

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter



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AUGUST 2010, ISSUE 89

This is the mid-point of summer vacations for a lot of us in the Northern Hemisphere. A great vacation is relaxing and filled with fun activities. To stay mentally young and vibrant, we need to nurture our inner child and allow him or her to come out and play. I like to explain my own playful or immature behavior to my wife, Heather, as "nurturing my inner Jimmy." If I really get out of hand, she will sometimes threaten the poor little guy with strangulation!

This month's first article is based on a great little video clip about harnessing the power of fun. Whether at work or at home, strong leaders often bring a sense of fun, joy, and high energy to what can be mundane daily tasks. Developing an "attitude of gratitude" is part of that approach. Other articles in this issue discuss the elements of building fulfilling and meaningful environments that most engage and inspire people and teams.

Here's to summer vacations and fun. Come out and play!

THE FUN FACTOR: STEPS TO MAKING WORK ENGAGING AND REWARDING

Managers are constantly looking for ways to "motivate" team members. This has led to an endless search for the right combination of carrots and sticks. These often include financial incentives, reward programs such as travel, merchandise or public recognition, punishments, and performance management systems.

These approaches can be motivating or manipulative depending upon whether they are based on [a set of values and assumptions that are traditional management or leadership-based](#). I've just come across a very entertaining and engaging video clip (less than two minutes long) that cleverly illustrates the power of fun to move people toward taking the stairs rather than the escalator. Check out [Stairs versus Escalator](#) for a quick bit of fun and inspiration.

Fun is a very powerful motivator that's vastly undervalued and underutilized by most managers. That's probably because they aren't putting enough fun and joy into their own work lives!

Here are some ways to raise your Laughter Index and bring more fun to your team or organization:

- Appoint a Director of Fun, take joke breaks, use humorous video clips, have dress-up theme days, and the like.
- Have a special thanks/congratulations breakfast or lunch BBQ served (or cooked) by management or the project team leader.

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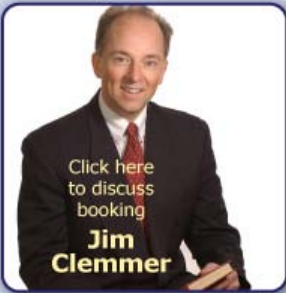
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- Bring in spontaneous treats (e.g. doughnuts, cake, ice cream, pizza party) for reaching a milestone.
- Give your customers the ability to award certificates, points, or "recognition dollars" to the frontline servers that give them great service.
- Give servers/producers the ability to award certificates, points, or "recognition dollars" to the internal partners supporting their efforts.
- Develop walls of fame or alcoves of excellence on your Intranet site, internal newsletter, or throughout your organization, filled with pictures, awards, performance charts, customer/partner letters, hero stories, and the like.
- Hold "top team" days to recognize high-performing teams. Have them set-up a "trade show" in your lobby, exhibit hall, or a hotel ballroom to show off what they've been doing and connect others to their work.
- Get teams presenting accomplishments to executives/ managers/ visitors.
- Send hand-written personal thank you or congratulations notes.

What are you doing to add more fun to your workplace? The most powerful and lasting rewards are those that excite and unite everyone toward a shared vision and common goals. How are you making the work itself rewarding? How are you providing that leadership?

NOW'S THE TIME TO CULTIVATE AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Celebration, appreciation, and gratitude are key ingredients for increasing our personal happiness - especially during tough times and challenging changes. Research in the burgeoning field of happiness and Positive Psychology is showing that counting our blessings, aligning our work and life to more frequently play to our strengths and cultivating an attitude of gratitude is vital.

In "20 Weeks to Happiness," Richard Handler reports on, "...a two-month experimental comparison conducted by psychologists Robert Emmons of the University of California at Davis and Michael McCullough of the University of Miami, volunteer subjects who kept gratitude journals on a weekly basis exercised more regularly, reported fewer physical symptoms, felt better about their lives, and were more optimistic about the upcoming week than subjects who recorded neutral life events or hassles as I'd done for years."

Most of us need to keep working at building gratitude skills and habits. Here are a few tips and techniques from [Growing @ the Speed of Change](#):

- On your own or with your spouse, wrap up your day just before going to bed by recounting at least three accomplishments or highlights of that day. This is especially important when you've had a bad day. Fall asleep feeling good about yourself and your situation. This can also be a great family exercise around the dinner table.
- Develop and keep expanding your Blessings and Brag list. List every accomplishment, strength, and success you've ever had or thing you're grateful for. Make it as long as possible and keep it growing. Review the list whenever you're feeling down on yourself, anxious, or a little sour.
- Take a "bliss break" by making a list of all the little things that you really enjoy. It's a fun exercise. Indulge yourself in activities on your list, which can run to many pages once you get started.

