



## Practical Leadership:

Inspiring *Action*, Achieving Results

### Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

December 2005, Issue 33

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Have you had a team check up lately? It's so easy for the teams we lead or are a part of to get off track. I have written about teams in almost every one of my books. In my most recent Globe & Mail article I summarized what I have consistently found are the main reasons many groups aren't really teams and the keys to forming an effective team (to reach the article, go to: [http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/coachs\\_playbook-teams.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/coachs_playbook-teams.shtml)).

#### Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Team Effectiveness

**"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."**

- Babe Ruth

**"It turns out that the single most important element in group intelligence is not the average, or highest IQ, but emotional intelligence...though the group may be able to work smarter than its members' collective intelligences would suggest, it can rapidly work dumber by not allowing people to share talents and by allowing destructive discontent, domineering, or infighting to degrade performance and stymie progress."**

- Robert K. Cooper and Aymen Sawaf, *Executive EQ: Emotional Intelligence in Leadership and Organizations*

**"The one who gets the most satisfactory results is not always the one with the most brilliant single mind, but rather the one who can best coordinate the brains and talents of his associates."**

- Sir William Alton Jones, English philologist and jurist

**"There are times when it seems as if one must intervene powerfully, suddenly, and even harshly. The wise leader does this only when all else fails...making people do what you think they ought to do does not lead toward clarity and consciousness. While they may do what you tell them to do at the time, they will cringe inwardly, grow confused, and plot revenge. This is why your victory is actually a failure."**

- John Heider, *The Tao of Leadership: Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching Adapted for a New Age*

**"Management is about human beings. Its task is to make people capable of joint performance, to make their strengths effective and their weaknesses irrelevant."**

- Peter Drucker, *The Essential Drucker*



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**"Strong team leaders do not act as the group's "brains," or autonomous decision makers, so much as consensus builders. When team leaders express their own opinion too early in a decision-making discussion, the group generates fewer ideas, and so makes poorer decisions. But when team leaders hold back, acting mainly as facilitators of the group's process without imposing their views, not expressing them until toward the end of a discussion, the outcome is a better decision."**

- Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*

**A Quick Reference Chart for Managing a Bad Boss**

Our lead article in the September issue of the *Leader Letter* was on how to manage your manager (to reach the article, go to: <http://www.clemmer.net/news/sept2005.html>). The October (to reach the article, go to: <http://www.clemmer.net/news/oct2005.html>) and November (to reach the article, go to: <http://www.clemmer.net/news/nov2005.html>) issues contained reader feedback and reflections on dealing with a bad boss or how to recognize these traits in you. Recently a magazine asked me to boil my article advice into a quick reference chart. I hope you find it useful.

<b>Boss Behavior</b>	<b>Possible Leadership Response</b>
<i>Disorganized</i>	Regularly review key goals, priorities, and projects.
<i>Indecisive</i>	Make your own decisions and move forward. Asking for forgiveness is often easier than getting permission.
<i>Micromanagement</i>	Ensure your role and responsibilities are agreed to. The single biggest source of your personal credibility with your boss is meeting your commitments. Make sure you do what you say you're going to do, and never over-promise and under-deliver.
<i>Overly Sensitive</i>	Sandwich difficult discussions with lots of positive feedback. Look for ways to build on his or her strengths.
<i>Abusive</i>	Don't enable bullying by being a victim – stand your ground, gently push back, or find a new boss.
<i>Moody</i>	Bide and pick your times for meetings, communications, and influencing decisions.
<i>Poor Communications</i>	Don't wait to get what you need. Initiate the conversations or exchanges you need.
<i>E-mail Flamer</i>	Never respond in kind. Have a conversation to avoid misunderstandings and escalating emotions. You may need to follow up a phone conversation with an e-mail, documenting what you discussed.

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**Pet E-mail Peeves and the Dangers of Multi-tasking**

Elizabeth is responding to my invitation in the November *Leader Letter* for thoughts on taming the e-mail beast (to read that section, go to: <http://www.clemmer.net/news/nov2005.html#pet>). Of course, I called her to discuss using this e-mail message!

