Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

JIM CLEMMER

Practical Leadership:
From Inspiration to Application

| JimClemmer.com | Online Version | Past Issues | Practical Leadership Blog |

MAY 2011, ISSUE 98

As we roll into the central month of spring we can look back at turbulent times so far this year. Many headlines have focused on natural disasters, riots and war, political conflict, and economic uncertainty. **Many organizations, teams, and individuals continue to be challenged -- and stimulated -- by shifting customer priorities, rising numbers of e-mails, meetings, urgencies, narrow "silo" or departmental thinking, and major setbacks or even failures.**

This issue looks at many of the **key leadership responses needed during these topsy-turvy times**. We'll start with a look at the key F-word that defines whether we're a leader, follower, or wallower. **How we deal with "failure" (and even define it) is critical to our personal, team, or organization success.** University of Michigan professor, Jeff Liker, provides timely and valuable advice based on his new book showing **how Toyota turned their crisis into opportunity**.

We'll also look at how **lasting organizational change balances doing and being through "involved leadership."** This calls for **strong management teams that effectively pull together and take time to work _on_ their team focus and effectiveness**. As customer perceptions and needs change, we need **a broader and more integrated customer focus to continuously improve service/quality levels**. This outward looking approach needs to move deep into the organization to **counteract the inward tendencies of "tyrannical" teams and departments to protect their turf**.

Ellen Langer's research on powerful mind-body connections (reviewed here in her book *Counterclockwise*) shows how **our perceptions and expectations shape the reality of our world**.

May this May issue help you spring back from setbacks or adversity and (re)shape your personal, team, or organizational reality!

BUILDING OUR RESILIENCE IN FACING THE F-WORD

Failure. Is it **temporary** or **permanent**? Is it **an experience** or **who you are**? Do you **learn from it** or **get crushed by it**? Do you get **traumatized, bounce back, or grow and become better off**?
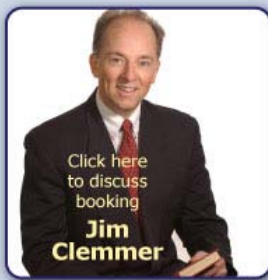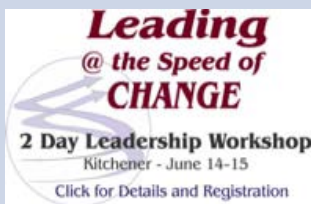
The April issue of the *Harvard Business Review* is entitled "The Failure Issue: How to

Understand It, Learn From It, and Recover From It." The editor writes: "Most of us…find it hard to draw useful lessons from our missteps. We tend to fail at failure. (My teenage son and his friends would call this an 'epic fail')." The issue features articles on:

- "Strategies for Learning from Failure"
- "Why Leaders Don't Learn from Success"
- "Failing by Design"
- "How to Avoid Catastrophe"
- An interview with (Procter and Gamble CEO) A.G. Lafley ("widely regarded as one of the most successful CEOs in recent history") on "I Think of My Failures as a Gift" and
- "Failure Chronicles" featuring stories from eight senior leaders in various industries

The article that really stands out for me is the ongoing pioneering work of Martin Seligman, Zellerbach Family Professor of Psychology and director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania. I've been a long time follower of Seligman's outstanding work. Entitled "Building Resilience," this article draws from his new book *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being.*

In the article he reports on a $145 million initiative involving 900,000 soldiers in the U.S. Army being trained in a program called Comprehensive Soldier Fitness. CSF has three components:

"…a test for psychological fitness, self-improvement courses available following the test, and "master resilience training" (MRT) for drill sergeants. These are based on PERMA: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment -- the building blocks of resilience and growth….MRT focuses on enhancing mental toughness, highlighting and honing strengths, and fostering strong relationships -- core competencies for any successful manager."

CSF helps the soldiers who fall apart under extreme adversity such as the stress of combat and army life, avoid Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It's also geared to helping those soldiers who bounce back to depression and anxiety after major stress toward higher growth. The aim is to have these two groups join the third group of soldiers who "show post-traumatic growth. They, too, first experience depression and anxiety, often exhibiting full-blown PTSD, but within a year they are better off than they were before the trauma. These are the people of whom Friedrich Nietzsche said, 'That which does not kill us makes us stronger.'"

