



# The CLEMMER Group

*Stronger People. Stronger Organizations.*

## Jim Clemmer's **Leader Letter**

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When our daughter Vanessa was a teenager, we hired her to do some after school general administrative support work at The CLEMMER Group offices. She was happy to earn an hourly wage for a variety of tasks. One of her jobs was typing selected passages from articles and book summaries for entry in my research library.

One evening she came home very frustrated. I asked her what the problem was. "Today, I spent three hours typing text and then found out that it had already been done." Knowing that this had been the result of some miscommunication (from me, actually), I consoled her: "You will still be paid for all your work." "Yeah," she agreed sourly, "but I hate doing useless work."

We all hate doing useless work. We're energized by meaningful work. We want to make a buck, but it's not the same as making a difference. In *The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey*, William Bennett writes, "the search for meaning is intrinsic to human nature. As thinking creatures, we want to understand why we find ourselves on this road and where the journey is taking us."

Some managers have developed mission statements, visions, or slogans. I have a closet full of shirts from numerous management conferences, adorned with snazzy logos and clever catchphrases. Some of the aspirational statements were actually believed by the participants (at the time, anyway). But most weren't. The taglines added a nice pizzazz to the conference but didn't express

anything credible to participants. The upbeat, gung-ho slogan didn't reflect the organization's true culture and was soon snickered down or forgotten -- until the planning committee started looking at next year's conference.

High-performance organizations pull together the intangible leadership principles that define their character and rally people around a deeper sense of purpose. This is the heart part of leadership. The hard part of management is making these powerful feelings tangible through strong implementation of management processes and systems that translate idea into action.

This issue starts with a vital self-assessment: are you leading on purpose? Can you answer the five questions on whether purpose is at the core of your strategy with a resounding yes?

There aren't any quick and easy ways to build purposeful, heartfelt, leadership. We ran out of magical leadership tonic. But you will find five ways to hone your leadership edge drawn from our decades of seeing the good, the bad, and the extraordinary. These approaches are the framework of my complimentary webinar this month. Or you can use the questions posed at a leadership check-up.

You'll also find a review, summary, and key thoughts from Neil Pasricha's new book just out this month. Neil gets to the heart of personal resilience. He shows how we can step back and focus on the bigger picture during difficult changes or tough times. Carving out the time to cut through the chaos and anchoring back to our own purpose is a vital part of that.

Queen bees emit a substance that keeps the hive together. It's sometimes called "the spirit of the hive." Few of us can sit around strictly as queen bees -- although it is a tempting thought! We need to be worker bees as well. It's a balance issue. As we work in our team or organization, we also need to contribute a deeper sense of meaning or purpose. If we're going to be leaders, we must build the spirit of our team or organization.

This leadership comes from our own center. I can only contribute by way of the spirit and meaning that I feel. I need to lead with all my heart and soul.

## To Reason Why: Are You Leading on Purpose?



This summer, 181 American CEOs of the Business Roundtable signed a "**Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation.**" For over twenty years, the Roundtable's Principles of Governance have declared that "corporations exist principally to serve shareholders."

The revised statement replaces the single-minded shareholder focus with "CEOs who commit to lead their companies for the benefit of all stakeholders -- customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and shareholders."

Finally! Some CEOs just might be catching up with the people they lead -- at least in words. Decades of research prove that purpose is an extremely powerful motivator for all stakeholders. Clearly, **good companies are changing the world and everyone profits.** Purposeful leadership is even more critical for younger generations. Millennials are Generation Why. They want to know why

companies exist. The companies they invest in, deal with, or work for must align with their values or lose them.

This fall's *Harvard Business Review* adds to the growing research on the strategic power of purpose. **"Put Purpose at the Core of Your Strategy,"** concludes, "many companies consider purpose merely an add-on to their strategy, but the most successful companies put it at the core, using it to redefine the playing field and reshape their value propositions."

We heartily agree with the authors' point that leaders can define their organization's purpose, but these often become "nothing more than nice-sounding words on a wall." During culture-building **leadership team retreats**, we regularly see executive teams **confuse well-written with well-lived** when developing or revising their vision, values, and purpose/mission. Many fall headlong into **the trap of wordsmithing hell**.

Is purpose at the core of your strategy? The authors found you must answer yes to all of these questions:

- Does purpose contribute to increasing your company's growth and profitability today?
- Does purpose significantly influence your strategic decisions and investment choices?
- Does purpose shape your core value proposition?
- Does purpose affect how you build and manage your organizational capabilities?
- Is purpose on the agenda of your leadership team every time you meet?

Do you 'reason why?' Are you leading on purpose? What would the people in your team/organization say if they could answer candidly and anonymously? How do you know?

