

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter



JIM CLEMMER

Practical Leadership:
From Inspiration to Application

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FEBRUARY 2009, ISSUE 71

Here in Central Canada it's a great time of year to be indoors! It's been bone chillingly cold and very snowy. So when I am not traveling, doing Client work, or shoveling snow, I've got the fireplace in my office on full blast as I research, conceptualize and write my latest book. See the first story for an update.

This month we've integrated my [blog](#) postings with *The Leader Letter*. Rather than sitting down for a full day each month to write *The Leader Letter*, I'm posting items to my blog every Tuesday and Thursday. These blog entries, and possible discussions from readers, now form the core of every issue of *The Leader Letter*. Go to <http://jimclemmer.com/blog> to read previous posts and sign up to get e-mail notifications or subscribe to the RSS feeds to get notifications as postings appear. Of course you can also read most of them in the *The Leader Letter* each month.

HAVING A BLAST WORKING ON MY LATEST BOOK

Some people like to build things with their hands. As Heather can certainly attest to, I didn't get the handyman gene. My farmer father and my cabinetmaker brother got those. I've come to love the creative act of writing. My grandmother was a poet, so that set of genes made me much handier with a keyboard than a hammer. Although there are those times I'd like to use a hammer on the keyboard!

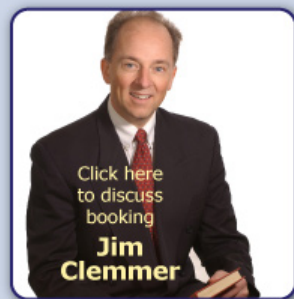
I've wanted to evolve, update, and expand upon the [Navigating Change model](#) (Navigator/Survivor/Victim) for some time. This simple approach continues to get the strongest and most positive responses in my keynotes, workshops, and retreats. It's easy to understand but much tougher to apply. After a Fall of contemplating what my next writing project might be, I have decided to write a new book around this approach. I am using the working title of *Thriving in Turbulent Times*. This book does address dealing with our turbulent economic times, however, it will more broadly address our choices in dealing with personal and professional change and turmoil.

I am going back to the magazine style format that proved so popular with [Growing the Distance](#) and [The Leader's Digest](#). This combination of personal narrative, sidebars with stories, how-to points, research, examples, and pithy quotations allows readers to browse their favorite or most relevant sections or read each chapter in sequence. (It's also more fun to research and write.)

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"Reprinted with permission from *The Leader Letter*, Jim Clemmer's free e-newsletter. For over twenty-five years, Jim's 2,000 + practical leadership presentations and workshops/retreats, six bestselling books, columns, and newsletters have been helping hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. His web site is www.jimclemmer.com."



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As I was pulling together my notes and finalizing the book's outline, I got a couple of comments on an [Improvement Point](#) that was sent out from my article, "With All My Heart and Soul." The comments align with my thoughts that setbacks in life – such as the economic turmoil the whole world is going through right now – can be just what we need to reevaluate what's really important in our lives. To read the article, [click here](#). Read the comments at the end of the piece and feel free to add your thoughts to the discussion on that same page.

NORTH AMERICAN AUTO LEADERSHIP NEEDS MAJOR RETOOLING

During the Holidays when the auto sector loan package was dominating the news, *Canada AM* (Canada's major national morning current events show) called me for an interview (I was on the show December 29) on what's needed to turn things around in this critical industry. I have trained and consulted supervisors, managers, and executives across a wide variety of industries over the past thirty years. That includes working with Toyota and GM management teams, as well as automotive parts manufacturers like Magna.

The Canadian and American governments are providing huge loans for the North American auto industry to retool their plants and modernize their product lines. But unless those companies also modernize their management practices, those taxpayer's dollars will be wasted and one or more of the companies will fail. The old adversarial command and control approaches must be replaced by collaborative practices that get everyone highly involved and engaged (as Toyota has done so successfully). You can read some of my previous writing on employee engagement and empowerment by [clicking here](#).

WALL STREET AND DOING THE RIGHT THING

I love to get feedback from readers of my books. I especially like to get push-back or hear views from a different angle than I'd intended when I first wrote the section under discussion. A reader of [The Leader's Digest](#) took issue with me including the following Elbert Hubbard quote:

"The world bestows its big prizes both in money and honors for but one thing. And that is initiative. And what is initiative? I'll tell you: it is doing the right thing without being told."

