



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

November 2007, Issue 56

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Moose on the Table Book is Now Available to Leader Letter Readers!

"Of all the wonders of nature, a tree in summer is perhaps the most remarkable; with the possible exception of a moose singing "Embraceable You" in spats."

– Woody Allen

The Leader Letter is a very important tool for me to open the discussion of my leadership principles to a very large audience – over 20,000 subscribers so far. It's also an opportunity for me to get feedback and connect with readers from around the world.

As a Leader Letter reader, it's important for me to let you know how much I appreciate your input and support over the years.

With *Moose on the Table* available exclusively through my web site, I'm in a rare position to offer my regular supporters a special discount well before my book finds its way to retail shelves.

You'll find plenty of special discounts and offers related to the *Moose on the Table* book as well as my other books at

<http://www.mooseonthetable.com/offers.aspx>.

So drop by and see all the ways I can say thanks!

How to Tell If You Have a Moose Problem

One of the features of our new *Moose on the Table* web site that we've posted the assessment exercise I have been using for a few years to help managers and management teams assess the size of their moose problem. Go to www.mooseonthetable.com/moose_exercices.aspx and find out if you have a moose problem in your office.

I am perhaps a bit biased; but if you have some type of team or organizational moose problem, download the audio or e-book or purchase a special pre-release signed copy of *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to*

Communications @ Work and follow in Pete Leonard's footsteps as he first denies, then avoids, and finally follows the hoof prints in learning how to corral the moose on the loose!



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Can Change Be Managed or Is That an Oxymoron?

A UK reader writes:

"I was interested by your article on change management being an oxymoron (see "[Change Management is an Oxymoron](#)"). Fundamentally I agree with much of your article. Unless we are personally ready, willing and able to accept change then no amount of theory or application of models will be successful.

However, I disagree with 'change can't be managed.' I think that is a generalisation that whilst provocative has not been fully thought through. You make the point that individuals need to 'learn, grow and develop at the speed of change (or greater)' in order to prevent later barriers - and I largely agree with you. My argument is that with a diverse employment base, the development of employees is a managerial process - so by extension just as you argue that dealing with change comes from timely development, the management of that development must be managing change.

Ideally all employees (at all levels) would self manage their own development. I believe it is part of the manager's role to facilitate that. However, if employees are to meet the challenges faced by change then it is incumbent on the manager to create the conditions for them so that they can develop appropriately to be ready for the change. The alternative would be for the manager not to help this process which is unthinkable.

I am curious as to where the figure of 10% came from as a minimum in terms of devoting time to personal development/growth? Is this based on any research or simply a figure plucked out of thin air to help emphasize a point?

Finally, you talk about long term culture issues that need to be changed. I agree that these usually cannot be changed overnight. Even though it is a long term process, culture change needs to be managed otherwise there is no guarantee that the resulting product will be that wanted by the business leader. The alternative is to focus on the recruitment/selection stage as Disney for example so that the right mindset is drafted in from the start - but this is not applicable in the case of changing existing culture with existing staff."

Steve

Hi Steve,

I welcome the discussion and points you've raised.



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We're basically in agreement. What seems to be causing the perceived difference in views is my distinction between management and leadership. This paradoxical balance has been at the foundation of many of my books such as *Pathways to Performance* and *The Leader's Digest* as well as my workshops/retreats and numerous articles. If you don't have either book, you can read some excerpts on this balance on our web site at http://www.clemmer.net/Leadership_articles/subject_2.aspx. The "Management vs. Leadership" article should make the distinction especially clear.

I could be accused of splitting hairs with the management-leadership distinction. But I find it is vitally important for people in management roles to understand the contrasting and complementary aspects of their management and leadership behaviors. So while I am arguing that we can't manage change, I strongly agree with your point that we can – and should – lead change.

I see managing change as coming from a quest to remove uncertainty and make organizational life march to some orderly step-by-step process. Leadership recognizes that life isn't that predictable or controllable. However, leaders can – and should - establish conditions (culture/environment) and exercise principles that successfully guide continuous change and improvement.

