



Issue 157 - April 2016

The Leader Letter

Partial Improvement Programs and Pieces



I've used this slide for some time to show a big reason for the 50 - 70% failure rate of organization change and improvement efforts. It shows that many of these common change and improvement initiatives are disconnected and don't fit together to create a cohesive picture.

"Fad surfing in the C Suite" wastes scarce resources and raises "the snicker factor" across the organization. Management and staff quickly learn to use the latest buzzwords, templates, and processes... and then get back to their real work.

Peter Drucker once defined a champion as a "monomaniac with a mission." And Abraham Maslow's famously observed, "if the only tool you have is a hammer you treat everything as if it were a nail." Many program champions swing the hammer of the latest big organizational fix with monomaniacal zeal. When this piecemeal approach fails to have much of an impact (usually within 12 to 18 months), a new hammer swung by a new champion often appears. And the snicker factor raises another notch.

Recently a leadership team retreat participant pointed out that these puzzle pieces can't possibly fit together because all of them but one are outside pieces. I hadn't noticed that. What an excellent observation and additional piece to the story. Many champions push hard to make their program THE program that frames the organization's operations.

A key theme in this issue is how an organization's culture ripples out from its leadership team. This was the main focus of my webinar on ***Executive Team Building and Culture Development*** outlined in the lead-off item below. When the leadership team isn't pulling together -- and especially when teams venture into dysfunctional territory -- they create a disconnected and confusing picture. This ripples out into silos and disjointed efforts.

In this issue you'll also find an outline of my April 20 complimentary webinar on **Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development**. It provides new approaches that are helping put leadership and coaching pieces together to solve the puzzle of why so many of our same old approaches lead to the same old disappointing results.

I hope you find material here that pieces together your personal, team, or organization development picture.

Archived Webinar: Executive Team Building and Culture Development

Would you like to:

- Leverage team and organizational strengths for peak performance?
- Integrate major change efforts and development initiatives?
- Build a foundation for significant and sustained culture change?
- Re-energize and refocus the executive team?
- Build cascading change coalitions and robust implementation infrastructure?



Last month I delivered a 60 minute webinar on **Executive Team Building and Culture Development**. I gave a high-level overview of:

1. Culture Ripples Out From the Executive Team
2. Common Failure Factors
3. Retreat Configuration Options
4. Typical Retreat Foundation
5. The Payoffs of an Executive Retreat
6. Next Steps/Options

In their study, "Cracking the Code of Change" published in *Harvard Business Review*, Michael Beer and Nitin Nohria reported, "Most of their initiatives -- installing new technology, downsizing, restructuring, or trying to change corporate culture -- have had low success rates. The brutal fact is that about 70% of all change initiatives fail."

Like a gnarled root system, common causes of failure are intertwined with personal, team, and organizational behaviors and conditions. BUT... the executive team models behavior patterns that set the tone and example for

the entire organization.

When executive teams are less than extraordinary their lower effectiveness can often be traced back to a few of these dysfunctional behaviors:

- Opposing views unsaid at meetings cause disagreements to go underground
- Complaining, criticizing, and talking about each behind member's back
- Difficult feedback not given directly to that person
- Healthy debates avoided because of disrespectful undertones and "humorous" pot-shots
- A few vocal executives hog airtime and dominate discussions
- Lack of response or silence mistaken as agreement

Click on **Executive Team Building and Culture Development** to view the webinar. Here are links to other topics covered in the webinar:

- **"7 Deadly Time Traps for Leaders"**
- **"Leadership Flows Downhill"**
- **Leadership Team Retreats**
- **"Harnessing the Power of an Offsite Retreat"**
- **Leading a Peak Performance Culture webinar**

6 Dysfunctional Leadership Team Behaviors

In my webinar, **Executive Team Building and Culture Development**, I outlined the common failure factors that contribute to the high rate (up to 70%) of failed organizational change efforts. Since a department, division, business unit, or entire organization's culture ripples out from the leadership team leading it, how the team functions is a vital factor in determining organizational performance.



