Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

JIM CLEMMER
Practical Leadership:
From Inspiration to Application

In this issue...

JUNE 2010, ISSUE 87

For gardeners like me, June in Southern Ontario is the peak of the Spring season. Everything is lush, green, colorful, and fragrant. All the hard work of spring preparation and last year's perennial planting is finally paying off.

"Servant Leadership" is the theme of this issue. So here's a June riddle for you; what does gardening have in common with "servant leadership?"

I see a few parallels. Plants, like people, can't really be "motivated" to perform. It's an inside job. Gardeners, like good coaches, make sure the right people - or plants - are in the right locations with plenty of fertile soil to encourage growth. But an especially key gardening - and leadership task - is removing the weeds and consistently pruning so that growth is nurtured and developed.

You'll find many examples, definitions, perspectives, and examples of servant leadership throughout this issue. Happy gardening - and serving!

THE DIGEST WINS

Last month we sent out a digest version of *The Leader Letter*, with short intros linking directly back to articles and blog postings on my site. We also conducted a short poll to see how it would be received.

Well the results are in, and well over 2/3 of respondents preferred the digest version or were happy with either version.

If you are in the camp that prefers the full version, it will continue to be posted online - here - as well as a downloadable PDF - here.

Another option that more and more folks are choosing is to subscribe to my blog - where the majority of *The Leader Letter* is posted throughout the month - using the RSS feed or as an email each time an item is posted.

To sign up for blog notifications visit my blog and enter your name and email in the top left sign-up box.

INTO AFRICA: AN EYE-OPENING AND INSPIRING TRIP

The first week of May, I facilitated a large (130 participants) four-day leadership development and planning "Advance" for Aga Khan University (AKU) at the Great Rift Valley Lodge in Kenya. I have never been to Africa before and it was an extraordinary and eye-opening trip.

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Jim Clemmer
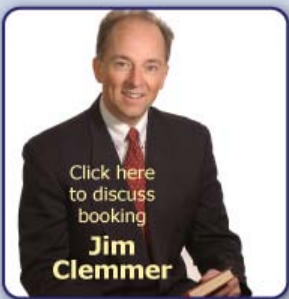
A big highlight was working with a group of exceptional leaders overcoming daunting obstacles to provide healthcare services in Kabul, Afghanistan, while also running teaching hospitals and university campuses in Karachi, Pakistan, Nairobi, Kenya, and other parts of East Africa. I will post a blog in the coming weeks with a profile of AKU and the incredible work they're doing to facilitate rebuilding and growth in developing countries around the Indian Ocean region. I'll also blog on some of the leadership lessons that emerged from these highly-involved sessions pulling together and harnessing the boundless energy (we worked from 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM most of the week) and ideas of such a large and very diverse group (numerous cultures, academic specialties, disciplines, departments, and roles.) I am now preparing for a June follow up trip to Karachi (my first time to that city) and again Nairobi, to lay a leadership skills foundation and coach them through the implementation process for the plans we established.

The week's agenda was jam packed, but our group did get a day of team building activities outside the Great Rift Valley Lodge (and then went back to work that evening when we returned.) About half of us climbed Mount Longonot, a dormant volcano towering over the Great Rift Valley. Another half of us in that group climbed to the very peak. Besides giving us a great five hour workout (coming down was almost as tough as going up - especially on knees), we were treated to breathtaking views both across the valley and down into the lush vegetation of the crater. I filled my digital camera with photos. Click here to view some of my photos on Flickr.

On the Saturday before flying back home (which included extra flying time to detour around the Iceland ash cloud), I was able to visit Nairobi National Park. It was too late in the morning to catch the lions hunting for their breakfast. But my camera did get another real workout photographing the wide variety of animals, birds, and flowers. Now I am threatening my family with a marathon session of photos and Dad Jokes!

An eye-opening part of the trip was the rebuilding of Kenya's democratic government and economic growth. In perfect synchronicity, when I got home Bono and Bob Geldof were doing TV interviews in Toronto promoting Africa and its vast potential. *The Globe & Mail* was also running a series of articles on Africa ahead of next month's G20 meeting in Toronto and the World Cup in South Africa.