He wrote, "in light of the recent financial fiascos on Wall Street and the state of the American automakers, I think this is totally incorrect. Just take a look at the compensation packages of the people who have run these companies into the ground and destroyed the lives of many who worked hard to build them up and who's hard work pays the exorbitant wages the CEO's and directors make! Were they doing the right thing?"

I absolutely share his frustration and incredulity with what's been happening on Wall Street and in many large corporations. There has been a complete breakdown of oversight and governance by regulators, boards, and executives.

His comments on the Hubbard quote takes us into the highly charged debating ring of values. Many of the leadership principles I wrote about in [The Leader's Digest](#) can be used for good or bad – to grow broad value and enrich everyone or greedily for personal gain. Like many natural laws of the universe, Timeless Leadership Principles like imagery/visioning, mobilizing/energizing, coaching, and navigating change by seizing initiative and refusing to submit to "fate" or the wishes of others, kick in regardless of the overarching morality or goals to which they are applied. It boils down to personal interpretation of what the user of the Principle considers to be "the right thing."

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic. E-mail me at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net.

COURAGEOUS AND SKILLFUL PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP

Performance management and coaching is a core leadership skill. During tough times "dumbsizing" or layoffs are used with all the finesse of a neurosurgeon doing brain surgery with a chainsaw (see "[Wise Managers Treat Layoffs as Last Resort](#)").

Too many managers don't have the courage or skill to face performance issues and deal one-on-one with people who are struggling and clearly don't belong in the roles they are in. So one easy way out is layoffs. Even worse are the cowards who do it by e-mail!

As I look back at the hundreds of people I've led over the past few decades, one of my regrets was letting underperformers, and people not doing well, struggle too long. I'm not sure I was being fair to them by prolonging their own suffering and that of the others on their team.

Getting managers to recognize and deal with their own ineffective behaviors, and the [moose antlers they sprout](#), has been one of my career-long challenges. I've had success in coaching and developing some of them but I have not found a magic formula to make a manager wake up and say "Oh, my God. He's talking about me and I need to change." In our business we always talk about personal, team, and organizational readiness as being the factor we can't control, and yet it's so critical to success.

I've found very few managers deliberately try to say one thing and do another. Most are unaware of the disconnect between their words and actions. So they need help through sensitive feedback from the people around them with the courage and skill to address their behavior through courageous upward leadership. We could use an upward leadership revolution during these turbulent times.

SOCIAL NETWORKING FOR LEADERS

It seems you can't read a newspaper (online anyway) or watch the television without hearing something about MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn or some other type of social networking.

I've added Google's Friend Connect Service to jimclemmer.com. Here you can sign-up and connect with other people interested in leadership in general and my work in particular. If you already have a Google account, all you have to do is click sign-in on the homepage and log in. If not, you can create an account and build a profile.

If you're already signed up for LinkedIn or Facebook, you can easily find my profile or become a fan of my work on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Jim-Clemmer/21266500280>.

You'll also notice on the top right of every page of jimclemmer.com, just below the banner, there is an area to add pages or articles to other networking sites such as Digg and Del.icious or e-mail them to friends and colleagues.

So don't just leave the social networking to "the kids." Get involved and take advantage of all these great resources to expand your learning!

TIME FOR A LEADERSHIP CHECK-UP AND TUNE-UP

The senior managers and support professionals we've been working with lately are nervous. There's a lot of uncertainty and plenty of negativity inside and outside our organizations. As I saw in an off-site executive team retreat I facilitated in January, the biggest danger is that leaders allow themselves to be discouraged, demoralized, and deenergize. If they hop on the Bitter Bus – or even worse drive it – whole teams and entire organizations can spiral downward very fast.

The second biggest danger is that leaders don't redouble their efforts to refocus, reframe, and reenergize their teams. Often that's because they may not know what to do. It's been quite awhile since we've been tested with such adverse and difficult conditions as we now face.

I recently recorded a short video clip (under two minutes) outlining how this is exactly the time to invest in learning and development. Go to our main page at www.jimclemmer.com, turn on your sound, and click on the "gear" graphic in the middle of the page to play it.

