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DECEMBER 2011, ISSUE 105

What? It's the last month of the year already! What happened to 2011? When I was a kid I'd snicker when I heard adults talk about how fast time goes by. I couldn't wait until I was taller, could drive a car, get a job, get out on my own ... Time dragged at a frustrating crawl.

Now I understand. **Life accumulates and time flies by**. The prolific and profound children's writer, Theodor Seuss Geisel -- more popularly



St-Mars-des-Pres sous la neige, by Raphael Toussaint

known as Dr. Seuss -- once asked, "How did it get so late so soon? It's night before its afternoon. December is here before its June. My goodness how the time has flewn. How did it get so late so soon?"

As a kid I was mesmerized by his books, like *Green Eggs and Ham, The Cat in the Hat* and *Hop on Pop.* Dr. Seuss had a lot to do with me developing an early and lifelong love of reading and **how words shape our imagination and create our reality.** I now appreciate the wisdom of what he wrote in *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!* "*The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."*

December means the Holiday Season for many of us. Cultural traditions are at the root of our Holiday celebrations. Whether these are the broader society cultures or those of our own families, **the Holiday Season is often a series of layers of "the way we do things around here."**

Many of my November <u>blog</u> posts compiled in this month's issue are focused on organizational culture. Musing about the moral points in his writing, Dr. Seuss once observed "sometimes the questions are complicated and the answers are simple." The CLEMMER Group's ongoing quest is drilling through the complexities of organizational culture to the simple leadership answers at the core of peak performance.

This issue provides overviews and links to drilling deeper in **defining team/organizational culture**, **failure factors**, **transformation pathways**, **key implementation steps**, **and how The CLEMMER Group helps Clients move from inspiration to application**. Jim Collins and Morten Hansen's new book, *Great by Choice* provides deep insights into the leadership practices and cultures of truly great and enduring organizations. We also look at **thriving in the permanent**

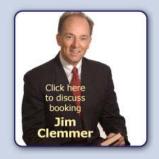
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www.jimclemmer.com."



white water of change, exponential engagement, and how we can build a culture of fun and festivity year round like the Cirque du Soleil.

In, Oh, the Places You'll Go, his last book published just before he died, Dr. Seuss left us this sage advice, "So be sure when you step. Step with care and great tact. And remember that Life's a great balancing act. You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So get on your way."

"SHIFT HAPPENS" VIDEO IGNITES DISCUSSION ON HOW WE NEED TO CHANGE OR WE'LL BE CHANGED

Last month I delivered a very fast paced and information packed 60 minute presentation by webcast. My goal was "culture change in an hour!" I tried to stuff the major learning from our thirty years of working with hundreds of organizations and the latest research on culture change into 60 minutes.

We had 894 sites registered in 34 countries for the webcast. The Webex technology we used allows us to track who was paying attention and who left or switched programs to do other things (like answer e-mail) during the broadcast. Since **attention was**



consistently high at 75 – 85%, attention built during the webcast, text messages were quite supportive, and there were positive tweets throughout, we're taking that as strong feedback that we were on the right track!

Here's an overview of the topic areas covered in the webcast:

- Defining Culture and Its Impact
- Fatal Five Failure Factors
- Culture Transformation Pathways
- Key Implementation Steps
- Next Steps

There are so many theories and fuzzy ideas on the huge topic of leadership and culture development. Our ongoing quest is to **provide** *practical* leadership practices grounded in successful experience built on a solid research foundation. So the presentation is buttressed by hard evidence for "soft skills."

<u>View</u> the full webcast with all slides and audio track.

LINKS FOR DIGGING DEEPER INTO LEADING A PEAK PERFORMANCE CULTURE

You might want to view (or review) the <u>Leading a Peak Performance Culture</u> webcast on your own or share it with your management team and/or improvement professionals concerned with leadership and culture development.



