



Issue 177 - December 2017

Greek mathematician, Euclid, was hired to teach geometry to a young, impatient Egyptian heir to the throne. The prince was an unmotivated student. He especially resisted learning basic formulas and theories before getting into practical applications. "Is there no simpler way you can get to the point?" he asked. "As the crown prince I should not be expected to deal with such trivial and useless details." Euclid's response gave teachers through the ages that unforgettable phrase, "I am sorry, but there is no royal road to learning."



I've been coaching "Jordan," a senior executive. He's been asking for that royal road to learning. Jordan's been building his personal development plan around the 360 feedback he'd received. As we discussed potential action plans, he kept complaining that this took time away from his overloaded and crazy busy daily struggle to stay on top of e-mails, meetings, and projects. "I don't have any extra time to work on my development," Jordan insisted.

As we looked deeper at Jordan's work it became clear he was "majoring in the minors" by getting caught in the details and losing sight of his role to focus on the bigger strategic picture. He was also thinking of leadership development as additional activities or time to be carved from his day rather than building a series of smaller improvements to his hallway conversations, meeting agendas, or coaching on the fly.

It turned out that Jordan's biggest misconception was to see learning as an end result rather than an ongoing process. He's operating on the assumptions that once he has a diploma, certification, or new position, he can coast on our earlier learning efforts and use his accumulating experience. This is the deadly trap of viewing learning or change as a phase of life rather than a way of life.

As with a few dollars a day going into a savings account, learning is a way of life that accumulates little by little each day. Scottish author, Samuel Smiles, founded the modern self-help field with his 19th century bestseller, *Self Help*. In it he writes, "(People) of business are accustomed to quote the maxim that 'time is money' -- but it is more; the proper improvement of it is self-culture, self-improvement, and growth of character. An hour wasted daily on trifles or in indolence, would, if devoted to self-improvement, make an ignorant (person) wise in a few years, and employed in good works, would make his/her life fruitful, and death a harvest of worthy deeds. Fifteen minutes a day devoted to self-improvement will be felt at the end of the year."

This month's issue is focused on leadership and coaching development. It's critical to dealing with today's relentless barrage of overwhelming activities that can easily suck us into the vortex of busyness. This often leads to working harder and harder with the same tools, habits, and approaches. The urgent crowds out the important and there's no time left to sharpen our skills or grow our personal, team, or organizational capabilities.

Highly effective leaders are always on the grow. They don't get stuck in old habits and ruts (once defined as a grave with the ends knocked out). Constant growth, development, and adaptability to change comes through

continuous learning. The 19th century British theologian and essayist, John Henry Newman once said, "Growth is the only evidence of life." If we're not growing, we're like a dying tree; eventually the winds of change will snap off our rotting trunks and blow us over.

How to Strengthen the Weak Link in Leadership Development

"Corporate leadership development programs aren't working. Less than a quarter of executives at the organizations that have them think they're effective." Those conclusions are from a report published in the November-December issue of *Harvard Business Review*.



The authors trace the main source of these dismal results to using unproven and ineffective leadership development approaches. The missing link is a scientific or evidence-based approach: "a scientific approach to talent development -- focused on spotting high potentials, understanding their capacity for growth in key competencies, and giving them the experience and support they need to succeed -- will be an extraordinary source of competitive advantage in the coming decades. And it will help many more managers transform themselves into the great leaders they were always meant to be."

A key reason The CLEMMER Group has been a strategic partner with Zenger Folkman for the past five years is their deep research and evidence-based approaches to leadership and coaching skill development.

Here are five key evidence-based findings from ZF's research paper, **Leadership Under the Microscope**:

1. **We need to set our sights higher** – helping good managers become extraordinary leaders produces outstanding results.
2. **We need to stop emphasizing weaknesses** – "lack of weaknesses" doesn't distinguish outstanding leaders. A few towering strengths define the best leaders.
3. **We need to invest more in identifying and developing strengths** – three or four strengths leveraged to a top level of effectiveness puts him or her in the top 10% of leaders.
4. **Leadership needs a broad footprint** – the very best leaders balance character, focusing on results, personal capability, leading change, and interpersonal skills.
5. **Developing a strength often requires a non-linear approach** – each leadership skill can be mapped with supporting behaviors that can form powerful development combinations.

