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During a keynote presentation on balancing technical expertise, management, and leadership at a company conference of senior managers, I discussed how very smart managers with deep technical expertise frequently direct rather than develop others (often seen as micromanaging). Really bright "techno-managers" can come across as "if I want any of your ideas, I'll give them to you."

A participant (we'll call Rachel) recognized this in herself and e-mailed me for advice on changing that tendency.

She wrote, "I've often struggled because I see things faster and more clearly than others. In projects where I am not the leader or where timing isn't insane, this isn't insurmountable. (I) breathe, relax, and enjoy helping others to grasp what they don't see. But when I'm leading a team with really tight timelines, I get stressed and feel like I don't have time to go slow. I think I inadvertently send the message to my team that I don't want to hear their input (I do, but I wish they were able to grasp things faster). Any advice on how to keep making progress, but not make the team feel that they're left behind?"



The fastest path to changing this bad habit starts with a 360 assessment. Rachel has taken an important first step; recognizing her tendency under pressure. Awareness and unfiltered feedback are vital to making many behavior shifts.

Rachel's put her finger on an all too common challenge for many team and project leaders. She was promoted to team/project leader because of her technical skills, experience, and ability to get things done. She's bright and quick with good intuition and a fast understanding of what's needed.

But coming up with strong solutions that aren't well supported by team implementation will sputter and usually fail. Rachel is building co-dependence on her as the chief problem solver and crisis manager. Increasingly, her team will back off, look to Rachel for solutions, and weaken their own crisis/problem-solving competence and confidence.

Rachel has raced right into a major speed trap. Managers under stress who feel like "I don't have time to go slow" often compound their problems by speeding up. This is a classic lose/lose: her stress goes up, and her team feels undervalued and less engaged.

Are you taking care of busyness? Have you fallen into a similar trap as Rachel? The first post in this issue features a 2-minute video and a new Mind Your Own Busyness quiz. Take some time to complete it so you can slow down to speed up.

How leaders frame change efforts can also save time, frustration, and speed implementation. Too many impatient leaders rush headlong into a common trap that gets them stuck in a swamp of resistance. Find out if your change leadership is raising or lowering resistance.

Underlying Rachel's challenges, resistance to change, and most failing busyness is ignorance. Many leaders don't know what they don't know. Low levels of feedback and weak coaching skills mean the leader is unaware of their leadership tendencies. So, the treadmill speeds up as personal, team, and organization effectiveness slows down.

Are you Taking Care of Busyness?

How many times has this happened to you? You FINALLY take the time (often not that much) to learn a skill or connect with an expert and wind up with time savings that pay back again and again:

- You're struggling to find a Word shortcut you think will save time. After endless searching through menus, you finally just Google it and a two-minute YouTube video shows you exactly what you need to do. You realize you've wasted hours over the past few months.
- Meetings often get off track, run late, and waste time. You see a skilled meeting leader focus the meeting agenda, keep participants on topic, and close discussions with action steps. You tighten up your meetings and save time.
- You take the time to show one of your team members how to deal with a recurring problem. He now handles it the next time it comes up.



When we're too busy to learn, we waste even more time. As busyness booms, the accelerating treadmill means we work harder just to keep up.

Are you taking care of busyness and working overtime? Get off the speeding treadmill for 10 minutes and take our [Mind Your Own Busyness](#) quiz to find out.

I am sticking my nose in your busyness. How'd you do on the 'going out of busyness' scales of our quiz? Have you fallen into the busy-manager trap? Based on five years of research studying 500 managers, Heike Bruch and Sumantra Ghoshal, published their conclusions in a *Harvard Business Review* article, "Beware the Busy Manager:"

"Fully 90% of managers squander their time in all sorts of ineffective activities... the smallest proportion of managers we studied -- around 10% -- were both highly energetic and highly focused. Not only do such managers put in more effort than their counterparts, but they also achieve critical, long-term goals more often... spend their time in a committed, purposeful, and reflective manner."