When leadership teams are less effective we've often found some degree and combination of these six dysfunctional team behaviors. Check those that apply to your leadership team:

- ❑ **Opposing views unsaid at meetings cause disagreements to go underground**
This is symptomatic of **inauthentic conversations not addressing the moose-on-the-table**. So the focus often moves away from a healthy debate of the issues to unhealthy personal conflict.
- ❑ **Complaining, criticizing, and talking about each other behind member's back**
This unhealthy dynamic ripples out from the leadership team to create organizational silos, turf protecting, and us versus them.
- ❑ **Difficult feedback not given directly to that person**
A culture of courageous conversations overcomes fear. Courageous conversations also require skill development in **"elevating feedback."**
- ❑ **Healthy debates avoided because of disrespectful undertones and "humorous" pot-shots**
A high **Fun Factor** and high Laughter Index help leadership teams create energizing environments. Cowardly humor that hides deeper messages is cancerous.

❑ **A few vocal executives hog airtime and dominate discussions**

Too often teams are separated into a few members having a strong debate and a few spectators. Highly effective teams use processes and practices that actively engage everyone.

❑ **Lack of response or silence mistaken as agreement**

Many of the above points reduce discussion and debate. The team leader then thinks he or she has consensus only to be frustrated later by lack of commitment and follow through.

Which dysfunctional behaviors are reducing your team's effectiveness? If you're the leader, how can you ensure your answer isn't just your own opinion? If you're a team member, how are you contributing to the problem? How will you be part of the solution?

Thoughts that Make You Go Hmmm on... Leadership Team Effectiveness

Antidotes to "**6 Dysfunctional Leadership Team Behaviors....**"

"Make sure everybody in your boat is rowing and not drilling holes when you're not looking."

- Anonymous

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."

- Babe Ruth, considered one of the greatest baseball players of all time

"The one who gets the most satisfactory results is not always the one with the most brilliant single mind, but rather the one who can best coordinate the brains and talents of his associates."

- Sir William Alton Jones, English philologist and jurist

"My team interviewed executives at six top banks to gauge their teams' level of candor. We found that the teams that scored the lowest on candor saw the poorest financial returns among those banks during the recent global economic crisis. In contrast, groups that communicated candidly about risky securities, lending practices, and other potential problems were able to preserve shareholder value."

- Keith Ferrazzi, "Candor, Criticism, Teamwork," *Harvard Business Review*

"Coast redwood trees can soar to more than 370 feet tall...redwood trees seldom fall over. Their shallow roots form an extensive system of intertwining threads that connect with the roots of neighboring trees, providing reinforcement against the powerful winds of winter storms."

- Visitor Guide, Redwood National and State Parks

"With remarkable consistency, the data showed that the most important predictor of a team's success was its communication patterns. Those patterns were as significant as all other factors -- intelligence, personality, talent -- combined. In fact, the researchers could foretell which teams would outperform simply by looking at the data on their communication, without even meeting



their members."

- Alex "Sandy" Pentland, "The New Science of Building Great Teams," *Harvard Business Review*

"The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say 'I.' And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say 'I.' They don't think 'I.' They think 'we' they think 'team.' They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but "we" gets the credit ... This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done."

- Peter Drucker, prolific research and author often called "The Father of Modern Management"

"Great organizations become great because the people inside the organization feel protected. The strong sense of culture creates a sense of belonging and acts like a net. People come to work knowing that their bosses, colleagues and the organization as a whole will look out for them. This results in reciprocal behavior. Individual decisions, efforts and behaviors that support, benefit and protect the long-term interest of the organization as a whole."

- Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*

Same Old Approaches = Same Old Results

Our organizations desperately want and need much stronger leadership and coaching at all levels. But most organizations aren't significantly improving employee engagement, customer satisfaction, attracting and retaining top talent, succession planning, increasing health and safety, or energizing organization culture. Traditional leadership and coaching skill development methods are producing very little behavior change.

Current approaches are falling woefully short. A ten year global study showed 93% of executives feel their leadership development efforts aren't working. It's nearly unanimous! The opportunity cost is staggering.

Here's why the same old methods are producing the same old results:



- **Poor motivation:** Traditional focus on fixing weaknesses undermines participant motivation for change.
- **Downward spiral:** Leaders micromanage, which results in reduced ownership and accountability for employees, reinforcing this negative cycle. Leaders end up crazy busy, overwhelmed, and frustrated.
- **Missed connections:** Leaders don't make the connection between their personal effectiveness and falling employee engagement levels.
- **Faulty feedback:** Self-assessment of strengths and effectiveness is only half as accurate as feedback from everyone else.
- **Negative 360 assessments:** Traditional 360 assessments are negative and punishing. This faulty pathway to "improvement planning" is discouraging, demotivating and proven to be 2 to 3 times less effective in changing behavior.
- **Development dead-end:** There is no clear development roadmap for leveraging a leadership strength from good to great other than "try harder."
- **Poor coaching skills:** Coaching is often confused with giving advice and doesn't build long-term personal,

team, or organization capabilities.