One especially enlightening *Globe & Mail* article, "Africa: An economic giant that's ready to wake up," reported that "steady growth in foreign investment means the continent's economy is outpacing the world average, taking bigger and bigger bites out of poverty." Since I am not sure how long the link to this article will remain active, here are a few eye-opening highlights - at least for me - from the article that aligned with some of what I heard, saw, and learned on my trip:

- "Africa is quietly preparing for a growth trajectory that could astonish the world. Its popular image is still the same: hunger; corruption; war; poverty. But take another look. Beyond the stereotypes, Africa's potential is explosive. Its human talents, its vast natural resources, its rising democracies and new technologies - all are reaching a tipping point that could send it surging dramatically upward."
- "The economy of sub-Saharan Africa is projected to grow by 4.75 per cent this year, faster than the world average, and will accelerate to an impressive 6 per cent in 2011, according to the International Monetary Fund... little noticed by the world, the African economy had grown at 6 per cent annually for five years before the global slowdown. ...when the global economy contracted last year, Africa succeeded in avoiding a decline, maintaining 2-per-cent growth even at the depths of the slowdown."

- "…contains 30 per cent of the world's mineral reserves, including 40 per cent of the world's gold, and is one of the biggest sources of the oil that fuels the U.S. and Chinese economies."
- Many of its countries already have a higher per-capita income than China and India.
- "Since 2003, Africa's use of cell phones and the Internet has been growing at twice the global average (I did see goat, sheep, and cow herders in tribal dress talking on cell phones.)"
- "Some of the most dramatic gains are in health and education. Africa's child-mortality rate is declining by 1.8 per cent annually - twice the rate of decline in the 1990s - due to expanded vaccination campaigns, improved nutrition and greater access to clean water. Malaria rates are sharply falling as millions of insecticide-treated bed nets are distributed across Africa."
- "A decade ago, only 58 per cent of African children went to primary school; today it's nearly 75 per cent. Many African countries have eliminated school fees and other barriers, allowing an extra 42 million children to go to school."

After so many years of suffering and problems it's great to see that Africa is rising.

ARE YOU SEEING - AND HEARING - YOUR CUSTOMERS IN 3D?

3D is all the rage today. Movies like Avatar take us to a new level of realism. TV manufacturers are furiously announcing new 3D systems. Apple has reportedly filed patents for special 3D glasses technology. Adding the third dimension of depth to a movie brings us up close and puts us into the action.

Are you getting the same depth of experience with your customers? Whether serving external or internal customers, too many teams and organizations echo the (now defunct) company executive's candid reflections on the roots of their demise, "We didn't always listen to what the customer had to say before telling him what he wanted."

The gap separating mediocre and outstanding service/quality performers is often widest in the amount and frequency of customer listening. One sure sign of an organization that is not listening to customers are the "vertical chimneys" separating functions, departments, and teams. This is an organization structured from the inside out. The service chain pulling customer needs across the organization is weak or nonexistent. Instead, teams throw what they think their internal or the external customers need down that group's "chimney." So chefs stay in their kitchens, IT professionals interact with their computers, engineers hide in their offices, purchasing departments rarely visit suppliers, and managers huddle in meeting rooms.

A serious consequence of not truly understanding - or caring about - customer needs is inconsistent levels of service across the organization. Each professional, frontline staff and manager provides the kind of service they think their internal or external customer should want. They wrongly practice The Golden Rule; do unto others as you would have them do unto you. High service providers follow The Platinum Rule; do unto others as they want to be done onto.

In a "we're the experts" environment, customer perceptions are often discounted or ignored. Responses depend on how seriously that individual or team views the problem, *from their own perspective*. Comments like "that's just their perception, that's not reality" run rampant. Since the customer's true needs are not understood or appreciated, they are often minimized. Customers are seen in only one or two dimensions - often as a source of revenue, someone to be dictated to, or even an annoyance getting in the way of real work.

A new IT manager brought in to turn around this badly faltering internal service group found that internal reports on problems with the system design were not taken seriously by software engineers. They argued that the customers were wrong. The engineer who designed the system defended its effectiveness as "good as or better than all the competition out there, and I can't help it if the customer doesn't like it."

High performing service providers partner with their internal or external customers to really understand what they are trying to accomplish and how the provider's product or service might fill that need. Peak performers look and listen with as much depth, and from as many dimensions as possible. Are you seeing - and hearing - your customers in 3D?

ARE YOU SEEING - AND HEARING - YOUR TEAM MEMBERS IN 3D?

