

**Practical Leadership:***Inspiring Action, Achieving Results***Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter**

August 2004, Issue 17

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**Traveling with the Wind in Our Hair**

We've all heard it's the journey and not the destination that is most important in life. But whether flying or driving, we're too often so intent on getting to our next destination that we miss the joy of the trip. Then it's a whirlwind of activity until we get back in the plane or car and race on to the next destination. We're so busy rushing toward tomorrow that we aren't living today. Life becomes an ever faster rush of blurry scenery speeding past our window.

Recently I spent a warm, sunny day playing "hooky" with a good friend. I appreciate many things about Carl Hiebert. The day we spent together was fun and relaxing. But most of all it was inspiring and energizing. I wrote about Carl in my book, *Growing the Distance*, in the chapter on Responsibility for Choices. You can read an excerpt on Carl and other leaders like him who so powerfully control their own destinies at:

[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders\\_control.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders_control.shtml)

On this beautiful summer morning in July, we flew in Carl's new ultralight aircraft. It is an open-cockpit, fair weather flying machine, made up of welded metal tubs wrapped in a fiberglass skin. Two seats are squeezed together so tightly that I had to put both legs around Carl's front seat and keep my left leg away from rubbing on the throttle cable that ran through the open cockpit back to the small gasoline powered engine that pushed us along from behind. I had no desire to mess with that cable, nor have it rub the skin off my bare legs (I was wearing shorts). No locked doors between passenger and pilot on this flight!

I arrived just after he and an engineer friend had removed the large glass bubble windshield and replaced it with a much smaller one so Carl could get better aerial photos. Carl has produced and sold a number of gorgeous coffee table books based on the tens of thousands of shots he's taken from the seats of the many ultra light planes he's flown (all the way across Canada on two occasions). As we took off from my uncle's farm near Elmira, Ontario where

Carl stores his plane, we flew over the very familiar and beautiful rolling rural farmland of Waterloo County. I spent many years of my childhood in this area and have flown over this territory hundreds of times in commercial jets taking off from Toronto's international airport, 90 miles away. But that was flying at hundreds of miles per hour thousands of feet in the air tightly encased in an aluminum tube while I busily prepared for my next destination. The countryside below was an interesting and distant miniature world way down below us.



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As the ground mist cleared on this morning, we flew up to a few hundred feet, 50 miles per hour, with the wind billowing through our hair (OK. It billowed through Carl's hair. It just rippled the skin of my ever expanding forehead). We "caught big air" as we circled ever higher in thermals (rising air currents) with majestic hawks playing in these same "magic staircases to heaven." More than once I spread my arms, felt the wind beneath my "wings" and soared with the birds as I yelled out a "yeehaw" or two.

We flew lower and waved to farm boys taking a break fishing in the Conestoga River. We waved to farmers cultivating their fields. We smelled the freshly mowed hay – and the freshly spread manure. As we flew, Carl's keen photographer's eye was constantly noticing colors, patterns in the fields, textures, and lighting. He would circle back around to click a few shots with his camera – showing me how to look at the scene with new eyes; how to appreciate what nature or a farmer had painted on the canvass laid out below us.

At a few hundred feet, we had a bigger perspective on the world. But we were in the picture, not just looking at it. We were flying strictly for the joy of soaring in the air and seeing the world from a new perspective. We had no destination. To some we were wasting time because we weren't getting anywhere. To others we were wandering aimlessly. To me we were living in the moment.

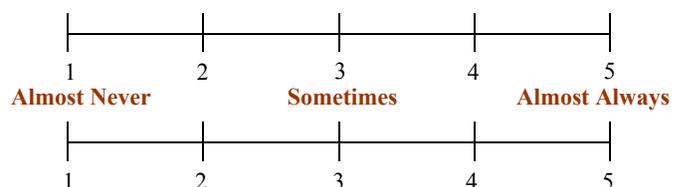
That afternoon, we cruised the same countryside in my new convertible car. We had the top down and the wind in our face. We turned up the music and yelled ourselves hoarse in conversation over the noise. We explored roads we'd never been on before. Roads that we may have noticed from the air, but now we had no idea where they went. So we found out. We discovered beautiful country homes on hilltops or nestled in the woods. We discovered new vistas. We stopped, backed up, and Carl framed and photographed the perfect country scene that I would have just sped by. We visited a few friends for a chat. We bought ice cream. We had no particular place to go. We had no agenda. We had a great time.