One of the mandatory modules on **post-traumatic growth is very relevant for all of us dealing with personal and professional traumatic adversity, setbacks, and failure**. Seligman writes that it:

"…begins with the ancient wisdom that personal transformation comes from a renewed appreciation of being alive, enhanced personal strength, acting on new possibilities, improved relationships, or spiritual deepening. The module interactively teaches soldiers about five elements known to contribute to post-traumatic growth:

1. Understanding the response to trauma (read "failure"), which includes shattered beliefs about the self, others, and the future
2. Reducing anxiety through techniques for controlling intrusive thoughts and images
3. Engaging in constructive self-disclosure. Bottling up trauma can lead to a worsening of physical and psychological symptoms, so soldiers are encouraged to tell their stories
4. Creating a narrative in which the trauma is seen as a fork in the road that enhances the appreciation of paradox--loss and gain, grief and gratitude, vulnerability and strength
5. Articulating life principles"

Failure happens. Failure is life. **Failing to deal effectively with failure is where we can truly fail.**

Further Reading:

- [Martin Seligman's website](#) featuring an array of excellent self-assessment questionnaires
- [Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmmm….on Resilience](#)
- [Thoughts that Make You Go Hmmm…on Choosing Our Perspective](#)
- [Bouncing Back from Adversity is a Critical Leadership Skill](#)
- [Leading Through Adversity: Reframing Tips and Techniques](#)
- [Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive](#) by Barbara Frederickson

LASTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE BALANCES DOING AND BEING

A **three decades long trail of failed organizational change efforts** stretches back to include excellence, customer focus/service, total quality management, continuous improvement, team building, reengineering, employee engagement, process management, strategic planning, new technologies, IT systems, safety, and Lean/Six Sigma. And that's to name just a few!

Failure rates of these efforts are 50 - 70% about eighteen to twenty-four months after they're launched. Many organizations now have **a sky-high "snicker factor" for the latest change initiative**. "**Here we go again" is often the response** as eyes roll and people learn what new buzzwords they'll be subjected to and tools they'll be "sheep dipped" in.

After my blog post, [Lean Leadership: Boosting or Blocking Lean/Six Sigma Tools and Techniques](#), Jeff Liker, Professor of Industrial and Operations Engineering at the University of Michigan and I had a stimulating e-mail exchange on the Four Key Failure Factors raised there. I've been a fan of Jeff's work since reading his book, *The Toyota Way: 14 Management Principles from the World's Greatest Manufacturer* a few years ago. This book gets much deeper into the "soft" leadership behaviors and culture development that have made Toyota so incredibly successful at implementing many of the "hard" tools of continuous quality improvement.

Jeff wrote:

"I absolutely, 100%, agree with your four key failure factors:

- Partial and Piecemeal
- Bolt-on Programs versus Built-in Processes
- Culture Clash: Overly Focused on Tools and Techniques
- Leadership Lip Service

If I were to rank these I would probably put them in reverse order with leadership on top. I might write it a little differently:

- Leadership lacking deep understanding and commitment
- Focus on tools and techniques without understanding the underlying cultural transformation required

- Superficial program instead of deep development of processes that surface problems solved by thinking people
- Isolated process improvements instead of creating integrated systems for exceptional customer value"

I agree wholeheartedly! **Leadership is at the top**. I don't present this list in priority order. I leave leadership to the end because I then spring off of that to get into our Commitment Continuum and to make the point about **the role and behavior of the management team leading the organization as the single most critical variable to successful implementation of tools/approaches like Lean/Six Sigma.**

After further discussion about Toyota's recent crisis and Jeff's brand new book, *Toyota Under Fire: Lessons for Turning Crisis into Opportunity*, just out this spring (stay tuned for my next blog), Jeff made an observation about Lean/Six Sigma that's equally applicable to the long string of other failed change efforts:

"Originally Six Sigma was derived from Toyota Quality Management (TQM) by Motorola to achieve six sigma levels of quality and then through Allied Signal and GE it morphed to projects by black belts based on statistics to become a cost reduction program -- every project needs a clear ROI. In other words, we denigrated the program from a leadership philosophy to a bunch of one-off projects to cut costs. It was a complete bastardization of the original and it rarely led to lasting, sustainable change because the leadership and culture were missing.

A similar thing happened to Lean which got reduced to a toolkit (value stream mapping, KPI boards, cells, kanban, etc.)

