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The Beijing Olympics once again provided many inspiring examples of dedication, focus, and dreaming big. It also provided vivid examples of how building disciplined habits will help you move from visualization to action. Each participant seemed to have a fascinating and instructive story on what drove them to train and compete at the very highest levels. And even when athletes fell just short of the podium, many could stand a little taller knowing they went beyond their own previous personal bests.

I was especially inspired by Canada's Ian Miller, winning a silver medal in the equestrian competition. This was the first time he ever won an Olympic medal. And while that is a remarkable achievement in itself, the real inspiration for me is that he's 61 years old! Not too many silver medal winners match their hair color. Ian competed in his first Olympics in 1972 and was finally rewarded for his decades of hard work. Now that's persistence! So there's hope for all of us with a few gray hairs. I think I'll go buy a horse this afternoon...

This month's *Leader Letter* deals with a number of topical issues that popped up over the summer. I hope you're inspired – and instructed – by the following examples, ideas, and insights as you continue on your personal quest to top your own personal bests!

Pet Peeves and Protocols

Like water, e-mail can nurture life or drown it. Last month I devoted a large section of *The Leader Letter* to the massive flood of e-mails that are washing through organizations and causing many people to paddle furiously just to keep their head above the waves ([Click here to read it](#)). How we all deal with the e-mail deluge indicates whether we're strong leaders mastering our time and priorities or victims of other people setting our agendas and focusing our attention for us.

I also posted "E-mail Pet Peeves and Protocols" on August 14 on my blog. Heather Bruce provided a response that reminds us of additional steps in using e-mail to sail our organizations toward our goals.

Hi Jim,

1. *Communicate to staff that they should have no expectation of privacy with company email - a good litmus test for an email is to consider how you might feel if the email were to be published in the paper or posted on the coffee room wall.*



If you wouldn't say those comments to a person directly don't say them behind a person's back - it lacks professionalism and that kind of backbiting is a very destructive force.

- 2. I would also suggest the CYA ("cover your ass..ets") is more urban myth than reality in many companies so staff needs to think about the need for CYA very carefully.*
- 3. Think green - if you don't REALLY need to - don't print the email!*
- 4. Clean up emails before you send them on - and think about sharing other's email addresses without their permission!*

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Heather Bruce, Executive Director
Aberdeen Health & Community Services, Brantford, ON, Canada

"Navigating Change and Adversity" Our Most Popular Topic

Since The CLEMMER Group's founding in 1994 we've specialized in balancing disciplined management systems/processes with core leadership principles in a variety of practical applications. This includes customer service, culture change, health and safety, lean and six sigma, magnet organization (attraction, retention, and engagement), team leadership/building, and personal growth (go to <http://www.clemmer.net/workshops> for a full look at our workshop topic areas).

We get the most requests for keynotes, workshops, and management team retreats on leading or dealing with change. Recently a learning and education specialist for a national association contacted me for permission to use my video clip "[Navigating Change and Adversity](#)" in a training program on Change Management she is designing for their members. In case you or your organization has a similar interest or application, here's my response:

You may have also found the corresponding article to this video clip at [Change choice navigator survivor victims](#). Organizations like Interior Health Authority in Kelowna, BC use [Growing the Distance](#) in conjunction with our Navigator-Survivor-Victim model to help their managers and employees deal with change and personal growth. You can read their Organizational Learning Consultant, Melissa Koehle's, comments on this in the January 2007 issue of The Leader Letter at <http://www.clemmer.net/news/jan2007.html> (scroll down to Growing the Distance: Self-Study System).



The "Navigating Change and Adversity" video clip is freely available for anyone to access and you could play it directly from our web site in your sessions. I'd also be happy to explore how we could work together further with this material. For example, we could provide you with that video clip on DVD if used in conjunction with [Growing the Distance](#) and/or [Growing the Distance: Self-Study System](#). Or I could customize and deliver a section of this workshop for you at one of your first sessions and you could record this for use at your other workshops.

My last three books – [Growing the Distance](#) (dealing with personal change), its companion [The Leader's Digest](#) (leading others through change and growth), and [Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work](#) (a management story that builds upon and illustrates that Navigator-Survivor-Victim approach) all apply a core set of leadership principles to dealing with change.