The webcast was built around the core models, frameworks, and approaches we use to help Clients with leadership and culture development. Here's an outline of the webcast's main sections followed by links for more information on the material covered:

Defining Culture and Its Impact

- Review of Beyond Performance (the massive McKenzie study) and key frameworks from it.
- Excerpts and key findings from Beyond Performance.
- Review of The Culture Cycle (James Heskett) and key frameworks from it.
- Excerpts and key findings from *The Culture Cycle*.
- A selection of <u>articles and excerpts on Culture Change</u>.
- A selection of <u>blog posts on Culture Change</u>.

Fatal Five Failure Factors

- "Bolt-On Programs or Built-In Culture Change"
- "Lasting Culture Change Means Going Beyond Passionate Lip Service To Involved Leadership"
- "<u>Lead, Follow, or Wallow</u>" and "<u>Thriving in Turbulent Times</u>" <u>archived webcast</u> (both based on <u>Growing @ the Speed of Change</u>)
- "<u>Unconscious and Underlying Beliefs Undermine Culture Change</u> Efforts"
- "The Acceleration Trap: Frantic Busyness and Priority Overload is Overwhelming Way Too Many Teams and Organizations"

Culture Transformation Pathways

- "Check Your Balance with the Performance Triangle", a selection of articles and excerpts, and blog posts on Management versus Leadership.
- A <u>selection of articles and excerpts</u> and <u>blog posts</u> on Emotional Intelligence.
- Use our "compass model's" six main clusters to dig deeper into any of the underlying sixteen Transformation Pathways (in right column).

Key Implementation Steps

- A selection of <u>articles and excerpts on Organization Development</u> including improvement planning and implementation infrastructure.
- "Using Strategic Imperatives to Drive Team/Organization Development" and "Use Strategic Imperatives to Set Improvement Priorities".
- A generic outline of our <u>Management Team Retreats</u> framework that we customize for each Client.

You can also review a large selection of video clips featuring me presenting many of these concepts and approaches to live audiences. Go to <u>Jim's Videos</u> and use the "Categories" pull-down menu to select the topics you're interested in.

I welcome your feedback on the webcast or this material. I am also happy to set up a phone call to explore how we might customize an approach to help your team or organization lead a peak performance culture.

IS YOUR CULTURE BY DEFAULT OR BY DESIGN?

We're continuing to get feedback, questions, and comments about culture development following my 60 minute webcast on November 4. If you missed the whirlwind "city bus tour," you can view the archived presentation (my animated slides synchronized with the audio track) at <u>Leading a Peak Performance Culture</u>.



One viewer sent me a good question after the webcast:

"Do you believe an organization has one type of culture throughout the entire organization/company, or do you believe an organization has differing cultural bubbles according to each department or management team because of varying people's behaviour, management and leadership style?"

Depending on the size, geographic spread, and structure, we've found **organizational culture exists at three levels**. The first level is the immediate work team. This is where everyone working in an organization has his or her up close and personal contact with culture.

We define culture as "the way we do things around here --especially when the boss isn't around." How do we treat our internal/external customers? How much and when do we work together? Are our daily conversations full of doom and gloom, petty gossip, and 'wethey' acrimony? Or are we mostly positive, supportive, and full of can-do spirit? Do meetings and emails drain energy and waste time or are they key tools leveraging our effectiveness?

All of these team behaviors are most heavily influenced by the leadership skills of the unit or team's immediate supervisor. He or she can build a strong team culture inside a larger negative culture or can make a mockery of the larger organization's peak performance culture. The way to change a team's culture is to change the supervisor's leadership approach -- or to change the supervisor.

Each team leader or supervisor gets his or her direction, support, skills, leadership example -- or lack thereof -- from the larger department or division he or she is part of. Some team leaders or supervisors are exceptionally strong leaders and build thriving peak performance local cultures even if the bigger culture they're part of, and leader they report to, are weak. We've seen some very powerful and inspiring examples of these "islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity" over the years.

