

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter



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FEBRUARY 2011, ISSUE 95

February was named after the Latin term *februum* meaning **purification**. In the old Roman calendar the purification ritual, *Februa*, was held on February 15. Some historians also connect the Latin word for fever, *febris*, with purification or purging from the sweating common with fevers.

This medieval painting, "Fevrier" (February), was for an illustrated manuscript in the early 1400s by the Limbourg brothers, famous Dutch miniature painters from the city of Nijmegen. It's fascinating to look at slice-of-life paintings like this one 600 years later to guess what life was like back then. Is there some sort of purifying ritual happening with the ladies in the building? Or are they just warming themselves by the fire? And what is the woman wrapped in a blanket at the bottom right of the painting doing?



Use this issue of *The Leader Letter* to **review and purify some of your leadership approaches.**

- Has Silly Season left you sweating with "future fever?"
- Do you need to purge a few **"management hedgehog" tendencies?**
- Are you **searching for certainty** in an uncertain world?
- Does your management team need to **purify approaches that have trapped you?**
- Is it time to **cleans and renew your team or organization with a built-to-change culture?**
- Are your **vision, values, and mission enervating or energizing?**

Do you need skills sharpening for **leading @ the speed of change?**

BOOK REVIEW OF *FUTURE BABBLE: WHY EXPERT PREDICTIONS FAIL – AND WHY WE BELIEVE THEM ANYWAY*

One month into 2011 we still have countless possibilities stretching out far beyond the horizon. Will this year be filled with triumphs or tragedies? What changes lay ahead? Is the uncertainty daunting or exciting? **Are we creating a new earth or witnessing the end of history?**

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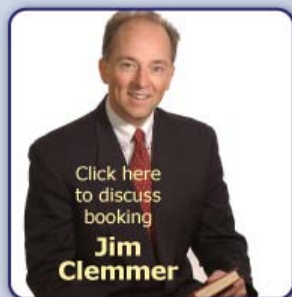
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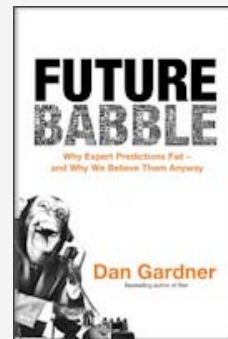
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Will this be the year of "The Big One" – flu pandemic, economic collapse, natural disaster, terrorism attack, nuclear war, environmental disaster, or the Second Coming and end of time? Or will 2011 be another step in humanity's long march to ever higher prosperity, social development, environmental awareness, interconnectedness, and personal/spiritual growth?



How many predictions bombarded you during late December and early January's "[Silly Season?](#)" Springing from our deep-seated need to eliminate uncertainty and know the future, an array of "experts" are all too willing to forecast with great certainty what's in store. In his new book, [Future Babble: Why Expert Predictions Fail – and Why We Believe Them Anyway](#), **Dan Gardner shows just how wrong those experts are.**

This is **an extremely readable and thought provoking book.** Gardner's exhaustive research builds an extremely persuasive case for the book's sub-title. He also explains why we keep coming back for more useless forecasting babble. Although some of his examples could be more succinctly summarized, most are very entertaining and enlightening. Gardner illustrates the book's core message around the dismal failure of expert predictions with examples of both overly rosy predictions and darkly apocalyptic forecasts missing the mark by miles. **He's especially effective at pillorying the many bestselling prophets of doom.** These include the authors of such pessimistically dire works as, *The Population Bomb*, *How to Prosper in the Coming Bad Years*, *The Limits to Growth*, *The End of Affluence*, *An Inquiry into the Human Prospect*, and *Blood in the Streets*.

