



Issue 151 - October 2015

The Leader Letter

An administrative assistant with no experience booking professional speakers was asked by her manager to call me about my availability and fee to deliver an opening keynote for their upcoming staff conference. When I gave her my fee, she replied, "For one hour....Wow! What a job! And you don't even have to have sex!" I didn't touch that one.



In fact, her company paid for 30 years of study, experience, and practice summarized into one concentrated hour tailored to their needs. After the engagement, the admin assistant had a much better appreciation for the value I delivered to the audience in shifting perspectives on the roles everyone needs to play in leading at the speed of change. I certainly do feel very privileged to be well paid for my speaking, writing, consulting, facilitating, and training work.

The Cloud of Unknowing is a spiritual guidebook believed to have been written in the 14th century by an English monk. Here's a thought that makes you go hmmm from that work, "it is on your own self-knowledge and experience that the knowledge of everything else depends." We see the world through the lens of our personal philosophies, explanatory style, and habitual practices.

I spent a fair bit of time this summer reviewing my experiences over the past few years working with Clients to design and deliver keynotes, workshops, and retreats to meet their needs. I see more clearly now how personal growth, leadership, and culture development topics are shifting in our fast changing world. And the need for customizing sessions to ever changing and diverse team and organization situations is greater than ever.

This issue features those summer reflections and revisions to our keynotes, workshops, and retreats. I hope you find them a useful time to pause and reflect on how your own, your team's, or your organizational development needs are changing.

New Keynotes and Workshops to Motivate, Energize, and Inspire Leaders

Since bookings in our business are much slower in the summer, I've often used the time for writing books, reflecting, and planning. One of my summer projects was to step back and look at the bigger and evolving picture of our keynotes and workshops.

Most of my keynotes and workshops are tailored to a group or organization's unique priorities and desired outcomes. These keynotes, workshops, and retreats



are often part of offsite strategy sessions, team building, special events like annual meetings or town halls, association conferences, corporate meetings, kickoff events, webinars or virtual learning, or leadership/culture development.

Customizing a keynote or workshop often involves mixing, matching, and redesigning our approaches and skill building modules to fit specific applications. That's resulted in a growing number of slides, examples, research, assessments, and application exercises. The summer project gave me a chance to step back and look more broadly at topic trends from a broad sample of organizations.

Here's our revised list of topic areas that emerged from this work (click on the link to read a short description):

- **Lead, Follow, or Wallow:** Inspiring Personal Leadership
- **Leading @ the Speed of Change**
- **The High-Performance Balance:** Management and Leadership
- **5 Vital Steps to Building a Peak Performance Culture**
- **Building a Customer-Centered Culture:** The Service/Quality System for Exceptional Results
- **6 Steps to Extraordinary Coaching Skills**
- **Leveraging Leadership Strengths:** Transforming Good Managers into Great Leaders
- **Moose-on-the-Table:** Fostering Courageous Conversations to Address Communication Breakdowns
- **The Top 10 Factors of Innovation Leaders**
- **BOLD Leadership:** How to Accelerate Performance and Results
- **8 Factors That Frustrate and Disengage Employees**
- **Big Breakthroughs in Health and Safety Effectiveness:** Building a Powerful Culture for Dramatic Results
- **Upward Leadership:** Strategies to Manage Your Manager

My summer analysis shows that change -- personal and organizational -- is an enduring popular topic. Balancing management and leadership has continually been one of the most read sections of our blog and article library and a popular keynote/workshop topic area. Culture development as a broad topic or focused more specifically on customers or safety is growing in popularity.

Coaching skills development and building a coaching culture is emerging as one of our fast growing topic areas. Leveraging leadership strengths has also grown rapidly over the past few years. Both of those topics are tightly linked to an ongoing interest in employee engagement.

More recent topic areas that have surged forward in interest are BOLD leadership and innovation.

Have you reflected on your personal and organizational trends? What areas are you trying to develop so you can stay on the grow?

7 Reasons Change and Development Programs Fail

A long list of studies shows that 50 – 70% of leadership, culture, and organization change and development efforts fail. For example, a *Harvard Business Review* article by Michael Beer and Nitin Nohria on "Cracking the Code of Change" concludes, "the brutal fact is that about 70% of all change initiatives fail."



