



Issue 145 - April 2015

The Leader Letter



It's been three years since Jack Zenger and I had one of our periodic update conversations after we headed off in different directions over 20 years ago. Our previous companies, The Achieve Group and Zenger Miller, had worked together for more than a decade. When this conversation took place with Jack, my wife, Heather, and I were just back from a one month dream cruise of Hawaii and the South Pacific to celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary.

In addition to warm reflections on our decades together since our Hawaiian honeymoon as newlyweds barely out of our teens, Heather and I were also contemplating our next life/career/business moves. For the first few weeks of the cruise, the idea of semi-retirement or slowing down and doing more cruising was appealing. We thoroughly enjoy cruising and loved this extended one. But by the fourth week it became clear that I am still too young (we were the youngsters on the ship), have too much energy, love for my life's work, and interest in exploring new pathways.

With more than 20 years of intense interest in the work of Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania, I was especially captivated with the extensive new research he and his colleagues were pioneering in the emerging field of positive psychology. At the point when Jack and I talked, I was seriously contemplating an application to the Masters of Applied Positive Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania.

While I'd been following Jack's work and reviewed three of the books he co-authored at Zenger Folkman, I didn't appreciate just how far he and Joe Folkman had advanced practical tools for strengths-based leadership and coaching skills development. As I got deeper into their approaches I became quite excited by the powerful and practical tools they'd developed using a scientific/evidence-based approach.

The CLEMMER Group began working with our Clients in using ***The Extraordinary Leader*** and ***The Extraordinary Coach*** in the fall and winter of 2012/13. It's been a deeply rewarding and frustrating few years. Helping leaders build their strengths and coaching skills has been extremely rewarding. Getting senior executives, Organization/Learning Development and Human Resource professionals to appreciate and embrace the power of these ground breaking new approaches has been more difficult than I'd expected. Old paradigms and habits are tough to change.

By happy coincidence this is the perfect issue to reflect back over the past three years since Jack and I first spoke about renewing our partnership. This month features two powerful new white papers on using strengths-based competency models and creating a coaching culture – along with how to check your

coaching skills. It also features new positive psychology research showing a major strengths revolution is finally taking hold in our workplaces.

May you also be re-fired with building life, leadership, and coaching strengths!

New White Paper: Creating a Competency Model That Works



A friend who hasn't seen a doctor in years was recently diagnosed with serious heart disease. He was immediately prescribed medication to reduce his blood pressure, control cholesterol, and thin his blood. His wife is fanatically devoted to natural remedies. She found a book arguing for cayenne pepper and garlic to soften and dissolve arterial plaque and clean out blocked arteries. When I asked my friend whether the book had scientific evidence that this worked, he replied that the book was full of testimonial letters.

We often encounter similar thinking around leadership competencies. Many executives and HR leaders develop competency models with little to no research on whether they have any connection to outcomes. For example, charisma, time management, entrepreneurial spirit, managerial courage, and executive presence are examples of competencies that don't predict or correlate to levels of employee engagement, profitability, sales, safety, turnover, customer satisfaction, or quality.

Decades ago in graduate school Joe Folkman worked with some of his professors who created one of the first 360 assessments. Joe wrote his PhD dissertation on data he collected from a 360 he developed. Joe went on to become a founding partner in a company that developed hundreds of 360 assessments based on a wide variety of competency models. In 2002 he teamed up with Jack Zenger and took a completely different path to developing, assessing, and strengthening leadership competencies.

Joe has just published a white paper summarizing Zenger Folkman's extensive and highly successful experience with using an evidence and strengths-based competency model. Key points include:

- What is the purpose of a competency model?
- How are competency models created?
- How our research changed the way we thought about competency models.
- The importance of focusing on strengths.
- The illusion of perfection.
- Correcting fatal flaws.
- Cross training to build strengths.
- What are the characteristics of a great competency model?
- Should competency models be used for evaluation/assessment or development?
- Embedding competencies in Human Resource systems.

