



Practical Leadership:

Inspiring *Action*, Achieving Results

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

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Continuing to Shift Directions with *The Leader Letter*

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."

- Winston Churchill

It's our third month in the new format and I'm happy to say that it's a great success!

You can find out more about the changes on the "[new](#)" [Leader Letter](#) post on my [Practical Leadership Blog](#). And don't be shy about using the comments section to let me know what you think.

Growing the Distance Survey Results

As most of you know by now, I'm currently working toward the Fall release of my latest book, *Moose-on-the-Table: Courageous Conversations in the Workplace*. Last month I surveyed readers of [Growing the Distance](#) to get some feedback, and also see what new products and services would be of interest in the future.

One of the core principles I talk about at workshops and seminars is the importance of sharing results with those who take the time to participate in surveys.

So I'm happy to share the results and let you know exactly how I'm going to action them today, tomorrow and in the coming months.

The results are posted online here.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=tNW4UKfqOclEAsHFaFX2ldS5NMohVvkWxtUROGZyG8E_3d

If you haven't filled out the survey, I'm leaving the link active, so there's still time.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=DIerLZqyLHyvLOoJH7m5qA_3d_3d

I have to confess, I was surprised at how much interest there was in audio books and other downloadable media. As a direct result I'm going to create more downloadable content.

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To start we recently launched:

- A completely downloadable version of my *Growing The Distance: Self Study System*, that includes e-book versions of [*Growing the Distance*](#) and the [*Personal Implementation Guide*](#) along with the multimedia guide.
- e-book versions of [*Growing the Distance*](#) and [*The Leader's Digest*](#).
- Furthermore, to reflect the reduced costs of not producing hard copies (and helping to save a few trees in the process), I'm offering all downloadable content at a 25% discount from the regular online pricing.

And this is just the beginning. In the coming weeks and months I plan to release additional e-books and develop more audio and video content. So stay tuned as I make it easier for you to get materials that inspire leadership in your team and throughout your organization!

Thanks again for your participation,

Jim

The Courage to Have Your Performance Appraised by Those You Lead

Kathryn took that survey and I'd like to share her feedback with everyone.

Hello Jim,

Thank you for the invitation to be involved in your survey, and please note that I have already done the survey. It was my pleasure!

You are so very correct! It does take courage to ask for feedback.

*Because I read your book - [*Firing On All Cylinders*](#) in the early 1990s and I was present at your Calgary workshop in 2004 and learned so much as a new manager, I have been doing 360 feedbacks at St. Mary's Health Care Centre since I was honoured to become their CEO (started working there in November 2003). I do performance appraisals with my staff...so I thought it only fair that they had the opportunity to do my PA.*

I use their feedback to improve my performance and to serve them better, so that they in turn will serve our residents, families, their colleagues and the general public better. It seems to be working...we have decreased our deficit from \$250,000.00 in 2003/04 to just over \$100,000.00 this past year. We have filled all of our empty PFT and PPT lines - in 2004/05 there was 4 empty lines in nursing - 3 NAs lines and 1 RN line. All of our Nursing Attendants (NAs) - except for 3 - have acquired the Health Care Aide certificate.



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Two of my managers, who have been employees of St. Mary's for over 15 years, are for the first time attending workshops on Leadership. My Board of Governance has an orientation process now that they did not have previously, and the really great thing is that they helped design it by telling me what they would have found useful to know when they were new to the Board.

Thank you, Jim, for all you do!

Measuring My Growth

The title of my fourth book, *Growing the Distance* (now available on our web site as an e-book download), reflects its focus on personal growth for personal, career, and family success. Following is an exercise taken from it's *Personal Implementation Guide*. Both *Growing the Distance* and the *Personal Implementation Guide* are now part of an extensive *Self-Study System* with a CD I put together walking an individual learner through each of the dozens of exercises and "Practical Application Ideas" section for every one of the seven *Timeless Leadership Principles*.

For subscribers who have read *Growing the Distance*, this personal growth measurement survey is built around pages 13-15, 123-125, 129-134, and 141-143 of *Growing the Distance*.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. I look for the growth opportunities in all changes. | |
| 2. Continuous personal learning and development is how I deal with change. | |
| 3. I recognize and work to overcome my own signs of resistance to change. | |
| 4. My rate of internal or personal change exceeds the rate of external change. | |
| 5. I invest at least 10% of my time in personal growth and development. | |
| 6. People who know me well would attest that learning is a way of life for me. | |
| 7. I am a role model for continuous personal growth to the people I lead. | |



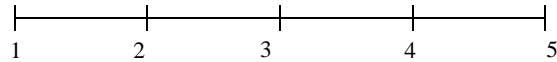
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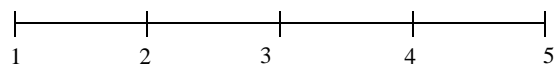
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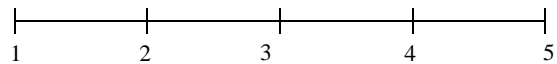
8. I am constantly experimenting, piloting, and trying new approaches, skills, and methods.



