



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

January 2008, Issue 58

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Happy New Year!

Another year has clicked over. Does anyone remember the “Y2K problem” as this decade began? That was eight years ago. Eight years! Where does the time go? Like Y2K there is no way to really predict what's going to take hold of the public's imagination in this or any other year. But just keep in mind that no matter what lies ahead, the sun will always find a way to peek above the horizon each morning.

We're starting 2008 very excited about the year ahead. Our revenue in 2007 was up about 50% over 2006! With current bookings and a booming training and consulting business, we're looking forward to another strong year.

A huge catalyst for continued growth is clearly going to be my sixth book, [*Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work*](#). I'm very gratified by the early response we're getting to this new and different approach (a fictional “case study”) I used in this book. This issue of *The Leader Letter* updates some of the feedback, events, perspectives, and experiences now rapidly unfolding with [*Moose on the Table*](#).



Cross-Canada Moose Workshop and Media Tour Begins in April

In the finest tradition of the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and now Led Zeppelin, I'd like to announce my spring tour! I'm conducting a series of full day public seminars across Canada to help leaders from every level of the corporate org chart, identify ways to improve their organization through the practical application of lessons from my new book *Moose on the Table*.



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Take advantage of steep discounts when you bring along colleagues and friends:

\$97 per person, plus GST

3 - 5 people - \$87 each

6 - 10 people - \$77 each

11+ people - \$67 each

Visit <http://www.breakingthroughthebull.com> to register!

Extension of Introductory Discounts

We've extended our introductory pricing until the end of January! You can still buy signed pre-release copies of [Moose on the Table](#) and add in an additional copy of that book for a fellow moose hunter or one of either [Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success](#) or [The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success](#) for only \$30 (with U.S. and Canadian shipping included). That's a savings of nearly 50%!

If you're outside of Canada or the U.S., we also have big introductory discounts on the [downloadable e-book and audio book](#).

Lessening My Anxiety: Great Feedback to Kick Off My New Book!

Since the fictional approach of [Moose on the Table](#) is such a big change from my previous books (although [Growing the Distance](#) and [The Leader's Digest](#) have fictional elements with fables and stories sprinkled throughout) I've been quite keen to get feedback from readers.

So Curwin Friesen, President of Friesens Corporation, made my day when he sent me this e-mail about a week after his printing company sent us our first 15,000 print run of [Moose on the Table](#):

Hi Jim,

I have a request. I read your book on the weekend (had a sample copy in my office) and loved it! Very easy read - well suited for many levels of managers. I would like to have all of my production managers read this book before our upcoming planning session in two weeks. I need 20 copies for this.

Given that I need to get them books in the next few days (so that they have time to read it), would I be able to reproduce the book here at Friesens and simply pay you for the 20 copies? It would be like a mini-extra print run?



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We made a deal. About a month later he sent me a follow-up letter with comments from six of his managers after his management team read [*Moose on the Table*](#) as preparation for their planning session. You can read the full letter along with other comments about the book at <http://www.mooseonthetable.com/Reviews.aspx>.

Another early e-mail came from a business school professor interested in bulk pricing for thirty-five copies of [*Moose on the Table*](#) for his second year Professional Development/Leadership class.

I've since heard from nearly a dozen early readers of [*Moose on the Table*](#) with extremely positive feedback. Many said they couldn't put it down. We've also been getting moose hunting stories (ways of playfully addressing tough issues with the Moose-on-the-Table metaphor or variations) and photos starting to come in. Book comments, photos, and stories are now available for viewing in our new Moose Gallery at <http://www.mooseonthetable.com/Reviews.aspx>.

I'd love to get your feedback on [*Moose on the Table*](#) and/or moose hunting stories (and photos if you have any). E-mail them to me at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net.

Tackling Communication Breakdowns Up, Down, and Across the Organization

Way too many teams – and often entire organizations – are trapped in the communication maze. This results in waste and rework, reduced productivity, workplace accidents, and plummeting morale. Of course, turnover also increases as frustration leads good people to look for more rewarding work elsewhere.

As you can read in the Preface to [*Moose on the Table*](#), I wrote this organizational fable using an "edutaining" story to playfully weave together keys to personal, team, and organizational leadership. In short, modeling how to turn words into actions.