### **Taking My Passion Pulse**

August is the time of year for me to visit our family doctor for my annual check-up. Like a regular physical examination, we need to regularly do a "life check-up." Following is a self-assessment exercise from the Passion and Commitment section of my new [\*Growing the Distance: Personal Implementation Guide\*](#):

**Rate how true the following statements are:**

- 1. My life is exciting and very enjoyable.**





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2. Most days I am "up" and full of enthusiasm.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I love my work.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My laughter index is high.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I persist until I find a way to get what I want.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel grateful and blessed for all the good in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I curb my negative impulses and control my bad habits.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am surrounded by loving relationships and caring friends.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have at least one good friend at work.	1	2	3	4	5
10. People find my passion infectious.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have passionate hobbies or special interests.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My work is aligned to my strengths and allows me to do what I do best every day.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Time often flies by because I am so caught up in what I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I look forward to continuing the key trends of my life over the next 5 years.	1	2	3	4	5

### Scoring:

- **60 - 75 points** – You're clearly on the right path.
- **45 - 59 points** – You need some course corrections.
- **30 - 44 points** – You're headed for serious apathy and unhappiness.
- **15 - 29 points** – You are on the wrong path. Major course corrections are needed.

You can get more information on the [Growing the Distance: Personal Implementation Guide](#) (and listen to an archived 45 minute teleconference I gave in June on it) at [www.clemmer.net/books/gtdpg.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/books/gtdpg.shtml). We are offering a limited time introductory discount on this new personal growth tool as well as [Growing the Distance](#), and [The Leader's Digest](#) along with its

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new *Practical Application Planner*. See [www.clemmer.net/books\\_main.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/books_main.shtml) to explore any of these publications.

**Personal Application Ideas for Increasing Passion and Commitment**

Here are a few of the dozens of "Personal Applications Ideas" from the Passion and Commitment section of *Growing the Distance: Personal Implementation Guide* that you might want to use in your own life check-up.

- If your current work isn't energizing you so you can energize and lead others, you have four choices: (1) do nothing but wish for your "fairy job mother" to magically appear and straighten out your life, (2) get out of a leadership role so you stop dragging others down to your low energy level, (3) realign your work with your values and strengths, or (4) figure out what your ideal job is, and go find or create it.
- Ensure you take vacations and regular time off to recharge your batteries and keep your life in balance.
- Practice regular humor therapy on yourself. Look for the humor in your situations. Hang around funny people. Read the comics, listen to comedians, watch funny movies, or just practice belly laughs in front of the mirror.
- Develop hobbies or special interests that play to your values, strengths, and passions.
- Look for opportunities to celebrate successes with others on your team. Lead exercises or start meetings with talking about accomplishments or what's gone right before you jump into problem-solving and dealing with things that need to be changed.
- If you're a sumo wrestler, don't waste time trying to be a ballerina. We can't teach frogs to fly. Don't allow others to "should on you" by making you feel guilty about your weaknesses (as long as they are not fatal flaws) and telling you what you should do. Do what aligns with your values, strengths, and passions.

**Thoughts that Make You Go Hmm...On Enjoying the Journey**

**"It takes a lot of imagination to be a good photographer. You need less imagination to be a painter, because you can invent things. But in photography everything is so ordinary; it takes a lot of looking before you see the ordinary."**

- David Bailey, Photographer

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**"The sheer speed of modern life and our extreme future-mindedness can sneak up on us and impoverish our present. Almost every technological advance in recent times - from the telephone to the Internet - has been doing more and doing it faster. The advantage of saving time is joined at the hip with the high value we place on planning for the future. So invasive is this "virtue" that in even the most innocuous of social conversations, we can catch ourselves not listening well, but instead planning a witty riposte. Saving time (for what?) and planning for a future (that arrived yesterday but also never comes), we lose acres of the present."**

- Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*

**"When someone seeks," said Siddhartha, "then it easily happens that his eyes see only the thing that he seeks, and he is able to find nothing, to take in nothing, because he always thinks only about the thing he is seeking, because he has one goal. But finding means: being free, being open, having no goal. You, Venerable One, may truly be a seeker, for, in striving toward your goal, you may fail to see certain things that are right under your nose."**

- Hermann Hess in his novel *Siddhartha*

**"This spending of the best part of one's life earning money in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it reminds me of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet."**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Walden*

**Improvement Points Subscribers' Top Picks for July**

Of all the short quotes with links to full articles that were e-mailed out as complimentary **Improvement Points** last month, the most popular with subscribers were:

**"Not all feedback is valid and helpful. Ultimately I have to decide what fits and what doesn't. I have to choose the feedback that rings true to me. According to an ancient story, a man once approached Buddha and began to call him ugly names, Buddha listened quietly until the man ran out of insults and had to pause for breath. "If you offer something to a person and that person refuses it, to whom does it belong?" asked Buddha. "It belongs, I suppose, to the one who offered it," the man said. Then Buddha said, "The abuse and vile names you offer me, I refuse to accept." The man turned and walked away."**

- from *Feedback to See How Others See Me*

[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/feedback.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/feedback.shtml)



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**"Like customer service and quality, reward and recognition are highly subjective. Just as they monitor the changing needs of customers, effective leaders constantly try to understand the shifting perceptions and values of everyone in their organization."**

- from *How To Make Effort Rewarding*  
[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/effort\\_rewarding.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/effort_rewarding.shtml)

**"Naturalist William Henry Hudson once observed: 'You cannot fly like an eagle with the wings of a wren.' Most training efforts never get off the ground because the methods don't change behavior or the training is poorly delivered and integrated by the organization."**

- from *Why Most Training Fails*  
[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/why\\_most.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/why_most.shtml)

Subscribe or view the archives by topic area here: [www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml).

#### **Your Thoughts on Helping Staff Who are Losing Their Jobs**

In the July issue of the *Leader Letter* I published an e-mail from "Mary" who asked for input on how to help staff who were losing their jobs due to a merger of her company with another. You can read her original message at [www.clemmer.net/news/july2004.html#jobs](http://www.clemmer.net/news/july2004.html#jobs)

Here are some comments and advice from a few *Leader Letter* readers:

*Dear Mary,*

*I was in the situation where our group was being 'changed' by new management in a way that went totally against how we were currently doing business. The situation also involved cutbacks in staff.*

*I did not use any resources; I went with my heart.*

*First, I was honest with the group and did not try to sugarcoat the inevitable. I ensured the staff was always aware of the situation as it progressed. If I was in charge, there were not going to be any surprises for the staff and the management was aware of this.*

*Second, we viewed every new step as positive; that change could be good for all of us.*

*The next stage was to build the confidence of the staff by together reviewing all of our options and then reviewed and considered the pros and cons of each one. In this way, together we brainstormed all the possibilities that we could possibly think of for every step each of the employees may take in their future, always cognizant of the fact we might miss a step or another*

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*curve may enter the picture. The bottom line was, we were going to be as prepared as we possibly could be.*

*I advised EVERYONE to update his or her resume.*

*I challenged everyone to look at their personal situation and their qualifications to see where there may be some gaps. There was still plenty of time for taking upgrading or retraining to improve employability.*

*If an employee identified a chosen career move, where possible I would contact the administration of that particular company to talk to them about the situation of the employee and their strengths and possible weaknesses, which included experience, qualifications and general preparedness for a career move. I was determined that my recommendations and information were credible. We all know how news travels!*

*In summary, those that took the challenge and moved on are all very happy and in far better situations than those that chose to remain. One employee made the plan to stay with the company for a year and during that year to upgrade to qualify in another area. This individual did not go through with the re-training. This year they are laid off and no employment possibilities in the immediate future. Another chose to stay because they were only four years away from retirement, however their health has suffered from the stress. Will they make retirement? During the initial process, this individual was offered an early retirement incentive. That incentive is no longer available.*

