

# THE LEADER LETTER

Lead with *STRENGTH*

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## OCTOBER 2012, ISSUE 115

The pace around The CLEMMER Group these days may not be as frenzied as the U.S. presidential race but some days it feels like it! We're not out on the campaign trail kissing babies or slinging mud at our opponents. But we have been very busy spreading the word about Zenger Folkman's revolutionary leadership development approaches while rebranding and refocusing our web site, slide templates, training materials, consulting approaches, and expanding our delivery capabilities (for ZF background see the [September issue of \*The Leader Letter\*](#)).



I thoroughly enjoyed working with Jack Zenger again after all these years putting together last month's [Strengths-Based Leadership Development webcast](#) (click on the title to access the archived session). Joe Folkman joined us later in the session as we discussed the four factors that make the [Strengths-Based Leadership Development System](#) so uniquely powerful. As I'd have expected from a partner like Jack, getting to know Joe has been a delight. He's a unique combination of very deep expertise in psychometrics and a warm and delightful human being with a great sense of humor (he's even a bit of a Dad Jokester!)

Throughout this issue you'll find many of the activities we're working so hard on pulling together this fall. The two biggest are our complimentary (no charge) October 25 [Building Exceptional Leaders](#) executive briefing and panel discussion in Toronto and our first [Extraordinary Leader public workshops](#) on November 29 in Toronto (hosted by ZF Client Canadian Tire) and November 13 in Calgary.

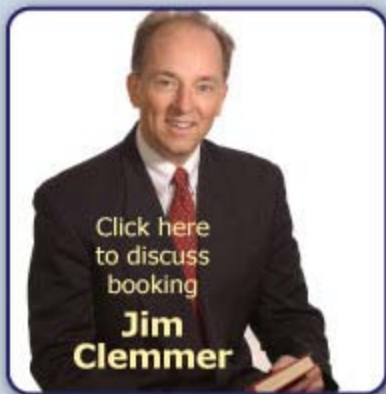


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If you haven't checked it out already, you'll also learn about our newly redesigned website. Drop by for a much easier time navigating the large and ever growing personal, team, culture, and leadership development content all freely available.

I've been lost in a steep learning curve over the past few months getting up to speed on Zenger Folkman's vast and bottomless pool of leadership development research and strengths-based approaches. That part of our frantic pace has been a wonderful state of flow where time has stood still and then vanished. The sense of alignment and connection with my personal purpose has been the most meaningful I've experienced in a very long time. This is clearly where I belong at this point in my life.

We're at the intersection of powerful and revolutionary research emerging from the new movements of Emotional Intelligence, Positive Psychology, Appreciative Inquiry, and Strengths. These emerging fields are scientifically -- and conclusively -- showing that we can only flourish by moving away from focusing on what's wrong, performance gaps, and weaknesses. The evidence for **what** needs to change and **why** is growing every day. But there's been a huge vacuum around **how** to apply these findings to leadership development.

I feel a growing and profound sense of mission to bring the revolutionary approaches so well developed by Zenger Folkman to Canadian leaders. Join the revolution and lead with strength!

### NAVIGATING OUR REDESIGNED WEBSITE

It's been a long term -- and ongoing -- goal to make our website at [www.clemmergroup.com](http://www.clemmergroup.com) a high-value destination for **practical** personal, team, and organizational leadership material that's worth far more than you're paying for it! Our steady increase in traffic has been gratifying feedback that we're on the right track.



As you've been reading for the past few months, The CLEMMER Group has expanded and refocused our business in becoming the Canadian Strategic Partner for Zenger Folkman. All of their very deep and well-researched content has exploded the amount of material on our site.

Earlier this year, our "Digital Diva," Julie Gil began planning a site redesign. With the new Zenger Folkman partnership this went from 'important' to 'critical.' So while it was steaming hot outside this summer, Julie was heating up our computers/servers inside and working long hours on redesigning our web site. She's very thankful for air conditioning!

