Keynote Speaker Workshop/Retreat Leader Management Team Developer

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

June 2003, Issue 3 ~ View on-line at www.clemmer.net

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Ah...June has arrived!

June is my favorite month in my perennial garden. Growth is vigorous, everything is lusciously green, and the blooms are stunning. Long daylight hours and the promise of lazy summer days stretch out far ahead. It's the time of year for gardeners to really enjoy the results of earlier hard work and previous planning.

The challenge is to really see, smell, and take pleasure from all that nature has to offer. For task oriented, results-driven people like me, that is not always so easy. I can get myself too focused on what needs to be done next, and not really look around and savor where I already am. Staying alert for photo opportunities with my new digital camera is helping to counterbalance this tendency — as long as I don't get too focused on achieving photo results!

In Southern Ontario, the end of May and into June is also the time of year to do hard pruning of roses, clematis, and shrubs. What is dead from winter kill and needs to be cut off and what is new growth to be nurtured is now very evident. A good gardener is a good pruner. Just like a good leader. He or she uses sharp tools to trim out old ideas that look ugly and choke new growth. In this issue I'll address some of the common 'winter kill' of less effective teams and individuals, and how to prune them out.

A Power Failure Whodunit

One of the Timeless Leadership Principles in our Leadership Wheel model (view the model at www.clemmer.net/models/tlship.shtml) is Responsibility for Choices. I have come to emphasize this one more heavily than the others because so many people in my keynote speaking and workshop audiences feel so helpless and powerless.

It's so easy to get stuck in Pity City. Since misery loves company, Pity Parties become popular as everyone points fingers at their favorite targets on the other side of the We/They Gap found in many organizations (head office versus regions/divisions, frontline staff versus management, lower management versus senior management, management versus unions, sales versus operations, etc.). Problems, setbacks, and disappointments are often wailed about in a rousing game of Blame Storming ("They are doing it to us again"). One group that I worked with recently reflected on how they don't spend as much time in Pity City, but they do get stuck in Frown Town far too often!

I have been in too many workshops, over too many years, listening to managers complain about staff not taking initiative and being disempowered. Those same managers then turn around and helplessly point fingers upward or outward at others as the reason for their own negativity, cynicism, and inaction. That's not leadership. In the Responsibility for Choices chapter of *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*, I decided to address this growing problem directly. We need fewer middle managers, and far more middle leaders.

An excellent article in the April 2003 issue of *Harvard Business Review* illustrates the power of strong and highly strategic leadership in the face of overwhelming bureaucracy, inertia, and resistance to change. In "Tipping Point Leadership," W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne draw powerful leadership lessons from William Bratton's remarkable career leading up to and including his unprecedented success as police commissioner of New York City. They show how he led a highly effective change process with a sharp focus on priority setting, performance management, strategic leverage, and the like. The steep drop in crime rates (murders down 50%, theft down 35%) and sharp rise in "customer satisfaction" (a positive rating for NYPD that soared from 37% to 73% in four years) is astounding.

What's even more impressive and instructive about Bratton's career is what an incredibly effective "tempered radical" (see my book review in this issue) he was at the bottom and middle rungs of the Boston Police Department and Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority. Since he had little formal power, he used a much more powerful force – leadership!

Go to www.hbr.com/ to read a summary of the article and order reprints.

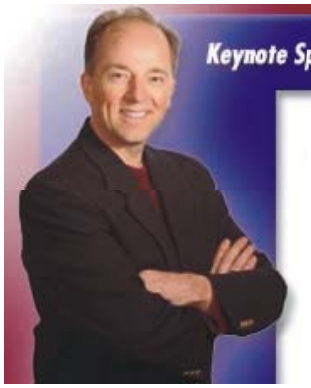
Is That a Moose Standing on the Table?

One of the more popular metaphors I have been using in workshops and management retreats is the notion of Moose-on-the-Table. It's a playful, fun way to open up deep, authentic conversations about problems or issues that aren't being addressed. When I work in the U.S., people are sometimes more familiar with the idea of Elephant-in-the-Livingroom. I have also heard of pink skunks and other such creatures.

One reason I like Moose-on-the-Table is because it's so Canadian. Another reason is that moose can be very territorial, hard to remove once established, dangerous when confronted, and awkward, gangly creatures. You can read an except on Moose-on-the-Table from *The Leader's Digest* (and view the graphic slide I use in my presentations) at www.clemmer.net/excerpts/authentic_comm.shtml.