#### Further Reading

- **Has Your Culture Created a Great Place to Work for All?**
- **The Purpose Motive: Why Does Your Organization Exist?**
- **Thriving Companies Pursue Both Purposeful Profits and Profitable Purpose**
- **Just a Job or Part of Our Deeper Purpose?**
- **Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on...The Purpose/Profit Paradox**

## 5 Ways to Hone Your Leadership Edge



Would you like to sharpen your personal, team, and organization's leading edge? Would you like to learn how good managers can become great leaders?

Step right up and buy Clemmer's Magical Leadership Tonic!! The Ultimate Elixir that turns management weaklings into leadership giants!!



Sorry. We just ran out. We don't have a miraculous cure-all to boost leadership. We do have a base of research, approaches, and proven applications that significantly elevates leadership effectiveness. We've prepared a webinar outlining what we've learned over the past few decades. In ***The Leading Edge: Transforming Good Managers into Great Leaders***, I'll boil these into a fast-paced 45-minute presentation followed by 15 minutes of Q & A.

If you're not able to join our complimentary **November 20 webinar**, you might want to use the main points I'll cover as a leadership check-up:

### **Shift Happens**

Change is inevitable. Growth is optional. If the rate of external change exceeds our rate of interest change, we're eventually going to be changed. Are you growing at the speed of change?

### **Three Critical Choices to Change or Be Changed**

When the shift hits our plan, we can lead, follow, or wallow. How do you keep yourself in leading mode? How can you help your team members spend more time in leading mode?

### **Harnessing People Power to Lift Performance**

Leadership and organization culture are THE critical X factors. That's even more critical in leading Millennials today. Is your "soft" leadership and culture boosting or blocking your improvement efforts?

### **Timeless Leadership Principles to Soar on the Wings of Change**

- Would your team/organization give clear, consistent, and enthusiastic answers to these core questions: Where are you going? What do you believe in? Why do you exist?
- Leadership is an action, not a position. Do people at all levels have personal ownership and responsibility for moving your team/organization forward?
- The most effective communication is face-to-face. The most believable communication is behavior. What are they seeing loud and clear? How do you **know**?
- Leadership is the stuff of dreams, inspiration, excitement, desire, pride, care, passion, and love. Are you a carrier? Do you let your face know about it? Do you impassion others?
- Strong leaders build team/organization spirit and meaning. Are you building commitment to change that goes below building logical business cases to make emotional connections?
- Are you developing people into what they could be with effective coaching?
- Do you mobilize and energize by serving and supporting rather than motivating and manipulating?

### **Pivot Points: The Power of Building Strengths**

Building strengths is 2 to 3 times more effective than fixing weaknesses. Are your development efforts leveraging strengths or trying to close skill gaps?

There aren't any leadership liniments, balms, or lotions. No special diets, superfoods, or pseudoscience will boost effectiveness. There are a few tried and true core leadership principles that can hone your leadership edge. Hope they help you to stay sharp.



**Transforming Good Managers into Great Leaders**

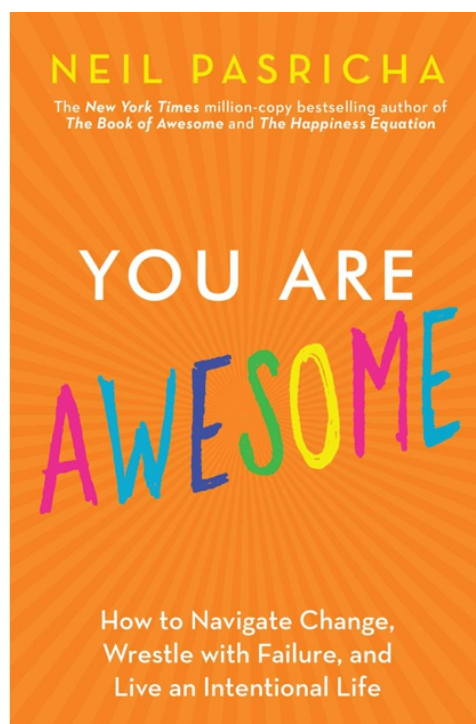
**The LEADING Edge**

**WEBINAR**

**with Jim Clemmer**

**Register now!** **Nov 20 - 1PM**

## Review of *You Are Awesome* by Neil Pasricha



Resilience is a vital skill. It's crucial to our health, happiness, and leadership. Resilience is a muscle that we can strengthen -- ideally before we really need it. Positive psychology research and best practices show that we can build resilience strengths or habits for **Post-Traumatic Growth**.

Since I enjoyed and reviewed Neil's previous book, *The Happiness Equation*, he sent me an advance copy of his new book, *You Are Awesome: How to Navigate Change, Wrestle with Failure, and Live an Intentional Life* (November publication).

