

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

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JULY 2009, ISSUE 76

It's finished! After six months of intensive research and writing I've sent the manuscript for *Growing @ the Speed of Change* to be typeset and printed. I've really appreciated Susan Chilton's strong editorial skills – especially her headline-writing experience from her newspaper days – in adding powerful punch to the magazine-style format used in this book. Susan is Dave Chilton's sister. For the past twenty years, Dave has been a good friend, an inspiration, and a source of invaluable publishing advice (having sold over two million copies of *The Wealthy Barber*, he does seem to know a few things about the book business). And we got another bonus with Bob Chilton (their father) applying his eagle-eyed proof-reading skills to the final manuscript. Since both Susan and Bob originally helped Dave with his book, I can only hope a bit of the Chilton magic has rubbed off here!

This is my best work yet and I'm extremely pleased and excited to be publishing my seventh book. In large part it's because I was able to draw from thousands of people who've influenced my thinking or contributed to my own life experiences. These include keynote, workshop, and retreat participants as well as [blog](#) and *Leader Letter* readers. Some of their quotes, experiences, and perspectives are featured in *Growing @ the Speed of Change*. And after decades of practice I hope my writing is continuously improving.

The August issue of *The Leader Letter* will feature *Growing @ the Speed of Change* content, publication plans, and a special pre-publication offer. You'll get a sense for the underlying themes of the new book from the first three sections below. Since I am a voracious reader, and have just finished a book, and you are clearly a reader, this month's "Thoughts..." are about – books!

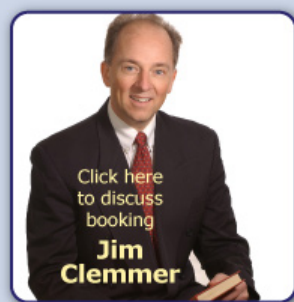
CHOOSING OUR PERSPECTIVE: INVIGORATING OR DISASTROUS TIME TO BE ALIVE?

There's plenty of evidence to show that we're in the midst of a major world shift. We're living through another disruptive pivot point of history. Part of nature's rejuvenation is a phase of cleansing and purging. This usually rocks the current framework, expectations, and too-comfortable lifestyles. Cleansing and purging makes room for the new order. It's not always fun. But it is a necessary part of growth.

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Depending on our perspective, a hinge of history, like the one we're currently experiencing, is either an invigorating or a cursed time to be alive. If you choose to thrive on turbulence and change, this time is a rare gift to participate in, and help shape, new ways of doing and being in our personal lives, organizations, communities, and societies. Years from now, we will look at this hinge of history as an era of upheaval and renewal that inspired us to a higher and different order of prosperity. If we continue history's long trends, we're moving toward a great renaissance of spirit, cooperation, love, redefined wealth, and care for the earth's environment.

During our workshops, team-planning sessions in particular, we often compile a list of major trends rocking our world. And it is generally a long, long list: technology, customer expectations, competition, globalization, business/organizational models, product or service response or development times, workforce demographics and cultural diversity, government regulations and policies, employee attitudes and expectations in the workplace, environmental issues and concerns, and economic gyrations between rapid expansion and sharp contraction...

I could go on, but you get the picture: these are all things shaping us or within our power to shape. This is an invigorating and great time – or a threatening and disastrous time – to be alive.

BUILT TO CHANGE IS ESPECIALLY CRITICAL TODAY

Unpredictable, unexpected, rapid, and even unfair change is rocking governments, businesses, and people worldwide. And the history buff in me finds lots of evidence to show this really isn't a new trend – and will never stop. There's no "getting through this crazy period" to some mythical place of stability, or predictable sameness. Whether these changes are deadly threats or growth opportunities often depends upon how they are dealt with. When our rate of growth and learning is slow or stalled, any change can be sudden and overwhelming. It leaves us scrambling to catch up with its impact, learning, or skills we need to just cope – never mind thrive.

Building a flexible and adaptable team or organizational culture is more critical today than ever. In their book, [*Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness*](#), Professor Edward Lawler III and research scientist, Christopher Worley, of the University of Southern California's Center for Effective Organizations write, "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."

THRIVE ON TURBULENCE BY GROWING FOR IT

As I was finishing the final editing stages of *Growing @ the Speed of Change*, I was running into a huge number of speaking and workshop Clients wrestling with massive personal and organizational change. It certainly was a powerful reaffirmation of the focus and message of the book. And I don't think it's just a case of me seeing what I want to see. Inspiration and advice on dealing with change, adversity, and turmoil does seem to be very timely.