The 10% figure is an estimate from my own experiences and what seems to continually come through in research on leadership/organization development. I don't have any hard numbers to back it up.

I also agree that culture can and should be shaped – again through leadership. You may have discovered that I have a whole section of workshops/retreats on Leading a High Performance Culture that provides tools and techniques proven very successful at doing that. The CLEMMER Group has helped numerous Clients reshape their cultures. It's generally an eighteen-month to three-year process, depending on how radical the change is and how committed the leaders are to sticking with it.

Thanks again for your feedback. I hope I have clarified your points further and you see that we are much closer in our views than you might have thought.

Jim

Emotional Intelligence Even More Important in Electronic Age

Milli Murray sent me the following e-mail in response to an item on Emotional Intelligence in the [*August issue of The Leader Letter*](#). She makes an excellent point on how EI is becoming ever more important. It's clearly a major factor in leadership effectiveness.



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"I really enjoyed the article on Emotional Intelligence. In an age where people are judged and recruited to positions more by their technical abilities and credentials than by their softer skills, it is good to see that research shows you need the emotional intelligence to deal with many of the issues that impact senior management. So often the dollar is the bottom line and the human resources are not considered to be of importance. People with emotional intelligence will recognize that our human resources are our most valuable resource. Without them we don't travel too far.

I think more and more EI becomes important, particularly in an age where everything is instantaneous and we communicate mainly through electronic mediums. People become isolated in their cubicles and someone who has the emotional intelligence will break through those barriers. Leaders with emotional intelligence will do some of their managing by "walking around", will get to know their employees, draw them out and get them involved, be personable and approachable, and through actions will let employees know they are valued.

Thanks for sharing your Issues of The Leader Letter – I always enjoy them and share your articles with my colleagues."

*Milli Murray, Director, Special Projects
Alberta Government*

Not That Kind of Moose-on-the-Table!

In August a web site visitor read my blog entry "Moose Crossing Ahead" and left the following post. My reply follows.

"Have you ever eaten moose? I live in Alaska and it was my 'beef' (only better for you) growing up. Good stuff, that. Just curious what you're planning to do with the 'moose' bit."

Amy

Hi Amy,

I never have eaten moose. All of my moose work has been of the metaphorical kind! This fall you'll get the full taste of what we're doing with the moose bit when my new *Moose on the Table* book is available.

Watch the road ahead!

Jim



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Powerful Proof That Leaders Are Made, Not Born

For over thirty years I've believed to the core of my being that high performers are made, not born. Otherwise I would have given up long ago!

When I was a sales trainer with Culligan Water Conditioning back in the seventies, I wrote a fictitious (and facetious) series of birth and death announcements making fun of the popular misconception that we're either born talented or not. I revamped and revised the announcements along with a passionate passage outlining my argument in 1994 when I wrote *Pathways to Performance*.

You can read all this in my article [Leaders are Made, not Born](http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_316.aspx). The main point of this piece is that if we are not working hard to continually improve our leadership skills because we weren't "born with natural talent" then we are either copping out, misinformed, or both. Read the article at http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_316.aspx.

Here are a few more of my articles and book excerpts continuing my strong contention that we make ourselves:

[Leadership and Learning are Indispensable](#)

Not all learners are leaders. But the research clearly shows that the strongest leaders are continuous learners. They are self-made leaders.

[Blazing Our Own Unique Leadership Path](#)

Leaders are made not born. Developing our "gift" starts with a clear and constant focus on where we're going, what we believe in, and why we exist — but it also demands persistence.

[Interested in Leadership, or Committed to Becoming a Leader?](#)

Many managers in leadership roles have stunted personal growth. We can focus on the gain of improvement by keeping our preferred future and purpose firmly in front of us, and develop the "habit" of personal improvement.

So I was DELIGHTED to come across the article on "The Making of an Expert" in the July-August 2007 issue of *Harvard Business Review*. I devoured the piece hungrily with pen furiously underlining and making notes. I quickly compiled the following excerpt from the article for a slide I'll now be using in my leadership development and personal growth workshops:

"...based on rigorous research (from over 100 leading scientists) that looked at exceptional performance using scientific methods that are verifiable and reproducible...in a variety of domains: surgery, acting, chess, writing, computer programming, ballet, music, aviation, firefighting, and many others.