- Make a gratitude visit. Pick a person in your life that you'd like to thank. Write this person a letter outlining how he or she helped you. After you've written it, call the person and ask to visit. Read the letter aloud when you are face-to-face.
- Study art, design, or natural wonders. Look with awe at the details, creativity, or beauty.
- Stop and treasure every accomplishment and success for yourself, loved ones, friends, and colleagues. Go out for dinner, take time off, send a personal note, raise a glass, give flowers, or buy the coffees.

Summer holidays are a perfect time to step back from our daily crazy-busy schedules and reflect on our journey. The University of Pennsylvania's [Authentic Happiness](#) web site is filled with questionnaire's to help your reflections. Once you're registered (it's free), take the very short and simple Gratitude Questionnaire to assess how you're doing.

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMMM ON... CULTIVATING OUR ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

"One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon - instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today."

- Dale Carnegie, American writer (author of the mega-seller *How to Win Friends and Influence People*)'s speaker, a nd developer of self-improvement courses

"Give thy mind more to what thou has than to what thou hast not."

- Marcus Antonius, 2nd Century Roman Emperor

"It is distressing that the media, and thus much of the public, dwell so heavily on bad news. If one were to judge the state of humanity solely by the daily headlines and news broadcasts, one would come away convinced that we inhabit a world besieged by poverty, insecurity, conflict, and oppression....people today, on the average, are better fed, better clothed, better housed, and better educated than at any previous time. Fewer and fewer people live under the weight of tyranny. In most parts of the world, people are enjoying longer, healthier, more fulfilling lives. And yet, unfortunately, these very real triumphs generally pass unnoticed, which is a very great pity. Why must so many people be so unhappy when in reality humankind is living in the most glorious period in all of history?"

- John Marks Templeton, *Is Progress Speeding Up?: Our Multiplying Multitudes of Blessings*

"The essence of all beautiful art, all great art, is gratitude."

- Friedrich Nietzsche, 19th-century German author, professor, and philosopher

"Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."

- Charles Dickens, 19th Century British novelist

"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."

- Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Turn of 20th Century British writer

"A man without ambition is dead. A man with ambition but no love is dead. A man with ambition and love for his blessings here on earth is ever so alive."

- Pearl Bailey 20th Century, American singer and performer

GENIUS OR GENIUS MAKER: DO YOU MULTIPLY OR DIMINISH INTELLIGENCE AROUND YOU?

Strong leaders build leadership skills at all levels ("leadership is an action, not a position") and share ownership by bringing out the best in people on their team and throughout their organization. Unfortunately, these leaders are rare. More common - and often unaware - are stressed out managers who take on too much while reducing the roles, responsibilities, confidence, and capabilities of people around them.

Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown contrast these two types of leadership/management styles as Multipliers and Diminishers. Based on studying 150 leaders in 35 companies with intensive 360 degree analysis (confidential behavior surveys of direct reports, peers, and boss.) Their *Harvard Business Review* article "[Managing Yourself: Bringing Out the Best in Your People](#)" provides an excellent summary of this work.

Wiseman and McKeown identify five types of Diminishers and Multipliers:

Diminishers

- **The Empire Builder** - Hoards resources and underutilizes talent;
- **The Tyrant** - Creates a tense environment that suppresses people's thinking and capabilities;
- **The Know-It-All** - Gives directives that demonstrate how much he or she knows;
- **The Decision Maker** - Makes centralized, abrupt decisions that confuse the organization;
- **The Micro-manager** - Drives results through his or her personal involvement.

Multipliers

- **The Talent Magnet** - Attracts talented people and uses them to their highest potential;
- **The Liberator** - Creates an intense environment that requires people's best thinking and work;
- **The Challenger** - Defines an opportunity that causes people to stretch their thinking and behaviors;
- **The Debate Maker** - Drives sound decisions by cultivating rigorous debate among team members;
- **The Investor** - Gives other people ownership of results and invests in their success.

The authors provide a very useful [Multipliers web site](#) built around their new book, *Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter*. An especially practical tool from their study is "Are You an Accidental Diminisher? This 10 item survey helps to cut through the problem so many managers have in recognizing their inconsistencies between talking the talk of coaching, developing, and growing people and actually walking the walk. When visiting the site, click on "Meet the Multipliers" for inspiring profiles of some of the top leaders in their study and the dominant type of Multiplier approach they use.

STOP BRIBING AND START LEADING

Salary increases, bonuses, and incentives are very tight and very scarce in today's economy. That makes strong, inspirational leadership even more critical. To manage is to attempt to "motivate" people by pushing them with financial and other inducements. To lead is to focus on drawing out - even to liberate - people's intrinsic motivation.

A *McKinsey Quarterly* survey sent to me recently reinforces the timeliness - and timelessness - of using recognition, celebration, and appreciation to energize and mobilize performance in these tough times. The full report, [Motivating people: Getting beyond money](#) explains how "The economic slump offers business leaders a chance to more effectively reward talented employees by emphasizing nonfinancial motivators rather than bonuses."