Lean/Six Sigma in no way reflects the original thinking of excellent Japanese companies or their teachers, like Dr. Deming."

Right on! **Implementing lasting organizational changes and constant improvement is about balancing a way of *doing* (tools and techniques) with a way of *being* (behaviors and culture.) Living the "soft" side of change and improvement is really hard -- and vital to enduring success.**

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMM ON … INVOLVED LEADERSHIP

The messenger must be the message. The most effective communication is face-to-face. But **the most *believable* communication is <u>behavior</u>.** We would all much rather *see* than *hear* a sermon. Many well intentioned managers lead change or improvement efforts that are all about changing everyone else while they carry on pretty much as before. They're preaching team and organizational change while they continue to do the same things.

"Example has more followers than reason."
- Christian Nestell Bovee, 19th century American author

**"And the lectures you deliver may be very wise and true;
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give;**

But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live."
- Edgar A. Guest, early 20th century English-born American poet

"High levels of emotional intelligence, our research showed, create climates in which information sharing, trust, healthy risk-taking, and learning flourish. Low levels of emotional intelligence create climates rife with fear and anxiety. Because tense or terrified employees can be very productive in the short term, their organizations may post good results, but they never last....emotional intelligence is carried through an organization like electricity through wires. To be more specific, the leader's mood is quite literally contagious, spreading quickly and inexorably throughout the business."
- "Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance," Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Harvard Business Review*

"You can't talk your way out of something you behaved your way into."
- Author Unknown

"A stained carpet in the office or a burned-out reading light on an airplane may seem inconsequential. But when management ignores such trivial irritations, it is effectively telling employees or customers that they don't matter...an organization's true priorities are revealed by the small stuff...customers who are ill-treated by a poorly trained associate, or employees working side by side with someone clearly incompetent, surmise that the business doesn't respect them."
- *Harvard Business Review* editor, Leigh Buchanan, on Michael Levine's book Broken Windows, Broken Business: How the Smallest Remedies Reap the Biggest Rewards

"He first practices what he preaches and then preaches according to his practice."
- Confucius, ancient Chinese philosopher and teacher

"Watch a man in times of ... adversity to discover what kind of man he is; for then at last words of truth are drawn from the depths of his heart, and the mask is torn off."
- Lucretius, Roman poet philosopher

Further Reading:

- Involved Leadership: They See You Loud and Clear
- Management Team Behaviors That Speak Louder Than Words
- Lasting Culture Change Means Going Beyond Passionate Lip Service to Involved Leadership
- Survey Shows Inadequate Leadership Skills Main Reason Executives Derail
- The Soft Side of Productivity Improvement is Really Hard

TOYOTA UNDER FIRE: LEADERSHIP LESSONS ON TURNING CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY

During my e-mail exchanges with Jeff Liker we agreed on **the critical role leadership and culture play in boosting or blocking major organizational change and improvement efforts** ("Lasting Organizational Change Balances Doing and Being".) Jeff is Professor of Industrial and Operations Engineering at the University of Michigan and the author of numerous books on how **Toyota's leadership practices and culture underpin its incredibly rapid rise to the world's largest automobile manufacturer**.
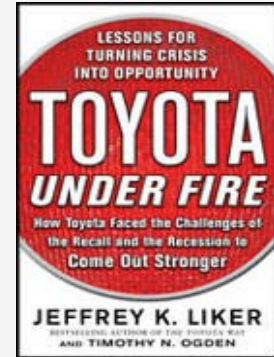
This spring Jeff released a timely new book, *Toyota Under Fire: Lessons for Turning Crisis into Opportunity*, providing **invaluable leadership lessons on how Toyota handled a major crisis that would have fatally crippled many companies**. Jeff summarizes the crisis in a *Harvard Business Review* blog post:

"In August, 2009, the improper installation of an all-weather floor mat from an SUV into a loaner Lexus sedan by a dealer led to the vehicle's accelerator getting stuck, causing a tragic, fatal accident and launching the most challenging crisis in Toyota's history. This iconic company, synonymous with safety and quality, was vilified by the American press."

A ten month NASA study just released in February showed that **the "sudden unintended acceleration" problem was not caused by any quality problems with Toyota's cars**. But the damage to Toyota's brand and stellar reputation has been done. It will take lots of time, effort, and leadership skills to rebuild that.