The site just went live last week. If you haven't visited our website lately, please browse on by. The site is divided into three major sections:

1. [Team/Organization Development](#):
  - [Strengths-Based Leadership Development System](#)
  - [Culture and Organization Development](#)
  - [Customized Keynotes and Workshops](#)
  - [Customized Executive Team Retreats](#)
  - [Team Building](#)
2. [Personal Development](#):
  - [Bestselling Books, Workbooks, and CDs](#)
  - [Blog Posts and Archive](#)
  - [The Leader Letter](#) (my monthly newsletter)
  - [Excerpts/Articles Library](#) (hundreds freely available)
  - [Webcasts](#)
  - [Jim's Video Clips](#)
3. [Zenger Folkman](#):
  - [Programs and Services](#)
  - [About Zenger Folkman](#)
  - [Clients and Testimonials](#)
  - [Press Room](#)
  - [Featured Resources](#)
  - [Leadership Resource Center](#) (dozens of White Papers and videos)

We hope you enjoy site-seeing! Julie would love to get your feedback on what you like, suggestions, and any problems you experience. Please e-mail her at [Julie.Gil@Clemmer.net](mailto:Julie.Gil@Clemmer.net).

Read. Lead. Succeed!

## GPS FOR A PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Last week I received this e-mail from a manager in Toronto:

*"You were recommended to me by my boss. He is interested in having me take some leadership training specifically on the issue of 'managing up.' I see that this is an area you discuss on your website.*



*Would you have some time to discuss how we can pursue some training on this? I'll also need to know how many hours this will entail, and the expected costs so I can pass it by my boss for approval."*

I have written extensively about upward leadership. As you've probably read, my view has long been that leadership is an action, not a position. It's what we do and not the role we're appointed to that determines whether we're Leaders, Followers, or Wallowers.

What's been clarified and reinforced in the last six months of our new strategic partnership with Zenger Folkman (see the [September issue of \*The Leader Letter\*](#) for background), is that an important skill like upward leadership has many underlying and interwoven components. ZF has built a massive database over the past 12 years that all started with the question of what core skills and behaviors most differentiates those leaders perceived as the least effective from those that are the most effective. Based on ratings from over 300,000 managers, peers, and direct reports on more than 36,000 people in leadership roles they now have a very clear answer. 16 "differentiating competencies" were identified in the five clusters of Character, Focus on Results, Personal Capability, Leading Change, and Interpersonal Skills.

When I now look at upward leadership through the lens of ZF's research findings, some of the 16 competencies like Drive for Results, Technical/Professional Expertise, Develops Strategic Perspective, Communicates Powerfully and Prolifically, Builds Relationships, or Collaboration and Teamwork jump out. All of these (and others) will have an impact on your ability to lead upward. The great news is that leveraging only three of these 16 competencies from a strength to a profound strength will jump you to the 80th percentile in leadership effectiveness. The critical question is, which ones will have the highest impact and which should you focus on?

That's where getting feedback is vital. *The Extraordinary Leader* process involves asking your manager, peers, direct reports, and any others who work with you (customers? outside agents/partners? suppliers? etc.) to give you input on your effectiveness across the 16 competencies, and identify which four are most critical to your job. Feedback from others is twice as valid as your own self-assessment. In your case, having this data would open up a discussion with you and your manager on what route you should take to increase your leadership effectiveness.

Two other keys emerged from the research:

- focusing on your existing strengths, and
- using cross-training to build them.

Most multi-rater feedback-based approaches focus on finding and fixing weaknesses and gaps. Finding and focusing on building your strengths is 2 – 3 times more effective. And it's a lot more fun!

You can learn lots more about all of this in ZF's brand new book, [\*How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths\*](#). It was reviewed in *The Globe & Mail* last week under [\*Excellent? Counterintuitive tips on how to be exceptional\*](#).

