



Issue 142 - January 2015

The Leader Letter



A University of Scranton study on New Year's resolutions reports that 2/3 of Americans make one. 47% of these are "self-improvement or education related." The study found that only 8% are successful in achieving their resolution!

Many New Year's resolutions are aimed at correcting our deficiencies or shortcomings. So is it any wonder that 92% fail? We're highly unlikely to stick with a personal development plan focused on something we're not good at and don't enjoy doing.

For over a decade Zenger Folkman has been breaking new ground in leadership development built with strengths-based 360 assessments and development approaches. Many of our Clients have run 360 follow up assessments on leaders who built personal development plans around their initial feedback. Those reassessments show that the people around that leader -- direct reports, manager, peers, and others -- rate improvement in the leader's effectiveness 2 to 3 times higher when the leader is building his or her strengths versus fixing a weakness.

ZF surveyed participants to drill deeper into why there's such a dramatic improvement in using a strengths-based approach. This chart contrasts participant responses to four key questions between those leaders who worked to build strengths and leaders who clung to traditional weakness fixing approaches:

The Powerful Impact of Building Strengths

Executives respond to these statements:

	Build Strength	Fix Weakness
I have created an excellent development plan that will guide my efforts to improve.	63%	13%
As a result of my use of the 360 feedback process, report, and tools, I feel that I have improved my overall leadership effectiveness.	72%	38%
I feel that I have moved forward on improving specific issues on my development plan.	68%	43%
I have taken the time and made a real effort to work on my development plan.	60%	38%

Building on the leadership strengths others see in us rather than fixing weaknesses is clearly much more sustainable - and a lot more fun!

May this new issue of the New Year bring you some fun and help you focus on developing the personal, team, and organizational strengths that will sustain your development resolutions in 2015.

Profit is a Means Not an End



One of my favorite Holiday traditions is watching numerous movie versions of Charles Dickens' powerful classic, *A Christmas Carol*. The story centers on Ebenezer Scrooge a selfish, cold-hearted miser who cares only about maximizing his profits.

Donald Duck's uncle, Scrooge McDuck is a cartoon character named after Ebenezer Scrooge. In those cartoons he's the world's richest person. He's often shown sitting on or swimming in huge piles of gold coins and bills.

One of the great paradoxes of our time is we're living in the most prosperous period in history. Yet rates of depression and suicide are soaring to unprecedented and alarming levels. Positive psychology research shows that pursuing "the good life" and its materialism -- along with the mounds of debt it often brings -- is a root cause of the problem. That same research shows those who are most fulfilled and flourishing often transcend materialism toward a deeper sense of purpose and connectedness.

While many young people are getting on the hedonistic treadmill as they rack up debt and build stress, a growing number of their business graduate peers are looking to join or build businesses that provide a greater good to society and deeper meaning than just financial returns for themselves. A recent *Globe & Mail* article entitled "For Today's Business Students, Profit is a Means Not an End," reports that "tension between profit and social impact has led business schools to create new offerings to help purpose-driven entrepreneurs develop sustainable businesses ... education ought to help entrepreneurs figure out how to generate profit while tackling a social problem." Some business students are now taking corporate social responsibility pledges as part of their graduation ceremony.

The insightful book, *Good Company: Business Success in the Worthiness Era*, reports on global studies showing a major shift in consumer expectations toward the social responsibility of companies they do business with. The authors run an investment fund based on their research. They report "When we compared pairs of Fortune 100 companies within the same industry, we found that those with higher scores on the Good Company Index outperformed their peers in the stock market over periods of one, three, and five years."

Few of us are motivated to swim in cash like Scrooge McDuck or are energized by maximizing shareholder returns and generating big profits. Yet a business that doesn't generate profit won't be around long to do much good. The most fulfilled people and sustainable businesses today manage to do both.

Further Reading:

- **"Leadership on Purpose"**
- **"Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on *Good Company*"**
- **"Doing Good is Good for Business and How We Do Anything Means Everything"**
- **"The Purpose-Profit Paradox"**

Surprising Research Results Show We Should Lead Like Scrooge

After Ebenezer Scrooge has his life-changing Christmas Eve experience, he enthusiastically sets out on a new pathway to personal growth on Christmas Day. When he gets back to work what would you suggest he do to increase Bob Cratchit's workplace engagement? In his entertaining and insightful *Forbes* column, "**Lead Like Scrooge: The Surprising Research Results**", Joe Folkman asks:



- Should he continue to be more considerate (we assume that he has moved from poor performance to average) while now working hard on being less driven and demanding?

or

- Should he continue at a high level of drive for results and work even harder at being even more considerate (to move from average to the top quartile)?

