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In his classic book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, American mythologist and writer, Joseph Campbell outlined common steps to the hero's journey. These cut across cultures, times, and every society's stories, fairy tales, novels, and movies. We're all living in our own novel. We write a page each day of our own action adventure.

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung built much of his early to mid-20th century pioneering psychology around the idea of universal archetypes that form models of our core personality types. These include child, hero, mother, wise old man, and trickster or fox. (The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and other personality models are rooted in this work.) It's fascinating and can be very revealing to contemplate what archetypes or roles we're playing at different points in the various legs of our life's journey. Sometimes our levels of courage determine how deeply we examine our mental frameworks and deal with adversity in our life.



Here's a process to map your life journey, or many of the smaller excursions along the way. We could start by using these steps to reflect on our journey so far, and draw key lessons from them in preparation for our ongoing voyage and the unforeseeable side trips that still lie ahead.

1. What's My Call to Adventure/Change/Growth?
 - Crisis/Loss (health, death, financial, job, or major market/political shift)?
 - Major event (birth of children, marriage, death of loved ones, restructuring, new job)?
 - Big projects (major innovation, merger/acquisition, new home)?
 - Personal/spiritual quest?
2. What's my reluctance/resistance to growth/change?
3. What are the rewards of change or costs of failing to change/grow?
4. Who are my mentors/coaches?
5. What are the thresholds (barriers) I need to cross?
6. How will I keep myself positive and optimistic as I navigate negative situations?
7. How/when will I continually assess progress and refocus?
8. How am I visualizing my happy ending for this change?

As outlined in this issue, a career coaching conversation coincided with our recent overhaul of my **LinkedIn profile**. Both were reminders of the importance of stepping back periodically to review our life story so far. This can help us to plot the direction we'd like to take in our next chapter.

Career Check Up and LinkedIn Profile Revisions

Erin (not her real name) is a rising high potential director now reporting to a new VP. He was hired from the outside with a mandate to revitalize their department. Erin is upset and struggling. The personal values and leadership approaches that made her so effective were seen as too soft and not results-focused enough by her new boss. As she became increasingly frustrated, she asked for career coaching on leaving her company and entering the training and consulting field.



We discussed her career highlights, strengths, passions, and aspirations. She was so caught up in the stress and frustration of dealing with her boss, she'd lost sight of the bigger picture. We discussed the differences between a job, career, or calling. As she sat back and painted the vision of her ideal future it became apparent to her that most of what she wanted was available to her in her current company. She needed to sharpen her skills of **upward leadership and learn how to manage her boss more effectively**.

The coaching conversation with Erin coincided with us recently updating my LinkedIn profile. We decided to move beyond treating my profile like a resume and focus on my core strengths and skills. This exercise was a powerful reminder of the value of stepping back periodically and looking at where our strengths, passions, and Client/organization needs intersect. Go to <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jimclemmer> if you'd like to see where I landed on culture change, executive coaching, keynotes, retreats, and workshops. If we're not already connected, please send me an invitation to connect.

As we spring into a new season of growth, here are suggestions for a career check up to keep you growing:

- What are your career highlights? What strengths, passions, and circumstances came together to create those high points?
- Describe key elements of your ideal job. How does that fit into a bigger picture of your ideal personal/family relationships, social life, community involvement, financial picture, health and well-being, and/or spiritual growth?
- What's your balance of **having** (position, stuff, power, and security), **should-ing** (family, friends, society or others "should-ing on you") or **being** (mindfulness, aligned with strengths/passions, values, or loving/giving)? Is it time to rebalance your priorities?
- If your current role feels like you're heading off to day prison every morning, you can't energize and effectively lead others. Don't wait for your "fairy job mother" to magically appear. Figure out what your ideal job is and go find it or create it or realign your work with your passions.
- If you're a sumo wrestler, don't waste time trying to be a ballerina. Are you a race horse trying to fly? Play to your strengths. Don't let your limitations or weaknesses define you.
- Keep a private blessings and brag list. Use it to reenergize yourself when things aren't going well or you're having a "doubt day."

During a career check-up, you might not want to do a major revision of your LinkedIn profile. But you can use a similar process to reflect on your 3 or 4 key areas of expertise, what you love and excel at doing, and successful experiences you've had. You can use a version of the template I used to focus on what you do, who you currently or ideally would work with, how your approach for that skill works best, what differentiates you from others doing similar work, and what co-workers or others have told you about your strengths. Go to

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jimclemmer> and adapt a similar approach for yourself around your major skill areas or competencies.

How to Boost Leadership Team (and Culture) Performance

Many organizations are struggling with low or mediocre levels of employee engagement, customer service, quality, safety, productivity, and innovation. This reflects uninspiring cultures of mediocrity created by harried leaders madly scrambling to keep up.