While researching and writing *Growing @ the Speed of Change*, I came across the following wisdom from the delightful and insightful book, [*The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living*](#). Written by the Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler, they describe a central tenet of Buddhism critical to thriving in tumultuous times: "Without cultivating a pliant mind, our outlook becomes brittle and our relationship to the world becomes characterized by fear. But by adopting a flexible, malleable approach to life, we can maintain our composure even in the most restless and turbulent conditions. It is through our efforts to achieve a flexible mind that we can nurture the resiliency of the human spirit." Mystics, philosophers, and spiritual teachers have for centuries emphasized that a fundamental key to dealing with life's turbulence is acceptance of life's impermanence.

After reading my above blog post, [Patricia Katz](#) sent me this insightful comment:

"Not getting too attached to an elusive and imaginary status quo - now that is indeed the central challenge of change!"

Pat has a wealth of excellent and thoughtful articles on balancing our busy lives and giving ourselves "permission to pause" at <http://www.pauseworks.com/library/articles.php>.

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMMM...ON BOOKS

"A room without books is as a body without a soul."
- Cicero, Roman statesman, orator, and writer

"He was going to write a book...but then he found out you can buy them for \$19.95."
- Unknown

"Your library is your portrait."
- George Holbrook Jackson, British journalist, writer and publisher

"I have sometimes dreamt that when the Day of Judgment dawns and the great conquerors and lawyers and statesman come to receive their rewards, the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without certain envy, when he sees us coming with books under our arms, 'Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading.'"
- Virginia Woolf, English novelist, critic, and essayist

"Employ your time in improving yourself by others' writings so that you shall come easily by what others have labored hard for."
- Socrates, Classical Greek philosopher

"A best seller was a book which somehow sold well simply because it was selling well."

- Daniel Boorstin, American historian, professor, attorney, and writer

"When you read a classic you do not see in the book more than you did before. You see more in you than there was before."

- Clifton Paul Fadiman, American writer, editor

IMPROVING IT'S INTERNAL SERVICE LEVELS

When the June issue of *The Leader Letter* went out, I included an item from my April 30th blog posting responding to a workshop attendee who read one of my articles with a chart on moving from casual or moderate to intense levels of customer service. She also asked for ideas on how to accomplish this top level of service on a small scale inside a large organization. I then asked for examples on increasing internal service levels with support groups like HR, IT, or Admin and Finance.

Kevin Claerhout responded with this post shortly after reading this item in [*The Leader Letter*](#):

"Hi Jim,

I love your newsletter, [Improvement Points](#), and recently read [Growing the Distance](#) (loved it too)!

Regarding "internal service"... I spent the first 18 years of my career in my company's IT organization, providing service to many different business areas over the years. When members of a business area approached me with problems or new opportunities the first thing I would do is learn as much as possible about the business area involved. I wanted to know as much as they did about how their processes were supposed to work, the information they used, the issues involved, how success is measured, etc.

What I enjoyed most about my role was that I was learning the business and not just dealing with the technology. I also found that I could propose much better solutions, work much more effectively with people and even propose new opportunities when we were "playing on the same field."

As a result, about 4 years ago, when one of the business areas had an opening in their group they approached me to take the job (which I did). Now that I'm on the other side of the fence and needing service from the IT organization, I find that too often the person I'm dealing with just simply asks, "what is it you would you like me to do?" If only they understood what I now do...that you can give much better service (and get ahead) if you seek to understand more than just the specifics of a single request."

Kevin gets at the heart of a big problem with many technical service providers. Most of us "non-techies" aren't especially excited about the technology itself nor do we understand enough about how it works to

technically define what we want. It's like that old marketing example that customers often don't go into a hardware store to just buy a ¼ inch drill bit. They are looking for a way to get a ¼ inch hole. They want to accomplish that in the easiest and most inexpensive way.

Kevin also demonstrates a high level of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Unfortunately, low EI is a big problem with many highly technical people found in IT departments. Fortunately, EI skills can be learned. Back in 2007 writer, Diann Daniel, interviewed me for an article she was writing for CIO and CSO magazines. She also interviewed Daniel Goldman and other leading EI researchers and writers. The resulting article, "[Soft Skills for CIOs and Aspiring CIOs: Four Ways to Boost Your Emotional Intelligence](#)" is excellent.