I'll be delivering our first [\*Extraordinary Leader\*](#) public workshop - - hosted by ZF Client Canadian Tire -- on November 29 in Toronto. I'll also deliver a session on November 13 in Calgary. [Click here](#) for more details and to register.

Attending [\*The Extraordinary Leader\*](#) public workshop will give you a very solid sense of where you are now, what strengths you can leverage, and help you build a personal development plan to increase your upward leadership -- and other leadership skills. It's like using a GPS device to pinpoint your location, then setting the route to your destination.

You're welcome to call if you want to discuss any of this further.

## LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE

In the 19th century "snake oil salesmen" travelled throughout North America selling unproven or fraudulent oils, elixirs, and various cure-all remedies. In 1906, the US Pure Food and Drugs Act began to regulate medicines. This was followed by decades of research into drugs, vaccines, public health regulations, and medical treatments that dramatically reduced and even eliminated many diseases and medical problems.



By the 1970s medical practices had come a long way and made many - - some quite drastic -- improvements to healthcare. But medicine was still mostly a collection of standard and accepted practice that had little grounding in scientific evidence. In 1974, when physician David Eddy was asked to give a talk on how physicians made decisions he went searching for best practices to build a decision tree showing diagnosis and treatment. He was looking for "strong evidence, good numbers, and sound reasoning." It didn't exist.

In his American Medical Association *Journal of Ethics* article, "The Origins of Evidence-Based Medicine -- A Personal Perspective," Eddy writes; *"If there wasn't sufficient information to develop a decision tree, what in the world were physicians basing their decisions on? I then realized that **medical decision making was not built on a bedrock of evidence or formal analysis, but was standing on Jell-O.**"*

He went on to become a pioneering researcher and advocate of what's become known as Evidence-Based Medicine. Now he writes; *"Medical decision making has gone through a fundamental change in the last 40 years. Simply put, **the foundation for decision making has shifted away from subjective judgments and reliance on authorities toward a formal analysis of evidence.**"*

We badly need the same evolution in leadership development. While we're -- mostly -- past snake oil solutions, there's a confusing array of leadership theories, opinions, thesis papers, inspiration, training programs, frameworks, styles, models, and tools. Most of these have little to no grounding in hard research or evidence.

In their white paper, "Leadership 6.0: Connecting Leadership Development with Drivers of Business Results," Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman make a case for leadership development going through this evolution:

1. Balancing people and business results.
2. Behavioral/skill based approaches.
3. Experiential/engaging instructional techniques.
4. E-Learning and related technologies.
5. Individual responsibility and personalized learning.
6. Linked to business/performance results/outcomes with hard data/evidence.

To read the parallels Jack and Joe draw with applying lessons from evidence-based medicine to leadership and the compelling data they've uncovered for Leadership 6.0, go to ZF's [Leadership Resource Center](#). Once you've registered (it's free) or logged in, click on Articles/White Papers.

ZF has compiled powerful evidence correlating leadership effectiveness with performance outcomes in their new book, [How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths](#). Jack and I covered this and related approaches in our September complimentary webcast on [Strengths-Based Leadership Development](#).

## LEADERSHIP CROSS-TRAINING IS POWERFUL AND REVOLUTIONARY

For the last few decades leadership development has used a linear approach. For example, communication skills training might involve breaking down the key actions of the skill, showing examples of strong communication, practicing key steps of the skill, and getting coaching or feedback.



Linear training is effective and will often help a motivated learner get better. This sort of training is usually aimed at helping leaders improve from bad or OK to better or maybe even somewhat above average. Zenger Folkman's research on over 35,000 managers working to strengthen their leadership shows that linear training doesn't help a leader rated as good or average become a great or extraordinary communicator.

About 12 years ago, Joe Folkman dropped by Jack Zenger's office with an intriguing observation that turned out to be an "aha" breakthrough. In reviewing data they then had on 20,000 managers rated by over 200,000 bosses, direct reports, and peers, Joe found statistically significant correlations between key leadership competencies and other competencies and behaviors.

