



## Issue 182 - May 2018

"The whole human side is now more important than skills or IQ. Everything we hear from clients is about the human aspects of leadership," reports Rajeev Vasudeva, CEO of the Egon Zehnder executive recruiting firm. In a feature article on today's "ultra-tight job market," *Fortune* magazine concludes, "across industries, employers are prizing people skills, the so-called soft skills, more highly than before."



Jason Baumgarten, a search consultant at Spencer Stuart, advises leaders to attract today's top talent by "making people feel they're part of an organization that matters." Adds HR chief at Intuit, Sherry Whiteley, people today "want to make a difference. They're very purpose-driven." A study of 500 global CEOs by Egon Zehnder found that "building an emotional connection" has become a key leadership objective.

These trends also show up in a recent LinkedIn survey of 1,200 talent developers, 2,200 employees, 400 people managers, and 200 executives. The "Workplace Learning Report" found, "among all groups the top priority for talent development in 2018 was training for soft skills."

Here are a few key points of the report:

- "...the pace of change is fueling demand for adaptable, critical thinkers, communicators, and leaders.
- Leadership skills are in high demand... (to) inspire others, not only to do their own tasks but to come along on the ride to success... no company can survive without them.
- Lack of collaboration can put the brakes on even the simplest task, once an environment of trust is established, collaboration skills can be taught.
- With targeted training and mentoring, a business can develop or polish the communication skills employees need to work effectively.
- As the workforce goes global, so does the need for training -- across time zones and even cultural norms.
- Learning and career development is at the core of the employee experience and personalization is critical to engaging a multi-generational workforce with varied learning needs."

"Soft skills" are core elements in leadership effectiveness and high performing cultures. It's a central thread running throughout this issue. The 4th Canadian conference on the emerging science of Positive Psychology is drilling ever deeper into clarifying what makes individuals, teams, and organizations flourish. The first global assessment of the current state of organizational excellence is your chance to be part of important research and assess the state of your own culture. Excellence models are becoming ever better maps on balancing the hard data, analysis, and processes of management with the soft emotions, people, and culture of leadership. And you can see how customer service levels reflect just how balanced and effective an organization's culture really is.

Two decades of Emotional Intelligence research clearly shows that understanding and controlling our own emotions while making emotional connections with others is a vital component of personal, team, and

organization effectiveness. As we know by the lack of leadership effectiveness in so many organizations, consistently practicing those "soft skills" can be really hard.

## 4th Canadian Conference on Positive Psychology and Wellbeing

Work is a four-letter cuss word for too many people. Monday morning is often the toughest time of their week. Too many people are mumbling, "I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go" as they trudge off to check into their "day prison."

In other workplaces people are leaping out of bed in the morning excited to get to work. They are feeling highly fulfilled and energized by their co-workers and their workplace. Many people in these organizations feel that their co-workers and leaders enhance their well-being with a healthy and productive workplace.



Building healthier workplaces is one of the reasons I am really looking forward to attending and speaking to the **4th Canadian Conference on Positive Psychology: "Bridging Canadian Wellbeing"** at the University of Toronto on May 23 to 25. More than 500 researchers, organizational leaders, educators, clinical practitioners, coaches, and development professionals will explore how to help individuals, organizations, and communities flourish.

For the past few decades I've followed the ground-breaking work of Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania. Based on his extensive research, articles and books, and his 1998 term as elected president of the American Psychological Association he's now considered the founder of the burgeoning new field of positive psychology -- defined as "the science of happiness, well-being, and what makes life worth living."

A central approach in positive psychology is building on strengths. That's much more effective than focusing on weaknesses, gaps, and what's wrong. See "**Positive Psychology, Strengths, and Leadership**" and "**Strengths, Positivity, and Halo Effects**" for more background on Seligman's work, this new field of study, and my deep and abiding interest in these approaches. Our **Positive Psychology** resource section also has over two dozen blogs, book reviews, and articles on this powerful new discipline.

Team or organizational culture is a core factor in creating energizing or enervating workplaces. And that culture ripples out from the team or organization's managers. Numerous studies show that the single biggest factor in employee satisfaction and well-being is the immediate manager or supervisor. The daily work environment -- how team members treat each other, respect, trust, communication, relationships, shared ownership for group goals, understanding and buying-in to the why of changes, autonomy, having a say in daily work, job design -- are paramount to engagement.

