

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter



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AUGUST 2009, ISSUE 77

Ah, the agony and ecstasy of writing a book! You'd think with finishing up my seventh one, *Growing @ the Speed of Change: Your Inspir-actional How-To Guide For Leading Yourself and Others through Constant Change*, I'd be used to it by now – and know better. Last month I announced that we'd launch *Growing @ the Speed of Change* with a special offer to *Leader Letter* readers this month.

It's not happening quite that fast. Since books are around for a very long time (the second edition of *Firing on All Cylinders*, published in 1992 is still available), I want *Growing @ the Speed of Change* to be done right rather than fast. From my work in quality improvement approaches (now morphed into the Six Sigma and Lean movements) I know that people usually remember how well you did the work – not how quickly.

I am ecstatic about how this book is coming together. It has a gorgeous and easy-to-read – or browse – layout (improving on the popular format first used in *Growing the Distance* and then its companion *The Leader's Digest*). *Growing @ the Speed of Change* combines inspiration, humor, research, stories, simplified frameworks, with lots of actionable and practical how-to steps (hence our made up word "inspir-actional"). Based on how *Growing the Distance* and *The Leader's Digest* were purchased in the hundreds and thousands (we had one order for over 50,000 copies) for broad distribution in organizations around the world, I am especially excited about the potential for *Growing @ the Speed of Change* to become a strong tool for executives, managers, OD, HR, safety, training and other professionals to reinforce their team and organization development and change efforts.

The agony is in all the tiny editing, cover layouts, and final production details. But with a clear vision of the end in mind, we're motoring through to produce our best book yet. Stay tuned for details and a special offer in September. Really!

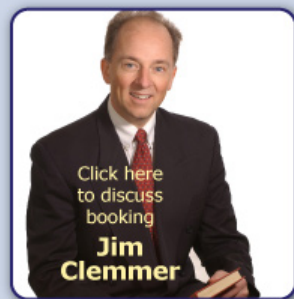
THREE CRITICAL FACTORS IN BUILDING A PRODUCTIVE TEAM CULTURE

Marcelino Sánchez added this comment to my blog posting last month on "Keys to Building a Strong Team or Organizational Culture:"

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"My thoughts on building a productive team culture (subculture). For a team to do what it needs to do in a way that they like to do it and be effective, they have to develop certain norms of behavior. Norms of behavior are a function of many things but three critical factors are:

- 1. Leadership – how the team leader leads and interacts with others (in the team).*
- 2. Values/beliefs held by the team – most teams have ground rules but they rarely make a difference because they are task oriented (be on time, don't interrupt, etc.) and only written on a flipchart page. Mutually espoused values and beliefs have to be written on individuals' minds and hearts.*
- 3. Consequences – a well defined accountability process is necessary to reinforce desired behaviors and attitudes.*

There is more to it than this obviously but in my experience these three elements are critical to an effective team culture."

Marcelino's comments come from his experience with Fortune 500 companies undergoing large scale change. You can get more of his background at <http://www.smartchangesolutions.com/TheCompany.htm>. You can also read my original posting on "Keys to Building a Strong Team or Organizational Culture" at

<http://www.jimclemmer.com/blog/?p=819#comment-404> (it includes a link to a 10-minute video clip on this issue).

I agree with all three of Marcelino's critical factors. I especially agree with point #2 around values. Many teams don't have ground rules to guide their meetings and other team behaviors. Those that do, often don't ground them in deeper organizational or team values. Strong and high-performing teams do this exceptionally well.

When I wrote [*Pathways to Performance: A Guide to Transforming Yourself, Your Team, and Your Organization*](#) I put together a team effectiveness checklist. You can read that at

<http://www.jimclemmer.com/pathways-and-pitfalls-to-leading-teams.php>.

There are lots more of my articles on team building at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/team-building.php>, building team vision, values, and purpose at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/building-team-vision-values-and-purpose.php>, and building team spirit at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/building-team-spirit.php>.

