



Issue 150 - September 2015

The Leader Letter

Some people like to build things with their hands. As my wife, Heather, can attest, I didn't inherit the handyman gene. My farmer father and my cabinetmaker brother kept that gene to themselves. My passion is building with words. My grandmother was a published poet so it's likely her set of genes that made me handier with a keyboard than with a hammer. Although there are times when I would like to use a hammer on the keyboard!



My biweekly blog posts (you can **sign up to get each one fresh from my keyboard** as they're published) that we publish each month in this newsletter draws from over three decades of study, personal application, and ongoing research and writing. These blogs also capture our experiences with coaching and training hundreds of organizations and thousands of leaders.

This issue is an especially broad cross section of the three pillars of our business:

1. **Keynotes, workshops, and retreats,**
2. **Customized leadership and culture development services,** and
3. **Zenger Folkman's Programs and Services.**

This month starts with a critical choice: whether to lead, follow, or wallow. This framework is the foundation of personal, team, and organizational effectiveness. You'll also find links to a recent webinar on Zenger Folkman's new research of the 6 leadership levers driving extraordinary results.

Human Resources can play a critical role in leadership and culture development. But there's a vast gulf separating top HR leaders from so many of their mediocre and very ineffective peers. Coaching skill development efforts are spreading and our *Extraordinary Coach* process is accelerating its effectiveness with major upgrades. You'll also get six key lessons from a new book based on the extraordinary Zappos culture. These illustrate and reinforce core approaches that are standing the test of time during these turbulent times.

American author, Og Mandino, wrote, "Thousands of grapes are pressed to fill one jar with wine, and the grape skin and pulp are tossed to the birds. So it is with these grapes of wisdom from the ages. Much has been filtered and tossed to the wind. Only the pure truth lies distilled in the words to come."

We don't claim to have the pure or ultimate truth in the words to come. We have studiously distilled research and approaches along with our own and others' experiences. Hopefully, you'll find some leadership and culture development truths worth sipping and savoring here.

Critical Choices: Lead, Follow, or Wallow

I was booked to facilitate a development and team planning retreat with a group of vice presidents of a large company. The group had a dinner the evening before our session to provide each other with updates and discuss common issues.

The company was going through turbulent and difficult times. Productivity and profitability were down. A recent organizational survey showed employee dissatisfaction and slipping engagement levels. As each VP updated their colleagues he or she pointed to problems with unions, industry regulators, the board of directors, unmotivated employees, supervisor skill shortfalls, and company bureaucracy. Soon the group was in victim mode reinforcing each other in a "blame storming" session.



First on our agenda the next morning was our foundational framework on critical choices we all face in dealing with problems and setbacks. We can either **lead, follow, or wallow**. After discussing the differences in these three behaviors at senior executive levels, we reviewed a continuum ranging from plus 10 (Leading) to zero (Following) to negative 10 (Wallowing). Each participant provided an anonymous vote rating where this leadership team was on the continuum. The average score was - 6.

This shifted the conversation toward this team taking stronger responsibility and providing leadership. Instead of acting like thermometers reflecting the organization's increasingly negative environment, these executives agreed they must act like thermostats and reset the culture and mindsets of their teams and the organization. That's leadership.

In his *Forbes* column, "**Taking Responsibility Is The Highest Mark Of Great Leaders**", Jack Zenger cites a study of a past colleague on key differences between managers passed over for promotion. "Accepts full responsibility for the performance of the work unit" most clearly distinguished their more effective peers.

Eleanor Roosevelt, American diplomat, writer, and U.S. First Lady once said, "In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility."

Are you and your leadership team leading, following, or wallowing?

Further Reading or Viewing:

- **Webinar on BOLD Leadership**
- **"Change Choices: Creating Our Own Reality"**
- **"Building Our Resilience in Facing the F-Word"**
- **"Bouncing Back from Adversity is a Critical Leadership Skill"**
- **"The Victimitis Virus: Undermining and Giving Away Our Power"**
- **"Whining versus Leading"**

Webinar: The 6 Leadership Levers that Drive Extraordinary Results

Periodically I search Amazon's web site to see how many books are now available on leadership. There are now 150,000. That's up from just over 120,000 when I last searched a few months ago.

The overwhelming number of leadership theories, models, frameworks, and skills makes it very hard to know where to invest development time and effort. Competency models can draw from leadership behaviors that can run into the dozens.