*Those who have suffered the most were those who did not take the leap of faith, move on, and leave a situation that was not healthy.*

*So, Mary, think positive; get your staff looking at alternatives now instead of after they receive their layoff notices. Help them build their confidence to move on through whatever resources or opportunities are available. If you have some cash, use some motivational speakers.*

*I also moved on. I love my new position. I make more money. I am happy and healthy. The one promise I made to my staff was that I would not compete against them for jobs for at least one year. I built credibility as their leader, I provided them with the confidence and freedom to explore new options and supported them in every way I possibly could. Now, all of us still get together once every month to catch up on how everyone is doing, provide encouragement and support to each other as required, celebrate births and birthdays and eat good food!*

*Good luck and keep positive,*

*"Jane"*

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*Hi Mary,*

*Do the best you can to provide training for them to make them attractive to a future employer...obviously this requires personal discussions to see what each employee's future employment plans are. Whatever you as a manager have the authority to do, e.g. training, mentoring, etc., do it!...Make these employees be someone you would hire if you could. I am sure that they as well as you, their manager, need some sort of session with a counselor who is knowledgeable and experienced in identifying phases of 'feelings,' for such situations...don't forget that most employees are members of a family, so there may be some sessions, where spouses ought to be invited as well...good luck.*

*Frank S. Perks, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada***A Coach's Playbook for Leaders**

Canada's largest national newspaper, *The Globe & Mail*, ran another one of my columns in July. This one is entitled, "A Coach's Playbook for Leaders." I adapted it from my work in writing *The Leader's Digest* and its new *Practical Application Planner*. Click here to read the article: [www.clemmer.net/excerpts/coachs\\_playbook.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/coachs_playbook.shtml)

**How Do You Define Leadership and Motivation?**

Following is a recent exchange I'd appreciate your input on. Send your thoughts to me at [Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net). I'll publish your comments in an upcoming issue of the *Leader Letter*.

*Hi Jim,*

*I am currently reading a copy of your book, *The Leader's Digest*. One of my favorite definitions of leadership (although I cannot recall the source) is:*

*"...a leader is someone who motivates others to go to places they wouldn't otherwise go themselves."*

*Thanks.**Joe*

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Hi Joe,

I have heard that and also don't recall who said it. I partially agree with it. Like so many things in life, it's all about balance. The comment could be used to justify manipulating or bullying people to go places they are eventually sorry they did.

On the other hand, strong leaders stretch people beyond what they might have thought possible for themselves, the team, or the organization. But it has to start with a fundamental respect for the individual's values and a leadership quest to align the team or organization destination with the individual's values.

Thanks for your input and getting me thinking on this one further!

Jim

**Introductory Special on New Leadership and Personal Growth Tools**

As an introduction to my new *Practical Application Planner* and *Personal Implementation Guide*, you can order copies for your team at 50% off now through the end of September. See details and on-line ordering here: [www.clemmer.net/books\\_main.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/books_main.shtml)

I hope you can take advantage of this introductory pricing to try these new tools for your team.

*The Leader's Digest* and the *Practical Application Planner* are powerful tools in building stronger leaders and leadership teams. The book and planner are designed and priced for distribution in quantity for leadership development programs, executive retreats, seminars, meetings, management team building, or new promotions.

*Growing the Distance* and the *Personal Implementation Guide* are powerful and popular tools in building a "leaderful" organization. They are invaluable personal growth resources for everyone - from senior managers to frontline staff. Personal application ideas, self-assessments, implementation exercises, and suggestions for action planning provide the opportunity to journal thoughts, guide reflective learning, set improvement goals, vision for the future, clarify core values, identify key strengths, check life balance, measure personal growth, plug energy leaks, reframe pessimistic thinking, and make concrete plans to improve personal, career, and family success.



**JIM CLEMMER**

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#### **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. 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](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).

I hope to connect with you again next month!

Jim

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