Most people pick option #1. But Zenger Folkman's research shows that will barely change Bob's engagement level. "Nice" leaders who create warm and fuzzy workplaces and feel-good teams that don't deliver results create mediocre engagement levels.

We all want to feel a sense of accomplishment. We love to win. Leaders with high standards who stretch us to higher achievement engage and bring out extra effort -- often getting more from us or our team than we thought was possible.

Of course, how a leader drives for higher results is critical. If his or her approach is cold, heartless, and dehumanizing -- like the pre-enlightened Scrooge -- engagement levels will be low. Zenger Folkman's database with assessments of over 45,000 leaders shows that when a leader is **strong (rated in the 75th percentile) at both Drives for Results and Build Relationships** over 70% of the time he or she is among the top 10% of leaders. This is a very powerful combination.

Read Joe's column, "**Lead Like Scrooge: The Surprising Research Results**", for a deeper look at the 83 Scrooges ZF discovered lurking in their database. You might want to drive for results like Scrooge and build relationships like Santa!

Give the Gift of Recognition and Celebration

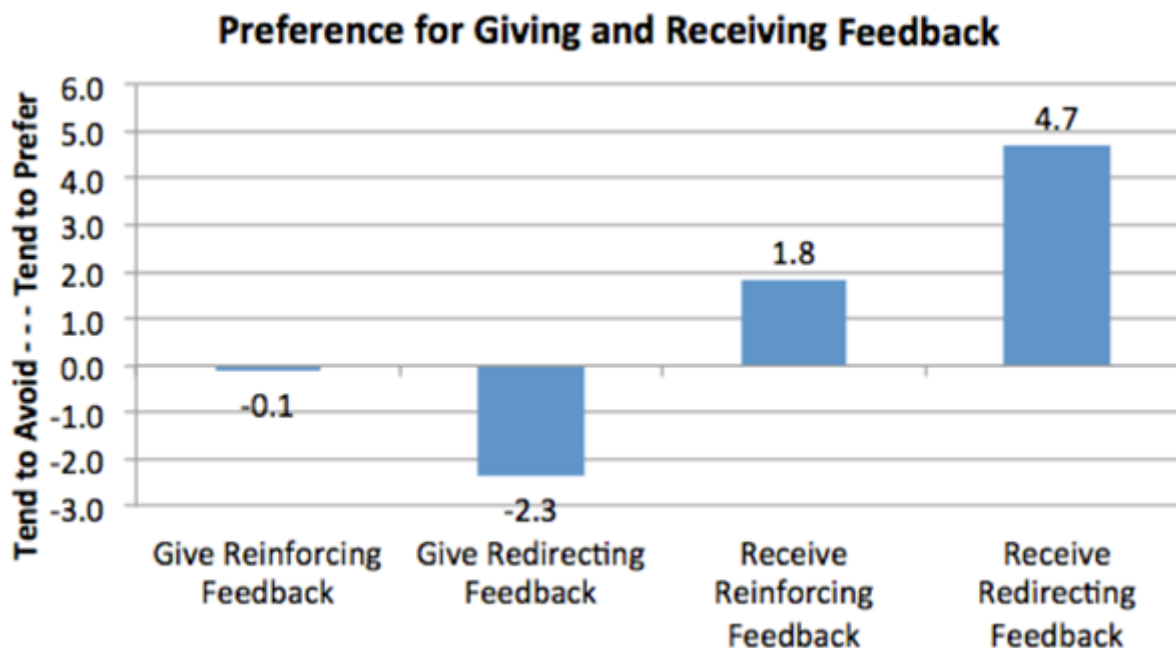


American president, Thomas Jefferson, once said "the glow of one warm thought is worth more to me than money." Reinforcing feedback produces a powerful afterglow that raises **the positivity ratio, energizes and inspires**, and provides **the pause that refreshes**.

This is the perfect time of year for you and your team to reflect back looking for strengths to reinforce and accomplishments to celebrate. This can be an important part of **anchoring your culture in strengths**.

