



## Issue 174 - September 2017

What makes a team great? Why do some teams flourish and others flounder? Google's People Operations (what they call HR) conducted a two-year study to find out. They conducted over 200 interviews looking at more than 250 attributes on over 180 active Google teams. Google analyst, Julia Rozovsky, reports that "who is on a team matters less than how the team members interact, structure their work, and view their contributions."

The research uncovered "five key dynamics that set successful teams apart from other teams at Google:



1. **Psychological safety:** Can we take risks on this team without feeling insecure or embarrassed?
2. **Dependability:** Can we count on each other to do high quality work on time?
3. **Structure & clarity:** Are goals, roles, and execution plans on our team clear?
4. **Meaning of work:** Are we working on something that is personally important for each of us?
5. **Impact of work:** Do we fundamentally believe that the work we're doing matters?"

Highly effective teams balance doing their work or working **IN** the team with stepping back periodically to refocus and work **ON** the team. Top teams don't confuse busyness with effectiveness. Less effective teams often lose sight of their objectives and then speed up their efforts. They spin faster and faster into disharmony and poorer results.

As everyone comes back from summer vacation and looks ahead to next year (often with budgeting cycles now kicking into high gear), this is an excellent time to take leadership teams offsite for a few days of planning and development.

Having facilitated around 200 leadership team retreats, Google's research aligns very well with our experience. The most successful leadership team retreats include these elements:

- Listing accomplishments and successes to leverage.
- Foundational frameworks/models that balance management processes/systems with people practices for leadership/culture development.
- Agreeing on a shared vision of success for this team/organization.
- Reaffirming or establishing the core values and the behaviors that boost or block team/organization effectiveness.
- Providing a safe and anonymous process to identify and address the key moose-on-the-table/elephant-in-the-room/800 pound gorillas that are impeding effectiveness.
- Establishing three or four strategic imperatives to move the team/organization forward.
- Laying out implementation plans with who, what, where, when, and how for each strategic imperative.

- Scheduling follow up and follow through steps to sticking to them.
- Team reflections on personal and collective learning from this retreat.

Our webinar on **Executive Team Building and Culture Development** outlines the common failure factors and vital steps of the most effective **Leadership Team Retreats**.

In this issue you'll find further links to team/organization development and how they impact leadership development's dismal failure to change behavior. Listening is a key leadership skill that's often reflected in team dynamics. Top teams listen respectfully and encourage debates and contrary views to better understand each other's perspectives and build solutions together. And just like strong leaders, strong teams leverage the synergy of delivering results and building relationships.

In today's crazy busy world, the difference between frenzied activity and effectiveness has never been more vital. How's your team doing?

## Why Leadership Developing is Failing and How to Fix It

A new McKinsey & Company study reports that the training industry "estimated to be more than \$50 billion are delivering disappointing results. According to a recent *Fortune* survey, only 7 percent of CEOs believe their companies are building effective global leaders, and just 10 percent said their leadership development initiatives have a clear business impact. Our latest research has a similar message: only 11 percent of more than 500 executives we polled around the globe strongly agreed with the statement that their leadership development interventions achieve and sustain the desired results."



This is a huge waste of time and money. If capital, technology, or marketing investments were only effective 10% of the time they'd be changed very quickly -- or the leaders would be changed.

In this study, McKinsey put together systematic data on what drives effective leadership development programs. They found "four sets of interventions appear to matter most: contextualizing the program based on the organization's position and strategy, ensuring sufficient reach across the organization, designing the program for the transfer of learning, and using system reinforcement to lock in change."

There's a blizzard of theories, opinions, arcane thesis papers, inspirational quotations, training programs, books, frameworks, and approaches to leadership and organization development. Search for "leadership" in books at Amazon and you'll find nearly 200,000 available for your reading pleasure. Google "leadership development" and you'll be served up over 21 million sites to browse through. What's sorely lacking is an integrated model that combines both "hard" management practices, "soft" leadership behaviors, sustained and supported by culture development, that's built on a base of solid research.