These efforts typically include:

- Improving internal/external customer service
- Boosting health and safety
- Executing organizational changes
- Enhancing productivity/efficiency
- Strengthening leadership skills
- Lifting morale/engagement levels
- Strengthening teamwork/team building
- Reducing turnover and absenteeism
- Increasing quality
- Implementing Lean/Six Sigma

This summer I reviewed research and our experiences in helping dozens of organizations with their change initiatives. Success or failure ultimately rests with the organization's senior leadership team. Here are the common problems that trap many leadership teams and become the root causes of their failed change and development efforts:

- **Speed Traps and Tyranny of the Urgent** – flooded by e-mails, endless meetings, and crisis management many leaders become reactive micromanagers and lose sight of the big picture.
- **Partial and Piecemeal Programs** – leadership training, succession planning, customer service, six sigma, safety, talent/performance management, IT systems, and such are disconnected and disjointed.
- **Leadership Lip Service** – organizational leaders send contradictory messages about core values or embracing change by their inconsistent actions and behaviors.
- **Not Building Change Capacity** – many change and development efforts fail to engage the hearts and heads of key leaders and frontline staff and don't energize and equip them to make it happen.
- **Teams Not Pulling Together** – strong leaders drive change in their "silo" and work at cross-purposes. This undermines both the team and the change/development effort.
- **Communication Breakdowns** – leadership teams aren't united in strategic priorities, key messages, behaviors that model the vision and values, and rigorous implementation planning.
- **Failing to Follow Through** – strategies and development plans can quickly lose focus when they don't have a robust implementation process engaging key teams with a disciplined follow through process.

How many of these traps are snaring your senior leadership team? What are you doing to avoid falling into these sinkholes?

Taking the team offsite for a few days can have a major impact on avoiding these problems. An **offsite retreat** can also lay the foundation to become one of the 30 – 50% of organizations with a very high and lasting impact from their change and development work.

See **Leadership Team Retreats** for configuration options and common retreat outcomes.

Clear Leadership Team Retreat Objectives and Outcomes Are Vital to Success

A senior leadership team retreat lays the foundation for successful change and development initiatives. This is often the intact senior leadership team heading up a department, division, or the entire organization. Depending on the retreat objectives and length, one or sometimes two levels of managers reporting to the senior leadership team may be included for all or parts of the retreat. Frontline supervisors or staff may even be included for smaller organizations for introductory foundation building.



A surgeon once observed that he could teach most people how to perform a simple operation in just a few hours. What takes years of training and experience is knowing what to do when something goes wrong or even recognizing the warning signs of potential problems and how to avoid them.

In running hundreds of retreats over the past three decades we've found identifying the retreat's 3 to 4 key objectives is a critical starting point. Effective retreats are also customized to an organization's culture, team dynamics, development needs, strategic issues, and priorities. An experienced retreat facilitator can keep the team focused and on track.

Here's a list of the most common retreat objectives and outcomes:

- Leverage team and organizational strengths
- Pull together major change efforts and development initiatives under an integrated implementation plan
- Leadership team building and development
- Assess organizational and leadership effectiveness and build a strong and well supported plan for change and development
- Develop a strong buy-in and agreement on leadership behaviors needed for leadership/organization development
- Action learning (versus theoretical education) on the key elements of team and organization leadership
- Better understanding and leadership of the interconnected elements to building a high performing organization
- Significant and sustained culture change
- Integrate succession planning, talent development, and performance management with organizational strategy actively led by the leadership team
- Re-energize and refocus the leadership team so they can mobilize the organization
- Build broad and cascading change coalitions and robust infrastructure for strong and sustained follow through

In today's crazy busy world, is your leadership team getting offsite for a few days at least once a year for vital R & R (review, refocus, and re-energize)? What are your 3 to 4 retreat objectives and outcomes?

This summer I reviewed our retreat approaches and updated our configuration options and descriptions. Go to [Leadership Team Retreats](#) to learn more.