*Hi Jim,*

*Where does one begin when it comes to lack of e-mail etiquette? Let's talk first about those people who hide behind their e-mails. Usually it comes from that perception that you are too busy to pick up a phone. But, by the time you get to the third or fourth e-mail on the subject, it is clear that the subject is serious enough to engage in conversation. So much is missed through e-mail. Written conversation happens in "sound bites;" tone of voice is lost, ultimately removing us at times from the true meaning or intent of the conversation. Most importantly, a phone call brings some feeling of personableness which we seem to be sadly lacking. Or, better still, why don't we just walk down to the next floor or around the corner and have the conversation in person?*

*Speaking of tone, I have great difficulty with those people who write their e-mails in CAPS. IT ALWAYS MAKES ME FEEL LIKE THEY ARE YELLING AT ME! If a person is too lazy to type properly, perhaps they are not serious about the subject matter after all.*

*Finally, blackberry messages are starting to exhaust me. I'm thrilled with people's impressive abilities to type in bank line ups, in the middle of a meeting (that they should be focusing on) or at a ball field while their child is playing. But, I would much rather people be fully engaged in the activity at hand, when they finally take the time to talk to me, it will make me feel important too.*

*Thank you Jim. That felt good. If you would like to discuss this further, I would love to chat with you via the TELEPHONE.*

**Elizabeth Ann Keenan, Account Executive  
BC Building Corporation, Victoria, BC**

And talk about synchronicity; Elizabeth's e-mail arrived on the same day as I was called for an interview by CKNW radio in Vancouver to talk about the growing Blackberry problem. The BC Legislature has just banned politicians from bringing their Blackberrys into sessions. The timing was perfect. As a seminar leader and facilitator, this is becoming a pet peeve of mine. I have recently been conducting workshops and retreats where participants were paying more attention to their little screens than to each other. We had to make some very tight rules about turning them off. One company is finding this to be such a problem that meeting participants must check their Blackberry at the door in sealed envelopes to be picked up when they leave!

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This is part of a much larger and very unhealthy trend to multi-tasking. That is leading to what psychiatrist Ned Hallawell calls attention deficit trait, or ADT. In a January 2005 article in Harvard Business Review entitled, "Overloaded Circuits: Why Smart People Underperform" he writes that the condition is "caused by brain overload, ADT is now epidemic in organizations. The core symptoms are distractibility, inner frenzy, and impatience. People with ADT have difficulty staying organized, setting priorities, and managing time. These symptoms can undermine the work of an otherwise gifted executive.... The number of people with ADT coming into my clinical practice has mushroomed by a factor of ten in the past decade... Facing a tidal wave of tasks, the executive becomes increasingly hurried, curt, peremptory, and unfocused, while pretending that everything is fine."

**The Leadership Lessons of Ebenezer Scrooge**

It's that time of year again to reflect on the ageless lessons of this seasonal classic. Following is an excerpt from *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success* (to read more about this book, go to: <http://www.clemmer.net/books/tld.shtml>). Happy Holidays from The CLEMMER Group and the Clemmer clan to you and yours!



*"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it."* - CHARLES DICKENS, A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is one of the best known and loved stories in the English language. It appeals to people on many levels. One reason I like it so much is because it provides powerful and timeless leadership development lessons. The principal character, Ebenezer Scrooge, begins his career as a passionate, driven young idealist, only to become a bitter, lonely old man. He's a business and financial success but a failure as a human being. You might say that Scrooge developed a rather large work-life balance problem!

Scrooge's story is one of revelation, reflection, and renewal. It begins one Christmas Eve with a visit from the ghost of his old business partner, Jacob Marley, miserably fettered in long chains and condemned to walk the Earth seeking to do the good he failed to pursue during his life. But as bad as his fate is, he warns, Scrooge's promises to be worse: In the seven years since Marley died, Scrooge had forged an even more "ponderous chain" - but one that he had a chance of casting off if he is visited by the spirits of Christmas past, Christmas present, and Christmas future. While Scrooge is understandably reluctant to welcome them, the spirits ultimately help him to remember his life as it was, see his life as it is now, and preview the bleak future that

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awaits him if his existing path remains as it is. Awakening Christmas morning, his power to change still intact, Scrooge is a man transformed. He alters the course of his life - and the future to which it leads.

Ultimately Scrooge's story is one of renewal and hope. By changing his current thinking and behavior, he changes his future - and enriches the lives of others.

Scrooge's experiences are a good example for any leader to follow. We need to look back to understand what has created the attitudes and behaviors that shape our current circumstances. We need to take a good look around us today to really see what's happening and where we fit into the current picture. Would the young person we once were be proud of what we have become?

Finally, we need to project our current course into the future. If we keep doing what we've been doing, we'll keep getting what we've been getting. Is that good news? Are we on the right track to our preferred future? Or are we continuing to lead in the same old way while expecting different results from our organizations? Of course, that's the path to getting what we've always got. But as I have emphasized throughout many of my books, to change them I need to change me.