We just looked at how a common cause of poor internal or external customer service is rooted in not seeing - or hearing - customers in 3D (previous article.) A major contributor to this problem, and the resulting "functional chimneys," is management's failure to listen to the needs of service teams and their individual contributors. "If you don't listen well, you can't involve people," says an award winning company's vice president of quality. "Involvement means winning the hearts and minds of your associates. If you don't listen, they know you think they're unimportant."

Many legendary customer service companies like Southwest Airlines or FedEx operate by the philosophy that the customer comes second. They have found that by first serving frontline service providers they will then serve customers. Herb Kelleher, founder of Southwest Airlines, lays out the relationship "my mother taught me that your employees come first. If you treat them well, then they treat the customers well, and that means your customers come back and your shareholders are happy."

One litmus test of how well management is listening to, and serving its servers, is the user friendliness of the organization's technology and administrative systems. In far too many cases, management-driven systems and technology hinder more than help the delivery of high internal or external service. It's often a wonder that performance isn't worse considering the defective tools many employees have to work with. Service is delivered in spite of, not because of, the organizational systems and technology. The president of one company puts the problem into perspective: "In a lot of ways, management has handcuffed and shackled our people, then told them to hop out there and build better products or deliver improved service. And then we beat them up when they fail to overcome the restraints we've put on them."

Far too often, the organization's technology and especially administrative systems are designed either for management's convenience or because in all management's benevolent wisdom, they know what the frontline needs. In fact, they are mind readers -- they don't even have to ask them! So, if servers and frontline teams think the systems or technology are hindering service levels, well, then they obviously have an attitude or motivational problem. So let's give them a good stiff dose of training or motivation injections so they will use management's systems and technology!

Employee engagement and other organizational surveys show very low levels of organizational listening to frontline individuals and teams. But as the famous "word mangler" Yogi Berra might have said "it's not rocket surgery." How can a team member eagerly seek to understand the needs of his or her internal or external customer if their own needs are not looked after? It just doesn't happen.

It starts with seeing - and hearing - team members in 3D. It finishes with following through and acting on what we learn.

THE 85/15 RULE: GET AT THE ROOT CAUSES OF POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Last month I was approached by a misguided manager looking for training and motivation programs to "fix" their frontline service staff. This is a fairly wide spread and common problem showing a lack of understanding about basic customer service cause and effect. And it's focused on treating symptoms rather than the underlying disease.

How reasonable would it be to hold a shipping dock worker responsible for the quality of the goods in the boxes he or she is shipping? Not only would that be unfair, it would be bad management. A good manager would argue, quite rightly, that the manufacturing process should be traced back to find the ultimate source of the defects.

So how reasonable is it to hold the frontline server responsible for the quality of the products or services he or she is delivering? Sometimes poor service is their fault. Some servers are rude, sloppy, or uncaring. But most often the person on the front serving line is a symptom carrier, not the source of the problem. While he or she may be contributing to low service delivery, blaming him or her is also not only unfair but looking for answers in all the wrong places.

Even if poor service did originate with the service deliverer, who hires, trains, rewards, coaches, and measures that person? Like so much about culture, performance, and leadership it really is common sense; *if you put a good person into a bad system, the system will win most of the time*. This obvious observation has been proven so many times that it has become a truism called "The 85/15 Rule." The 85/15 Rule shows that if you trace service breakdowns back to the root cause, about 85% of the time the fault lays in the system, processes, structure, or practices of the organization. Only about 15% of the service breakdowns can be traced back to someone who didn't care or wasn't conscientious enough.

But the last person to touch the process, pass the product, or deliver the service may be burned out by ceaseless service problems, overwhelmed with the volume of work or complaints, turned off by a "snoopervising" manager, out of touch with who his or her team's customers are and what they value, unrewarded and unrecognized for their efforts, given shoddy materials, tools, or information, not given effective coaching and feedback, measured (and rewarded or punished) by results conflicting with his or her immediate customer's needs, unsure of how to resolve issues and jointly fix a process with other functions, trying to protect themselves or their team from searches for the guilty, or not knowing where to go for help. All this lies within the system, processes, structure, or practices of the organization. And all this is a leadership, management, and culture issue.

