Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

JIM CLEMMER

Practical Leadership:
From Inspiration to Application

In this issue...

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The payoff of all the frenzied flurry of preparations for the holiday season can be **time for reflection** and looking back over the past year. As we look ahead, resolutions to change some of our habits are often a good way to kick off the New Year.

But *planning* isn't *doing*: forming new habits is easy to talk about but often much tougher to do. This issue features a couple of last month's blog posts about the powerful force of habit, and habit forming tips and techniques.

A reader left this astute observation about habit formation on my blog post at www.HR.com:

> "Bad habits are easy to form, but extremely hard to end. Good habits, on the other hand, tend to take more time to form. Luckily, scientists agree that the average person needs at least 3 weeks to form a good habit.
>
> Know what you want. If you can perfectly visualize the habit in your head, the work will be easier. Commit to the habit. If you want to change, you have to work at it. Do not quit if you have one failure. Set your own goals, and reward yourself."

Visualization is a very powerful force for changing habits and many other elements of developing ourselves and leading others. The holiday season is my favored time of year for reflecting on the past year and visualizing where I'd like to be heading in the years ahead. My wife, Heather, and I have also found the seasonal reviewing and renewing of our personal and business vision is an excellent foundation to building or rebuilding new habit.

Happy Holidays! And Happy Habit (Re) Forming!

HARNESSING OR HINDERED BY THIS POWERFUL FORCE?

Like finding a $20 dollar bill in the pocket of a jacket you haven't worn for a while, it's always delightful to rediscover inspirational gems. Over the past few weeks I've been working with a very progressive and delightful Client to finalize a two-day management training workshop we've been customizing for their senior and middle managers. This *Leading @ the Speed of Change* workshop is part of a series of leadership development events and activities in Flynn's corporate university (an example of why they've been named a Best Managed Company 11 years in a row).

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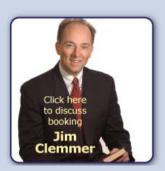Jim Clemmer

Gerard Montocchio, Flynn's VP of Human Resources, has been thoroughly poring through many of my books and workbooks as we've been pulling together material tailored for their company. In some of our planning meetings he arrived with bookmarks, sticky notes, and references to my materials that show he might know it better than I do! As we worked on how to conclude this workshop – which is the last of the Flynn U series for these participants – Gerard wanted to emphasize personal growth, leadership development commitments, and habits. He reminded me of a wonderful verse that I'd picked up in my "pack rat research habits" along the way and published in *Growing @ the Speed of Change*. The author is unknown:

Asset or Liability: Who Am I?

I am your constant companion.
I am your greatest asset or heaviest burden.
I will push you up to success or down to disappointment.
I am at your command.

Half the things you do might just as well be turned over to me,
For I can do them quickly, correctly, and profitably.
I am easily managed, just be firm with me.

Those who are great, I have made great.
Those who are failures, I have made failures.
I am not a machine, though I work with the precision of a machine and the intelligence of a person.

You can run me for profit, or you can run me for ruin.
Show me how you want it done. Educate me. Train me.
Lead me. Reward me.
And I will then…do it automatically.

I am your servant.
Who am I?
I am a habit.

HABIT FORMING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Our habits make or break us. A habit is a learned behavior causing us to think and act automatically. Many times, we're not aware of the hundreds of tiny and bigger habits we've acquired over our lifetime. Each habit piles on top of another and shapes us into who we are today. These habits create our reality.

Modern psychology's greatest contribution to our health, happiness, and well-being is showing that we're not stuck with any of our habits. It may be neither quick nor easy, but **we can change any habit**. That's generally done by replacing a bad or unwanted one with a good or desired thought or behavior. Gail Sheehy, the U.S. journalist and author of *Passages*, writes, *"The secret of a leader lies in the tests he has faced over the whole course of his life and the habit of action he develops in meeting those tests."*

Here are a few suggestions for developing stronger leadership habits from *Growing @ the Speed of Change*:

- Draw three columns on a piece of paper with Keep, Stop, and Start at the head of each one. List your main habits under each heading. You might want to get a mentor, close friend, coach, spouse, or someone else who knows you well, whose opinion you trust, and who wants to help you improve, to provide input to your lists.

