



## Practical Leadership:

Inspiring *Action*, Achieving Results

### Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

February 2006, Issue 35

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#### Navigating Change and Adversity

"Embrace change" is a useless platitude mouthed by managers or motivational speakers who have not thought through its full implications - or they are masochists who enjoy suffering. Changes that bring new opportunities or propel us forward are easy to embrace. But many changes look quite negative and are tough - if not impossible - to welcome. This list might include loss of a relationship, a loved one, health, job, money, and such.

We often don't choose the difficulties or negative changes that spring upon us. But we always choose how we respond.

For the past few years I have been using a simple Navigator-Survivor-Victim chart to outline choices in dealing with difficult problems. Surveys and feedback from my workshop or retreat participants continually point to the few minutes we spend on this basic model as the most powerful part of our time together. It may be basic and seem obvious, but many of us seem to need constant reminders and help because it is so easy to sink "below the line."

Go to <http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/navigating-change.shtml> to see the chart and read an extensive how-to article on:

- Our change choices
- What pulls people down
- How to shift your own perspective and live "above the line"
- How to help pull others above the line.

We will cover this material in much more depth in my only "Leading @ the Speed of Change" public workshop this year. See the section below for details.

#### "Leading @ the Speed of Change" Workshop

For the past twenty-five years I have been helping thousands of managers and management teams apply the practical leadership principals and practices that catapult them to peak personal and professional performance. I have taken that experience and the research from writing my five leadership and organization effectiveness books, and boiled it all down to a two-day high energy and intense workshop that I call "Leading @ the Speed of Change." It's jammed full of practical tips, tools, and techniques on how to align people,

processes, and personal effectiveness for continuous success.

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We only have one public session scheduled for all of 2006 (most of my work is internal to organizations). Please join me for my one and only two-day public session, right here in my hometown, Kitchener, Ontario, on May 30 - May 31, 2006. You (and possibly your colleagues) will be inspired to action and provided with practical 'how to' steps that dramatically boost personal, team, and organization results. Each day is packed with practical guidelines, powerful systems, and personal growth strategies.

Check out the session or download a PDF workshop brochure at <http://www.clemmer.net/events/lsc/lsc.shtml>. There are special discounts for bringing colleagues along so you can learn and apply these principles together.

Jim

P.S. - This workshop includes four valuable resources...at no extra cost. You'll receive signed copies of my recent bestsellers, *Growing the Distance* and *The Leader's Digest* as well as the extensive 'how to' workbooks, *Practical Application Planner* and *Personal Implementation Guide* with hundreds of practical application ideas.

P.S.S - You can read other participant comments here: [http://www.clemmer.net/events/lsc/lsc\\_reviews.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/events/lsc/lsc_reviews.shtml)

P.S.S.S - I run many half, one, and two-day customized versions of this "Leading @ the Speed of Change" workshop. Contact me if you'd like to explore this option for your own organization.

**Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Navigating Change and Adversity**

**"You have to take it as it happens, but you should try to make it happen the way you want to take it."**

- German Proverb

**"Sometimes I get the feeling the whole world is against me, but deep down I know that's not true. Some of the smaller countries are neutral."**

- Robert Orben, American comedy writer

**"We all know people who, under duress, throw up their hands and cry, 'How can this be happening to me?' Such people see themselves as victims, and living through hardship carries no lessons for them. But resilient people devise constructs about their suffering to create some sort of meaning for themselves and others."**

- Diane L. Coutu, "How Resilience Works," *Harvard Business Review*



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**"Nothing in life happens. You have to have the stamina to meet the obstacles and overcome them."**

- Golda Meir, (called "the Iron Lady of Israeli politics" by the BBC) former Israeli ambassador and Prime Minister

**"Optimists...have a strength that allows them to interpret their setbacks as surmountable, particular to a single problem, and resulting from temporary circumstances or other people. Pessimists, I have found over the last two decades, are up to eight times more likely to become depressed when bad events occur; they do worse at school, sports and most jobs than their talents augur; they have worse physical health and shorter lives; they have rockier interpersonal relations, and they lose American Presidential elections to their more optimistic opponents."**

- Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*

**"Self-help must precede help from others. Even for making certain of help from heaven, one has to help oneself."**

- Morarji Ranchhodji Desai, Prime Minister of India

#### **Using Appreciative Inquiry to Help Low-Performance Teams**

*"Jim, I'm ramping up to do my research for my graduate degree in leadership (Royal Roads University Master of Arts in Leadership and Training). I wondered if you could recommend any literature that you've found particularly helpful including any of your publications. Specifically, I'm looking for material that would support my area of interest related to my evolving research question.*

*My research will be focused on exploring existing team dynamics, particularly with low-performance teams (or non-teams really) using an 'Appreciative Inquiry' approach. I want to help develop strategies to help these teams, and ultimately the organization, to 'get there from here' where 'there' is a high-performing, dynamic and successful team, and 'here' is what I reveal through the inquiry process. I hope to positively influence the organizational culture and help develop a strategy and training program to build corporate teams while ultimately building the learning organization. So, any suggestions would be most appreciated.*

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*Jim, I wish you a fabulous, prosperous and highly successful 2006 and thank you again for the positive influence you provide to your readership!"*

– Valerie Davis, Special Projects Coordinator, Interior Health Authority, Kelowna, BC

I did recommend my latest book *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success* to Valerie because it focuses on team leadership. However, it does not discuss the use of Appreciative Inquiry. Please send me any recommendations you might have for Valerie. E-mail me at [Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).

**"Growing the Distance" Feedback from a 13 Year Old Reader**

I continue to be very gratified by the broad appeal of my fourth book, *Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal and Career Success*. We've sold over 100,000 copies and it's been translated into half a dozen languages. I used a magazine-style "edutainment" approach to make the book easy to read with plenty of points to "drive you to thinking." The book is being used in numerous high schools and by guidance counselors. Karly's e-mail below was a delight. She (with her parent's approval) agreed to let me share her insights with you. I am sure she will grow far in life!

*My name is Karly Stewart and I am 13 years old and in Grade Eight. I read your book Growing the Distance and learned many useful things from it. Even though it is about the workplace, I can apply these principles to similar situations that occur at school. It showed me that I shouldn't be afraid to take the lead.*

*I liked the chapters, 'Responsibility for Choices' and 'Authenticity'. I really liked reading the quotes and anecdotes, which were very humorous and gave me something to think (and laugh) about.*

*At my dad's office they are giving away fifty copies of this book for their leadership group. I think that not only people in workplaces should read this book, but people my age should read it too. Even teens would be able to benefit greatly from it. I would recommend it to any one who wants to become a better leader. This is an excellent book for people of all ages and a valuable source of information and wisdom on how to grow the distance.*

*Thanks,*

*Karly*

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**Meetings Are Critical but Most Are Very Wasteful**

How important are meetings in today's organizations?

- Meetings are more important than ever in our increasingly complex and interconnected world. Research clearly shows that when run effectively, groups make better decisions than individuals. Effective meetings involve and engage participants in problem-solving and planning.
- Most management meetings are poorly run and that's a big reason that many people hate meetings. Participants who continually experience poorly run meetings see them as a waste of time. Many are. Managers who experience well run and effective meetings get the bulk of their work done through meetings.
- A big problem with many meetings is that the group doesn't address "Moose-on-the-Table" issues (AKA "Elephant-in-the-Room"). The lack of openness stifles true problem solving, increases negative politics and game playing, and frustrates everyone. You can read much more about this in my October 2004 newsletter at <http://www.clemmer.net/news/oct2004.html>.

**Your Tips for Managing at a Distance or Virtual Teams**

The first paragraph of this reader's message below speaks to an aspect of navigating change such as covered by the lead article ("Navigating Change and Adversity") in this issue of *The Leader Letter*.

The rest of her message outlines a major and growing challenge in many far flung organizations.