Future Babble cites numerous studies showing **the repeated and colossal failure of expert predictions in every field** (except for short term weather forecasts.) He quotes Scott Armstrong "an expert on forecasting at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania" on his "**seer-sucker theory: No matter how much evidence exists that seers do not exist, suckers will pay for the existence of seers.**" Here's another of Gardner's examples: "The now-defunct magazine *Brill's Content*, for one, compared the predictions of famous American pundits with a chimpanzee named Chippy, who made guesses by choosing among flashcards. Chippy consistently matched or beat the best in the business."

Future Babble draws heavily on the comprehensive research of Philip Tetlock, professor of psychology, business, and political science at University of California Berkeley. His authoritative study encompassed 284 experts "giving 27,450 judgments of the future." **Tetlock concluded that the experts would have been beaten by "a dart-throwing chimpanzee."** Gardner observes that **"the simple and disturbing truth is that the experts' predictions were no more accurate than random guesses."** An especially interesting finding in these days of media sound bites, blogging, and viral videos is Tetlock's use of Google hits to determine the fame of each of the 284 experts. **His findings: "the more famous the expert, the worse he did."**

Future Babble concludes with very wise advice from British/American journalist and broadcaster, Alistair Cooke, for dealing with life's uncertainty: "In the best of times our days are numbered anyway. And so **it would be a crime against nature for any generation to take the world's crisis so solemnly that is put off enjoying those things for which we were designed in the first place.** The opportunity to do good work, to fall in love, to enjoy friends, to hit a ball, and to bounce a baby."

For Further Reading:

- [Change is Life](#)
- [Time Travelling: Current Lessons from Changes Past](#)
- [Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on...Expert Forecasts](#)
- [Five Resolutions to Lead and Not Follow or Wallow in 2010](#)
- [Range of Reality: Choosing the Best or Worst of Times](#)

ARE YOU A MANAGEMENT HEDGEHOG OR A LEADERSHIP FOX?

In Dan Gardner's fascinating new book, [Future Babble: Why Expert Predictions Fail - and Why We Believe Them Anyway](#), he cites the research of Professor Philip Tetlock, in **dividing the expert forecasters he studied into hedgehogs and foxes**. This comes from an essay entitled, "[The Hedgehog and the Fox](#)" by political philosopher Isaiah Berlin. The title comes from a poem fragment attributed to the ancient Greek poet Archilochus ("the fox knows many little things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing".)



Gardner writes; "**Foxes beat hedgehogs**. Tetlock's data couldn't be more clear...hedgehogs who are ideologically extreme are even worse forecasters than others of their kind...when hedgehogs made predictions involving their particular specialty, their accuracy declined (his emphasis.) And it got worse still when the prediction was for the long term." And hedgehogs are media darlings because they're "confident, clear, and dramatic. The sort who delivers quality sound bites and compelling stories. The sort who doesn't bother with complications, caveats, and uncertainties. The sort who has One Big Idea."

The hedgehog and fox metaphor has parallels to [The Management-Leadership Balance](#). **Strict management thinking** is rigid and sees the world as black and white, either/or, and right or wrong. **Leadership approaches take a nuanced approach** recognizing many shades of gray, balancing and also understanding that life sometimes gives us choices that are both right and wrong at the same time.

Management hedgehogs are what Kenneth Arrow, American Nobel laureate economist, was describing when he recounted the response he and his colleagues received after showing that the military's long-term weather forecasts were useless; "The Commanding General is well aware the forecasts are no good. However, he needs them for planning purposes."

Management hedgehogs set strategic plans and budgets based on their forecast of the year(s) ahead, **put their blinders on**, and push relentlessly forward. **Leadership foxes are strategic learners**. They establish a longer term vision and strategic direction, set their budgets and plans, and promptly start adjusting course.

Just as Gardner shows with expert hedgehogs throughout *Future Babble*, **management hedgehogs do very little reviewing, assessing, and readjusting assumptions or direction**. Their minds are made focused on their strategy (One Big Idea) and the course is set. They don't let new data, feedback, and changing conditions get in the way. In fact, they'll often make it difficult for anyone to raise concerns and identify problems. Their reviews center on operational details using lagging indicators like financial reports from which they extract little strategic learning.

