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I once had a speaking engagement with a cleaning and custodial company at their annual management conference. Arriving early and sitting in on the meeting to get a feel for the group and the conference, I was inspired by what a remarkable job those leaders did of bringing "pride of craft" to clean toilets and shiny floors. They showed pictures of facilities before (good thing it wasn't near meal time) and after, gave awards and recognition, and discussed best cleaning practices -- all with much more energy and professionalism than I had seen from many other highly trained and multi-degreed "professionals" at their meetings.

Pride is a distinctive hallmark of strong leadership. Leaders who deeply connect people to their organization, its products or services, each other, customers, and other partners, cultivate an outstanding pride-of craft and sense of ownership in many ways -- both highly visible and subtle. High-performance organizations are often defined by people who feel connected to something greater than themselves. In his book, *Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Simon Sinek reports,

> "great companies don't hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them. People are either motivated or they are not. Unless you give motivated people something to believe in, something bigger than their job to work toward, they will motivate themselves to find a new job and you'll be stuck with whoever's left."

A growing number of studies are now looking at the critical leadership issue of bringing spirit and meaning to organizations. One poll found that managers want a deeper sense of meaning and fulfillment on the job more than they want money and time off. Former Harvard professor David Maister's study of the values most impacting organization effectiveness found that, "'People treat each other with respect around here' turned out to be one of the nine profit predictors." In his book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink notes,

> "we're learning that the profit motive, potent though it is, can be an insufficient impetus for both individuals and organizations. An equally powerful source of energy, one we've often neglected or dismissed as unrealistic, is what we might call the 'purpose motive.'"

This issue features Frank's search for spirit and meaning in a four-part "summer reading series" adapted from *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success* (one of my four books offered in our **3-for-1 choose your own combo summer reading**). He learns how high-performance organizations pull together the intangible leadership principles that define their unique character and rally people around a deeper sense of purpose. These powerful feelings are made tangible through the strong implementation of management processes and systems that translate ideals into action. The rapidly growing research in the new discipline of

positive psychology shows that purpose and meaning play a key role in boosting our well-being. In his book, Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being, positive psychology's founder, Martin Seligman, explains,

> "positive mental health is a presence: the presence of positive emotion, the presence of engagement, the presence of meaning, the presence of good relationships, and the presence of accomplishment. Being in a state of mental health is not merely being disorder free; rather it is the presence of flourishing."

Let's be Frank: In search of the company's lost heart

In the midst of that morning's operations review meeting, Frank started wondering just how the company had lost its heart. As he looked around the meeting room he saw nothing but stern faces, apprehensive expressions, and a few stifled yawns. The humorous quips he had added to the conversation a few minutes ago to lighten things up fell as flat as a day-old glass of Coke. Everyone was so serious. They solemnly reviewed yet more numbers and looked at more charts and graphs.

Frank knew that management issues were critical to success. Facts, processes, systems, data -- all were vital to efficient operations. But how did the company become so unbalanced? When did efficiency crowd out effectiveness? How had the management vampire been able to sneak into the organization and suck the energy out of everyone, leaving these lifeless corpses behind?

Frank knew a bit of his company's history. He knew that the original founder, Roy Fitzsimmons (who was now retired), had deep technical expertise and extensive professional training in their industry. He knew that Roy was passionate about the company's pioneering technology. He had an exciting and powerful vision with an intense drive to blaze new pathways.

This energy and excitement had attracted like-minded team members, customers, partners, and investors, and had fueled their rapid early growth. Over the next few days, Frank made a point of seeking out the company veterans to ask them about the culture and focus of the early days. He also reviewed some archival material on their first products, strategies, financial statements, correspondence, and the like. He learned that the company grew strongly on the strength of its technology.

It was an exciting, fun place to work. But it struggled financially. Management systems and processes were weak or nonexistent. So costs were high. Error rates and rework were also high and Frank heard lots of "heroic recovery" stories of fixing up customer problems.

As Roy neared retirement, he decided to hire a "professional manager" as president and CEO while he stepped back into the role of chair. The new president imposed much-needed organization and order on the growing company.

But, Frank knew, you can take any good idea too far. While the pendulum had been way over on the leadership side of the equation, the new president swung it sharply to the management side. Slowly the spirit and vitality

was squeezed out of the company. The soft, intangible feelings of making a difference and being part of a meaningful cause were driven out by the drive to achieve hard results -- goals, objectives, and the bottom line.

Communications and meetings that were once full of exciting reports about new customers, innovative products developed on a shoe string, new market frontiers opening, and outstanding service delivered in extraordinarily tough circumstances were now filled with dry reports on progress to sales and profit goals, committee activities, strategies, budgeting, and business planning.

It became uninspiring and lifeless. The management imbalance dehumanized people and turned them into their roles. Expressions like "business is business" and "it's not personal, it's business" were heard more regularly. People become number crunchers, orders processors, product producers, sales pushers, researchers, technical problem solvers, managers, and budgeters.

