

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter



JIM CLEMMER

Practical Leadership:
From Inspiration to Application

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[Online Version](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[Practical Leadership Blog](#)

In this issue...

March 2010, Issue 84

[Recommended Reading: Rethinking Your Work: Getting to the Heart of What Matters by Val Kinjerski](#)

[Thoughts That Make You Go Hmm...on Pursuing Excellence](#)

[Practical Leadership Development for Peak Performance Archived Webcast and Slides Download Now Available](#)

[Leading @ the Speed of Change: Practical Leadership Development for Peak Performance Rare Public Workshops in Vancouver, London, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Calgary](#)

[Using Leadership Book Clubs to Form Cost and Time Effective Learning Networks](#)

[Characteristics of Admired Leaders](#)

[Put Valentine's Day Passion in Your Leadership](#)

[Rebuilt Video Section Gives You Dozens of Clips for Personal or Team Development](#)

[Recommended Reading: Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive by Barbara Frederickson](#)

[Coming Events Section on Our Web Site](#)

[Let's Stay Connected With LinkedIn](#)

[Read It Here or Hot Off My Blog](#)

[Most Popular February Improvement Points](#)

[Feedback and Follow-Up](#)

MARCH 2010, ISSUE 84

Another Winter Olympics has come and gone. Canada proudly hosted the Olympics and had front row seats to the greatest spectacle of human spirit, the pursuit of excellence, and example of peak performance. The unseasonably warm weather (the warmest in over 100 years) created huge challenges for organizers on the slopes of Cypress Mountain. But the "Spring Olympics" helped to create one of Canada's biggest street parties in Canada's prettiest major city.

Most athletes competing at the games are deeply committed to pursuing their dream of excellence. While some have golden visions of the fame and fortune that often come with a big medal haul, many athletes are simply fulfilling a deeper sense of purpose. They've invested years of incredibly hard work to push themselves to the very peak of performance excellence.

This issue explores a few different ways to bring that spirit and sense of purpose into our personal and professional lives as we go for our gold.

RECOMMENDED READING: *RETHINKING YOUR WORK: GETTING TO THE HEART OF WHAT MATTERS* BY VAL KINJERSKI

Val Kinjerski's engaging book, *Rethinking Your Work: Getting to the Heart of What Matters* is a perfect way to blend personal/career development with the afterglow of Olympic spirit still radiating from Vancouver's Winter Olympics.

Most people have a job. Some people have fulfilling careers. A few people have a sense of calling or deeper purpose that lives through their work. Val's excellent book, [Rethinking Your Work](#) shows that what matters most is not what work we do, but how we think about it. Drawing from her speaking and consulting work in employee engagement and building spirit at work, Val starts with a diverse variety of stories that illustrate spirit at work and the varying paths each person took to develop a deep sense of purpose in their work.

The main part of [Rethinking Your Work](#) provides practical actions and how-to steps to deepen our sense of purpose or spirit at work. This includes helpful "Reflection Questions" at the end of each chapter.

The book is built around a simple four part Spirit at Work framework. Here's how Val describes the model:

- **Engaging Work** - involves the belief that work is meaningful and has a higher purpose. Our values and beliefs are aligned with our

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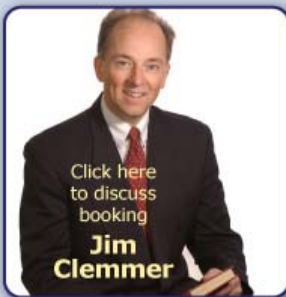
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work. We are authentic and experience a profound sense of well-being at work.

- **Sense of Community** - arises from sharing a common purpose with others and being connected through feelings of trust, respect, and love.
- **Spiritual Connection** - being connected to something larger than self that has a positive effect on the workplace. It often involves a sense of love for others.
- **Mystical Experience** - those times in which we feel vital, energized, and have a sense of joy and bliss at work.

I've studied, worked to personally apply, and written extensively about [Deepening Spirit, Meaning, and Purpose](#). This book is an inspiring, entertaining, and very practical addition to this vital topic. The closest most of us will ever come to the Olympics is cheering on our favorite athletes from our living room. But we can capture some of that magical Olympic Spirit in our work.

Visit Val's blog at <http://www.rethinkingyourwork.com/blog> for further insights, handily by topic area, related to employee engagement and spirit at work.

