



JIM CLEMMER

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

September 2007, Issue 54

In this issue...

- **Back to School**
- **Moose Crossing Ahead**
- **Hey! That's Me!**
- **Customer-Focused IT**
- **Broadening the Change Focus**
- **Involved and Active Listening is Key to Strong Leadership**
- **Teaching Managers How to Have Effective Performance Review Discussions**
- **Leading Generation X**
- **Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Participation and Involvement**
- **Most Popular August Improvement**

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

-Alvin Toffler

What happened to summer? Every June starts with lots of plans and a feeling of easy living stretching far off into the horizon. Then you blink and it's August. We have an annual tradition, here in the Clemmer household, of hitting the Canadian National Exhibition (a very large fair in Toronto often referred to as The Ex) as an annual summer close-out that Heather and I started just after we were married thirty years ago.

Early September feels much like early January to me. It's a new season and it often feels like a new year around the office. We're especially excited about this fall because my latest book, *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work* will be pre-launched before its official release in January. As a *Leader Letter* reader, you'll be getting the inside scoop (and an opportunity to purchase advance copies) over the next few issues. Watch this space!

Moose Crossing Ahead

This month our marketing director, Aidan Crawford, and I are furiously finalizing the production of my new book, *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work*. Aidan's technology skills have been a wonderful addition to The CLEMMER Group in reshaping, continually improving, and updating our web site and digital communications work. That's mainly why he was hired last January. But his writing skills (he has over fifteen years of experience writing for newspapers and magazines) and creativity have been a real bonus and have proven very helpful in polishing the book.

I did get a wonderful family vacation in beautiful Prince Edward Island and a few lazy days off this summer. The rest of the time was spent finishing the manuscript and then going through the (somewhat) painful editing and production process. With the help of Don Bastian, an excellent editor with thirty years under his belt, I let go of some of my hard-written material in the interest of staying focused with the main story. Don's a persuasive guy. I only cried a few tears as he gently pried the stuffy sections, puffy paragraphs, and what I thought was a killer ending worthy of a major literary prize from my clenched hands. Fortunately, in the end it made for a better story. But of course as the writer and publisher, I had the last say!



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September 2007, Issue 54

We've had such success with self-publishing [*Growing the Distance*](#) and [*The Leader's Digest*](#). So it's a no-brainer to self-publish *Moose-on-the-Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work*. One big advantage of self-publishing is to own all audio, video, and electronic rights. In today's world, that's becoming an ever bigger issue as book channels and delivery vehicles continue fragmenting.

The biggest advantage of self-publishing is the economics for selling books in large quantities. We've sold over 100,000 copies of [*Growing the Distance*](#) and 40,000 copies of [*The Leader's Digest*](#) mainly to organizations purchasing hundreds or thousands of them for their managers, employees, dealers, customers, students, subscribers, and the like. Since publishing [*Growing the Distance*](#) in 1999, most Clients booking me for a speaking engagement or workshop purchase at least one book for every audience member. With *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work* we're going to make it very financially attractive to continue this trend.

As the sub-title states, I've taken a novel approach with this book. This is my first work of fiction. I've thoroughly enjoyed studying and applying the timeless art of storytelling to allow the reader to be a fly-on-the-wall witness to the kinds of ineffective and effective conversations and actions I've seen over twenty-five years of working in the personal, team, and organization development fields. I had lots of fun writing the book and tried to balance a humorous and engaging story with leadership learning. I hope readers find it highly "edutaining."

Next month's issue of *The Leader Letter* will provide you with a full overview of *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work*. If you can hang in there until then, you'll be rewarded with special offers to purchase or download pre-publication copies at steep discounts!

Hey! That's Me!

During our family vacation in Prince Edward Island last month, Heather purchased a fridge magnet for me. It couldn't have been more timely or appropriate this summer given the work we're doing to finish up and then launch *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work*. The magnet had a cartoon with two moose sipping beers in a bar (no doubt, Moosehead beer). One of the moose is pointing at a moose's head mounted on the wall behind them. The bubble above his head reads, "Hey! Wait a minute! That's Jim!" You can see this and other amusing moose stuff at [Jeff Pert's site](#).

