



Issue 152 - November 2015

## The Leader Letter

Years ago I was in a meeting with our team reviewing the rapid changes in our training and consulting business and sorting through our priorities for the coming quarter. We had doubled our already substantial business over the past 18 months. While the growth was exciting, it was also exhausting. We were piling on new programs, services, and organizational changes.



I don't recall anything from the meeting except a rich conversation that ensued after I said, "Once we get through this crazy period and things settle down again..." I stopped myself. "Haven't we been saying that an awful lot lately?" I asked. Heads nodded around the room.

"I guess we -- or at least I -- have to get my head around the fact that this crazy period is normal and will be with us for many years to come," I reflected aloud. This led to an animated conversation. We needed a seismic shift in our thinking. The right approach was not to just plow through change, toward some mythic future period of stability. We agreed that we need to see constant, unpredictable, and tumultuous times as a normal and ongoing part of our company's life.

We need to thrive on and in our turbulent times.

As so often happens when you're newly attuned to an issue, not long after that meeting I came across a highly relevant remark. It was from Warren Bennis, Distinguished Professor of Business Administration and Founding Chairman of The Leadership Institute at the University of Southern California. (Since Warren said some very nice things about my book, *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*, the man was clearly brilliant!).

Warren observed, "I can't recall a period of time that was as volatile, complex, ambiguous and tumultuous." He then quoted a top corporate leader of the day as observing, "If you're not confused, you don't know what's going on." See: your confusion about our crazy, topsy-turvy times just shows you know what's going on!

Have you caught yourself saying things like, "Once we get the new position filled ... the restructuring is complete ... the project is finished ... the new software is installed ... I get organized, things will settle down again?" Do things ever settle down? Of course not. And they never will.

Leadership, learning, and pulling together are vital to dealing with constant change. I hope those themes in this issue inspire and support your continuous change and development efforts.

## Key Notes from My Keynotes

As the name implies, an effective keynote presentation condenses key ideas from broad topics to its core essence. Memorable keynote presentations that connect and "stick" with audiences spice these points with humor. This "edutaining" combination is powerful. It's often one of the big differences between dry presenters strangling their audiences through "death by PowerPoint" and a seasoned professional speaker.



Leadership, culture, coaching, and personal, team or organization development are broad topics covering vast territory. A lifelong personal quest is boiling down overwhelming ideas and research (searching on leadership now yields 172,000 books at Amazon) to memorable, useful, and sometimes, humorous key points.

My recent post, "**New Keynotes and Workshops to Motivate, Energize, and Inspire Leaders**", described our major summer project of reviewing, revising, and condensing the many **custom keynotes and workshops** I've delivered over the past few years into core topic areas and modules. Within each topic area we then condensed the core messages summarizing the key notes that audiences (and book/blog readers) have found the most helpful.

An example of this work is in the section on **Leading @ the Speed of Change**. This topic continues to be one of our most popular and frequently requested. Here are a few of its key notes that might resonate with you:

- **Shift Happens** - living in a world of accelerated and constant change
- **Change or be Changed** - if the rate of external change exceeds our rate of internal change, we're going to be changed
- **Which Lens on Our Camera** - three critical choices that frame change as threats or opportunities
- **Explanatory Style** - how we explain good and bad events creates our reality -- and results
- **Culture Anchors** - grounding our team/organization culture in positivity and strengths
- **Strengths and Shifts** - what strengths can we leverage and what shifts must we make to move toward our vision
- **Everyone a Leader** - building "leaderful" teams and organizations to foster change adaptive cultures

Based on dozens of key notes from many of my **keynotes and workshops** we're now starting a new social media series of Key Notes from my Keynotes. These will be broadcast through **Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook**, and **Google+**. If you're not connected to me already go to the bottom of this post and let's connect. You'll then receive these key notes and other updates.

Too often a presentation is where the notes of the presenter become the notes of the audience without passing through the minds of either! May you find a few key note nuggets that inspire and illuminate your pathway to peak performance.