This new white paper outlines the good, the bad, and the ugly of competency models. It's hot off our e-press and available for download now at [Creating a Competency Model that Works](#).

May you get to the heart of evidence-based leadership development.

Video Clip: Feedback Pinpoints Perceptions of Leadership Effectiveness



As I described recently in "**Courageous Leaders Ask for Feedback**", strong leaders encourage feedback, and reap the benefit in their improved leadership and coaching effectiveness. Feedback from others is twice as valid as our own self-assessment, and provides a double value: insight into how others perceive our current leadership effectiveness and assurance that our route to increased effectiveness is based on accurate information.

In this three minute video clip, **Feedback Pinpoints Perceptions of Leadership Effectiveness**, I discuss the importance of uncovering how our leadership and coaching is perceived. Often one or two of our traits stand out, and inflate (or deflate) perceptions of all our other traits and overall effectiveness.

The past few years I've delivered **The Extraordinary Leader** and **The Extraordinary Coach** workshops to hundreds of participants, and it is always energizing to see the impact of strengths-based feedback. Both workshops include a 360 assessment, providing participants with feedback from all directions on their effectiveness across key competencies specific to leaders or coaches. Participants then determine their "leadership sweet spot" -- where existing strengths overlap the skills the organization needs most to implement its strategy, and create a personalized development plan to continue developing and applying their leadership skills in daily, on-the-job activities.

I am delivering public workshops of **The Extraordinary Leader** and **The Extraordinary Coach** in Toronto and Calgary this May and June. These one and two-day sessions (our two-day **Extraordinary Coach** includes our newly revised Elevating Feedback module as well as a specific strengths-based 360 coaching assessment) create dramatic shifts in thinking and participant skills. You can **view full details and registration here**.

If you are in the Mississauga area on April 9th please join Brad Smith and me at our complimentary ½ day executive briefing on **Coaching and Leadership Skill Development Breakthroughs**. It's a good chance to learn more about building coaching skills and strengthening leadership. There is no charge, but spaces are limited and pre-registration is required.

Further Reading:

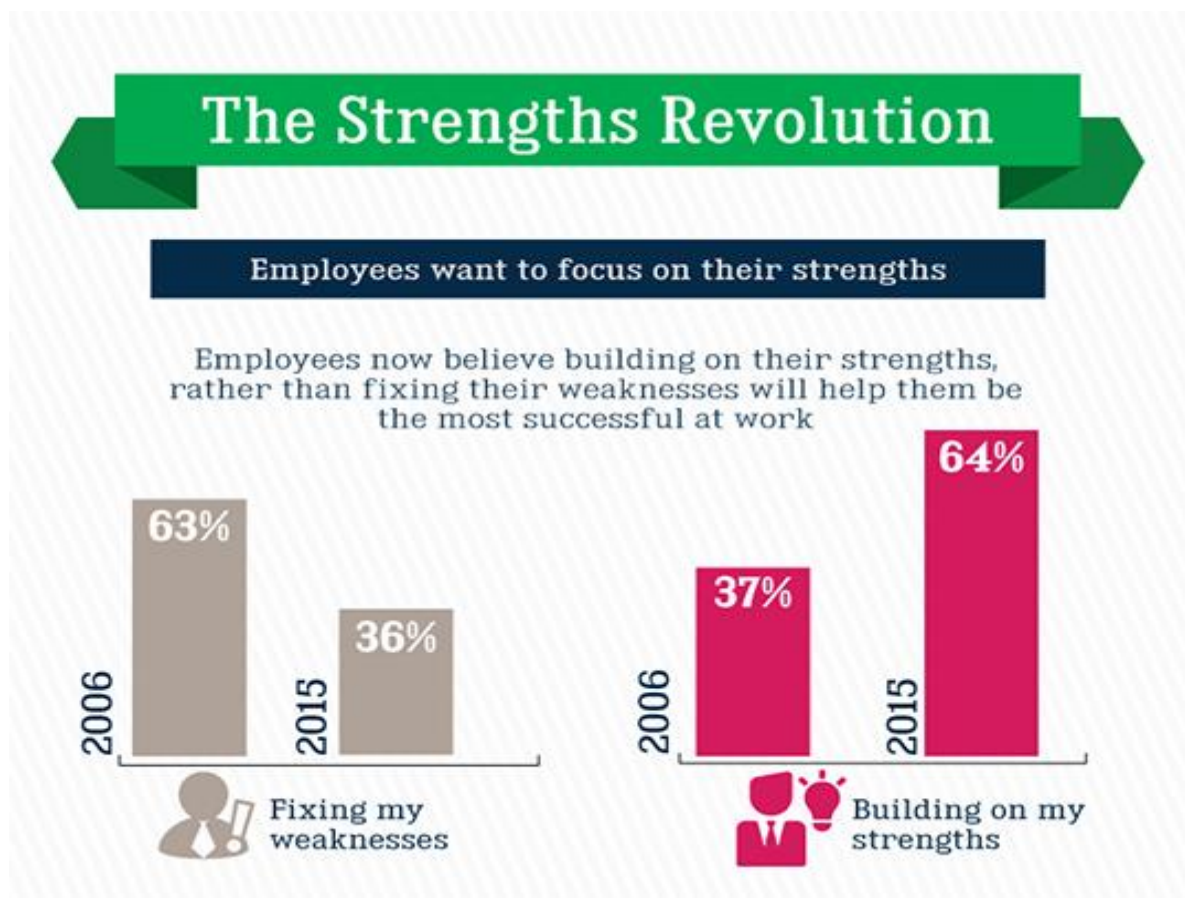
- "**Perceptions Are a Leader's Reality**"
- "**11 Components of a Best in Class 360 Assessment**"
- **The Extraordinary Leader Workshop**
- **The Extraordinary Coach Workshop**