If you really want your perspective on this issue twisted in a whole new direction, read Alfie Kohn's well researched and reasoned book, [Punished By Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes](#). Alfie makes important points about the misuse of financial "motivation:"

"...good management, like good teaching, is a matter of solving problems and helping people do their best. This takes time and effort and thought and patience and talent. Dangling a bonus in front of employees does not. In many workplaces, incentive plans are used as a substitute for management: pay is made contingent on performance and everything else is left to take care of itself... if it does make sense to measure the effectiveness of rewards on the basis of whether they produce lasting change, the research suggests that they fail miserably."

Alfie's great at pointing out the problem, but not so good at suggesting alternative approaches. I've tried to provide a menu of options and leadership approaches in a series of articles and book excerpts on [Recognition, Celebration, and Appreciation](#).

Inspiring higher performance during challenging times is one of those "soft" skills that is really hard to do. That's why it's so rare - and so effective when done well.

FIVE COMMON TEAM BUILDING PITFALLS AND TRAPS

Teams and teamwork are ever more critical in today's organizations. Effective teams are central to higher customer service, continuously increasing quality, increased productivity, and greater innovation. Strong and effective teams also increase engagement, development, and retention.

Lots of managers fall into these common traps when trying to increase teamwork and build more effective teams:

- **What the Top Orders the Middle to do for the Bottom** - one of the key factors determining the skills of supervisors and managers are the team leadership skills of senior management. Accustomed to using their technical or management system skills, most senior managers' team skills are -- to put it gently -- rusty. Numerous organizations have proven that developing the skills of executives in this vital area has a profound and lasting impact on how quickly and effectively the rest of the organization follows suit.

- **Confusing Structure and Skills** - bringing groups of people together and calling them a team doesn't make them one. Far too many groups are a loose collection of individuals, not a team. Extensive and continuous team *skill development* is needed. Form follows function. Teaching people *how to make teams work* (as leaders or members) is critical to increased effectiveness and teamwork.
- **Meeting Madness** - far too many organizations accept poorly run meetings as normal. People arrive late, agendas and ground rules don't exist or are ignored, participants pay more attention to their Blackberrys than the meeting, conflicts turn personal or are avoided, a few people hog all the air time, decisions aren't made, summarized, or documented, or discussions go off track.
- **Reverting Under Pressure** - the truest test of teamwork, engagement, and empowerment is when the crunch is on. If team leaders revert to command and control management, their credibility - and teamwork - may be shot. That doesn't mean avoiding the tough decisions that go against popular opinion. People want decisive and strong management -- when it's called for. But how position power is used makes all the difference in the world. As much as possible, strong team leaders gather broad input and give people a chance to have their say. Once they made a tough or unpopular decision, he or she reiterates the reasons for it and solicits the support of others.
- **A Weak Management Team** - if you're part of a management team that wants to see stronger team effectiveness from others in your organization - *get your own house in order first*. It's amazing how many managers run around spouting off about the need for teamwork when their own team doesn't pull together. Don't be hypocritical. Your people aren't blind. How do you know what the perception of your management team's effectiveness is?

How are your team member or leadership skills? Are you helping to build stronger teams or allowing teamwork to drift? If you'd like to refocus your team skills, visit our [Team Building](#) articles section for tips, techniques, and examples of this vital component of peak performance.

EIGHT KEYS TO ATTRACTING, ENGAGING, AND RETAINING TOP TALENT

The global economic crunch has brought persistently higher unemployment levels to many countries. That dramatically slowed - and even reversed - a focus on attracting, engaging, and retaining top talent. In some cases, organizations were focused on survival. But in too many cases it was a near-sighted focus on the short term.

We're seeing a revival of interest in building "magnet organizations" that attract, engage, and retain the best people. In preparing for leadership and culture development work with a U.S. healthcare Client last month, we referenced a research study from The Ken Blanchard Companies on this issue. Building on their previous study "The Leadership-Profit Chain" this new research looked at "the new rules of engagement" by surveying over 2,100 people to determine the core elements that ignite employee passion.

Eight Key Factors Influencing Employee Passion

- **Meaningful Work** - *Employees perceive the organization's larger purpose through products or services produced, consider their work to be worthwhile, and are proud of their individual actions and contributions that help the organization serve its customer.*

- **Collaboration** - Employees perceive an organizational environment and culture that enhances collaboration, cooperation, and encouragement between all organizational members.
- **Fairness** - Employees perceive an environment where pay, benefits, resources and workload are fair and balanced and equitable, people treat each other with respect, and leaders act in an ethical manner.
- **Autonomy** - Employees perceive an environment where people have the tools, training, support, and authority to make decisions.
- **Recognition** - Employees perceive an environment where they are praised, recognized, and appreciated by colleagues and their leader for their accomplishments, where they receive monetary compensation for those accomplishments, and where they are contributing to positive relationships with others.
- **Growth** - Employees perceive an environment where people have opportunities to learn, grow professionally, and develop skills that lead to advancement and career growth.
- **Connectedness with Leader** - Employees perceive an environment where they trust their leader and where the leader makes an effort to form an interpersonal connection with them.
- **Connectedness with Colleagues** - Employees perceive an environment where they trust their colleagues and where their colleagues make an effort to form an interpersonal connection with them.