9. I am a strong coach and developer of people on my team.



10. I regularly take time for personal reflection and renewal.



Scoring:

- 40 - 50 points – You're clearly a leader on the grow.
- 26 - 39 points – Watch for signs of stagnation.
- 10 - 25 points – You're stagnating and in great danger of becoming a victim of change.

Introducing e-books

During a recent survey, we polled visitors about new products they'd like to see in our store. In the results we noticed a significant interest in e-books.

Obviously the advantages to e-books are numerous. You can store and view them on your computer or PDA for easy reference, or print out specific pages to share with your team. Best of all they travel great because they never wear out!

Today we're launching e-book versions of *The Leader's Digest* and *Growing the Distance*.

And because they're digital downloads, shipping and handling costs are eliminated.

We're also offering our e-books at a 25% discount from the regular online ordering price.

So order today and download [*The Leader's Digest*](#) and [*Growing the Distance*](#) for only \$10.45 each.

On the Grow: Practical Application Ideas

Just telling people they need to grow is one thing. Actually offering practical ideas is what really helps leaders to reach their full potential. I've posted some advice from the *Growing the Distance: Personal Implementation Guide* on the blog to get you started.



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Here are a few ideas from dozens listed in the Growing and Developing section of the [*Growing the Distance: Personal Implementation Guide*](#).

- Get a personal coach or counselor to guide your personal development. He or she can be a sounding board, gather feedback from those you work with, prod you to reach your goals, provide advice, or encourage you.
- If lack of time is your reason for not investing more in your personal growth and development, figure out what's chewing up all your time. For a few weeks (ideally a month), keep a log of how you spend each fifteen-minute block of your day from the time you get up until the time you go to bed. Before you start, develop categories such as reading, learning, meetings, family time, relaxation, travel, telephone calls, visiting, preparing, planning, etc. Estimate how much time you spend in each activity before you start your log. Once your log is complete, compare your estimates to the way you actually use your time. Then compare that to your vision, values, purpose, and strengths. Identify the key areas for change.
- Setting personal breakthrough goals that are well beyond your current character, ability, or habits is to set yourself up for failure. That's why crash diets and so many New Year's resolutions fail. Build a series of small wins and new habits that gather momentum and confidence to keep you moving forward.
- Join the "Daily Reflect and Plan Club." You need at least fifteen minutes but ideally thirty to forty-five minutes each workday. Use this time to read or listen to spiritual, inspiring, or educational material, write in your journal, daydream, review the previous day, set your priorities for the next day to sort out the urgent from the truly important, pray/meditate, continue developing your vision, values, and purpose, etc. Experiment with many of these activities until you find the ones that are most meaningful for you. You may need to juggle the time you do this to suit what's available, but try to do it during your peak performance hours.
- Develop or join a network of colleagues who are as interested in personal growth and development as you are. This can be a powerful source of learning from other people's experiences. It's also a great place for you to reflect on your own experiences and articulate your improvement plans.
- Use Benjamin Franklin's "method for progressing." He identified thirteen virtues he wanted to develop. Each week he worked on one of the virtues for a total of "four courses (cycles) in a year." Each night before retiring Franklin reflected on and recorded his progress on that week's virtue.

Site Seeing: Recent Changes to Clemmer.net

Over the last five months, we've made some changes to the site. Some are big, and some not so big. We've made these changes in order to make all the information you need available quickly and easily.



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Some of the new features include:

- "News & Events" column on the home page
- Top Ten Articles list
- Embedded videos
- Improved navigation

Now it's your turn to let us know how we're doing (and maybe suggest some ways we could do things better).

Please take a few minutes to give us your feedback. We plan to keep the survey open until the end of June, and post the results online and in a future issue of *The Leader Letter*.

[Click here to take survey.](#)

Continually Grow and Change or Be Changed

Two and a half years after I began writing (and more than four years after I conceived the book idea), I have finally finished the first draft of my Moose-on-the-Table book! Squeezing this writing between a major web site redesign, an increasingly busy Client work schedule, and all the other writing I do for our newsletter and various publications was a huge challenge. Most times writing this book was like a passionate hobby and I had lots of fun doing it.

