

THE LEADER LETTER

Leading with *STRENGTH*

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JULY 2013, ISSUE 124

I am really looking forward to attending Zenger Folkman's Leadership Summit at the end of this month in Park City, Utah. The lead item in this issue outlines just what a unique and extraordinary opportunity this is. There's still room for you to join us.

Just after publishing my blog post on "3 Keys to Developing Extraordinary Leadership (second item in this issue)," Bob Boulton, Leadership Coach -- the Human Side of Leadership, cornerlight.net, sent me this e-mail:

"Jim, I have followed your work and have always been impressed by the rare combination you display of refreshing yet solid thinking and practical implementable (if that is a word) suggestions.

The focus on developing leadership strengths rather than focusing on weaknesses is something I have advocated for many years. Sometimes, we need to help people raise their so-called 'areas for development' from 'poor' to 'satisfactory'; but it is the development of individual strengths where people can really shine; make their best contribution to their organization; and live the most fulfilling and successful career. My own Leadership Coaching practice will continue to acc-cen-tuate the positive."



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Many of the items in this month's issue focus on developing leadership strengths. The Likability research provides a contemporary answer to the ancient question of whether it's better to be loved or feared. Succession planning and building an organization's bench strength with an effective leadership pipeline is fast becoming one of our most critical issues. We'll see how global security leader, Symantec, is building bench strength by developing Top Talent.

Accepting and leveraging feedback is at the heart of strengths-based leadership development. We will look at 5 keys to doing that. Inspirational leadership is often confused with charisma. We'll look at 6 different pathways to inspiring and motivating others. Charisma is only one -- and one of the least used -- to get there. And trust is vital to leadership but we often lack practical approaches for building it. We'll provide you with 6 evidence-based steps.

3 KEYS TO DEVELOPING EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP

I've delivered hundreds of leadership workshops over the past few decades. Until our partnership with Zenger Folkman, these sessions were based on "timeless leadership principles" that encouraged participants to build their improvement plans around the weaker areas to round out and expand their leadership skills. That meant focusing on weaknesses.



Last month I delivered another of our rare public workshops (most are run in-house) on the groundbreaking strengths-based leadership development approach of [The Extraordinary Leader](#). When asked to assess to what extent participants felt the session changed their thinking on leadership, most answered with a 5/5.

Participants identified three reasons for their shift in thinking:

1) Evidence-based leadership skills

Most leadership development efforts are built around a skills framework or leadership model. The key question is, how were these developed? Who decided on that particular set of skills and how was the decision made?

Often a model was chosen because a senior executive or development professional found it in a book or article, or saw a consultant present it

at a conference. Or the organization decided to adapt a leadership framework from an association or company that looked good and seemed to fit.

What's missing is proof that these are the competencies that truly matter. Where is the empirical data that these are the key behaviors that have the greatest impact on employee engagement, attraction and retention, service levels, quality, innovation, safety or productivity?

Drawing on a database of over 50,000 leaders, Zenger Folkman has pinpointed the critical leadership skills that have high statistical correlations with results.

I recently wrote about this in my column in *Canadian Healthcare Manager*. You can read more about this approach at [Leadership Lessons from Evidence-Based Medicine](#) and [Evidence Based Leadership in the Healthcare Organization](#).

2) A personalized path to extraordinary leadership

Most leadership competency models weight all skills and underlying behaviors equally. Some models layer the competencies across organizational levels, starting with front-line staff and moving up to supervisors, managers, and executives. Implicit in this approach is the message that outstanding leaders excel at the broadest number of these skills.

This "Super Leader" model doesn't account for vast variances in individual preferences among leaders or their widely differing functions. Each of us is a unique mixture of strengths and weaknesses. We have work areas that play to our passions and turn us on, and areas that are a real chore and turn us off. One-size-fits-all competency models don't account for those differences.

