



JIM CLEMMER

Practical Leadership:

Inspiring Action, Achieving Results

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

February 2004, Issue 11 ~ View on-line at www.clemmer.net

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Leading Yourself and Coaching Others

Registrations are now coming in for my new two-day workshop combining the personal development approaches of *Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success* with using those same principles in leading others as outlined in my new book, *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*. Entitled, **Practical Leadership Strategies for Peak Performance**, I am currently updating, revising, and adding to this material in preparation for my March 2-3 session in Mississauga. This issue of the Leader Letter contains a few Tools, Tips, and Techniques for leading yourself and coaching others drawn from this new session.

[Click here for registration and an overview](#) (text and/or audio) of what we'll cover in **Practical Leadership Strategies for Peak Performance**.

Tools, Tips, and Techniques for...Living True to You

- ❖ Establish your three - five personal core values. These could be words or short phrases that represent what you care most about in life. Are these truly your own beliefs and values or are they what other people or institutions have said you should care about?
- ❖ Ensure that your day planner and calendar reflect your values. Schedule personal and professional activities that align to your values with equal weight. Don't allow today's urgencies to crowd out what's really important in your life.
- ❖ Develop your private 'Blessings and Brags' list. Record every accomplishment, strength, success you've ever had or things you're grateful for. Keep adding to it regularly. Review the list whenever you're feeling down on yourself, anxious, or a little sour.
- ❖ Schedule regular reflection time. Review your vision, values, and purpose. Read inspirational material. Meditate. Focus on life's bigger issues and put today's concerns into a broader context.
- ❖ Wrap up your day just before going to bed by recounting your top five accomplishments or best things that happened that day. This is especially important when you've had a bad day. Fall asleep feeling good about yourself and your situation.



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Tools, Tips, and Techniques for...Coaching

- ❖ Make a list of only the strengths (no weaknesses) of each of the people you lead. Meet with each person individually, to review your list and get their input. Discuss ways you can play to their strengths and preferences by realigning or reassigning their roles and responsibilities.
- ❖ Discuss the long-term career goals of each person on your team. Work with them to develop a personal growth plan that will help them get an objective assessment of their current strengths and weaknesses. Explore potential growth and development opportunities that will move them along their preferred career path.
- ❖ When a member of your team comes to you with a problem, ask for his or her opinion on what to do about it before you offer your opinion or take the "monkey" off their back and put it on yours. Use questions to lead them toward areas they may not have considered. Provide relevant experiences or teaching points if this is a good opportunity to enhance their learning.
- ❖ Meet with each person on your team before they go to a workshop or training activity. Discuss how what they're going to be learning fits into their career development plan and/or the organization's values or goals. Review what will be covered and how you can help them apply the training. Meet after the training (or periodically throughout if it's an ongoing process) to review what was learned and how the training can be applied.
- ❖ Meet with each team member for a performance review at least once every six months (quarterly is even better). Review their progress against the goals you set together at the start of the year. Hold them accountable for progress since the last meeting. Establish targets for the next quarter. Add your feedback and suggestions to theirs. Ask for input on what you should keep doing, start doing, or stop doing to help them reach their performance targets. Connect the conversation to their longer-term career aspirations and your organization's vision, values, and purpose.

Leading a Team to Excellent Customer Service

Hi Jim,

I have recently read several articles of yours and liked them so much, I bought two of your books. Several years ago, I was a facilitator at our company for the Zenger Miller program and support the concepts a great deal. I accepted a Call Center Manager position recently and have a question concerning my team of 7 customer service and sales representatives. I hate to mention it, but they are all women, which I think makes this challenge a little more difficult. I want to focus the group on providing excellent customer service and working as a

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team. There are some negative attitudes that I noticed coming into the position and back-biting. There's no place for this kind of behavior and it only serves to tear down the group and reduce productivity.

How would you suggest beginning to direct the department in the right direction?

*Donna Metzger, Call Center Manager
Cincinnati, OH*

Hi Donna,

Thanks for your interest in my work. I hope you enjoy my books! As a Zenger Miller facilitator, you'll certainly recognize many of the underlying values in my books and other work.

