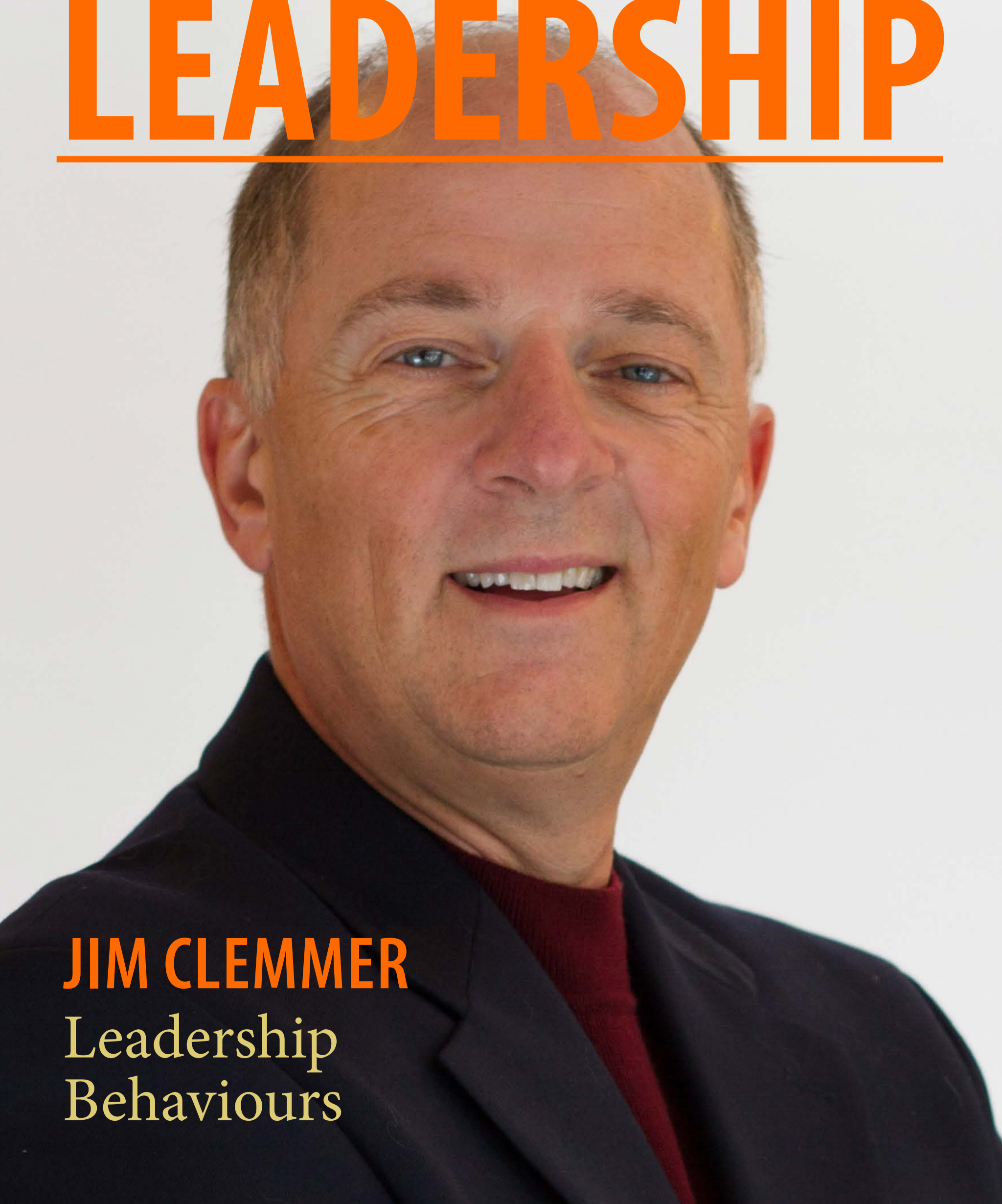


Issue 49

A Better Leader: Realizing

LEADERSHIP



JIM CLEMMER

Leadership
Behaviours

A man in a light purple shirt and a woman in a black and white striped shirt are standing in an office, engaged in a conversation. The man is on the left, smiling and looking towards the woman on the right. The woman is holding a folder and looking back at the man. They are positioned in front of a large glass window that looks out onto a bright, modern office space.