An organization's culture ripples out from the senior leadership team leading it. In "**Is Your Leadership Team Slipping into These Traps?**" I outlined seven common traps snaring many teams. Priority overload, unaligned change programs, leadership lip service, not building capacity for change, poorly run meetings, conflicting messages, and lack of follow up are typical culture shortfalls that start at the top. We then developed a brief assessment to help leadership teams look in the performance mirror; **Seven Leadership Team Failure Factors**.



As I was working with a senior leadership team (SLT) recently it became apparent that the root cause of many of their struggles was lack of clarity about their role and their key team processes. Their weekly meetings were becoming highly frustrating and a waste of time. Like a rowing team with one set of oars locked into one side of the boat, they were rowing in circles. The faster they rowed, the quicker they spun around.

Here are a few tips to help your SLT get all its oars in the water and move forward together:

- **Agree on your team's roles and responsibilities** – are you primarily together to share information and updates or make collective decisions and set action plans?
- **Don't waste valuable team time on updates** – find other ways to keep team members informed. Put your heads together to deal with the most important issues.
- **Separate operations from strategy** – periodically step back from daily operations to look at culture, strategy, policies, and the team's dynamics and effectiveness.
- **Don't confuse information and communication** – everyone says "we need more communication around here." Almost no one asks for more e-mails. Most teams need a much better balance.
- **Improve your meeting effectiveness** – bring discipline and focus to your meetings. Use a robust discussion structure with the purpose, desired outcomes, decision type (Command, Consultative, or Consensus), and action plan for every agenda item. Agree on behavior ground rules and call each other when you drift off track.
- **Follow through and follow up** – document who, what, when, where (and sometimes why) of your decisions and action plans. Start your next meeting with these. Make your decisions stick.
- **Encourage healthy debates** – the best decisions come from vigorous discussions arguing all sides of important issues. Learn to have courageous conversations that focus on the topic or problem and not personalities.

An organization's culture reflects the dynamics and behavior of its senior leadership team. Culture development starts with team development.

How Coachable Are You and Your Leaders?

Often a "dragon investor" on the Dragon's Den TV show or a "shark investor" on the Shark Tank show will decide not to invest in a hopeful contestant's company because he or she feels the budding entrepreneur isn't "coachable." An article in *Entrepreneur* magazine on how to attract venture capital investors lists coachability as one of the key factors. Examples abound of professional athletes upping his or her game to elite levels by seeking out and acting on coaching advice.



Coachability is also a major factor in leadership effectiveness. Zenger Folkman reviewed 360 feedback on 51,642 leaders to assess how perceptions from direct reports, peers, their manager, and others of their self-development practices correlated with their overall leadership effectiveness. The differences were stark. The very least coachable in the bottom 10% were about **9 times** less effective leaders than the top 10%. Even leaders with average coachability were about half as effective as highly coachable leaders.



Last month Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman presented a 45-minute webinar on ***Coachability. How Coachable Are Your Leaders?*** They were joined by Kevin Wilde, former head of talent and learning at General Mills and General Electric.

The webinar covered:

- Coachability by nine box placement results
- Coachability among those designated as high potentials
- Coachability by age and management level
- The links between a leader's coachability and engagement of his or her direct reports
- How circumstances and organizational practices reduce coachability
- How senior leaders can get honest feedback

- 8 attitudes that make people more coachable

How coachable are you? How about your leaders? When scheduled into a leadership development event or coaching process are your leaders prisoners, tourists, or learners? It's been said that no one should ever try to teach a pig to whistle. It wastes your time and annoys the pig. Are development dollars being wasted on uncoachable leaders?

[Click here](#) to view 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:

Joe uncovered six counterintuitive themes showing the negative impact of leaders giving advice.

"Advice For Those Who Believe They Give Great Advice" -- Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"Some may believe that giving others advice would raise other's perceptions of a leader's overall effectiveness. After all, doesn't it demonstrate their knowledge and insights? No, it does not."

Ever-growing research is updating the ancient wisdom and practice of mindfulness and awareness of our emotions.

"Emotional Agility: How To Master Inner Challenges Without Getting Derailed" -- Jack Zenger
www.forbes.com

"Emotional agility is fundamentally the ability to be with and be healthy with our thoughts, emotions, and stories — even ones that might be troubling or concerning."

Setbacks and failures are inevitable. Bouncing back and becoming even stronger is optional.

"New Research: 7 Ways To Become A More Resilient Leader" -- Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"The seven characteristics are the result of research from more than 500 leaders. Choosing to improve on even a few of these factors will help you to be seen as more resilient."

Research showing the key approaches of the best senior teams and how their leadership determines organizational performance.

"The Five Traits of Highly Adaptive Leadership Teams" -- Roseline Torres and Nneka Rimmer
www.bcgperspectives.com

In a volatile and uncertain business environment, top teams must be more than just high-performing. They also need to adapt and thrive, regardless of the turbulence they face.

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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