*I would like to express my appreciation of the material you provide. At times you present those Hmmmmm points that are thought provoking. Other times the articles will reaffirm what we believe or are trying to do is correct. Since I had been introduced to the 85/15 management concept many years ago, I have tried to instill in staff that we need to concentrate our efforts on the 15% within our control and accept we have no control over the other 85% (still very hard to do). Though we have no control, it does not prevent us from providing feedback to those 'higher up' and just maybe a time will come when we are heard.*

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*The management/leadership role should always be changing/growing to keep up with our ever changing service delivery priorities and ways of doing business. I find myself in a new role now - distance management. Your section entitled 'Harnessing the Power of Recognition, Appreciation, and Celebration' (see the January 2006 issue at <http://www.clemmer.net/news/jan2006.html> ) prompted me to send an e-mail as I would not normally do this. When you are managing a team that is spread over a vast geographical area, I find it hard to do. You can't do the normal expression of appreciation for a job well done when you are no longer privy to seeing it happen or finding out through other team interactions (could be as simple as a comment made in the coffee room). Yes, you can still provide recognition on things that are statistically captured but given the nature of our business, service delivery to clients, that is only a small part of what the job entails.*

*Meetings take place via teleconference or video conference, which loses some of that camaraderie of all sitting in the same room. It is a constant struggle to keep the team unified - providing the same level of service, with the same goals and objectives in mind.*

*So the primary reasons for my e-mail are to express my appreciation and ask that in some future edition of your Leader Letter you consider covering the topic of management at a distance.....the principles I believe are the same but it is the 'how' that is confusing (as I tried to explain above with the recognition piece and of course, the same would also be true if things are not going well).*

What are your experiences with managing a team where everyone is not in the same location (nor perhaps time zone)? What have you found to be key to success? What are the traps to avoid? Please e-mail me your experience and perspectives at [Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).

**Favorite *Improvement Points* from January**

*"Your Improvement Points continue to enlighten and inspire me, as well as informing me as I continue my learning journey through life. I just love your positive approach and your flare for writing scholarly-level material with a totally humanistic approach. Bravo!"*

– Valerie Davis, Special Projects Coordinator, Interior Health Authority, Kelowna, BC

*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

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performance boost. You can circulate especially relevant or timely articles or *Improvement Points* to your team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action. To subscribe go to: <http://www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml>.

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

**"The Moose-on-the-Table scenario is one that we run into very often with management teams. The problem is that conversations among the team aren't authentic. They don't deal with the real issues that are blocking progress. Some teams have a huge moose to deal with; others have a smaller moose."**

– from Jim Clemmer's article, "The Moose On The Table"

Read the full article now! <http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/moose.shtml>

**"A WorkLife Design survey reviewed the characteristics that made organizations employers of choice. Only 34% named pay. About 56% said flexible benefits were a major factor. A whopping 80% of respondents said the work environment was the biggest factor. This was described as servant leadership, trust and cooperation, family friendly policies, work-life balance, and credible and fair management."**

– from Jim Clemmer's article, "Retaining Top People"

Read the full article now! <http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/retaining.shtml>

**"Most people want to be on a winning team, to feel proud of the organization and their own accomplishments. This emotional connection provides a deep sense of making a difference through meaningful work. Highly effective leaders nurture a strong "pride of craft" for the products or services the organization provides and what these do for customers."**

– from Jim Clemmer's article, "Team Spirit Built from the Top"

Read the full article now! [http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/team\\_spirit.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/team_spirit.shtml)

**Bad Bosses Continue to Challenge Us**

Re: 'Bad Boss: Learn How to Manage Your Manager' (see the September 2005 issue at <http://www.clemmer.net/news/sept2005.html>).

*I like my boss personally he is a very nice person but he is not able to manage those who need development and he tends to blow little things out of proportion.*

*I tend to challenge him and be a little argumentative. I've stopped being argumentative, but I can not figure out how not to challenge. In addition, I've been in positions where my boss*

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*has not been supportive when he should have - how can I avoid reacting defensively? To be honest I do not trust him even though I like him. I would like to change how I react and hopefully this will enable me to develop a better relationship with him.*

*Any suggestions/readings you may have would be greatly appreciated.*

*"Tara"*

Dear "Tara"

Dealing with a challenging or poor boss is an issue you share with many, many people! This has become one of the longest ongoing issues I continue to address in various editions of *The Leader Letter*. The key is to be a Navigator and not a Victim. I'd recommend you go to the December 2004 issue of *The Leader Letter* at <http://www.clemmer.net/news/dec2004.html> and scroll down to "Dealing with a Bad Boss." This will give you both my response to a previous question like yours and a link to an earlier article on keeping problems in perspective.

Jim

**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. 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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