An old Chinese proverb reminds us to dig a well before we're thirsty. If you're leading a team or developing supervisors and managers, now's the time to review the strength of these factors within your team or organization. How's your Passion Pulse? Beyond your own opinion, how do you know?

To read the full white paper, see [Employee Passion](#) on The Ken Blanchard Companies web site. You need to register (no charge) to download the eight page PDF file.

SHORT AND POWERFUL "LOST GENERATION" VIDEO PUTS CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

I've been using a 1 minute and 44 second video when working with groups wrestling with the challenges and choices that come with organizational or personal change. The "Lost Generation" video features a poem written by Jonathan Reed for a "U @ 50" contest among 20 - 22 year olds on what future they see for themselves in 30 years.

The short poem is a palindrome. That means the words read the same backwards as forward. On top of that, Jonathon made the words mean the very opposite when read in reverse. The opening few lines sound very cynical and pessimistic:

*"I am part of a lost generation
and I refuse to believe that
I can change the world.
I realize this may be a shock but
'Happiness comes from within.'
is a lie, and
'Money will make me happy.'"*

If you now read line by line in reverse by starting at the bottom and reading upwards, you'll get a hopeful and optimistic message.

Sponsored by the American Association of Retired People (AARP) everyone in the room was awe-struck at the end of the video clip and

broke into a spontaneous applause. [CLICK HERE](#) to watch this powerful 1:45 video.

The video wonderfully illustrates our workshop discussions around perception, what exactly is "reality," and how we choose our perspective. Here are a few short items from [Growing @ the Speed of Change](#) and previous [Leader Letter](#) articles outlining those points:

[Range of Reality: Choosing the Best or the Worst of Times](#)

[Lessons in Perspective from the Dung Beetle](#)

[Keeping Problems in Perspective](#) which includes [Thoughts That Make You Go Hmm...on Choosing Our Perspective](#)

[Grappling with the Science of Reality: Dreams, Illusions, and Perceptions](#)

LEADING @ THE SPEED OF CHANGE WORKSHOP IN CALGARY, VANCOUVER, AND HALIFAX

The only open or public workshops I have booked are set for [September 24 in Halifax](#), [September 29 in Calgary](#), and [October 1 in Vancouver](#). Since our business is built around [customized programs and services](#) I do very few public workshops. It will likely be a few years again until I deliver public sessions in these cities. So if you're in these regions - or want to take a trip to great Canadian cities at a beautiful time of year - I hope to see you in the fall!

If you're located in one of these cities and you're interested in booking me for a customized half, one, or two-day in-house workshop around these dates, this is a great opportunity to save on travel expenses.

Send Heather a note at Heather@Clemmer.net to discuss how we can make this happen.

THE FACEBOOK FACTOR

We've recently integrated a lot of the main site and blog into Facebook to make it easier for folks to share and comment on our content and articles.

If you're on Facebook, please take a second to join the [Jim Clemmer page](#).

It's quick and easy. You will also see Improvement Points, blog postings, *The Leader Letter* and any videos that are posted to YouTube in your Facebook news feed as soon as they are published.

It's another way for you to access all my content where and when it's most convenient to you. [Click here](#).

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 weeks. 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.

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 JULY 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 I.P.M. 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 July:

"Leadership means accepting responsibility for our choices in life. Leaders realize that life accumulates, that choice more than chance determines their circumstances. They refuse to succumb to the "Victimitus Virus" ("it's all their fault" and "there's nothing I can do")."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Growing the Leader in Us"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"There are numerous modern technologies, instruments, and techniques to help managers see where they are today. But many of them still attempt to navigate their own personal development or organization-change processes with tools similar to old-fashioned sextants or star charts. Some may have lookouts posted in the crow's nest, but ignore or discount any warnings that don't coincide with their own perception."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Pinpointing My Leadership Position"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"Imagery is what "emotionalizes" and energizes a vision. It's a vitally important leadership skill. We seem to have a natural ability to image what we don't want and then bring it into being. Reversing years of negative conditioning and bad habits so we can learn to vividly see what we do want isn't easy. We have to work very hard at it. Since we're all different, there is no universal "one approach fits all" way to increase our picturing power."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Personal Visioning Pathways and Pitfalls"

[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

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