What are the odds? The same scene is available on a T-Shirt. Maybe I'll get one for facilitating my [moose hunting workshops](#)!

Customer-Focused IT

Last month I wrote about how I have used the burgeoning research on Emotional Intelligence in my work. A few months earlier writer Diann Daniel interviewed me, Daniel Goleman, and other leading



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September 2007, Issue 54

EI researchers and writers. She wrote an excellent article entitled "Soft Skills for CIOs and Aspiring CIOs: Four Ways to Boost Your Emotional Intelligence." To read my comments and link to Diann's article see "[Boosting Your Emotional Intelligence](#)."

In August, [InterGovWorld.com](#) ran [Diann's article](#). They also included a Related Content section with links to a few past articles. If you're interested in helping IT professionals – or your entire IT department – become more customer focused, I recommend you click on the "Three Strategies for Customer-Focused IT" link. This short article makes some key points on the need and approaches for helping IT become more customer-focused.

In the past year, we have seen a sharp increase in organizations asking for our "[Leading a Customer-Centered Organization: How to Build a Service/Quality System for Exceptional Results](#)" workshops for IT departments and professionals. We also see many of our [consulting Clients focusing IT](#) more sharply on external through to internal customer needs.

I'd love to get your experiences with personally developing your own EI as well as any approaches you've found useful to help others (IT or otherwise) build these vital skills. E-mail me at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net.

Broadening the Change Focus

Hi Jim

Just to say thanks very much for the very useful insight you give in your regular updates. They are an inspiration.

One book I have just completed which you may have already read, but if not I would highly recommend is by John Seddon called "In pursuit of Quality - the case against ISO 9000" It has really challenged me in our organization and I recognize many of the failings we have fallen foul of over the years since we gained registration. We have become very 'procedure driven' at the expense of understanding what really matters to the customer and I am considering ways in which we can get back to focusing on the people who pay the bills!!

The book is out of print currently but I managed to get the UK public library service to track down a copy! Thanks again for your wisdom.

Regards,

*Paul Phillips
Head of Operations, Environmental Monitoring Services
West Sussex, UK*



JIM CLEMMER

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September 2007, Issue 54

Hi Paul,

Thanks for your message I am delighted to hear that you find [*Improvement Points*](#) are useful and inspiring.

I have not read John Seddon's book. Your comments on it are certainly something we hear a fair bit. Many organizations fall into that same trap. Our focus at The CLEMMER Group continues to be on helping management teams integrate improvement or change efforts into larger and more integrated strategic efforts. You will be able to read more about that in last month's issue (August) of [*The Leader Letter*](#).

Involved and Active Listening is Key to Strong Leadership

In August I posted my top three "[*Favorite July Improvement Points*](#)" on [my blog](#). Here are two comments left by visitors:

"The challenge that I see as one of the 'masses' is there is a huge disconnect between what some leaders say and what they actually do. With the healthcare worker shortage now is the time to start inviting nurses and other front line workers to be part of the solution. This is not happening often enough on a consistent basis and many of my colleagues are leaving for organizations that have 'chosen' to listen to them."

"Active listening is the route to successful relationships especially with younger employees..."

I couldn't agree more! These comments seemed to stem from one of the [*Improvement Points*](#) that dealt with the demoralization – especially the line "People feel criticized, ignored, unappreciated, and even used. They feel like a piece of equipment or just so many 'human assets with skin wrapped around them'."

Here are three articles from the [Passion and Commitment section](#) of our web site excerpted from [*The Leader's Digest*](#) that expand on these key leadership behaviors. They show that a growing body of research clearly points to involvement and partnering as key to increased effectiveness. Click on the title to read the full article.

[Beyond Manipulating and Motivating to Leading and Inspiring](#)

When confronting morale problems, managers will often succumb to the Victimitis virus and blame the declining work ethic, or any number of societal factors. But these factors are more imagined than real. Studies show that people's real needs are much less mercenary than most managers believe.



