



**JIM CLEMMER**

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

December 2007, Issue 57

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### **Merry Chris Moose!**

It seems like we've just rung in 2007 and now the holiday season is upon us! This year has zipped by especially quickly for us because of all the work on my latest book, *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work*. Over the past month the support staff at The CLEMMER Group have been busier than Santa's elves fulfilling orders for our special [introductory offer](#) for *Moose on the Table*. If you haven't heard about it, you can find out more [here](#).

Until the end of this month you can buy signed special pre-release copies of *Moose on the Table* and add in an additional copy or one of either *Growing the Distance* or *The Leader's Digest* for only \$30 (with U.S. and Canadian shipping included). That's a savings of nearly 50%! The offer runs out at the end of 2007 because I really don't think my right arm and shoulder will hold out much beyond that!

If you're outside of Canada or the U.S., we also have deals on the [downloadable e-book and audio book](#).

I may be a little biased on this one, but what better stocking stuffer is there for team members or people you care about than to inspire them to reduce their moose! Make tracks now to [www.mooseonthetable.com](http://www.mooseonthetable.com).

This issue of *The Leader Letter* is filled with moose hunting stories and other feedback around this simple, fun, and very powerful way of opening up team and organizational communications.

### **Audio on the Grow**

Kit Grant is a friend and one of the pioneers at the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers. He recently interviewed me for his web site. I've posted all twelve parts here.

[http://www.clemmer.net/media/media\\_teleconferences.aspx](http://www.clemmer.net/media/media_teleconferences.aspx)

### **It's Moose Hunting Season**

I have used the Moose-on the-Table analogy for nearly ten years in my [workshops](#), [articles](#), [keynote presentations](#), and *The Leader's Digest*.



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As you can read in the Preface to [\*Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work\*](#), I have an office full of moose stuff. I've also been collecting plenty of creative examples and variations of moose hunting activities. This issue of *The Leader Letter* contains some of those. We're now building a moose hunting gallery/blog with photos and stories to inspire and guide you to follow in Pete Leonard's footsteps (the central character in [\*Moose on the Table\*](#)).

One respondent to our [Leader Letter survey](#) question around what feature he or she would like to see added to the newsletter wrote "Moose Poop - stories of courage and results from putting the moose on the table." As proof of the power of this metaphor, we had many comments around how the Moose-on-the-Table concept was being used or its impact. Here's a sampling of anonyMOOSE quotes from the survey:

*"I share your newsletter and articles weekly with the management team. 'Is there a moose-on-the-table' is a phrase we utilize regularly to break the ice and get past the initial 'too polite' stage of discussion."*

*"When I am teaching organizational theory/behaviors with Athabasca University, I refer them to your Leader Letter and often use your concepts in our discussions. I am really looking forward to reading your new moose book because I have used your Moose-on-the-Table metaphor extensively. In fact, I have my [stuffed toy] moose in my office and frequently take it to both work related and volunteer related (e.g., I chair our church congregation/board) meetings to help emphasize the importance of discussing the real issues in the meeting to help get them identified and resolved versus with partial information and minimal chance for favorable resolution over the kitchen table."*

*"I share your Leader Letter and some of your Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm comments with my managers (24 of them) and encourage them as well to subscribe. The Moose-on-the-Table is a real expression we use frequently."*

*"Since reading about the Moose-on-the-Table, I have bought a fluffy version and have used it to great effect."*

*"Instead of moose I use salmon (I live in British Columbia) when reminding our managers how we need to deal with an issue. Let's deal with this salmon-on-the-table before it really starts to smell! This is one of many ideas I have taken from The Clemmer Group... Please keep it up!"*

Send your moose hunting stories and related experiences in dealing with difficult issues to me at [Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).

**Moose Stories: Discussing the UndiscussaBULL**

"I have coined the term 'Discuss the Undiscussabull'™ which is the bull in the middle of the family business living room, and no one wants to talk about it.