- **Improvised coaching conversations:** Leaders don't know how to frame their coaching conversations, and jump into coaching discussions with little planning and no framework.
- **Spray and pray:** leadership and coaching development are rarely research-based using methodologies proven to boost effectiveness.

Reflecting on our research and Client work over the past few years I am now working on a complimentary webinar on **Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development** for April 20. During this fast-paced overview I'll outline how leaders and coaches can go from good to great and deliver truly extraordinary results. The session is geared to senior executive, HR/OD leaders, and senior operating executives.

[Click here](#) for more information and to register.

A Powerful Combination That Creates a Peak Performance Culture

Less effective leaders often fall into the either/or trap. Do you want results or teamwork? Do you want happy shareholders or highly engaged employees? Do you want us to hit short-term goals or focus on longer term vision and strategy?

Our research clearly shows that extraordinary leaders (top 10%) focus on and/also rather than either/or. "**Powerful Combination: Drive for Results and Builds Relationships**" is a great example of this more effective approach.



We also have research showing powerful leadership team and organization combinations. Zenger Folkman drew from their extensive database to look at organizational and employee surveys. They measured the impact of overall organizational effectiveness and the key capabilities that differentiated the best organizations. This study included 122,000 employees in 10,000 work groups from different organizations. Zenger Folkman then contrasted the highest-performing (top10%) to the lowest-performing (bottom10%).

Here's one of the powerful combinations that emerged:



Our research showed that when Ability to Execute was a strength (75% percentile) but Positive Work Environment was average, the probability of being an extraordinary organization (top 10%) was just 9%. When Positive Work Environment was a strength but Ability to Execute was just average the frequency of this type of organization being extraordinary dropped to a mere 4%.

However, when both factors were rated as strengths, then the probability of being an extraordinary organization rocketed to 88%!

Now that's a powerful combination!!

Cross Training to Leverage Leadership Strengths

I was coaching a university vice president who was responsible for student and community relations. In reviewing his 360 assessment we aligned his strengths, passion, and organizational need to identify his "**leadership sweet spot**." Strengthening his communication skills from the 75th to the 90th percentile is what he felt would help him elevate his leadership effectiveness from good to great.

Before we started to focus on possible action plans to boosting his communication he said, "I've been a member

of toastmasters, I've had presentation skills training and feedback/coaching, I've studied written communications, and I've focused on improving my storytelling skills to make stronger emotional connections. I hope you're not going to advise me to do more of that."



That's linear development. Our research shows it rarely improves a strength from good to great. It's like telling a competitive world class long distance runner who's training every day and already in the top quartile of his sport to train harder and run more. Today's top athletes cross-train to elevate their game. So the runner might use imagery, meditation, or other mental techniques, focus on nutrition and sleeping habits, use weight training or other exercises to build stamina, and so on.

Click on **Cross-Training to Build Profound Strengths** for a video clip of me discussing the dilemma of how to increase honesty and integrity. Does a leader resolve to be really, really honest, never lie, be brutally honest...? In this clip I show the map from our **Competency-Companion Development Guide** for building this skill.

After reviewing the Competency-Companion Development Guide for Communicates Powerfully and Prolifically the university VP chose two key areas to leverage his strength. This new insight and inspiration to leverage his leadership sweet spot put him well on his way toward doubling or even tripling his development motivation as we've seen consistently in our research.

Cross-training is one of the **Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development** I'll cover in my complimentary **April 20 webinar**. It's also a key approach to **The Extraordinary Leader public workshop** I'll deliver in Toronto on June 22.

Everyday Choices to Lead, Follow, or Wallow

I met Chad Hymas years ago when he was a speaker at an executive retreat I was facilitating. He was putting his life back together after a devastating accident that left him a quadriplegic.



Chad's an inspiring speaker on overcoming obstacles and making the most of tough circumstances life may have handed us. How he lives his message is even more inspiring.