Research now shows that leaders who consistently rated in the 80th to 90th percentiles of effectiveness only need to excel at three to five of 16 key competencies. So leaders can build from good to great the skills that are their natural strengths, that they're most energized about developing further.

3) Building on strengths can triple improvement levels

As I've been for decades of my workshops, most of us unconsciously equate improvement, development, and personal growth with finding and fixing weaknesses. Improving low marks is deeply socialized in us, going back to school report cards. When a leader gets a feedback report on his or her leadership skills, the natural instinct is to skip past positive ratings and look at "where I need to improve."

Research from the emerging fields of positive psychology and strengths-based leadership shows that leaders who focus on their weaknesses consistently create weaker development plans, allocate less of their time to personal growth, and abandon training efforts more quickly. Zenger Folkman found executives working on weaknesses reported their leadership improvement efforts had minimal impact on team and organizational results, and even less effect on the commitment or engagement levels of their direct reports.

A series of studies examined the impact of leaders who chose to fix weaknesses versus building on existing strengths. 12 to 18 months later, the leaders who magnified their strengths showed two to three times more improvement than those who worked on fixing their weaknesses!

You can read more about these three compelling shifts in traditional leadership development approaches at [Leadership Competency Models: Why Many Are Failing and How to Make them Flourish](#).

You can also participate in *The Extraordinary Leader* workshop and hear how General Mills, The Gap, Safeway, and Symantec are revolutionizing their leadership development using the new strengths-based leadership development system. I hope you can join me, Jack Zenger, and Joe Folkman, in picturesque Park City, Utah at the end of July. See my recent blog [Very Rare Leadership Summit Opportunity](#) for more information.

ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE LEADERS LOVED OR FEARED?

According to behavioral sciences research cited in "Connect, Then Lead," the cover article in the July-August issue of *Harvard Business Review*, "when we judge others -- especially our leaders -- we look first at two characteristics: how lovable they are (their warmth, communion, or trustworthiness) and how fearsome they are (their strength, agency, or competence)."



The authors point out that most leaders emphasize their authority, credentials, or capability. But doing that before establishing trust "is exactly the wrong approach" because it can evoke fear or disengagement.

The feature article answers the 500 year old question raised by Niccolo Machiavelli on whether it's better to be feared or loved by pointing to

"a growing body of research suggests that the way to influence -- and to lead -- is to begin with warmth. Warmth is the conduit of influence: It facilitates trust and the communication and absorption of ideas ... helps you connect immediately with those around you, demonstrating that you hear them, understand them, and can be trusted by them."

The authors cite Zenger Folkman's recent research on likability to make their case that the chances of a leader being strongly disliked (such as being feared) and still considered a good leader is about one in 2,000. See ["Demanding Leaders Are Much More Effective -- and More Likable"](#) for more on this research. It includes a chart showing the "Impact on Likability of Being Demanding" for men and women. You can also link to Zenger Folkman's new Likability Index for a self-assessment.

Where I start disconnecting with "Connect, Then Lead" is when the authors provide advice on how to project warmth and strength or power. Their focus on body language, speech, and presence smacks of "faking authenticity."

How to be more likable, build trust, or increase perceived honesty and integrity is a challenge we often encounter in our leadership development work. Last week's blog on [The Six Steps to Trust](#) provided insights from Zenger Folkman's latest research.

Another groundbreaking and highly effective approach to this conundrum pioneered by Zenger Folkman's research is leadership cross-training at the heart of their ***Extraordinary Leader Development System***. See [Leadership Cross-Training is Powerful and Revolutionary](#) or [Powerful Combinations: Drive for Results and Builds Relationships](#).

Leadership is situational and different leadership is needed in different circumstances and times. In the 15th century Florentine Republic, Machivelli's advice that "it's much safer to be feared than loved" may have been appropriate for those times. In today's world, it's clear the most effective leaders who consistently deliver top results are loved -- or at least very likable.

