



# Practical Leadership:

Inspiring *Action*, Achieving Results

## Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

September 2004, Issue 18

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### We Can't Lead Through E-mail

E-mail is out of control. The amount of time that many managers now spend chained to their computers or PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants), like the "CrackBerry" (those highly addictive BlackBerry devices), has become a gigantic time and energy sinkhole.

I love and hate e-mail. It's a highly effective tool in so many ways. But like any tool, it can easily be misused and abused. The first few items in this *Leader Letter* will look at the critical distinction between Information (management) and Communication (leadership) and e-mail pet peeves and protocols.

### Information versus Communication

#### Excerpt from *The Leader's Digest*

Many managers are great at supplying information, but they're not so good at communication. In this "information age," our organizational lives are overflowing with e-mails, voice mails, phone calls, newsletters, books, articles, manuals, and web pages. Like the sailor marooned in a lifeboat on the high seas, we have water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink. We suffer from a profound lack of communication. Too many managers over-inform and under-communicate. The differences between information and communication underscore those between managers and leaders, as shown in this table:

Information	Communication
Speaks to the head	Engages the Heart
Monolog	Dialog
Facts and Results	Stories and Values
Mostly Written	Mostly Verbal
Quantity	Quality
Provides Updates	Builds Communion

In our "information age" e-mail is a great tool for keeping each other informed. It's not a good tool for true conversations that engage the heart and build community through communication.

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**Email Peeves and Protocols**

Most managers are doing far too little to mitigate the destructive and wasteful effects of e-mail misuse. Like a B-movie, the e-mail monster keeps growing larger and consuming more time and resources ("E-zilla: The Insatiable Beast"). Some of the more common abuses I hear about in my workshops are:

- **"CC-ing the World"** – far too many people are copied on far too many messages that are either of remote or some interest or a classic case of CYA (cover your bum).
- **Hiding Behind E-mail** – difficult news or tough feedback is cowardly delivered through this impersonal channel.
- **Flaming E-mails** – insensitive, inflammatory, or negative comments are fired off with an aggressive or hostile tone that wouldn't be used in a personal conversation – like some mild-mannered people who become aggressive drivers behind the wheels of their big honking SUVs.
- **Over Reliance on One Message/Channel** – important decisions, "discussions," or directions are fired out and everyone is expected to give this one e-mail the immediate attention and urgency the sender feels it needs.
- **Stringing the Pieces Together** – recipients are expected to follow a long and convoluted discussion in reverse chronological order.

With the huge amount of time being sucked down the e-mail sinkhole each day, teams can get a fast and large return on their time investment by getting together – **in person** – to establish e-mail protocols. Here are a few ideas your team might consider:

- Get an idea of how much time everyone is currently spending each day on internal versus external e-mails.
- Set a target for the number of e-mails you would like everyone to have to deal with each day.
- Have everyone do an analysis of their inbox for the next few weeks and categorize the e-mails as to type, importance, relevance, etc. Aggregate those individual logs to see the overall trends.
- Agree on the criteria for when e-mails are not appropriate. This might include whenever an issue is sensitive or difficult, has potential for conflict or misunderstanding, needs discussion, calls for collective brainstorming, personal feedback, etc.

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- Agree on the criteria for categorizing e-mails by level of urgency, information only, decision needed, who should be copied, etc.
- Learn (or review) how to lead and participate in effective meetings with agendas showing the purpose (information giving, decision required, problem-solving, input needed, etc.), desired outcomes/objectives, decision-making process to be used (command, consultative, consensus), and time allocated for each agenda item.
- Periodically review your team's e-mail usage by asking everyone what you all should keep doing, stop doing, and start doing to ensure e-mail is an enabling, rather than enslaving, tool.

I have just scratched the surface. Please send me ([Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net)) your pet peeves, protocol suggestions, and experience with taming the e-mail beast.

