Issue 181 - April 2018

Early in his career, Thomas Edison invented a vote recording machine for use in legislative chambers. Politicians could vote yea or nay from their desks. This would replace the time-consuming process of counting votes.

Edison patented the machine and went to Washington to demonstrate and sell it. He was turned down immediately. Edison was told that filibustering and voting delays were part of the political process (perhaps proving the old adage that it's better not to see laws and sausages being made!). Edison later said, "There and then I made a vow that I would never again invent anything which was not wanted."

Many companies stumble, and products or services die because they are solutions in search of a problem. Clever marketing can sometimes create needs we never knew we had. But it's far easier to ride a horse in the direction it is already going. Understanding and filling emerging needs is often a much more effective approach.

Understanding needs and what's wanted comes to mind as I scratch my itch to write my next book. My previous books have grown from frameworks, approaches, or services we've developed and then brought to readers. And based on book sales and demand for our speaking, workshop, and retreat services, that's worked very well.

In the past few years, the number of leadership and culture development topic areas and books has exploded. That's inversely related to the rapidly shrinking time crazy-busy leaders have to read them. And we know that leadership matters -- a lot. So how can I best help time-crunched leaders develop their effectiveness on the fly?

This time I am taking a pull versus push approach to writing this next book. Which leadership and culture development topics are most pressing today? What book length, format, and layout would be the most useful?

An old boss once told one of our family members to just give the first paragraph and the last paragraph and cut out everything in the middle to avoid lengthy explanations or TMI (too much information). We still poke affectionate fun at him with this reminder when he starts to wind up for a detailed discussion. In today's information overloaded world, I want to provide a succinct, highly relevant and practical book. Our first topic in this month's issue provides more background on this new book project and how you can help.

In this issue you'll also find new research on workplace culture and its impact. Great workplaces aren't just warm and fuzzy, they produce up to three times higher results. And HR should be playing a major role in making that happen. But many HR leaders need to make big changes in their approach to help their organizations become more innovative and agile through much better performance management, coaching, teams, and development.

May you find a few ideas here to help in your development journey. And I hope you can take our 5-minute book topic survey to help me help you further.

Help Us Distill Today's Vital Leadership/Organization Development Topics

Which leadership / organization development topics are most critical to you today? How can you cut through all the clutter to quickly find and apply practical applications to boost effectiveness? Can we distill and sweeten the personal, team, and organization development process?

These are especially relevant questions this sweet time of year. Sugar shacks are sending up billows of steam as maple sap is boiled to make syrup. It's time for The Elmira Maple Syrup Festival – Guinness recorder holder for the world's largest single day maple syrup festival. Elmira is just north of our home in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario.

Many hairs ago I grew up on a Mennonite farm and helped gather and boil sap in spring to make maple syrup. It takes 40 containers of watery sap to boil down to one container of the sweet, sticky syrup that's wickedly delicious on pancakes.

Since then I've been gathering and boiling personal, team, and organization development approaches to extract the essence of what works best. Coaching and developing is my lifelong passion. I've written more than a dozen books and workbooks, over 1,200 blogs and articles, lost count of how many books and research papers I've studied, and delivered over a thousand workshops, offsite retreats, and conference keynotes -- while trying to sweeten with a few punny Dad Jokes!

These experiences have given me up close and personal insights into what works and what doesn't. In the last six months, I've been reviewing and applying fresh new ways to condense all of this work into the most useable and useful public workshop (see *The Leading Edge: Boosting Team and Culture Performance* - Kitchener Apr. 25-26) and book(s) for busy leaders to help them keep growing and learning on the run.

This work may be a single book, series of mini-books, and/or chapters or sub-sections that could be mixed and matched in a create-your-own book. Your help is vital for me to kick my habit of pushing new books according to what I think is needed ("Psst…wanna buy a good leadership book?"). With your help, we'll identify and pull through the content of this/these book(s) according to what is most useful and needed in today's fast changing workplaces.

You could help us to boil down the essence of leadership/organization development to:

- the vital topics and applications most relevant for today's leaders
- what's grounded in research, actually works, and is easy to apply
- succinctly get right to the point
- entertain, inspire, and put into action -- lighting logic on fire

It would take about 5 minutes of your time to rank order 8 topic areas that you think are most relevant/needed today. **Click here to complete the survey**. How sweet it would be to get your help!

Has Your Culture Created A Great Place to Work for All?

What's the impact of being one of the 100 best companies to work for? What does it take to join this elite group? How does your organization or team compare?

Since 1998, Fortune magazine has partnered with Great Place to Work to create its annual list of 100 best companies to work for. This year's list has just been published along with a new book by Great Place to Work CEO, Michael Bush and his research team. *A Great Place to Work for All* provides a much deeper look at the research findings.

Each year the firm surveys about 4 million employees at 6,000 global companies. The research shows that central to a "For All" culture are high trust levels. High trust is defined by credible leaders (competent, communicative and honest), respectful treatment, and a fair workplace. Best Companies with high trust cultures deliver "stock market returns two to three times greater than the market average." These companies also have turnover rates 50% lower than competitors and "increased levels of innovation, customer and patient satisfaction, employee engagement, organizational agility, and more."

