



Issue 158 - May 2016

## The Leader Letter

The evening before a speaking engagement in Vancouver, I was in a hotel room on the 37th floor overlooking Stanley Park, English Bay, and The Lion's Gate Bridge. After a pleasant dinner with a friend, I returned to my room. The sun was setting on a beautiful, warm spring evening. Wanting to enjoy the view, I took my phone out onto the balcony to check my voice mail. When I turned to go back in my room, I found that the sliding door to the balcony was locked. The latch had fallen into place as I closed it behind me.



I called the hotel on my phone and a manager was sent to help. He, however, could not get into my room, either. It seems the night latch had swung into place behind me when I entered the room. So he went into the room next door, came out on its balcony, adjoined to mine, and stepped over the small railing separating us so he could help me get back into my room and undo the night latch from the inside.

We tried lifting the door out of the frame or unlatching it. It would not budge. Ten minutes later, a maintenance man arrived bearing a three-foot-long flat steel rod. He unscrewed the frame from the sliding door, slid the steel through, and unlatched it.

It's so easy to lock doors behind ourselves and not realize what's happened until it's too late. Whether we just accept our fate or find ways or help to unlock those doors depends on whether we're green and growing or ripe and rotting. If we are stagnant in our same old thinking as the world changes around us we can become trapped.

The American author and humorist said, "twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

This issue provides webinars, personal growth strategies, and leadership approaches that challenge conventional thinking and stretch growth in new directions. I hope it helps you to explore, dream, discover -- and avoid being trapped by old thinking that latches doors behind you.

## Webinar on Demand: *Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development*

Would you like to help your leaders increase employee engagement by up to 8 times, double or triple their motivation to implement a personal development plan, build coaching and leadership skills around natural strengths, make performance appraisals an inspiring event people look forward to, and double rates of improvement from 360 feedback?



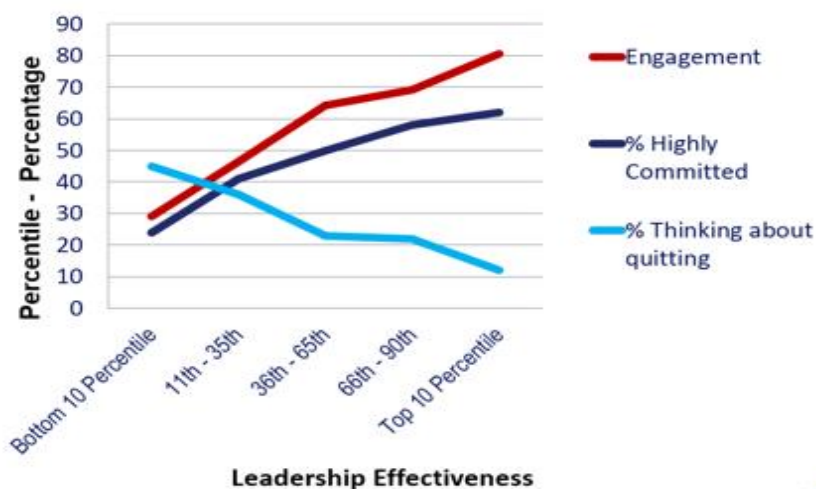
As farfetched as those BHAGs (big hairy audacious goals) sound they're grounded in evidence-based leadership research. I addressed this research in my complimentary webinar on **Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development**. Two objectives in this webinar were to summarize counterintuitive new research on coaching and leadership skill development and show how these approaches are breaking new ground -- and significantly boosting results.

Here's the agenda I **covered in the webinar** :

1. Same Old Approaches = Same Old Results
2. Building Coaching and Leadership Strengths
3. Critical Differences Between Traditional 360s and a Strengths-Based 360
4. Cross Training: A Revolutionary New Approach to Building Strengths
5. Six Steps to Extraordinary Coaching
6. Possible Next Steps
7. Q &A

An example of some research I discussed is shown in this chart:

### Impact of Leadership Effectiveness



This correlation was brought home recently in a coaching session with a leader. He was resisting the connection between his 360 feedback report on his leadership effectiveness and the disappointing engagement levels of his direct reports. But the data from him and his cohort of 20 other leaders also going through the assessment and development process showed the highest and lowest rated leaders also had the corresponding highest and lowest levels of engagement of their direct reports.