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMM...ON PURSUING EXCELLENCE

We heard many inspiring stories and saw numerous examples of personal and team excellence during the Vancouver Winter Olympics.

"The spirit, the will to win, and the will to excel are the things that endure. These qualities are so much more important than the events that occur."

- Vince Lombardi, American football coach

"At the (2002) winter Olympics the difference between gold medal and no medal was often less than 2%. Against truly global competition, a lot of stunningly good performers were just not good enough. In the men's 10,000-meter speed skating, the difference between a gold medal and no medal was 1.9%. In the women's giant slalom it was 1.1%; in the four-man bobsled, 0.2%."

A lot of managers claim their companies will 'bring home the gold' this year. Terrific, but remember that many excellent competitors went to Salt Lake City and were 98% or 99% as good as the best - and brought home nothing. By all means try to bring home the gold, but don't delude yourself about how hard it is."

- Geoffrey Colvin, "Think You Can Bobsled? Ha!" Fortune magazine

"The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity, and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because philosophy is an exalted activity, will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water."

- John W Gardner, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Lyndon Johnson and author of books on improving leadership in American society

"National Quality Institute has tracked these award winners since 1990, and the results show that many Canada Awards for Excellence recipients have consistently out-performed the TSE, Dow Jones, and Standard & Poor's indices by almost double. CAE recipients have reported results such as a 91% reduction in employee turnover, a 215% increase in cost savings, and an overall 90% increase in customer satisfaction. Companies in the manufacturing sector have also reported a welcome 57% decrease in workplace injuries."

- National Quality Institute, Toronto, ON Canada

"Your preoccupation should be on doing what you do as well as you can. What your co-workers say about you, what your opponent is doing - that doesn't matter."

- Jay Leno, American comedian, (retired and then rehired) host of "The Tonight Show"

"I read a story that conveyed to me what (excellence) means. It is a story of the greatest sculptor of ancient Greece, Phidias. He was commissioned around 440 B.C. to make the statues that to this day stand on the roof of the Parthenon, in Athens. They are considered among the greatest sculptures of the Western tradition, but when Phidias submitted his bill, the city accountant of Athens refused to pay it. 'These statues,' the accountant said, 'stand on the roof of the temple, and on the highest hill in Athens. Nobody can see anything but their fronts. Yet you have charged us for sculpting them in the round - that is, for doing their back sides, which nobody can see.' 'You are wrong,' Phidias retorted. 'The gods can see them.'"

- Peter Drucker, "My Life as a Knowledge Worker", Inc magazine

PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE ARCHIVED WEBCAST AND SLIDES DOWNLOAD NOW AVAILABLE

Last month we had over 500 sites log on and view my (no charge) 59 minute webcast on *Practical Leadership Development for Peak Performance*. During this "City Tour" of leadership, change, and organization effectiveness, I covered:

- Change Challenges and Choices
- Keys to Leading Change
- The High-Performance Balance: Managing Things and Leading People
- Soft Skills, Hard Results: Emotional Intelligence
- Timeless Leadership Principles for Enduring Team and Organizational Success
- Leadership Development Workshops

We had over 1,100 sites originally registered to participate. In retrospect, we likely should not have chosen the Friday afternoon of what was a long weekend for most of North America! We also found that many participants had trouble accessing the live webcast and were not able to participate (we won't be using this webinar provider again.) So if you were not able to log on - or you missed the live event - it's now available for viewing on our web site.

The webcast is my voice through an audio broadcast synchronized with slides, full of the usual animations and transitions I use when presenting in front of a group. We now have the broadcast available on our site for

viewing as streaming audio and video, or download the WMV file ([CLICK HERE.](#)) When you click on this link you'll also see the agenda of what was covered in the webcast.

So you can catch the webcast on your own time, show it at your next team meeting, or bring people together for a shared learning experience and do the assessment/discussion exercises recommended in the presentation.

LEADING @ THE SPEED OF CHANGE: PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE

RARE PUBLIC WORKSHOPS IN VANCOUVER, LONDON, WINNIPEG, TORONTO, AND CALGARY

In good times, and bad, leadership is clearly the key to finding sustained success. Highly effective managers, directors and executives understand this. Developing "soft skills" and aligning them with organizational goals is critical in today's rapidly changing world.

So the question becomes how can you develop the personal, team and organizational effectiveness that great leadership embodies?

In the coming months, I'll be traveling across Canada to deliver a series of one-day workshops, in association with the Canadian Society for Training and Development, that will help you become the leader you need to be in turbulent times.