The vast majority of supervisors reflect the values, skills, and behaviors of the department or division. This points straight at the managers' cultural leadership skills. Are they racing from meeting to meeting, buried in emails, and personally putting out many fires? Or are they building strong capabilities in their teams, delegating daily operations, and coaching supervisors and team leaders toward higher performance? Do they relentlessly focus everyone on customers, service/quality, safety -- or whatever the department/division's "strategic imperatives" might be? Are vision, mission, or values just words from above or do they vibrantly live in all key people decisions like hiring, promotions/succession planning, recognition/appreciation/celebration practices, and tough actions like discipline or letting someone go? Departmental or division managers can shape their culture (leading), sit back and wait for direction from above (following), or throw up their

hands in frustration at executives' lack of culture leadership (wallowing).

The organizational culture ripples out from the executive team leading it. The research shown in the <u>Leading a Peak Performance Culture</u> webcast is overwhelming and very clear: The single biggest key to transforming an organization's culture starts with executives defining and developing their own behaviors. This must then cascade down the entire organization. Anchored around core values (no more than five), behavioral descriptions are the foundation for competency models, training programs, hiring/promotion criteria, reward and recognition, and such.

Every team and organization has a culture -- a routine or habitual "way of doing things around here" -- especially when no supervisor, manager, or executive is around. Whether you're focused on a unit/team, department/division, or entire organization, the key questions asked in <u>Leading a Peak Performance Culture</u> are:

- What's your culture?
- How do you <u>know</u>?
- Is it by design?

CULTURE TRANSFORMATION FOR THRIVING IN PERMANENT WHITE WATER

I was talking with a CEO Client about the development work we've been doing with his team. This led to a discussion about the state of our businesses. His company is doing fairly well during these uncertain times. He asked about our business. I told him that we saw many organizations cut back sharply on leadership and culture development during the economic shock of late 2008 and into 2009.



Over the past two years we've seen a **steadily growing resurgence of interest in leadership and culture development**. In the past six months this has accelerated. Like this CEO, **many senior executives are realizing we're in a state of "permanent white water."** In the midst of the financial crisis back in 2009, *Harvard Business Review* published a special issue on "Managing in the New World." One article was especially prescient. Entitled "Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis" the authors posited that "things won't be returning to normal and a different set mode of leadership will be required ... sets the stage for a sustained or permanent crisis of serious and unfamiliar challenges."

They went on to argue that leaders must build cultures that "foster adaption, embrace disequilibrium, and generate leadership across all levels of the organization to adapt to changing times." Two years later, more senior executives finally seem to be taking this message to heart. As a result, demand for our keynotes, workshops, and offsite executive retreats on leadership and culture development is very strong.

ARCHIVED WEBINAR ON THE CLEMMER GROUP'S PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES NOW AVAILABLE

As a follow-up to my November 4 *Leading a Peak Performance Culture* webcast I went through our toolkit of leadership and culture development resources and materials. I also sifted through the many variations of highly customized training and consulting approaches we've taken with many Clients. This was to pull together an interactive webinar to overview The CLEMMER Group's practical leadership and culture development services. I gave a 30 minute presentation followed by questions from participants.



I built the overview around the five Key Implementation Steps outlined in the *Leading a Peak Performance Culture* webcast:

- 1. Assess current systems, practices, culture, and readiness for change.
- 2. Executive Retreat:
 - Review/assess, learn, envision, and prioritize leadership behaviors, and systems/processes.
 - (Re)set Strategic Imperatives, steering/project teams, and implementation framework.
- 3. Realign/integrate/prune current projects, processes, systems, and development initiatives.
- 4. Plan implementation strategies and timelines.
- 5. Monitor, follow up, and adjust implementation plans.

This follow-up session was directed at senior executives and support professionals such as Health and Safety, Human Resources, Training and Development, Lean, Organization Development, Quality, Customer Service, and related support professionals who are responsible for directly leading or guiding culture change efforts in their organization.

If you'd like to learn about The CLEMMER Group's **Practical Leadership** and Culture Development Services <u>click here</u>.

EXPONENTIAL ENGAGEMENT: THE POWER OF THREE

In today's economic uncertainty employee engagement is critical. Organizational engagement surveys are showing that employee frustration is accelerating as engagement plummets. They feel trapped. With higher unemployment rates and tight job markets, many people on the frontlines -- especially those with less specialized skills -- are clinging to jobs they don't enjoy.