Click on **Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development** to watch the webinar. Covering these topics in a short, condensed webinar is like skipping across ice bergs with so much more below the surface. Here's where you can dive deeper below the surface of what was covered:

- **How Extraordinary Leaders Double Profit**
- **Leadership Under the Microscope**
- **"Strengthen Leadership Skills by Awakening the Force"**
- **"Traditional versus Strengths-Based 360 Assessments"**
- **"9 Problems with 360 Multi-Rater Assessments"**
- **"Avoiding 7 Coaching Traps That Snare Many Managers"**
- **"Bringing Science to the Art of Coaching"**

## More about my Groundbreaking Webinar to Boost Leadership and Coaching Development

Bill Bryson's book, *A Short History of Nearly Everything* is an extremely entertaining -- at times LOL funny -- recap of some of the world's biggest shifts in scientific understanding. He cites many humorous, and sometimes tragic, examples of prominent scientists who can't change their thinking despite mounting evidence to the contrary.

Here's an example:

"As late as 1909, the great British physicist J. J. Thomson was insisting, 'The ether is not a fantastic creation of the speculative philosopher; it is as essential to us as the air we breathe' -- this more than four years after it was pretty incontestably established that it didn't exist. People, in short, were really attached to the ether."



While not as sharp and clear as the existence of ether, I am continually struck by how much difficulty senior HR/OD/training leaders and operating executives have in letting go of old ideas about leadership and coaching skill development that are now proven to be less effective or just not so.

I covered some of this research in last month's complimentary webinar, **Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development**. Here's some of the counterintuitive and research findings I touched on:

- Why current development approaches aren't filling the leadership pipeline
- Key leadership and coaching competencies that have the greatest impact on productivity, engagement, turnover, sales, customer service, safety, and profitability
- How to outperform by building on strengths rather than focusing on weakness
- How to make 360 assessments 2-3 times more effective and a positive experience

- How cross-training moves leaders and performers from good to great
- Common coaching traps that diminish effectiveness
- Key coaching skills and an effective coaching culture
- Strategies to strengthen employee engagement
- Guiding highly effective coaching conversations

Go to [Groundbreaking New Approaches to Leadership and Coaching Development](#) to view the session.

If you watch the webinar, perhaps you'll see with new eyes the truth of Umair Haq's advice, "It's only when you drop yesterday's assumptions that you can glimpse tomorrow's patterns and possibilities."

## Why Most Personal Development Plans Fail - and How to Fix It

A sure path to marital unhappiness -- if not divorce -- is when a newlywed sets out to change his or her spouse. Yet how many performance management discussions are built on the same premise? Too often managers set about trying to "improve" his or her direct report by fixing weaker areas.

How enthused are you about fixing a weakness? Weaker areas are often weaker because we don't enjoy doing those things. It's a chore. Like New Year's resolutions, when our hearts not in the task we feel obligated rather than energized. Fairly quickly those development goals fade and we drift back to what we find most rewarding.



Joe Folkman's recent *Forbes* column appeared as I was preparing a progress report on the personal development and one-on-one executive coaching of over a dozen high potential leaders with a major global manufacturer. In [The No. 1 Reason Most Personal Development Plans Fail](#), Joe highlights the magnifying power of the CPO model in turning good managers into great leaders.

This three step process starts with identifying strengths (Competencies) to be leveraged. Unless there's a glaring weakness or fatal flaw that needs to be addressed, building strengths is 2 to 3 times more effective than fixing weaknesses. Strength building leads naturally into identifying which competencies generate the most energy (Passion). This is when we're "in the zone" -- that state of flow where time zips by and we feel most masterful. The third step is aligning our strengths and passion with what's most valued/expected in our role or position (Organizational Need).

My report to the CEO and HR/OD leaders on the work with their high potential leaders showed the exponential power of the CPO model. We started the process with these leaders with one-on-one coaching sessions to understand their career and development goals. In the next session we reviewed 360 feedback on their strengths as seen by their manager, direct report, peers, and others. As we so often see, many of these high potential leaders underrated -- and underused -- their strengths.

Each leader then built a Personal Development Plan around his or her **leadership sweet spot** of strengths, passion, and organizational need. Energy and follow through is much higher than traditional performance improvement planning or leadership training.

Helping leaders find their leadership sweet spot and build their Personal Development Plans based on a strengths-based 360 assessment is highly fulfilling. I am looking forward to doing that with a limited number of participants this June in Toronto. Click on [\*\*Extraordinary Leader and Extraordinary Coach public workshops\*\*](#) for details if you'd like to join us.