This one-day *Leading @ the Speed of Change* workshop is built for supervisors, managers, directors and executives who are looking for:

- Ideas and inspiration for personally dealing with or leading change during turbulent times;
- Tools, techniques, and ideas for strengthening a team/organization;
- A deeper understanding of the power and application of emotional intelligence;
- Ways to assess leadership strengths and improvement opportunities;
- Implementation strategies for personal, team, or organization improvement plans;
- A recharged, re-energized, and re-inspired approach to change;
- Insights for coaching and developing others.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a detailed agenda, past participant feedback, what to expect, schedule and venues, downloading a brochure, fees, and to register.

USING LEADERSHIP BOOK CLUBS TO FORM COST AND TIME EFFECTIVE LEARNING NETWORKS

A big challenge for many organizations today is providing learning and development opportunities when many managers, supervisors, and staff are extremely pressed for time. It gets even more challenging when many people are spread out among a number of locations. Gerry Parker, Lead HR Advisor for Rural Areas at Vancouver Coastal Health, faces this geographic challenge every day.

Gerry first pulled together a number of people at various sites to view my December *Thriving in Turbulent Times* webcast ([CLICK HERE](#) to view.) This learning event worked so well for them that he and members of the group decided to use webinar technology to connect with each

other for a book club. Over the years, we've seen other teams and organizations use similar approaches using leadership/personal development books and/or corresponding workbooks.

Using a webinar service, everyone was connected through the Internet with audio and video connections. Gerry has made the slides they used available to show how they organized their club. [CLICK HERE](#) to view them.

[CLICK HERE](#) for this original blog post and more background from Gerry's e-mail on their approach and how they used [*Growing @ the Speed of Change*](#).

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADMIRERED LEADERS

I am a member of a LinkedIn leadership group that recently discussed the characteristics of admired leaders. This is a topic very near and dear to my heart. I've studied, worked to apply, written books, developed keynotes and workshops, and provided coaching and consulting on leadership for many decades.

There's a lot of jargon and mumbo jumbo on leadership. Many people have overcomplicated the topic. I've tried to simplify and break leadership down to its core components. From my work, I've identified the "timeless leadership principles" that have endured through the ages and keep getting rediscovered and relabeled.

We've developed a "leadership wheel" to show these principles as circular with vision, values, and purpose at the hub or core:

- Leaders take initiative and do what needs to be done rather than waiting for someone else to do something (they don't often follow, and rarely wallow)
- Leaders are authentic and lead by visible example, fostering openness and continuous feedback
- Leaders are passionate and build strong commitment through involvement and ownership
- Leaders lead with heart and rouse team or organizational spirit
- Leaders grow people through strong coaching and continuous development
- Leaders energize people by fostering two-way communication, inspiring, and serving

Leadership is circular - there is no beginning or end. Each of the supporting leadership principles around the outside of the "leadership wheel" are interdependent and interconnected. If a person, team, or organization develops all the leadership skills, the wheel is well-rounded. If it is deficient in one or more of these skills, the ride may be a little bumpy!

[CLICK HERE](#) to review my leadership model and a description of each the Timeless Leadership Principles applied to Personal Leadership and to Leading Others.

PUT VALENTINE'S DAY PASSION IN YOUR LEADERSHIP

February 14 was Valentine's Day. Guys, did you buy a card for your sweetheart? The U.S. Greeting Card Association estimates that approximately one billion valentines are sent each year worldwide. That makes this day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year next to Christmas. The association has found in the U.S. men spend twice as much money as women.

Passion and Commitment is one of the seven Timeless Leadership Principles in our Leadership Wheel (see "Characteristic of Admired Leaders" in this issue.) Passionate leaders rally people around a cause. Those leaders are often so passionate about their work that they have turned it into a cause that draws others like insects to the back porch light. The American clergyman and personal effectiveness writer and speaker, Norman Vincent Peale, considered a burning conviction and contagious enthusiasm to be the most critical factor in successful living and leadership (listening to him speak was an inspiring and invigorating experience.) He once said, "Your enthusiasm will be infectious, stimulating and attractive to others. They will love you for it. They will go for you and with you."

Effective leaders generate peak performance that comes from creating energy through excitement (the pull or gain of what could be), urgency (the push to avoid the pain of poor performance), or some combination of both. This creates focus and harnesses the deep urge we all have to be part of something meaningful -- to make a difference. To know that we are doing something worthwhile, that we are striving for a worthy goal.