**Tips and Techniques for Inspiring Through Verbal Communications****Selected from the new *Leader's Digest: Practical Application Planner***

- Build a repertoire of teachable stories. Collect and catalogue the best examples of your organization's key principles in action. Circulate those stories inside and outside your organization through the media (where appropriate). Write up collections of case studies illustrating tough decisions, trade-offs, outstanding performance, dealing effectively with changes, etc. Embed the stories in training and orientation programs and in your or your team's key messages.
- Incorporate story-telling into your management or staff meetings. Devote a section (usually best at the start of the meeting) to having participants relate a recent example of successful change, values-based decision-making, heroic performance, etc. Capture those stories for your repertoire.
- Develop a strong cause and case for change. Make it "logic on fire" that appeals to the head and the heart. Speak in their terms of experience and what's in it for them. Connect to the organization's values and past successes.
- Take communication skills training or coaching, especially on public speaking or giving presentations. Learn how to use stories, examples, and metaphors that speak to the heart. Never make a point without a story or example and never tell a story without a point. Get ongoing feedback from professional speaking coaches, mentors, peers, and your audiences.

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You can get more information on [The Leader's Digest: Practical Application Planner](http://www.clemmer.net/books/tldpp.shtml) (and listen to a 60 minute free teleconference I gave on it) at <http://www.clemmer.net/books/tldpp.shtml>. You can also check out my new [Growing the Distance: Personal Implementation Guide](http://www.clemmer.net/books/gtdpg.shtml) (and listen to my archived 45 minute teleconference) at <http://www.clemmer.net/books/gtdpg.shtml>.

**We are offering a limited time introductory 50% discount on these new management team development and personal growth tools along with *Growing the Distance*, and *The Leader's Digest* books. See [http://www.clemmer.net/books\\_main.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/books_main.shtml) to explore any one of these publications.**

**More on Traveling With the Wind in Our Hair**

I put in a fun summer playing with my new toy (a two seat convertible sports car). Although the weather in this part of Canada has been unseasonably cool and somewhat rainy, there were some "top down" days for cruising through the scenic countryside (even if the heater needed to be on, along with a jacket – I would finally put the top up before resorting to a parka and gloves).

I was continually struck by how often we can choose the much faster expressway and get to our destination much more quickly. But when the top is up, the wind doesn't ruffle our hair, and the scenery is bland. Another choice is to put the top down, get off the busy highway and take our time. Along the way we can take in the scenery (perhaps through new eyes), smell the countryside air, hear the birds, and stop to explore interesting places. We won't get to our destination nearly as fast, but we've had much more memorable fun along the way.

Here is one reader's response to last issue's story on my day of playing "hookey" with Carl Hiebert ([click here to read that story](#)):

*Hi Jim,*

*Thanks for your August Leader Letter. I very much enjoyed the story about "traveling with the wind in our hair" as it really struck home with me. Late last fall, I bought a Harley Davidson motorcycle. Getting out on the road this spring on my bike has been wonderful. After work, I go for a ride with no particular destination in mind; just following wherever the bike happens to steer. To some people, this is probably a waste of time and gas. To me, it is an awesome way to relax - especially finding a road with new pavement, no traffic and the right amount of corners and hills. Sometimes I travel alone and sometimes with other bikers. On one trip a magpie flew alongside me for quite a stretch of road no further than 10 feet away. I felt I could just reach out and touch it, but I didn't as I didn't want to scare it away as we traveled down the road together. It was one of those moments I'll always remember.*



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*But not all my relaxing is done on my Harley. Even more magical was my last hike in the Rocky Mountains. I led a small group up the north-east ridge to the top of Mt. Hamell a few weeks ago. We were treated with spectacular views all along the way and came upon an abundance of wildlife on that trip - mountain goats, bears, moose, numerous deer, gold-mantled squirrels, a marmot, coyote, and spruce grouse. Another one of those days I'll always remember.*

*Take care and keep on traveling,*

*Greg  
Grande Prairie, Alberta*

*Scerbak*

#### **How Do You Define Leadership and Motivation?**

In the last issue of the *Leader Letter* I printed an exchange with a reader on defining leadership and motivation ([click here to read this](#)). Here's another response to that discussion:

*Hi Jim,*

*I think leadership drives motivation. Based on my view, here is what I have learned over the past 15 years in Leadership Development:*

*Only once we are grounded in self-leadership behavior can we then begin to motivate others through our actions and behaviors.*

*Bernie McNeill  
VP AchieveGlobal*

I heartily agree with Bernie. Leadership is an inside job! We lead from the inside out. Please send me thoughts you have on this topic ([Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net)).