Recognition and celebration are among the most inexpensive, easy to use motivational techniques available to leaders. Yet the degree to which this energizing and engagement tool is underused by leaders is bewildering. In developing

our new workshop, Elevating Feedback (also part of *The Extraordinary Coach* system), Zenger Folkman's research uncovered these results:



The very sad left side of this picture explains why the positivity ratio in many teams and organizations is way below "the ideal praise to criticism ratio" of 5.6 to one. It might also explain why leaders are so reluctant to give redirecting feedback. It's hard to make withdrawals from a negative "relationship bank account."

University of Michigan Business School's study of team performance correlated to the frequency of praise and criticism found "The best-performing teams used about six times as many positive comments for every negative one. It found that the worst performing teams, on average, used three negative comments for every positive one."

Since leaders in ZF's study are very keen to receive redirecting feedback they clearly need to be directed to give more reinforcing feedback! What's your feedback ratio? Are you creating a warm afterglow or a frosty trail of negativity?

Video Clip: Working ON the Team versus IN the Team



We're working with the leadership team of a multi-billion dollar project that's critical to the future of the company. Through a series of offsite retreats with dozens of the top managers and key professionals, we've developed strong alignment on core Strategic Imperatives for the next year. We're now forming SI Teams and solid implementation plans to move each Strategic Imperative forward.

There's one major obstacle on the horizon: the senior leadership is frantically caught up in daily urgencies that are distorting its priorities. The team is feeling intense pressure to address every crisis, micromanage a long list of problems, and

do way too much. They're like a tin can surrounded by dozens of powerful magnets. They're spinning faster and faster as competing magnets pull them in all directions.

What's needed is a periodic stepping back to look at whether it's the magnets or the team that's controlling their time and priorities. Click on "**Working ON the Team versus Working IN the Team**" for a less than two minute video clip where I outline this way too common problem and a few simple approaches to address it.

As our organizations spin faster and faster many leadership teams allow their priorities to be badly distorted. Things that matter most -- team dynamics, touchy moose-on-the-table issues, key priorities -- are often crowded out by things that matter least -- crisis du jour or technical problems better solved by those closest to the action -- and the team spins round and round.

Further Reading and Resources:

- "**A Fourteen-Point Team Check Up**"
- "**Leveraging Strengths and Building Team Spirit**"
- "**Culture Change Starts with the Management Team**"
- "**Team Building Lessons from the Wisdom of the Hive**"
- "**Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on...Team Building**"
- "**Nine Reasons Many Groups Aren't Teams**"
- **Building Team Spirit** – for a broad selection of articles and blog posts
- "**Use This 10 Point Checklist for a Leadership Check Up**"

Middle Managers Are the Most Disengaged



Employee engagement is a critical issue for many organizations. And for good reason. Highly engaged employees are more productive, less likely to leave, have lower absenteeism, create happier customers, contribute to safer workplaces, increase revenues, and decrease costs.

A new research study from Zenger Folkman shows that many organizations are overlooking their most disengaged people: middle managers. And the ripple effect of disengaged managers is very destructive down through the organization. Zenger Folkman reviewed data from 320,000 employees across a broad number of

organizations.

ZF then identified the bottom 5% who were the least engaged and committed. These 15,729 of the most unhappy people turned out to be mostly managers "stuck in the middle of everything" with 5 – 10 years of tenure who had been given good (not terrible or great) performance ratings.

In ascending order of importance here are the main causes of middle managers dissatisfaction:

9. Their distinctiveness is not valued or appreciated.
8. They see the organization as inefficient and ineffective.
7. They're overworked.
6. They don't believe that if they raise an issue it will be addressed.
5. They don't feel valued or appreciated.
4. They feel they are treated unfairly compared with others.
3. Their work lacks meaning and purpose.
2. They see no career or promotion opportunities.
1. Poor leadership.

Poor leadership emerged as the number one cause of middle management unhappiness and disengagement. What often compounds this problem is the leaders of these managers don't realize the profoundly negative impact and ripple effect of their leadership. These leaders need a healthy dose of feedback through a strengths-based 360 assessment that includes engagement ratings from their direct reports.

You can read more about this study in Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman's *Harvard Business Review* blog "**Why Middle Managers are So Unhappy**". You can also read more about **Feedback Power and Problems** and **360 Assessments**.

Too often engagement is what the top orders the middle to do for the bottom. Senior leaders need to strengthen their own leadership to better engage managers who will then create positive engagement ripples to everyone else.

Season's Readings and Holiday Viewing



During Christmas week I published this one blog post (rather than my usual two blogs per week) as I enjoyed holiday relaxation with family and friends. Hopefully, I've packed this blog post with enough resources to last the week!