So, for example, it turns out that the competency of "Communicates Powerfully and Prolifically" has eleven companion competencies and behaviors including "Strategic Perspective," "Establishes Stretch Goals," "Dealing with the Outside World/Networking," and "Involves Others." Developing these non-linear skills -- or cross-training around this competency -- will significantly increase the boss, direct report, and peer perceptions of the leader's communication skills. When the leader moves this one competency to a profound strength, his or her overall leadership effectiveness can actually double!

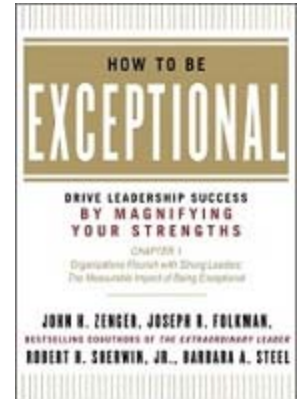
As Joe and Jack followed this research trail, they found a set of companion competencies and behaviors that clustered around each of the key leadership competencies. This discovery has since opened up a powerful new leadership development methodology. ZF went on to develop their Competency Companion Development Guide for leadership cross-training. This has proved to be a major tool in Zenger Folkman's incredible success in helping good or strong leaders become great or exceptional leaders. It's a core part of *The Extraordinary Leader* development system/workshop.

Read ZF's COO, Bob Sherwin's blog post on [Cross-Training for Your Leadership Marathon](#) for a bit more about this revolutionary approach.

Jack Zenger also highlighted leadership cross-training in our September webcast, [Strengths-Based Leadership Development System](#). He also drew from the latest research just published in ZF's new book, [How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths](#).

## UPDATE ON ZF'S NEW BOOK *HOW TO BE EXCEPTIONAL*

As I said to Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman in last week's [Strengths-Based Leadership Development webcast](#) (click on title to view the archived session). [How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths](#) (click on title to read my review) really is an exceptional book. In my 35 plus years of studying, applying, writing about, and providing leadership development programs and services I've never seen such powerful data leading to a clear path for developing leaders. This book will become a landmark in the leadership development field. It provides the succinct, practical, how-to roadmap we so badly need to navigate the inspiring and tremendously fulfilling territory of strengths-based leadership.



Last week Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe & Mail*, published a full length review of *How to Be Exceptional* that concluded with, "*It's a clear, easy-to-read book, despite the heavy focus on research, and a compelling alternative approach to our tendency to obsess over weaknesses.*" As I outlined in [Leadership Lessons from Evidence-Based Medicine](#), that heavy focus on research is exactly what's so badly missing from the confusing world of leadership theories, models, and approaches. And most of them have no basis in any research at all. Zenger Folkman has succeeded writing an easy-to-read and very practical book that's based on evidence. You can read the full review at [Excellent? Counterintuitive tips on how to be exceptional](#).

Here are other reviews, excerpts, and links for *How to Be Exceptional*:

"A fitting capstone to Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman's previous works, the new book provides readers with organizational gold. "It brings forth data ... to illustrate what happens to teams and organizations when we uplift and grow their participants, and when we truly strengthen executives' abilities to lead."

- David K. Williams, CEO of Fishbowl



"The best book on professional development I have read in decades. It reinforces the emerging wisdom that the path to greatness is really about building profound strengths, rather than through relentlessly focusing on one's weaknesses. This is a great road map for any leader seeking to optimize their growth and impact."

- Michael A. Peel, Yale University, Vice President, Human Resources and Administration

"Zenger Folkman's findings related to companion behaviors is exciting. It enhances what's been presented in prior books and makes extraordinary leadership seem like an achievable goal. I would recommend this book to anyone committed to the journey."

- Pam Mabry, Director, Human Resources, The Boeing Company

"A milestone in the emerging business case for evidence-based management. Building on two decades of earlier research, the authors brilliantly lay out a simple, concrete, scientifically validated model for achieving consistently superior business results through leadership ... Its magic is its simplicity, pragmatism, and focus."