New Survey Showing a Strengths Revolution in our Workplaces



In 2001 only 2 out of 10 people reported that they had a chance to do what they do best every day at work. In 2015 this more than doubled to 5 out of every 10 people. Michelle McQuaid is an honorary fellow at Melbourne University's Graduate School of Education, holds a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania, and is currently completing her PhD in Appreciative Inquiry.

Michelle has just published the results of a survey of over 1,000 employees representing a cross-section of American workplaces. She's **compiled the results in powerful infographics** such as:



Published in conjunction with the **VIA Institute on Character**, here are a few key insights of **The 2015 Strengths @ Work Survey**:

- 78% of employees who report having a meaningful discussion with their manager about their strengths feel their work is making a difference and is appreciated. These employees are most likely (61%) to be leaping out of bed in the morning to get to work.
- The 51% of organizations who are committed to building their employee's strengths have 74% of their managers in meaningful strengths discussions with their employees.
- Research by the Corporate Leadership Council found that when managers focus on the weaknesses of an employee their performance declines by 27%, whereas when they focus on the strengths of an employee performance improves by 36%.
- ... an employee's manager being primarily focused on their strengths, there is just a 1% chance these people won't be engaged in their work.

This study shows how far and fast positive psychology and the strengths revolution is moving into our lives and workplaces.

It also points out just how critical strengths-based coaching skills are to employee engagement and effectiveness. And as Peter Drucker noted, "it takes far less energy to move from first-rate performance to excellence than it does to move from incompetence to mediocrity."

Further Reading:

- "The Performance Evaluation Meeting: Focusing on Strengths and Not Weaknesses"
- "Wasting Time on Weaknesses"
- "Letting Go of Our Weaknesses is Really Hard"
- "Is Your Culture Built on a Weak Foundation?"
- "Changing Forms Doesn't Create a Strengths-Based Performance Appraisal"
- "Talent Management: Developing Strengths of Individual Contributors"

New White Paper: How Developing a Coaching Culture Pays Off

Most people know that the difference between incompetent coaches and extraordinary coaches is huge. What's often more surprising are these big differences between OK or mediocre coaching at the 50th percentile and outstanding coaching skills at the 90th percentile:

- 28% versus 46% of employees willing to "go the extra mile."
- Employee commitment jumps from the 58th to the 89th percentile.
- A drop from 35% to 22% of employees thinking about quitting.
- An increase from 3.4 to 4.6 on a 5 point scale in response to "I am giving a real opportunity to improve my skills in the company."
- A leap in "overall, I feel my immediate supervisor is doing a good job" from 3.6 to 4.7 on a five point scale.