Their heart and soul were hung up in the closet with their coats on the way in to work each morning. People went from being part of a cause that provided a paycheck to collecting a paycheck without a cause.

Let's be Frank (II): Snowballs, stones and stories

Frank had a few ideas about how to strengthen his leadership and bring more spirit and meaning into the organization. But he felt that he needed the fresh and informed perspective that an outside expert could offer. So he hired Pat, a consultant, to provide an assessment.

Pat conducted confidential interviews with Frank and with each of the managers on his team. Pat sat in on a few management meetings. Pat also ran some focus groups with frontline staff groups.

During their first feedback session, Pat asked Frank if he'd noticed how much sniping there was going on between his managers. "It's just good fun," Frank objected. "Yeah, often it is and that's great," Pat replied. "But it can also be like having a snowball fight. As long as the snowballs are soft and fluffy, everything's fine. Then someone throws a snowball with a stone inside, which hits you in the head. That person might say, 'It was just in fun'. But that doesn't make the buried stone hurt any less."
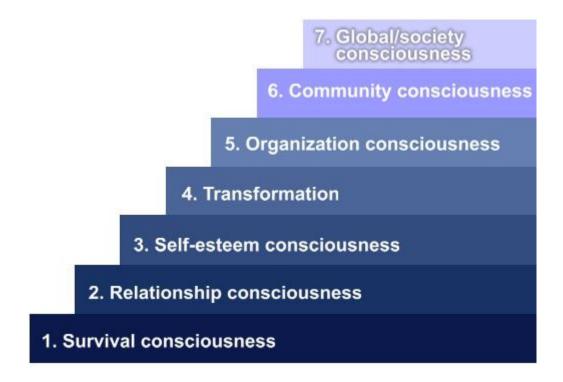
Pat looked down at his notes and concluded, "There are a few stones and some rocks being thrown around your meeting rooms, offices, and halls. A number of people have told me privately how much some of these hurt. They are eroding the team's spirit. Also, a lot of the humor around here is pretty cynical, and nothing destroys team spirit faster than cynicism. Snide remarks, barbs, and pessimism are like an acid that corrodes deeper connectedness and meaningful workplaces."

Frank and Pat decided that the sniping problem was a good place to start reconnecting the team. In consultation with the managers, they agreed to set up a Sniping and Cynicism Rule: If any team member made a comment that sounded like a putdown, cheap shot, or cynical remark, the others would tap their glasses, cups, or table top with a pen. The offender would then be required to deposit two dollars in a "fine pot." The money would be donated to a designated charity at the end of each quarter. (This strategy also prompted Frank to identify local charities

and community projects that were of interest to people in the organization, and to provide them with support -- both in allowing time off work and in donations of financial support.)

Frank's leadership plan to reconnect people focused on communication -- holding "town hall" meetings in which he shared Pat's assessment report, discussed strengths, weaknesses, and improvement opportunities, asked for input and ideas, and got everyone involved in the improvement process. Frank also worked to develop his verbal communication skills. He became a corporate "storyteller," sharing with others what he had learned about the company's rich heritage and how previous leaders had dealt with many changes and crisis points.

Let's be Frank (III): Growing to the next level

Frank found that Richard Barrett's seven-level hierarchy provided a useful model for thinking about what was needed to bring spirit and meaning to his organization. Sitting in his home office during one of his early-morning R & R (reflection and renewal) periods, he thought to himself, "I can see that I allowed myself to become a victim of our short-sighted management culture -- both personally and professionally.

Our company has been locked into the lower levels. At the beginning, we needed to focus on survival (Level 1), then build relationships (Level 2), and then become more efficient and productive (Level 3). The problem is we haven't moved up any further in the growth hierarchy.

By failing to grow in spirit, our basic needs have stagnated into greed for both more money and power. It's never enough. We're all tuned into radio station WIFM -- What's In it For Me. I need to find a way to help people through the transformation I've personally gone through (Level 4) and into the higher orders of spirit and meaning represented by Levels 5 to 7."

Frank focused on leading his division to higher levels of consciousness. From there he hoped to influence or inspire his peers, boss, and the rest of the company to evolve as well. Frank read books and searched key phrases

like "spirit in the workplace," "soulful leadership," and "culture change." He even took time off to attend an international conference on business and consciousness.

At that conference he participated in a workshop led by a very experienced and knowledgeable transformation consultant whose books he had read and admired. Frank peppered her with questions on the specifics of taking her noble and uplifting ideas, and applying them in his workplace.

But all he seemed to get from her in reply were vague generalities. Sensing his frustration, she approached Frank after the session and said, "I'm sorry I wasn't able to give you the simple formula you were looking for. But attaining higher levels of being isn't a paint-by-numbers project. Part of it is about readiness. Some people and organizations are more ready than others for the transformation from 'what's-in-it-for-me' to 'what's-best-for-the-common/greater-good.'

