

THE LEADER LETTER

Lead with *STRENGTH*

clemmgroup.com



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SEPTEMBER 2012, ISSUE 114

Over the years "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" became a clichéd back-to-school assignment. This September, our response is "what vacation?" and "we were extraordinarily busy!"



Our biggest news of the summer was [A New Era Begins: Our Strategic Partnership with Zenger Folkman](#). If you were on summer vacation and missed the [August issue](#), it's full of Zenger Folkman related research and articles. A pivot point in getting our new relationship rolling was Scott Schweyer (our SVP of Consulting and Training) and I attending Zenger Folkman's Annual Extraordinary Leadership Summit at Robert Redford's Sundance Resort in the beautiful mountains just above Provo, Utah. Before and after that insightful and inspiring three day conference we completed our certification in Zenger Folkman's foundation program: the award-winning and deeply research-based **Extraordinary Leader** Strengths-Based Development System.

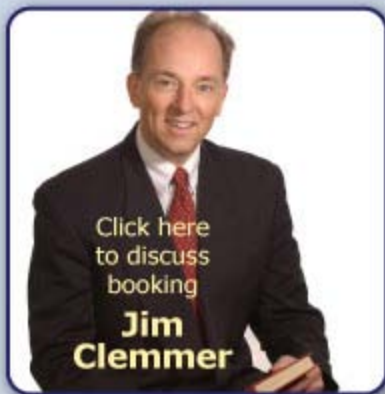
How we spent our summer was in a blur of preparation for a very busy fall lineup of Strengths-Based Leadership Development webcasts, breakfast presentations, executive briefings, panel discussions, and public workshops. This issue compiles my August blogs drawing on what we're learning about the incredible power and almost unbelievable payoffs of developing strengths-based leadership skills. There's also links to an excellent piece from Bruce Huber on Barrick Gold's highly successful *Courageous Safety Leadership* and my presentation on *Courageous Leadership for Health and Safety* at the Health, Safety, & Environment Conference and Trade Show in Toronto on October 4.

Visit Jim's Site!
www.jimclemmer.com

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We're delighted to work with McGraw Hill Ryerson in the Canadian launch of Zenger Folkman's groundbreaking new book, ***How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths***. In more than three decades of watching thousands of leadership books come and go in this business, I can count on one hand -- starting with *Corporate Cultures* and *In Search of Excellence* -- the very few that marked a major turning point in development focus and approaches. ***How to Be Exceptional*** is one of those books. It heralds a mega-shift in leadership training and development. You can read my review and a few insights gleaned from it in this issue. Then download or buy a copy as quick as you can. And join in the biggest revolution in leadership development in the last 50 years.

As you can also see, this issue is the kick-off of The CLEMMER Group's brand and image makeover. Our marketing director, Julie Gil, worked late into many nights -- while she thought we were dancing in the sun in Utah -- creating and orchestrating our redesigned web site, *The Leader Letter*, as well as managing the myriad of details around all the fall activities you'll find outlined here.

Here's to leveraging the strength of leadership!

STRENGTHS-BASED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMPLIMENTARY WEBCAST (NO CHARGE)

The more we learn about Zenger Folkman's leadership development research and approaches, the more excited we are to be their Canadian Strategic Partner. At risk of sounding like a sleazy late night TV pitch man; Zenger Folkman's Strengths-Based Leadership Development System is a major revolution in our field.



We've got a leadership crisis. Our organizations -- and our world -- need dramatically stronger leadership to address the massive challenges and changes engulfing us. This was clearly identified in a McKinsey & Company large scale global survey of CEOs and senior executives where 76 percent cited leadership development as important. But our current approaches are falling woefully short. Most leadership training and development programs are like the "magic medicine" cure-alls of the last century. They sound so good ... but most don't work. The study participants declared that **only 7 percent** thought their organization was **effectively developing leaders!**

In the past few decades the healthcare field has dramatically improved teaching and treatment methods through evidence-based medicine. The overarching question is what does the data and research tell us about what works and what doesn't?

Like the traveling medicine-man days of elixirs, potions, and quack medicines, there's a blizzard of theories, opinions, arcane thesis papers, inspirational quotations, training programs, books, frameworks, and approaches to leadership. What's sorely lacking is an integrated model that combines both "hard" management and "soft" leadership built on a base of solid research.