An excellent *Harvard Business Review* article that shows just how dangerous untended Moose can be is in the May 2003 issue. In, "Is Silence Killing Your Company?" Leslie Perlow and Stephanie Williams show how the vicious circle of silence (not dealing with the Moose-on-the-Table) be reversed with the virtuous circle of communication.

Go to www.hbr.com/ to read a summary of the article and order reprints.



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Personal FAQs and More...Probably More Than You Ever Wanted to Know

With our ongoing web site renovations and the publicity around my new book, *The Leader's Digest*, we have revamped our Media Centre to provide more of my background and answer questions that I am often asked. It also contains press releases and story angles on *The Leader's Digest*. You can access the centre at www.clemmer.net/media_center.shtml. I had some fun putting together answers to question #10 (www.clemmer.net/media/qa.shtml#ten) on my most impactful life change book, humor, pet peeve, and favorite music, TV show, and movie. Of course, the great thing about reading e-newsletters and visiting web sites is that when the authors get to full of themselves, you can give them a good swift click and head off somewhere else!

Two New Excerpts: Insights on our Web Site

I adapted an article called "Cultivating Leadership" from *The Leader's Digest* for *Restaurant News*. It outlines the differences between management and leadership, and uses my personal gardening analogy to discuss the nurturing aspect of leadership. You can view the article at www.clemmer.net/excerpts/cultivating_lship.shtml.

I write a column for a local publication here in the Waterloo Region called *Exchange Magazine*. A recent column provided an overview of our Leadership Wheel that *The Leader's Digest* is built around. You can view this excerpt at www.clemmer.net/excerpts/timeless_lprinciples.shtml.

Getting More From Your Leadership Speaker

This editorial piece was posted by HR.com's Knowledge Manager, David Creelman, at www.hr.com. He's clearly a very bright and astute guy...

> *Organizations commonly call in speakers to give their spiel about leadership. It's basically a canned presentation but these speakers are often enjoyed by employees. However, the speaker is giving his or her message, not your organization's message.*
>
> *An alternative tactic is to choose a speaker who has been closely involved with a project. For example, if you have built a leadership competency model you might ask the consultant to speak about it. This gives an on-target message but everyone knows the consultant is being paid to spout the company line.*
>
> *Jim Clemmer recently shared a third tactic that is worth considering. His clients sometimes ask him to present his leadership model but link it to their own message. The resulting message is aligned but it has the credibility of coming from an outsider.*
>
> *What I like about this approach is that it gives the listener something to think about. It gives an alternative, but not inconsistent, view that employees need to integrate with the company message.*
>
> *Getting people to think is far better than just getting them to listen.*

A sample of customized presentations and workshops (like David describes above) that I have designed and delivered is available at www.clemmer.net/speaking/custom.shtml.

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Outstanding Performance is Voluntary

I recently received an e-mail from a visitor to our web site asking for *"your thoughts about leadership within volunteer organizations and what can be learned for people who provide leadership for 'paid employees'."*

Here's my response:

> *I have long believed that managers who provide leadership for paid staff can learn a great deal about true leadership from the volunteer sector. A manager gets people to do what needs to be done. A leader gets people to want to do what needs to be done.*
>
> *I first wrote about "voluntarism" in my book, Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Performance, in the context of providing an environment that nurtures the discretionary effort that leads to outstanding customer service (the only way we can get there). Here's a passage from the Passion and Commitment chapter of my recent book, The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success, which attempts to summarize some of my views on the topic:*
>
> > Taking an organization from good to great customer service ultimately depends on the people who provide that service. It can only happen through the volunteerism – the willingness to go beyond what is merely required – of people who serve on the front lines. Going from ordinary to extraordinary performance happens through the discretionary efforts of frontline staff deciding to make the thousands of "moment of truth" (any time a customer interacts with the company in person, by phone, or electronically), they manage every day as positively as they possibly can. This enthusiasm, loyalty, or devotion can't be forced on people. It only happens through a "culture of commitment," where frontline people reflect to the outside the intense pride and ownership they are experiencing on the inside.

Get the Point with Improvement Points

If you're looking for quick tips/ideas/thoughts for discussion with your management team or your own learning, visit the Improvement Points Archive at www.clemmer.net/quotes.shtml and click on one of the 22 topic areas within the broad categories of **Change**, **Management-Leadership Balance**, **Organization Improvement**, or **Personal/Leadership Development**. These topic areas and categories are the same ones used for organizing the over 250 free columns and articles on our web site (www.clemmer.net/articles.shtml). This is all built around the key models and frameworks found in my books, keynote presentations, workshops, and retreat (www.clemmer.net/models_main.shtml).