I have been helping teams and organizations improve customer service for over two decades. I've come to learn that there are many, and quite varied, approaches to this general topic and specifically to the symptoms you're describing. It's difficult to give you a prescription without a more thorough diagnosis. I can only offer you a series of suggestions that you can try and/or choose from for those that make the most sense:

- Pick out some of the exercises and approaches found in the two-day retreat I conduct with management teams at www.clemmer.net/speaking/dcco_mgrt.shtml. You may not be able to get everyone offsite for a retreat. But if you can take a few hours here and there to cover the most relevant areas in this outline, it could make a big difference.
- Some of your symptoms may speak to the importance of having a common set of values or principles guiding behavior in your team. If your organization has a set of core values (anything more than five is too many -- they aren't yet CORE values), you could discuss how to live the values. You'll find a series of articles on our web site pertaining to Vision, Values, and Purpose (what I call Focus and Context) at www.clemmer.net/excerpts/t_o_vision.shtml. A few articles specific to clarifying and/or living values are:
 - **Values-Based Leadership Has Huge Pay-Offs**
Teams and organizations with well-grounded, shared values that are alive and thriving, have much higher than average performance. These leaders, teams, and organizations identify and live their core values.
www.clemmer.net/excerpts/values_based.shtml



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- **Pathways and Pitfalls to Clarifying Organizational Values**
Effectively using values to care for the context and provide focus to a team or organization can be very difficult leadership acts. Discover the Clarifying Organizational Values approaches that can help you to avoid the pitfalls and pave your organization's pathway to success.
www.clemmer.net/excerpts/pp_orgvalues.shtml
- **Pathways and Pitfalls to Living Organizational Values**
Core values are critical to effectively leading people. Discover the Living Organizational Values approaches that can help you to avoid the pitfalls and pave your organization's pathway to success.
www.clemmer.net/excerpts/pp_livingorgvalues.shtml
- Your team may have some "Moose-on-the-Table" that need to be dealt with. See http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/authentic_comm.shtml for details.
- You could buy your team members their own copies of *Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success* or *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success* (www.clemmer.net/books_main.shtml) and then pick a chapter per week/month for discussion and application.
- Subscribe to our free Improvement Points service (www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml) and circulate the most relevant ones along with your comments and/or pick some of the articles attached to particular Improvement Points for further discussion and application.
- Browse through the 250+ articles on our web site at www.clemmer.net/articles.shtml for those you might circulate to your team and/or use for further discussion.

I hope some of these general suggestions are useful!

Jim

Jim,

Thanks for your advice and the references to your articles. I wanted to give you a testimonial of success (so far). I used a combination of all the useful information you gave me and decided that goal setting and values were where we needed to begin. I started the meeting by asking the team members where they were going and where they wanted to be in 5 years. Then I presented the company's goals and where the company wanted to be in 5 years, how they were all related, and how our team helped to meet that goal. It seemed to be a very positive meeting and gave us all a better feeling of who the other members of the team were, and an agreement of the group direction.



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Thanks again for your help. I look forward to reading the books now.

Sincerely,

Donna Metzger

How Useful Are Team Building Exercises?

Jim,

*Just completed your new book, *The Leader's Digest*, and enjoyed it thoroughly. I am a retired Staff Developer for the Toronto District School Board and used your books, your personal quotes, and your vast collection of quotes and stories in my leadership presentations for both students and staff.*

*On page 182 of *The Leader's Digest*, in the last paragraph, you suggest that "team-building exercises" rarely create strong teams. I agree in part with you. However, in my career I have seen these types of activities produce significant results. Many teams do not always understand why they cannot move through the four stages of the team development wheel (Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing). Team building exercises can help them better understand each other in a non-threatening manner that is totally, at least in their immediate perception, not directly related to the team. Some of these activities create an "equal playing field" where all team members are on the same footing and therefore, under the guidance of a well-trained facilitator, the team can begin to see some of the steps that need to be taken to become "high performers."*

I totally agree with you that the next step in the process is to then do a task that is totally relevant to the team. The exercises may reveal strengths of individuals that to date the team has not recognized. My experience has shown that teams that have played together, move much more quickly through the job related activity with improved creativity, and much less conflict.

After playing, two of my favorite activities for a group is to put up three charts; What are we doing well? What can we do better? What is getting in the way? The other is to have them examine the "Fish Philosophy," see the video, and apply the philosophy directly to their situation. If they have "played" beforehand these two activities can be breakthrough experiences and move them to go on to become a "high performance" team.



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Given that I have read your last two books and we only disagree on one small paragraph, I would like to personally thank you for a wonderful resource that I continue to use. I am currently using many of the quotes and thoughts to develop a presentation for a group of Toronto District School Board student leaders (60) that I, along with a number of capable teachers, will be going to Muskoka Woods Camp in May to run a program for 350 younger students from across the province.

Retiredly, Dave Moore

Hi Dave,

Thanks very much for your positive feedback and strong support for *The Leader's Digest*. I am delighted to hear that you find it and my other work so useful.

If both of us always agreed on every single point in any of my books, that would be scary! I am not dead set against team building exercises as you've described them – especially if they are connected to practical applications and the real work of the team. But often that doesn't happen and/or trainers/facilitators/consultants get caught up in theoretical exercises that are fun but ultimately have little lasting impact on the team's effectiveness.

Thanks for sharing your input and insights.