We need to bring leadership development out of the "spray and pray" shadows into the light of modern research. We need a leadership revolution. That's why we've partnered with Zenger Folkman. They may not be inciting riots in the streets -- or throwing tea in the harbor -- but they're leading us to a long overdue leadership overhaul. Zenger Folkman have built a uniquely powerful leadership development system using strengths-based leadership development, on a foundation of evidence-based approaches, producing a highly personalized development plan, that's built around a best of class 360 multi-rater tool. That's one very powerful combination!

In our [September 20 webcast](#), Jack Zenger and I will outline our new partnership to bring Zenger Folkman's highly unique and very powerful strengths-based leadership development system to Canada. The overview will include:

- background on their original and ongoing leadership effectiveness research
- the high leverage of building strengths
- how to create a best of class 360 assessment
- finding the leadership sweet spot, and
- leadership cross-training with data that shows how to build extraordinary strengths

We'll then include Joe Folkman in a discussion of the four key crucial factors that clearly sets Zenger Folkman apart from current approaches to leadership development.

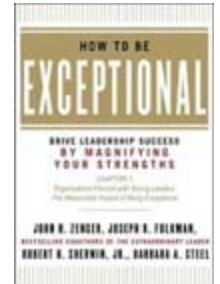
This [webcast](#) will feature some of the latest research just published this summer in Zenger Folkman's revolutionary new book ***How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths***. You can preview a special introductory chapter embedded with brief video clips of Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman explaining key concepts. [Click here](#) to access it.

For information and to register for this complimentary (no charge) webcast click on [Strengths-Based Leadership Development System](#).

Tune in, turn on, and join the revolution!

REVIEW OF *HOW TO BE EXCEPTIONAL: DRIVE LEADERSHIP SUCCESS BY MAGNIFYING YOUR STRENGTHS*

How to Be Exceptional couldn't come at a better time. We're standing at a very critical crossroad. Our organizations desperately want and need much stronger leadership at all levels. But a torrent of studies show most leadership development approaches aren't working. We need a better way.



We're also 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.

The opening reviews and quotations in the front of *How to Be Exceptional* tells the reader he or she is holding a revolutionary leadership book with a radical new approach. Award-winning development professionals and senior executives from organizations like Yale University, General Mills, Boeing, Symantec, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Hilton, Transat, Marathon Oil, General Motors, Invesco, and Elsevier laud the book as:

- "the next evolution in focusing on strengths"
- "the best book on professional development in decades"
- "cuts through the clutter"
- "practical how-to realities of leadership improvement"
- "simple, concrete, scientifically validated model"
- "invaluable to my organization"
- "breakthrough milestone"
- "actionable advice"
- "innovative methodology"

The Introduction begins with this declaration:

"Like a gigantic pendulum swinging, there has been a dramatic shift in the world of leadership development. 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."

And it's about time!

Parts One and Two of *How to Be Exceptional* are built around "What Leaders Can Learn From their Strengths" and "How Exceptional Strengths Are Developed." A third "Special Considerations" part discusses building strengths with individual or frontline staff, when to fix weaknesses or Fatal Flaws, addressing the misconception that strengths can be taken too far, vital keys to effective 360 multi-rater tools, are leaders made or born, and a brief history of the strengths movement.

Parts One and Two are the core of this book. They start with an outline of the powerful research behind Zenger Folkman's groundbreaking strengths-based leadership assessment, development, and sustainable implementation system. Their research is built on a massive database that now contains 300,000 responses from managers, peers, and direct reports who completed 360 feedback surveys across leadership 16 competencies on over 35,000 leaders.

The aggregated leadership effectiveness scores were then correlated with organization performance data. The differences are stunning! For example, the differences between the weakest and strongest leaders are 4 - 6 times higher profits, 6 times higher sales revenues, 10 - 20 times higher levels of employee engagement, 3 - 4 times reduction in employees thinking about quitting, 50% fewer employees that do leave, double the satisfaction with pay and job security, 4 - 5 times more employees "willing to go the extra mile," and 1.5 times higher customer satisfaction ratings. Now there's hard evidence for "soft" skills!