We must each find what works for our own unique personalities, corporate culture, and individual team members. It's like trying to find a path in a field of newly fallen snow.
Once we walk across the field, we've discovered our path."

Let's be Frank (IV): Redefining the role of leadership

Some months after they had implemented the new leadership plan, Frank talked with Pat about how well the improvement process was going. He reported that energy and commitment levels around the organization were rising. "We are starting to see a big drop in absenteeism, complaints, and service/quality problems," Frank enthused.

"People are really getting into things around here. Yesterday, when I talked to Steph from accounting during their Hawaiian theme day, she had just come back from visiting a client. She went on and on about what a different place this was becoming. 'It's sure a lot more fun to come to work now,' she told me." "There's just one thing," Frank continued. "I'm spending so much time out of my office now that I am getting less and less of my own work done." "Last week my boss saw me in the parking lot and asked if I was taking more time off! Seems he had been trying to see me and always found me out of my office."

Pat looked at Frank and asked, "What do you think your real leadership work is?" "What do mean?" "I mean, you have been turning around the spirit of your organization and bringing a deeper sense of meaning and fun to people here. That's leadership. Shouldn't you delegate and develop people to do more of the day-to-day work?"

Frank thought for a moment. "You're right. My work is caring for the context. My role is working *on* the business, not *in* the business. I need to explain that to my boss and help him see how the turnaround we're now producing here comes from leadership, not micromanagement. Perhaps I can even influence him to take a look at his leadership…"

Adapted from my book, *The Leader's Digest*. Full details and a special **3-for-1 choose your own combo summer reading** offer available now.

Webinar: The Urgency of Developing More Women Leaders

60 percent of companies facing leadership shortages that impede their performance. 31 percent say developing leaders is their largest talent issue. And 10,000 Baby Boomers retire every day.

Despite such a pressing need for leadership development, many organizations are significantly overlooking or under developing women. Zenger Folkman has been tracking differences in leadership effectiveness for nearly two decades. ZF's data consistently show that women leaders are rated significantly more effective than men. And the increased effectiveness of women leaders rises as they move from middle to top management roles.

ZF's survey of 7,280 leaders in some of the most successful and progressive organizations in the world confirms some long-held assumptions about gender differences in leaders in the workplace… and holds some surprises!

Last month, Jack Zenger presented a complimentary 40-minute webinar on *The Urgency of Developing More Women Leaders! – How to Leverage Their Unique Strengths*.

During this webinar Jack discussed:

1. The fallacy of stereotypes that would have us believe that female leaders only excel at certain competencies
2. The research that shows at every level, women were rated as better overall leaders than their male counterparts and why that might occur
3. The possible rationale for why men outscored women significantly on only one management competence in this survey
4. Conclusions from the research about what organizations, leaders and managers should do with these findings

As Jack concluded, this is a serious issue for broad economic, corporate, and moral reasons. The many causes are complex and solutions aren't quick fixes. Good information can help to lay the groundwork for change. Organizations must begin to change their cultures and practices. And women can take steps to help themselves.

Click here to watch the archived webinar.

Tweet Reading: Recommended Online Articles

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

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

More Zenger Folkman research on the pivotal impact of leadership effectiveness on perceptions and motivation.

> **"How To Increase Satisfaction With Pay (Without Increasing Pay)"** -- Joe Folkman
> **www.forbes.com**
> *"Few people are paid too much. In a recent study of 60,000 leaders there were seven factors that helped increase satisfaction with pay, without increasing pay."*

Michelle McQuaid's five steps to encourage a growth mindset also build a learning culture that gets results.

> **"Do You Have A False Growth Mindset?"** -- Michelle McQuaid
> **http://www.michellemcquaid.com**
> *"While effort is important, unproductive effort is not, and outcomes still do matter. So ignoring outcomes and just rewarding effort, regardless if your hard work is getting results or not, isn't good for you or your organization."*

Not sure about his EQ. Musk should look at the safety culture the exec team creates with their leadership behaviors.

> **"This Email From Elon Musk to Tesla Employees Is a Master Class in Emotional Intelligence"** -- Justin Barison
> **https://www.inc.com**
> *"Tesla, the electric-automobile manufacturer led by famed CEO Elon Musk, has struggled mightily with safety over the past few years."*

Critical points distinguishing bolt-on change programs from built-in culture integration and alignment.

> **"5 Questions to Ask About Corporate Culture to Get Beyond the Usual Meaningless Blather"** -- Bill Taylor
> **https://hbr.org/**
> *"So much of our thinking about organizational culture has become so bland, so unobjectionable, that it is on the verge of becoming meaningless."*

Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments

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

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

Feedback and Follow-Up

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

May the Force (of strengths) be with you!

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