*Realizing Leadership
in Conversation*

JIM CLEMMER
Leadership Behaviours

with **LAURIE WILHELM**

LW Jim Clemmer is president of The CLEMMER Group, an organization dedicated to making people better for organizations and organizations better for people. Using well-researched and proven approaches forged through deep experience with hundreds of organizations and thousands of leaders, his keynote presentations, workshops, management team retreats, and seven best-selling books have helped hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. Jim joins *Realizing Leadership* and discusses some key findings backed by solid research into what makes an outstanding leader.



To start off our conversation, Jim, can you tell us what are some of the behaviours that leaders exhibit that inhibit their effectiveness?

JC Well, a lot of times, leaders aren't even aware of their own behaviours. A prime example would be a leader who thinks they're on top of the details and they're really staying connected with everything and staying in touch with what's going on. Their direct report might say, "My leader is constantly micromanaging me." The leader thinks he or she is there and helpful, watching every step of the way, trying to guide them along, whereas the individual feels like the leader doesn't trust them because they're constantly micromanaging and not letting them just do their job.

Certainly I can generalize that there are some sets of behaviours that are poor and that show up a lot, but most of the time, especially with less effective leaders, leaders aren't always aware of how they are coming across and how they're perceived.

LW How can leaders become aware of their poor behaviours?

JC There are a variety of ways. Probably the most effective is using a 360 assessment. Our bias, our experience, is towards strength-

based 360. We're trying to make a distinction based on fairly new research that's becoming critical—making a distinction between weaknesses which we have and what we call a “fatal flaw”—a significant weakness that may be a major problem.

Most 360s give you feedback on your strengths and weaknesses and then you tend to zero-in on fixing the weakness—even when, in fact, it's not really a big problem. Let's not worry about weaker areas, let's figure out how to leverage strengths. Research shows very clearly that for great leaders, for outstanding leaders, it's not the absence of weaknesses that defines them as outstanding, but the presence of a couple of profound strengths.

LW What are some of these profound strengths and behaviours that leaders exhibit?

JC That's a really timely question because we've just gone through a bunch of research through a partnership with Zenger Folkman and they have developed a program called