## Special Webinar on Developing Leaders at Wilfrid Laurier University

WLU is a dynamic and fast growing university in the heart of "Silicon Valley North" in Waterloo. A core part of their mission and values is nurturing a culture that "inspires lives of leadership and purpose." Our daughter, Vanessa, is a Laurier graduate. Living in Waterloo Region, I've spoken to various student groups and conferences on leadership and personal effectiveness over the years.



In 2013, The CLEMMER Group began to work with Laurier to further strengthen their leadership and culture. Melanie Will, Manager of Learning and Organizational Development, developed a strategy using *The Extraordinary Leader's* strengths-based leadership approach as a foundation. We started by introducing *The Extraordinary Leader* process and coaching senior executives in building their personal development plans. This was followed by custom building a series of "Taking Action" modules. These are peer coaching sessions to follow through and further build participant's personal development plans.

Melanie was then certified to deliver all this material to Laurier's leaders. Over the next 18 months she cascaded *The Extraordinary Leader* and Taking Action modules to over 160 leaders throughout Laurier. This laid the foundation for a culture shift toward building strengths and a more positive, motivating environment that inspires lives from the inside out across Laurier.

This year all the 360 assessment data on overall leadership effectiveness, strengths, staff engagement levels, the importance ratings of key competencies for each position, and significant weaknesses that might need attention, were summarized in an aggregate analysis. This is now forming the base for planning the next stages in Laurier's leadership and organization development.

When asked to reflect on the main impact of this work at Laurier Melanie said, "The strengths-based approach to leadership development is very different and contrary to our long conditioning on gap-based learning and development. Once participants let go of irrelevant weaknesses and focus on what matters most, strengthening strengths, the impact is significant. The biggest difference I have noticed with this program is participants' energy to focus on development planning. When strengths align with passion and organizational need, people are motivated to implement."

Join Melanie and me for a complimentary one hour webinar on November 17 to learn more about *The Extraordinary Leader* and how Laurier has so innovatively adapted it to strengthen leadership skills and culture. **[Click here for details and to register.](#)**

## 7 Attributes of Extraordinary Coaches

If you buy a little goldfish and keep it in a small bowl it will remain no bigger than a few inches long. Move that same fish to a large aquarium and it will double or triple in size. Put the goldfish in a large pond and it can grow up to a foot long! The biggest factor that determines the size of the fish is the size of its environment. And so it is with people.



Many managers see people as they are and treat them according to what they see. A less effective manager would take a small goldfish and keep it in the little bowl because it would be inefficient and wasteful to put it in a larger environment.

Outstanding coaches, however, see people as they could be and work to grow that potential. Our research shows that extraordinary coaches share these attributes:

- Caring deeply about the coachee's progress
- Believing people can grow, change, and improve
- Focusing on the future
- Showing interest beyond immediate job performance
- Allowing solutions to come from the coachee
- Having more frequent, shorter conversations
- Supporting and encouraging

Click on [Keys to Extraordinary Coaching](#) for a two minute video clip of me presenting and explaining these points. How many of these attributes describe your coaching or the coaches in your organization?

We've just scheduled our next public workshop of ***The Extraordinary Coach on January 28, 2016 in Toronto***. I'll be delivering our newly revised and updated version of this powerful coaching development system. [Click here](#) to view a two minute video overview. This is a rare chance to attend an open workshop since most are customized and delivered internally.

## Is the Rate of External Change Exceeding Your Rate of Internal Change?

Change happens. We can't control much of the world changing around us. But we can control how we respond. We can choose to anticipate and make changes or resist them. Resisting change is usually like trying to push water upstream. Generally we're quick to point to others who resist change. It's much harder to recognize or admit to our own change resistance.



If the rate of external change exceeds our rate of internal growth, we're eventually going to be changed. The "ghost of crisis yet to come," similar to the third spirit that visited Ebenezer

Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, is also as predictable. We often see a strong correlation between a leader's rate of personal growth and skills at leading change to their overall leadership effectiveness ratings.