You can talk with Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman about their research at Zenger Folkman's Extraordinary Leadership Summit on July 29 - August 1 in Park City, Utah (30 minutes from Salt Lake City airport). [Click here](#) for details and to register.

VERY RARE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT OPPORTUNITY

If you're interested in dramatically boosting personal, team, or organization leadership and coaching skills there's an incredibly rare opportunity you'll want to seize this summer. And you could combine this powerful Leadership Summit with vacation and leisure time in picturesque Park City -- one of Utah's top tourist destinations favoured by entertainment stars during Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival.



For little more than the cost of our one day public workshop you have an extremely unique and unusual chance to immerse yourself for three days:

- Hear from -- and chat with -- two of the leading international authorities in leadership -- and especially the revolutionary new field of Strengths-Based Leadership: Joe Folkman (renowned psychometrician) and Jack Zenger (HRD Hall of Fame and Lifetime Achievement Award from American Society of Training and Development).
- Hear a presentation on "How to Create a Coaching Culture" from, take *The Extraordinary Coach* workshop with, and talk further to, Kathleen Stinnett, leading international authority on coaching and co-author of [The Extraordinary Coach: How the Best Leaders Help Others Grow](#).
- Listen to and meet with Kevin Wilde, VP Organization Effectiveness and Chief Learning Officer at General Mills -- a company recognized as one of the top 25 in leadership development in the U.S. and one of ZF's longest term Clients.
- Learn from the groundbreaking leadership development approaches used by The Gap (Eric Severson, SVP Global Talent Solutions, and Heather Robsahm, Director of Leadership Development), Safeway (Dan Cousins, VP Learning and Leadership Development), and Symantec (Sandra Hunter, Sr. Director, Leadership and Employee Development -- featured in last week's blog ([Symantec Leaders Show Extraordinary Results](#))).
- Participate in two of three of Zenger Folkman's core workshops; ***The Extraordinary Leader***, ***The Extraordinary Coach***, or ***The Inspiring Leader*** ([click here](#) to get more info and download brochures). *Our standard fees for two days of these public workshops alone will cover this Summit fee and most of your hotel costs!*

- Have breakfast, lunch, or dinner -- or just chat time -- with me to discuss what you're learning and how you can apply the powerful leadership development approaches from this Summit.
- Network and share best practices with senior leaders and leadership/organization development professionals.
- Spend time with senior ZF executives, Bob Sherwin and Barbara Steel, co-authors of the highly acclaimed [*How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths*](#).
- Network and enjoy dinner at Jack Zenger's "manor estate" home on 80 acres overlooking Midway and the Wasatch Mountains.

This is not a massive convention with hundreds or thousands of people. It's small and intimate for less than 100 participants. So [register now](#) to ensure a seat!

4th Annual Leadership Summit
 July 29-August 1, 2013
 Hyatt Escala Lodge, Park City, Utah
 (30 minutes from Salt Lake City airport)

<http://www.clemmergroup.com/zf/2013summitzf.html>

I attended last year's powerful Summit and it was outstanding. This year's session is growing, but it's still a very manageable size. I hope you can join us for what is fast becoming one of this field's premier leadership development events.

SUCCESSION PLANNING: DEVELOPING A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

We're approaching a crisis point in succession planning and building leadership depth. The 2008 financial crash caused many leaders approaching retirement to put off their plans as their retirement funds sank. Organizations delayed or stopped leadership development as they switched into survival mode.

...70%
of organizations
lack adequate
bench strength

Organizations are now waking up to an urgent new focus on building leadership capacity:

- 70% of executives think their organization lacks adequate bench strength
- 97% of organizations report serious leadership gaps, 40% say these are severe
- 65 to 75% of current senior management will be eligible to retire by 2020
- Of leaders hired from the outside, it is estimated that 40% are pushed out or leave 18 months after joining an organization

In his *Forbes* column, "[Developing a Leadership Pipeline That Works](#)", Jack Zenger describes these core elements to building leadership pipelines that actually work:

- A simple, non-bureaucratic system
- The pipeline is owned by the senior leadership team
- Managers become significantly more involved in people development
- The greatest pay-offs from a good competency model is its ability to predict future success and to aid in the development of leaders
- Pipelines rely on multiple inputs

Jack very correctly points out that:

"a leadership pipeline is more than turning a valve and hoping something will gush out. The pipeline demands the right culture in which to flourish. It takes time to build and to fill."