[*Moose on the Table*](#) is especially written for busy people who find personal growth, organizational change, and leadership books a little too dry. As with my other books, [*Moose on the Table*](#) is written (and priced) to be purchased in quantities for everyone on a team or in an organization so they can:

- Develop a common language and mutual support for Navigating Change
- Identify team and organizational moose, and work together to get rid of them
- Build a communication rich environment through "courageous conversations"
- Reduce internal politics, turf protection, and misunderstandings
- Tame "The E-mail Beast"
- Understand how to help build a high performance culture
- Increase personal and team effectiveness
- Practice outward and upward leadership
- Learn to seek and use personal and team feedback



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Just like Friesens did (see "Lessening My Anxiety..." item above), we're now seeing many early buyers of *Moose on the Table* purchasing copies for their management teams or entire organization. Get more information on how and why the book is being used this way and find out about quantity discounts at <http://www.mooseonthetable.com/bulk.aspx>.

Chapters One to Fourteen Online – With Video Commentary

You can read the first fourteen chapters of *Moose on the Table* as well as watch a short video clip of me giving a brief introduction to each chapter and its main underlying leadership lesson at www.mooseonthetable.com.

Even the Toronto Maple Leafs Can Use Some Advice

That led to a lot of speculation about the future of the team's General Manager and Coach.

In the November 30, 2007 *Globe and Mail*, there was a story about the lack of support Leaf's General Manager, John Ferguson, has been getting – especially from his boss. It's very similar to what Pete Leonard (the central character in *Moose on the Table*) faces with his boss. You can read my comments on the situation and advice to John Ferguson at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20071130.CACOACH30/TPStory/?query=IMMEN>.

Strung Up By an Unlikely Story?

In the November Leader Letter I announced we were building a Moose Gallery and asked for stories and photos (see "[It's Moose Hunting Season](#)"). Within a week of that issue hitting inboxes, I had three readers send me the following photo and story:

Pogo Moose Incident - Fairbanks, Alaska

"They were laying new power cables which were strung on the ground for miles. The moose are rutting right now and very agitated. He was thrashing around and got his antlers stuck in the cables. When the men (miles away) began pulling the lines up with their big equipment, the moose went up with them. They noticed excess tension in the lines and went searching for the problem. He was still alive when they lowered him to the ground. He was a huge 60 inch bull and slightly peeved!"



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This seemed like an urban legend and a bit too far-fetched to me. So I started checking the web. Apparently it's a true story. Proving, once again, that truth is stranger than fiction! But according to About.com: Urban Legends, the story ended with a much less than metaphorical Moose-on-the-Table:

Netlore Archive: Emailed image shows an unfortunate moose accidentally strung up on power cables by a utility crew near Fairbanks, Alaska

Description: Emailed image

Circulating since: November 2006

Status: Authentic

"True. On October 5, 2004, electric workers were stringing power cable along a stretch of Pogo Mine Road 80 miles southeast of Fairbanks when, unbeknownst to them, a 1,200-pound bull moose became entangled in the cable and was hoisted 50 feet off the ground when the line was winched to the top of the utility poles.

This being real life and not an episode of Rocky and Bullwinkle, the incident probably sounds more amusing than it actually was. The moose was still alive when the workers found it, photographed it, and finally lowered it to the ground, but their efforts to disentangle it were thwarted by the critter's own panicked attempts to flee. In the end, after consulting with the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, power company officials decided to put the moose out of its misery. The meat, we're told, was salvaged and donated to a local resident."



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Moving Out of Pity City

A day after long time [Improvement Points](#) subscriber, Larry Beckon, received the following Improvement Point he sent me the e-mail below:

"A thirty-eight year old man was at his parent's home for Sunday dinner. He mournfully turned the discussion to his many problems, 'I've just left my third failed marriage, I can't hold onto a job, I'm in debt up to my ears and will have to declare personal bankruptcy,' he whimpered. 'Where did you go wrong?'"

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Avoiding Pity City and the Victimitis Virus"

Read it now!

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_305.aspx

"Hi Jim,

My wife Jean called me at the office a few minutes ago. During our brief conversation, I read her your story about the mournful man who said to his parents, "Where did you go wrong?" I thought it was a great story. My wife reminded me of the time that I gave my watch to a lady at the office.

This is the story. I went to an office that was being remodeled and asked the office manager how the work was coming. Walls had been torn down, many things had been moved, and the exact completion date of the work was not clear. The office manager (who often visited Pity City) talked about not having a clock, which had been on the wall in front of her work area - a wall that no longer existed. I immediately apologized for things being in turmoil (the division I led was responsible for having this work done), took off my watch, told her she needed it more than I did (I had a clock in my office), gave her my watch, and insisted that she keep the watch until after all the work was completed. I left and went back to my office without any further conversation.

When the work was completed (it wasn't much more than a week or two later), she returned the watch and thanked me for loaning it to her. I never saw her visit Pity City again - at least while I was in the room.

I learned something from this experience. Others will choose to move away from Pity City if we help them to move to someplace else - to higher levels. What she needed was a means to know what time it was and I helped make that happen for her. That was the issue she had and when that issue was solved, there was no reason to visit Pity City.