Zenger Folkman's ongoing research and quest for simplifying the complex topic of leadership development has uncovered powerful new insights.



Last month Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman shared their insights on the six leadership levers in a complimentary webinar. The session covered:

- The impact of these leadership levers on employee engagement
- How profound strength in any 3 of these leadership attributes takes a leader to the top 10% of leadership effectiveness and results
- How a fatal flaw in just one of these attributes drops leadership effectiveness to the bottom 15%
- Non-linear development is the only way to move leadership skills from good to great
- Why building strengths doubles improvement in leadership effectiveness versus fixing weaknesses
- How to use the CPO model (Competence, Passion, and Organizational Need) when deciding what leadership attribute to develop

Click on [The 6 Leadership Levers That Drive Extraordinary Performance](#) to view the webinar.

Ten Critical Questions to Assess HR's Effectiveness

Over the years we've worked with many Human Resource executives. We've also facilitated a few hundred offsite executive retreats as part of **Culture and Organization Development**.

Step #2 in that process, setting up and following through on the executive retreat, is where we see the starkest differences in HR leaders. The biggest differences often show up in how the HR leader is able to influence and guide the CEO and executive team in setting up the retreat and following through with **steps 3, 4, and 5 after the session**.



The most effective HR leaders are valued advisors and key leaders highly respected by the CEO and executive team. Less effective HR leaders can't get the retreat properly set up (if at all) or they're nudged aside as others take stronger leadership roles.

The July-August issue of *Harvard Business Review* features a bomb with a burning fuse on its cover and this bold proclamation; "It's Time to Blow Up HR and Build Something New." In one article, "Why We Love to Hate HR... and What HR Can Do About It," Wharton School professor, Peter Cappelli, provides five "basic steps HR leaders can take."

Here are his steps rewritten with a few key questions to help you assess your HR leadership:

Set the Agenda

- Does HR wait to be asked/told what HR issues to address or do they lead the way?
- Is HR partnering with managers on key people issues like layoffs, recruiting, flexible work arrangements, and performance management?

Focus on Here and Now

- Is HR perpetuating old practices (like widely hated performance appraisals) or building organization-specific approaches that fit today's needs?
- Is HR using evidence-based approaches rather than theories and traditions to guide HR practices?

Acquire Business Knowledge

- Is HR bringing first-rate analytical minds into the function to help their organization make sense of all the employee data available?
- Is HR using data to help their organizational leaders learn how to predict good hires, the best leaders, and people practices with the most impact?

Highlight Financial Benefits

- Is HR making the case for how they help drive financial performance?
- Is HR using its enterprise resource planning systems to analyze turnover, productivity, engagement, and leadership effectiveness to determine talent management strategies?

Walk Away from Time Wasters

- Is HR investing in fads like generational differences that don't have any compelling evidence to support they need to be managed differently than everyone else.
- Is HR balancing short term projects and initiatives with long term strategies?

People leadership is vital to organizational effectiveness. Highly effective HR leaders are strategic leaders and executive team members as vital as finance, operations, or IT. How does your HR function measure up? What are you doing to improve it?

4 Vital Competencies That Differentiate Top HR Leaders from the Rest

We started working with Troy, an HR leader with a consumer goods manufacturer, last spring. He reached out for help with **culture and organization development** because communication breakdowns had created extreme silo behavior causing engagement and productivity levels to drop. Working with Troy we found the common ground among the competing departments and he adroitly coordinated an offsite management retreat with pre-assessments to help us focus the group on strategic problems connected to customer issues. Following the retreat -- which further raised his credibility and influence -- he's playing a strong and effective role in working with us to analyze and solve implementation issues while helping leaders set their personal, team, and organizational performance targets much higher.



A progress update meeting with Troy coincided with just having posted "**Ten Critical Questions to Assess HR's Effectiveness**" (see above) and newly published *Harvard Business Review* research by Zenger Folkman. "**What Separates Great HR Leaders from the Rest**", reports on ZF's study of 2,187 HR leaders across hundreds of organizations around the globe. Four competencies sharply distinguished top quartile HR leaders from their much less effective peers:

- Establishes Stretch Goals
- Solves Problems and Analyzes Issues
- Develops Strategic Perspective
- Connects to the Outside World

Some HR professionals have changed their titles to "HR partner" to signal the role they want to play. The appearance of articles in high profile management publications on the need to blow up, split, or redesign HR shows that many aren't seen as partners. Too often HR is internally focused, slow to respond, taken on a policing role, continuing outdated "same old, same old" practices, or slowing down much needed leadership and culture reforms.