Employee engagement is getting more attention from managers as the evidence of its effectiveness continues to pile up. As with many leadership and culture tools and techniques, **too many managers are** "doing their engagement thing" by asking their HR professionals to run engagement surveys. When the dismal numbers come in, executives often make token changes, such as maybe giving quick "sheep dip" in leadership training for supervisors and managers.

The global consulting firm, Towers Watson's 2011 study <u>The Power of Three: Taking Engagement to New Heights</u> shows "engaged employees outperform their non-engaged coworkers ... a growing body of evidence over the past decade validates the quantifiable relationship between levels of organizational engagement and financial performance."

But engagement is really just the tip of the culture iceberg. In highly effective organizations, engagement is part of a deeper set of leadership values and approaches that also includes enabling and energizing:

- 1. "Engaged attachment to the organization and willingness to give extra effort.
- Enabled a work environment that supports productivity and performance.
- Energized individual physical, social, and emotional well-being at work."

This is about organizational culture. Towers Watson found that the exponential boost of this more integrated peak performance culture is huge:

"We found that companies with the combined impact of all three exponential engagement factors can generate operating margins three times higher than companies with low engagement, and nearly two times higher than companies with high engagement alone."

Yet more evidence that we need to move beyond using engagement as a bolt-on program and make it a built-in part of leadership values and culture.

SHARED SECRETS FROM THE CIRQUE

If you've never taken in one of the amazing and spectacular shows of the Cirque du Soleil, you really need to treat yourself and see one. Cirque travels extensively to major cities and have permanent shows with elaborate stages and buildings in Las Vegas. One of my favorite shows of all time is their The Beatles "Love" in Vegas. The Cirque du



<u>Soleil</u> web site gives an overview of some of the organization, their shows, and **captures some of their special magic**.

This month's guest blog is written by Vera Asanin, founder and editor of <u>YourWorkPlace</u>. Based in Canada, her organization produces outstanding materials and conferences on workplace, personal growth, and leadership. **Vera's blog highlights just how critical the <u>Laughter Index</u> is to healthy team or organizational cultures.**

Guest Blog by: Vera Asanin

Too many people cringe when thinking about the next meeting they have to attend. Boring, too long, stale and all too serious. Meetings are the same-ol', same ol'. Now imagine an alternative: Would employees be a bit more light-hearted about attending and actively participating if they knew it might be fun?

At Cirque du Soleil a full-time staff member travels from meeting to meeting, workspace to workspace to ensure that Cirque staff don't take themselves too seriously. And the best part? This staff member is a clown.

What makes Cirque a vibrant, thriving work culture? Daniel Lamarre, President & CEO, of Cirque du Soleil located in Montreal, Quebec, recently shared some of his thoughts at the 2011World Business Forum in New York. And it all starts with him. He believes that his job is to "create the best conditions to allow his creators to create". He has absolute clarity about the fact that Cirque must be innovative to be successful, and he does everything in his power to allow innovative ideas to grow.

For example, Cirque celebrates their failures. They have a Museum of Horrors -- a physical venue within their work environment showcasing the thousands of dollars spent developing things that didn't work. There is no fear or trepidation to try something new -- only support and encouragement. You see the museum serves as a reminder to all team members that ideas and innovations are a stepping-stone to thoughts that will eventually work. How cool is that?

Working at Cirque can be strenuous. Artists must be optimal performers at all times. The risks are great and they can't afford to have a less-than-awesome day. They can't afford to have an "under the weather" moment, while they recover from a long party the night before. They must be disciplined, as team members rely on each other for safety, perfect execution and precision movements, and they have 5,000 spectators counting on them to perform perfectly.

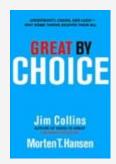
Working at Cirque is not easy. As the pressure to perform mounts, strain on the body and muscle tension escalates, breathing quickens and pearls of sweat appear, staff can always rely on their friendly clown to cut the tension.