> *I currently receive your monthly newsletter and really enjoy your articles. I find them very timely and have circulated them to a number of friends and encouraged them to subscribe. These improvement tips add another dimension to the information you provide. I particularly like how you use the work of others to make your perspective on a subject more meaningful.*
> *Keep up the great work.*
>
> **- Brian Johnstone, Advisor, Business Improvement, Industry Canada**

Improvement Points Subscribers' Top Picks for May

Improvement Points are short quotes from one of the hundreds of free articles on our web site that are sent by e-mail three times per week. Each quote comes with a heading that corresponds with my core models and frameworks (click here to view those). Subscribers have the opportunity to click on the title of the article that the quote was taken from and go read the entire piece. Of the quotes/articles sent out in May, the three most popular were (you can click on the article title to read it):

- **Leaders Care for Organization Culture and Context**
  at http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders_care.shtml
- **Leadership Keys to Harnessing the Power of Teams**
  at http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leadership_keys.shtml
- **Personal Improvement Planning Pathways and Pitfalls**
  at http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/personal_planning2.shtml

What's the Right Organization Structure?

Here's a note I recently received from the president of a company we've been working with:

> *I am looking for a book/information on organizational structures. However, there's a twist. We are currently set up as most companies are, with a vertical (silo) model. I want to change this. Part of our vision is to be a "knowledge-based" company. In order to accomplish this, information has to flow from the outside-in and from the inside-out. The more effective the transmission of information, the more connective the organization will become.*
>
> *In order to do this, I feel that we need a circular "network" model, rather than a vertical integration model. We want to be like a multi-dimensional, living organism (e.g. the human body) where information/knowledge is exchanged and flows unimpeded throughout the organization. Projects get done through a collaborative workplace and information is available centrally to everyone.*
>
> *I'd appreciate your advice/recommendations.*

We have long believed that form follows function. In other words, first determine what the key goals/objectives, business models, and key processes are and then put a structure in place to support that. So "the right organization structure" is impossible to generalize in a book. You can find some of my work on systems and structure on our web site at www.clemmer.net/excerpts/org_structure.shtml.

We tend to work with Clients to shape a structure and support systems after work like process management has been completed. You can see our approach to process management at www.clemmer.net/process.shtml (including key slides from the executive overview of this approach).

A Little Feedback on Feedback

The May issue of the *Leader Letter* focused on feedback. The Center for Creative Leadership has posted a great summary of top ten mistakes managers often make in giving feedback. You can view this from their March 2003 newsletter at www.ccl.org/connected/enews/articles/0303mistakes.htm.

More Feedback on *The Leader's Digest*

Easy to digest...presenting it in easily accessible snippets is a smart way to reach leaders who are usually busy, well, leading rather than reading.

- "Recommended Readings," Marketing Magazine

You might be surprised to hear that I started on page 152 with the fish-tank factor (my husband would have preferred the tank top factor!) It speaks volumes. It's such a joy to see you seize the opportunity to make your living doing what you love! Like you, I seek to help others find their feet, and their ideal work situations. I appreciate how you succinctly state philosophy and concepts, and proceed to provide procedures for real-world implementation. Thank you for filling a serious gap on the management bookshelf.

Perhaps too few readers will comment on the format and layout of the book. It's friendly, like an elementary school reader. The large typeface is user-friendly, and the margins provide space for personal notations.

'As we speak', I'm experiencing some turbulent times, and have undertaken a strategic job search. The Leader's Digest is my pillar of strength. I can open it at any time at any page, and find exactly what I need to read.

- Linda Stagg, B.Com., MPA Student

Continuing the Dialogue: High Flying Gurus

Hi Jim,

Enjoyed your response to Davis Balestracci about Jack Welsh (in the May Leader Letter at www.clemmer.net/newsl/may2003.html#goodpoint). I think Jack was simply after the energy and innovation, information flow and customer intimacy of small business units. He had been in Japan when Toshiba decided to produce a VCR in half the time, at half the cost, and he made 'stretch' one of his business goals after that.

But Mr Balestacci's skepticism about 'guru du jour' is well taken. Generalizations about business strategies have the handicap of being out of context. As Aristotle said, the truth is in the particular circumstances. People hearing high-flying theme speakers at conferences often react by saying that the suggestions don't apply to their circumstances. Guru-speak can get very complacent and self-satisfying when it has nothing tangible to prove. Managers and leaders taking such advice have to ensure that their managing and leading is actually about something.

