# Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

**In this issue...**

**October 2010, Issue 91**

Three Root Causes of Dropping Customer Service Levels

How Customer Service Training Often Reduces Service Levels

Service Strategy Differences between Retail Staff and In-Home Service Technicians

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on... Serving the Servers

Survey Shows Inadequate Leadership Skills Main Reason Executives Derail

Leading Perspectives: No Arms, No Legs, No Worries!

Tweet Reading: Recommended Online Resources

Kouzes and Pozner Book Proves That "What's New in Leadership?" is the Wrong Question

Lasting Culture Change Means Going Beyond Passionate Lip Service to Involved Leadership

Complimentary Toronto E-Learning Conference and Keynote on Culture and Leadership Development for Online Learning

The Facebook Factor

Complimentary Monthly Podcast of *Firing on all Cylinders* Excerpts Now Available (No Charge)

Read It Here or Hot Off My Blog

Most Popular September Improvement Points

Feedback and Follow-Up

## OCTOBER 2010, ISSUE 91

In 1984, the American Society for Quality (ASQ) declared October as National Quality Month with a joint resolution by Congress and a proclamation by President Ronald Reagan. In 1989, Congress and President George Bush reaffirmed the original legislation and recognized quality as a national priority. In Canada, the National Quality Institute marks Quality Month with their annual Performance Excellence Summit & Canada Awards for Excellence.

Quality of customer service is the key focus of this month's issue. As you've likely experienced – perhaps all too painfully – customer service and quality levels are a big problem for way too many organizations. Managers often point to frontline servers' attitudes as the source of the problem and look for quick motivational or training fixes.

But who hired the servers? Who trains them? Who provides the systems and processes they're forced to use? Who provides on-the-job coaching or criticism? Who nurtures the levels of criticism or celebration they find at work everyday? Who sets their priorities and directs their efforts? Who addresses or ignores daily job irritants? Who nurtures or neglects teamwork and team spirit?

Improving service/quality is first and foremost a leadership issue.

## THREE ROOT CAUSES OF DROPPING CUSTOMER SERVICE LEVELS

A television producer called me recently to discuss a story she's working on around declining customer service levels and what to do about it. We agreed that there's been a big drop in customer service over the past two years.

I believe this problem is rooted in three common causes:

**Misuse of Technology** – forcing customers to use technology when they just want to talk with someone. This is often done by burying phone numbers deep in websites. Or making customers tumble through a maze of phone menu options to find someone who might take their call ("Press 1 to spend your money, 2 for a no, 3 to get ready, and 4 to go... away".) In other cases, customers want self-serve technical options but are completely baffled by the twisted geek logic needed to find and follow the steps needed to solve their problem.

**Inadequate Training** – too many customer service providers are thrown into their roles and it's left up to customers to give them on-the-job training. This often stems from short-sighted managers who don't feel that investing time and money in proper training is worthwhile –

especially for part-time or low paying service jobs. Often that's because they're feeding the Turnover Tornado; we don't train servers effectively so they get frustrated and leave, which means we need to go hire more servers who we don't properly train, these ill-equipped servers deliver poor service which causes frustrated customers to yell at them – or complain to management who then yells at them too – so they quit ("they don't pay me enough to take this abuse".)

**A Culture of Not Serving the Server** – frontline service providers reflect the service and support they are getting from their organization. Disengaged, demoralized, and dissatisfied servers don't produce satisfied customers. Managers wanting to improve customer service levels need to start with a deep and honest look in the mirror. In a poor service culture, people are often de-humanized and seen as just another set of assets that happen to be wrapped in skin ("we need more warm bodies, let's get more bums in seats, we've got to reduce our head count".) Servers often pass along the disdain, neglect, or abuse they get from their manager.

Improving customer service and quality levels isn't as simple as dunking service providers in a training program and throwing some incentives at them. Sustained and continuously improving service/quality is the result of strong leadership and organization effectiveness. You can review past blogs on customer service and a series of articles and steps on taking the service/quality improvement journey at Customer Service.