This is my first work of fiction using a business fable to illustrate the book's leadership lessons (see "[I'm just making this up](#)" blog post for some background). The book's main character is Pete Leonard a struggling middle manager in a struggling company. In the following excerpt Pete's mentor, Alfred, is using a story to illustrate how unaddressed organizational problems often creep up on us when we're successful and growing very sure of ourselves. By discouraging open dialogue we delude ourselves into thinking we're doing fine. So if we fail to grow and continually change, we get changed.

"Years ago there was a mighty hunter named Maynard. His name meant 'brave strength' from the Germanic elements *magin* 'strength' and *hard* 'brave, hardy.' Maynard's elk instincts, hunting skills, and marksmanship with a longbow were legendary. He could pretty much find and kill elk at will. His hunting success was many times that of any other hunter. So his party of followers increased and he became the head of a large and very well fed band of hunters that roamed through Old England's great forests, meadows, and glens.

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As years passed, Mighty Maynard spent more and more time lounging in the sun and basking in his own glory. He loved nothing more than the praise of others for his unmatched prowess and legendary feats. He began wearing a set of elaborately decorated horns and spent evenings sitting at the fire on a very large and intricately carved oak chair as elk roasted for the evening feast. As time passed, his temper became more volatile. He carried a large and gnarly walking stick to club hunters who dared make a mistake during a hunt or were just unlucky enough to be in the way when Mighty Maynard was in a foul mood. Everyone knew of Mighty Maynard's temper. They were also well aware that he'd killed a few hunters and broken bones in many others. No one talked about that.

Maynard's second in command was Alvin which means 'elf friend' from the Old English name *Ælfwine*, which was formed of the elements *ælf* 'elf' and *wine* 'friend' and..."

"Your obsession with the meaning of names is getting really irritating," Peter interjected.

"Words create our world, my friend. There's a deeper meaning to words and the world around you that you're choosing to ignore. That's a big reason you've got so many elk, or I should say moose, in your life."

Pete rested his head on his right hand and stared at the floor. "Meanwhile, back to our story...Unlike you, Alvin was a master storyteller. He earned his powerful position because of his ability to dramatize Mighty Maynard's greatest hunting feats. Maynard never tired of Alvin's evening entertainment. The rest of the hunters learned to look enthusiastic and cheer in all the right places during Alvin's repeated re-enactments. The Mighty Maynard had encouraged this participation after he walked over and whacked a few bored looking hunters with his big stick when Alvin first started telling his tales.

Eventually Mighty Maynard's elk horns, huge wooden chair, and Alvin's growing number of props meant that moving around to track the elk became increasingly difficult. So when the hunting party found a spot on the edge of a forest with both a river and a large cave in the nearby hills, Mighty Maynard set up a permanent camp. He and his hunters roamed further and further to find elk to feed their growing settlement. Maynard stayed behind more often. He was growing larger and was finding the long hunts tiring. Alvin assured him that participating was beneath a Mighty Hunter of his standing anyway.

One evening before the dismal rations, three of the best hunters came to Alvin just out of earshot of Mighty Maynard. The elk feasts of old had been reduced to rations of a few occasional bits of meat mixed with roots, berries, and whatever else the hunters could find on their long walks home. They often shot only one or no elk at all.

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'We are barely finding elk any more,' one of them whispered.

'We need to pack up camp and move further inland to find a herd,' another hunter added.

'There's growing talk among the hunters about forming their own band or joining another one,' said the third hunter.

'What are you whispering about over there?' bellowed Mighty Maynard pointing his stick at Alvin. The other hunters trembled and slunk back toward a few trees behind them.

'Ah, well, sir... we were, we were, ah, just comparing notes on a big herd that seems to be in the area. Tomorrow's hunt promises to be bountiful.'

'That's good. Glad to hear it. I would hate to have to move camp from this very comfortable spot.' Mighty Maynard settled back in his chair, took another deep drink of his tankard of mead and sleepily closed his eyes. 'Tell us the story of the day I brought down this big buck,' he said pointing to the enormous set of antlers he was wearing.

Alvin went to get his props.

The next day the hunters returned home with no elk. But they did see signs that another hunting party had shot and butchered two large ones. So they only brought back roots and berries for a meager evening meal. When Maynard asked Alvin about this, Alvin told him that many in their band heard a vegetarian diet was healthier than all that high cholesterol red meat anyway."

Alfred snickered and waited for Pete to respond. With his head still resting on his right hand, Pete moved only his eyes toward Alfred and groaned.

"Just wanting to see if you're still with me, big guy," Alfred knocked Pete's arm out from propping up his head. Pete's body slumped sharply to the right. He didn't say a word as he gave Alfred a stony stare and settled himself into the back of his chair.