BOOK REVIEW: AN EXCELLENT NEW RESOURCE ON STRENGTHENING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

I just received a published copy of Harvey Deutschendorf's great new book, *The Other Kind of Smart: Simple Ways to Boost Your Emotional Intelligence for Greater Personal Effectiveness and Success*. As Harvey was writing this book a few years ago he sent me an outline and sample chapter and asked for a "cover quote" endorsement. It looked very strong so I gladly gave him one.

Now that I have the finished book, I wish I could rewrite that quote into something much more enthusiastic. This book is outstanding. I've read dozens of books on the important and evolving new field of Emotional Intelligence (EI). *The Other Kind of Smart* is well (smartly) written in a conversational style that's extremely easy to read. It's also laid out in an easy to browse style. It's full of contemporary and classical quotations and comments on elements of EI. And best of all; it's filled with how-to, practical techniques to help readers boost fifteen key EI skills such as self-awareness, healthy relationships, stress tolerance, impulse control, optimism, and social responsibility.

Harvey writes, "Success is not a quantum leap. It is the accumulation of small changes resulting from perseverance, self-discipline, and learning to get the most from your emotional intelligence...unlike cognitive function, your emotional capabilities are flexible, adaptable, and highly *expandable* (his emphasis)." Harvey is certified to administer the highly regarded and scientifically validated BarOn EQi. You can take Harvey's mini EI Quiz at <http://www.theotherkindofsmart.com/quiz.html> and learn more about his book.

I've been a devoted follower of EI research since the mid nineties. I've used many of the concepts, frameworks, and findings in my books and workshops. You can peruse a series of my EI articles at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/content/view/929>. You can watch video clips of me presenting EI concepts at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/seynet/3.php>. And two blog postings on EI are at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/newsletter/?cat=33>.

POSSIBILITY THINKING: SPREADING HOPE AND OPTIMISM

During all my decades of studying, personally applying, training, and coaching leadership, I've come to appreciate that hope and optimism are core defining elements.

Leaders make us hopeful. Whether leading ourselves, our families, our teams, organizations, or countries, when times are darkest true leadership shines brightest. Leaders don't sugarcoat or avoid facing tough problems head-on (the Moose-on-the-Table®). Strong leaders inspire their co-workers, teams, associates, friends or loved ones to be hopeful by focusing on what could be, as a counterbalance to what is. Leaders know how powerful and self-fulfilling the Law of Attraction truly is. They set up positive magnetic fields that attract the behaviors, circumstances, and events that ultimately lead to success.

Business advisor, and coach, Harry Hudson and cultural anthropologist and management consultant Barbara Perry are authors of *Putting Hope to Work*. In an article entitled "The Leaders from Hope," they report: "...work connected to the positive-psychology movement has made hope discussable in new ways.

Hope has been shown to be the key ingredient of resilience in survivors of traumas ranging from prison camps to natural disasters. Many studies have shown that people who score higher on measures of hope also cope better with injuries, diseases, and physical pain; perform better in school; and prove more competitive in sports."

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMMM...ON OPTIMISM

"Everything works out in the end. If it hasn't worked out, it's not the end."

- Our daughter Vanessa's favorite philosophy

"The Green Bay Packers never lost a football game. They just ran out of time."

- Vincent Thomas Lombardi (1913 – 1970), American football coach

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 – 1968), American clergyman, activist, and prominent leader in the African-American civil rights movement

"This is the art of courage: to see things as they are and still believe that the victory lies not with those who avoid the bad, but those who taste, in living awareness, every drop of the good."

- Victoria Lincoln (1905 – 1981), "The Art of Courage," *Vogue*

"Never think of the consequences of failing, you will always think of negative results. Think only positive thoughts and your mind will gravitate towards those thoughts!"