Six Behaviours for Leadership Effectiveness

Innovation

Encouraging new ideas and solutions through creative approaches

Relationships

Developing strong relationships built on trust, respect, and consideration

Acumen

Acquiring knowledge and skills to be at the cutting edge of business practices

Inspiration

Motivating others to perform at their highest potential

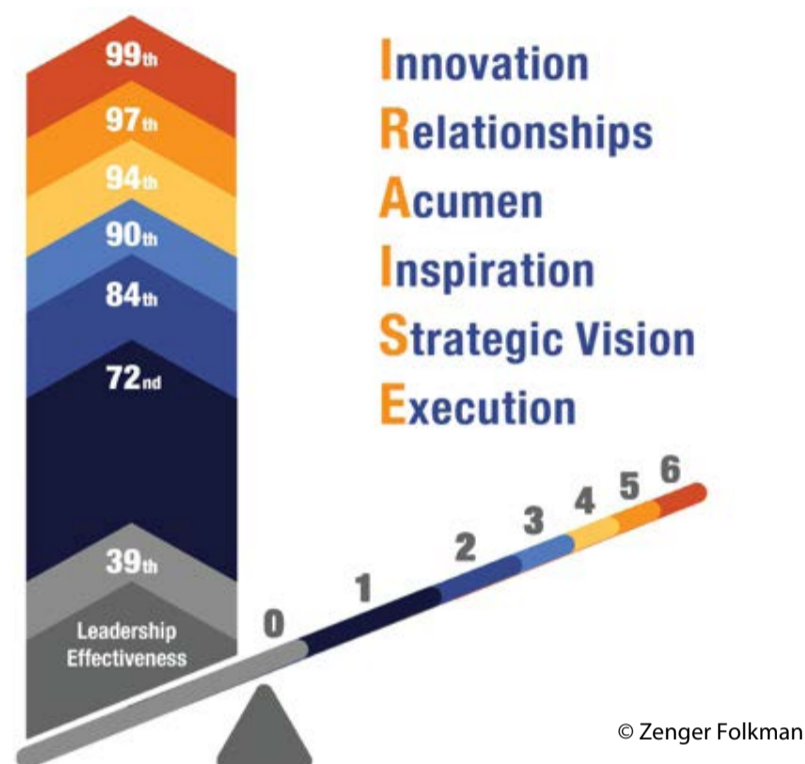
Strategic Vision

Communicating a clear vision to accomplish key objectives

Execution

Consistently delivering extraordinary results

© Zenger Folkman



Leadership Levers: Building Critical Strengths. Through reviewing about one million 360s done on nearly 90,000 leaders, the data shows which six behaviours are the most impactful, that have the highest degree of leverage.

If someone is assessed by others as having no profound strength, by that we mean they're seen in the top 10%, then they're going to be around the 39th percentile—they're going to be below average leaders. If they have just one of these in the top 10% then they're going to be in the 70th percentile which is in the top three quarters, and you can see how it graduates up from there. Somebody with three, for example, will be seen, overall, in the top 10% of all leaders.

LW How hard is it to get there?

JC That's another part of this research. There's a methodology called cross-training that looks at what are your strengths, what are your passions—what do you love

Whitepaper by Dr. Jack Zenger,
Dr. Joe Folkman, and
Joyce Palevitz:

*Discovering and
Developing Hidden
Reservoirs of Talent*

to do out of those six things—and what is it that the organization needs most from you in the role that you're in. So, for example, somebody who's in an accounting or technical kind of role might have acumen which includes business acumen and professional expertise and so on and that is really key to their role. Someone who is in sales, HR, or some kind of people role, it might be relationships that are really important. It's finding the intersection of what are your strengths, what do you love to do, and what does the organization need. Once you find that, in our experience, the success and likelihood that you can take a couple of those up to much higher levels is dramatically greater.

LW Do weaker ones get pushed out when you're working on the strengths?

JC Unless they are fatal flaws, unless one of them is a big problem, you've got to address that first. But most people don't have that. Zenger Folkman's research shows that about 75% of leaders don't have any fatal flaw. That means that the weaker areas will be overshadowed by the strengths.

Sit back and think about the best leaders you've ever known personally, not public figures. Think about what it was that made them great. You can probably name three or four things right away that they were outstanding at. Now, were they perfect? Did they have no weaknesses? Well, most people would say, "No." It might be they weren't well organized, sometimes they weren't very patient—so you can start to list things that they weren't so good at. Then why would you list them as some of the best leaders you've ever know? They weren't perfect. They had weaknesses. What's going on? Well, their strengths are overshadowing their weaknesses to the point where you're ready to overlook them, forgive them, and not worry about them too much because of the strengths that you're getting.

LW It's interesting, the difference between the one big fatal flaw and the many smaller ones. When I think of a particularly poor leader I worked with, I'm realizing that the problem wasn't these little things, it was one big thing.

JC And what happens, it's called confirmation bias in psychology, but when we see one or two things that we either really appreciate and love or one or two things that turn us off, we tend to rate everything they do along those same lines. So everything comes down, in the case of a fatal flaw or everything gets pulled up, in the case of profound strength.

LW In the case of a fatal flaw, how is that addressed?

JC In our own case, it's coaching, one-on-one executive coaching, workshops where we help people determine where they're at, decide what they want to work on, and give them methodology to deal with a fatal flaw or developing their strengths further.

What typically happens with a fatal flaw revealed in a 360, is it's often a bit of shock if this is the first 360. But most people have heard it before in one way or another so they're not completely surprised. We look at helping them leverage their strengths to address this issue and that starts to become the focus. There are ways they can do that or sometimes they have to take it head-on. One that comes up a lot, for example, is relationships. Leaders are creating problems within their team, with their direct reports, or their peers because they're so poor at handling relationships—they're driven to get results or they see technical skills as being the most critical thing.