In the newsletter article, Responding in the Toyota Way to a Crisis, Jeff and co-author Timothy Ogden summarize **four main lessons to be learned from how this crisis was handled** (I've condensed here):

Lesson 1: Your Crisis Response Started Yesterday
Turning crisis into opportunity is all about culture. It's not about PR strategies, or charismatic leadership, or vision, or any specific action by any individual. It's about the actions that have been programmed into the individuals and teams that make up a company before the crisis starts.

Lesson 2: A Culture of Responsibility Will Always Beat a Culture of Finger-Pointing
By not pointing fingers Toyota was able to turn the energy from the crisis from anger or despair to positive improvement energy. The starting point was to take care of customers…then energy turned to looking in each function and finding opportunities for improvement to respond more quickly to every customer concern, whether rooted in technical defects or customer perception.

Lesson 3: Even the Best Culture Develops Weaknesses
Toyota's investment in a shared culture of continuous improvement is remarkable and practically unique…the company still encountered difficulties that were directly attributable to weaknesses in the culture…the greatest threat to a culture of continuous improvement is success.

Lesson 4: Globalizing Culture Means a Constant Balancing Act

Developing a shared corporate culture across varied national cultures is perhaps the biggest challenge facing modern multinational corporations...the balance between centralized and decentralized, global and local, is even harder than most people think (and most people think it's very hard)...it was out of balance toward too much centralization and took bold actions to provide more power and influence to local leaders.

Further Reading:

- Jeff's [Facebook page](#) with discussion of his work
- [From Recalls to Redemption: Toyota did NOT Lose its "Way"](#) by Jeff Liker
- [Toyota Under Fire](#) blog by Jeff Liker and Timothy Ogden
- [Debate with HBR blog readers and Jeff on Toyota's handling of their crisis](#) (scroll down to comments)
- [Lean blog and podcast](#) with Jeff on Toyota's challenges and his new book

A FOURTEEN-POINT TEAM CHECK UP

In these days of frantic activity and whirlwinds of change, **many management teams are so caught up working _in_ their team they invest little to no time working _on_ their team effectiveness**. As the daily flurry of e-mails, meetings, and firefighting overloads everyone, **most teams scramble to respond to all the demands coming at them**.

The classic and extensive studies of manager effectiveness by leadership and management professors Heike Bruch and Sumantra Ghoshal captured in ["Beware the Busy Manager"](#) and ["Reclaim Your Job"](#) show that "90% of managers waste time and fritter away their productivity by grappling with an endless list of demands from others." **Most managers bring this same crazy-busy behavior into the teams they lead or belong to**.

Teams that break the vicious cycle of we-don't-have-time-to-learn-how-to-be-more-effective-so-our-diminishing-effectiveness-sucks-away-more-of-our-time do so by **periodically stepping back. These peak performance teams regularly assess what's working, not working, and refocusing on new things to work on.**

Through facilitating hundreds of management team retreats we've evolved the following fourteen-point team check up:

Does Your Team:

- Spend most time leading (making it happen), occasionally following (watching it happen), and very little wallowing (complaining about what happened)?
- Have the right balance of focus on technical expertise/technology, management (processes/systems), and leadership (customers and staff)?
- Regularly reset priorities and plans against a clear, compelling, and shared picture of your preferred future?
- Actively guide your individual and collective leadership behaviors with 3 - 5 core values?
- Share a deep sense of purpose with strong emotional connections that leads from the heart?
- Focus on what you directly control and can influence while letting go of what you can't control?

- Openly discuss, debate, and hold courageous conversations in an atmosphere of trust and transparency?
- Engage passionate commitment from your team/organizational members?
- Build team/organizational spirit, powerful pride, and a deep sense of meaning?
- Invest heavily in coaching and developing each other and team/organization members?
- Actively look for and reduce or remove issues that block or drain team or organizational energy?
- Serve the servers, producers, and other frontline staff who deliver your services or build your products?
- Foster high levels of recognition, celebration, and appreciation?
- Tame The E-Beast by actively reducing information and technology overload and increasing two-way communications?

This framework has grown out of my last few books and work on leadership and culture development with dozens of management teams in a variety of public and private sector organizations. Our *Leading @ the Speed of Change: Navigating Turbulent Times* workshop is built around these key points.