Many of the manifestations of the "our staff are the problem" assumption stem from the all too common, but badly misguided, inclination to go on "seek and destroy missions" by asking "who" rather than "what" went wrong. Symptom carriers of the organization's system and process problems are hunted down and hung by the neck on lampposts. The result is a culture of fixing the blame rather than the problem. This creates a culture of fear, cover your backside, and finger pointing. That's clearly not a culture that creates higher customer service.

Treating symptoms can provide quick relief and make us feel like we're fixing the problem. But until a management team is prepared to treat the underlying leadership and organizational root causes by applying The 85/15 Rule, they will be locked in a repeating loop of mediocre or poor customer service.

for a selection of articles on Customer Service. for short items from past issues of *The Leader Letter* on Customer Service. for an overview of our approach to *Leading a Customer-Centered Organization.*

HOW TO MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES TO ATTRACT NEW CUSTOMERS IN A RECOVERING ECONOMY

Return on Performance magazine asked me to respond to a series of questions on motivating employees to attract new customers in a recovering economy for their "Winning Tips" section. My responses below reflect many of the internal service and servant leadership themes found throughout my work - and this month's issue.

Ask yourself...
Does our management staff serve our servers? How do we know? Do we have good data, and not just management opinions, on what engages and disengages our front-line people?

You might consider...
Involving frontline service staff in identifying customer expectations and tracing those back through the organization to focus internal priorities and services needed from support departments.

I've always found that...
Frontline service staff reflect the service levels they are getting from the organization. Too many managers "snoopervise" rather than look for ways to build partnerships in strengthening the service chain of customer > service staff > support teams > management.

Whatever you do, don't...
Use customer service measures to beat up service staff, isolate customer service as strictly a frontline function, or focus on training frontline servers without aligning organizational processes/systems, and developing the organization's support values and skills.

Here at The CLEMMER Group, our approach is...
Build a strong service culture through a five step process; 1. Articulate customer service vision, values, and purpose/mission; 2. Develop Supervisors, Managers, and Executives Leadership Behaviors; 3. Align Management Processes/Systems; 4. Develop Frontline Staff's Leadership Skills; and 5. Continuous Improvement and Organization Development.

Keep in mind...
Frontline staff are external symptom carriers for the internal health of a company's culture. High-performing cultures are created by strong leadership at all levels built around the core belief that "leadership is an action, not a position."

The bottom line is...
A company's culture is "the way we really do things around here" and mostly clearly shines through in the behaviors of frontline staff to customers and internal departments to each other when no supervisors, managers, or executives are present.

THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMM ON... SERVANT LEADERSHIP

What is "servant leadership?" Years ago The CLEMMER Group was helping a Client identify best leadership practices among their high performing managers. One especially effective manager's leadership philosophy was one of the best definitions of servant leadership we've ever heard. He said, *"Most of the people who work here do have passion and purpose for the work they do. It's about respecting that, facilitating*

their desire to do good work, and removing obstacles from their path that frustrate their efforts."

Here are other perspectives on the mindset and actions of servant leaders:

"Organizations that take constructive action based on employee survey results have shareholder returns that are twice as high as those that don't."
- Research by Watson Wyatt Worldwide, "Pay For Performance Report"

"Servant leadership is part of our ethic... the leader exists for the benefit of the firm, not the firm for the benefit of the leader. When we lead by serving, we are committed to being an example for others to follow, an initiator for change and growth, and an activist for the future."
- C. William Pollard, *The Soul of the Firm*

"Instead of pushing solutions on problem employees, the manager should pull solutions out of them by creating circumstances in which the employees can channel their motivation toward achievable goals. That means addressing any obstacles - possibly even the manager's own de-motivating style - that might be hindering the employees."
- Nigel Nicholson, "How to Motivate Your Problem People," *Harvard Business Review*

"Whoever renders service to many puts himself in line for greatness - great wealth, great return, great satisfaction, great reputation, and great joy."
- Jim Rohn, American entrepreneur, author, and professional speaker

"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."
- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 - 1968), American clergyman, activist, and prominent leader in the African-American civil rights movement

"The greatest motivational act one person can do for another is to listen."
- Roy E Moody, author and professional speaker

RECONNECTING WITH JACK ZENGER AS GUEST BLOGGER: "THE MOTIVATION MYTH THAT WON'T GO AWAY"

Jack Zenger is one of those very special people whose work and personal relationship has had a big impact on my career. And he's a wonderfully warm human being and all around nice guy. As co-founder and president of California-based Zenger Miller, Jack and his organization developed outstanding leadership training programs that my previous company, The Achieve Group, distributed in Canada throughout the eighties. We not only sold their powerful programs and services teaching personal, team, and organization effectiveness principles; we built our own company around them. By 1990, The Achieve Group had become Canada's largest training and consulting company.