Too often a static person who hasn't developed the habits of personal growth and continuous development, can become a statistic. He or she is caught and surprised by change.

We were meant to grow. Charles Darwin was the famous 19th century British naturalist who revolutionized the study of biology with his theory of evolution based on natural selection. His most renowned works include *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*. One of his key research findings was that, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one that is most adaptable to change."

Some people call change progress and celebrate the improvements that it brings. Others curse those same changes and long for the good old days. Same changes, different responses. The choice is ours.

Searching for stability and predictability can be one way we resist change. Stability is when everything is settled. It's when little new can happen to me. But that means there is no growth, no development, and no exciting new gains that might result from unexpected pains. Predictability and stability is the denial of life. It also means that the faster the world changes around me, the more likely I am to become a victim of the changes I am trying to deny.

Learning and personal growth is at the heart of an organization or individual's ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. The key question is "does our rate of internal growth exceed the rate of external change?"

## Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times

I've known Paul Born for many years and have deep respect for his work founding the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement in 2001. Their community-based work has reduced poverty for 250,000 people in Canada and many other countries.

When Paul gave me a copy of his latest book I expected it would center on his Tamarack work as a community activist and focus on community as a description of place like the neighborhood, city, or town where we live. The book turned out to be much broader and spoke to me very directly. Paul's writing style is conversational with lots of stories and personal examples. I was especially fascinated to learn more about his upbringing in a Mennonite farming community since I share similar roots.



Paul defines community as identity, place, spiritual, intentional, and natural living system. While he focuses on personal and societal aspects of community, I was struck by the parallels with highly effective teams and organizational cultures. Take, for example, his finding of three types of community; shallow, fear-based, and deep. Far too many teams and organizations are shallow workplaces where many people find little connection or meaning beyond earning a living or building a resume. Fear as a motivational force or bonding "us" against "them" is too commonly used by political and organizational leaders. This is destructive and poisonous.

Deep communities define peak performance cultures. This is where people are made stronger for their organizations and organizations are made stronger for their people. Paul found that happens through "four acts

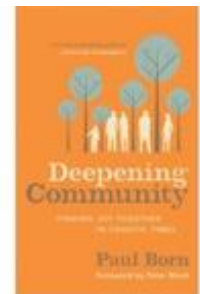
that individually and especially together deepen community: sharing our story, enjoying one another, taking care of one another, and working together for a better world." That's a great description of the great leadership that creates highly effective organizational cultures.

***Deepening Community*** is an inspiring and insightful approach to rebalancing today's focus on individual rights and opportunities with broader community connections and responsibilities. And you'll get to know much better a strong and visionary leader who walks his talk.

## Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm from... *Deepening Community*.

Community is one of those words that have many meanings, primarily because the experience of community is so diverse and rich.

Community can help shape our identity as a collective and interdependent people. It creates the opportunity for us to care for and about others and, in turn, to be cared for, the key interaction that builds a sense of belonging. When we belong and enjoy strong relationships with one another, we can rely on one another in both good and difficult times. This makes us more resilient, and it makes us healthier.



In some ways it is ironic that we call this activity "social" media when so much of it is created by individuals sitting alone at their computers or with their smartphones. That said, many young people are building connections through the Internet, cleverly and determinedly finding ways to connect cybernetic and bricks-and-mortar community.

To deepen community is to find opportunities for ongoing connection with those we care about and those who care about us. This connection strengthens the bonds between us. It builds an emotional resilience within and between us that, in turn, builds mutuality and reciprocity. We begin to open ourselves up to receive and give. Mutual acts of caring become the basis of an ever-stronger feeling of belonging.

The deepest experience of community is the privilege to work together with others to make things better for someone else and for one another. To care about the same things with others and to wish for, and work for, the betterment of those in need. In this way, we become more than we can be by ourselves and together can be something we all are proud of.

When we believe that by cooperating, caring, and reaching out to others, we will harness the wisdom within our diversity, we create the conditions for community.