What's especially remarkable is how obtainable extraordinary leadership is proving to be. A leader needs to develop just three existing strengths out of sixteen competencies to catapult his or her leadership effectiveness from the 34th to the 80th percentile! Zenger Folkman's deep research shows very clearly that it's the presence of strengths -- not the absence of weaknesses -- that defines highly effective leaders. Building strengths is proving to be ***the only way to move from an average or ordinary leader to extraordinary or exceptional.***

In a series of pre and post studies Zenger Folkman looked at the impact of leaders choosing to fix weaknesses versus building on existing strengths. 12 to 18 months later the leaders who magnified their existing strengths showed two - three

times more improvement in leadership effectiveness than leaders who worked on fixing their weaknesses.

How to Be Exceptional provides the succinct, practical, how-to roadmap we so badly need to navigate the inspiring and tremendously fulfilling territory of strengths-based leadership. This guide book outlines a step-by-step method for "driving leadership success by magnifying your strengths." For weary leaders feeling beat up by engagement surveys, performance reviews, 360 and other feedback tools highlighting their deficiencies and suffering change fatigue, this book couldn't come at a better time.

In my 35 plus years of studying, applying, writing about, and providing leadership development programs and services, Zenger Folkman's approaches are a much needed revolution. The authors close with this modest and understated summary of their contributions to this critical movement:

"We believe that our contributions to this collection of massive granite blocks that make up the current foundation of the strengths movement are the following:

- A more rigorous analysis of the impact of strengths on business outcomes. This had not been the focus of the pioneers ...
- Studies confirming that strengths can be developed, in contrast to those who believe that they are somewhat fixed or static.
- Research that confirms that developing strengths is far more successful than developing weaknesses.
- Research showing that the approach one uses to build strengths is radically different from that used to fix weaknesses. Utilizing a nonlinear approach and companion competencies makes it possible for people to move from good performance to great."

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

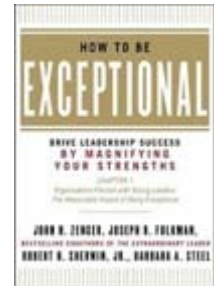
For bulk purchases at substantial discounts, contact McGraw-Hill Ryerson by [email](mailto:) or call 905-430-5094.

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMM ON... *HOW TO BE EXCEPTIONAL*

"In all our research to predict the satisfied, engaged, and committed employee versus the dissatisfied, disengaged, and uncommitted employee, one variable emerged as the best predictor of the differences. That one variable is, "Who is your immediate supervisor?"

"...leadership strengths as those qualities that are highly valued in most cultures, that are valued in their own right, that can be developed through focused effort, that may be found in multiple leaders of an organization, and that have been shown to separate those perceived as the highest-performing leaders from those perceived as average or poor leaders."

"...72 percent of leaders should be focused on building their strengths. By not doing that, this large group is failing to benefit from the advantages of the building-on-strengths approach. Their leadership development efforts may still have an impact, but their effort will be sub optimized. So the biggest challenge in focusing on strengths ... is our innate desire to fix our weaknesses."



"...effective leaders are created through a mixture of "made and born" and that the weight of evidence is clearly on the side of leaders being made."

"Those leaders who worked on strengths were more likely to:

- Create an excellent development plan
- Improve their overall leadership effectiveness
- Improve specific issues in their development plan
- Allocate appropriate time to development
- Put forth a concerted effort to work on their development plan"

"...our research shows that self-perceptions tend to be only half as reliable as those from either peers or direct reports ... we simply don't know our strengths or weaknesses as well as we would like to think we do ... the only way to get an accurate read of how you are doing as a leader is through the collective eyes of those you lead ... bottom line, a leader's ability to lead is highly determined by the reactions of others to that leader. Self-perceptions make little difference."