- Michael Jordan, retired athlete called by the National Basketball Association "the greatest basketball player of all time"; failed to make his high school varsity basketball team in his sophomore year

"Optimism (is)...an inner resource – the ability to believe that times may be rough but that, with renewed effort, they'll improve, that failure and success are to a great degree states of mind."

- Steven J. Stein and Howard E. Book, *The EQ Edge. Emotional Intelligence and Your Success*

WHINING VERSUS LEADING

Last month I was sent a follow-up e-mail from "Bob", an internal Industrial Relations/Human Resources professional from one of our larger Clients. He was a participant at a leadership fundamentals workshop I ran in June. Another participant in that session was an extremely vocal and negative supervisor who continually complained about her inability to lead because of their union contract. Shortly after presenting my revised model around our fundamental choice of Leading, Following, or Wallowing (the old model was Navigator/Survivor/Victim) I put up this slide for discussion:

"Management frequently blames unions or civil-service regulations or Human Resources departments for delays in dealing with poor performers. To the extent we have been able to study this, our data do not bear this out. The problem of management's unwillingness to face up to poor performers appears unrelated to those variables. For example our data show little difference between the way workers in unionized and non-unionized companies respond to the question about the company facing up to poor performers. The problem therefore appears to lie in management, not in the constraints imposed by unions."

- *The Enthusiastic Employee*, David Sirota, Louis A. Mischkind & Michael Irwin Meltzer

"Joanie" objected and gave examples of how her hands were tied by the company's union contract and there was nothing she could do about the poor performers she was forced to continue working with. The IR/HR professional said to her "I can help with exactly your situation. There is a

leadership process that we've developed with the union to help you. Call me." This quieted Joanie on that issue. But she soon found other things about her job and with the company to complain about.

After the workshop Bob talked to me about how frustrated he was by similar excuses coming from some supervisors and managers who chose to slip below the line rather than lead. Now he just updated me a month later with an e-mail that he still had not heard from Joanie. We agreed that she was one of those unfortunate and unhappy sorts who is determined to be a wallowing victim. And she is resolved not to let anyone talk her out of her comfortable misery. Some people seem to be most comfortable loudly complaining and really don't want anyone to show them how they can get themselves above the line and start leading. Bob and I need to move on to work with those who want to do and get better.

KEYS TO BUILDING A STRONG TEAM OR ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Whether it's across an entire organization or with a local team, culture change is a hot issue these days. For good reason; culture trumps strategy, structure, processes, or technology. We have long defined culture as "the way we do things around here." A team or organizational culture heavily influences what's acceptable and unacceptable behavior. And those influences can be incredibly subtle and little recognized.

Don Borsk is an exceptionally strong leader who understands the power of culture and how management behaviors influence it. I wrote about The CLEMMER Group's experiences in helping him and his team revitalize Supply Chain Management (they operate Wal-Mart's Canadian distribution centers) in the May 2004 issue of *The Leader Letter*. To read it go to <http://www.jimclemmer.com/news/may2004pf.html> and scroll down to "Leading a High-Performance Culture: Balancing Processes and People."

A few years ago, Scott Schweyer (our SVP, Consulting and Training), and I worked with Don and his new team as he established a culture from scratch at his new company; Metro Retail Supply Chain Solutions. Last spring I again had the pleasure of co-presenting with Don Borsk at Supply Chain & Logistics Canada's annual conference. You can view a 10-minute clip of the two main elements to cultural leadership that I outlined following Don's overview of what his company did to build a very high-performing culture. Go to <http://www.jimclemmer.com/culture-change.php> to view the clip and to peruse a series of articles Scott Schweyer and I have written on culture change.

LESSONS IN PERSPECTIVE FROM THE DUNG BEETLE

Perspective is everything. What some people see as an unmitigated disaster is an opportunity to others. Some people wallow in why-me misery, some people wait to follow someone else, and others lead. I've collected numerous stories, metaphors, and research over the decades showing that there is no "reality." It's all in how we frame life's challenges and changes that are dumped on us.