Decades of leadership research has settled the debate and put to rest [the myth of the born leader](#). I poked fun at the born leader myth perception with [fictitious birth announcements of born leaders and losers](#). What deceives so many people when looking at strong leaders is they make it look natural. That's the final level of skill development mastery. We see the end results and don't see all the work the leader put into getting there.

Clearly, there's no busyness like slow busyness. We need to slow down to speed up. Take time to get unfiltered feedback on your leadership effectiveness, and build a personal development plan that leverages your

strengths. Sharpening your coaching skills can significantly boost your leadership effectiveness while reducing stressful, time sucks.

To help you in taking care of busyness, we had fun putting together a quick video on escaping the speed trap. [Click here](#) and slow down for two minutes to see how you can escape the speed trap and leader smarter, not faster.

Now's the time to start your 'going out of busyness' tale.

This Common Mistake Dramatically Increases Resistance to Change

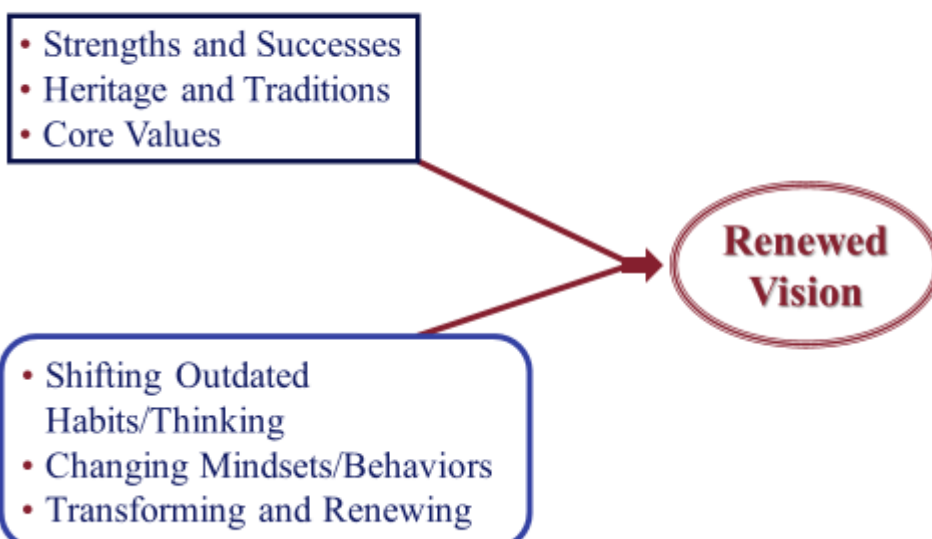
I was waiting to deliver a workshop on "leading change" at a company's management meeting of their top leaders. The new CEO was setting the context with observations of his first few months, his vision for the coming years, and the strategic priorities for the next year. Essentially his message boiled down to, "you've been doing fairly well, but you're a pretty screwed up company. I am here to turn this around and fix you." He was their savior. He seemed to expect the hallelujah choir to herald his arrival in the nick of time.



Most of us can embrace change -- especially if we feel it's for the better. What we resist is being changed -- especially focused on our mistakes and weaknesses. This CEO was falling into the age-old [heroic management trap](#). He gives a short grunt to their accomplishments and a big shout out to where they fell short. This is way too common. And it's a major cause of resistance to change.

Change leaders need a better balance. Leveraging strengths, building on successes, and honoring the organization's positive history often centered on core values is energizing. In these turbulent times, we also need to shift outdated habits and thinking, change mindsets and behaviors, and continuously improve and renew our organizations.

Evolutionary Change: Blending Strengths and Shifts



In the past few years, I've added an exercise to the beginning of planning retreats I am facilitating. We start with small groups generating Post-It-Notes on the biggest accomplishments/successes of the past year. These are then posted in clusters with headings describing each grouping. The exercise takes about half an hour. It's time very well invested. Participants are always energized -- and pleasantly surprised by what they've done. This puts everyone in a more positive mindset for tackling the core challenges and changes at the heart of the planning session.