Jack and his partner Joe Folkman delivered an information-packed 60 minute webinar on *Developing a Leadership Pipeline* last week addressing these crucial questions:

1. What's the likely leadership scenario for your organization in the next 36 to 48 months?
2. How can you know who in your organization will be ready to assume leadership responsibilities?
3. How can you make leadership development a conscious, deliberate, and sustained strategy in your organization?
4. What has Zenger Folkman done to support other organizations as they build their leadership pipeline?

The webinar is now archived and [available for viewing on demand here](#).

*Leadership development up, down, and across the organization is a central theme of Zenger Folkman's Leadership Summit in beautiful Park City, Utah (30 minutes from Salt Lake City airport). Hear from **Kevin Wilde**, VP Organization Effectiveness and Chief Learning Officer at **General Mills**. Learn from the groundbreaking leadership development approaches used by **The Gap** (**Eric Severson**, SVP Global Talent Solutions, and **Heather Robsahm**, Director of Leadership Development), **Safeway** (**Dan Cousins**, VP Learning and Leadership Development), and **Symantec** (**Sandra Hunter**, Sr. Director, Leadership and Employee Development -- featured in [Symantec Leaders Show Extraordinary Results](#)).*

[Click here](#) for details and registration.

5 KEYS FOR ACCEPTING FEEDBACK

An earlier blog, [You Are Here: Multiple Feedback Points Locates our Leadership Skills](#), described the work we're doing introducing hundreds of leaders at one company to the groundbreaking new approach of [strengths-based leadership development](#). As we continue to use only self-assessments to discuss leadership strengths we're seeing an overwhelming interest in getting much more accurate -- **strengths-based** -- feedback from direct reports, peers, manager, and others. Subsequent polls are now running at 95% of participants asking for 360 strengths-based feedback.



Leading without feedback is like driving a car in unfamiliar territory in the dark with no reference points. You may have a map and know exactly where you want to go. But if you can't pinpoint where you are, you'll be lost. The famous 19th century American frontiersman, Daniel Boone, once quipped, "I was never lost, but I was bewildered once for three days." Of course, being a real man he likely refused to ask for directions! Not only are many feedback-impaired leaders lost, but most refuse to ask anyone else to help them figure out where they are.

Joe Folkman has spent his long career designing feedback assessments and approaches, and helping leaders build their leadership skills around this input. He's the foremost authority on feedback. I highly recommend Joe's book ***The Power of Feedback: 35 Principles for Turning Feedback from Others into Personal and Professional Change***. You can read my review of the book at [Book Review: The Power of Feedback by Joe Folkman](#) and excerpts from it at [Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on ... The Power of Feedback by Joe Folkman](#).

Joe's *Forbes* recent column, [5 Ways To Calm 'Feedback Fires': What We Can Learn From Celebrity Meltdowns](#), offers these keys for accepting feedback:

1. Assume others' perceptions of you are real.
2. You need to care.
3. Be confident and courageous.
4. Be honest with yourself.
5. Take steps to change.

Decades of Joe's research has proven that, "***leaders need feedback to be effective. There is an extremely strong correlation between a leader's ability to accept and utilize feedback and their overall effectiveness as a leader.***"

SYMANTEC LEADERS SHOW EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS

Symantec is a global leader in software security, storage, and systems management. Sometimes people enviously argue that a company like Symantec can afford to invest in leadership and organization development because of their success. But a large part of Symantec's success has resulted from these development investments.