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Engagement is an Inside Job

Building partnerships through involvement and participation results in strong leadership that leads to high performance.

Retaining Top People

Retention and engagement are critical to an organization's success, but attracting and retaining talented people is a growing challenge for many organizations.

Teaching Managers How to Have Effective Performance Review Discussions

Last month I ran a short question and my short response to a reader looking for a "...best practice' in the area of teaching managers how to have effective performance review conversations....not just with poor performers but with all employees." [You can read this item here.](#)

After reading this exchange on [my blog](#), a (clearly experienced and knowledgeable) visitor left this post:

"Couldn't agree more that it is often a combination of a number of things that make having that performance conversation that is truly effective.

First, getting to know your employee helps to find out what motivates them, how they like to be recognized for work well done, what type of training they like or get the most from, making sure they feel some ownership of the review process. Including how they will be reviewed.

Second, having clear responsibilities and expectations understood by all helps with communication overall. This allows more productive two-way communication throughout the year. This communication helps the employee see you in a 'coaching role'.

Third, having that culture that nurtures employees as resources. They are your most valuable resource. Having them set and achieve goals (specific, measurable, attainable and realistic goals with clear start or finish timelines work really well).

I personally like the 360 review process and it has worked well in many of the organizations I have used it in."

Short and right on! Here are three articles from the [Growing and Developing section of our web site](#) (two are excerpted from [The Leader's Digest](#)) that expand on the vital leadership skill of coaching. Click on the title to read the full article.



JIM CLEMMER

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[A Coach's Playbook for Leaders](#)

Effective managers bring out the best in their people.

[Growing Others into What They Could Be](#)

A leader sees people as they could be, seeing beyond current problems and limitations to help others see their own possibilities.

[Leaders Give People Space to Grow](#)

Leaders treat each person in their organization as an individual with his or her own unique aspirations, strengths, and characteristics; and then work to put people in the best place for them to thrive and succeed.

Leading Generation X

A web site visitor read my excerpt from [The Leader's Digest](#) entitled "[A Tale of Two Managers: Command versus Commitment](#)" (contrasting Joel and Denise's management/leadership approaches) and sent me this e-mail. My response follows.

"For two years I have been managing a team of thirteen GenX contract staff working in a client's site. We have twenty percent permanent staff and eighty percent contract staff.

I have been trying to reduce the gap between contract and permanent staff. However GenX don't seem to be as loyal or patient to stay on after about 18 months on the job. They will often leave for just a small amount of money elsewhere. I believe GenX are money spenders and don't really care about long-term commitment.

Being a Denise manager (contrary to Joel), I can convince them to pursue our team's goals. But after a year I lose my best performers who are chasing after awards, tokens, and small salary increases. What helps GenX staff look beyond the immediate dollars and create a path to excel within this team?

What factors make my approaches fail? My leadership?"

Your mixture of permanent and contract staff and the attitude of the young people you describe strongly underline the need for leadership. The story of Denise and Joel you reference from [The Leader's Digest](#) highlights a leadership style that builds "volunteerism." Another term that's gaining popularity for the same idea is building "a magnet organization/team."

Whatever it's called, this leadership approach nurtures deep feelings of pride and commitment to the organization, team or cause. Energy levels are high, teamwork is strong, and most people identify strongly with the group and its purpose.



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It's hard to diagnose your situation without a deeper assessment. But it looks like your last question on whether it's about your leadership is the right one. Studies of Gen Xers show they deeply want to be part of an organization they can feel proud of and want their abilities used and stretched as much as possible. David Sirota's extensive survey database (established in 1972) shows that Gen Xers are no different than everyone else when it comes to "...the basic goals at work - the need to be treated fairly, the desire to have a sense of achievement and pride in your work, and the desire to have productive relations with your co-workers."