[CLICK HERE](#) to browse a large selection of my articles, excerpts, and columns on Passion, Commitment, and Self-Discipline. Here are three short articles that deal most directly with passion and love:

[The Many Faces of Love](#)

Highly effective leaders are in love with the organization, community, or team that they work or live in. Their love is expressed in a deep desire to see that organization, community, or team grow to its full potential. [More](#)

[The Power of Passion](#)

Leadership is emotional. Leadership deals with feelings. Leadership is made up of dreams, inspiration, excitement, desire, pride, care, passion, and love. The areas of our lives where we show the strongest leadership. [More](#)

[Passionate Leaders Rally People to the Cause](#)

People rally around passionate leaders with a compelling vision and purpose. Effective leaders generate action that comes from creating energy and transforming jobs into crusades, exciting adventures, or deeper missions. [More](#)

REBUILT VIDEO SECTION GIVES YOU DOZENS OF CLIPS FOR PERSONAL OR TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Last year we made a strategic decision to move my videos to YouTube in order to make them more widely available. As part of this process we then used a web site component to display and categorize these videos on the main JimClemmer.com web site. Without getting technical - because I am not much of a techie - the component broke down and the video indexing was scrambled while many videos became unusable.

If you haven't checked it out yet, please take a look around our new and totally rebuilt video section. It's cleaner, faster and more intuitive. Now there are nearly 70 video clips available from live presentations or media interviews. Many are just a few minutes long. Some are ten to fifteen minutes in depth. And a few are even a bit deeper and longer.

[CLICK HERE](#) to visit our main video page where you can quickly overview and scroll through all the videos. If you put your cursor over any video title a short description of the clip will appear. Click on the title video screen shot for the YouTube clip to pop up for playing.

We've also sorted the videos into these categories:

- Media Interviews
- Personal Leadership
- Leading Change
- The Performance Balance (Technology, Management, and Leadership)
- Leadership Lessons from Emotional Intelligence
- Timeless Leadership Principles (seven core areas from [Growing the Distance](#) and [The Leader's Digest](#))
- Quality and Safety Leadership
- Transformation Pathways
- Keynote and Workshop Style
- Moose on the Table

You can use these clips for personal growth, inspiring your team, supplementing your development or coaching programs, fostering group action planning, or evaluating how my style or topics will fit with a meeting, retreat, or training program you have planned. [CLICK HERE](#) to contact Heather or me if you'd like to discuss any of this further.

RECOMMENDED READING:

POSITIVITY: GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH REVEALS HOW TO EMBRACE THE HIDDEN STRENGTH OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS, OVERCOME NEGATIVITY, AND THRIVE BY BARBARA FREDERICKSON

Positive psychology is an exciting new and rapidly expanding movement pioneered by Martin Seligman, Fox Leadership Professor of Psychology in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Psychology and director of their Positive Psychology Center. His book, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, is one of the best ever written on the topics of happiness, learned optimism, and positive psychology ([CLICK HERE](#) to read my review of it.)

On the cover of *Positivity*, Martin declares Barbara Frederickson, "the genius of the positive psychology movement." She is Kenan Distinguished Professor of Psychology and principal investigator of the Positive Emotions and Psychophysiology Laboratory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Barbara defines "positivity" as "the whole range of positive emotions - from appreciation to love, from amusement to joy, from hope to gratitude...although some of this may sound like the vocabulary of greeting cards, the term positivity points to vital human moments that have now captured the interests of science. And the new scientific discoveries about the importance of positivity are stunning."

What's especially compelling about the genre of positive psychology books is that they are not just giving us warmed over platitudes or emotional stories on positive thinking. *Positivity* is grounded in solid research while being very easy to read, and chocked full of practical and very useful how-to advice. In her first chapter, Barbara presents six key points she labels as facts and then provides deep research throughout the book to support them:

Fact 1: Positivity feels good

Fact 2: Positivity changes how your mind works

Fact 3: Positivity transforms your future

Fact 4: Positivity puts the brakes on negativity

Fact 5: Positivity obeys a tipping point

Fact 6: You can increase your positivity

In her chapter on "The Positivity Ratio," Barbara gives a detailed account of how she co-researched and co-developed a mathematical model showing that for "individuals, marriages, and business teams, flourishing - or doing remarkably - comes with positivity ratios above 3 to 1." She defines our positivity ratio as the amount of heartfelt positivity we feel relative to our heart-wrenching negativity. "Stated formally, your positivity ratio is your frequency of positivity over any given time span, divided by your frequency of negativity over that same time span."