There are hopeful signs on the horizon for better customer service. As companies look for growth opportunities in stagnating markets, higher levels of customer service is a sure path to greater customer attraction, retention, and expanding "wallet share" with existing customers. Is your company one of the few that are waking up to the benefits of giving customers (internal or external) better choices between dealing with people and technology? Are you effectively serving your servers? How do you know?

## HOW CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING OFTEN REDUCES SERVICE LEVELS

A big city public transit system just released a report addressing its terrible service and image problems. While some of the panel's recommendations deal with the organization's culture, much of it is focused on "fixing" drivers, counter staff, and other frontline service people through training and "attitude change."

The way too common "fix our customer service staff" is a natural outgrowth of the deadly assumption that frontline service people are fully accountable for the quality of service they are delivering. That's a very narrow and incomplete understanding of how organizations work. The quality of external customer relationships is a direct reflection of the quality of internal customer/supplier relationships. Just as a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, an organization's service/quality is usually no stronger than its weakest internal customer/supplier relationship.

The service deliverer is but the last link in the chain. Granted, he or she may well be the weak link, but usually he or she is no worse than the many who provide the myriad of production and support services backing up that person. The success or failure of first-line service providers is strongly determined by the quality of service leadership they receive. In fact, many frontline servers provide good service in spite of, not because of, the organizational support systems and culture they work within. Given the many obstacles, it's a minor miracle that service is being provided at all by some exceptionally caring employees!


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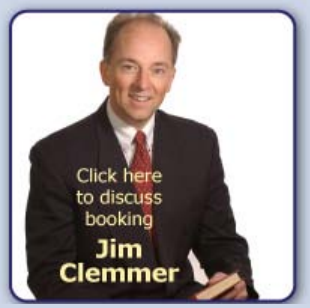


There's no question that basic courtesy skills are sadly lacking in too many organizations. Rude, gruff, or indifferent treatment can quickly make service encounters negative experiences. But the painted-on smiles will be quickly wiped off servers' faces by poor organizational support, lack of teamwork, or an abrasive supervisor. This kind of customer service training can send the wrong signals to participants about how bright management thinks they are. Many smile training packages or one-day-wonder seminars are insulting to employees with their simple-minded approach and "you're the problem" messages.

Customer service culture, habits, and attitudes start with management. Teach managers how to better serve their servers and watch customer service levels soar.

## SERVICE STRATEGY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RETAIL STAFF AND IN-HOME SERVICE TECHNICIANS

A long-term Client sent me an e-mail looking for advice on how to best position his expertise for a new position he is pursuing:

> *"What would you say are the major differences between the strategies to support service excellence in a retail environment with fixed locations/employees (i.e. Mc Donald's) versus a service company with technicians in trucks delivering services at customer sites?*
>
> *I am a candidate for a VP of HR role with a large multi-national residential home services provider. They are looking at me with a background in the construction/maintenance and services industry as well as candidates from the retail sector. The role will lead the service quality initiative. During our discussions I indicated that there are substantial differences in the HR strategies required to achieve the excellence they're pursuing.*
>
> *Outside of the obvious environmental factors that can impact the outcomes, my experience has been that service technicians are by their nature independents. They have a difficult time buying into any corporate 'initiative of the month.' They often receive dual messages like 'do the best job' but are paid piecework. Often there is very little support and they are removed from any support system within the organization. Contrast that with the controlled, authority-driven retail sector where there are usually more supervisors than frontline staff.*
>
> *I am seeking your input on what you see are differences between the two that would assist me in my pursuit of this position."*
>
> I agree with his distinction on the differences, especially the independence of contractors versus retail service providers. This underscores the need for leadership that builds "volunteerism." Here's how I described that in an article at http://www.jimclemmer.com/customer-satisfaction-is-a-reflection-of-employee-satisfaction.php:
>
> *Taking an organization from good to great customer service ultimately depends on the people who provide that service. It can only happen through the volunteerism – the willingness to go beyond what is merely required – of people who serve on the frontlines. Going from ordinary to extraordinary performance happens through the*

*discretionary efforts of frontline staff deciding to make the thousands of "moment(s) of truth" (any time a customer interacts with the company in person, by phone, or electronically), they manage everyday as positively as they possibly can. This enthusiasm, loyalty, or devotion can't be forced on people. It only happens through a "culture of commitment," where frontline people reflect to the outside the intense pride and ownership they are experiencing on the inside.*

There's a similar perspective from a piece on "Leading Generation X" in the September 2007 of *The Leader Letter*.