I've also redesigned and updated my "Leading @ the Speed of Change" workshop for today's environment; drawing from my new book (working title of *Thriving in Turbulent Times*). "Leading @ the Speed of Change: Navigating Turbulent Times" on June 2 and 3, 2009 is a very rare two-day public workshop designed to help individuals and management teams address our most challenging issues and successfully navigate the choppy waters of uncertainty. This is my only date for open or public versions of this workshop in 2009. No others are planned. If you're in Southern Ontario or the Greater Toronto Area this is a unique opportunity to bring your team to one of my sessions (if you have more than six team members, we should talk about an in-house session customized to your organization). The Kitchener Holiday Inn is only forty-five minutes from Toronto's international airport.

For everyone outside Ontario or Canada, June is a beautiful time to visit our wonderful little piece of heaven here on earth. Niagara Falls is only ninety minutes away and many other tourist attractions are even closer. Of course, you can always go further north and look for our famous moose!

[Click here](#) for a short video clip (under two minutes) introducing the workshop and to view the agenda, outcomes you can expect, pricing, and other information.

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMMM...ON GROWING THROUGH CHANGE

"Progress everywhere today does seem to come so very heavily disguised as Chaos."
— Joyce Grenfell, British actor, writer

"Too much security and the refusal to evolve, to embrace change, leads to a kind of death."
— Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*

"It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear... It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to."
— Marilyn Ferguson, American author, editor, and speaker, best known for her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*

"The only thing that one really knows about human nature is that it changes. Change is the one quality we can predicate of it. The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development."
— Oscar Wilde, 19th Century Irish playwright and poet

"Organizations that are built to change must view people as open and willing to learn and as eager to try new things. They must have structures that are constantly refocusing attention and resources on both current and future problems and opportunities. They must have reward systems that encourage learning and growth as well as current value-added activities. Finally, they must have financial processes and other systems that support innovation and the start-up of new products and services."
— Edward E. Lawler III and Christopher G. Worley, *Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness*

SPECIAL GUEST ARTICLE : WHY ARE SOME OF YOUR STAFF NOT PERFORMING...AND WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

My good friend and great management thinker, Donald Cooper, recently wrote an article on "Why are some of your staff not performing...and whose fault is it?" Donald's work is always insightful...and his edgy style makes an interesting read. You can also get this article as a [PDF download](#)

There are about 10 reasons why your staff may not be performing...and most of them aren't their fault. So, much of the time when we're unhappy with them, it's actually because we haven't been effective leaders or managers.

Below is my list of the 10 possible causes of non-performance. For each person on your team who isn't measuring up, go down the list of possible reasons, shown below, and identify what the real problem is and who needs to do what to fix it. You'll be amazed to discover that in many cases, the "fixing" is up to you.

Cooper's 10 reasons for non-performance...and how to fix them:

1. They truly don't understand what you want done, the standard to which you want it done, or by when you want it done. Your first job as a business owner, leader or manager is to create clarity about...
a) What the business commits to deliver to its customers, to its investors and to its employees,
b) What it commits to become...and,
c) How you commit to behave along the way (your values & standards).

If you haven't created clarity about those 4 things, you haven't done your first and most important job...and only you can fix that.

2. They lack the skills, information, tools, time or empowerment to do it! So, you've given your people a job to do without giving them all the resources they need to do it. It's not their fault...you need to fix this. Sit down with non-performers and ask them what skills, information, tools, time or empowerment they need to be extraordinary.

3. They don't understand why it's important. Many employees simply do not understand how their job affects customer retention, operational efficiency, job satisfaction or job safety for other team members, or the overall success of the company. They work on one little piece of the puzzle and no one has shown them what the whole puzzle looks like. Once again, it's not their fault.

4. It doesn't have to be done! You just think it does. They get that...and you don't. I often see situations where an employee knows full well that a particular instruction from the top makes no sense, so they don't do it and hope that the boss doesn't notice.

5. They have a better way to do it. Your people often find a better way to do things than the way you told them and, if they know that you're not open to suggestions, they'll just do it the better way and, once again, hope that you don't notice. Then, if you do notice them doing it a different way, and give them Hell, you have permanently demotivated them. On the other hand, by acknowledging and rewarding innovation and proactivity, you will encourage folks to find better ways to do things and share them with others.