There's been a significant growth in strength building tools and approaches over the past decade. It's an approach that makes lots of sense to many people. However, "strengths" can have many meanings and applications. Many times, they refer to traits, interests, values, or even resources. Assessing and strengthening those elements in ourselves and our situation can be quite helpful.

When it comes to leadership development, skills or behaviors as perceived by the people the leader is trying to influence or lead, is the most useful approach to strength building. That's where a strengths-based 360 feedback assessment can be invaluable. Through pre-post studies, Zenger Folkman has found that leveraging the strengths in observable skills or behaviors that others see in the leader is 2 to 3 times more effective than traditional approaches.

On January 17 and 18 I'll be delivering **Leadership Development and Coaching Skills Workshops** in Toronto using Zenger Folkman's evidence-based strength building assessment and development approaches. [Click here](#) for more information.

As the authors of the *Harvard Business Review* report found, "when companies take this approach to leadership development -- focusing on potential and figuring out how to help people build the competencies they need for various roles -- they see results."

5 Questions to Cut Through the Coaching Clutter

In the past four years the number of books on coaching available at Amazon has grown by 50% -- from just under 30,000 to over 45,000. This reflects the growing understanding that effective coaching has a huge impact on individual, team, and organization performance.

But this also shows there's an overwhelming assortment of coaching theories, models, and frameworks. What's often missing is research on which coaching approaches can provide the most benefit in the shortest time.



Zenger Folkman's research paper, **Bringing Science to the Art of Coaching** (click to download a free copy), helps to cut through the bewildering array of coaching clutter to answer five key questions:

1. Does coaching really make a difference?

When measured by 360 feedback, the highest levels of coaching effectiveness compared to very poor coaching has a six-fold impact on employee engagement, cuts turnover in half, and doubles the number of employees inspired to "put forth a great deal of effort every day."

2. How can we increase the effectiveness of each coaching session?

Focusing the conversation on what the coachee wants from this discussion (short and impromptu or longer and scheduled) puts him or her in control, shows the coach respects his or her concerns, and makes this part of an ongoing coaching relationship. This two-way collaboration is reinforced when the coach asks for feedback at the end of the conversation on how useful the discussion and coaching was for the coachee.

3. How can the process of coaching be made more consistent?

A research-based framework with coaching skill development in its application has a major impact on coaching effectiveness:

- **Frame the Conversation**
- **Understand the Current State**
- **Explore the Desired State**
- **Lay Out a Plan of Action**

4. What is the appropriate goal for coaching, and how much change can we expect?

Research shows that having a personal development plan is one of the most powerful steps a person can take to higher effectiveness. But only 10% of leaders do. A strong coach helps leaders build a personal development plan they're highly committed to, monitor and make adjustments, and follow through.

5. What is it about the coaches' personality or behavior that makes the most positive impact?

Highly effective coaches collaborate and "do with" rather than "do to" the coachee. Strong coaches draw ideas and insights from the coachee rather than teaching or guiding them toward the solution the coach has in mind. Extraordinary coaches rarely play "I am the boss" but maintains the coachee's autonomy and ownership of the issue.

Before The CLEMMER Group became strategic partners with Zenger Folkman, I reviewed their book, *The Extraordinary Coach: How the Best Leaders Help Others Grow*. This is the best book on coaching I've ever read. It's a unique combination of solid research, relevant and illustrative examples, with lots of practical how-to applications.

For the past five years I've been delivering *The Extraordinary Coach* in a wide variety of organizations. It's a powerful and highly condensed one-day session that provides participants with a personal development plan focused on their own coaching challenges and opportunities. Recently ZF revamped and further tightened the session with award-winning video examples and application tools. Occasionally we provide public or open sessions of this workshop. I'll be facilitating one of these sessions in Toronto on January 17, 2018. [Click here](#) for details.

Peter Drucker put his finger on the power of coaching when he wrote, "a leader has to be an energizer and motivator, someone who inspires and guides others, who energizes the system and generates the magic that makes everyone want to do something extra."

Webinar: *Change Culture by Upgrading Leadership Development*

We did a series of focus groups, interviews, and a feedback survey with a division of a large company to help Eric, the division manager, determine why their culture wasn't performing at the level he wanted. We found that the shortfalls in the division's levels of engagement, service, and productivity could be traced to the leadership team's effectiveness. Their individual and collective leadership was weak.