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As a coach, I use the talking stick, a beanie baby bull which family members pass around at random when they wish to speak. The person holding the bull gets to speak without interruption.

This method works well for drawing out the conversation of the quieter members of the group. I also use Undiscussabull cards which are simply bright yellow index cards. As I listen to the family or couple, I write down one word on the card...TRUST, FAIRNESS, INHERITANCE, POWER, CONTROL, DEBT, RECOGNITION, CONFLICT STYLE, etc. These cards then are the personal pack for the family to use as discussion starters in their business meetings around succession or transition planning.

It is a way for me to keep track of the key issues, and a way for them to name the main issues that are keeping them stuck. Although it sounds very much like being in 'kindergarten with flash cards' it is a very effective tool to keep the conversation focused on the issues, confirm the issues with new couples on the family team, and not waste time talking about the weather!

I use my flipchart to illustrate conflict resolution skills like intent, action, and effect, and always ask the family for the goals they have for our circle meetings with the bull. At the end of the session I summarize the flipchart visuals and notes, to send a summation to the family to continue discussing at their next meeting. My goal is to model a way to have fierce conversations (Susan Scott's term), in a safe place. The stress toys I provide for squeezing, the cards, and the toy bull all help add an element of play to a very hard discussion.

In a nutshell, that is what I am called to do. I just did this in a presentation format last week at a Hutterite colony, with men and women in their dining room. When I pulled out a roll of toilet paper to remind them to be hard on the problem, but soft on the person, just like toilet paper...they got the message!"

Elaine Froese, Author of *Planting the Seeds of Hope*, Professional speaker, and coach  
Boissevain, MB  
[www.elainefroese.com](http://www.elainefroese.com)





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Send your moose hunting stories and related experiences in dealing with difficult issues to me at [Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).

### **Start Your Day With a Leadership Boost!**

As we track the patterns of growing traffic to our web site, we continue to see the vast majority of visitors come to read through my archive of nearly three hundred articles, book excerpts, and columns. Comments like this one from Luís always make my day! His feedback also lets us know that our goal of making [www.clemmer.net](http://www.clemmer.net) a major resource for practical material on personal, team, and organizational leadership is on track.

*"Congratulations on the clear and simple way in which you have based your sharing of the thoughts that your experience have made you get to.*

*Their reading has been, for the past two years, a very good way to start my days, and I have to express my agreement to most of them.*

*Thank you for sharing all these experience-based thoughts!"*

Luís Cochofel  
Portugal

The index to all my articles is at <http://www.clemmer.net/articles>. Click on any topic and you can review clickable one sentence descriptions of each article.

You can also sign up for our free [Improvement Points service](http://www.clemmer.net/newsletter/ipoints.aspx) to have article excerpts "pushed" out to you three times a week. This service sends you an excerpt from one of my articles with the topic of that *Improvement Point* indexed in the subject line. If the topic, article title, and excerpt interest you, click on it to read the full article. If it's not applicable, hit "delete" and get on with your day! Check out this free service at <http://www.clemmer.net/newsletter/ipoints.aspx>.

### **How I Got My Start in Professional Speaking**

A reader who is interested in becoming a professional speaker wrote;

*"I was wondering if you could share with me how you got into the career you are in? What type of jobs did you have earlier in your career? How did you start your own business?"*

There are as many pathways to becoming a professional speaker as there are speakers in this business. When we published *The Leader's Digest*, we provided a short summary of how I got into this business in the [Media Center](http://www.clemmer.net/media/media_faq.aspx) of our web site at [http://www.clemmer.net/media/media\\_faq.aspx](http://www.clemmer.net/media/media_faq.aspx).