Leadership foxes are constantly reviewing, assessing, and refocusing. They build **flexible teams and learning organizations**

built to last by being **built to change**. They'll quickly make internal changes and readjustments as external conditions change. **Learning leaders** seek input, feedback, and engagement of everyone up, down, and across their organizations. This is what McGill management professor, Henry Mintzberg, has shown throughout his work on the [Strategy Safari](#). He calls strategic planning an oxymoron.

It's been said there are two kinds of people in this world; those who classify everyone into groups and those who don't! **Management hedgehog or leadership fox. Which one are you? How do you know?**

For Further Reading:

- [Paradoxical Balancing Acts in Organization Improvement](#)
- [Strategic Planning Smothers Innovation](#)
- [Visions Provide the Energizing Context to Reach Our Goals](#)
- [Check Your Balance with the Performance Triangle](#)
- [Built to Change is Especially Critical Today](#)
- [Consultants Can Help or Hinder Strategic Planning](#)

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMMM ON... LEADING THROUGH UNCERTAINTY

The multi-billion dollar forecasting and predictions industry is **built around our deep insecurity about dealing with uncertainty**. But life doesn't come with any guarantees and nobody knows what triumphs or tragedies await us around the next corner of our journey.



Here are some profound insights and powerful research on **how strong leaders deal with uncertainty**:

"Maturity of mind is the capacity to endure uncertainty."

- John Finley

"(The best leaders) are comfortable with uncertainty. They understand the constant flux inherent in their job and business. They know that what worked yesterday won't necessarily work tomorrow, and optimistically view uncertainty as fuelling the fires of creativity. They turn the anxiety that accompanies change into productive energy for moving forward."

- Research by Robert Rosen at Healthy Companies International after interviewing 300 CEOs and top executives in over 40 countries on the five key characteristics of the best leaders

"One large telecommunications company, for instance, uses swarm intelligence technology (named for the way insects pass along information and modify their behavior to fit the environment) to capture what its many employees are hearing and seeing...turned hundreds of employees into informal sentries, warning the company to react to changing competitive conditions."

- "Be Prepared," Leonard Fuld, *Harvard Business Review*

"In truth it is our doubts, not our beliefs, that inspire us to go beyond rote acceptance and comfortable conformity. It is our doubts that

prevent us from accepting half-truths and safe havens of security...doubts make us question and search; they force us out of bed and into battle; they refuse to let us sleep."

- Harry Moody & David Carroll, *The Five Stages of the Soul: Charting the Spiritual Passages That Shape Our Lives*

"...true leadership often lies in knowing how to embrace uncertainty. The research suggests that when companies fail to recognize the importance of uncertainty, employees disengage from the organization's efforts. Leaders who get the best results combine an ability to set inspiring goals and a willingness to admit that they don't know exactly how to accomplish those goals. It turns out that people working for managers who openly express uncertainty and who seek employee input in resolving ambiguous challenges are more satisfied with their jobs, more committed to and less cynical about their organizations, and more likely to identify with the companies they work for."

- Katie Sweetman, "Embracing Uncertainty," *Sloan Management Review*

"Fundamentally, the world is uncertain...so what is the key thing you can do to prepare for that uncertainty? You can have the right people with you....what's your greatest hedge against uncertainty? Having people who can adapt to whatever the mountain throws at you..."

- Jim Collins, author of *Built to Last* and *Good to Great*

FOCUS AND CONTEXT ARE THE CORE OF BUILT-TO-CHANGE CULTURES

Above items in this issue touch on dealing with uncertainty and concepts from Dan Gardner's excellent new book, *Future Babble*. It drew parallels with one of his key themes (expert hedgehogs and foxes) by discussing management hedgehogs and leadership foxes.



A key difference from management hedgehog's rigid planning and budgeting is how **leadership foxes build much more flexible and rapidly changing team and organizational cultures**. This is vital to dealing with uncertainty.

