Keynote Speaker Workshop/Retreat Leader Management Team Developer

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

October 2003, Issue 7 ~ View on-line at www.clemmer.net

In this issue…

- **Survey Summary: Reshaping the *Leader Letter***
- **Building a High Performance Culture**
- **Is Your Culture Killing Team Spirit?**
- **Tips, Tools, and Techniques for… Building a High Performance Culture**
- **Thought Provoking Quotes**
- **Top Improvement Points**
- **Coming Events**

Survey Summary: Reshaping the *Leader Letter*

Very big thanks to everyone who participated in the *Leader Letter* survey last month. Well over 500 of you shared your feedback and suggestions for improvements. You sure are helping me to reshape this newsletter. This October issue reflects much of the consensus that emerged on what the *Leader Letter* should look like. I plan to have the November issue reflect more of the many very useful opinions and input.

You can view full survey results here: www.clemmer.net/newsl/survey0903.shtml. In short, the majority favors a newsletter that can be read in 15 minutes or less, delivered once each month. "Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm..." (quotations) were enjoyed most, followed closely by "Issues and Advice," "Feature Stories/Articles," "Key Notes From My Keynotes," and "Improvement Points Top Picks." I am happy to comply with fewer pictures and graphics throughout – just the facts, ma'am! I really appreciate everyone's input and thoughtful suggestions.

We drew three winners of my books and CDs (*The Leader's Digest*, *Growing the Distance*, *Pathways to Performance*, *Firing on All Cylinders*, and *Leading in Turbulent Times*) from all of the survey participants.

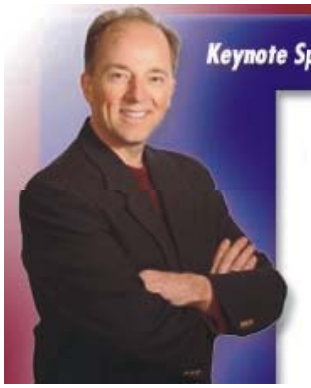
The envelope please…and the winners are:

Michael Syer
Peter Muise
David DeHaven

Congratulations, and thanks again! I'm always happy to receive your thoughts or suggestions for improvement – just drop me a line at jim.clemmer@clemmer.net. I would especially appreciate hearing about any issues or topics you'd like me to address.

Building a High Performance Culture

Southwest Airlines founder Herb Kelleher said, "It's the intangibles that are the hardest things for a competitor to imitate. You can get an airplane. You can get ticket-counter space; you can get baggage conveyors. But it is our esprit des corps – the culture, the spirit – that is truly our most valuable competitive asset." Two decades of research shows that an organization's culture is the key factor in its performance. A multi-year Harvard Business school study on the links between corporate culture and performance found that high performance cultures resulted in 682% revenue growth versus just 166% for low-performing cultures. Net income growth was 756% versus 1%!!



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The accelerating pace of change, new technologies, customer demands, e-commerce, workforce demographics, business model challenges, fierce competition, shareholder expectations, margin pressures, shrinking cycle times, shifting work ethics, and the like are pulling organizations in many directions. Now, more than ever, teams and organizations need the bonding glue of a strong culture to hold everything and everyone together.

High performing teams and organizations pull together the intangible leadership issues that define their unique character and rally people around a deeper sense of purpose. These powerful feelings are made tangible through the strong implementation of management processes and systems that translate ideals into action. It's recognizing that vision without an action plan is just a dream. Action without a vision is drudgery.

Here are three favorite articles of mine on building a high performance culture. They are excerpted from *Pathways to Performance: A Guide to Transforming Yourself, Your Team, and Your Organization* (*www.clemmer.net/books/ptp.shtml*):

Three Core Questions That Define Organizational Culture
Click here to read article: www.clemmer.net/excerpts/three_core.shtml
The 3 Ps — picture or preferred future, principles, and purpose — are critically important questions. Our answers to these three basic questions define the team and/or organizational culture we are trying to create.

How Many Companies Lose That Loving Feeling
Click here to read article: www.clemmer.net/excerpts/loving_feeling.shtml
Many successful companies are started by passionate zealots, full of energy and excitement. But once the Technomanagers take over, people are turned into their roles, systems, and processes — then their heart and soul are lost.

Leaders Care for Organization Culture and Context
Click here to read article: www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders_care.shtml
Redefining a leader's role from operational manager to context leader, can be one of the key factors in the success of dealing with change in the organization. They spend less time managing the day-to-day business and more time caring for the organization's culture.

I give 60 – 90 minute keynote presentations and half, one, or two-day customized management team retreats or workshops on **Building a High Performance Culture**. Details are available here: www.clemmer.net/speaking/bhpc.shtml.

Is Your Culture Killing Team Spirit?

Which of the following conditions might be killing the spirit of your team?

- People are invited to participate and then ignored when they do
- There's lots of talk about empowerment while there are still many approval levels, long decision loops, and rules

- When people participate in surveys, focus groups, etc. they rarely hear back about what was done with their input
- There are "walking wounded" in your organization who feel that you and your team care only about results and don't respect their dignity or feelings
- Those in support roles rarely see customers or think about how what they do ultimately impacts customers
- You declare an open door policy but react in anger or with cold aggression when you hear something you don't like
- You and your team spend very little time talking about the individual preferences, strengths, aspirations, succession planning, etc., of the people in your organization

Here are the key leadership questions:

Am I part of the problem or part of the solution?