Articles – Top 5:

- "**Bad Boss: Learn How to Manage Your Manager**"
- "**Management vs. Leadership**"
- "**Communication Strategies, Systems, and Skills**"
- "**Customer Satisfaction is a Reflection of Employee Satisfaction**"
- "**Manage Things, Lead People**"

Videos – Top 5:

1. **Managing Things and Leading People**
2. **Leadership Training and Change Management**
3. **Foundation of all Leadership is Self-Leadership**
4. **Towering Strengths Overshadow Weaknesses**
5. **The Difference Between Training, Mentoring, and Coaching**

Blogs – Top 5:

- "**Six Core Values of Organization Development**"
- "**Tips and Techniques for Inspiring Through Verbal Communications**"
- "**The 85/15 Rule: Get at the Root Causes of Poor Customer Service**"
- "**Exceptional Leaders Aren't Well-Rounded**"
- "**An Hilarious Illustration of How Perceptions of Fairness and Equality Are Relative**"

Whitepapers – Top 5:

1. **"Developing Strengths or Weaknesses"**
2. **"Leadership Competency Models"**
3. **"11 Components of a Best in Class 360 Assessment"**
4. **"Making Performance Appraisals an Inspiring Event"**
5. *The Inspiring Leader*

Case Studies – Top 4:

1. **Multinational Mobile Telecommunications Company**
2. **Learning to Provide Feedback a Big Win for U.S. Grocery Chain**
3. **Symantec Leaders Show Extraordinary Results**
4. **Top U.S. Ivy League School**

Webinars on Demand – Top 5:

1. **Strengths-Based Leadership Development Webcast - Jim Clemmer, Jack Zenger, Joe Folkman**
2. **Breaking Through the Bull Full Webcast**
3. **Facing a Talent Gap?**
4. **Leadership and Culture Development for Higher Health and Safety**
5. **Leading a Peak Performance Culture**

Just one form for all of our resources! We've implemented a site-wide registration this past year, which means you can register once (free, of course), and have full access to all of the resources on the site now, as well as any of the new resources we are constantly adding. You can **register here**.

Our Picks Jest for the Fun of it



To help you ring in 2015 with some fun and frivolity we asked our team to offer their favorite bits of "brain candy" and funny bone ticklers! Below are links to some amusing, clever or inspiring videos, podcasts, and website favorites from all of us to you:

Video clips:

1. Even monkeys know what's fair: **Two monkeys paid unequally**
2. Smart idea to stop jaywalking: **Dancing Traffic Light**
3. Perspective is everything: **Lost Generation**
4. Amazing, terrifying, -- and not always safe – feats: **People are Awesome 2014**
5. Using fun to change habits: **Piano stairs**
6. A Husband's Trip to the **Doghouse**
7. May the Force (of strengths!) be with You: **Best of Star Wars Music Christmas Lights Show 2014**

Webisodes:

- Jerry Seinfeld, cool cars and guests: **Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee**

Podcasts:

- **Vinyl Café Stories**
- **The Debaters**
- **Scientific American 60-second Science**

Just fun: **Holiday Eating Tips**

Visions of Earth - **Beauty, Majesty, Wonder**

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.

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



Personal interviews combined with 360-degree feedback uncovered 10 distinctive behaviors of leaders who scored at or above the 99th percentile on innovation.

"10 Traits of Innovative Leaders"

-- Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman

<https://hbr.org>

"Many organizations would like their leaders to create more innovative teams. But how exactly should they do this? We began by collaborating with a respected organization in the telecommunications industry whose leaders scored well above average...."

This study powerfully illustrates the direct impact a leader has on engagement levels of direct reports.

"The 9 Top Causes For Uncommitted Employees (And How To Turn Them Around)"

-- Joe Folkman

www.forbes.com

"Our research clearly shows that the stereotypical profile for a disengaged employee is very different than the reality. The disengaged are more often employees with education, experience, and even good performance ratings."

A strong approach to ensuring that we're pushed along by our good -- and not our bad --habits.

"The Smart Way to Stick to Habits"

-- Leo Babauta

www.dailygood.org

"If you set up this smart system, and do one habit at a time, really putting your focus and energy into this habit change, you'll be much more likely to stick to it."

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 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!



Jim Clemmer
President

Phone: (519) 748-5968 Fax: (519) 748-2171

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@clemmergroup.com

www.clemmergroup.com

©2015 Jim Clemmer and The CLEMMER Group