The second part of the book is all about raising our positivity ratio. It starts with a Positivity Self Test. You can take the test online at <http://www.positivityratio.com>. This is followed with two excellent chapters on improving our positivity ratio through decreasing negativity and increasing positivity. Here Barbara helps readers apply the highly successful and well researched applications from the rapidly growing field of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). The last chapter, "A New Toolkit," provides 12 very concrete and useful techniques to permanently raise our ratio.

This is a very stimulating, practical, and useful book. I highly recommend it.

COMING EVENTS SECTION NOW ON OUR WEB SITE

Our business is almost exclusively customized internal sessions for specific Clients. I've typically done very few public events that have open attendance. However, over the next six months I do have a higher level of Canadian presentations and workshops with open attendance. So we've added a Coming Events section to our web site. [CLICK HERE to access it.](#)

LET'S CONNECT WITH LINKEDIN

I am steadily increasing my use of LinkedIn to reconnect with so many past Clients, workshop participants, or readers I've lost touch with over the years and tap into interesting group discussions on personal, team, and organizational leadership. I've been updating and adding to my LinkedIn profile and utilizing it's growing number of features such as connecting to my [blog](#) and [Twitter feed](#) through the my profile's Status Update. I've also just added slides from a January presentation to the Human Resources Professionals Association (see the next item on "Integrating Succession Planning, Culture Change, and Executive Team Development.")

As a [blog](#) and *Leader Letter* reader, I'd love to connect with you. My profile is at <http://ca.linkedin.com/in/jimclemmer>. Click on "View Full Profile." Please send me an invitation to add me to your network and reference that you're a [blog](#) reader and/or subscriber to [The Leader Letter](#).

READ IT HERE OR HOT OFF MY BLOG

The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my [blog](#) (updated twice per week) the previous month. You can wait to read it all together each month in *The Leader Letter* or you can read each item as a [blog](#) post and have them sent directly to you hot off my computer by signing up at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/blog/>. Just enter your e-mail address in the upper left corner box under "Sign up for E-mail Blog Notification."

MOST POPULAR FEBRUARY IMPROVEMENT POINTS

[Improvement Points](#) is a no-charge service to bring timely and inspirational quotes from my articles to subscribers three times a week. Built around our new [topic index](#), Improvement Points are crafted to help you become a better leader of yourself, your team and your organization. Each Improvement Point links directly to a full article on our web site. If you'd like to read more about the point being made in that day's Improvement Point, you simply click on the "Read the full article now" link below each IP. Many subscribers circulate especially relevant [Improvement Points](#) articles to their team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action.

Here are the three most popular Improvement Points we sent out in February:

"We have to take responsibility for our choices. And we have to take responsibility for how we act in response to circumstances - even if those circumstances are not of our own making. This is the real test of our maturity and emotional intelligence. This is the "ground zero" of leadership."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Leaders Take Responsibility for Their Choices"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"As a parent I am too often reminded of the old adage that says "children act like their parents - despite all attempts to teach them good manners." When one of our kids does something I'm not especially pleased with, my first inclination is to wonder "where did you learn that?" If I reflect on it for a while, I can start to see where that behavior came from - their mother, of course!"

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Leaders Go First"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"A reliable indicator of management's failure to impassion people and foster their commitment is absenteeism. When I was a kid I didn't enjoy school very much. So I was sick a lot. Once I found my life work and pursued career choices that really turned me on, my health improved miraculously. In more than 30 years, I have taken fewer than five sick days."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Empowerment Through Passion and Commitment"

[Read the full article now!](#)

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP

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

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

Jim

The CLEMMER Group

10 Pioneer Drive, Suite 105,
Kitchener, ON N2P 2A4
Phone: (519) 748-1044
Fax: (519) 748-5813
E-mail: service@clemmer.net
<http://www.jimclemmer.com>

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<http://www.jimclemmer.com/newsletter>

The CLEMMER Group
10 Pioneer Drive, Suite 105, Kitchener ON N2P 2A4
Phone: (519) 748-1044 ~ Fax: (519) 748-5813
E-mail: service@clemmer.net
<http://www.jimclemmer.com>