In striving for certainty, management hedgehogs create a sterile and passionless culture. Their rigid strategies, budgets, and business plans are cold and lifeless. So, most people go through the motions, put in their time, and go home. In this environment, change and improvement programs have no spirit. These programs may build up some speed and even get off the ground - but they don't soar.

Leadership foxes know that a strong **"Focus and Context" is at the core of a vibrant culture** (which we define as "the way we do things around here - especially when the boss isn't around.") It provides flexible direction and guides behavior. It energizes the heart, soul, and spirit of teams and organizations. **Three interconnected questions are at the center of Focus and Context:**

- Where are we going (our vision or picture of our *preferred* future?)
- What do we believe in (our principles or values?)
- Why do we exist (our purpose or niche?)

Keys to Building a Strong Cultural Core with Focus and Context:

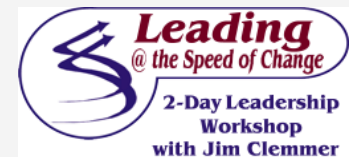
- Evolution not Revolution – team or organizational immune systems are triggered by dramatic and radical change that dismisses past efforts. Effective leaders **blend and build on past strengths/heritage with the changes needed** for a more adaptive culture to capitalize on the uncertain and rapidly unfolding future.
- Engage Their Hearts – **management speaks to the head** with goals, plans, and budgets. **Leadership connects with the heart** using emotive language, images, stories, metaphors, and experiential learning.
- Simplify and Emotionalize – any more than five values is a laundry list and aren't yet core values. **Wordy and bureaucratic mission statements** that include everything and everybody are boring and lifeless. **Boil it down** to a snappy phrase less than 10 words long.
- Energize Your Vision, Values, and Purpose – after the senior management team has clearly defined these cultural core elements they **work hard to engage, connect, and energize** them throughout their organization. This is best done by **face-to-face communication for heart-to-heart connections**.
- Make Central to Your People Decisions – core values are the last **critical** screens in **all hiring and promotion decisions** to make them truly the core of your culture. People who may be high performers but don't live your core values are **coached, moved, or let go**. Formal and informal recognition clearly and publicly **showcase your core values**.
- Revisit and Revitalize – once a year **review your Focus and Context**. They often stay relevant as the core of your culture for years. The **annual process** of revisiting and reviewing will **revitalize and recommit everyone** in your organization.

Further Resources on Focus and Context:

- Large selection of articles on [Vision, Values, and Purpose](#)
- Blog archive on [Organizational Vision, Values, and Purpose](#)

LEADING @ THE SPEED OF CHANGE WORKSHOP JUNE 14 - 15

I've been helping managers improve personal, team, and organization performance for three decades. Much has changed in our world and our organizations during that time! But a number of **key principles have remained very constant**.



Such as:

- **how we deal with change - as leaders, followers, or wallowers**
- **balancing management and leadership**
- **identifying key organization improvement gaps and developing plans to improve them**
- **clarifying personal focus and priorities**
- **assessing our leadership strengths and lesser strengths**
- **aligning and improving ourselves to develop the leadership paths** that will take us, our teams, and our organizations where we want to go

Based on our work with thousands of managers, and the research and writing of my books, we've condensed the key lessons of leadership into two provocative, intense, reflective, and humour-filled days in my **Leading @ the Speed of Change** workshop.

We often hear back from participants who've invested these two days with us that "the time changed my life" or "gave me a new perspective on old issues." You can [read other comments here](#).

It's a powerful session for individuals, but the **benefits are magnified when a team attends together**. We're offering **deep discounts for teams, and early registration**. You can find full [details, discounts, and registration](#) here. [Register today!](#) I hope you'll be able to join me June 14th and 15th.