In response to a June blog posting that was also included in the [July issue of *The Leader Letter*](#), Jeff Johnson sent me this delightful example to add to my collection:

"As always, I appreciated reading your Leader Letter today. Your section titled "Choosing our Perspective: Invigorating or Disastrous Time to be Alive" resonated as our company goes through change, even though it is positive change and we are still growing.

One of the artifacts in my office of our time in Africa is all about choosing perspective. I have a dung beetle encased in hard plastic on my desk. Why? If a rhino drops 50 - 70 pounds of manure on you, most people would think it was the start of a bad day. The dung beetle, however, has a different perspective: 'Cool, a new home!' 'Wow, a nest for my young!' 'A new food supply!' And then they roll it up in a ball and take it home. Same crap — different perspective/attitude!"

Maybe I should get a dung beetle encased in plastic to take along to my leading change workshops! If you'd like to read the original item ("Choosing our Perspective: Invigorating or Disastrous Time to be Alive?") Jeff referred to, go to <http://www.jimclemmer.com/blog/?p=787>. And please post a comment or reflection on this topic there.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Over the past two months, we've been conducting an extensive clean-up of our database. As you can imagine, since I started The CLEMMER Group back in 1994, I've compiled a huge list of contacts (over 70,000!!). Of course people get promoted, leave jobs or just move on. So we sent out an e-mail asking folks to review the information we have for them and send us an update. The response has been better than we anticipated and only goes to show how the only constant in life is change!

Most of you reading this probably got one of those e-mails and updated your information. But if you signed up for *The Leader Letter* online – then we probably only have your name and e-mail address.

If you didn't receive an e-mail and would be interested in completing a profile, we'll give you a digital coupon worth 25% off any orders you place through our online store until the end of August.

[Click here to complete your profile.](#)

Even if you have already updated your information, there's still something in the goodie bag for you this month! Recommend www.jimclemmer.com to five colleagues and you can download the e-book version of *Growing the Distance*.

[Click here to claim your book.](#)

As always our **privacy policy** is clear. **We will not exchange or sell your information to anyone else** and **we will not contact anyone you refer to us.**

MULTITASKING DUMBS US DOWN AND UPS OUR STRESS

One evening I was slowly eating my dinner with Heather. She waited and waited for me to finish and finally asked me to hurry up. I told her I was

mindfully eating by savoring every bite of the delicious meal she had prepared. She told me to “savor faster.”

“Fast savoring” is an apt oxymoron for our time. We’re in the midst of an epidemic deficit of focus and attention in our society. Edward Hallowell is a psychiatrist and the founder of the Hallowell Center for Cognitive and Emotional Health in Sudbury, Massachusetts. He began his career treating ADD in kids. He’s the author of twelve books, some of which deal with ADD in kids. They include [*Delivered from Distraction: Getting the Most out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder*](#) and [*CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Handling Your Fast-Paced Life*](#). He also published an article in *Harvard Business Review* entitled “Overloaded Circuits: Why Smart People Underperform.”

Hallowell has found that managers and professionals in the 21st century suffer from a newly recognized neurological phenomenon that he calls Attention Deficit Trait, or ADT. “It isn’t an illness; it’s purely a response to the hyperkinetic environment in which we live. But it has become epidemic in today’s organizations....people with ADT have difficulty staying organized, setting priorities, and managing time, and they feel a constant low level of panic and guilt.” He reports that the number of patients with ADT coming into his clinical practice has mushroomed tenfold in a decade.

Hallowell finds that the benefits of multitasking are illusionary and a big part of the ADT problem. Many people believe that younger generations raised in an environment of juggling multiple technologies at once are better at multi-tasking. Numerous studies have shown that to be completely false. Stress research has found that shifting attention every few minutes to respond to incoming electronic messages increases levels of cortisol (a stress hormone), which decreases memory function. Studies by Glenn Wilson, a psychologist at London University’s King College, showed an average IQ loss of ten points among 1,100 frequent electronic communicators who were flipping back and forth between tasks, conversations, and their electronic messages.