"We have some new research that shows that there is an even better way to increase employee engagement. Surprisingly, the secret is for the manager to ask for feedback. The impact of asking for it is even more powerful than the impact of giving it. Here's what happens to the percentile scores on employee engagement:

- 29th percentile -- manager neither asks for, nor gives feedback
- 34th percentile -- manager doesn't ask, but gives feedback
- 48th percentile -- manager asks to receive feedback, but doesn't give feedback
- 74th percentile -- manager both asks for and gives feedback"

THE 11 CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF A "BEST IN CLASS" 360 ASSESSMENT

On October 12 I am delivering another breakfast presentation at the Human Resources Professionals Association's 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 reduce 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.

This presentation will draw from Zenger Folkman's white paper "*11 Components of a Best-In-Class 360-Degree Assessment*." You can download and read it in the Articles/White Paper section of the Leadership Resource Center once you've registered there.

STRENGTHS-BASED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BRIEFING

A Complimentary (No Charge) Executive Briefing and Panel Discussion
October 25, 2012
(Toronto Congress Centre)
8:30 AM – Noon
Free – Registration Required



Leadership effectiveness is ***the*** major performance factor. Zenger Folkman's extensive research studies correlating 300,000 people's ratings of more than 35,000 managers with performance outcomes found these dramatic differences between the weakest and strongest leaders:

- 4 - 6 times higher profits
- 6 times higher sales revenues
- 10 - 20 times higher levels of employee engagement
- 3 - 4 times reduction in employees thinking about quitting
- 50% fewer employees that do leave
- Double the satisfaction with pay and job security
- 4 - 5 times more employees "willing to go the extra mile"
- 1.5 times higher customer satisfaction ratings
- Over 3 times safer work environment

Designed for medium and large organizations:

- CEOs, CAOs, General Managers, and Divisional VPs
- Learning and Development Professionals
- Senior Human Resource Executives
- Organization Development/Effectiveness Professionals

Agenda:

- Research Insights from ***How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths*** (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2012)
- The Differentiating Competencies of Extraordinary Leaders
- The High Leverage of Building Strengths
- Critical Components of a Best-of-Class 360 Assessment
- Finding The Leadership Sweet Spot
- Magnifying Leadership Strengths Through Cross-Training
- Why The CLEMMER Group and Zenger Folkman Are Strategic Partners
- What Makes Zenger Folkman's Leadership Development System Uniquely Powerful
- Client Panel Discussion

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

BUILD ON STRENGTHS FOR DRAMATICALLY BETTER RESULTS

It's both jarring and exciting to learn that I've been wrong.

Most of my last few decades in the leadership development field, I've fallen headlong into the trap ensnaring a vast majority of us in this business; focusing on closing organizational or managerial gaps or weaknesses. We've used needs analysis or facilitated a gap analysis to find the weak spots and then gone to work on fixing those. And if we're successful, we get them up to average!



This is a key reason leadership and organization development efforts have a 70% failure rate. To paraphrase a popular love song, we've been looking for leadership development in all the wrong places. Zenger Folkman's deep research shows very clearly and convincingly that it is the presence of strengths, not the lack of weaknesses that differentiates the best leaders. This is the only way to move from an average or ordinary leader to extraordinary or exceptional. And extraordinary leaders deliver exceptional and dramatically higher productivity, innovation, employee engagement, customer satisfaction, sales, and profits.

Jack Zenger's four page white paper "***Developing Strengths or Weaknesses: Overcoming the Lure of the Wrong Choice***" is a succinct and powerful overview. It's freely available for download in Zenger Folkman's [Leadership Resource Center](#) once you've registered on their site. This paper is a tiny tip of a massive iceberg as we see a convergence of powerful new research in the fields of Positive Psychology, Appreciative Inquiry, and Strengths-Based Leadership. For much more background and lots of practical how-to approaches rush out and buy Zenger Folkman's outstanding new book [How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths](#). You can preview a special introductory chapter embedded with brief video clips of Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman explaining key concepts. [Click here](#) to access it.

I'll be delivering a breakfast presentation on [7 Reasons Why Strengths-Based Development Just Works Better](#) on October 2 at the Human Resources Professionals Association office in Toronto. During our discussion I'll expand on ZF's new book and their extensive research to:

- Prove that a strengths-based approach is 2 - 3 times more effective than focusing on weaknesses.
- How strengths-based approaches dramatically boost motivation for improvement and transforms organizational culture.
- Present an overall framework that can be used to develop leaders' strengths.
- Outline the compelling research on using cross training or non-linear development using powerful combinations is a highly effective new way to develop strengths.
- Show that a genuine strength cannot possibly be over developed and become a weakness.