These results are reported in our newly published white paper **How Developing a Coaching Culture Pays Off**. Once you're registered on our site it's **now available for free download**.

You'll also find insights on these steps to creating a coaching culture:

1. Setting Clear Expectations
2. Create a Process to Follow
3. Provide Skill Training
4. Organize Systemically
5. Monitor and Measure

We discovered that leaders who received high scores on productivity improvement also scored high in 10 correlated behaviors that appeared to drive productivity. Of the 10 behaviors, we concluded that coaching had a direct bearing on 7 of them. They are:

1. Resolve Problems Speedily
2. Emphasize Continual Improvement
3. Show Respect for Individuals
4. Handle Performance Issues Positively
5. Provide Extensive Coaching
6. Developing People
7. Inspire Others

Click on **How Developing a Coaching Culture Pays Off** to download a copy of this new white paper. You'll also find other blogs, white papers, case studies, videos, webinars, and books/CDs at our **Extraordinary**

Coaching resources section. Use the "click to view" tabs on that page to select the resources you're most interested in.

We've been revising and updating our *Extraordinary Coach* development process. [Click here](#) to download our new outline of *The Extraordinary Coach* and view the options available.

Checking Your Coaching Skills

We have seen a dramatic increase in the use of coaching as a tool for leadership development over the past few years. And for good reason ... the list of benefits is impressive:

- improved productivity
- high-energy company culture
- dynamic supervisor/employee relationships
- creative problem solving
- greater risk taking
- heightened innovation, and
- higher levels of customer service and satisfaction



Is your organization using coaching effectively? Last month Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman focused on successful coaching in their webinar, **Train Your Managers to Coach and Give Feedback**. They combined their own extensive research with the latest findings from the worlds of psychology, adult development, and systems theory to map out the real science behind effective coaching. You can view the recording on demand [here](#). Joe also shares ZF's own research on how coaching affects an organization in his *Forbes* article, "**5 Business Payoffs For Being An Effective Coach.**"

The business case for improving coaching skills is compelling. When it comes to improving productivity, employee engagement, retention, employee development, and supervisor performance, there is simply no better activity than having a leader that coaches and develops their direct reports on a regular basis.

But how strong is your own coaching? Do your skills measure up to outstanding business coaches? Take ZF's complimentary **Coaching Attributes and Perspectives Assessment** to measure:

- **How strong your collaboration and directive skills are**
- **How prone you are to giving advice**
- **How effective you are at enabling other people to discover answers for themselves**
- **How apt you are to exert your expertise and treat everyone as equals**

I am delivering ***The Extraordinary Coach*** in Toronto and Calgary this May and June. Our two-day workshop includes an Elevating Feedback module as well as a specific strengths-based 360 coaching assessment. You can view [full details here](#).

Webinar: 8 Ways to Increase Leadership Speed without Breaking a Sweat!



With e-mail in-boxes burying managers in hundreds of e-mails while they rush through a blur of meetings, speed is essential to effectiveness -- if not survival.

Zenger Folkman recently analyzed 360 assessments on over 50,000 leaders to understand how speed impacts evaluations of their effectiveness. A "speed index" was created to measure speed in three ways: how well a leader can spot problems or trends early, can respond to problems quickly, and can swiftly make needed changes.