## Webinar: How to Develop Strategic Vision - 8 Critical Behaviors

Alvin Toffler, former associate editor of *Fortune* and bestselling author of books such as *Future Shock*, *The Third Wave*, and *Powershift* advises, "You've got to think about 'big things' while you're doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction."

This is an update of ancient wisdom from the Roman philosopher, Seneca the Younger, "When a sailor does not know what harbour he is making for, no wind is the right wind."



Strategic vision is one of the most crucial competencies for effective leaders to possess. Interestingly, it is one of the most often quoted weaknesses.

Some of the most common comments we hear about a person's area of weakness are, "This person is not strategic. This person is not perceived as looking at the longer term, the broader view of the organization's vision and mission. They are stuck in the same way of getting things done. They are not skillful in helping others to understand the vision so that it can be translated into challenging and meaningful goals. They are not able to connect the big picture to tactics and short-term goals." This is a problem.

Last month Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman provided a complimentary webinar, [\*\*How to Develop Strategic Vision - Eight Critical Behaviors\*\*](#), that answered these questions:

- How many leaders with strategic vision does an organization need?
- How do you go about developing that vision?
- What does strategic vision do for the firm and the individual?
- What does an individual need in order to truly execute well for their organization?
- What is required to coach leaders on strategic direction and vision?

[Click here](#) to watch the archived webinar to learn the eight proven companion behaviors that most strategic leaders possess and how you can develop them.

## How Recognition Programs Can Reduce Productivity and Decrease Motivation

A study recently published in *Organization Science* ("Motivational Spillovers from Awards: Crowding Out in a Multitasking Environment" ) reviewed the results of data from an attendance award program at one of five laundry plants in the U.S. Midwest. They concluded:

- *"Reward-motivated employees responded positively to the awards by reducing tardiness, but gamed the system to maintain eligibility using sick days and reverted back to poor attendance behavior when they lost eligibility in a given month.*
- *The awards crowded out intrinsic motivation in internally-motivated employees, who were already performing well by coming on time in the absence of rewards. These employees had increased tardiness after the program was implemented and they lost eligibility.*
- *The awards decreased motivation and productivity for internally-motivated workers, suggesting these employees were unhappy because of fairness and equity concerns.*
- *In total, the award program cost the plant 1.4 percent of daily productivity, mainly because of the lost productivity by internally-motivated employees."*



Bribing people to perform turns them into mercenaries. It debases, degrades, and demeans work. It sets a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle into motion -- incentives, inducements, rewards, and the like leave people feeling manipulated and overly focused on what they get for complying with management's goals and direction (tuned only to WIFM -- "what's in it for me").

The emptier work is, the more people look elsewhere for fulfillment; so they demand more money and incentives to continue working in such a meaningless, unfulfilling job (which then "proves" to managers that people won't improve their performance unless they're bribed to do so). Incentives are rarely an effective rallying point for high performance. That's often because extrinsic rewards don't provide deeper meaning and inspiration for a bigger cause and purpose.

Weak managers try to use incentives as a motivator to direct behavior. Strong leaders shower their teams and organizations with recognition and rewards to reinforce desired behavior:

### **Traditional Management Approach**

- Lead with to manipulate, control, and direct behavior
- Do it to employees to push motivational buttons
- Paternalistic pats on the head
- Management decides who gets rewarded and recognized for meeting their goals
- Assume performance problems are from lazy, unmotivated, and uncaring people

### **Leadership-Based Approach**

- Follow with to support organization change and improvement
- Do it with people to develop meaningful systems and practices
- Participative, respectful partnerships
- Customer input helps management and partners decide who and how to reward and recognize
- Poorly designed systems, structures, and processes leave people feeling powerless and uncaring

How are you or your organization using rewards and recognition?

See **Recognition, Appreciation, and Celebration** for more on pitfalls and traps, do's and don'ts, Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm..., keys, and other resources.

## 5 Causes of Leadership Team Communication Breakdowns

Communication is critical to team and organization effectiveness.  
Communication is the lifeblood of trust, cooperation, and teamwork.

But communications is a complex topic with many interconnected elements. Communication breakdowns are a major problem that prevents many leadership teams from being highly effective and leading their organizations to peak performance.



Many breakdowns in leadership communications can be traced to one or more of these common causes:

**The team isn't united in strategic priorities** - a team of horses pulling a heavy wagon in different directions can only end in disaster. If leaders are working in their individual silos and don't have a common focus they'll work at cross-purposes. Growing friction provides the heat to push the team further apart.

