Each session has adequate planning and preparation around who, what, when, where, and why;
- An agenda shows the purpose (information giving, decision required, problem-solving, input needed, etc.), desired outcomes/objectives, decision-making process to be used (command, consultative, consensus), and time allocated for each agenda item;
- The agenda has been distributed far enough in advance of the session for participants to adequately prepare;
- Ground rules are clearly established and owned by the group;
- The physical setting/environment/technology for the session provides the right atmosphere, space, and equipment;
- Session roles (discussion leader, chair/facilitator, time keeper, note taker, etc.) are clear;
- Follow-through and follow-up from previous sessions ensures accountability and things don't slip through the cracks;
- Each agenda item is summarized and actions/decisions documented before moving on to the next one;
- When the time allocated to an agenda item has been reached, but the discussion not yet concluded, the group revisits the agenda timeframes and resets priorities for the rest of the session;
- The session pace contributes to maximum effectiveness;
- Next steps and follow-up action plans are clear;
- The group periodically reviews and improves the meeting/conference call/webinar process;
- Notes are distributed within a few days of the session.

COMPLIMENTARY MONTHLY PODCAST OF [FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS](#) EXCERPTS NOW AVAILABLE (NO CHARGE)

Just after [*Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Corporate Performance*](#) was published (now over 100,000 copies sold), I recorded an audio series reading excerpts from the book. We are now making these freely available in a weekly podcast series. [CLICK HERE](#) to access the installments as they are posted. We'll be posting all 10 segments over the next 10 months. On this page you can sign up to be notified whenever the next segment is available.

You can learn more about this series and look at an overview of the audio on the [*Firing on all Cylinders audio CD*](#) web site page.

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMM...ON LIVING ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

I often poll my audiences to see how many work in or lead an organization that has published a statement of values. Usually about 3/4 of the group raises their hands. I then ask a rhetorical question (not asking for hands to be raised) about whether those values have a "high snicker factor" throughout the organization. The CLEMMER Group's survey and assessment work inside dozens of organizations helping them with leadership development and culture change shows that in about 3/4 of the organizations with value statements, they are ignored, snickered at, or boost cynicism and disengagement.

"Like the money in a bank's vault, values are the company's treasure. Values reflect what the leader holds worthy, what the organization assigns worth. They are the ideals, principles, and philosophy at the center of the enterprise. They are protected and revered. They reveal the company's heart and soul. They energize the covenant. Unlike stacks of \$100 bills

or gold ingots, these valuables are intangible. From them, however, flows the company's life. Their force and spirit permeate the company at every level, and they become palpable in decisions and behavior."

- Leonard L. Berry, *Discovering the Soul of Service. The Nine Drivers of Sustainable Business Success*

A lawyer had a jury trial in a very difficult litigation. The client who had attended the trial was out of town when the jury came back with its decision, which was for the lawyer and his client. The lawyer immediately sent a message to his client, reading "Justice has triumphed!" The client responded, "Appeal at once!"

- An old legal joke

"Trust is the conviction that the leader means what he says. It is a belief in something very old-fashioned, called 'integrity.' A leader's actions and a leader's professed beliefs must be congruent, or at least compatible. Effective leadership - and again this is very old wisdom - is not based on being clever; it is based primarily on being consistent."

- Peter Drucker, *The Essential Drucker*

"The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear."

- Socrates, Classical Greek philosopher considered one of the founders of Western philosophy

"This was one of the most paradoxical findings from Built to Last - core values are essential for enduring greatness, but it doesn't seem to matter what those core values are. The point is not what core values you have, but that you have core values at all, that you know what they are, that you build them explicitly into the organization, and that you preserve them over time."

- Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't.*

"One organization put 500 of their top-level managers through a six-week executive program. But the vice presidents and the managing directors didn't go through the program. So even though the president talks this great game, everyone in the organization looks up, they see these very senior managers behaving inconsistently, and they say this executive program is a joke."

- Charles O'Reilly, author of *Hidden Value: How Great Companies Achieve Extraordinary Results with Ordinary People*

[CLICK HERE](#) to review my selection of short articles on organizational Vision, Values, and Purpose. [CLICK HERE](#) to review articles on the role of core values in Culture Change.

DOING GOOD IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS AND HOW WE DO ANYTHING MEANS EVERYTHING

What does Toyota's on-going recall problems and Tiger Woods' infidelities have in common? They're both a great source of material for comedians and late night TV. They are also very expensive, make sensational headlines, and have tarnished stellar brands. We've added a Coming Events section to our web site. [CLICK HERE to access it.](#)

But an especially interesting leadership link is how these two big news stories vividly demonstrate today's interconnected and transparent world. Another example is the searching out of a job candidate's online presence or reputation. Sometimes what's posted on Facebook, You Tube, or other social media is not the same as what's on his or her resume or was shown in the job interview.