"Alvin tried his best to sound casual in telling Mighty Maynard that another band of hunters was in the area. Maynard's eyes opened wide as he grasped for his big stick. 'But not to worry, sir. They are probably rabbit or deer eaters.'

'Alright then. No point in us getting excited about that then is there,' Maynard replied as he closed his eyes and his stick fell to the side. Alvin needed to tell Maynard that a group of their best hunters and families had left the band. But that wasn't the right time.

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Over the following weeks a depressing pattern began to emerge as more hunters left and those remaining returned with nothing to share. As he drank more mead to kill the hunger pains and keep his spirits up, Mighty Maynard asked Alvin where his best hunters and their families had gone.

'Oh, that. It's nothing, sir. Their skills were really slipping and they've lost their hunting instincts. I encouraged them to join bands that eat easier game.'

'Good thinking,' Mighty Maynard replied, 'we're big game hunters and we don't want our standards to slip because a few people can't cut it anymore.'

'My thoughts exactly, sir!'

It wasn't too long before there was no elk because all the hunters had left. 'What's going on, Alvin?' asked Mighty Maynard. 'Where is everyone?'

'They've all left us, sir,' Alvin made sure he was well outside the range of the big stick.

'Left us?' Mighty Maynard started to bellow and rose from his great carved chair. 'How could that happen after all that I did for them?' He sunk back into his throne.

Alvin shrugged his shoulders.

'I can't understand it,' Mighty Maynard said. 'Everything was going so well.'"

Many Roads Lead to Improvement

Jim,

Today's Improvement Point (see below) about there being many ways to change and improve is a very important one. There are many, many people who concentrate on selling others 'the best way'. I have found that commitment to improvement is far more important than anything else.

*Larry Beckon
Michigan Department of Transportation*



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"There are as many ways to change and improve as there are people and organizations trying to do so. There is no one right path or approach to higher performance. The most important thing is that you have an improvement plan or process."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Keys to Personal, Team, and Organization Transformation"

[Read the full article now!](#)

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_243.aspx

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmm...on Continuous Personal Development

"The most fatal illusion is the settled point of view. Since life is growth and motion, a fixed point of view kills anybody who has one."

-Brooks Atkinson, drama critic

"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, American writer/philosopher

"If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't actually living."

-Gail Sheehy, American writer on life's stages or "passages"

"I have this theory that I call 'returning to zero.' You return to zero when you think you've achieved something, when you've reached a plateau. When that happens, you have to go all the way back to square one and treat the experience of success as if it never happened. You start over from a new angle. You commit yourself to some new sacrifice and some new risk."

-Robert Redford, Academy Award winning movie actor, writer, and director

"I do not believe today everything I believed yesterday; I wonder will I believe tomorrow everything I believe today."

-Matthew Arnold (1822-88), British poet, critic

"Excellence means when a man or woman asks of himself more than others do."

-Jose Ortega y Gasset, Spanish philosopher writer/philosopher



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Favorite June Improvement Points

Improvement Points is a free service providing a key thought or quotation from one of my articles, provided three times per week, directly to your e-mail inbox. Each complimentary Improvement Point links directly into the full article on our web site that spawned it. If you'd like to read more about that day's Improvement Point, you can choose to click through to the brief article for a quick five-minute read. This is your opportunity for a short pause that refreshes, is an inspirational vitamin, or a quick performance boost. You can circulate especially relevant or timely articles or Improvement Points to your team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action.

Here are my personal three choices of the *Improvement Points* we sent out in June:

Poorly designed organizations, ineffective processes, bureaucratic systems, unaligned rewards, unclear customer/partner focus, fuzzy visions, values, and purpose, unskilled team leaders and members, cluttered goals and priorities, low trust levels, and weak measurements and feedback loops all cause communication problems. Whenever a manager contacts us to solve a "communication problem," we always know we have some digging to do.

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Communication Strategies, Systems, and Skills"

[Read the full article now!](#)

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_185.aspx

"Discipline is the difference between the dreamer and the doer. Many people can vision and talk a good story about what they are going to do. Some even set out to put their good intentions into practice. But few people are able to stick to their plans. Without the discipline to follow through, there can be no improvement. The depth of our discipline will determine the accumulation and longevity of our improvement."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Personal Improvement Planning and Discipline"

[Read the full article now!](#)

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_69.aspx

"Growth or rot are the direct results, respectively, of the learning habits or the stagnation that flow from our choices."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Always on the Grow"

[Read the full article now!](#)

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_2.aspx



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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@Clemmer.net.

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

Jim

Please post or forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested.

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www.clemmer.net/subscribe.shtml

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