The Gallup Organization and other researchers have shown that 70% of the reason people leave an organization is because of their immediate manager. This could well mean you need a deep and courageous look in your leadership mirror. I'd suggest you do a 360 survey to get safe feedback from people who report to you, your peers, and your manager around your leadership style. There are numerous ones available based on Emotional Intelligence and many other leadership models.

You're on the right track in looking at your own leadership. You're clearly in a situation where the people you lead can easily vote with their feet. The high turnover you're experiencing points strongly to the possibility that they are not feeling compelled to stay.

That is a leadership issue.

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Participation and Involvement

"No one is apathetic except those in pursuit of someone else's objectives."

-Henry Ford, American automobile pioneer

"Leadership is not so much the exercise of power as the empowerment of others. Leaders lead by pulling rather than by pushing; by creating achievable, challenging expectations and rewarding progress toward them, rather than by manipulating; by enabling people to use their own initiative."

-Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith, *Learning to Lead: A Workbook on Becoming a Leader*

"The core of the problem is the mindset that somehow people have to be managed, motivated, and trained for them to perform well. In fact, mostly people just need to be included and given some choice, treated as owners, and supported as if they're central to the business. That's what stewardship is all about."

-Peter Block, author and consultant

"The ratios of We's to I's is the best indicator of the development of a team."

-Lewis Eigen, Executive Vice President, University Research Corporation



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"People want to be treated like responsible adults, but many workers - primarily in factories but also in many white-collar settings - are, as they see it, treated like children or criminals, subjected to strict monitoring of their work and other behavior to coerce performance and conformity to the 'rules.' The response to this kind of treatment is that anger builds up in workers over time, and this has always been a major element in the more severe industrial relations conflicts we have studied. Even when the reaction is not explosive, this mode of management is self-defeating for the company. It is based on false assumptions about the great majority of workers (e.g., that they are irresponsible) and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: management that expects the worst from people gets it."

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

"When you give people choice, you give them power. When you give them power, you give them freedom. When you give them freedom, you give them back their individuality and their life. When they get their life back, they will choose to find unity and purpose. This is a natural human yearning and a requirement of the spiritually centered organization."

-Ian Percy, *Going Deep: Exploring Spirituality in Life and Leadership*

Most Popular August Improvement Points

Improvement Points is a free service providing a key thought or quotation from one of my articles, provided three times per week, directly to your e-mail inbox. Each complimentary Improvement Point links directly into the full article on our web site that spawned it. If you'd like to read more about that day's Improvement Point, you can choose to click through to the brief article for a quick five-minute read. This is your opportunity for a short pause that refreshes, is an inspirational vitamin, or a quick performance boost. You can circulate especially relevant or timely articles or Improvement Points to your team, Clients, or colleagues for further discussion or action.

Here are my personal three choices of the *Improvement Points* we sent out in August:

In the middle of a meeting with a few colleagues I caught myself saying, "Once we get through this crazy period and things get back to normal..." Then it hit me. I had been saying something like that for at least a year or two.

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "This Crazy Period of Constant Change is Normal"

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_75.aspx



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Many rigid managers try to use "change management" or improvement planning to regulate and direct the random and chaotic events swirling around them. They aren't comfortable with letting their improvement plan and path to higher performance unfold and evolve toward their vision, values, purpose, goals and priorities. In other words, they think they can start with the answers. They're not comfortable with learning.

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Change Management Can Lead to Rigidity and Resistance to Change"

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_53.aspx

Effective mobilizing and energizing goes well beyond "doing" programs to the "being" or culture of a team, organization, or any group including a family. That culture is a set of shared attitudes and accumulated habits around "the way we do things here." The culture provides the context or backdrop that either energizes or exhausts people.

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "The Motivation Myth"

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_39.aspx

Feedback and Follow-Up

I am always delighted to hear from readers of *The Leader Letter* with feedback, reflections, suggestions, or differing points of view. Nobody is ever identified in *The Leader Letter* without their permission.

I am also happy to explore customized, in-house adaptations of any of my material for your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail at jim.clemmer@clemmer.net.

Keep learning, laughing, loving, and leading -- living life just for the L of it!

Jim

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