- Eric Severson, Senior Vice President, Talent, Gap Inc.

The press coverage on the book and its principles is highly positive thus far as well, with early coverage appearing in [Fast Company](#), [Harvard Business Review](#), [Forbes](#), [CNBC's Bullish on Books](#) and other publications.

"Like a giant pendulum swinging, there has been a dramatic shift in the world of leadership development," the authors say in the book's introduction. "We have moved from a focus on fixing weaknesses all the way over to a focus on building strengths. Without question, it is the most profound change in this realm to occur in the past 50 years."

Although discovering strengths is a logical beginning step, *How to Be Exceptional* picks up where all the other books leave off. It helps readers take their strengths and develop them into distinguishing factors that help them make high contributions to their organizations.

A free e-book with video clips by Jack and Joe based on *How to Be Exceptional* is available for download at <http://zengerfolkman.force.com/ebook>.

To order single copies of *How to Be Exceptional* visit [Amazon.ca](#), [Amazon.com](#), [Indigo-Chapters](#) or your local bookstore.

For bulk purchases at substantial discounts, contact McGraw-Hill Ryerson by [email](#) or call 905-430-5094.

## IT'S WHAT MANY LEADERS DON'T DO THAT MAKE THEM UNINSPIRING

Derek is the head of a large division. He's technically brilliant, a great strategic thinker, with strong analytical skills, and has tremendous drive for delivering results. Derek's impressive track record garners respect. He's fairly personable and most people like him. These are the reasons he's had a series of promotions and is one of the youngest executives in the company.



But Derek's divisional performance is now stalling and he's getting increasingly frustrated. His management team is getting fractious and silo walls are growing thick and high throughout his division. Cooperation and teamwork is slipping along with energy and engagement levels. Absenteeism is soaring and customer service as well as productivity levels are sliding.

Despite his strengths, Derek's become a bad boss. He doesn't rant, rave, publicly embarrass, or bully anyone. It's not what he's doing that makes him a bad boss. It's what he's not doing. His sins of leadership omission are dragging people and performance down. And his flaws are becoming fatal to his career.

Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman have an intriguing blog in *Harvard Business Review* drawing from their research encompassing leaders like Derek. They analyzed the behavior of 30,000 managers as seen by 300,000 of their direct reports, peers, and managers in 360-degree evaluations. They looked further at the bottom 1% and bottom 10% for predictive signs of their extremely poor ratings and performance. They also analyzed data from executives who'd just been fired for explanations of their failure.

The results of their study led to identifying 10 fatal flaws listed in rank order of most to least fatal. Go to ["Are You Sure You're Not a Bad Boss"](#) to review the list. Dozens of comments following their blog add further dimensions to the discussion.

Jack Zenger and I looked at the strength side of the leadership coin in a webcast on September 20. It's now archived and available for viewing at [Strengths-Based Leadership Development System](#).

## 360 FEEDBACK TOOLS CAN HELP OR HURT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

360 multi-rater feedback assessments are now used by more than 85% of **Fortune 500** companies. They've become a foundation of leadership development efforts because they're like a GPS unit showing leaders their current leadership effectiveness ("you are here") and mapping a route to increased effectiveness. 360 feedback tools derive their name from getting feedback in all directions; boss, peers, direct reports, and others working with that leader.



Another reason 360s have become so widely used is outlined in Zenger Folkman's new book, [\*How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths\*](#):

"...very few people have an accurate perception of either their strengths or their weaknesses. This is why we often comically read such facts as "80 percent of American drivers consider themselves above average" and "65 percent of people surveyed believe they are better than average looking in appearance." Indeed, our research shows that self-perceptions tend to be only half as reliable as those from either peers or direct reports."