Symantec attracts highly effective leaders from around the world. However, *"there are good leaders and there are great leaders -- and Symantec makes momentous efforts to help both further develop their strengths as they progress within the organization,"* said Sandy Hunter, Senior Director, Leadership & Employee Development, Symantec. ***"We know that deploying strong leadership practices from top to bottom is going to drive better business results."***

Sandy goes on to explain, *"what got them to where they are may not be sufficient to keep them successful over time, especially in a very dynamic environment. Our success depends on our ability to develop, motivate, and retain high-potential employees at every level of the company, and prepare them to take on additional responsibility as the organization grows."*

A key element in Symantec's leadership development efforts is a program they launched in 2010 called "Top Talent." It has three tracks for individual contributor, managers/senior managers, and directors/senior directors.

We've just published [a case study on Symantec's highly successful Top Talent program](#).

Highlights include:

- About 15% of Symantec's full time employees are recognized as Top Talent.
- Zenger Folkman's *The Extraordinary Leader* development system was used for 455 high-potential first line managers and senior managers using multiple learning strategies and technologies.
- Follow through included webinars and monthly newsletters.
- A reassessment showed the first cohort of leaders going through the program found "the results were incredibly positive. Symantec found improvement in each and every competency measured."

Symantec is now implementing a corporate-wide high-potential program. According to Bettina Koblick, Chief HR Officer at Symantec:

"By cultivating and deploying our employees' leadership strengths, we can drive superior performance amidst accelerating growth and competitiveness in the IT marketplace. To not accelerate their development and feed this leadership pipeline would have been a shame ... We now have leaders who are intensely focused on learning, teaching, and understanding which competencies are not only valuable, but are critical to their performance."

[Click here](#) to download and read Symantec Leaders Show "Extraordinary" Results

6 DIFFERENT PATHWAYS TO INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A few months ago in [Charismatic Leadership is Vastly Overrated](#) I quoted from a European study published in *Sloan Management Review* on the downside of charisma. I also quoted *Good to Great* author, Jim Collins, reporting on his findings that charisma can be more of a leadership liability than an asset.



Despite the mounting proof to the contrary, many people still cling to the outdated belief that the path to rallying people to high levels of motivation and performance is through charismatic leadership. A few years ago Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman studied their growing database of tens of thousands of 360 assessments to apply an evidence-based approach to this critical issue. They set out to provide a more scientific understanding of the approaches used by the top 10% of leaders in "inspiring and motivating others" as rated by their direct reports, peers, manager, and others.

Zenger Folkman discovered six very different pathways to inspiring leadership:

- Visionary - providing a clear picture of the future and being able to communicate that to the team.
- Enhancing - creating positive one-on-one relationships along with team relationships by being a great listener and connecting emotionally with people.
- Driver - displaying a focused pursuit to make the numbers and complete things on time and generally being accountable for personal and group performance.
- Principled - providing a powerful role model of doing the right things in the right way.

- Enthusiast - exuding passion and energy about the organization, its goals, and the work itself.
- Expert - providing a strong technical direction that comes from deep expertise.

It turned out that "enthusiast" -- charismatic leadership -- was the **second least used** approach by leaders rated as being extraordinarily inspiring. Exceptional leaders used a combination of the six pathways to inspire and motivate others. They didn't try to change their basic nature, but used approaches that built on their natural strengths.

Zenger Folkman then set out to answer another key question; can leaders learn to be more inspiring? The "are-leaders-made-or-born" debate has been around for decades. The growing mass of evidence overwhelmingly shows that leadership can be learned and developed. Read Joe Folkman's *Forbes* column, [Everything Counts: The 6 Ways To Inspire And Motivate Top Performance](#), for a look at the results of a ZF study of 300 leaders who were given pre and post tests on their inspirational leadership skills over an 18 - 24 month period.