If it's a relationship issue, it might be going to apologize to people, and say, "I'm sorry. I've just got this feedback and now I'm more aware and I realize that I haven't been dealing well with you and I really want to fix that. I'd like to get your ideas and input on what I can do."

Now, of course, relationships and trust aren't going to suddenly and miraculously change based on a conversation like that. People want to see long-term evidence that you're really working at it, but that's a starting point.

Zenger Folkman's research shows that when people go to work on a fatal flaw and then we reassess in 18 - 24 months with another 360, in about a 60 - 70% of participants, it is reported by everyone else that the leader made significant improvements.

One of the things we ask to someone who is working on a fatal flaw is, "What would have happened if you didn't get this feedback?" Yes, it's shocking, maybe devastating, and it sets you back right now, but now that you have this feedback and if you start to put a plan together for how you're going to improve or address this issue, you're in a much different place than you would be just carrying on.

LW I'm going to switch the topic a bit now because I'd like to ask you about millennials in the workplace. We read a lot about the differences but are there really behaviours that have to change when dealing with millennials?

JC No. That's a huge myth. I've written a lot about this a couple times and cited research. It's less about generational and more about better leadership. A whole bunch of research shows that it hasn't changed much across generations. What people are looking for, for example being treated with respect, to be given information and treated as partners, asked for their opinions, have good relationships, that doesn't make much difference across generations.



LW Do you think millennials are more determined to get what they want in terms of work expectations?

JC This may be less generational than the age that people are. When we think back to baby boomers, back to the early part of their career, we see that millennials want feedback more than older workers do. They want to be told how they're doing—and they want negative feedback as much as they want positive feedback. There's a belief that you have to coddle them and constantly be praising them, but that's not what the research shows. They want to know when they're off track as well. Now, how you tell them and what kind of coaching conversation you're going to have is going to be critical. Millennials tend to be just as conscientious.

Sometimes you hear people complain that nobody wants to work that hard anymore, they want more work-life balance and these of things. Well, the research just doesn't prove that to be true. Millennials tend to want to have all the information, have a career, do well, but not they're not willing to sacrifice to the degree that some baby boomers did, but they still want to work hard.

As an example, my son is a millennial worker and he works very hard, he's one of the top in his office, but he basically feels that the weekend is his and that's maybe a little different than the older generations.

More Writing by Jim Clemmer

*We Need Less Generational Nonsense
and More Leadership*

*Myths and Methods for Developing
Our Next Generation of Leaders*

LW Are there three things that you'd like to tell an up-and-coming leader to do, read, or look out for as they move into their leadership journey?

JC Find ways to get good feedback, like the 360, but more informal things too. Asking periodically your co-workers or your boss or direct reports, questions like, "What do you think I should keep doing? What should I stop doing? What should I start doing?" Simple approaches like that can help to open up and keep feedback going.

I would also highly recommend having a development plan. Zenger Folkman's research shows that less than 10% of leaders have a personal development plan. Having something that you're working on and, as I talked about earlier, building your strengths—unless there's a real issue to be addressed—is typically the best way of having a development plan.

And finally, a universal skill that's becoming more and more important is coaching. Whether that is coaching a direct report, which is often how it's thought of, but also it can apply to the same skills being used to coach a peer—having a coaching conversation with a peer—or even your manager. It's important to get comfortable giving feedback in a way that minimizes defensiveness and directs issues so they don't feel like it's a personal comment or judgment. Help to draw the ownership and the ideas from the individual; coaching is often confused as giving advice or mentoring or guiding people. Coaching is really about having conversations where you're together trying to generate ideas or pull ideas out from the other person.

LW Thank you, Jim, for this great conversation. I highly recommend to the readers to check out your blog and [sign up for your newsletter](#). You've got a lot of great information and programs to lift up leaders and those they lead. Thanks again for your time.

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