So I walk away believing that a clown on staff is a novel idea with obvious benefits. Although not right for my work environment, I will pay attention to hiring those who have a great sense of humor.

- <u>Vera Asanin</u> is the founder and editor of <u>YourWorkPlace</u>. Based in Canada, her organization produces outstanding materials and conferences on workplace, personal growth, and leadership.

BOOK REVIEW: GREAT BY CHOICE: UNCERTAINTY, CHAOS, AND LUCK - WHY SOME THRIVE DESPITE THEM ALL

This is a very timely, inspiring, and practical book for leading in turbulent times. It's the culmination of a nine year research project that began in 2002 "in the aftermath of 9/11 and the bursting stock bubble, watching the exponential rise of global competition and the relentless onslaught of technological disruption, hearing the rising chant of 'change, change, change...'"



While a faculty member at Harvard Business School, Morten Hansen provided Jim Collins with input on his seminal book, *Good to Great*. In the turbulent times after 9/11, they talked further about their strong sense that "uncertainty is permanent, chaotic times are normal, change is accelerating, and instability will likely characterize the rest of our lives." How true that's proved to be in the last 10 years!

The central question that began the nine year research quest and led to publishing <u>Great by Choice</u>, was **why do some thrive in the face of immense uncertainty**, **even chaos**, **and others do not?** So they looked for companies that started in vulnerable positions and rose to spectacular performance in dangerously fast changing, unstable environments with major events and forces outside of their control. Sounding familiar?

As with Collins' first book, *Built to Last*, and with *Good to Great* (read my review of both books on LinkedIn or *The Leader Letter* archive), they compared the outstanding companies to a control group of comparison companies in the very same industries and extreme environments that failed to thrive. Many failed altogether and are no longer with us. They started with a list of 20,400 companies and went through 11 stages of cutting, screening, and shifting to identify the "10Xers." They called them "10 times companies" because they didn't merely get by or just become successful. They truly thrived. Every 10X case beat its industry index by at least 10 times." During the 30 year period of this research study, the 10Xers beat their industry stock performance indices by 32 times! Where's that time traveling machine to go back and make those investments?

The book is structured around the main finding of the research. This boils down to three core behaviors:

- "Fanatic discipline: 10Xers display extreme consistency of action -- consistency with values, goals, performance standards, and methods. They are utterly relentless, monomaniacal, unbending in their focus on their quests.
- Empirical creativity: When faced with uncertainty, 10Xers do not look primarily to other people, conventional wisdom, authority figures, or peers for direction; they look primarily to empirical evidence. They rely upon direct observation, practical experimentation, and direct engagement with tangible evidence. They make their bold, creative moves from a sound empirical base.
- **Productive paranoia**: 10Xers maintain hyper-vigilance, staying highly attuned to threats and changes in their environment, even when -- especially when -- all's going well. They assume conditions will turn against them, at perhaps the worst possible moment. They channel their fear and worry into action, preparing, developing contingency plans, building buffers, and maintaining large margins of safety."

The authors also found that "underlying the three core 10Xer behaviors is a motivating force: passion and ambition for a cause or company larger than themselves. They have egos, but their egos are channeled into their companies and their purposes, not personal aggrandizement."

An especially fascinating chapter reports their findings on what role luck played in the 10Xers success and the failure of their comparison companies. They concluded:

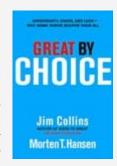
"The best leaders we've studied maintain a paradoxical relationship to luck. On the one hand, they credit good luck in retrospect for having played a role in their achievements, despite the undeniable fact that others were just as lucky. On the other hand, they don't blame bad luck for failures, and they hold only themselves responsible if they fail to turn their luck into great results. 10Xers grasp that if they blame bad luck for failure, they capitulate to fate. Equally, they grasp that if they fail to perceive when good luck helped, they might overestimate their own skill and leave themselves exposed when good luck runs dry. There might be more good luck down the road, but 10Xers never count on it."