In 1991, Achieve co-founder, Art McNeil and I sold our company to Times Mirror Training and merged with Zenger Miller. For the next few years, I was an executive team facilitator and coach with Zenger Miller/Achieve traveling extensively across Canada and the U.S. I delivered keynote presentations and facilitated dozens of senior management team retreats and coaching sessions. During that time, Jack and I worked together and I learned a great deal from his wisdom and extensive experience. A few years after I left in 1994 to form The CLEMMER Group, Zenger Miller/Achieve, Learning International, and Kaset were merged into what is now AchieveGlobal.

Jack and I still cross paths occasionally and stay in touch with each other's work. He is now CEO and Co-Founder of Zenger Folkman. You can read his biography at http://www.zengerfolkman.com/jack.html.

I was delighted to be a recent guest blogger on Zenger Folkman's blog. You can read my posting on "The Motivation Myth That Won't Go Away" at http://zengerfolkman.wordpress.com. Scroll down to May 5. While you're there, check out many of the other excellent blog postings from Zenger Folkman. Jack sent me a review copy of his new book a few months ago. I'll be posting a review on my blog in the coming weeks on this excellent new book, *The Extraordinary Coach: How the Best Leaders Help Others Grow*.

IMPLEMENTING IT SYSTEMS: "CHANGE MANAGEMENT" IS USUALLY TOO NARROW AND UNBALANCED

We've recently run into another wave of problems with implementing new organizational computer systems. In one case, the term "change management" became a derogatory euphemism for having inflexible and ineffective systems forced on divisions and departments. When frontline staff pointed out deficiencies with the system and how it caused problems for customers - and most everyone else - they were labeled as "not being team players" and seen as resisting change.

There are a number of reasons for the high failure rates of 50 - 75% for ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) and other computerized systems. A major underlying factor is that implementation is driven by "change managers" comprised of technical staff and managers who are much more comfortable in the world of techno management - processes, data, systems, and analysis than leadership - customers, staff, perceptions, values, and culture. These so-called "soft" issues are really hard. It's much easier to slam dunk the system change on the organization and then complain about the users and their lack of adaptability to change.

If you're not familiar with these underlying themes from my work CLICK HERE for a deeper look at The High-Performance Balance. CLICK HERE for a few 3 - 4 minute video clips on The Performance Balance or Managing Things and Leading People.

Five Common Traps

Jumping the Gun
Eager to begin enjoying the benefits of better systems, too many organizations are plunging ahead before they're ready. A nurturing environment, supportive structure, all built on a solid skills foundation, must first be in place to ensure implementation success.

Under-Investing in Culture Change and Training
When the benefits and results achieved by well implemented systems are reported or sold, what's often missed is the amount of investment that was made to get there. A direct and positive correlation exists between the results obtained and the amount of time spent upfront helping everyone understand the need for the change and training to help them

deal with the changes. Too many people are allowed to wallow and not taught how to lead themselves and others through the change.

In Another World
Implementation teams often consist of outside technology and systems experts and inside support professionals. These function outside of the organization's daily life and current systems. Like a crash diet, change management becomes a program to be imposed rather than a lifestyle change to be integrated into daily organizational life. Supervisors and frontline teams are often involved at the periphery rather than at the center leading the change effort.

Out of Focus
Process changes rarely involve getting frontline teams involvement in focusing on external customers' expectations and tracing those back through the chain of service/quality to the process, functions, or activities that need improvement all along the way. The "best practices" often embedded in the new computer system force change from the top down and the inside out. This is exactly backwards.

Rickety Rewards and Recognition
A key performance criterion for all managers, but especially senior executives, must be the amount of recognizing, celebrating, and hoopla they lavish on frontline teams who are making progress and having success. Highly visible team measurements and scoreboards give managers the information and encouragement they need to "catch people doing things right." To sustain the momentum for the long change journey, this reinforcement *must stay at the top* of management's To Do lists. It's a key source of team energy.