What am I doing to build team spirit and lead us toward a high performance culture?

Tips, Tools, and Techniques for…Building a High Performance Culture

- **Uncover and tap into deeper meaning and values already in the culture.** Tell stories that honor the past and highlight the rich heritage of your organization. Link recognition, appreciation, or celebration to these.
- **Lead change with examples of how the organization has gone through tough times or major changes like these before.** Appeal to a proud heritage. Tell them how you've all come from a lineage of leaders and it's everyone's obligation to build an even stronger organization as a legacy for future generations.
- **Do a cultural audit with surveys and/or third party interviews/focus groups.** Try to get an objective answer to the question "how do we do things around here?" Once you know what your current culture is, work with your team to identify your preferred culture and put an Improvement Plan together to move you there.
- **Is your culture so strong that you repel people who don't fit?** How do you know? There should be no middle ground or apathy. People should either passionately love or intensely hate what your organization stands for. Ensure that "cultural fit" is a key part of your hiring process. Candidates with great technical skills or highly relevant experience but who don't fit your culture should be expunged like a deadly virus that will weaken your team or organization's culture.

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Thoughts that Make You Go Hmmm…on Leading a High Performance Culture

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."
- Author Unknown

"An essential factor in leadership is the ability to influence and organize meaning for the members of the organization."
- *Learning to Lead: A Workbook on Becoming a Leader*, Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith

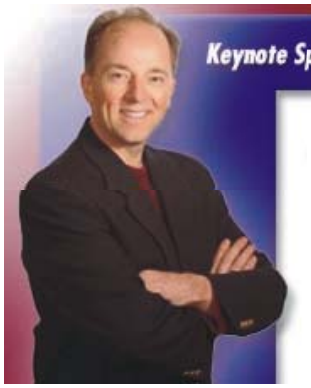
"But now we have results from a range of industries that link leadership to climate and to business performance, making it possible to quantify the hard difference for business performance made by something as soft as the 'feel' of a company."
- *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee

"Traditions are group efforts to keep the unexpected from happening."
- Barbara Tober

"One more myth must bite the dust: At its core, corporate culture is never – never – an organizational phenomenon, the kind that has been played up by dozens of CEOs. In reality the culture of an organization is a multifaceted entity, with as many identities and variations as there are managers and work groups. That's right: Each manager and work group has its own culture."
- *Follow This Path: How the World's Greatest Organizations Drive Growth by Unleashing Human Potential*, Curt Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina

"Throughout our research, we were continually reminded of the 'hardiness' research studies done by the International Committee for the Study of Victimization. These studies looked at people who had suffered serious adversity – cancer patients, prisoners of war, accident victims, and so forth – and survived. They found that people fell generally into three categories; those who were permanently dispirited by the event, those who got their life back to normal, and those who used the experience as a defining event that made them stronger. The good-to-great companies were like those in the third group, with the 'hardiness factor.'"
- *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap…and Others Don't*, Jim Collins

Send me your favorite quotes (or great sources for them) at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net.



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Top Improvement Points in September

September's most popular Improvements Points (quotes plus articles) **were:**

> **"People in organizations are natural mimics. They act like their leaders despite all attempts to train and develop them otherwise."**
> - from **How to Get Beyond Poor Lip Service**
> (www.clemmer.net/excerpts/beyond_lip.shtml)
>
> **"Get the people whose motivation and morale you're concerned about to identify their biggest barriers. One company tackled this task through a "dumb rules and forms" committee. Led by a vice-president, the group's mission was to search out and destroy all the demeaning and useless bureaucratic busywork that complicated the organization and turned people off."**
> - from **Morale Problem? Look in the Mirror**
> (www.clemmer.net/excerpts/morale_problem.shtml)
>
> **"A young boy came home and told his Dad that the other kids kept stealing his pencils at school. The father stomped off to the school to complain. "It's not a matter of the pencils," he bellowed to his son's teacher, "I get plenty of those from work. It's the principle of the thing that bothers me most." An environment that doesn't ring true with honesty, integrity, and trust is an environment that drains energy."**
> - from **Creating High Energy Environments**
> (www.clemmer.net/excerpts/creating_high.shtml)

Sign up to receive complimentary Improvement Points via e-mail three times weekly here: www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml.

Coming Events (Public or Open Sessions)

Coaching for High Performance, **Toronto, Ontario (Nov. 17-18)**
Developed by Dr. Peter Jensen

Performance Coaching Inc.

Coaching is one of the most critical skills for a manager to master, as it builds employee commitment and develops peak performers. Learn the why and how of coaching using a proven, practical and easy-to-use coaching model, adopted by dozens of leading edge corporations. Click here for details and registration: http://www.performancecoaching.ca/workshop_overview.shtml

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Leading a Customer-Centered Organization

Vancouver, BC (Jan. 13-14, 2004)
Calgary, AB (Jan. 15-16, 2004)

High performing organizations are highly customer-centered. Research shows that improving customer retention by just five percent doubles the profit margin. This 2-day workshop with Jim Clemmer provides a systematic and strategic approach to customer service/quality excellence in your organization. Click here for details and registration: http://www.clemmer.net/events/dcco/dcco.shtml

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I would appreciate your feedback on this newsletter, and any issues or topics you'd like me to address in future issues. I also 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!

All the best,

Jim

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