*You Are Awesome* centers on nine key factors. He calls them "secrets," but these approaches are well-known and researched. Here are a few key points that stood out for me:

- We tend to catastrophize the size of our problems and lose perspective on where they fit in our lives.
- We incorrectly think it's all about me. Others aren't shining a spotlight on everything we do. People focus on themselves, not us.
- We often see our future as a continuation of the way things are now. When times are tough, it's very hard to see the steps that will take us to better times. When we look back, we can see how those tough times or failures took us to a better place. This helps build our resilience.
- Social and mainstream media companies use fear to get our attention by bombarding us with negative headlines (truly fake news). We need to be more intentional with our attention and buffer all that destructive static and deadly noise.
- The stories we're telling ourselves to interpret our experiences often skew toward what's wrong rather than what's right with us and the world. We can rewrite our stories to keep reminding ourselves of just how good we have it.
- Neil uses three questions to tell himself a different story:
  - Will this matter on my deathbed?
  - Can I do something about this?
  - Is this a story I'm telling myself?
- Our vision or ambition should exceed our current abilities. We should stretch our imagination to picture where we want to get better or what we want to change. We then fail our way to success by learning and growing to make it happen.
- Lose more to win more. We often don't realize how many failures people have worked through to become successful. Moving through failure is the key to resilience and success.
- We need to counter multi-tasking with blocking out significant time to focus on single tasks that are most important to us.
- Restrict your choices, keep decisions simple, and don't overthink or second guess yourself.

Neil blends an intimate personal and family biography, with research, practical how-to applications, breezy humor, and clever turns of phrase ("Resilience is being able to see that tiny little sliver of light between the door and the frame just after you hear the latch click"). What sets this book apart from over 10,000 books on resilience listed at Amazon is Neil's highly engaging writing style. An entertaining and inspiring read to help you bounce back and keep growing -- especially during tough times. *You Are Awesome* brings alive the axiom that tough times don't last, but tough people do.

## Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm from *You Are Awesome* by Neil Pasricha



"Resilience is a skill we now have in very short supply. Not many of us have been through famines or wars or, let's be honest, any form of true scarcity. We have it all! And the side effect is that we no longer have the tools to handle failure or even perceived failure. These days when we fall, we just lie on the sidewalk crying. We are turning into an army of porcelain dolls."

"Real growth, real evolution, doesn't come about through destruction. It comes from taking what came before and integrating it into a greater whole."

"Here's the line missing from commencement speeches: 'Do you love it so much that you can take the pain and punishment too?' That line isn't mentioned in commencement speeches, and it's just as important."

"When we look at our flops, we're really giving ourselves credit for all the learning and stamina and resilience baked into those moments when we made ourselves a little stronger."

"As our world gets busier and our phones get beepier, the scarcest resource of all is quickly becoming attention."

"We need to find space. Space where we can escape. Space where we can process. Space where we can reflect. Space where we can get off the deck, climb up to the captain's chair, and make sure our ship is really going the right way."

"When we gain the courage to add a 'yet' to statements about ourselves, we leave our options open. Adding the word 'yet' is empowering. It wedges a little question mark into the negative certainty we hold on to so fiercely in our minds...it adds a 'To be continued...'"

"We take tiny strings of trouble and extrapolate them into huge problems with our entire identities always on the line."

"So often we're attaching stories to facts...and we don't even know it. Be vigilant. Search for absolute truth. Husk away all those mental attachments causing unnecessary suffering. Keep peeling and peeling and peeling until you find the solid and objective core, and then use that core to tell yourself a different story."

"We need to stop looking at successful people as if we're looking at products of success...the failures and the losses are part of the process for anyone who is willing to try. All successful people swim in ponds of failure. They swallow and choke on failure. They're covered in gobs of failure. They have sticky failure in their hair and under their fingernails."

"Being ambitious means, you have artistic vision. It means you can imagine what the end product should look like even if you don't know how to make it...yet...When ambitions exceed abilities, it's a clear sign you're on the right path."

## Tweet Reading: Online Recommended 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> and connect with me on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jimclemmer>

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

I'm looking forward to this webinar - I hope you can join me on Nov 20 at 1PM.

### **The Leading Edge: Transforming Good Managers into Great Leaders -- Webinar**

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Declaring the purpose of a corporation is not just to serve shareholders is a great start. Now it's rhetoric-to-reality time.

**Is the Business Roundtable Statement Just Empty Rhetoric?**, Andrew Winston, *Harvard Business Review*

*"We need a much bigger pivot to circular, renewable-energy-based business models that value the long-term, protect natural capital, and invest in human development and equality."*

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Watch this archived webinar to learn about practical, how-to approaches for building leadership strengths.

**Steps to Go Beyond Discovering Strengths**, Joe Folkman and Jack Zenger – *complimentary webinar*

*"Explore the reasons why our research on leadership strengths continues to have a significant impact on leaders today."*

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## 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**!

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

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