A much deeper look at Zenger Folkman's research and the six pathways is outlined in their insightful and very practical book, [The Inspiring Leader: Unlocking the Secrets of How Extraordinary Leaders Motivate](#). Click on the book title to read my review and on [Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on.... The Inspiring Leader](#).

Based on their extensive and ongoing research around inspiring leadership Joe concludes; "*This evidence is clear. With awareness, good feedback and a plan of development, **leaders are most definitely able to make significant improvement on this most important of all leadership competencies.***"

The Inspiring Leader is one of three workshops (along with The Extraordinary Leader and The Extraordinary Coach) available at Zenger Folkman's value-packed Leadership Summit on July 29 - August 1 in beautiful Park City, Utah (30 minutes from Salt Lake City airport). See Tuesday's blog on this [Very Rare Leadership Summit Opportunity](#).

THE 6 STEPS TO TRUST

Trust is a very slippery concept to grasp. Everyone agrees it's vital to leadership. But what are its core components? And what are the steps to building trust? If a leader in our *Extraordinary Leader Development System* is rated as trustworthy but wants to be ranked in the 10% of leaders on trust, how does he or she do that?



The adage "we judge ourselves by our intentions while everyone else judges us by our actions" is especially central to building trust. Leaders looking to increase trust levels often confuse their inward view of their own character or intentions with the behaviors others are seeing. Nobody can see into our heart to read our true intentions ... instead, they judge our honesty, integrity, trustworthiness -- and our intentions -- on our actions.

Zenger Folkman analyzed 360 assessment data from 35,000 leaders to pinpoint what leaders can do to increase trust. Here are the steps that can have the biggest impact on increasing trust:

1. Build positive relationships
2. Stop competing
3. Throw others a bone
4. Be balanced
5. Track your commitments
6. Accept blame and share credit

See Joe Folkman's recent **Forbes** column [The Six Steps to Trust](#) for more detail on each step. As Joe writes, "*many people have been given the feedback, 'Others do not trust you.' Most people, hearing this, are perplexed as to what they might do to change.*" He provides insightful evidence-based advice.

*You can talk with Joe about this and all the other leadership development research his colleagues have compiled at **Zenger Folkman's Leadership Summit on July 29 -- August 1 in Park City, Utah (30 minutes from Salt Lake City airport).** [Click here](#) for details.*

TWEET READING: RECOMMENDED ONLINE RESOURCES

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 precedes each title and descriptor from the original source:

Building on their research linking likability and effective leadership, Jack Zenger provides research based steps on how to be more likable.

["The Unlikable Leader: 7 Ways To Improve Employee/Boss Relationships"](#) -- Jack Zenger
www.forbes.com

"There is a secret to becoming a more likable leader. It doesn't have to do with how tall and charming you are, or how often you give employees a raise. In fact, we have evidence that the majority of the behaviors displayed by the most likable leaders have to do with the way they interact with employees on a day-to-day basis."

A short video clip with Jack providing three short and practical tips on leading change.

["Jack Zenger: Can openness to change be developed?"
www.fastcompany.com](http://www.fastcompany.com)

"Create a positive culture where people tend to focus on positive comments rather than negative comments. Secondly ask people for their idea ask Bill ..."

Joe outlines powerful research showing six pathways to inspiring and motivating others that builds around a leader's natural strengths.

["Everything Counts: The 6 Ways To Inspire And Motivate Top Performance"](http://www.forbes.com) -- Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"You don't have to have "charisma" to inspire the people around you. Find your preferred methodology, and start making it count"

READ THE LEADER LETTER IN TWICE WEEKLY INSTALLMENTS

The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my twice weekly [blog](#) during the previous month.



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

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP

I am always delighted to hear from readers of *The Leader Letter* with feedback, reflections, suggestions, or differing points of view. Nobody is ever identified in *The Leader Letter* without their permission. I am also

happy to explore customized, in-house adaptations of any of my material for your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net or connect with me on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [FaceBook](#), or my [blog](#)!

May the Force (of strengths) be with you!

Jim



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