Excerpted from Jim's bestseller, *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*. View the book's unique format and content, Introduction and Chapter One, and feedback at [www.theleadersdigest.com](http://www.theleadersdigest.com). This book is a companion book to *Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success* (to read more about this book, go to: <http://www.clemmer.net/books/gtd.shtml>).

**Favorite Improvement Points from November**

Improvement Points is a free service providing a key thought or quotation from one of my articles three times per week directly to your e-mail inbox. Each complimentary Improvement Point links directly into the full article on our web site that spawned it. If you'd like to read more about that day's Improvement Point, you can choose to click through to the short article for a quick five-minute read. This is your opportunity for a short pause that refreshes, is an inspirational vitamin, or a quick performance boost. You can circulate especially relevant or timely articles or Improvement Points to your team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action.

Here are my personal three choices of the Improvement Points we sent out in November:

**"Highly spirited and well-led organizations are often competitive in their financial pay scales but way ahead of their counterparts in "psychic pay" via higher levels of pride and satisfaction."**

- from Jim Clemmer's article *Leaders Transform Groups Into Teams*  
[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/team\\_spirit.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/team_spirit.shtml)

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"Effective teams step back periodically to review their progress. They look at what's working and what isn't. They adjust course accordingly. Strong team leaders move beyond building a team of champions to building a championship team. High-performance teams work on the team as well as in the team. They regularly ask themselves, "What should we keep doing, stop doing, and start doing?" to become ever more effective."

- from Jim Clemmer's article *Team Spirit Built from the Top*  
[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders\\_transform.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders_transform.shtml)

"Some managers have "done their leadership thing" and developed mission statements or snappy logos. I have a closet full of nice shirts from numerous management conferences, each adorned with logos and clever slogans. A few of the slogans were actually believed by the participants (at the time, anyway). But, sadly, most weren't. The catchphrase added a nice pizzazz to the conference, but it didn't express anything credible to the participants. The upbeat, gung-ho slogan didn't reflect the organization's culture and was soon snickered down or forgotten - until the planning committee started looking at next year's conference."

- from Jim Clemmer's article *Leadership Links Corporate Culture and Performance*  
[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leadership\\_links.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leadership_links.shtml)

*Hi Jim,*

*Just had a chance to read your Improvement Point on Spirit and Meaning (to read this article go to: [www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leadership\\_links.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leadership_links.shtml)) and found it was very appropriate to what is going on at work right now. We are in the midst of assessing the implementation of our Global work process and one of the key points the team must understand is the assessing value adding tasks.*

*The important point is how do you assess value in the tasks you do everyday? That's where your article ties in. When training my teams, I stress how their day to day activities impact and support the corporate goals. Upper management cannot succeed without the support from the team working on the shop floor and if the shop floor team is not working on tasks that are aligned with the goals then we will begin a downward spiral!*

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*Most of the time the shop floor workers don't see how they impact the goals coming down from the corporate office and when they can see how everything they do (or don't do) impacts the bottom line, then they begin to see meaning in their day to day tasks.*

*I enjoy the newsletters and share them with others! Keep up the great work!*

*Regards,*

**Diane Cappel, Social and Work Process Coach  
Dow Chemical, Freeport, Texas**

The hundreds of Improvement Points we've sent out over the past few years are all indexed and freely archived on our website. You can peruse the archive by topic area at <http://www.clemmer.net/quotes.shtml#topics>.

**Feedback and Follow-Up**

*Hi Jim,*

*Your advice is the best I've come across regarding the development of leadership skills. Talk about being emotionally involved in what you do. You transmit that feeling in every article I've read. Your honesty and transparency in the advice you provide cannot be compared.*

*I send these articles to my boss in Europe, especially those addressing team. He has recently asked me if I was trying to tell him something.....indeed I am.*

*I plan to purchase and take a few of your books with me on my upcoming vacation in Costa Rica. Then I will be more relaxed and be able to digest the info even better.*

*Thanks for this excellent work you do.*

**Irene Neil, CRM Administrator  
Bacardi Global Quality**

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*Hi Jim,*

*I continue to enjoy your website and newsletter. We share so many points of view. Working where I do, things are OFTEN not practical or logical. Your material breaths so much life into me some days & your site is on my "favorites" list. It is proof that there are PEOPLE who make SENSE in the world!! I send it on to some others whom I work with in hopes that they will bring you in for a speech or workshop someday!*

*Thanks for helping me stay sane Jim! Good to know you are doing sooooo very well.*

**Valerie Pike, MBA, SPHR, Compensation Analyst  
State of Ohio**

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

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Keep learning, laughing, loving, and leading -- living life just for the L of it!

Jim

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