Fortune magazine ran a fascinating article recently entitled "[Why doing good is good for business.](#)" Richard McGill Murphy states, "In a world where disgruntled employees and unhappy customers can trash you globally in the time it takes to dash off a nasty blog posting or upload a cell phone video, it's becoming much harder to manage reputation the old-fashioned way, by hiding behind lawyers and crisis-management consultants. Ultimately, the only way to enjoy a good reputation is to earn it by living with integrity."

The article featured the work of Dov Seidman who, with a master's degree in philosophy and a Harvard Law Degree, founded a California-based legal and management consulting company. Dov looks remarkably like a younger and less muscle-bound Arnold Schwarzenegger. The article discusses how Dov's company started with providing services for legal compliance and has evolved into brand, culture, and leadership development.

The studies and examples on the pay-offs from using values and culture to "outbehave" competitors and build branding and reputation from the inside out inspired me to get a copy of his book, [How: Why How We Do Anything Means Everything ... in Business \(and in Life\)](#). Intrigued by the title, and anticipating lots more meaty research and rich insights, I was disappointed by the book.

As famed American satirist, Ambrose Bierce, (most known for writing *The Devil's Dictionary*) once put it, "the covers of this book are too far apart." *How* is at least twice as long as it needs to be. Like gold mining, you have to move, crush, and refine a lot of rock to get the nuggets. Seidman's stories are long and way too detailed with some sections or entire chapters providing rambling flashes of the obvious.

The book's gold is in Chapters Ten and Eleven dealing with organizational culture. Seidman's "Spectrum of Culture" starts with "Anarchy and Lawlessness," moves up to "Blind Obedience," then steps up to "Informed Acquiescence" and culminates with the strongest and most successful culture of "Self-Governance." His chart on "The Five How's of Culture" (pages 228 - 229) is an excellent summary of behaviors, characteristics, signs, and steps to each type of culture. He then builds a strong "Case for Self-Governing Cultures" (Chapter 11) that finishes with these short sections showing why self-governance is the future of business:

- Self-governing cultures thrive on the free flow of information;
- A leading company needs to be a company of leaders;
- Values-based self-governing cultures encourage employee development;
- Self-governance builds universal vigilance;
- Self-governance shifts decision making from the pragmatic to the principled;
- Self-governance is a higher concept.

ENGAGING IN THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

One of the more striking disconnects in organizations around the world is the tendency to cut back on training and development during difficult economic times. Even as these programs prove their value over and over again by introducing new approaches that help improve bottom-line efficiencies across the board, they are often the first expenditure

eliminated in the rush to keep budgets balanced.

Perhaps the reason is that many managers still view training and development as an unnecessary "perk" when budgets tighten. Of course anyone who has ever attended one of my workshops understands that a day away from the office can provide new techniques, tools, and perspectives that shift the focus away from what's impossible to what is entirely doable. Attendees don't see these events as costs, but investments in their personal, team and organizational performance.

I am delivering a series of one-day *Leading @ the Speed of Change: Practical Leadership for Peak Performance* workshops in Winnipeg, Toronto, London, Calgary, and Vancouver. This action-packed session is built for supervisors, managers, directors, and executives who are looking for:

- Ideas and inspiration for personally dealing with or leading change during turbulent times;
- Tools, techniques, and ideas for strengthening a team/organization;
- A deeper understanding of the power and application of emotional intelligence;
- Ways to assess leadership strengths and improvement opportunities;
- Implementation strategies for personal, team, or organization improvement plans;
- A recharged, re-energized, and re-inspired approach to change;
- Insights for coaching and developing others.

To find out more about this workshop, we've created a [special section](#) on our website that includes a [detailed agenda](#), [what you can expect to learn](#), and a [downloadable brochure](#). In short, it makes a very persuasive case for why you should attend.

If you're interested in exploring a customized in-house half, one, or two-day version of this workshop for your organization, [CLICK HERE](#) to look at the options.

CHECK OUT MY COMING EVENTS

I have a series of public sessions in various Canadian locations coming up over the next few months. [CLICK HERE](#) to check them out.

TWELVE GROUND RULES TO KEEP MEETINGS AND CONFERENCE CALLS ON TOPIC AND PRODUCTIVE

Getting a group to agree on basic ground rules describing desired and unacceptable behavior is critical to using your time together most effectively. It's a simple and high impact step that's often missed.

You can present a list like this one and vote on the top five you all need to especially pay attention to. Or you can have the group come up with their own list. What's key is that you keep using, reviewing, and giving each participant feedback when you are on and off track.

- Sessions start on time with all the right participants present and ready;
- We call each other when team norms or session ground rules are violated;
- We stay focused and on topic;
- Sniping, pot shots, or putdowns are not allowed;

- Discussions focus on the problem, issue, or behavior avoiding personal putdowns, judgmental statements, or sweeping generalizations;
- Cell phones, Blackberries/PDAs, texting, and other people do not interrupt the session or divert participant's attention;
- Everyone participates and stays engaged in the conversation;
- When discussions involve just some participants, we encourage them to have a separate discussion at another time;
- We don't cut each other off, finish someone else's sentences, or engage in side conversations;
- Those with dissenting opinions at least feel their point of view was heard;
- We practice "cabinet solidarity" by keeping disagreements and debates inside the session and not continuing debates or disagreement with others outside our team after the session;
- With major decisions/discussions, ending the session, or when we want a consensus decision, we go around the team and get everyone's point of view;
- We look for lots of opportunities to celebrate, recognize, and appreciate our team/organization successes;
- We have a high laughter index using constructive, positive humor.