This simple formula is key to lasting and effective leadership and organization development; **B = P x C**. That is, **B**ehavior is a factor of **P**ersonal development multiplied by the organization's **C**ulture. This generates an interdependent cycle that creates a flywheel effect. Like two wings of an airplane, both are needed for sustained and soaring performance.

## Keys to Successful Leadership Development

Looking back over decades of leadership development efforts, we see that when they've had a substantial and lasting impact on shifting behavior and results, senior leaders and development professionals cover most of these bases:

- **Move beyond bolt-on development programs to built-in culture change** – too many efforts are partial and piecemeal efforts unconnected to the organization's strategy and key objectives.
- **"Double Development Impact with Manager Support"** - Managers can double the effectiveness of development activities by investing some time in pre and post coaching sessions.
- **Avoid Common Barriers a Harvard Professor Found Causes Leadership Training to Fail** – unclear strategy and values, executives not working as a team, lack of honest conversations about problems, lack of organization-wide coordination, inadequate time to talent issues, and employee fear about telling senior management of obstacles.
- **Leader's Coachability** - It's been said that no one should ever try to teach a pig to whistle. It wastes your time and annoys the pig. Are development dollars being wasted on uncoachable leaders?
- **Cascade and Model Leadership Development from the Top Down** - Too often senior leaders are "too busy" to participate in leadership development exercises. Giving lots of lip service to the importance of leadership and organization development they approve budgets to develop (or "fix") other leaders.

Thoreau wrote, "It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue... but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look..." Successful leadership development efforts paint the culture while the culture shapes the leader.

## Say What? Are the Best Leaders Listeners or Talkers?

Does your team or organization need to improve communications? Would you like to get more e-mails every day?

I'll often ask those two questions in workshops when we're discussing communications. Most hands go up when asked who would like to improve communications. Often no one raises a hand when asked who would like to increase the number of e-mails they get every day. Yet what do most managers do when they hear people want more communication: send out more e-mails, load up more PowerPoint slides, and set up more meetings.



Recently I was coaching Rachel, an executive struggling with team issues. She'd been told she needed to improve her listening. Often she'd interrupt to finish a team member's sentence or cut them off with an answer before he or she completed a thought. This was a major contribution to declining ownership for the team's growing customer service problems.

Rachel's preference was to tell rather than ask. She felt leadership was about directing and coordinating the team's work. She came across as "if I want any of your ideas, I'll give them to you." So her team sat back and waited for her to take charge.

In memoirs reflecting on his long career studying, teaching, and writing about leadership (he wrote 27 books), Warren Bennis called listening "one of the most important and most undervalued leadership skills." He

counselled, "Listening is an art, a demanding one that requires you to damp down your own ego and make yourself fully available to someone else."

Do you prefer listening over talking? Recently Zenger Folkman compared self-assessment of leaders with a strong preference for talking to other leaders who preferred listening. ZF then compared 360 ratings of leadership effectiveness of the talker and listener groups. They found, "the data is extremely compelling, showing that a preference for listening (and listening before talking) is directly tied to a leader's effectiveness."

In his *Forbes* article, ***Listening and Speaking: The Leader's Paradox***, Jack Zenger adds further research (and how-to tips) on seven ways to become a more effective listener:

1. **When you have something important you want to say, wait for the optimum time**
2. **Ask good questions**
3. **Be a trampoline, not a sponge**
4. **Ask for feedback from others**
5. **Be curious**
6. **Be aware of what your face is saying**
7. **Trust that listening intently, prior to fully stating your position, will get you more than talking.**

This folk wisdom sums up this vital leadership skill:

A wise old owl sat in an oak,  
The more he heard the less he spoke;  
The less he spoke the more he heard.  
Why aren't we all like that wise old bird?