Our SVP of Consulting and Training, Scott Schweyer, has worked extensively on service/quality improvement programs with mechanical contractors, home builders, retailers, and others using contractors. He added his experience and prospective to our discussion:

***Differences between In-Home Service and Retail Transactional Service***

- *Time it takes to deliver versus transactional* – need much better communication and 'recovery' skills if work is not proceeding as expected.
- *Level of expectations by customer* – work done in or on my home is expected to be high quality and long-lasting. The service person has to convince me that their solution is the best for the cost they will incur. Transactional sales are low investment usually and returnable or refundable. This is not the same level of commitment.
- *Expertise, Attitude, and Communication Skills* – buying a hamburger or shoes calls for lower knowledge and investment. In-home service customers want more technical advice and assurance that the service person is a qualified expert. Poor communication skills or a negative attitude can dramatically undermine that perception. The technician needs strong communication skills, a solid field support system, and pride in representing the company.
- *Dealing with objections and problems* – I have a much higher emotional investment in the problem when it concerns where I live. Recovery from transactional service breakdowns is often quicker and easier. If the service recovery isn't effective, the company will usually lose fewer customers by word of mouth. With in-home service, I will tell more people about the companies I liked working with (i.e. furnace contractor) and complain even more loudly about the ones that didn't come through.

Our Client said our advice provided further clarity to how he was positioning his experience and expertise. Hopefully it helps him get the executive role!

## THOUGHTS THAT MAKE YOU GO HMMM ON… SERVING THE SERVERS

**"Satisfied and engaged employees – even those who do not deal directly with customers – bolster a company's bottomline, according to a study from Northwestern University. The report, 'Linking Organizational Characteristics to Employee Attitudes and Behavior'.There is a direct link between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, and subsequently between customer satisfaction and improved financial performance, because a satisfied customer is less expensive to serve, says James Oakley, the author of the study."**

- "Satisfied employees affect bottomline, study says," *The Globe & Mail*

**"Creating an organization that is successful and effective is an inside-out proposition. The quality of the culture, the quality of management practices, and the alignment of these practices with key strategic initiatives rest with leadership... leaders also hold the key to organizational vitality – the creating of an environment that allows employees to win and be passionate about what they do. By taking care of employees, leaders establish an environment in which the employees take care of the customers at a level that causes the customer to want to return year after year."**
- Study connecting profits to leadership capacity from The Ken Blanchard Companies

**"Emotionally committed employees form teams that deliver exceptional outcomes... customers recognize the passion and commitment employees feel toward them and cannot help but respond in emotional ways... this emotionally driven reaction builds a bridge between employees and customers that creates engagement... this engagement becomes the key factor that drives sustainable growth... sustainable growth is the route to profits and, ultimately, higher stock value."**
- Curt Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina, *Follow This Path: How the World's Greatest Organizations Drive Growth by Unleashing Human Potential*

**"You can't measure and manage the employee and customer experiences as separate entities... most companies are not currently organized or prepared to manage employees and customers under the same organizational umbrella. But because the crucial juncture in creating value in sales and service organizations is the interaction between employees and customers, you must view both sides of the employee-customer encounter as interrelated and mutually dependent. As a result, you must assess and manage these human systems as a coherent whole, not as separate pieces."**
- John H. Fleming and Jim Asplund, *Human Sigma: Managing the Employee-Customer Encounter*

**"When Alexander the Great visited Diogenes, and asked whether he could do anything for the famed teacher, Diogenes replied, 'Only stand out of my light.' Perhaps someday we shall know how to heighten creativity. Until then, one of the best things we can do for creative men and women is to stand out of their light."**
- John W. Gardner, author, U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Lyndon Johnson, and President of the Carnegie Corporation

## SURVEY SHOWS INADEQUATE LEADERSHIP SKILLS MAIN REASON EXECUTIVES DERAIL

I just read about the results of an OI Partners (a global talent management firm) survey with these sobering statistics; "Inadequate management skills such as leadership, motivating people, and building teamwork are the top reasons why executives and managers today are

not working out. 65% of surveyed companies cited deficient management skills as the main reason why executives are derailing. It is also the No. 1 reason why managers are not succeeding, according to 56% of employers."