- Subscribe to newsletters, blogs, and other electronic feeds to get regular doses of inspiration, instruction, and affirmation. Collect quotations, tips and techniques, or other improvement ideas to help form the habit you most want to develop. Keep the key ideas you want to focus on in front of you throughout your day.
- Setting personal breakthrough goals that are well beyond your current character, ability, or habits is setting yourself up for failure. That's why crash diets and so many New Year's resolutions are abandoned. Build a series of small wins to celebrate, new habits that gather momentum, and you'll find the confidence to keep you growing.

As Elbert Hubbard, 19th Century American writer, publisher, artist, and philosopher advised, *"Cultivate only the habits that you are willing should master you.*

PIECEMEAL PROGRAMS OR CULTURE CHANGE: WHICH ROAD ARE YOU ON?

Leadership and culture development is a series of organizational habits that are widely shared. Both are widely discussed, badly understood, and rarely implemented with any lasting impact. Ask anyone under age 45 if they'd like to retire wealthy and 99% will say they do. But how many really understand what lifestyle and savings habits they need to change? And how many are willing to make those changes to prepare for some distant point in their lives?

If you're leading or supporting a management team that wants to transform or change your organization's culture, **you stand at a critical crossroad**. Which road will take you to that higher ground? There are two basic choices: **piecemeal programs** or a **long-term cultural change process**. Be careful as you look down the two roads. First appearances are deceiving.

The piecemeal programs road looks smooth and inviting. It's broad and well maintained. There's plenty of company, and the road appears to be going uphill in the direction you're heading. But around the first bend, conditions start to change. The road starts to get bumpier. As you continue, it gradually becomes apparent that this road will not take you where you want to go. The road winds its way downhill and you advance with little effort. But soon the pavement turns into a dirt track. This starts to get soft and muddy. Before you know it, the road has emptied into a bog. With a sinking feeling, you watch a few organizations struggling up the cultural change road far above. You realize that your organization is now firmly stuck and will have a difficult time getting back on track.

On the other hand, the cultural change road is not nearly as appealing at first glance. The grade is very steep; it will clearly require more effort. For the first while, this road runs parallel to the piecemeal programs route. In a number of places they almost merge. You notice that some organizations appear confused and begin following the programs route without even realizing it. But as the journey continues, the terrain gets tougher. Many travelling companions fall behind, drop out, or cut across to the much easier program route.

As you stay on this course, it gets very bumpy and narrow. In places it's all you can do to stay on the thin ledge high above the canyon floor. You notice you're almost alone. And the journey seems to be endless. But when you pause to look around, you find yourself in the company of high performers. You've never felt so strong. And then you begin to enjoy the fruits of your efforts...

It's been said that **"no amount of travel on the wrong road will bring you to the right destination."** Many management teams loudly declare their destination is leadership and culture development. A huge majority of managers are interested in improving their customer service, productivity, quality, safety, productivity, or innovation. Many have put those good intentions into vision/mission statements, strategic plans, training, restructuring, IT systems, branding, and the like. But **only a tiny minority of managers is truly committed to taking the necessary steps toward improving their own leadership skills**. And an almost minuscule number of management teams are prepared to stay the course for the time and effort needed to make permanent changes in their culture.

The American poet Robert Frost's iconic poem "The Road Not Taken" ends with the famous lines:

> *"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –*
> *I took the one less traveled by,*
> *And that has made all the difference."*

Click on "Lasting Culture Change Means Going Beyond Passionate Lip Service to Involved Leadership" if you missed this item in the October issue. It has a diagram and links, such as "Bolt-on Programs versus Built-In Culture Change." Traversing the much less traveled Built-In Culture Change road can make all the difference.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IS A STRONG PREDICTOR OF JOB PERFORMANCE AND IS ALL ABOUT LEADERSHIP SMARTS

I've extensively quoted and cited the expanding body of emotional intelligence (EI) research for many years in my writing and workshops. This rigorous and ever deepening research provides hard evidence for the catalytic power of "soft skills" in personal, team, and organizational performance. **EI brings empirical science and greater clarity to the fuzzy topic of leadership**.

Many of my audiences and workshop participants are technical specialists in medicine, engineering, academics, aviation, logistics, law, mining, government and the like who have been promoted to management positions because of their technical expertise. The EI research and frameworks are a very effective way to discuss leadership by starting with the head or intellect to get at issues of the heart. EI is about recognizing and controlling my own emotions as well as tuning into and influencing the emotions of others.