HOW TO ENERGIZE VISION, VALUES, AND PURPOSE/MISSION

Change is happening way too fast to predict and plan for an uncertain and unknown future. **Building a quickly responsive and highly adaptive team and organizational culture is more critical than ever**. The core of a built-to-change culture is **an energized vision, values, and purpose/mission** (it's the hub of our "Leadership Wheel") **brimming with life and vitality**.

Strong leaders anchor their high-performance culture with a wide variety of approaches. Here are 17 examples of what you can do to co-create your future:

- Develop **common messages that everyone on your management team uses** in their presentations and in formal discussions on where you're going, what you believe in, and why you exist.
- Develop/review your vision, values, and purpose through a **series of cascading meetings** throughout your organization.
- Get **local teams to develop their own vision, values, and purpose** linked to that of your organization.
- Have team members **constantly give each other feedback**, discuss ways we can live our values, and may inadvertently violate them.
- Use **formal (e.g. 360° feedback programs, organizational surveys) and informal feedback** processes and practices to nurture values-centered leadership up, down, and across the organization.
- **Make "values fit" a final screen in your hiring process**. Get lots of input on this from the team members the new candidate will be working with.
- Ensure **everyone who is promoted is a good role model for your vision, values, and purpose** – especially if they will be leading others. Make these linkages explicit in all communications/announcements.
- Examine the common words used to **describe customers, organizational members, and other partners (like suppliers)**. Are "headcount," "vendors," "consumers," and other such cold, impersonal, and dehumanizing phrases often used?
- **Ask customers, partners, and organizational members** what they think your organization or team cares about most.
- **What gets people fired?** What does that say about your values?
- Make sure vision, values, and purpose are **deeply embedded in and drive all your training and development**.

- Begin/end meetings with **reflections on living your vision, values, and purpose.**
- Weave **references to your vision, values, and purpose** in all presentations, discussions, feedback, coaching, recognition, etc.
- Have a contest to **develop the snappiest slogan or purpose statement.**
- **Tell stories and publicize good examples** of your vision, values, and purpose in action.
- **Look at your calendar and meeting agendas** to see if there are big gaps between you and your team's espoused values and lived values.
- Continuously work to **align the organizational/team and the personal vision, values, and purpose of everyone** in your organization.

How alive is the core of your culture? How do you know?

For Further Reading:

- [Bringing Values to Life](#)
- [Organizational Visioning Pathways and Pitfalls](#)
- [Pathways and Pitfalls to Clarifying Organizational Values.](#)

FOCUSING ON WHAT WE WANT TO CREATE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE RESOURCES

A reader responded to my December [Tips and Techniques for Reviewing, Assessing, Celebrating, and Refocusing](#) blog with this comment:



"Hi Jim,
Just like to echo your thoughts on staying focused on successes. For many it has been a tricky year in our global economy. Focused thinking has never been so important. Focus your thinking on the positives, not the negatives and hold a strong belief that 2011 will be a successful year with opportunities a'plenty."

She is right on. Our **focus and beliefs do set our behaviors** and ultimately reflect back to us that which we expected. My favorite little word trick is the phrase "opportunityisnowhere." It can be read as "opportunity is now here" or "opportunity is nowhere." The choice is ours.

For Further Reading:

- [Grappling With The Science Of Reality: Dreams, Illusions, And Perceptions](#)
- [When Choosing Our Thoughts We Choose Our Future](#)
- [Seeing the World as We Are](#)

Emotional Intelligence Resources

Another reader asked where to find sections of our site dealing with Emotional Intelligence. Here are the main ones:

- [Selection of articles](#)
- [Four short video clips](#)
- [Three archived blog posts](#)

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.

It's way too easy to slip into mindless jargon and empty clichés. Here's an extensive list of banal words and phrases to use as a checklist.

[MBA Jargon Watch](#)

<http://www.johnsmurf.com>

"MBA Jargon Watch – Tongue-in-cheek guide to business jargon, corporate buzzwords, and other affronts to the English language."

The "Five Questions to Ask Yourself" sidebar is a great checklist to assess how you're doing at leading organizational major changes.