My conference presentation on "Leveraging Leadership Strengths with a 360 Assessment and Development Process" will draw from Zenger Folkman's extensive and continuing research in ***The Extraordinary Leader*** development system. Over the past six years The CLEMMER Group has helped over a thousand leaders leverage their strengths using this powerful feedback and development process (I am facilitating **public workshops on *The Extraordinary Leader* and *The Extraordinary Coach*** in Mississauga on June 21 and 22)

Studies continue to show that workplace stress and low engagement levels are a big and growing problem. Helping leaders leverage his or her strengths to increase leadership effectiveness has a major impact on the workplace environment and everyone's health and wellbeing.

# Global Organization Excellence Index: What's the State of Your Culture?

Over the last few decades, research on the key elements of top performing organizations has dramatically increased. When I wrote *Firing on all Cylinders*, organization effectiveness frameworks focused on service and quality improvement and were just being developed in Canada, the U.S., Japan, Europe and other countries. The book's "cylinders" framework draws from that research and the work our consulting companies (The Achieve Group and Zenger Miller) were doing at that time.



When I wrote *Pathways to Performance*, organizational excellence research had grown and broadened further. As we helped Clients with their **culture development efforts**, we merged those experiences with continuing OE research to evolve our **Transformation Pathways** assessment and implementation framework.

Dawn Ringrose's career has followed a similar path through three decades of evolving organizational excellence models and approaches. Today she is Canada's representative on the Organizational Excellence Technical Committee (OETC) and Global Benchmarking Network (GBN). Recently the OETC launched the **first global assessment of the current state of organizational excellence** and the work has been supported by the GBN, International Academy for Quality and ISO Technical Committee 176.

This project is "intended to provide data on the extent to which organizations are characterized by the principles and the best management practices of high performing organizations that are found in excellence models." The principles are "a reflection of the culture of excellence that exists in the organization and include:

1. Leadership Involvement
2. Alignment
3. Focus on the Customer
4. People Involvement
5. Prevention Based Process Management
6. Partnership Development
7. Continuous Improvement
8. Data Based Decision Making
9. Societal Commitment"

The project centers on an assessment tool based on Dawn's research and development of the **Organizational Excellence Framework**. You can help your own organization/culture development work and contribute to the research by completing the Teaser or **Full Assessment**. The five minute "**teaser assessment**" provides an opportunity to assess the culture of excellence in your organization and delivers a feedback report to your inbox. The Full Assessment provides a more robust diagnostic of your organization on the culture of excellence and deployment of best management practices. When the final report is completed, and the aggregate results are shared, it will provide an opportunity for you to benchmark your organization with others by size, industry sector and country (region).

Teaching a pig to sing wastes your time and annoys the pig. While training and development programs aren't at that level of futility, many try to "development dip" participants in a one-off effort and then put them back into the same organization culture. I've been a "monomaniac on a mission" about integrating leadership and training efforts within a larger culture/organization development effort. So much money and time has been wasted with isolated efforts that don't provide broader context, support, and follow through.

This framework and research continues the evolutionary path of bringing together approaches like Lean/Six Sigma, Quality, OD/OE (Organization Development/Effectiveness), L & D (Learning and Development) Talent

Management, and Culture Change/Development. Take these assessments to gauge the state of your culture and development efforts.

And you'll contribute to continuous improvement of global research **on making organizations stronger for people and people stronger for organizations.**

## Boost Customer Service with a Culture That Serves the Servers

With years of travel I've experienced the full range of frontline servers. Some are warm, friendly, and genuinely want to help. They seem to have bounced out of bed that morning thinking "how can I brighten our customers' day?" Others are sour and surly. For them, customer service is an oxymoron and a huge pain in the paycheck.