**Sending conflicting messages** - in one company, head office became known as Puzzle Palace. People in the branches and field offices heard one VP after another come to town delivering different messages. Cost, quality, innovation, safety, production, and customer service were given widely differing levels of emphasis and importance.

**Behaviors don't model the desired culture or values** - the most effective communication is face-to-face. But the most believable communication is behavior. People in today's workplaces have highly sensitive "BS meters" and are quick to spot and label a leader as phony or the real deal.

**Little personal feedback on leadership behaviors** - we judge ourselves by our intentions. No one else can read our thoughts so they can only judge us by our actions. Less effective leaders don't have effective tools and channels that provide ways for their team members and others to give them honest feedback.

**Not safe to discuss moose-on-the-table** - touchy or politically sensitive topics are often avoided. Everyone knows there's a big critter (moose, elephant, 800 pound gorilla) in the room but everyone's pretending it's not there.

How's your team communication? Which one or two of these factors might be derailing your team? How do you know? Compounding the problem is that less effective leaders often think their teams don't have these problems. They don't know what they don't know.

## The Multiplier Effect of a Strong Leader

"We all have our boss horror stories. The underminer. The bad communicator. The credit hog. The snake. Then again, if we're lucky, we've all had those amazing bosses as well -- the supervisor who encourages all employees to take their work up to the next level; the manager who makes everyone around them look better."



This all too true observation comes from Michael Blanding in, "What's a Boss Worth?" just published by *Working Knowledge* from Harvard Business School.

Michael's article cites new research from Harvard Business School Assistant Professor Christopher Stanton. Stanton and his coauthors worked with a technology services company that tracked all workers' transaction times. Since supervisors were rotated frequently and team productivity was carefully tracked it was possible to isolate and compare the impact of the leader on the team's effectiveness.

Once they reviewed all the data they concluded that "replacing a boss who was in the bottom 10 percent of the distribution with a boss who was in the top 10 percent had the same effect as adding another whole worker to a nine-person team -- a huge effect for such a small variation in quality."

This is yet more evidence of the strong need for effective leadership development. Of course, not all leadership development efforts actually change behavior and helps the leader to be more effective. When it does -- as shown in Stanton's research -- the payback can be substantial.

In a two minute video clip on **The Impact of Leadership on Employee Turnover** you can catch me presenting our 360 data on the multiplying -- or diminishing -- effect of the boss' effectiveness on his or her direct reports. I also discuss "on the job retirement" of disengaged people brought about by weak leaders.

For more research and data on the pivotal impact of leadership, view these links:

- **How Extraordinary Leaders Double Profits**
- **"The Cascading Effect of Good and Bad Leaders"**
- **"A Leadership Combination for 10 Times Higher Employee Engagement"**
- **"Demanding Leaders are Much More Effective - and More Likable"**
- **"Coaching Skills Have a Huge Impact on Employee Engagement"**

## 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:



Specific and key behaviors that team leaders can further develop to boost the effectiveness of their teams.

**"5 Ways to Build a High-Performance Team"** -- Joe Folkman

[www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

*"To understand specifically what led to high performance, we focused on a measure that evaluated the extent to which the team environment was a place where people would go the extra mile."*

Inspired by this summer's Olympics, a humorous 3 minute video illustrating a key coaching technique in dealing with a late employee.

**"High Dive for Meaning"** -- video clip

[www.zengerfolkman.com](http://www.zengerfolkman.com)

*"Learn the value of diving deep in coaching conversations during this first video installment of the Zenger Folkman Coaching Games!"*

Watch this two minute video for an overview of ZF's latest research and powerful new leadership development workshop.

**"Leadership Levers: Building Critical Strengths"**

[www.zengerfolkman.com](http://www.zengerfolkman.com)

*"Research on over 75 thousand global leaders across all industries shows that there are six critical capabilities, or 'Leadership Levers,' employed by those who produce extraordinary business results."*

Looking forward to attending another powerful Summit with outstanding speakers and a few intense days of learning and networking.

**2016 Extraordinary Leadership Summit**

*Zenger Folkman's premier conference where leadership development professionals gather to learn new insights and cutting-edge leadership trends from experts in the industry.*

## Read *The Leader Letter* in Twice Weekly Installments

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



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

## Feedback and Follow-Up

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