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**Moose Stories: Dealing with Dead Camels**

*"We think that Thomson Carswell is a great place to work and we have a proactive conflict strategy which we believe will help us harness different opinions and conflict to drive growth. We always talk about naming 'dead camels' - with the principle that you can't fix what you can't name - and then comes the task of trying to fix it.*

*I really look forward to reading your new book."*

Kay Hubbard, Manager, Organization Effectiveness  
Thomson Carswell  
Scarborough, ON

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**Chapters One to Eight Now Online – With Video Commentary**

A respondent to our [Leader Letter survey](#) question around what feature he or she would like to see added to the newsletter wrote:

*"I'd like to see a fable corner...perhaps a variation on the Moose on the Table book. It could be a fable with a 'moral to the story' component or it could be a running chapter of 'a day in the life' of a fictional manager (the fable) with his solution (the moral)."*

That's pretty much what happens with Pete Leonard, the central character, in [Moose on the Table](#). Since we launched the book in the October issue of *The Leader Letter*, we've been putting up PDF versions of each of the book chapters every week on our new [Moose on the Table](#) web site. You can read the chapters as well as watch a short video clip of me giving a brief introduction to that chapter and its main underlying leadership lesson.

**Is *Moose on the Table* Suitable for All Staff?**

*"Hi Jim,*

*I have two coordinators and 10 staff ranging from a financial officer to HR assistants and records clerks.*

*Would this book be suitable for all staff or just the coordinators?"*

Bev



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Hi Bev,

I actually wrote [\*Moose on the Table\*](#) (and we've priced it) to be [purchased in bulk](#) for everyone in an organization so they can:

- Develop a common language and mutual supports to Navigating Change.
- Identify team and organizational moose and work together to get rid of them.
- Build a communication rich environment through "courageous conversations."
- Reduce internal politics, turf protection, and misunderstandings.
- Tame "The E-mail Beast."
- Understand how to help build a high performance culture.
- Increase personal and team effectiveness.
- Practice outward and upward leadership.
- Learn to seek and use personal and team feedback.

If you click on the Moose Store tab (top right) at [www.mooseonthetable.com](http://www.mooseonthetable.com) you'll see our pricing for bulk purchases of *Moose on the Table*.

If you decide to do some group moose hunting, we'd love to hear about your approach (and see any photos you might have taken)!

Jim

### **Barrick Gold Hunts Moose Worldwide**

One of the sections in the Courageous Leadership for Health and Safety training program we designed for Barrick Gold (see [July 2006](#) and [December 2006](#) issues for more details) revolves around initiating courageous conversations using our [moose quiz](#) and moose hunting tips from [\*The Leader's Digest: Practical Application Planner\*](#).

Recently their Health and Safety Director, Bruce Huber, sent me these photos and an update on how some of their mine sites are using this approach.

*"One Australian site had great fun in 'hiding the moose'. Over a period of time the moose was found: in the microwave, in the porta-potty underground, in the cab of mobile equipment. Never knew where he was going to disappear to or be found.*

*An African site made a rather large (3' x 4') plywood cutout of a moose. If you found the moose in your office, you knew someone was looking for you with an issue.*



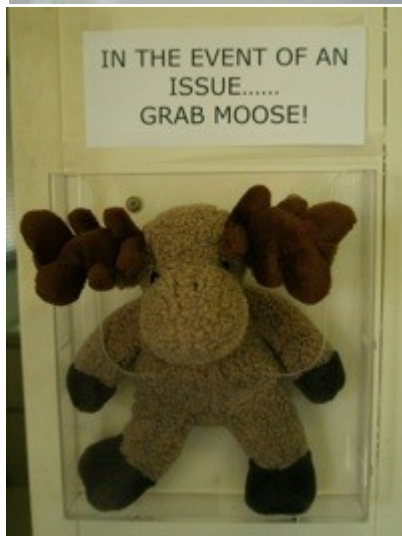
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*One general manager declared moose season open and went moose hunting; keeping a 'trophy board' (bulletin board) of moose killed.*

*It's worth noting that the moose is not recognized or even known in many parts of the world. However, we've maintained the moose identity in Barrick and have educated many about this animal – as well as the concept!"*



Send your moose hunting stories and related experiences in dealing with difficult issues to me at [Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).