October "Leading @ the Speed of Change" Workshop in Toronto

I've delivered hundreds of half, one, and two-day versions of our in-house "Leading @ the Speed of Change" workshops and keynote presentations. As I prepared background material for a public session I am running for The Canadian Society for Training and Development Conference & Tradeshow on October 15, 2008 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, I reflected on key learnings from these sessions. [Click here to read those in last month's issue.](#)

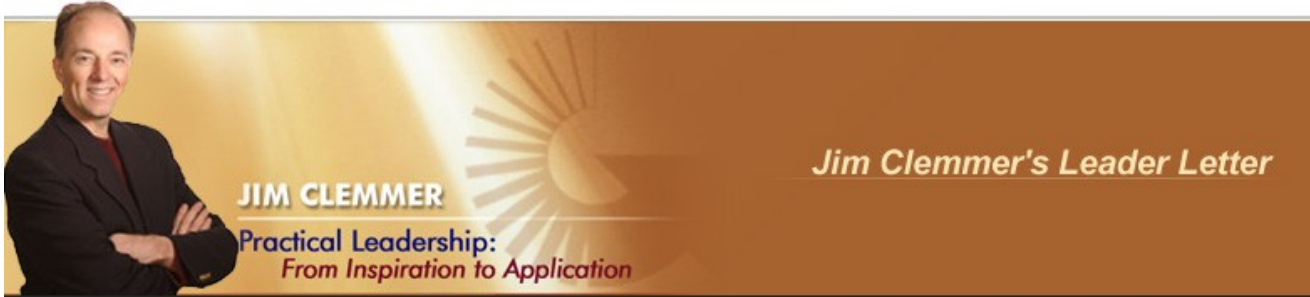
This "Leading @ the Speed of Change: Aligning People, Processes, and Personal Effectiveness for Continuous Success" workshop is the only public session I'm doing in 2008 (I am, however, delivering many in-house ones). This open session runs from 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Participants can register for the workshop for \$599. But if you are registering for the whole CSTD conference the workshop rate is only an additional \$399.

https://www.cstd.ca/conference/registration/conference_registration.html

Watching the Olympics at the Office: What Leadership's Got to Do with It

Just before the opening ceremonies in Beijing, Tavia Grant from *The Globe & Mail* sent me an e-mail and interviewed me for her story on how managers should deal with people watching the Olympics at the office ("World's Watching: Who's Working," August 8, 2008).

As *The Globe & Mail* so often is, her story was very timely. It also raised key leadership questions. This issue is a great way to contrast enslaving and overbearing cultures and their heavy handed bosses with more open, fun, and team-oriented cultures with their people-focused leaders. I wrote about this in an excerpt entitled "Might is No Longer Right" from [The Leader's Digest](#) at http://www.clemmer.net/articles/Might_is_No_Longer_Right.aspx



Here are a few other leadership points this issue raises:

- People are going to do what they want to do. No amount of bossing is going to stop that. Leadership is getting people to work towards a single goal or purpose. The Olympics are a great way to show how teams come together to accomplish great things.
- A group's "laughter index," or the amount of fun they're having at work, correlates with their commitment to the organization, innovation, customer service levels, attendance, etc.
- Draconian rules **may** bring about short term productivity and keep people from "goofing off." But when the bigger picture of attraction and retaining (both very dependent upon organizational or management's reputation) and engagement are considered, heavy-handedness will always hurt the organization.

The "dog days of summer" can cause some "dogging it" and slacking off during August. But in today's competitive and tight cost environments, organizations need strong levels of productivity from those who aren't at the beach or cottage. Clearly everyone can't be sitting around watching the Olympics all day. But managers can post medals charts in common areas with updates or put a TV in a common area. Managers should also have a discussion (in person rather than sending out an e-mail) about web usage for watching Olympics and get agreement on how everyone will refrain from tying up organizational band-width or time watching events on their computers. It's also important to remember that the summer Olympics only happen every four years. Then again the World Cup and 2010 Vancouver Games aren't that far away, so these are tips that you can apply to any major event!

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Building Trust

"What loneliness is more lonely than distrust?"

- Mary Ann (Marian) Evans, better known by her pen name George Eliot, English novelist

"The final requirement of effective leadership is to earn trust...to trust a leader, it is not necessary to like him. Nor is it necessary to agree with him. Trust is the conviction that the leader means what he says. It is a belief in something very old-fashioned, called 'integrity.' A leader's actions and a leader's professed beliefs must be congruent, or at least compatible. Effective leadership – and again this is very old wisdom – is not based on being clever; it is based primarily on being consistent."

- Peter Drucker, American management research, professor, and author

"It is impossible to go through life without trust: That is to be imprisoned in the worst cell of all; oneself."

- Graham Green, *The Ministry of Fear*



"Loyalty is impossible without trust. Trust is impossible without accurate, reliable information. Develop state-of-the-art communication tools and listening skills so you and your partners can reach deeper levels of understanding that yield clearer priorities, coordinated actions, and superior results. Nothing magnifies the loyalty effect like the trust engendered by open, honest, and direct exchange of information and ideas."

- Frederick Reichheld, *Loyalty Rules! How Today's Leaders Build Lasting Relationships*

"Fear is at the root of all forms of exclusion, just as trust is at the root of all forms of inclusion."

- Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*

"If the individuals do not need to work together closely, because the work is routine or because the changes are small and can be made slowly, weak-trust is not necessarily a problem. With big changes in a fast-moving world, it's a huge problem. How can you create a sensible vision and strategies for the overall group in a team with low trust? People will think of themselves or their subgroups first and be protective and suspicious. Smart strategy does not emerge from a pond full of politics, parochialism, and guarded communication."

- John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change: Real Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations*

"Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly, and they will show themselves great."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays, First Series: Prudence, 1841*

Site Seeing: [weLEAD Leadership Development](#)

Gregg Thomas has built an extensive and excellent collection of leadership articles and book reviews at www.leadingtoday.com. Drop by his weLEAD web site to browse through all the leadership development material he continues to assemble there and to read his review of my latest book, [Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work](#).

Keys to Keeping Meetings on Track

On August 26, CITY-TV in Toronto had me as a guest on Breakfast Television to talk about meeting effectiveness. Aside from getting up at 5:00 a.m. to get ahead of Toronto traffic and make it to the studio well ahead of my live spot, what also stood out for me from the preparation for the interview were the two questions below. These questions caused me to step back and again look at critical issues that drain so much energy and productivity from so many organizations. My answers follow each question.



Tell us the big NO NOs when it comes to getting meetings off track.

Making or taking things personal. Effective meetings often feature strong debates with everyone pushing and probing all sides of important issues. When they become personal, conflict and resentment aren't far behind. That can lead to open warfare – or often worse – participants covertly shooting at each other outside the meeting room and shutting down frank discussions. This creates perfect conditions for moose-on-the-table.

What is a good meeting length where people remain effective?

One organization left their old meeting habits and processes in place but tried to reduce wasted meeting time by removing all the chairs. That's like equipping unskilled and untrained people with a dangerous array of razor sharp power tools but giving them a time limit together to try and reduce the likelihood of blood loss leading to death.

The length of a meeting is less critical than the way they are run. An hour can be too long to endure someone droning on with a death-by-PowerPoint presentation while everyone is on their Blackberrys or falling asleep. A day can zip by if participants are energetically engaged in a meaningful and productive conversation that has practical applications and leads to effective follow-through action.

For more of my experiences on the role of meetings in team effectiveness go to [Teams Building deference between team and group.aspx](#).

Most Popular August 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 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 performance boost. You can circulate especially relevant or timely articles or Improvement Points to your team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action.



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

"Results are the outcome: They can't be managed any more than we can turn back time. We can't manage results, we can only manage the causes of those results. Organization improvement starts by identifying and measuring the vital areas that have the biggest impact on results. If we're driving through the rear view mirror of bottom line results, we won't see the swamp until we're sinking in it."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Organizational Measurement and Feedback Pathways and Pitfalls (Part 1 of 2)"

Read the full article now!

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_226.aspx

"Ask each team member to imagine the team's ideal future state in a few years from now. Listen to each person's vision, then summarize the key themes that have emerged. Some groups also use drawings, cut-outs of pictures, symbols, metaphors, or success stories to paint a picture of what everyone sees in the future."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "A Coach's Playbook for Workplace Teams"

Read the full article now!

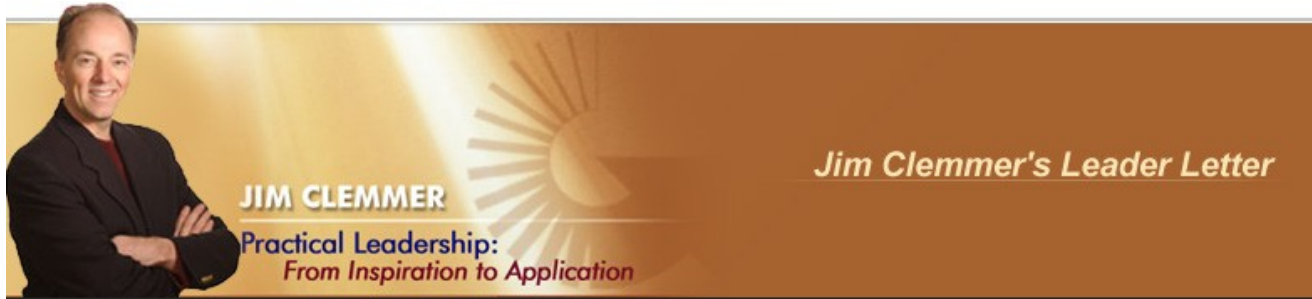
http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_260.aspx

"Research continues to show that while there are some 'born leaders' (like there are some child prodigies, naturally talented athletes, or gifted musicians), the vast majority of effective leaders are self-made. Strong leaders put learning and personal development high on their priority list. They have developed strong improvement habits that have built strong leadership skills."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Personal Improvement Planning and Discipline"

Read the full article now!

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_69.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

Please post or forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested – or on a 'need to grow' basis. If you received this newsletter from someone else, and would like to subscribe, click here: http://www.clemmer.net/newsletter/leader_signup.aspx