A Great Place to Work now measures six components:

1. Values
2. Innovation
3. Financial Growth
4. Leadership Effectiveness
5. Maximizing Human Potential
6. Trust

Here are some key points that stood out for me:

- 71 percent of Americans are part of a "spend shift" to align their spending with their values.
- 81,000 undergraduates ranked an inspiring purpose as the most desired characteristic in an employer.
- A great workplace is 20 times more likely to retain Millennials.
- Agility is becoming critical and leaders need to involve more people throughout the organization in change efforts.
- High-trust and highly functioning executive teams are critical for elevating and cascading culture change and development.
- When employees rated executives highly on strategic clarity, even-handedness, and authenticity in their relationships revenues grew 3 times faster than companies with the lowest scores.
- When Millennials report that their managers show a sincere interest in them as people they're 8 times more likely to respond with change readiness, agility, and innovation.

- A study of 20,000 employees around the world reported that "54% experience a basic lack of respect from their leaders." It also found that when employees felt respected by their leaders "56 percent reported better health and well-being and 89 percent greater enjoyment and satisfaction with their jobs."
- Being included in decisions meant employees were "5.3 times more likely to experience a psychologically and emotionally healthy workplace."
- Compared to people in low-trust companies, those in high-trust workplaces report "74 percent less stress, 106 percent more energy at work, 50 percent higher productivity, 13 percent few sick days, 76 percent more engagement, 29 percent more satisfaction with their lives, 40 percent less burnout."
- The 100 Best Companies to Work For have increased training by 76 percent in the past 20 years to 58 hours per year for hourly employees and 65 hours for salaried.

A Great Place to Work for All reinforces and updates similar global studies of leadership and culture effectiveness. The mountain of evidence keeps growing; strong cultures create strong workplaces. That leads to outstanding personal, team, and organizational results for all.

HR Needs to Make Big Changes to Boost Effectiveness

Innovation and agility are critical to thriving -- or even surviving -- in today's fast-changing world. **Balancing speed and quality** is now a vital leadership skill.

First used in software development, Agile is an approach now spreading to other functions. Its main principles are focusing on people more than process, using pilots and prototypes for quick experiments and learning, responding rapidly to change rather than rigid adherence to a plan, and collaborating with internal/external customers to help them achieve their evolving outcomes.

HR leaders have come under fire for their lack of strategic focus and slow response to organizational needs. Some experts have said it's **"time to blow up HR and build something new."** This month's issue of *Harvard Business Review* features an article on "HR Goes Agile." Professor and Director of Wharton School's Center for Human Resources, Peter Cappelli, and associate professor of human capital management at New York University, Anna Tavis report, "HR has not had to change in recent decades nearly as much as have the line operations it supports. But now the pressure is on, and it's coming from the operating level, which makes it much harder to cling to old talent practices."

Cappelli and Tavis document a range of HR services and approaches where leading companies are making big changes. The practices that stand out in leadership/culture development are:

> **Performance Appraisals** – Agile HR leaders are moving away from annual appraisals to more frequent assessments to deliver more immediate feedback so that "teams can become nimbler, 'course-correct' mistakes, improve performance, and learn through iteration -- all key agile principles." (See **Performance Management** for more on the big changes happening in this area).

> **Coaching** – "The companies that most effectively adopt agile talent practices invest in sharpening managers' coaching skills." (See **Driving and Directing to Coaching and Developing** for a chart on the coaching shift needed).

Teams – many companies are now organizing work by projects and teams. Agile teams have frequent "scrums" (as in rugby) to refocus and adapt quickly to changing conditions. High-performing teams need multidirectional feedback (especially from peers and upward to leaders), frontline empowerment and decision making, and helping supervisors to manage more complex team dynamics.

Learning and Development – more personalized and individual development plans aligned to the person's experience, interests (we've found the very best approach comes from finding **the leadership/career sweet spot**).

We continue to find stark and sharp contrasts between those HR professionals who are **strong strategic leaders** and those who are tactical HR administrators. The **best HR leaders think strategically,** are system-oriented, deeply understand and serve operations, personally model strong leadership behaviors, and have built their credibility, relationships and courage to push back when executives or the team is veering off track.

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:

Zenger Folkman celebrates Women's History month with four women leaders sharing insights in a panel discussion.

> **The Impact of Women Leaders – Complimentary Webinar**
> *"Zenger Folkman webinar - Presented by: Joyce Palevitz, Brenda Norman, Amy Pasquale, and Susan Christensen"*

Five enabling factors proven to boost communications and engagement levels.

> **"Measuring Engagement Does Not Improve It"**-- Joe Folkman
> **www.forbes.com**
> *"Measuring engagement creates an expectation that it will be significantly improved. Learn about the two fundamental issues that hamper most improvement efforts."*

Inspiring leaders leverage their strengths by using one of six approaches aligned to their natural style.

> **"Drop The Cheerleader Act--Learn More Ways To Inspire And Motivate Others** -- Joe Folkman
> **www.forbes.com**
> *"Every leader can be an inspiring leader, but leaders need to know what inspiring leaders do and they need to do it their way."*

Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments

The **items in each month's issue of** *The Leader Letter* **are first published in my 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!

Jim Clemmer
President

Phone: (519) 748-5968
Email: **jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com**
Website: **www.clemmergroup.com**

Please forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested -- or on a 'need-to-grow' basis.

Did you receive this newsletter from someone else?
Subscribe to ensure you don't miss the next issue!