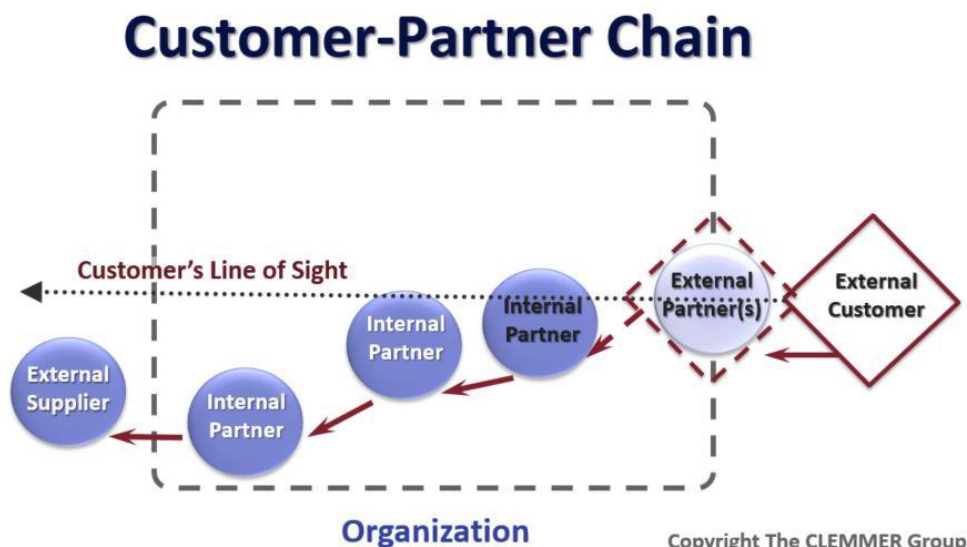


A minority of servers are born to serve or born to snarl. It's the large group in the middle that makes or breaks an organization's service levels. They could go in either direction. Their customer service efforts reflect the service levels they're getting from the organization.

IBM draws a direct link between employee engagement and customer service. Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Diane Gherson, said, "We've found that employee engagement explains two-thirds of our client experience scores. And if we're able to increase client satisfaction by five points on an account, we see an extra 20% in revenue, on average."

This link is consistent with research by Disney Institute and McKinsey & Company as reported in "**Put Employees First to Delight Customers**", "**American Express Boosts Customer Service with Transformed Leadership and Culture**", and a Wharton study showing **to improve customer service, treat your employees better.**

The Customer Service Chain is often a useful visual in building a culture of serving the servers to boost the customer experience and live up to the organization's brand promise. Its core message is "if you're not serving customers directly, you need to serve someone who is."





## 7 Tips for Co-Creating a Higher Service Culture:

1. Draw a customer-partner chain for your organization. Start with a key customer segment and work your way back through external partners and each team or department to external suppliers. Help everyone see where they fit in the big picture.
2. Regularly bring the voice of the customer and actual customers into your organization. Take support staff who rarely deal with customers out to meet them.
3. Update customer and internal partner performance data frequently (daily or weekly) and make visible to everyone.
4. Work with servers to systematically identify root causes of service problems and involve them in a continuous improvement process.
5. Post service trend charts and customer experience/process maps for all servers to keep score and stay engaged in the improvement process.
6. Continuously ask servers to identify and prioritize what's getting in the way of higher service levels and involve them in addressing the issues.
7. Make it easy and painless for internal partners to raise issues and concerns. Respond promptly and systematically to analyze the trends for improvements.

I often encounter caring servers who want to respond to my request or help me deal with a service problem. Many times, they're as frustrated as I am with the situation and their inability to solve it. Too often I've heard some version of, "Please complete our survey or make a complaint about this. Nobody listens to me. Maybe they'll do something about it if enough customers like you complain loud enough."

## 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:

### **A good checklist of key steps to boost a leader's development work with their team members.**

**"10 Powerful Ways to Develop Your Employees"** -- Dan McCarthy  
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com>

*"Investing in the development of employees is the most important and rewarding thing a manager can do. Yet for some reason, it's often the last thing on a manager's 'to do' list."*

### **Jack provides six steps with practical applications for building self confidence and self-esteem.**

**"The Confidence Gap In Men And Women: Why It Matters And How To Overcome It"**-- Jack Zenger  
[www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

*"Research shows that women's confidence increases more with age than men's. But consider the many opportunities lost in early years because of fear and lack of confidence."*

Zenger Folkman research shows how what you don't know badly hurts your leadership effectiveness.

**"Most Leaders Know Their Strengths — but Are Oblivious to Their Weaknesses"** -- Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman

<https://hbr.org>

*"Our data shows that someone who is perceived very poorly on any single, important leadership trait pays a high price."*

Yet more recognition that "soft skills" play a vital role in producing hard results - especially in changing times.

**"Employers' top training priority for 2018? Soft skills"** -- Riia O'Donnell

<https://www.hrdiver.com>

*"New research shows that qualities like collaboration, leadership and communication are increasingly mission-critical in a business climate of change and disruption."*

## 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](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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