After reviewing a summary of our findings with Eric, he recognized the problem. And he realized it started with his own leadership behaviors. If he didn't change, he'd fall into that trap of expecting different results while continuing to do the same things. So, Eric built a detailed personal development plan to elevate his leadership.

We then planned **an off-site retreat** for Eric's senior leadership team to review the feedback and establish leadership and culture development action plans. On the first morning of the retreat, Eric started with reflections on his own feedback and the personal development plans he'd started -- which many on his team had already begun to notice. I then discussed all the research showing that an organization's culture ripples out from the



management team leading it. Eric then handed out a folder printed with the company logo and the words "Change Kit: Change Begins Here" on the outside. Each manager opened the folder and found a large mirror inside.

"Making Change Work ... while the Work Keeps Changing" is a research report from IBM summarizing interviews and online surveys they conducted of over 1,400 leaders responsible for designing, creating, and implementing change in their organizations. What's the most effective means of changing attitudes and behaviors? The number one factor -- mentioned by 73% of respondents -- was the leader's role modeling.

Last month, Jack Zenger presented a complimentary (no charge) webinar on ***Change Culture by Upgrading Leadership Development***. As the pace of change accelerates, most organizations realize the need for their culture to keep pace with new technology, evolving markets and broader societal changes.

The webinar will identify and examine methodologies to develop effective leaders and simultaneously build a positive cultural change. Join Jack as he discusses:

- What is culture?
- Options for changing cultures
- Criticism of leadership development and how to address their shortcomings
- Combining leadership development and work
- Building leadership development principles into HR systems
- Methods of delivering leadership development

Click here to view this complimentary webinar.

Culture change strategies, programs, branding, and communication campaigns can help shift "how we do things around here." But the single biggest impact is leadership behavior.

Tweet Reading: Recommended Online Articles



This section summarizes last month's LinkedIn Updates and Twitter Tweets about online articles or blog posts that I've flagged as worth reading. These are usually posted on weekends when I am doing much of my reading for research, learning, or leisure. You can follow me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/JimClemmer>

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

You can download the e-book or listen to the podcast **here**

eBook: Overcoming Today's Workforce Challenges (featuring Erica Volini, Deloitte Consulting)
<http://zengerfolkman.com>

"Erica Volini from Deloitte joins Dr. Jack Zenger and Dr. Joe Folkman to discuss the challenges she has observed in today's workforce and some concrete ideas for overcoming them."

Zenger Folkman research shows that leaders who give others credit are then credited with being the most effective.

"It's All About Me! What Happens When A Leader Takes All The Credit?" -- Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"Does taking credit for the work of others, as a strategy to get ahead, help or hinder the leader using that approach? What is the impact of giving others all the credit?"

Find out why most leaders prefer to give negative feedback and take Zenger Folkman's Influence Preference Assessment.

"Why Is It So Difficult For Leaders To Give Positive Feedback?" -- Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"If you think you have developed a habit of focusing on what people do wrong rather than what they do right, try keeping track. This research shows that the best leaders are those that prefer to give positive feedback."

Zenger Folkman research shows many leaders assume they are better at valuing diversity than they actually are.

"Leaders Aren't Great at Judging How Inclusive They Are" -- Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman
<https://hbr.org>

"And the least inclusive tend to overrate their skills."

Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments

The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my weekly blog during the previous month.



If you read each blog post (or issue of *The Leader Letter*) as it's published **over twelve months you'll have read the equivalent of a leadership book**. And you'll pick up a few practical leadership tips that help you use time more strategically and tame your E-Beast!

Feedback and Follow-Up

I am always delighted to hear from readers of *The Leader Letter* with feedback, reflections, suggestions, or differing points of view. Nobody is ever identified in *The Leader Letter* without their permission. I am also happy to explore customized, in-house adaptations of any of my material for your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail at Jim.Clemmer@ClemmerGroup.com or connect with me on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [FaceBook](#), or my [blog](#)!

May the Force (of strengths) be with you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Clemmer". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping loop at the bottom.

Jim Clemmer

President

Phone: (519) 748-5968

Email: jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com

Website: www.clemmergroup.com



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

Did you receive this newsletter from someone else?

Subscribe to ensure you don't miss the next issue!

The CLEMMER Group

10 Pioneer Drive, Suite 105, Kitchener ON N2P 2A4

Phone: (519) 748-1044 ~ Fax: (519) 748-5813

service@clemmer.net

www.clemmergroup.com

©2017 Jim Clemmer and The CLEMMER Group