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**Moose Stories: Conversation Starter**

*"I've been getting The Leader Letter for several years now and it has followed me through a stint in Asia Pacific and now in the US. Here's a picture of my "Moose on the Bookshelf" from my office in Shanghai. It traveled with me from the retreat you did for us in Burlington back in 2003 and was always a conversation starter (usually with a 'what's a moose' question)!"*

Jeff Greenberg, Vice President, BioProduction  
Invitrogen  
Grand Island, NY



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**Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Harnessing the Timeless Power of Stories**

**"A good rule of thumb from examining human history, the role of parables, and the influence of the Christian Bible: Never under-estimate the power of a good story."**

- John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change: Real Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations*

**"When executives need to persuade an audience, most try to build a case with facts, statistics, and some quotes from authorities. In other words, they resort to "companyspeak," the tools of rhetoric they have been trained to use...executives can engage people in a much deeper--and ultimately more convincing--way if they toss out their PowerPoint slides and memos and learn to tell good stories."**

- "Storytelling that Moves People: A Conversation with Screenwriting Coach Robert McKee"  
*Harvard Business Review*



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**"Build a repertoire of teachable stories. Collect and catalogue the best in-house stories that illuminate your...principles. Encourage your partners recognize teachable moments. Develop a communications strategy for circulating these stories..."**

- Frederick F. Reichheld, *Loyalty Rules! How Today's Leaders Build Lasting Relationships*

**"Effective leaders are able to create, manipulate and exemplify not only stories but symbols, slogans, and mantras as well. All of these help define in the minds of followers the essence of the leader's vision and his character."**

- Steven B. Sample, *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*

**"Stories that have been told and retold within a culture become so much a part of consciousness that we don't see them as stories at all. They define what we see as 'plain truths' - the way things 'are.' For example, stories about what is 'good,' who is deserving, and what is 'normal' are so ingrained and taken for granted that the stories themselves are transparent. All cultures have these 'dominant narratives'."**

- Debra E. Meyerson, *Tempered Radicals: How People Use Difference to Inspire Change at Work*

**"Develop and repeat your most compelling stories. People seldom tire of good stories that stir up feelings of pride...In 1995, Howard Gardner wrote a landmark book entitled *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*, in which he explored the attributes and approaches of ten truly great world leaders ranging from Margaret Mead to Mahatma Gandhi. One of the most intriguing findings of his works was that 'whether direct or indirect, leaders fashion stories-principally stories of identity. It is important that a leader be a good storyteller, but equally crucial that the leader embody that story in his or her life...'"**

- Jon R. Katzenbach, *Why Pride Matters More Than Money: The Power of the World's Greatest Motivational Force*

**"A carefully chosen story can help the leader of an organization translate an abstract concept into a meaningful mandate for employees."**

- Stephen Denning, "Telling Tales," *Harvard Business Review*

**Most Popular November Improvement Points**

[Improvement Points](#) is a free service providing a key thought or quotation from one of my articles, provided 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 brief article for a quick five-minute read. This is your opportunity for a short pause that refreshes, is an inspirational



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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 the three most popular choices of the [Improvement Points](#) we sent out in November:

**Improvement Planning Pathways and Pitfalls (Part 2 of 2)**

Develop change and improvement momentum by building around the champions who are most likely to make the effort succeed. They will help to bring the others on side. They are also the ones you and everyone else can learn the most from. But don't try to impose their successful approaches on others. Ownership and personalization are the keys to local adaptation of changes and improvements. Sell, persuade, educate, and communicate.

[http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article\\_215.aspx](http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_215.aspx)

**Measurement Traps**

Too many measures are designed to meet internal needs. They may satisfy management's command-and-control paranoia by tracking every activity and minute of the day. Or they're designed to serve accounting, information technology, human resources or other support departments.

[http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article\\_223.aspx](http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_223.aspx)

**The Dynamic Power of Hope**

Hope gives life meaning. Hope helps us take responsibility for our choices. Hope stretches us and energizes our continuous growth and development. Hope urges us to go against the odds and do what everyone knows can't be done.