Troy's strong leadership makes him an invaluable -- and rare -- HR leader. He exemplifies the four vital HR competencies. His business card doesn't say HR Partner but the rest of the executive team clearly see him as a critical player in co-creating a powerful new culture.

Four Steps to FUEL More Effective Coaching Conversations

There are many models and approaches to coaching skill development. Over the years we've worked with many of them and modified or developed a few of our own.

As we've been developing Client coaching skills with the FUEL framework for the last few years we've seen striking differences from other coaching models and approaches. The FUEL conversation framework is an evidence-based approach that evolved from extensive research.



FUEL is designed to achieve behavioral outcomes, challenge assumptions, and strengthen an adult-to-adult partnering relationship between the coach and the coachee. A core difference of FUEL framework is moving the manager from telling, directing, and giving advice to asking non-leading and open-ended questions to guide the conversation so that both coach and coachee learn, arrive at a better solution, and ultimately the coachee owns the outcome.

Many coaching models are based on sports coaching approaches and designed to provide training, give advice, mentor, solve problems, and set action plans. We've seen numerous problems with this approach. A common problem is directing or leading questions that result in follow up conversations along the lines of "how are you doing with implementing my solution/action plan." This results in a lack of coachee commitment and follow through, and managers' frustration when action plans are poorly implemented.

Go to [The FUEL Model for Coaching Conversations](#) if you'd like to see my video clip overview of the FUEL process for more effective coaching conversations. We've also just pulled together a brief summary of each step in FUEL and some of the critical differences from most coaching approaches. [Click here](#) to read it. If you'd like to dig even deeper into coaching skills development click on [Extraordinary Coach](#) for an assortment of whitepapers, blogs, videos, and webinars (use "Click to View" tabs to select the resources you're interested in).

Revamped Coaching Program Wins Six Industry Awards

Developing coaching skills for today's time-crunched leaders is a big challenge. As we've delivered *The Extraordinary Coach* workshop over the past few years we've been very impressed by how quickly participants shift their thinking about coaching and pick up new skills. A big part of the reason is the 4 Step FUEL model (see above).



This spring we started delivering the newly revised and updated version of *The Extraordinary Coach*. It's proving to be even more powerful. A major improvement comes from the new video clips in the program. They provide entertaining and engaging illustrations of key points in the program -- especially the FUEL model.

In the few months they've been available, these videos have captured an unprecedented number of awards and recognitions. The program features several video vignettes that model the critical coaching skills and tools needed to be a more impactful leader/coach. These videos have caught the attention of the leadership community and have been recognized with six different industry awards honoring their quality. These include top honors from the Stevie Awards, the Telly Awards, and the Videographer Awards.

The coaching video received a Gold Stevie Award, the highest honor in the training category. The Stevie Awards, created in 2002, honor top achievements and positive contributions of organizations globally. The awards are

reviewed by over 200 judges that are some of the world's most respected entrepreneurs, innovators, and business educators.

In addition, *The Extraordinary Coach* was honored with a Bronze Telly Award. The Telly Awards annually recognize superior film and video productions, groundbreaking online video content, and outstanding local, regional, and cable TV commercials/programs.

Four of the new coaching videos were also honored in the Videographer Awards. Two videos received The Award of Excellence, the highest honor. Another video received the Award of Distinction and a fourth video was recognized with the Honorable Mention Award. The Videographer Awards are among the oldest and most respected awards in the industry.

[Click here](#) to view clips from the video.

Six Lessons in Culture Development from Zappos

Recently I delivered a keynote presentation on culture and leadership development at a senior leader's conference. Robert Richman also spoke at the event sharing his insights and experiences as co-creator of Zappos Insights, a program for educating companies on the powerful culture of Zappos that catapulted the American online shoe retailer from a startup in 1999 to \$1 billion in sales by 2008. In 2011 the company was rated #1 in customer service by American Express customers and #6 in Best Places to Work by *Fortune* magazine.



Robert captured the key lessons and insights from his time with Zappos in his book, *The Culture Blueprint: A Guide to Building the High-Performance Workplace*. The book is a succinct and high energy overview of the key leadership and people principles at the heart of Zappos' highly effective culture. Their mission is to "Live and Deliver WOW!"