Individual participants at my infrequent public workshops (usually once every year or two) in my hometown of Kitchener, Ontario (45 minutes west of Toronto's airport) rate the session highly and report that they pick up many *practical* leadership tips, tools, and techniques during the intensive two-day session. However, **management teams that have attended get even more benefits when attending together.** They can **step back to assess their collective leadership performance, address obstacles as a team, brainstorm team applications, hold each other accountable with follow through, and pull together to strengthen teamwork.**

See *Leading @ the Speed of Change: Navigating Turbulent Times* for more information. I hope to see you and help you and your management team get off the frantic tread mill for a few days of R & R - reflection and renewal!

THE THREE RINGS OF PERCEIVED VALUE: AN INTEGRATED CUSTOMER FOCUS

Many organizations today are **striving to increase their customer service or product quality levels**. Legions of executives are declaring themselves "customer-focused" or "customer-centric." **Yet customer service levels are slipping** and many of us are frustrated by attitudes of indifference, navigating technological mazes ("press one to hear that your call is very important to us"), or being bounced around like we're a major interruption to real work.

Fundamental to delivering high service/quality levels is starting with the **customer's perceptions of value**. That outside-in view of weighting what's most important must then drive the integration of the technical, processes/systems, and people interaction components that combine to create the customer's overall experience.

Centuries ago the Greek Philosopher, Epictetus, declared, "what concerns me is not the way things are, but rather the way people think things are." **Service/quality, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder**. To the question, "what is high (or low) 'service/quality,'" **the simple answer is "whatever the customer says it is."** Defining service/quality means looking to the customers being served. **Customer's perceptions of the value they are receiving must become the common yardstick** against which all activities of every operating and support department and team throughout the entire organization are measured.

But **most organizations are organized by vertical departments, functions, or disciplines that toss the customer over the wall from one group to the next**. Ask an engineer, clinician, or other technical professional what customers value most and they'll focus on product or service specifications or requirements.

In a restaurant, for example, people in the kitchen or "back of the house" will be focused on food quality. "Front of the house" managers may be focused on getting people seated, order efficiency, delivering food accurately and on time, parking, operating hours, or other convenience factors. And the best servers will be looking for ways to tailor their services to individual customer preferences while relating to each person they serve with higher or lower degrees of warmth, humor, attentiveness, attuned to what that person wants.

Back in my days at The Achieve Group (now AchieveGlobal) we developed The **Three Rings of Perceived Value to horizontally integrate all the vertical functions that need to come together to deliver high customer service/quality levels**. This model was the beginning point for the system described in my book *Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Corporate Performance*.

We've continued to evolve the Three Rings model for cross-functional, integrated customer focus. It's used for a "systems thinking" approach to improving service/quality levels. That calls for pulling together those directly producing products or serving customers and those serving them.

	First Ring *Basic Product or Service*	Second Ring *Support*	Third Ring *Enhanced Service*
Focus	Requirements/Specs	Satisfaction	Delight
Customer Concern	Does the product/service meet my needs/standards/ expectations?	Is the product/service convenient/efficient/easy to access or use?	How do they make me feel?
Key Elements	Technology/Technical expertise	Systems, processes, policies, and structure	Leadership and Culture
Controlled by	Technical specialists	Management	Front line performers
Abilities Needed	Industry/Field/Trade/ Clinical Knowledge or Skills	Intellect and Reasoning (IQ)	Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Quickie Service/Quality Quiz:

- What's your team, department, or organization's Basic Product? What do your customers or internal partners say it is? Does everyone agree?
- What core processes/systems cut across your team, department, or organization to provide Second Ring Support? Have you visually mapped them out through the eyes of -- or even involving -- the customers/internal partners you serve?
- Do your First Ring technical experts ignore or discount "touchy-feely" customer/internal partner perceptions ("that's just their perception, that's not reality".)
- How do you integrate all three rings so that each team or department understands the overall customer/internal partner experience and pull together to continuously improve it?

BOOK REVIEW OF *COUNTERCLOCKWISE: MINDFUL HEALTH AND THE POWER OF POSSIBILITY*

How old would you be if you didn't know how old your body is? "**You're only as old as you feel" is folk wisdom that's almost a cliche**. In *Counterclockwise*, Harvard psychology professor, Ellen Langer, presents powerful evidence showing just how true that is.