I don’t know about you, but I can’t afford to lose ten IQ points! So I shut off all of those notifications. By point of comparison, marijuana smoking causes only a four-point IQ drop. You’d have to miss a whole night of sleep in order to get to the ten-point drop caused by the technology distractions measured in the study.

SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS PLAYING THE BLAME GAME AND MAKING THEMSELVES TRANSPARENT

After reading one of my articles entitled “Leaders Take Responsibility for Their Choices” along with a comment from another reader, Heather Bruce posted these reflections:

“I agree with Don’s e-mail and the article in our very human tendency to find something or someone to blame!”

I have found over time that asking myself: ‘what outcome am I looking for?’ will stop me from blaming. If I want the problem fixed I have to be realistic and know that blaming has never fixed anything! All I accomplished when I blame is to teach others that I am not a solution

finder but a blamer. I really don't see myself that way and don't want to teach others that blaming is part of my character.

If we start with: 'what outcome am I looking for?' we - as leaders - can stop a lot of the often soul destroying, diminishing, and useless blame that goes on in organizations."

Right on! When I work with supervisors or middle managers I encounter a few who point fingers upward and blame their lack of leadership on someone else further up the organization. In one session last month, we had a lively discussion with one particularly strong participant challenging his peers to "be less transparent." He made the observation that when a supervisor or boss explains a change by saying that it's what senior management wants, he or she causes people on their team to look through or past them to others for direction and leadership. This weak leader gives away his or her credibility and authority. Strong leaders seek the understanding they need from their boss (or higher) and then explain what's going on to the people in their organization. When I work with executives, I also encounter a reverse phenomenon; a few of the weaker leaders point their fingers downward and blame people in their organization.

You can read the original article and comments at http://www.jimclemmer.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=342&Itemid=99999999&joscclean=1&commentid=333#jos333. Please add your thoughts to the fundamental leadership principle.

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So I'd love to get your help. If you have an account with Amazon, Indigo, or Barnes & Noble and you've found my books helpful, I'd really appreciate you posting a review. In return, I will send you an autographed copy of my new book, *Growing @ the Speed of Change*, when it's released as a big thanks for your time and effort.

Here are the links to the online stores. When you've submitted your review, send me a note with the link to jim.clemmer@clemmer.net. Please include your mailing information, and I'll make sure you get a thank you copy of *Growing @ the Speed of Change* hot off the presses. And I'd love your feedback on my new book too!

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GET IT HOT OFF MY COMPUTER AS THEY ARE POSTED

Most of the items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* were first published in my [blog](#) the previous month. You can wait to read it all together each month in *The Leader Letter* or you can read each item as a [blog](#) post and have them sent directly to you hot off my computer by signing up at <http://www.jimclemmer.com/blog/>. Just enter your e-mail address in the upper left corner box under "Sign up for E-mail Blog Notification."

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Here are the three most popular Improvement Points we sent out in July:

"Life isn't fair. Whatever hits the fan certainly won't be evenly distributed. The best approach to dealing with things that cannot be changed is to accept them. The worst thing we can do is to succumb to the Victimitis Virus and "awfulize" the situation by throwing pity parties in Pity City. When the doo-doo starts to pile deep, a leader doesn't just sit there and complain (usually about "them"); he or she grabs a shovel. We may not choose what happens to us, but we do choose how to respond - or not."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Accept What Can't Be Changed and Change What Can Be"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"Unhappy and poorly served staff passes how they are treated to their customers. In today's workplace, a management style of pushing people around often pushes the highest performers right out the door."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Cultivating Leadership"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"Developing a personal mission statement is a discovery and learning process, not a problem to be solved. It takes a lot of time and thoughtful reflection to sort out what's most important to us. Our purpose is intertwined with our vision and values. Defining it is part of that same process."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Personal Purpose Pathways and Pitfalls"

[Read the full article now!](#)

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 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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