Zenger Folkman researchers then looked at high scores on the speed index correlated to overall leadership effectiveness among the leaders rated in the top 10% through 360 assessments. They found "of these 5,711 top leaders, 2% were judged particularly fast but not exceptionally effective (that's about 114 of them); 3% (some 170) were judged to be highly effective (that is, people trusted them to do the right thing) but not particularly fast. And fully 95% (that's more than 5,400 of them) were judged both particularly effective and particularly quick. That is, being good is only marginally better than being quick, but the fact is both are necessary, and neither alone is sufficient, to be perceived as an exceptional leader today."

We don't need to do everything faster, but for many activities speed can significantly improve effectiveness and the motivation of individuals. It's interesting how often our pace affects our attitude - - slow is often boring. Think about people you have worked with who had a tendency to move quickly and keep things going at a fast clip, versus those who were more ponderous as they ensured everything was completed and finished. Yes, too much speed can leave participants feeling rushed and frazzled. But if your company's energy is lagging, maybe it's time to consider upping the pace.

In March Joe Folkman presented this research in a complimentary webinar **8 Ways to Increase Leadership Speed without Breaking a Sweat**. [Click here](#) to watch and learn the eight skills possessed by leaders who are perceived as both "fast" and "highly effective."

Complimentary Pace Assessment: Everyone viewing the webinar will also have the opportunity to participate in our Pace Assessment [here](#). This self-assessment will measure the pace at which you prefer to work, and the results will compare your speed to others. The assessment will measure situations such as:

- Are you more concerned about making mistakes or moving too slowly?
- Do you tend to make decisions quickly or consider multiple alternatives?
- Do you assume when starting a project that it will finish on time or be late?

Quick! Rush to click the link and hurry over to watch the webinar right now!

What's the Meaning of Your Work?



Any job can become a career or calling, and any career or calling can become a job. A scientist, physician, or pastor may have initially felt called. But if he or she finds work has become drudgery, it's now a job. An hourly production worker or hospitality server may have started in a job and progressed to feeling a calling to make better products, happier people, or the world a little better place. He or she now has a career or even a calling.

Job

- A means to some other end.
- Provides financial support.
- Not much else expected from the work.
- Little loyalty or emotional commitment ("work is a four-letter word").
- Move on if a better job, usually with more money or benefits, comes along.

Career

- Mark achievements through income, advancements, power, or prestige.
- Usually involves ongoing training and development.
- Focus on a particular profession/trade/skill set.
- Often certified, licensed, or credentialed.
- "Topping out" -- little further advancement -- can cause mid-life crisis or big career changes.
- A significant source of personal identity.

Calling

- Fulfilling a sense of purpose and making a meaningful difference.
- Contributing to a greater good that's bigger than you -- a sense of service.
- Aligned with your values and strengths.
- 'Being' is more important than 'doing' or 'having.'
- Following an inner voice to what you're called to do.
- Higher income is a bonus, but not a key driver.
- Promotions to greater responsibility may expand impact or might be an unwelcome distraction from the work at the centre of the calling.
- Time often flies by.

Which of these three defines most clearly why you work? Which one would you like your work to be?

Further Reading:

- **"Leadership Sweet Spot: Strengths, Passion, and Organizational Needs"**
- **"Authentic Leadership Comes from Building Our Strengths"**
- **"With All My Heart and Soul"**
- **"Just a Job or Part of Our Deeper Purpose?"**
- **"True to Our Souls"**
- **"Purpose Gives Us a Deep Sense of Meaning"**
- **"How I Express My Personal Purpose"**

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:



A few practical steps to deal with unfair feedback from an unskilled boss.

"What To Do When the Boss Gives You Baseless Feedback" -- Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman, *Harvard Business Review Blog*

<https://hbr.org>

"A wise reaction can undo much of the damage."

Leaders with integrity, responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion vastly outperform self-focused CEOs.

"Measuring the Return on Character" -- *Harvard Business Review*

<https://hbr.org>

"CEOs whose employees gave them high marks for character had an average return on assets of 9.35% over a two-year period. That's nearly five times as much as what those with low character ratings had; their ROA averaged only 1.93%."

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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