[http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article\\_38.aspx](http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_38.aspx)

**Feedback and Follow-Up: Ways to Use *The Leader Letter***

Nearly three hundred readers responded to our survey regarding *The Leader Letter*. The ratings and feedback have been very useful and gratifying. Eighty-five percent rated *The Leader Letter's* overall quality an eight or more out of ten. Other insights about which sections or regular features are most useful, along with the newsletter length, and why readers signed up for it in the first place, are very helpful to us as we continue to invest a fair bit of time producing this "good for nothing" publication.

Many rich and encouraging comments were freely given in the open sections of the survey. Some of those are published in this issue. Others, you'll find on our web site:

<http://www.clemmer.net/newsletter/survey.aspx>

Thanks VERY MUCH to everyone who completed the survey and left so many supportive comments. It's a thrill to hear from so many that all the work myself, Aidan Crawford, Gini Kechnie-Williams, and others at The CLEMMER Group invest in producing *The Leader Letter* each month is worthwhile.



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So this month we're publishing a few comments within the main categories of why readers subscribe to *The Leader Letter* and how they use it. If you want to review a broader selection of comments under each category, [click here](#). They are all anonymous because the survey did not ask anyone to identify themselves.

**Supplementing HR/Training and Development Efforts**

(65% of survey respondents pass *The Leader Letter* on to others each month)

*"The Leader Letter gives me practical ideas and themes for sharing with other managers within my organization."*

*"Our whole salaried staff sees The Leader Letter monthly. It is the reason Jim was chosen to facilitate our Leadership Conference in the Canadian Rockies May 8 and 9. Our entire team is buzzing and those who were not there are infected with the energy and positivism we caught. We have action teams who are accountable for addressing the 'strategic imperatives' we identified with Jim's help. Our company will be even greater because of The Leader Letter and the two days spent with Jim. Thanks again."*

**Personal Inspiration and Practical Applications**

*"Extremely practical. Many ideas can be taken directly from the newsletter and applied to day-to-day leadership issues."*

*"Jim, I have always found truth in your words and strength in applying them. It must give you great satisfaction in helping others so profoundly - at work, home and in all relationships - it is very powerful stuff."*

**Sharing with Colleagues and Team Members**

(65% of survey respondents pass *The Leader Letter* on to others each month)

*"I and my team find them very useful to keep abreast of things that are happening and as a reminder of important considerations in our quest to get better."*

*"The Leader Letter acts as a catalyst for development. I get satisfaction when sharing these thoughts infuses enthusiasm in the team members."*

**Personal/Professional Growth and Development**

*"I set aside a time to initially scan the latest edition, then print off articles of particular and current interest to read on flights, waiting in airports and quiet times to allow digestion of the content. Often I leave them on a seat then watch others pick them up and start to read them. A silent passing of the wisdom so to speak. Please continue!"*



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*"It's my favorite 'professional development' vehicle...that comes to me in my own home, to read at my convenience - in the middle of the day or night - and in my PJs if I want!" :)*

**Staying in Touch With or Building upon My Work**

*"I have come across many 'Clemmer Quotes' over the course of my years in leadership and have even used some of them in presentations. It is delightful to finally make the move to receiving The Leader Letter. Thanks!"*

*"Jim, I have been a fan of yours since [Firing on all Cylinders](#) keep it up!"*

*"Thank you, Jim. After attending one of your workshops in Calgary over 4 years ago, your Leader Letter serves as a booster shot for me. I am relatively new to management/leadership and I value the words of wisdom and practical applications I find in your articles and books. I especially enjoy 'Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm?' Once again thank you."*

**General**

*"I have been reading your Leader Letter for a few years now and I have enjoyed the continuous improvement in its delivery. Congrats! Keep up the good work."*

*"This is positively THE BEST newsletter I have ever received to date. I love the Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm. The [new blog format](#) is great (forgive me if I just read for now, I'll comment later!)"*

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

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