Jim

Please email me your experiences on what does and doesn't work in building high performance teams at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net.

Why Most Training Fails

The following correspondence centers on an old *Globe & Mail* column entitled "Why Most Training Fails" at www.clemmer.net/excerpts/why_most.shtml.

Dear Jim,

I just read your above article and agree with your major points. However, I respectfully disagree that behaviors drive attitudes. In my practice, I have found that attitudes drive behaviors. One cannot change the behavior until the supporting negative to neutral attitude or attitudes are redeveloped.



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Additionally, most training fails because of the lack of opportunities for application. Delivering 16 hours of training over 8 weeks (2 hrs once a week) will deliver far more sustainable cognitive retention than a 2 day seminar of equal time. This scheduling works with the organization and has a far lesser negative impact on productivity. Most individuals can only absorb 2 hours before interference from existing mental commitments to physical discomfort.

Leader Letter reader

Hi,

Thanks for your feedback on my article. This has been a very popular and controversial one since I wrote it twelve years ago.

When I wrote this I was with Zenger Miller/Achieve International (now AchieveGlobal). They used a powerful training process called behavior modeling based on solid research that showed most people act themselves into a new way of thinking more often than think themselves into a new way of acting. Since then, I have come to believe that it's a combination of both.

I also agree with your second point that most training fails because of problems with application. More and more of my work these days involves helping very busy management teams develop skills as they resolve issues and lead the organization on the fly. "Sheep-dipping" participants through a big two-day dunk tank is less effective. Although this is certainly better than no training at all, because busy managers can never get themselves free to invest in their own development.

Jim

Thoughts that Make You Go Hmmm...on Coaching

"The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook."

- William James

"A good leader can step on your toes without messing up the shine."

- Author Unknown

"Great managers would offer you this advice: Focus on each person's strengths and manage around his weaknesses. Don't try to fix the weaknesses. Don't try to perfect each person. Instead do everything you can to help each person cultivate his talents. Help each person become more of who he already is."

- Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, *First, Break All The Rules. What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*



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***The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.***

- William Arthur Ward

"Leadership is not magnetic personality — that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not 'making friends and influencing people'— that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations."

– Peter Drucker

Thoughts That Make You Want to Hang Them on the Wall

Hello Jim,

Just a wee note to let you know how your 'triumphs are silently celebrated' by people over in Student Financial Services (York University). One of the quotes in your newsletter hit a chord, so I passed it on to our team. Now one of our manager's would like to frame it. My e-mail and the reply follows:

I came across this quote today from Jim Clemmer and couldn't help but think of how well it applies to all of you, particularly in December and January (and September and October, April, and May, November, February, March...). Keep celebrating those triumphs, and there are SO many. Each student that lines up at our counter is a triumph, for they have beaten the odds just by being here. Your sympathetic approach in helping a student solve his or her financial problem is a triumph. And each time you have sent a student away with options is a triumph, because your options have given them hope.

"No one has yet computed how many imaginary triumphs are silently celebrated by people each year (second, minute, hour, day, week, month) to keep up their courage." (forgive my editing) - Athenaeus (Circa 200 A.D.), Greek grammarian

Wanda,

This is so true and inspiring. I think we should frame it for the office it as a gentle reminder that no help is too little.

Nevia

Regards,

Wanda Monks, CHRP, Administrative Officer, Student Financial Services, York University



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Improvement Points Subscribers' Top Picks for January

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

"Good customer listening helps organizations avoid expensive service or quality overkill. As management guru Peter Drucker pointed out, "Nothing is so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all."

- from *[Why Smart Managers Master the Art of Listening Well](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/listening_well.shtml)*
www.clemmer.net/excerpts/listening_well.shtml

"Improving personal and organizational performance without constant feedback is like trying to pin the tail on the donkey when we're blindfolded. Only through knowing where we are, can we change where we are going."

- from *[Don't Wait to See the Blood](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/see_blood.shtml)*
http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/see_blood.shtml

"Many people in so-called leadership positions aren't leaders. They're managers, bureaucrats, technocrats, bosses, administrators, department heads, and the like; but they aren't leaders. On the other hand, some people in individual contributor roles are powerful leaders. Leadership is an action, not a position."

- from *[Managing Things and Leading People](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/managing_things.shtml)*
www.clemmer.net/excerpts/managing_things.shtml

Subscribe or view the archives by topic area here: www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml.

I would love to hear from you on any of the discussions raised in this issue of the *Leader Letter*...or any other matters concerning my work. Of course, I especially welcome conversations exploring how I might help you or your team/organization with a keynote presentation, management team retreat, or workshop.

Send me an e-mail at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net or call me directly at (519) 748-5968.

I hope to connect with you again next month!

Jim