Langer's life work is on illusion of control, aging, decision-making, and mindfulness theory. She's published over 200 research articles, six academic books, and won

numerous academic honors. Part of her American Psychology Association award states, "...her pioneering work revealed the profound effects of increasing mindful behavior...and offers new hope to millions whose problems were previously seen as unalterable and inevitable. Ellen Langer has demonstrated repeatedly how our limits are of our own making."

Her 1979 pioneering study on aging established her career and is where Counterclockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility draws its title. In this study an experimental group of elderly men were taken to a one week retreat in a detailed recreation **of the world of 1959**. All their conversations, movies, decor, music, current events and book discussions, photos, newspapers, and the like were **as if they are**
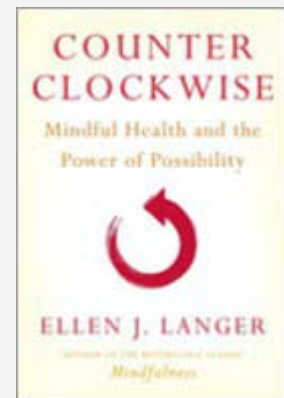
actually living in 1959. A control group of elderly men were taken on a separate retreat to reminisce and talk about what their life was like in 1959. Both groups underwent extensive physical and mental tests before and after their retreats.

The differences were dramatic:

"The experimental group showed greater improvement on joint flexibility, finger length (their arthritis diminished and they were able to straighten their fingers more), and manual dexterity. On intelligence tests, 63 percent of the experimental group improved their scores, compared to only 44 percent of the control group. There were also improvements in height, weight, gait, and posture. Finally, we asked people unaware of the study's purpose to compare photos taken of the participants at the end of the week to those submitted at the beginning of the study. These objective observers judged that all of the experimental participants looked noticeably younger at the end of the study."

Langer's conclusion set her career path for the coming decades and frames the focus of *Counterclockwise*:

"This study shaped not only my view of aging but also my view of limits in a more general way for the next few decades. Over time I have come to believe less and less that biology is destiny. It is not primarily our physical selves that limit us but rather our mindset about our physical limits. Now I accept none of the medical wisdom regarding the courses our diseases must take as necessarily true."

Counterclockwise adds **convincing evidence to the rapidly growing bodies of research on the mind-body connection and the power of optimism**. The book chronicles numerous studies Langer, her colleagues, and other researchers have done to show how we can "change our physical health by changing our minds."

Counterclockwise is a fairly short book. My only criticism is that it's still about 30% too long. Langer's anecdotes tend to ramble with much more detail than we really need.

The broader leadership implications of the book's main findings are profound. She discusses, for example, **how mindlessly we often accept limitations and give away our control over our health and other aspects of our lives. That limits our choices, reduces our chances of success, and further shrinks our boundaries**.

Part of the work Langer and her research are currently engaged in involves **mindful learning, mindful leadership, and the effects of a leader's mindfulness on others**. It will be fascinating to see if they can develop a study showing **the impact of a strong leader helping a negative or defeated organization turn back the clock on their beliefs and behaviors**.

Further Reading:

- [Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on …. The Mind/Body Connection](#)
- [After the Tears: Getting Past Bad News by Visualizing a Better Tomorrow](#)
- [The Victimitis Virus: Undermining and Giving Away our Power](#)
- [Possibility Thinking: Spreading Hope and Optimism](#)
- [Thoughts that Make You Go Hmmm…on Imagery](#)
- [What We Get is What We See](#)
- [Vision at Work](#)

A selection of short articles on [Attitude and Outlook](#)

HOW "INTERNAL CUSTOMERS" CREATE SILOS, TURF WARS, AND TYRANTS

As many organizations work to focus on customers and increase service/quality levels, **we're seeing a growing problem with "internal customer tyranny."** That's where one department **uses its status as a "customer" of another department or support group to make their own lives easier.** Too often there's **little or no connection to whether the real customer** -- those paying the bills or being served by the organization -- **gets better service/quality.** In fact, the service/quality real customers get is usually worse.

As he so often did, Peter Drucker, the insightful management author, pierced straight to the heart of the customer focus issue:

"The single most important thing to remember about any enterprise is that results exist only on the outside. The result of a business is a satisfied customer. The result of a hospital is a healed patient. The result of a school is a student who has learned something and puts it to work ten years later. Inside an enterprise there are only costs."