A build on this approach follows [group visioning](#) with an exercise outlining strengths we can leverage and shifts we need to make to reach our vision. Leaders can use a shortened version of this at their team meetings. Start the meeting with 10 minutes on what we've accomplished since our last meeting, a bragging session, what's working, recognition, and so on. Get the team into a have-done/can-do mindset.

Contrast that heroic leader with another one who took a more balanced approach. She began her comments with examples of effectiveness she noted in her first few months in the organization. She talked about the organization's traits that made it successful and acknowledged past leaders -- some in the room -- who contributed to that. She then went on to talk about the need for change to continue their evolution as past leaders had done in the past when the going got tough.

Which leader do you think inspired the highest energy levels? You're right. Resistance to change that she encountered was much lower. Is your change leadership raising or lowering resistance?

Are You a Leader on the Grow?

Stanford University professor of psychology, Carol Dweck, has become well-known for her work on the power of a growth mindset. Her research shows this is vital to success and fulfilling our potential.

Spring is a great time for gardeners in the Northern Hemisphere to reflect on growth. I enjoy perennial gardening in our yard. As I have tended our gardens over the years, I am struck by how some plants will do well in some locations and terribly elsewhere in the garden. Each spring and fall I move plants around to match their preferences for particular soil, wind, and sun conditions, as well as their proximity to other plants. Cutting off old blooms to encourage new ones and pruning plants that are becoming overgrown is a constant chore.



At times I am pleasantly surprised by how some lackluster plants thrive in a new location better suited to their needs. Since each perennial has a different bloom time and length, one of the gardening challenges is to keep color spread throughout the garden from early spring to late fall.

Positive psychology research shows that [focusing on strengths is a revolutionary approach](#) that's proving to nurture the most vigorous and sustained growth in those we lead. Like a good gardener, effective leaders treat each person in their organization as an individual with his or her own unique aspirations, strengths, and characteristics. Leaders then work to put people in the best place for them to thrive and succeed. They mix and match team members to build a well-rounded team that can show its best colors according to the season -- or is best suited to the current operating conditions of the organization or the team.

Strong leaders tend to each person on their team and coach them to change habits or prune overgrown methods that may prevent further growth. They'll move team members around to avoid overcrowding and to bring out the best in each person.

I've been reflecting on growth as I look at my awakening garden from my office window and prepare for growing participants in our upcoming [public workshops *The Extraordinary Leader and The Extraordinary Coach*](#). It's highly satisfying to see deeper personal understanding and development of leadership effectiveness and coaching skills blossom.

Highly effective leaders are always on the grow. They don't get stuck in old habits and fixed mindsets. Constant growth, development, and adaptability to change comes through continuous learning. The 19th-century British theologian and essayist, John Henry Newman once said, "Growth is the only evidence of life."

Where's your evidence of life? Are you a leader on the grow? Are you stunting or stimulating the growth of those you lead?

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:

Doing an exceptional job on these six competencies can have a profound impact on how your performance is rated.

[Can You Trust Advice from Your Peers? 6 Clues Why You Were Passed Up for That Promotion](#), Joe Folkman, *Forbes*

Learn new insights that take strengths-based development to the next level.

[Leadership Strengths That Matter](#), Zenger Folkman complimentary webinar

Top performers actively seek feedback and act on it. That's one of the reasons they're top performers.

[The Upside of Getting Negative Feedback](#), Joe Hirsch, *Inc*

How to feedback to lead forward and benefit the giver and receiver.

[5 Lessons from Leaders Who Have Top Ratings In Coaching](#), Jack Zenger, *Forbes*

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

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Live, learn, laugh, and lead -- just for the L of



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