Great by Choice is very aptly titled. Collins and Hansen present incredibly strong evidence through their exhaustive research (which included reviewing 7,000 historical documents!) that it's not what happens to us but what we do about it; "... this study shows that whether we prevail or fail, endure or die, depends more upon what we do than on what the world does to us ... every 10Xer made mistakes, even some very big mistakes, yet was able to self-correct, survive, and build greatness."

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMMM ON... GREAT BY CHOICE

Selections from *Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck - Why Some Thrive Despite Them All* by Jim Collins and Morten Hansen:

We cannot predict the future. But we can create it ... we can be astonished, confounded, shocked, stunned, delighted, or terrified, but rarely prescient ... life is uncertain, the future unknown. This is neither good nor bad. It just is, like gravity. Yet the task remains: how to master our own fate, even so.



.... 10Xers shine when clobbered by setbacks and misfortune, turning bad luck into good results. 10Xers use difficulty as a catalyst to deepen purpose, recommit to values, increase discipline, respond with creativity, and heighten productive paranoia. Resilience, not luck, is the signature of greatness.

.... it's what you do before the storm comes that most determines how well you'll do when the storm comes. Those who fail to plan and prepare for instability, disruption, and chaos in advance tend to suffer more when their environments shift from stability to turbulence.

Every 10Xer we studied aimed for much more than just "becoming successful." They didn't define themselves by money. They didn't define themselves by fame. They didn't define themselves by power. They defined themselves by impact and contribution and purpose.

We've found in all our research studies that the signature of mediocrity is not an unwillingness to change; the signature of mediocrity is chronic inconsistency ... 10Xers reject the choice between consistency and change; they embrace consistency and change, both at the same time.

.... if there's one overarching message arising from more than six thousand years of corporate history across all our research ... it would be this: greatness is not primarily a matter of circumstance; greatness is first and foremost a matter of conscious choice and discipline.

Very few people predicted the 2008 financial crisis. The next Great Disruption will come, and the next one after that, and the next one after that, forever. We cannot know with certainty what they'll be or when they'll come, but we can know with certainty that they will come.

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 precedes each title and descriptor from the original source:

A good example of how all support functions need to serve the servers or producers and contribute to a continuous improvement culture.

"Shifting Finance from Controlling to Improving" - Brad Power

http://blogs.hbr.org

"Having grown up with a mission of controlling the expenses of the organization, measuring performance, complying with regulations, and focusing the organization on shareholder value, CFOs need to unlearn command-and-control thinking before they can learn how to help lead improvement."

Good how-to practical leadership advice, a few case examples, Do's and Don'ts, and thoughtful comments/debate among readers at the end.

"<u>Delivering an Effective Performance Review</u>" - Rebecca Knight

http://blogs.hbr.org

"If you take the right approach, appraisals are an excellent opportunity to reinforce solid performers and redirect the poor ones."

These engagement stats (applicable to most Western countries) point to the huge leadership vacuum -- and transformation opportunity.

"<u>Majority of American Workers Not Engaged in Their Jobs</u>" — **Nikki Blacksmith and Jim Harter** http://www.gallup.com

"Gallup's employee engagement index is based on worker responses to 12 actionable workplace elements with proven linkages to performance outcomes, including productivity, customer service, quality, retention, safety, and profit."

Lynn provides a good eight-point checklist on earning respect and avoid vacillating between being power players and pushovers.

"<u>Is It Better to Be Liked or Feared?</u>" – Lynn Taylor http://www.businessweek.com

"The greater good of the company sometimes necessitate unpopular decisions. But managers can't execute them without a foundation of respect." Many managers and executives don't recognize their own Wallowing and are spreading the highly contagious Victimitis Virus.

> "Why Your Team Doesn't Care: The 4 Ways You're Crushing Your Culture" - Christine Comaford http://www.Forbes.com

> "It's a disease. And it's going to become an epidemic if we don't do something about it ... employee disengagement, or Crushed Culture, has spread to the C Suite too."

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 one of my books. 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 your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net or connect with me on LinkedIn, Twitter, FaceBook, or my blog!

Keep learning, laughing, loving, and leading - living life just for the L of it!!

Jim











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