It always seems that, however beautiful the view is from 30,000 feet, God is always in the details. Enjoy your newsletter (especially book reviews). Continued good luck with it. Cheers.
- John Greenwood, Ph.D. Greenwood Editorial Consultants

Key Notes from My Key Notes: Updating "It's OK, son, everybody does it"

I recently gave a keynote at a conference where another speaker also presented on leadership and using technology to maintain a competitive edge. During his presentation he talked about downloading music from the Internet for his personal collection. Since Napster was shut down by recording companies' legal action for copyright infringement, he discussed the merits of various new services he was now using (to illegally steal music) that had sprung up to replace Napster.

As I listened to him, I wondered how he might feel about people photocopying pages of his books or duplicating his audio and video products. This got me thinking about the famous piece Jack Griffin wrote in the Chicago Sun-Times years ago entitled, "It's OK, son, everybody does it." I decided to update it:

It's OK, son, everybody does it

When Mark was 6 years old, his parents took him to a movie. Kids under 5 got in free. His parents told the cashier he was five and they didn't have to pay for Mark. Reacting to his quizzical look as they walked into the theatre, Mark's Mom said, "It's OK, son, everybody does it."

When Mark was 8, Mark's Dad was caught speeding. He angrily argued the charge with the officer, telling her that she should be spending precious police resources catching real criminals rather than harassing honest, law-abiding citizens. As they drove away he got on his car phone and called directory assistance for the number of an agency that would fight the charge in court for him. As he waited for the number, he said to Mark, "It's OK, son, everybody does it."

When he was 12, Mark sat around the dinner table at a family gathering as his Uncle Joe explained where to buy illegal satellite dishes to steal TV service. Another relative explained how to hotwire the cable TV lines to get free service. "These big, rich companies just rip us off anyway," explained Aunt Marg to Mark. "It's OK, everybody does it."

When he was 15, Mark was introduced to web sites that allowed file swapping of music and DVDs to his computer. His best friend, Derek, showed him the hundreds of "free" songs and movies he had downloaded. "It's cool, everybody does it."

When he was 17, Mark went to work part-time for a friend of the family who ran a small business. Mark was hired to help update and expand the company's web site. He needed a copy of the various software programs the company was using set up on his own computer. The company owner told him to install copies of the software with the disks from another machine in the office so they didn't have to buy legitimate programs for him. When Mark asked if that was allowed, he was told "It's OK, kid, everybody does it."

When he went to university on an athletic scholarship, his coach talked to a few of his professors to "cut him some slack" as his grades slipped but his value to the school team soared. An older teammate gave him web site addresses where he could buy essays to hand in as his own. "It's OK, bud, everybody on the team does it."

One of Mark's key essays was identified as plagiarized. His other work was scrutinized and more evidence of cheating was found. He was expelled from the school. His aunts and uncles were outraged. "How could you do this to us?" his father ranted, while his mother sobbed, "You sure never learned anything like that in this family!"

As Jack Griffin observed in his original piece, "if there's anything the adult world can't stand, it's a kid that cheats."

- Jim Clemmer, based on "It's OK, son, everybody does it" by Jack Griffin

Thoughts that Make You Go Hmmm...

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage."
- Anais Nin, writer and diarist

"If the creator had a purpose in equipping us with a neck, he surely meant us to stick it out."
- Arthur Koestler, Hungarian-born writer

"I believe half the unhappiness in life comes from people being afraid to go straight at things."
- William J. Locke, British writer

"If fifty million people say a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing."
- Anatole France, French critic, writer

"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect."
- Mark Twain

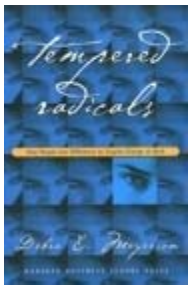
Forward This!

If you're enjoying this e-newsletter, inspire and help friends and colleagues grow by forwarding a copy.

Worth Reading: Book Review on Tempered Radicals

I first came across Stanford Organizational Behavior professor, Debra Meyerson's work as I was gathering research for the Responsibility for Choices chapter of *The Leader's Digest*. Her fifteen years of research on how "everyday leaders stick to their values, assert their agendas, and provoke learning and change without jeopardizing hard-won careers" fit perfectly with the focus of this timeless leadership principle.