CLICK HERE for a further selection of articles on Process Management.
CLICK HERE for short items on Process Management from past issues of *The Leader Letter*.

READER REFLECTIONS ON FRANTIC BUSYNESS, PRIORITY OVERLOAD, AND THE ACCELERATION TRAP

I am glad to see that last month's theme of Spring clean up, To-Stop lists, busyness, and The Acceleration Trap touched a nerve with many readers. It's a complex, multi-layered, and very serious problem at personal, team, and organizational levels.

Following are some thoughtful reflections and observations on the topic:

"I love your characterizations of 'busyness' and the 'To Stop' list. I will watch for both in my own behavior and on my team and try to avoid them."
- Brock Criger, Manager, Development Services, Public Works, Region of Peel

"The 'The Acceleration Trap' is a real concern across North America and one that affects me as I experience tremendous expectations and a delicate balance of time. Maybe in part my own fault as I also see all the opportunities.

One of my concerns the 'The Acceleration Trap' is the impact on our families and communities. Managers who are working 11 hr + days and maxed out are not going to be able to give their families the support they need, nor have time to volunteer in their communities. Historically it was often people who stepped into leadership roles at work, who also stepped into leadership roles in their communities. Not to mention the joy and happiness people get from helping others. On a recent flight back from West

Virginia, the dentist across from me shared the great joy and feelings of happiness he got from volunteering his time at a dental clinic.

Related to 'The Acceleration Trap' is the cognitive ability of stressed out people, *The Invisible Gorilla: And Other Ways Our Intuitions Deceive Us* by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons was just published. My wife first saw the video in a second year cognition class ~ 2001, with the professor tunneling the students down ('You're all high school graduates, you can count right?'), as few as 5 - 10% would see the gorilla. I've had many other confirmations of the number - one case, no one in an entire second year Psychology class saw the gorilla. Even the second time through many, many students totally missed the gorilla."
- Long time reader

"I was reading your latest newsletter and came upon the article on The Acceleration Trap, and how one needs to slow down to go faster. Once again I am reminded of the Karate training that I have taken. I studied Wado- Kai Karate for 14 years and I have repeated many of the lessons that I learned in that field in my work.

Slowing down in order to go faster was a lesson that my instructor used to emphasize. Speed did not come from trying to go faster, but rather from improving technique, shedding yourself of extraneous motion and effort, and focusing on your core technique. When all the unnecessary activity is shed, the speed will always increase. That seems to be exactly the lesson that you are talking about.

Martial arts and the working world seem to always have a strong correlation - in my mind at least."
- Doug Waldner, Technical Support Supervisor, Shand Power Station, SaskPower

If you missed last month's issue and the articles referenced above. CLICK HERE to access it.

COMPLIMENTARY MONTHLY PODCAST OF *FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS* EXCERPTS NOW AVAILABLE (NO CHARGE)

Just after *Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Corporate Performance* was published (now over 100,000 copies sold), I recorded an audio series reading excerpts from the book. We are now making these freely available in a weekly podcast series. CLICK HERE to access the installments as they are posted. We'll be posting all 10 segments over the next 10 weeks. On this page you can sign up to be notified whenever the next segment is available.

You can learn more about this series and look at an overview of the audio on the *Firing on all Cylinders* audio CD web site page.

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."

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

> **"A big cause of team and organization learning impairments is lack of openness. As mistakes are made, pilot tests run, and in 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!](#)

> **"Strong convictions can be confused with loudly expressed opinions. Sometimes loud opinions come from deep convictions. But people who have deep convictions and know themselves well, often don't have a high need to stand on a soapbox with a megaphone bellowing loudly to convince others."**
> - from Jim Clemmer's article, "Ringing True to Me"
> [Read the full article now!](#)

> **"Of all the principles, there is one that is central, one from which the others emanate, much as spokes radiate from the hub of a wheel. That core principle, Focus and Context, consists of three inter-related parts, which are defined by the answers to three key questions:**
>
> > 1. **Where are we going (the vision or picture of our preferred future or outcome?)**
> > 2. **What do we believe in (our guiding values or principles?)**
> > 3. **Why do we exist (our reason for being, mission, or purpose?)"**
>
> - from Jim Clemmer's article, "Focus and Context: The Hub of Leadership"
> [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 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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