Here are six lessons on culture development from Robert's presentation and book that especially stood out:

1. **Co-Creating Culture** -- as outlined in our June webcast, *Leading a Peak Performance Culture*, we define culture with variations of "the way we do things around here" such as behaviors/attitudes that are accepted/overlooked or expected and rewarded. Robert's thought provoking definition is "culture is a feeling" that comes from experiences creating emotions.
2. **Opt-In** -- he rightly points out any culture development work that's forced or mandatory will be resisted. He extends this idea to eliminating the phrase "buy-in" because it's a paradigm of selling. He advises aiming for alignment instead.
3. **Core Values** -- when actively modelled throughout the organization, central to hiring and firing (we'd add recognizing and promoting), and used as decision-making criteria, values lay the foundation of a high-performance culture.
4. **Internal Service** -- there's a direct and powerful correlation between how people inside the company are served and treated to how they deal with external customers.
5. **Remove Obstacles** -- find the biggest obstacles, problems, or frustrations -- pain points -- as leverage for change. This is the quickest way to alignment.
6. **Resistance is a Gold Mine** -- resistant people are passionate and engaged. By addressing their blocked energy they can be made into enthusiastic converts.

The Culture Blueprint provides leadership tips, inspiring insights, and some good implementation ideas on the "soft side" of culture development. What's not covered are the "hard" systems and processes that sustain and support

peak performance cultures. It's a quick and easy read to energize your efforts in leading a peak performance culture.

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on.... Culture Development

A few thought provoking excerpts from, *The Culture Blueprint: A Guide to Building the High-Performance Workplace*, by Robert Richman:

"Culture change is not a strategy or an initiative. This is a total mind shift. Once you truly experience it, you can't go back.

Without taking care of your people, who will deliver? In order to take care of others, you must take care of yourself. That is why your own team's needs (not wants, but needs) come before the customers.'

Values are the DNA of any organization.....values provide a decision-making framework... they can be re-engineered to create the outcome and experience you desire within your organization... values attract the right people and repel the wrong people (and that includes customers).

You know you are truly committed when you are willing to hire and fire by the values of the company. This means that if someone is a great performer but they do not meet every value, then you must not bring them on board. And if they violate a core value, you must be willing to terminate their employment, immediately.

Now, you may not have a business where people can get killed, but you are killing people's ideas constantly by making them feel unsafe in very subtle ways. And no one will tell you this because they're either afraid of losing their job, or they don't realize it because it's that subtle.

Performance metrics are a group responsibility: We take it on as a team. Culture is an individual responsibility: We each are fully responsible.

Reflection is another one of the most under-utilized activities in business today. Everything moves so fast that we rarely take a moment to stop, breathe, and say what's working and what's not.

Culture is a feeling, so how you feel is ultimately guiding the culture of your organization. Do you feel stressed, constantly in a rush? Not having fun? Then no matter what you say, you are contributing to a culture that values that. Your state of being is your highest leverage tool. Shifting a feeling is an instant culture change."



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:

A fun and quirky look at leadership differences connecting to confidence and feeling powerful and in control.

"Which Superpower Would You Choose: To Fly Or To Be Invisible?" - Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"How much can you learn about someone from a silly question? Believe it or not, the answer to this question provides some interesting insights into business and professional leaders around the world."

Strong example of customizing *The Extraordinary Leader* to their ILEAD process for leadership/culture development.

Michelle Freiberg on "The Evolution of Leadership at McKesson" (podcast)
www.zengerfolkman.com

Recorded live from our 2015 Extraordinary Leadership Summit held in July. Michelle is Director of Talent Assessment at McKesson Corporation (healthcare services and IT company ranked 15th on Fortune 500 list).

Use this list of best practices to assess your skills and approaches to leading change.

"Nice Guys Finish Last: 7 Change Behaviors that Actually Work" - Joe Folkman
www.forbes.com

"We started with a list of the behaviors that are least helpful behaviors ... next we did an analysis where we created an index of these seven enabling behaviors and then looked at the outcome variable."

This podcast (with a link to an e-book excerpt) builds on Kevin's insightful keynote at our July Leadership Forum.

"Cupcakes and High Potentials - The Recipe for Developing New Leaders" (podcast)
www.zengerfolkman.com

Kevin Wilde, VP of OE and Chief Learning Officer at General Mills, joins Joe Folkman in this podcast to discuss developing high potentials.

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!



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