"The Relation Between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance: A Meta-Analysis" was recently published online in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. If you're academically inclined, you can read the study with all its technical detail, methodology, and research citations. Richard Boyatzis, a professor at Case Western Reserve University and co-author of the bestselling book, *Primal Leadership* (click on title for my Amazon book review and scroll down the page to it) said *"Emotional intelligence is a field of study characterized by contradicting claims, models and methods. But the meta-analysis by O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver and Story lends light where there has been darkness. They took an impressively comprehensive view of EI and amassed a much larger collection of studies linking EI to intelligence, personality and job performance. This will be a source of inspiration to scholars and a guide for those lost in the confusing morass of claims, critiques and posturing."*

Daniel Goleman, the EI pioneer and leading guru in the field, recently posted an excellent blog entitled *Performance Reviews: It's Not Only What You Say, But How You Say It*, citing research that a manager's tone

and approach is critical in delivering positive or negative feedback. Goleman notes, "*In one study, when people got positive performance feedback that was delivered in a negative, cold tone of voice, they came out of the session feeling down – despite the good news. Amazingly, when negative feedback came in a warm, positive tone of voice, they felt upbeat and energized.*"

I always poll audiences to find out who is familiar with the Emotional Intelligence research. The numbers are growing, but still way too small among most supervisors, managers, and executives. This work gets at the heart of what they're being paid to do – lead from the inside out. Far too many people in supervisory positions (at all levels) are **providing technical expertise or management, and very little leadership**.

In our workshops we'll often do a balance check exercise based on our High-Performance Balance. This is a simple triangle model that looks at what percent of time we're investing in technical/technology, management (systems/ processes), and leadership (people.) Participants then look at what amount of time they'd like to spend in these three areas. I've yet to find a group that doesn't say they want to spend more time in Leadership and less time in Technology and Management. This leads us in lively discussions on why we're not spending as much time leading as we'd like to.

There are many reasons both inside and outside of our control. But if participants are going to make progress in re-balancing their focus – and improving their EI/leadership – they need to **do less looking out the window and more looking in the mirror** – and finding the courage to stretch their comfort zone (Read more on this topic.)

Emotional Intelligence is really about leadership smarts. 'You can find more of my material on EI here:

- Articles and book excerpts
- Video clips
- Previous blog posts

CONFERENCE BOARD WEBINAR: LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE

Marketing Alert - 'this is one of the rare advertising pieces we occasionally run to help pay the bills and keep me fed well enough to keep providing you with what I hope you find is decent quality personal, team, and organization development material, week, month, and year in and out without any charge. This marketing post is not quite as discreet as Google's Pay-per-Click revenue model, but our volume of readers and click-through revenues aren't quite in their league either!

Research consistently shows that 70% of efforts to improve customer service, quality, safety, productivity, employee engagement, restructure, or introduce new technologies fail. Leadership and organization culture are the critical X factors. "Soft" leadership and culture boosts or blocks strategy, structure, and change initiatives.

High-performing organizations pull together the intangible leadership issues that define their unique character and rally people around a deeper sense of purpose. These powerful feelings are made tangible through the strong implementation of management processes and systems that translate ideals into action. It's recognizing that vision without an action plan is just a dream. Action without a vision is drudgery.

The [Conference Board of Canada](#) has retained me to deliver a one-hour webinar on *Leadership and Culture Development for Peak Performance* on December 16 at 1:00 PM Eastern Time (UTC-05:00). I will cover:

"Soft" Leadership and Culture Produce Hard Results

We'll start with defining leadership and culture and their powerful impact on team and organizational performance.

Culture Change Failure Factors

Unconscious underlying beliefs undermine many culture change and leadership development efforts. These beliefs often create Leadership Lip Service as management teams try "changing them without changing us."

The Peak Performance Balance: Managing Things and Leading People

Highly successful cultures balance the discipline of systems, processes, and technology management on a base of effective people leadership. Periodic balance checks resets the focus to the "soft skills" that produce hard results.

Bolt-on Programs versus Built-in Process

To avoid the high failure rate, leadership and culture change efforts must move from partial and piecemeal plans and programs to integration and alignment up, down, and across the organization. This includes reducing priority overload and building stronger discipline with consistent trimming and pruning.

Five Key Steps to a High Performance Culture

It all starts with the *critical issue* of aligning executive, manager, and supervisor leadership behaviors with management and operational processes and systems.