["In With the New" – Mitchell Lee Marks – Wall Street Journal/ MIT Sloan](#)

<http://www.sloanreview.mit.edu>

"Change is often crucial. But it's never easy. Here's how to get employees to let go of the past."

Take stock of your situation, evaluate your level of happiness, examine your friendships, and take a chance and soar.

[Will 2011 Be Your Best Year Ever?](#)

<http://www.FastCompany.com>

"2010 is just about gone and now you have a chance to begin a new. For many, this past year was full of tough challenges. Here are some ways to ensure 2011 is your best year ever."

Process management is one of the most underutilized tools of the last two decades. Management teams are losing huge improvement opportunities.

[Where Have All the Process Owners Gone?](#)

<http://blogs.hbr.org>

"When organizations set about improving the way they work, the natural tendency is for them to do it within functions. They don't necessarily improve processes that cross functions – and processes must often be redesigned this way to improve the customer experience."

EXECUTIVE TEAM TRAPS: HAVE YOU FALLEN AND CAN'T GET UP?

In the last few months I've been working with three executive teams to help strengthen team effectiveness and boost their leadership of major culture change and development efforts. One team heads up a large commercial construction company in Western Canada, another is a European based international mining company, and the third are senior partners in a Toronto law firm.



This work has shown – yet again – that **executive leadership and organization effectiveness issues have a lot in common** across a diverse range of business sectors, geography, and organizational size. This work started with me doing an assessment of the executive team's effectiveness, key issues, and biggest improvement opportunities. These were one-on-one private interviews with each executive and/or confidential e-mail surveys sent back directly to me.

As I reflect on the lessons learned from this work, here are **the interconnected executive team traps** that emerge:

Collective Decision Making

Functional silos and vertical accountability often create teams that are little more than **a group of executives who meet to share information and provide individual input** to budgets and operational plans. Meetings are mostly **data dumps**, this week's **firefighting**, and **operational/technical problem solving**.

Follow Through and Follow Up

Many executive teams are fairly good at setting direction, strategies, and new goals. But **very few teams have a strong discipline and rigorous process for cascading those plans** throughout their organization **and following through** to hold themselves and the teams reporting to them accountable for implementation.

Tactical Planning versus Strategic Capacity Building

Feeling pressured to deliver monthly results, **executive teams often slip into focusing on short-term tactical issues**. This **spins the vicious cycle faster**; we don't build long-term organizational capacity and so need to personally lead or push everyone to drive for short-term results. This leaves **less time to build long term capacity so we need to fight more fires** and solve an ever growing number of operational problems which means we have no time to build capacity...

Meeting Effectiveness

An **organization's culture ripples out from the behavior of the executive team** leading it. **Meetings showcase** the levels of discipline, cohesion, values, priorities, time management, customer focus, teamwork, and employee engagement/involvement provided by the executive team. Many meeting processes, content and tone of discussions, and participant behaviors **waste time and sow the seeds of separateness and division**.

Cascading and Engaging Management Levels

Common **complaints from middle managers** are **conflicting messages** from the executive team, **micro management**, and **lack of their involvement** identifying and solving the organization's biggest barriers to higher effectiveness. Many executive teams **don't have good forums and processes** to connect with, listen to, and strategically engage the deep wisdom and experience of their middle managers.

Leadership Development/Succession Planning

Many organizations face **a growing crisis as their executives approach retirement** or experience health problems. **Failing to involve, coach, and train their middle managers and supervisors** has left the organization with little "bench strength" or management/leadership depth.

Courageous Conversations and Moose-on-the-Table

Most leaders insist - and truly believe - that their executive teams are open and everyone speaks their mind. Since he or she isn't hearing that there is a problem there's **often a false belief that there's little fear to strongly debate, push back, or raise a "sensitive problem."** But when executives are confidentially interviewed or given a safe and anonymous process to "name the moose" (or elephant/gorilla in the room) **a very different picture usually emerges**.