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Most persons do not like Pity City, but they need a different alternative. Helping others find different alternatives can help others be successful."

Larry Beckon
Michigan Department of Transportation

A central exercise in most of my workshops and retreats is how to move ourselves and others out of Pity City. I'd love to get your stories and experiences. E-mail them to me at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net.

Leadership Is an Action, Not a Position

An early [*Moose on the Table*](#) reader e-mailed me that she quite liked the book. But she bitterly complained about not being in a position of power and authority as Pete Leonard (the central character) and the other characters in the book.

She was very right about this book being directly applicable to those in supervisory or management roles. I targeted that group because they are the ones who so often disempower themselves even though everyone else in the organization sees them as more powerful than they often see themselves. Pete's experiences were to provide a model for that group. Pete's experiences were also to provide a broader model for anyone wrestling with communication and courage as he does in the story.

One of my earlier books, [*Growing the Distance: Timeless Principles for Personal, Career, and Family Success*](#), is written very broadly for anyone anywhere in an organization – or in life – to apply many of the same principles that Pete used in [*Moose on the Table*](#) (it's also the first book in which I started using some fictional stories and fables). [*Growing the Distance*](#) is actually being used by many high schools, colleges, and universities for students and faculty, and numerous organizations are giving them to all staff. There is also a [*Growing the Distance: Self-Study System*](#) available to help apply the book's main approaches.

Unfortunately, this [*Moose on the Table*](#) reader may have fallen into the trap of believing that power and authority comes from position. I have long emphasized that leadership is an action, not a position. You can peruse a selection of my articles on this theme at http://www.clemmer.net/articles/subject_18.aspx (e.g. "Leaders Make It Happen").

Most Popular December 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



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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 December:

Meetings are more important than ever in our increasingly complex and interconnected workplaces. Research shows that when meetings are run effectively, teams make better decisions than individuals.

- From Jim Clemmer's article, "A Coach's Playbook for Workplace Teams"
http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_260.aspx

Highly effective leaders transfer their energy and passion to the people they're trying to mobilize with words that paint exciting pictures, ring true, fire the imagination, or touch the spirit. Like the leader, their words are charged with energy.

- From Jim Clemmer's article, "Strong Leaders are Strong Communicators"
http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_37.aspx

Leadership is a verb, not a noun. Leadership is an action, not a position. Leadership is defined by what we do, not the role we are in. Some people in "leadership roles" are excellent leaders. But too many are bosses, "snoopervisors," technocrats, bureaucrats, managers, commanders, chiefs, and the like.

- From Jim Clemmer's article, "Growing the Leader in Us"
http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_81.aspx

My Top 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/>), 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.

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Stories, Mythology, and Metaphors

"The universe is made of stories, not atoms."

- Muriel Rukeyser, American novelist, poet, biographer, and screenwriter



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"Wherever a story comes from, whether it is a familiar myth or a private memory, the retelling exemplifies the making of a connection from one pattern to another: a potential translation in which narrative becomes parable and the once upon a time comes to stand for some renascent truth. This approach applies to all the incidents of everyday life: the phrase in the newspaper, the endearing or infuriating game of a toddler, the misunderstanding at the office. Our species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories."

- Mary Catherine Bateson, American writer and cultural anthropologist

"....myth (stories) is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries, in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth."

- Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

"Everyone is necessarily the hero of his own life story."

- John Barth, American novelist and short-story writer

"All stories consist of a few common structural elements found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams, and movies. They are known collectively as The Hero's Journey...The Hero's Journey is nothing less than a handbook for life, a complete instruction manual in the art of being human."

- Chris Vogel, *The Writer's Journey*

"We have found that the most effective persuaders use language in a particular way. They supplement numerical data with examples, stories, metaphors, and analogies to make their positions come alive. That use of language paints a vivid word picture and, in doing so, lends a compelling and tangible quality to the persuader's point of view."

- Jay Conger, "The Necessary Art of Persuasion," *Harvard Business Review*

"Those who tell the stories rule society."

- Plato



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"Concrete language and stories defeat the curse of knowledge and make executives' strategy statements stickier. As a result, all the members of an organization can share an understanding of the strategies and a language for discussing them....FedEx, for example, uses a story related to its Purple Promise award, which honors employees who uphold FedEx's guarantee that packages will 'absolutely, positively' arrive overnight: In New York, a FedEx delivery truck broke down and the replacement van was running late. The driver initially delivered a few packages on foot; but then, despairing of finishing her route on time, she managed to persuade a competitor's driver to take her to her last few stops."

- Chip Heath and Dan Heath, "The Curse of Knowledge," *Harvard Business Review*

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.

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