Bringing Alive Vision, Core Values, and Purpose/Mission

Most organizations have vision, values, or mission statements – but with a high "snicker factor." These vision, core values, and purpose/missions must be *actively lived* to focus and energize leadership and culture development.

Leadership is an Action, Not a Position

Peak performing organizations build strong leadership behaviors *at all levels.* Constant change is the fuel for continuous personal, team, and organization improvement.

Getting (Re) Started

Key steps to beginning or re-energizing your leadership and culture development efforts.

My associates and I have spent decades helping thousands of managers in hundreds of organizations work at boosting leadership skills and culture development. Some have been incredibly successful. Other efforts have flamed out and gone nowhere. For this fast-paced hour, I'll jam as much of that experience as I can into **an executive summary of pitfalls to avoid and best practices** to learn from.

TWEET READING: RECOMMENDED ONLINE RESOURCES

This section summarizes last month's LinkedIn Updates and Twitter Tweets sent 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.

How Incentives Can Undermine Your Influence – *businessweek.com*
> *"Too many leaders think money is the easiest – and best way – to get results. Take a lesson from a great restaurateur."*

A great illustration of how strong leaders avoid using incentives as a crutch and build cultures of highly engaged frontline servers.

Add an Hour to Your Day – *Harvard Business Review blogs*
> *"The reality is that we all have 'extra' hours available, without having to turn back the clock. Those hidden hours exist, buried in unnecessary meetings, inefficient work processes, interruptions, false starts, PowerPoint perfection, misplaced files, and a host of other time wasters."*

As many of us enjoy an extra hour during the fall back to standard time, Ron Ashkenas' blog provides two great suggestions for finding extra time.

Management Dilemma: The Rule of 98/2 – *businessweek.com*
> *"Focus on the 98 percent of the workforce that is engaged. Making regulations to rein in the recalcitrant 2 percent is counter- productive."*

Weak leaders hide behind rules because they don't truly value people, have low skills, or are too gutless to have courageous conversations.

Future of business management is in going back to the basics – *Fortune*
> *"By going back to a basic definition of management, we can help managers make better choices, rather than suggest they invent something that has never been thought of before."*

While Julian mixes up and confuses "management' and "leadership," her analysis of these tasks/roles and her recommendations are solid.

TEAM BUILDING LESSONS FROM THE WISDOM OF THE HIVE

Management is about facts, analysis, and issues of the head. Leadership is about intuition, values, and issues of the heart. Logic is the language of management. Imagery is the language of leadership. Imagery is fuelled by metaphors, parables, analogies, stories, and examples. It's how we've learned from each other and passed along our accumulated experiences and collective wisdom for thousands of years.

Nature's intricate and highly refined systems provide examples and metaphors that we can learn much from. Thomas Seeley, Professor of Biology in Cornell University's Department of Neurobiology and Behavior, provides fascinating team leadership lessons from the world of honey bees in his *Harvard Business Review* blog post, [The Five Habits of Highly Effective Hives](). Not only does he provide intriguing insights into the very sophisticated world of honey bees, he extracts highly relevant and practical applications for team building.

Seeley's five key lessons we can learn from the hive are really about raising a team's collective Emotional Intelligence (EQ). He calls it raising their IQ, but I'd argue that it's first through increasing their EQ that their IQ increases. His EQ raising or leadership lessons are:

1. *Remind the group's members of their shared interests and foster mutual respect, so they work together productively.*
2. *Explore diverse solutions to the problem, to maximize the group's likelihood of uncovering an excellent option.*
3. *Aggregate the group's knowledge through a frank debate.*
4. *Minimize the leader's influence on the group's thinking.*
5. *Balance interdependence (information sharing) and independence (absence of peer pressure) among the group's members.*

Extensive research shows that these team leadership and team building behaviors are exactly how effective team leaders build top teams. They are deceptively easy to understand – and remarkably difficult for many supervisors, managers, and executives to apply.

As empowerment, employee engagement, and teamwork grows in popularity, some managers have decided that they had better play the game to get in on "this team building stuff" and all its benefits. And that's been their undoing – playing the team building game. These manipulative managers see teamwork as one more lever to be pulled, another string to be yanked. They put on an involvement act unsupported by inclusive values or personal development of team skills. They might, for example, bring people together to "decide" on a course of action that they have already set. The transparency of this kind of "involvement" soon becomes evident to all. So as the manager pretends involvement, his or her group members pretend commitment.