## **Complimentary Webinar: How to Deliver Outstanding Results AND Build Strong Relationships**

Which is more important:

- Achieving goals/commitments or building trust?
- Successfully following through on objectives or fostering teamwork and cooperation?
- Delivering quarterly objectives or building a strong culture?
- Hitting production targets or ensuring no one is injured on the job?
- Pushing people toward higher performance or pulling inspired efforts from them?



Zenger Folkman's recent research shows that 71% of people rated "drives for results" highest compared to 29% rating "people skills" most important. To choose one or the other is to fall headlong into the tyranny-of-the-OR trap. That severely limits our possibilities and reduces effectiveness.

The American writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, said "the test of first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still be able to function." Leadership research is now showing that the



very best leaders thrive in "the AND zone." They deliver outstanding results through people and they develop people who deliver outstanding results.

But how? What is the secret? What do leaders who are highly-skilled at delivering results and building positive relationships do that is different? To find the answer, Zenger Folkman analyzed their expansive database and discovered six "behavioral bridges" that differentiated these leaders. A behavioral bridge is a capability that enables leaders to achieve both results and positive relationships.

Last month Joe Folkman provided a 45 minute complimentary webinar showing the results of his new research. During his webinar, **YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL! -- What Leaders Can Do To Deliver Superior Results and Build Positive Relationships** Joe explained:

- The multiplier effect of both skill sets on leader effectiveness.
- The six behaviors that can be learned to bridge the gap between driving for results and people skills.
- The keys to inspiring and motivating others.
- A self-assessment tool ZF has made available to test your preference to push or pull.
- The paradox of satisfaction and effort.
- The impact of integrity and trust on results.
- The value of coaching others and your own coachability.

**Click here** to view this complimentary webinar. Find out why Joe says, "You can have it all -- you can increase your ability to deliver outstanding results and also improve your relationships with team members. The key is utilizing the Six Behavioral Bridges."

## 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. You can follow me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/JimClemmer>

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

**Another opportunity to learn, network, refocus, develop new skills, and even become a certified facilitator.**

### **2017 Leadership Summit: Increasing Talent Management Agility**

<http://summit.zengerfolkman.com>

*"Participants will reflect on their current organization's practices, learn from working both with industry experts and their peers, and will leave with new ideas and implementation plans that they can immediately put to use."*

**Practical steps to be a results-driven leader and a people person -- gaining both higher productivity and engagement.**

### **"3 Ways To Drive For Results And Still Be Likable" -- Joe Folkman**

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

*"While being a demanding leader often strains relationships, a recent study showed some ways for leaders to drive for results while remaining likable."*

**We need to change these dangerous and misogynist stereotypes with facts and science.**

**"3 reasons the Google anti-diversity memo is wrong, according to data" -- Zameena Mejia**  
<https://www.cnbc.com>

*"A recent study of 51,418 leaders finds women are considered more effective than male leaders."*

**Jack provides 7 practical tips to become a more effective listener -- and elevate leadership success.**

**"Listening And Speaking: The Leader's Paradox" -- Jack Zenger**  
[www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)

*"Research has found that leaders with a preference for listening are rated as significantly more effective than those who spend the majority of their time talking."*

## Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments



The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my weekly blog during the previous month.

If you read each blog post (or issue of *The Leader Letter*) as it's published **over twelve months you'll have read the equivalent of a leadership book**. And you'll pick up a few practical leadership tips that help you use time more strategically and tame your E-Beast!

## Feedback and Follow-Up

I am always delighted to hear from readers of *The Leader Letter* with feedback, reflections, suggestions, or differing points of view. Nobody is ever identified in *The Leader Letter* without their permission. I am also happy to explore customized, in-house adaptations of any of my material for your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail at [Jim.Clemmer@ClemmerGroup.com](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@ClemmerGroup.com) or connect with me on **LinkedIn, Twitter, FaceBook**, or my **blog**!

May the Force (of strengths) be with you!



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