The next time you're tempted to complain about the inconveniences of air travel watch Chad's video **Just Another Day at the Office**. Sub-titled, "Who needs legs when you have wings?" it shows the big obstacles Chad has to deal with in traveling alone 260 days a year. He's completely unable to transfer himself from his wheelchair, bath, or use the toilet on his own.

When I was writing **Growing @ the Speed of Change: Your Inspir-actional How-To Guide for Leading Yourself and Others through Constant Change** I came across this piece written by an unknown author:

Everyday Choices

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy or I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health or I can rejoice that I am alive. Today I can lament all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up or I can feel grateful that thanks to them, I was born.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns or I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends or I can embark upon an exciting quest to discover new relationships.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work or I can shout for joy because I have a job to do. I can moan because I have to go to school or eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

Today I can gripe because I have to do housework or I can feel thankful because I have shelter.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping. What today will be like is up to me. I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

Central to *Growing @ the Speed of Change* and many of my **Custom Keynotes & Workshops** is the model "**Which Framing Level? Wallowing, Following, or Leading**". When the 'you-know-what' hits the fan, it's way too easy to wallow in it. Leaders like Chad show us how to soar out of the swamp.

A Fresh Look at Employee Engagement

When I poll audiences for the key performance outcomes their leadership development efforts are aimed at improving, employee engagement gets many of the votes. While many session participants agree that the immediate manager plays an important role in engagement levels, most are surprised by extensive research data showing the influence of the manager on his or her direct reports levels of engagement is around 70%.

Many organizations put extensive effort into regular engagement surveys. These focus on division, department, branch, plant, or organizational factors. But this accounts for only 30% of engagement factors. That "majoring in the minors" is a big reason engagement levels aren't improving in many organizations.

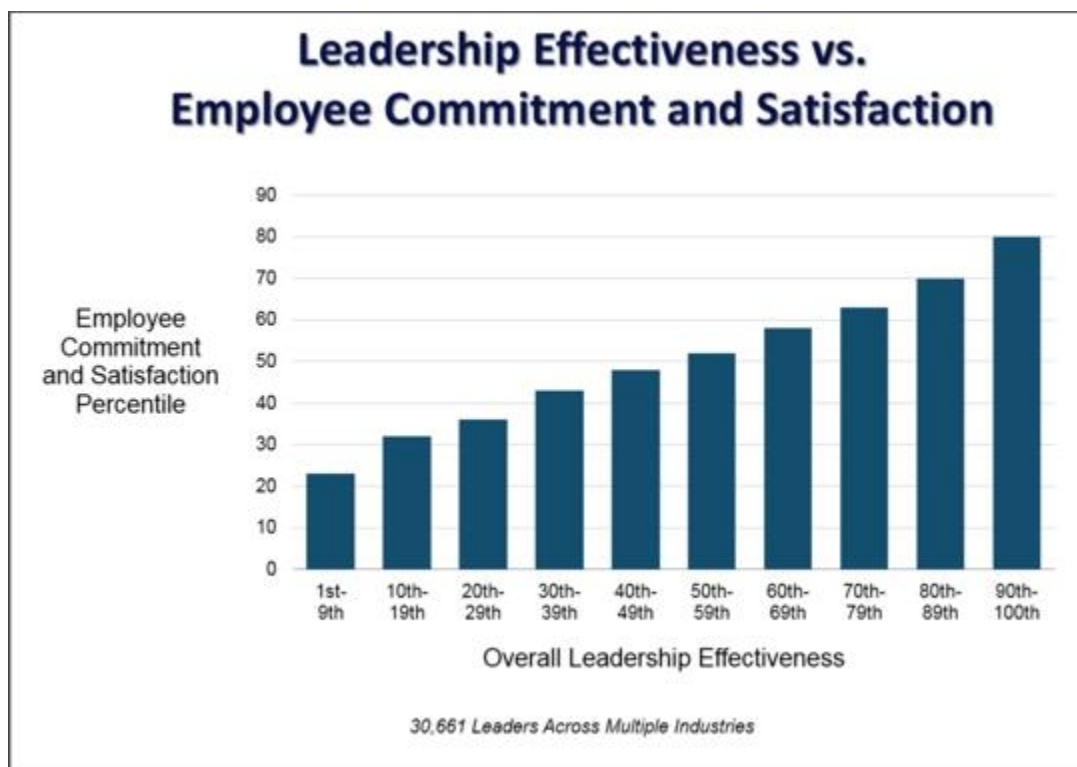
Joe Folkman has just published the results of a large engagement study in *Talent Quarterly*. He looked at data



from approximately 250,000 people in six extremely different organizations. He studied employees with the highest level of engagement and looked at their satisfaction with other factors in the survey. These had the highest influence on engagement:

1. Open Communication
2. Career Opportunities
3. Individual Development Opportunities
4. Organization Reputation
5. Organizational Efficiency/Productivity
6. Confidence in Management
7. Recognition
8. Teamwork/Collaboration/Cooperation
9. Satisfaction with Work
10. Workload

Many of these factors appear to be determined by the broader organization. But at least seven of these ten factors are highly influenced by the immediate manager. We see that direct connection in our 360 assessment data of leaders assessed by managers, direct reports, peers, and others. The assessment contains a mini-engagement survey based with 5 to 7 measures. How a leader is rated by everyone around him or her correlates to his or her direct reports' engagement levels.



As Joe points out, "The manager has a tangible, personal connection with the employee that far transcends the larger more impersonal institution. The manager is the window through which employees see the organization. A dirty window or an extremely small window distorts the view."

Go to [A Fresh Look at Employee Engagement](#) to download Joe's research paper published in *Talent Quarterly*.

Webinar: 10 Distinctive Behaviors of Highly Innovative Leaders

"Inspiration is for amateurs. The rest of us just show up and get to work."
Chuck Close, artist

Decades ago pioneering leadership researcher and author, Warren Bennis, declared, "The organizations of the future will increasingly depend on the creativity of their members to survive."

The future is here. Disruptive innovation is destroying and creating whole new industries at a blistering pace. Before experts have finished declaring that something can't be done or won't be changed they're abruptly cut off by someone doing it.

Like Steve Jobs; an innovative giant who restructured major industries in his shortened lifetime. Jobs explained, "Innovation has nothing to do with how many R & D dollars you have. When Apple came up with the Mac, IBM was spending at least 100 times more on R & D. It's not about money. It's about the people you have, how you're led, and how much you get it."

Innovation clearly sets organizations apart. It's key to inventing our future. But how do you cultivate innovation in leaders and teams?

To find out, Zenger Folkman conducted their own study. ZF began by collaborating with a highly respected organization in the telecommunications industry whose leaders scored well above average on most managerial competencies. ZF researchers interviewed each one, together with their boss, and a number of their direct reports and peers. ZF then combined the results of these group interviews with 360-degree feedback they had about these individuals.

The results were fascinating and gave us a list of behaviors that set this group apart as innovative leaders.

Last month Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman delivered a webinar offering a glimpse into what drives innovative behavior. The results of their research identified the 10 distinctive behaviors that emerge for the most innovative leaders.

Click here to view the archived webinar.



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. You can follow me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/JimClemmer>

My original tweet commenting on the article follows each title and descriptor from the original source:

A 90 second video animation showing the cascading effect of good and bad leadership on engagement levels through the organization.

"Good Leadership Is Contagious" -- Harvard Business Review video

<https://hbr.org>

Leadership and Managing People video based on Zenger Folkman research.

Putting support systems in place can be a powerful way to change our habits or develop new skills.

"Do You Find It Hard To Change? Perhaps It Isn't Your Fault" -- Joe Folkman

www.forbes.com

"Examine your goals and think about the ways a new or different structure might make a critical difference."

A good summary of the value of 360 feedback and the key differences among the many assessment tools available.

"How Effective Are Your 360-Degree Feedback Assessments?" -- Jack Zenger

www.forbes.com

"Feedback seems especially important in the process of developing strengths. Our research has clearly shown that leaders are not highly attuned to seeing their weaknesses, but are equally unaware of their strengths."

Positive psychology research on key factors causing us to personally flourish and how we can lead others to flourish at work.

"Five Ways to Flourish at Work" -- Michelle McQuaid

www.michellemcquaid.com

"Employees who describe themselves as flourishing have higher levels of job satisfaction, are more committed to their organizations, put greater thought and effort into their work, are less likely to leave and have fewer sick days and workplace accidents."

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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