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Consistently and overwhelmingly, the evidence showed that experts are always made, not born (their emphasis).

...the journey to truly superior performance is neither for the faint of heart nor for the impatient.

The development of genuine expertise requires struggle, sacrifice, and honest, often painful self-assessment."

— K. Anders Ericsson, Michael J. Prietula, and Edward T. Cokely, "The Making of an Expert," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2007

"This article is amazing and 'accurate.'

I have been taught by some managers that management skills are a privilege, not a right. To me this means that I have no way of making it to the 'top'. I won't be given that privilege.

It has taken me a long time, but I now believe these managers were grossly mistaken.

Thank you for your time in putting these articles together. I take away a great deal of information when reading these articles."

Regards,

*Don Semple, QA Jr Analyst
RBC Financial*

My Top Ten Articles

The single biggest driver of traffic to our web site (by far) is my collection of nearly 300 indexed book excerpts, columns, and articles. I've made them freely available for you to read, reprint, and pass along to others. And now you can even track which articles are most popular with my readers. The next time you go to the articles page (<http://www.clemmer.net/articles.aspx>), you'll see a Top Ten list. It updates dynamically, so you will always know what the hot topic is by day, week, month, or year.

Moose Contest Winners

Over the last few months I've asked for feedback on our web site redesign.

As an incentive I'm giving signed copies of Moose on the Table to twenty-five lucky winners.



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If you've won, we'll be sending you an email in the next couple of days.

If you are interested in reading the results of the site survey, follow this link:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=dtc8dgy96TBmu4_2bvHAjuFayzX_2f15X3jcto0z7Zt_2fcMc_3d

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...Ensuring You Don't Become a Moose

"I make mistakes. I'll be the second to admit it."

– Jean Kerr, American playwright

".... people around us may tend to collude with our denial. Among the more difficult kinds of information to get in organizational life is honest, constructive feedback about how we are doing, especially about our lapses. Coworkers, subordinates, and bosses have an easier time complaining to each other out of earshot of a person than having an honest and open talk with that person about what's wrong. There is a Faustian bargain in this collusion to act as though everything is fine when in fact it is not, for we buy the illusion of harmony and effectiveness at the cost of the truth that could open the way to genuine improvement."

– Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*

"The major difference between the most and least successful executives ... the latter's lack of awareness. Successful executives are critical of their own performance. Unsuccessful executives are critical of the performance of others."

– Harry Levinson, *The Exceptional Executive*

"Hearing 'reflective backtalk' from friends, colleagues, spouses, and significant others allows us to 'true' ourselves in relation to their perceptions. With this input we can integrate our internal conversations with data from the external world to enrich the process of knowing ourselves better."

– Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith, *Learning to Lead: A Workbook on Becoming a Leader*

"If one or two people tell you that you're an ass, you can ignore them. But if three or four people tell you you're an ass, you might think about putting on a saddle."

– Yiddish saying

Most Popular October 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.



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

Inspiring and Energizing with Strong Verbal Communications

When I was eighteen and starting my Culligan career I took a Dale Carnegie sales course. I followed that with their public speaking course. Both had a major impact on my leadership performance. I came to realize that learning the basic persuasion skills of clarifying and simplifying what we're trying to say, tuning in to our audience, and grabbing them by the handles of their emotions, is critical to effective leadership.

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_85.aspx

Measurement and Feedback are Vital to Improvement

Managers aren't comfortable with feedback. They haven't learned how to get it and how to give it effectively. So measurements turn into "gotchas" to be avoided.

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_222.aspx

Choice More than Chance Determines Our Circumstance

Dwelling on our problems rather than our possibilities comes all too naturally. We often expect the worst and then say "see, I told you that would happen" when it happens. Too often we choose to curse the darkness rather than light a candle.

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_310.aspx

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.

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

Jim

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