Four Keys to Transforming Safety Culture

In organizations with safety risks, leaders loudly proclaim their commitment to health & safety. But every day we read news reports of another worker badly hurt or killed on the job.

The stark contrast in injuries and deaths between very unsafe and extremely safe workplaces -- often in the very same industries -- can be 10 times or more. Yet these vastly different organizations are often employing workers from the same community with similar skills, experience, and compensation.



The key variable is leadership. Leaders establish the culture that creates an extremely healthy and safe workplace or one that's dangerous and often deadly. One of our studies correlating safety incidences to leadership effectiveness rating showed that the top 10% of leaders created a workplace three and a half times safer than the bottom 10% of leaders.

We've just posted four new articles written by our senior associate, Scott Schweyer, on our **Culture & Organization Development** page. Here's a brief summary and link to each article:

- **Safe Behaviors and Good Intentions** – challenging deeply ingrained attitudes, behaviors, and thinking is critical to a very safe workplace culture. Includes a chart summarizing a survey of six Employee Safety Behaviors.
- **Who's in Charge of Safety?** - a safe work culture comes from everyone paying attention to the details of what goes on in the work environment and employees having the passion and energy to get involved and do something about what they see, hear and experience.
- **Case Study: Leadership Commitment to Change Safety Culture** – the seven step process used by a large organization to change their high accident frequency and severity rates to be best in class.
- **What Does a Great Safety Culture Look Like?** – the 'Give-A-Care-Meter' has a huge impact on worker behaviors like raising safety concerns. It makes the difference between speaking up or turning away from someone working in a potentially dangerous situation.

John Ruskin, the 19th century British art critic and writer once observed, "what we think, or what we know or what we believe in is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do." Leaders create extraordinary safety cultures through backing up their words with strong follow through and action.

The High-Performance Balance: Management and Leadership

Employee engagement, customer satisfaction, safety, quality, and financial performance are slipping in many organizations. That's often because organizations are **over managed and under led**. "People are our most important resource" has become a worn out cliché with a high "snicker factor."

Research shows that high performing teams and organizations balance the "hard" discipline of systems, processes, and technology management on a "soft" base of effective people leadership. Leading with the heart inspires higher energy and commitment to meaningful change toward more successful outcomes for everyone.



As mentioned in this newsletter, one of my summer projects was reviewing our most popular keynote and workshop topic areas for common themes or trends. This led to a revision and updating of our **keynote and workshop topic areas**.

Balancing management and leadership has been an enduring theme throughout my books and presentations, workshops, and retreats. Those experiences along with analyzing which blogs and articles on our web site draw the most traffic shows many managers and executives wrestle with the vital question of how to balance these two critical areas.

Here are a few "key notes" from my keynotes (and workshops) that seem to capture the core messages that resonate most:

- **Managing Things and Leading People** - understanding the differences between management and leadership and integrating them for greater success. Like both wings of the airplane, we need both to soar.
- **Soft Skills, Hard Results** – emotional intelligence, engagement, perceptions, and energy are powerful catalysts propelling teams and organizations to peak performance.
- **Powerful Combinations** - balancing Management Competencies like Business Acumen, Drive for Results, and Problem Solving with Leadership Competencies such as Communications, Teamwork/Collaboration, and Developing People.
- **Information versus Communication** - management speaks to the head with information technologies and written communication. Leadership engages the heart with courageous conversations and verbal communications.

How's your balance or the balance of your team? A powerful exercise is looking at time spent in technical, management, and leadership ("as is") and comparing that to your desired or "should be" state.

Podcast and Slides: How to Create a Coaching Culture

A recent study by the International Coach Federation showed that strong coaching cultures are correlated with much higher financial performance. Companies with an above average coaching culture showed revenue 19% higher than all others in their peer group.



At last July's leadership summit Kathleen Stinnett delivered a keynote presentation on **How to Create a Coaching Culture**. Kathleen and Jack Zenger wrote THE book on coaching skill development. Before our strategic partnership with Zenger Folkman I reviewed and raved about their well-researched and highly practical book ***The Extraordinary Coach: How the Best Leaders Help Others Grow***.