We continually find that the extent to which supervisors and managers embrace the movement toward an involved, team-based organization is heavily influenced by the strength of their team leadership skills. When supervisors and managers can confidently use team leadership skills to rally people around a problem or process improvement opportunity, they do so much more often. They understand that one step by one hundred people is much more effective than one hundred steps on their own.

In way too many (generally struggling) organizations, "heroic management" reigns supreme as team members stand by and watch their (harried and overwhelmed) weak team leader fight the fires alone. Ironically, many weak team leaders believe that frequent meetings are a sign of weak management! Solutions to problems are initiated by

management – as are the rescue efforts, because team members, on whom the plans depend for success, never owned them in the first place.

The general manager of a mid–sized computer company we worked with was extremely frustrated because his many attempts to bring his senior management group and their management groups together into a solid team had failed. He recounted all that he had done: wilderness retreats, team building exercises, building a matrix organization around key initiatives and project teams, and the like. "We even wrote a manual on the need for teamwork and how to make it happen," he lamented. But teamwork wasn't happening. Further investigation revealed the reason: the general manager and his managers knew the whys and wherefores of team leadership – they could almost wax poetic on the virtues of group dynamics – but they didn't have the skills to put their good intentions into action. And since they didn't see the need to go through the time consuming process of developing those skills, they didn't. And the teams didn't come together any better over the next year – about the time the general manager was fired.

So if you want to build a stronger team, "bee" wise and apply the leadership lessons of the hive!

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMM ON... TEAM BUILDING

Team effectiveness depends heavily on the team leadership skills of the person heading up the team. Here's a look at recent and emerging research on team leadership for stronger team building:

> **"Great teamwork is an outcome; you can only create the conditions for it to flourish. Like getting rich or falling in love, you cannot simply will it to happen."**
> - Jerry Useem, **"**What's that spell? TEAMWORK!" Fortune

> 1. **"Great teams always have a noble cause.**
> 2. **Effective teams drive engagement.**
> 3. **Their performance is driven by team, not company, loyalty.**
> 4. **Great teams simplify."**
> - Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, "Four Essential Qualities of Great Teams," based on the results of a 350,000 person study that measured the characteristics of extremely productive teams.

> **"Group members with leaders in a positive mood have a more positive mood overall than do group members with leaders in a negative mood. Similarly, a negative mood spreads to the group...Groups with leaders in a positive mood, however, exhibit more co-ordination than groups with leaders in a negative mood."**
> - Research conclusions from Stéphane Côté of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and two colleagues from American universities

> **"To unlock a team's abilities, a manager must spend a significant amount of time on two activities: Helping the team understand the company's direction and its implications for team members and coaching for performance... at some companies, district managers devoted as little as 10 minutes a day to coaching. At the best companies, frontline managers allocated 60 to 70**

per cent of time to their staff, much in high-quality individual coaching. The companies also empower managers to make decisions and act on opportunities."
- McKinsey consultants Aaron De Smet, Monica McGurk and Marc Vinson report in the *McKinsey Quarterly*

"Dream big – Bold, extreme dreams capture the imagination. When people believe they are involved in something big, they'll sacrifice to make it happen.
Think yin and yang – In forming teams, find people with a variety of strengths that complement each other.
Keep it light – Be a guide and adviser, rather than a rule enforcer. Fear squelches communication and suffocates creativity.
Give everyone glory – Recognize achievements of star performers, but also acknowledge and reward the supporting players. Everyone has a role in making the team a success."
- Pat Williams, co-founder and senior vice-president of NBA Orlando Magic, from his book *Extreme Dreams Depend on Teams*

"New research suggests that CEOs have a rosier view of senior management's performance than other top team members do – (a simple and reliable test of executive teamwork) is for CEOs to ask themselves the following three questions. Those who answer no to any of them probably perceive team performance as better than other team members do – and, by extension, better than it actually is.

1. **Does my team make decisions in meetings?**
2. **If we do make decisions in meetings, are they implemented shortly thereafter?**
3. **Do meetings allow for lively conflict?"**

- Richard M. Rosen and Fred Adair, "CEOs Misperceive Top Teams' Performance," *Harvard Business Review*

IT TAKES STRONG LEADERSHIP SKILLS TO AVOID THE DEADLY INCENTIVES TRAP

One of the above Tweet Readings linked to a *BusinessWeek* article "How Incentives Can Undermine Your Influence." The article focuses on Danny Meyer, "the most influential restaurateur in New York City…today every one of his 10 restaurant brands have appeared every year in Zagat's top 40 for New York City."