Click on "[From Casual to Moderate to Intense Levels of Service](#)" to read the full blog post that triggered Kevin's response. To peruse a large selection of my articles and excerpts on various aspects and applications of Emotional Intelligence mind and skills sets go to:

[Emotional Intelligence](#), [information technology](#), [internal service](#), [leadership](#), [organizational change](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

REVIEW ONE OF MY OTHER BOOKS AND GET THE NEW ONE FREE

One of the most important ways for books to become successful on Amazon and Indigo is reader reviews. All my previous books are available online, but they don't have very many reviews.

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!

Amazon.com	Chapters/Indigo
Amazon.ca	Barnes & Noble
Amazon.co.uk	

KEYS TO DELIVERING OUTSTANDING SERVICE AND QUALITY LEVELS

Back in May we sent out the [Improvement Point](#) below to subscribers:

"Despite all the talk - passionate speeches, glossy brochures, clever ads, high tech videos, convincing sales pitches, snappy slogans, strategic plans, and solemn annual reports - the service and quality action delivered by most organizations is mediocre at best."
- from Jim Clemmer's article, "How Total is Your Quality Management?"

[Read the full article now!](#)

I originally wrote this article back in the day when Total Quality Management (TQM) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) were popular. Many organizations used these powerful tools to dramatically drive up their service and quality levels. My previous company, The Achieve Group (now part of AchieveGlobal), and The CLEMMER Group worked with some of those highly successful organizations.

Unfortunately, those organizations were rare then – and still are today. Many claim high service and quality levels but few deliver. So an [Improvement Points](#) subscriber was right when he asked "how do you make it Great??"

That's a very simple question with a complex answer! I wrote an extensive book, [Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Corporate Performance](#), on what it takes to build a high service/quality organization. You can peruse a series of my articles on [Customer Service](#). I tried to boil most of this down to one article entitled, ["Bolt-On Programs or Built-In Culture Change"](#) summarizing what's needed.

"EXTRAORDINARY VISION" AUDIO INTERVIEW NOW AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

In May I was interviewed for a one-hour teleconference by Shelley MacDougall and Kevin MacDonald. Shelley and Kevin have created a program (mainly for the private club industry) called the Extraordinary Leader. It is a tele-class and web-based community with the focus of developing Extraordinary Leaders. This year-long program is divided into twelve modules.

Our interview was about forty-five minutes followed by fifteen minutes of questions from participants. During our discussion we looked at vision from a self-leadership perspective and in leading others. Here are a few of the questions I responded to:

- How important is a personal vision? How can we create a compelling personal vision?
- Is being visionary a learned skill? Can anyone learn it?
- What is the process for building a team or organization vision for a team or organization?
- What are some of the obstacles in creating an impactful vision?

- As you work with many organizations around North America, do you notice that most organizations have compelling vision or not?
- What do you find are the biggest leadership challenges today?
- Who are some of the leaders in your life that have influenced you? What have they taught you?
- What are some of your greatest leadership lessons?

Time flew by as Shelley and Kevin led us through a lively discussion that went beyond vision to discuss organizational culture, values, and purpose. We also touched on broader leadership issues with a few excellent questions from participants. To (download/listen) to the interview click on

http://jimclemmer.com/uploads/Visions_%20Master%20Call.mp3.

I have written extensively about vision, values, and purpose. Here are three sections of our website where you can peruse a large selection of short articles on various aspects of this topic:

- [Organizational Vision, Values, and Purpose](#)
- [Culture Change](#)
- [Personal Vision, Values, and Purpose](#)

MOST POPULAR JUNE 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 the "Read the full article now" link below each IP. 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 June:

"Leaders spend much less time personally solving problems. They invest their time in making sure that the right problems are being solved."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Leaders Help People to Help Themselves"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"A big cause of team and organization learning impairments is lack of openness. As mistakes are made, pilot tests run, and tries clumsily attempted learning occurs. Unless those results are openly and widely shared, everyone is reduced to learning only from their own experiences. That's an expensive waste of time and resources. We need active internal networks and processes for sharing all that rich learning experience."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "Innovation Needs a Culture of Trust and Openness"

[Read the full article now!](#)

"The real danger comes from not doing things on purpose. If we're not leading a purposeful life, it's easy to drift aimlessly and become trapped in our own misery-series. People who want very little from life and enjoy what they have can be wealthier than those who have a lot, but always want much more. And some people who just let life happen to them end up enriched and fulfilled. But drifting to a rich and full life is the exception. The most fulfilled lives are generally the most purposeful lives."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "What's Really Important?"

[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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