In **How to Create a Coaching Culture** Kathleen discusses:

- What factors measure a strong coaching culture
- How organizations are expanding their internal coaching capacity
- Key roles and responsibilities for creating a coaching culture
- How often senior leaders coach
- The gap between managers and employees perception on coaching frequency
- The three most important coaching behaviors
- The FUEL model to guide more effective coaching conversations
- Avoid stealth coaching

- Building visibility and accessibility
- Common success factors

Kathleen also discusses five key elements of creating a coaching culture:

- Link to organization initiatives
- Create compelling data
- Building and create communication plans
- Leverage senior leader champions
- Organization/employee satisfaction surveys

Building a strong coaching culture needs a supporting infrastructure to support the culture change, provide training and create sustainability, build common language and consistent implementation, link to performance management systems, measure progress, and provide access to tools.

As I wrote in "**Revamped Coaching Program Wins Six Industry Awards**", *The Extraordinary Coach* has been extensively revised and updated. That post provides a link to view some of the new award winning video clips.

Webinar: You're Fired! How to Dodge those Dreaded Words

"Ignorance is bliss," and "what you don't know can't hurt you," is dangerous thinking in today's fast changing world. Perceptions don't improve because they're ignored.

American writer and philosopher, Eric Hoffer, wrote, "far more crucial than what we know or do not know is what we do not want to know." Leaders often rely too heavily on self-assessment of their effectiveness. Research consistently shows self-assessment is only half as accurate as assessments from peers, direct reports, and managers ("**Beware the Self-Assessment Trap**").



Not knowing how our behavior is seen by those we're trying to lead and influence can lead to very unpleasant surprises.

Imagine there is a key meeting in your organization. You are NOT invited. In the meeting it will be decided who will be asked to leave. So, how do you keep your name off the list and avoid hearing those dreaded words, "You're Fired!"?

Zenger Folkman recently took a deep dive into their leadership assessment data and discovered six common characteristics of the people who were asked to leave their organizations. Last month Joe Folkman presented a webinar to share his research findings. His webinar outlined those six critical things where you do not want to be found lacking.

Click on "**You're Fired!**" -- **How to Dodge Those Dreaded Words** to watch the archived webinar and learn what can hurt you and how to avoid the pain by strengthening your leadership.

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:

Communication is essential to great leadership. This study deepens our understanding of its critical components.

"Tell, Ask, Listen: The 3 Steps To Great Communication As A Leader" -- Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"Doing any one of the behaviors well yields very little, but combining these three skills makes a powerful impact. Combining these three behaviors can elevate your effectiveness as a leader from "good enough" to extraordinary or even to great."

This archived webinar includes a 6 Leadership Levers assessment.

"The 6 Leadership Levers that Drive Extraordinary Results"(podcast)
www.zengerfolkman.com

"Leaders have a dramatic impact on the productivity of those they lead and on the organization's bottom-line results. Learn about the 6 Leadership Levers -- behaviors that extraordinary leaders leverage to influence others and improve their organizations."

A fascinating story of large scale leadership development and culture change at an iconic global company.

"Driving Cultural Change at General Motors"(podcast), Bill Huffaker
www.zengerfolkman.com

Bill Huffaker's address, "Driving Cultural Change at General Motors," recorded live from our 2015 Extraordinary Leadership Summit held in July. Bill is an expert in Talent Management and Talent Acquisition.

One of our projects this summer was to step back and look at the bigger and evolving picture of our keynotes and workshops. Here's our list of the most popular topic trends that emerged from looking at a broad sample of organizations.

12 Most Popular Development Topics
www.clemmergroup.com

"Which development areas do your team/org need to develop so you can stay on the grow?"

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** or connect with me on **LinkedIn, Twitter, FaceBook**, or my **blog!**

May the Force (of strengths) be with you!



Jim Clemmer
President

Phone: (519) 748-5968

Email: jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com

Website: www.clemmergroup.com



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The CLEMMER Group

10 Pioneer Drive, Suite 105, Kitchener ON N2P 2A4

Phone: (519) 748-1044 ~ Fax: (519) 748-5813

service@clemmer.net

www.clemmergroup.com

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