The article's author, Joseph Grenny, identified Danny's aversion to incentives as one of the big keys to the superb service delivered by the company's 1,500 staff. **I strongly agree with Joseph's comments that way too many managers use "incentives as candy."** He explains, "being loose with incentives tends to undermine engagement at best and promote corruption at worst. What ought to be ethical and social decisions are now viewed in purely economic terms. And people who might otherwise have behaved morally fail even to consider the moral content of their actions."

As Grenny very rightly goes on to point out, this moral and social imperative is especially powerful when it comes to getting engagement for safety. "Our research shows that the most powerful drivers of safety in an organization are a palpable sense of moral duty about circumspect

behavior and potent peer pressure that holds people to high safety standards...leaders who lead with incentives first are more than just compensating; they're compensating for something. They're trying to offset their failure to create personal and social motivation with a tool that surely gets our attention, but not our affection. And ironically, leaders who employ incentives as a last source of influence often get rewarded more sustainably and generously than those who put them first."

In my article, Weak Leaders Try to Use Money as a Motivator, you'll find a chart contrasting a Traditional Management Approach with a Leadership-Based Approach. This was designed to illustrate the critical distinction of incentives and other rewards and recognition to support and reinforce rather than manipulative tools to change and shape behavior.

Management is often about searching for extrinsic motivators to push people with incentives, goals, or performance targets. **Leadership is about pulling people through engaging emotional connections that fan the flames of their intrinsic motivation**. This is based on the assumption that most people want to make a meaningful contribution, take pride in their work, and be part of a winning team.

Industrial psychologist, David Sirota, who founded and maintains the Sirota Survey Intelligence sums up this critical leadership issue very well: "*I am often asked to speak on the topic, how do you motivate employees? I think that's a very silly question. The real issue is not, how do you motivate people but how do you keep management from destroying that motivation? That's the key question. You don't need all kinds of gimmicks to motivate people. You have to treat people in a way that their natural enthusiasm can flourish.*"

Click on "How Incentives Can Undermine Your Influence" to read Grenny's insightful leadership article.

You can also go to Recognition, Appreciation and Celebration to browse through a series of my short articles (some with practical how-to steps) on this key leadership topic.

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 NOVEMBER IMPROVEMENT POINTS

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

> **"Self-rating is a good place to start with the Energy Index. But the clearest picture will emerge by asking the team you're leading to rate each of these areas. Taking that courageous approach is the mark of a leader. It's a key part of building team commitment and ownership."**
> - from Jim Clemmer's article, "Measuring Organizational and Team Energy Levels"
> Read the full article now!

> **"When I was eighteen and starting my Culligan career I took a Dale Carnegie sales course. I followed that with their public speaking course. Both had a major impact on my leadership performance. I came to realize that learning the basic persuasion skills of clarifying and simplifying what we're trying to say, tuning in to our audience, and grabbing them by the handles of their emotions, is critical to effective leadership."**
> - from Jim Clemmer's article, "Inspiring and Energizing with Strong Verbal Communications"
> Read the full article now!

> **"If our organization's systems don't work well, if our skill levels aren't strong, if processes are out of control, if measurements are giving incomplete or false feedback, if communication channels are crossed, or if reward and recognition practices are unaligned, the clearest focus, strongest context, and best of intentions will be wasted."**
> - from Jim Clemmer's article, "Improvement Planning for Taking Charge of Change"
> Read the full article now!

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP

The continued increase in my blog subscriptions and the steady growth in complimentary subscriptions to *The Leader Letter* (a monthly compilation of my biweekly blogs) leads me to believe that many readers feel they are getting more than they're paying for from my insights.

Because I am a "leadership nerd," I quite enjoy the labor of love in researching and writing material (most of the time!) that we freely give away to whoever is interested in reading it. I've written about 60,000 words a year for the past seven years. 60,000 words is slightly longer than each of my last four books. So I've given away a book a year for the last seven years. If you're a regular blog or *The Leader Letter* reader, you've read a book a year in weekly installments or monthly chapters.

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

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:

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