[CLICK HERE](#) to go to this original blog posting and add your experiences or suggestions at the bottom of the page on how to keep your virtual or physical meetings highly productive and energizing.

18 BOOK REVIEWS NOW AVAILABLE ON MY LINKEDIN PROFILE

Now that the writing, publishing, and launch of my latest book [Growing @ the Speed of Change](#) is through its busiest phase, I am able to spend more time indulging my passion for reading. I generally have a novel of historical fiction, a book on spiritual/philosophical/meditation, and one or two personal growth/leadership/organization effectiveness books on the go.

As part of building out [my LinkedIn profile](#), I've recently added 18 book reviews. These are mostly favorite books on personal growth, leadership, and organization effectiveness. Some reviews are from past [blog](#) posts or previous issues of [The Leader Letter](#). Other reviews are drawn from the book's inclusion in [Growing @ the Speed of Change](#).

[CLICK HERE](#) to visit my profile. If you have a LinkedIn profile and we're not already connected, please mention your connection to me (through my blog, newsletter, books, speaking engagement/workshop, etc) and send me an invitation to connect.

PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE ARCHIVED WEBCAST AND SLIDES DOWNLOAD NOW AVAILABLE

The webcast is my voice through an audio broadcast synchronized with slides full of the usual animations and transitions I use when presenting in front of a group. We now have the broadcast available on our site for viewing as streaming audio and video on site or download the WMV file [here](#). When you click on this link you'll also see the agenda of what was covered in the webcast.

So you can catch the webcast on your own time, show it at your next team meeting, or bring people together for a shared learning experience and do the assessment/discussion exercises recommended in the presentation.

READ IT HERE OR HOT OFF MY BLOG

The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my [blog](#) (updated twice per week) the previous month. You can wait to read it all together each month in *The Leader Letter* or you can read each item as a [blog](#) post and have them sent directly to you hot off my computer by signing up at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/blog/>. Just enter your e-mail address in the upper left corner box under "Sign up for E-mail Blog Notification."

MOST POPULAR MARCH IMPROVEMENT POINTS

[Improvement Points](#) is a no-charge service to bring timely and inspirational quotes from my articles to subscribers three times a week. Built around our new [topic index](#), Improvement Points are crafted to help you become a better leader of yourself, your team and your organization. Each Improvement Point links directly to a full article on our web site. If you'd like to read more about the point being made in that day's Improvement Point, you simply click on the "Read the full article now" link below each IP. Many subscribers circulate especially relevant [Improvement Points](#) articles to their team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action.

Here are the three most popular Improvement Points we sent out in March:

"At our youngest daughter's sixth birthday party, a five-year-old boy hit Vanessa on the head. Asked to apologize, he politely refused: "Mr. Clemmer, I don't apologize unless I see teeth marks or blood."

Many managers don't realize the problems they're creating unless they see the teeth marks or blood on those with whom they work. The most insensitive managers are those who lack good feedback systems and refuse to seek input on how to improve their own performance."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Feedback is an Essential Element of Learning and Improvement"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"Around the time I got thinking about what I would like to look back on in my life, I heard someone repeat Oliver Wendall Holmes' comment that "Most of us die with our music still in us." What a tragedy! How many people go to their graves with the songs or poems they were going to compose still in them? How many people die with the book they were always going to write buried in their head? Or the love they always meant to express still in their hearts? How many innovations and businesses that might have made a real difference went to a grave and perished? Just how many unrealized dreams have died with their dreamers?"

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Clarifying Personal Purpose"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"Like a good gardener, leaders treat each person in their organization as an individual with his or her own unique aspirations, strengths, and characteristics. Leaders then work to put people in the best place for them to thrive and succeed."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Leaders Give People Space to Grow"

[Read the full article now!](#)

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@Clemmer.net.

Keep learning, laughing, loving, and leading – living life just for the L of it!!

Jim

The CLEMMER Group

10 Pioneer Drive, Suite 105,

Kitchener, ON N2P 2A4

Phone: (519) 748-1044

Fax: (519) 748-5813

E-mail: service@clemmer.net

<http://www.jimclemmer.com>

Please post or forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested – or on a 'need-to-grow' basis. If you received this newsletter from someone else, and would like to subscribe, click on the link below:

<http://www.jimclemmer.com/newsletter>

The CLEMMER Group

10 Pioneer Drive, Suite 105, Kitchener ON N2P 2A4

Phone: (519) 748-1044 ~ Fax: (519) 748-5813

E-mail: service@clemmer.net

<http://www.jimclemmer.com>