BUT, we're also seeing a growing backlash against 360 survey feedback tools. Like any tool, the design of the tool and how it's used makes a huge difference in its usefulness. Traditional assessments and needs analysis look for gaps. And most 360 feedback tools focus on finding and fixing weaknesses. This often leads to:

- Participants feeling beat up by feedback reports.
- Negative response or avoidance of 360 multi-rater feedback tools.
- Erosion of confidence.
- Defensiveness and fear of making mistakes.
- Data denial and feedback phobia.
- Working on a weak area and only getting it to average -- with mediocre results.
- A belief that extraordinary leadership is achieved by naturally gifted or "born leaders."

While most organizations have the technical capability to run 360 feedback surveys internally, over 95% use external companies to provide this service. Some of the reasons include giving raters a much stronger sense of anonymity and participant

confidentiality in reporting the results, normative percentile scoring comparisons across industries and leadership levels, measuring competencies that are proven to differentiate low and higher performers, and more sophisticated and flexible tools that have been well tested in a wide variety of situations.

On October 12 I am delivering another breakfast presentation at HRPAs Toronto office on ["The 11 Critical Components of a "Best in Class" 360 Assessment."](#) I'll draw on the key lessons learned from Zenger Folkman's solidly researched and highly successful 360 development system used by Marriott, Harvard Business School, Wells Fargo, Coca Cola, General Mills, and ConocoPhillips. My presentation will:

- Outline compelling research correlating a leader's effectiveness and organizational success.
- Demonstrate the need for validated, research-based 360-degree assessments.
- Explain how poor rating scales lead to false positives that reduces desire for improvement.
- Show why validated items drive substantial and lasting organizational change.
- Prove how a strengths-based methodology is twice as effective as traditional development methods.

[Click here](#) for more information and to register.

If you can't join us, you can read a white paper on this topic at Zenger Folkman's [Leadership Resource Center](#). Once you're registered (which is free and only has to be done once) or logged in, click on Articles/White Papers and click on *"11 Components of a Best-In-Class 360-Degree Assessment, by Joe Folkman & Jack Zenger."*

## **TWEET READING: RECOMMENDED ONLINE RESOURCES**

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 precedes each title and descriptor from the original source:

Zenger Folkman has powerful and very compelling data linking leadership effectiveness and organizational performance in their new book.

["Are You an 'Exceptional' Leader - Does It Even Matter?"](#)

- Joe Folkman

[www.cnbc.com](http://www.cnbc.com)

*"What's the single most effective way to increase the revenue of your organization? Increase the skills of your leaders. These are the results our own organization has proven by compiling the data from more than a decade of analysis using 360-degree evaluation reviews."*

Kathleen's five steps provide a practical approach to aligning our personal development with broader organizational and life goals.

["You are Your Greatest Asset" - Develop With a Plan](#) -  
Kathleen Stinnet  
[zengerfolkman.wordpress.com](http://zengerfolkman.wordpress.com)

*"While it is true that most of our development happens on the job (versus in formal training), it seems to make sense for us to be a bit more intentional about how we truly want to be growing and developing ourselves."*

Less effective managers often point fingers and put negative labels on their most unhappy team members and give up on them.

["Are You Creating Disgruntled Employees?"](#)  
Joseph Folkman  
[blogs.hbr.org](http://blogs.hbr.org)

*"Our results suggest a clear path forward for bringing disgruntled employees back into the fold. In particular, the unhappy group in our survey strongly agreed on six major areas in which they felt (and we agree) that their leaders needed to improve."*

Equating improvement with fixing weaknesses is deeply ingrained. But strengths-based leadership development is far more effective -- and fun!

["Why Focusing on Weaknesses Doesn't Create Exceptional Leadership"](#)  
[www.thoughtleadersllc.com](http://www.thoughtleadersllc.com)

*"The philosophy of building strengths suggests that leaders ought to find a way to stand out and differentiate themselves. Others will notice our abilities, not our disabilities."*

## 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 one of my books. 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@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net) or connect with me on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [FaceBook](#), or my [blog](#)!

Keep learning, laughing, loving, and leading - living life just for the L of it!!

Jim



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