6. A personal problem or crisis is temporarily distracting them. Are you there for your staff when their life hits a "bump"? This is not only good for the person who hits the "bump"...it's good for everyone else on the team because they now know that if their life hits a "bump", the team will be there to support them.

Caution: Be clear about which problems you are not prepared to support, like drug abuse or compulsive gambling that can lead to employees stealing from the company or each other to support their addiction.

7. They're good people in the wrong job. Earlier in your career you were probably given jobs for which you were not suited. Nobody's good at everything. Sometimes we put great people in the wrong job and it's not their fault. Before giving someone the boot, ask them if there's some other job in the business that they think they could perform excellently...and what kind of training they think they'd need to achieve that.

There are people who are good at managing "things" who should never be given the job of managing people. For example, a great product designer, accountant or receivables manager might be a terrible department manager.

8. They're underpaid or underappreciated...or both.

Good people can go sour pretty quickly when they're underpaid or underappreciated. Or, they simply leave and go some place that is less toxic. The solution is simple. Pay more and expect more. The best people never work for the lowest pay. They don't have to. Then, create a culture of appreciation, acknowledgement and celebration.

9. It's beyond their mental or physical abilities.

Some people simply lack the mental or physical capacity to do the job. They could be very nice people. They could even be trying their best ...but they just can't do it and it's hurting the business. Find something less demanding for them to do, or counsel them on how to find an appropriate position elsewhere.

10. They simply don't want to do it. They're lazy, bitter, uncaring or dishonest. Some people are losers. They're not rescuable, they're toxic and they're killing you. It's not your fault, but shame on you if you don't deal with them. Just make sure that their non-performance is not caused by one of the other 9 factors and, if they really are a #10, give them the boot ASAP.

So, will you make a list of your non-performers and then use the above 10 "causes" to determine what needs fixing, how you can improve as a manager, who needs help and who needs to be given the boot? It's up to you. This stuff never fixes itself.

Visit [Donald's site](#) and have a look at his articles or subscribe to his newsletter!

LET'S GET PRACTICAL – FEBRUARY 24, 25, AND 27

I'll be in Medicine Hat on February 26, 2009 for a Client session. During this week I have a few open dates in my calendar that I'd like to offer you. If you're interested in a half, one or two-day customized workshop on February 24th, 25th or 27th and would like to save by sharing travel expenses, this is a great opportunity to have a practical workshop designed to revitalize managers and staff throughout your organization.

During turbulent times, practical professional development is a necessary investment in your organization's ability to navigate the choppy waters of change.

My workshops inspire action with concrete "how to" steps that dramatically boost results.

Visit the workshop page of www.jimclemmer.com to see a sampling of customized workshop choices I've previously presented. Of course, all of my presentations are customized to meet the individual needs of each Client. If you've recently been wondering about how to address issues

surrounding these rapidly changing times, then this is a great opportunity.

If you have any questions or would like to explore this option, please call Heather at 519-748-6561 or send an email for more information to Heather.Clemmer@clemmer.net.

MOST POPULAR JANUARY IMPROVEMENT POINTS

[Improvement Points](#) is a no-charge service to bring timely and inspirational quotes from my articles to subscribers three times a week. Built around our [new topic index](#), Improvement Points are crafted to help you become a better leader of yourself, your team and your organization. Each Improvement Point links directly to a full article on our web site. If you'd like to read more about the point being made in that day's Improvement Point, you simply click on its title to see the full article. Many subscribers circulate especially relevant [Improvement Points](#) articles to their team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action.

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

"An organization's behavior ripples out from the management team leading it."

— from Jim Clemmer's article, "Culture Change Starts with the Management Team"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"Paradoxically, people who work harder often get less done. As technology speeds up the flow of information and communications, less effective people are swept away on a tidal wave of trivial urgencies and busyness. Failing to reflect and learn from their experiences before choosing their next course of action, they race around putting out multiple fires with little thought to fire prevention. They join the ranks of the industriously stupid. Like painting a building with a toothbrush, they're working very hard using a dumb approach."

— from Jim Clemmer's article, "Moving Out of a Career Rut"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"We need to be less afraid of death and more frightened by an empty life. When we feel the most love, passion, or energy is when we are the most alive. That's when our soul sings."

— from Jim Clemmer's article, "With All My Heart and Soul"

[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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