#### **Top Improvement Points from August**

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

**"Pessimists fall into the trap of the three Ps when faced with negative change or setback. They make the issue Permanent, Pervasive and Personal. They avoid wearing clean underwear because it will only tempt car accidents."**

- from [\*\*Leaders Inspire Their Teams With Optimism\*\*](#)  
[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders\\_inspire.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/leaders_inspire.shtml)



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**"Leaders develop and bring out the best in people. This dramatically expands the performance capacity of an organization. With a strong leadership foundation, management systems and processes, as well as technology and technical expertise, expand to their full potential."**

- from ***A Coach's Playbook for Leaders***

[www.clemmer.net/excerpts/coachs\\_playbook.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/coachs_playbook.shtml)

**"Of all the principles, there is one that is central, one from which the others emanate, much as spokes radiate from the hub of a wheel. That core principle, Focus and Context, consists of three interrelated parts, which are defined by the answers to three key questions:**

- 1. Where are we going (the vision or picture of our preferred future or outcome)?**
- 2. What do we believe in (our guiding values or principles)?**
- 3. Why do we exist (our reason for being, mission, or purpose)?"**

- from ***Focus and Context: The Hub of Leadership***

[http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/fc\\_hub.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/excerpts/fc_hub.shtml)

Subscribe or view the archives by topic area here: [www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/improvement.shtml)

#### **Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm... On Verbal Communication Skills**

**"It is not sufficient to know what one ought to say, but one must know how to say it."**

- Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

**"We often refuse to accept an idea merely because the tone of voice in which it has been expressed is unsympathetic to us."**

- Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

**"No matter how intellectually brilliant we may be, that brilliance will fail to shine if we are not persuasive. That is particularly true in fields where entry has high hurdles for cognitive abilities, like engineering and science, medicine and law, and executive ranks in general. As the director of research at one of Wall Street's largest brokerage firms put it to me, 'To get into our business you need to be highly adept at numbers. But to make things happen, that's just not enough - you have to be able to persuade.'"**

- Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*

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**"...the great majority of effective leaders have an excellent command of language, either spoken or written or both. Words are the primary stock-in-trade of leadership, and all leaders use them to attract, hold, inspire and galvanize their followers. To be sure, the written word can sometimes be very effective in motivating people. But the spoken word is by far the most powerful form of communication. Any leader who thinks that a memo is as effective as a face-to-face meeting, or that an e-mail is as effective as a phone call, is still playing in the minor leagues."**

- Steven Sample, *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*

**"We assume that the opportunity to edit our written words means we put our best foot forward, but a recent study suggests that communicating via e-mail alone can doom a relationship," reports *Psychology Today*. "Janice Nadler, a social psychologist and Northwestern University law professor, paired Northwestern law students with those from Duke University and asked each pair to agree on the purchase of a car. Researchers instructed each team to bargain entirely through e-mail, but half the subjects were secretly told to precede the negotiation with a brief getting-to-know-you-chat on the phone. The results were dramatic: Negotiators who first chatted by phone were more than four times likelier to reach an agreement than those who used only e-mail."**

- Michael Kesterton, *The Globe & Mail*

**Expiring Soon!****Introductory Special on New Leadership and Personal Growth Tools**

The introductory special of 50% off my new *Practical Application Planner* and *Personal Implementation Guide* is over at the end of September.

**I hope you can take advantage of this introductory pricing to try these new tools for your team. See details and on-line ordering here: [www.clemmer.net/books\\_main.shtml](http://www.clemmer.net/books_main.shtml)**

*The Leader's Digest* and the *Practical Application Planner* are powerful tools in building stronger leaders and leadership teams. The book and planner are designed and priced for distribution in quantity for leadership development programs, executive retreats, seminars, meetings, management team building, or new promotions.



**JIM CLEMMER**

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*Growing the Distance* and the *Personal Implementation Guide* are powerful and popular tools in building a "leaderful" organization. They are invaluable personal growth resources for everyone - from senior managers to frontline staff. Personal application ideas, self-assessments, implementation exercises, and suggestions for action planning provide the opportunity to journal thoughts, guide reflective learning, set improvement goals, vision for the future, clarify core values, identify key strengths, check life balance, measure personal growth, plug energy leaks, reframe pessimistic thinking, and make concrete plans to improve personal, career, and family success.

#### **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. 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).

I hope to connect with you again next month!

Jim

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