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

It's time to stop "minding the gap" and lead with strength!

I hope you'll join me and Jack Zenger on September 20 at 1PM for our free [webcast](#) introducing The CLEMMER Group and Zenger Folkman's new partnership, an overview of Zenger Folkman's Extraordinary Strengths-Based Leadership Development System, and what makes it so unique and effective. If you haven't registered yet, [register now](#).

HEALTH AND SAFETY LESSONS LEARNED FROM BARRICK GOLD

Over the years I've written about how Barrick Gold dramatically improved their safety record. They went from being a typical international mining company with the industry's sad record of deaths and injuries to one of the leaders in their field.



With *Courageous Safety Leadership* at the center of their major culture change, Barrick reduced total recordable incidents by 65%!! As director of safety and health at Barrick Gold, Bruce Huber was one of the key players in their incredible success story. He's written an excellent summary of how they achieved this turnaround in *Engineering and Mining Journal*. It's available for you to read at [Courageous Leadership](#).

Since working with Barrick Gold, we've continued to evolve and further develop our programs and services to help Clients reach for Zero Incidents with balancing safety and high production. If you missed my May webcast, it's archived at [Leadership and Culture Development for Higher Health and Safety](#).

I am also delivering a keynote presentation on *Courageous Leadership for Health and Safety* at the Health, Safety, & Environment Conference and Trade Show in Toronto on October 4. If you're attending, drop by our booth and say "hi." Go to [HSE Canada](#) for details.

THE EXTRAORDINARY LEADER PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

October 22 - St. Paul, MN
November 13 - Calgary
November 29 - Toronto



Why Strengths-Based Leadership Development Works Better:

- Building strengths is the only way to become an extraordinary leader.
- A strengths focus produces up to 3 times higher change and improvement.
- Profits, sales, engagement, morale and energy levels, turnover, health and safety, and customer satisfaction skyrockets.
- The spectrum of development methods broadens with cross-training and Companion Competencies.
- Participant motivation to improve is much higher.
- Organizational culture is much more positive and energized.
- It's a lot more fun to work on strengths!

The Extraordinary Leader process is being used extensively for individual leaders at all levels of an organization from senior executives to first-line supervisors. Customized in-house sessions are delivered to executive or management teams, other intact or cross-functional work teams, or to individuals gathered from different parts of an organization.

***The Extraordinary Leader* Process and Participant Outcomes**

The research and approaches used in this system were first outlined in Zenger Folkman's bestselling book *The Extraordinary Leader: Turning Good Managers into Great Leaders* and *Harvard Business Review* article "Making Yourself Indispensable." Their newest book, *How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths* further updates that work.

This is a uniquely powerful leadership development system using strengths-based leadership development, on a foundation of evidence-based approaches, producing a highly personalized development plan, that's built around a best of class 360 multi-rater tool.

[Click here](#) for more information and registration

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:

Just back from ZF's inspiring Leadership Summit at Sundance Resort in Utah. Here are insights from their deep pool of leadership research.

["10 Questions: Are You a Bad Boss? Or Do You Work For a Terrible Boss?"](#)
www.forbes.com

"What is worse than having a bad boss? Being a bad boss and not knowing it. To help these leaders who really do want to know how their subordinates honestly feel about them, we did some research."

Not all readers are leaders, but many highly effective leaders are thoughtful readers. It's key to learning from other people's experience.

["For Those Who Want to Lead, Read"](#) -- John Coleman
<http://blogs.hbr.org>

"Deep, broad reading habits are often a defining characteristic of our greatest leaders and can catalyze insight, innovation, empathy, and personal effectiveness."

Dan presented his research on strengths, happiness, and lawyers at the Canadian Positive Psychology conference in Toronto. Applies to many professionals.

["10 Happy Tips for Lawyers"](#) -- Dan Bowling
<http://thecareerist.typepad.com>

"At the risk of sounding trite while compressing centuries of thought and research into a list, here are ten ideas for greater well-being in law."

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 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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