I often wonder if the only way we can ever really transcend the collective evil we endure as people is to do good together. Maybe loving our enemy and repaying harm with good is the only way to achieve true healing -- and, in turn, joy.



# Institute for Performance and Learning: Helping Learning and Development Add More Value

Just as "**Human Resource Leaders Need to Create More Strategic Value**" there's a huge need for Learning and Development professionals to do the same.

Last year Rob Pearson became the new CEO of the Canadian Society for Training and Development. I reconnected with Rob at a Conference Board of Canada Learning and Development meeting last fall a few months into his new role. As we discussed his plans for CSTD and the profession I was excited by his vision. Rob sees workplace learning and development professionals making a strong contribution to Canada's prosperity. He envisions learning and development professionals engaging and inspiring people to perform at their best and "championing the power of workforce performance and learning to enrich lives, enhance productivity, foster innovation, and fuel organizational results."



In moving toward this renewed vision for the profession, CSTD has just rebranded itself as The Institute for Performance and Learning. Rob explains that "a bolder brand better aligned to The Institute's business goals is integral to becoming a more recognized and respected voice in workplace productivity, innovation and performance."

As part of refocusing and rebranding, IPL has revised and clarified their beliefs. A few that stand out -- and connect to providing more strategic value -- are:

- Workforce performance and learning is mission critical and not a cost of doing business.
- IPL's work is critical input to successful corporate strategy and government policy.
- Professional practice is guided by research and approaches from fields such as organizational development, facilitation, neuroscience, education, instructional design, coaching, the arts and change management.
- The profession needs to be based on evidence-based principles.
- Approaches need to be part of a complex system that intertwines organizational and individual development and impact.
- The best solutions are multifaceted and woven into the fabric of an organization, not isolated events disconnected from the workplace.

Kudos to Rob and the IPL board for their leadership in moving the learning and development profession forward. I've had a long standing relationship with CSTD. I am looking forward to working together further with IPL with events like this webinar on **How Learning and Development Can Build Stronger Leaders and Cultures** and my November 18 session at the **national 2015 conference** in Toronto on Making Leaders Stronger for Organizations and Organizations Stronger for People.

## 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.



My original tweet commenting on the article follows each title and descriptor from the original source:



**Apply the 6 differentiators of younger leaders as a checklist for succession planning, high potentials, or self-assessment.**

**"6 Surprising Reasons Younger Managers Perform Best" -- Joe Folkman**  
[www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

*"When we looked at the 360 data of the younger and more seasoned managers we found the younger group was rated more positively on every one of the 49 items."*

**Jack suggests a few reasons for reduced effectiveness and provides 5 steps to improve the performance management process.**

**"The 'Shrinking Effectiveness' Crisis: 4 Reasons Organizations Fail To Fully Utilize Employees" --**  
Jack Zenger  
[www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

*"For most organizations, people costs account for well more than half of their overall expense structure. Yet by the estimate of these very people, their companies are getting less than half of what they could in return."*

**Kevin led General Mills to one of the top companies for leadership. In 2007, Chief Learning Officer magazine named him CLO of the year.**

**"Temptations of a High Potential,"** (podcast)  
[www.zengerfolkman.com](http://www.zengerfolkman.com)

*"Presentation from Kevin Wilde, VP of OE and Chief Learning Officer at General Mills, recorded live from our 2015 Extraordinary Leadership Summit held in July."*

**Jack's four tests to see if you need a wake-up call are excellent for career assessment and development.**

**Seasoned Leaders: Might You Need A Whack On The Side Of Your Head** -- Jack Zenger  
[www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

*"The great majority of us need something to grab our attention and cause us to change in a positive way. To succeed (or even to survive) we must be proactive about becoming a more productive and contributing member of our organization."*

**This study shows five challenges faced by younger leaders and six dimensions where they have a significant advantage.**

**"What Younger Managers Should Know About How They're Perceived"** -- Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman



<https://hbr.org>

"As new managers fill vacancies created by retiring Boomers, how do their skills compare with the seasoned older managers they replace?"

## 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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