The big difference between an organization producing a consistent level of customer-defined high service/quality and one with low performance ratings can most clearly be seen in the perspective from which they view the world. **The common and least customer-focused approach is to narrowly see the world through the lens of internal disciplines, functions, or technical expertise.** This is compounded by vertical structures, lines of accountability, and individual performance management systems. **Measures, priorities, and resource allocations with an internal perspective are a root cause of the large gaps between what customers expect and what they perceive is delivered.**

Stellar service/quality can only be delivered by finding a multitude of ways to **keep everyone in an organization looking at what they do from the outside in**. This means that everyone throughout the Service/Quality Chain is able to **define, plan, implement, and measure their job around external customer expectations**. However, since many people are not dealing with external customers directly every day, they need to define their contributions on the basis of how well they are serving their internal partners so that external customers can be better served.

During these times of falling dictators and tyrants, we've repeatedly heard them talk of having the best interests of "the people" in mind while disempowering and even slaughtering them. While it's nowhere near as extreme or deadly, **internal customer tyrants often talk of serving customers while actually dictating or bending others toward meeting their needs and priorities**. Highly customer-focused organizations **integrate their entire production or service delivery change around customer needs**. Everyone needs to **pull together as internal partners to directly produce products or deliver services, or support someone who is**.

Further Reading:

- [Blocks to Customer Focus](#)
- [Casual, Moderate, and Intense Levels of Customer/Partner Focus](#)
- [Getting it Together: Integrating Customer Focus, Involvement, and Horizontal Management](#)

LEADING @ THE SPEED OF CHANGE: NAVIGATING TURBULENT TIMES
RARE PUBLIC WORKSHOP - JUNE 14 - 15

Is your team **overwhelmed by meetings, e-mails, projects, and a torrent of "top priorities?"** Is your team **scrambling to juggle endless changes**? And is the pace speeding up?

> "I have attended various seminars and this was by far the most concrete insight to help me focus my organization."
> - Peter Reaume, President **Logisti Solve Inc.**

There's nothing like a few days to **reflect, renew, energize, and gain a fresh perspective.** To get out of the acceleration and busyness traps **your team needs a progress check**. You need to **slow down to go faster.**

One of the key features of these *rare* public workshops is the chance to **strategize overcoming these common leadership challenges with colleagues** from other organizations. Managers from hundreds of organizations such as IBM, Research in Motion, Petro-Canada, American Express, Westjet, General Motors, Bombardier, Toyota, Syncrude, healthcare, and public sector (municipal, provincial, and federal) organizations have attended past sessions, and **rated the session an average of over 4.5 on a 5 point scale. Many rated it a 6 or higher!**

Don't miss out on **the only public workshop I'll be doing this year**. **Bring your team** and save $100 - $200 each. You can find full details, discounts, and registration here. **Register today!**

TWEET READING: RECOMMENDED ONLINE RESOURCES

This section summarizes last month's LinkedIn Updates and Twitter Tweets sent about online articles or blog posts that I've flagged as **worth reading**. These are usually posted on weekends when I am doing much of my reading for research, learning, or leisure.

My original tweet commenting on the article precedes each title and descriptor from the original source:

Getting **emotional buy-in to team or organizational change is so critical and yet so poorly done** by many managers.

> **Four Ways to Increase the Urgency Needed for Change** —
> **John Kotter**
> http://blogs.hbr.org
>
> "Success creates size, market power, and an entitlement culture, all of which, in turn, create an inward focus, a lack of understanding of external reality, and a total lack of urgency to correct the problem."

Practical **how-to steps to "reboot your listening skills"** reinforced by the importance of tone.

> **Tools to Hear - Tone to Engage** - **Brian Caulfield**
> http://blogs.forbes.com
>
> "Many leaders try to change others, so they can speak and feel heard at work. Yet far fewer are aware of the brain powered tools required to really hear in ways that raise worker engagement."

Classic Peter Drucker advice addressing **a key skill many supervisors, managers, and executives need to dramatically strengthen**.

   Yes, You Can Make Performance Reviews Worthwhile —
   Rick Wartzman
   http://www.businessweek.com

   "And less odious for all parties. The key is to concentrate first and foremost on employees' strengths."

READ IT HERE OR HOT OFF MY BLOG

The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my blog (updated twice per week) 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."

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!!**