In her October 2001, *Harvard Business Review* article, "Radical Change, the Quiet Way," Meyerson finds that at "some point, many managers yearn to confront assumptions, practices, or values in their organizations that they feel are counterproductive or even downright wrong. Yet they can face an uncomfortable dilemma: If they speak out too loudly, resentment may build toward them; if they remain silent, resentment will build inside them." She discovered that the best leaders "learn to rock the boat without falling out of it."



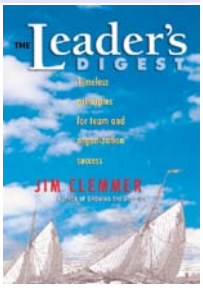
Her book, *Tempered Radicals: How People Use Difference to Inspire Change at Work*, (Harvard School Press, Boston, MA, 2001), is full of inspiring examples, solid research, practical how-to sidebars, and sound advice on leading change from positions of little or no formal power. This book provides a powerful "evolutionary's manifesto" to being a Navigator rather than just Survivor or Victim of change, injustice, or bad management from above.

> *"Tempered radicals...mitigate their anger and use it to fuel their actions. In the world of physics, when something is 'tempered' it is toughened by alternately heating and cooling. Tempered steel, for example, becomes stronger and more useful through such a process. In a similar way, successfully navigating the seemingly incongruous extremes of challenging and upholding the status quo can help build the strength and organizational significance of tempered radicals."*
> Page 7

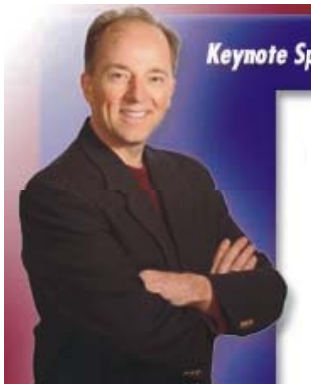
> *"The first and most important characteristic of encounters turned into opportunities is that people see that they have a choice in how to respond. The second critical characteristic is that people recognize a variety of productive responses fall between the extremes of silent submission and aggressive confrontation. Being prepared to look for these alternatives in any encounter is critical to making effective choices in the moment."*
> Page 59

> *"Tempered radicals inspire change. Yet their leadership resides equally in their capacity to inspire people. They inspire by having courage to tell the truth even when it's difficult to do so, and by having the conviction to stay engaged in tough conversations. They inspire by demonstrating the commitment to stay focused on their larger ideals even when they suffer consequences or get little recognition for doing so. Their leadership does not rely on inspiring through periodic heroism and headlines. Their leadership inspires - and matters - in big and small ways every day."*
> Page 176

Time is Running Out!



Our 2 for 1 introductory offer for *The Leader's Digest* has been very successful with thousands of books sold. We will be returning to regular pricing soon for the hottest new leadership available today (no hype or bias there)! Go to www.clemmer.net/books/tld.shtml for a look at the book and to place your order.



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Coming Events

Lessons in Leadership (June 10) – still some tickets left!
I am delighted to be supporting a very worthy cause, the Laura's Hope research fund for Huntington's Disease. As part of an impressive line up of Canada's top professional speakers, I'll be joining Warren Evans CSP (Certified Speaking Professional), Donald Cooper CSP, Peter Urs Bender CSP, Kit Grant CSP, and Dave Bradfoot CSP. The big bonus is that most of your registration fee will be going to the cause -- this entire line up of high powered and high priced speakers are donating their time to benefit Laura's Hope. Buy a corporate table and bring your Clients, team members, or colleagues. Be inspired and help make a big difference to pushing this research over the top. Click here for details: www.laurashope.com/lil/.

Communitech Luncheon: "Managing Things and Leading People," Waterloo, Ontario (June 18)
Communitech is a not-for-profit, member-supported organization that is recognized as the voice of technology in the Waterloo region with over 300 members (such as RIM, Open Text, Descarte, etc). Because of the University of Waterloo's world renowned technology leadership, the Waterloo region is building a reputation as one of North America's compelling new technology clusters. I will be giving a brief overview of my approaches and experiences working with management teams to balance management and leadership. Participants will receive a complimentary copy of my new book, The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success. Members and non-members are welcome to register. Click here for details: www.communitech.org

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 email at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net or call me directly at (519) 748-5968.

I hope to connect with you again next month!

All the best,

Jim

Phone: (519) 748-1044 ~ Fax: (519) 748-5813 ~ E-mail: ***service@clemmer.net***
www.clemmer.net

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