How's your team doing? Which traps have you slipped into? Are they symptoms or root causes? How do you **know**?

EXECUTIVE TEAM TRAPS: TIPS, TECHNIQUES, AND RESOURCES TO PICK YOURSELF UP

Has your executive or management team fallen into a few of the traps identified in my last blog post? If so, you're in good company. **Those common team traps are highly interconnected.** Getting out of them takes a fair bit of work and approaches unique to each team.



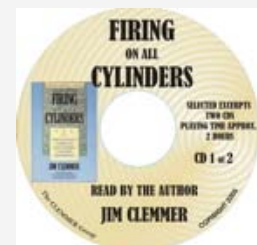
Following is a menu of resources and approaches that have helped other teams. **Click through for more information on the issues your executive or management teams are wrestling with:**

- [Goals and Priorities](#) – a selection of blogs dealing with slowing down to speed up, reducing priority overload, stop doing lists, cascading goals, controlling your own time, and related topics.
- [Team Building](#) – short articles on dealing with loose-on-the-table, culture change starts with the management team, team spirit built from the top, pathways and pitfalls to leading teams, and others.
- [An Issue of *The Leader Letter* focused on meetings](#) – includes 12 ground rules to keep meetings and conference calls on topic and productive, nine steps to make all your meetings more effective, and deciding how to decide: three levels of effective team decision making.
- [Meetings Showcase Organizational Culture](#) – charts showing the linkages between meeting behaviors and organizational culture.
- [Thoughts that Make You Go Hmm... on Meeting Effectiveness](#)
- [Team Building](#) – blog posts on healthy debates, team effectiveness, and management team development.
- [Moose Hunting](#) – a blog linking to our Moose Tracks quiz, research on the lack of openness in many organizations, the story behind my story of this metaphor and book, and moose stories, examples, and discussions.
- [Lasting Culture Change Means Going Beyond Passionate Lip Service to Involved Leadership](#) – a blog post featuring our "Commitment Continuum" for executive and management teams with links (just below the graphic) to bolt-on versus built-in culture change, why most change programs fail, walking the talk, and other resources.
- [Stop Wasting Valuable Time](#) – I've purchased reprint rights to this *Harvard Business Review* article for some executive teams prior to their offsite retreat. Click on the link to read an executive summary with the key suggestions outlined.

What traps does your executive or management team tend to fall in? What helps get them back on the road to higher team performance and organizational leadership? Send me a [one-mail at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).

TEAM LEADERSHIP – COMPLIMENTARY PODCAST

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. These are now freely available in a monthly podcast series. Access the installments [here](#) as they are posted. Add this page as an RSS feed or add the URL to



iTunes and have new segments download automatically as they are posted.

This month's podcast focuses on Coaching Skills. 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 JANUARY 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 a round 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 on 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 IP. 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 January:

"The search for an ideal or perfect structure is about as futile as trying to find the ideal canned improvement process to drop on the organization (or ourselves). It depends on the organization's context and focus (vision, values, and purpose), goals and priorities, skill and experience levels, culture, teams' effectiveness and so on. Each is unique to any organization."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "High Performance Organization Structures and Characteristics"
[Read the full article now!](#)

"A vital – and painful – lesson I learned was that I would always get more no responses than yes responses. To increase my yes responses, I had to increase my no's. Of course, averages never play out in smooth and even increments. Some days I could get 15 or 20 no's in a row before hitting a yes. The difficult discipline to develop was not quitting at the end of the 14th no. Some of my toughest sales involved convincing myself to get excited about a long string of cold no's because it meant I was getting closer to a clump of warm yes responses."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Innovation and the Law of Averages"
[Read the full article now!](#)

"We know that the turtle only makes progress by sticking his head out. Yet we sit and dream about what we're going to do someday. If we don't take steady steps toward our dreams, the walls around our complacency zone get ever higher and thicker."
- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Signs of Stagnation"
[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 a line -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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