The OI Partner's press release also reported "the surveyed employers also want executives and managers to adapt to changes that have occurred in their jobs and workplaces. 53% of companies cited inability of managers to deal with changes as a major barrier to succeeding, and 45% of employers said executives also need to make adjustments."

This research demonstrates a meshing with our leadership and organization development experiences. In my days with The Achieve Group, our partner Zenger-Miller (all now part of AchieveGlobal) extensively studied the evolving roles of supervisors, managers, and executives, and the skills they needed to excel. I have revised the headings in this chart ZM developed to summarize their findings:

| **Traditional Management** | **Increasing Participation and Engagement** | **Leading a High-Performance Culture** |
|---|---|---|
| Direct people | Involve people | Develop self-motivating people |
| Get groups to understand ideas | Get groups to generate ideas | Get diverse groups to carry out their own ideas |
| Manage one-on-one | Encourage teamwork | Build teams that manage more of their own work |
| Maximize the performance of the department | Build relationships with other departments | Champion cross-functional work process improvements |
| Implement change | Initiate change | Sponsor innovation to meet customer needs |

The major skills deficiencies cited in the OI Partners' survey is rooted in managers and executives misunderstanding their role and the skills they so badly need to effectively lead their teams and organization through these changing times. Many "leaders" in assigned leadership roles are really "technomanagers" who don't understand the critical High-Performance Balance of Technology, Management, and Leadership so crucial to their success.

How are your skills? How about the supervisors, managers, or executives you lead or support? How do you know?

## LEADING PERSPECTIVES: NO ARMS, NO LEGS, NO WORRIES!

I was just sent a link to a powerful video that shows – once again – how leaders change reality and shape perceptions – their own and others. The four-minute clip shows Nick Vujicic fully engaged in sporting activities and speaking to young people about perspective.

Nick was born with no arms and legs. But he's grateful for "his little chicken drumstick" in place of his left leg. Go to No Arms, No Legs, No Worries! to watch his very inspiring and moving video.

You can find a number of short articles on Attitude and Outlook on our web site. Here's a few that align with Nick's philosophies:

Breaking Out of Our Mental Prisons
Self-imposed mental wheelchairs hold so many people back from being highly effective leaders. Change what happens in our head, and the universe changes. More

Choice More than Chance Determines Our Circumstance
Dwelling on our problems rather than our possibilities comes all too naturally. Too often we choose to curse the darkness rather than light a candle. More

Stop Whining and Start Leading
Less effective managers aspire to lead, but end up demoralizing their own teams and frustrating themselves by choosing to be disempowered by their bosses. They unwittingly fall for the cult of heroic management – the notion that leadership comes down from up high. More

A core focus of my latest book, *Growing @ the Speed of Change*, is on perspective and how our outlook and beliefs (our explanatory style) shapes reality. You can peruse a few of my past blog posts that draw from the book at Category Archives: Attitude and Outlook. You can also watch my *Thriving in Turbulent Times* archived webcast for a deeper look at the fundamental core principles key to successfully leading ourselves and others.

## TWEET READING: RECOMMENDED ONLINE RESOURCES

This new section is a summary of 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 once (sometimes twice) per weekend when I am doing much of my reading for research, learning, or leisure.

**Good advice on being true to you with practical tips around when and how to have those difficult Courageous Conversations.**
Book Excerpt: *Giving Voice to Values* by Mary C. Gentile

**From their new book, this is an outstanding summary of emotional leadership so vital to mobilizing and energizing teams and organizations.**
LEADERS WHO MAKE MEANING MEANINGFUL by Dave Ulrich and Wendy Ulrich, iveybusinessjournal.com

**More evidence of the power of managers engaging, involving, and partnering. Little gestures that send big messages about respect and trust.**

Designing your own workspace improves health, happiness and Productivity sciencedaily.com
"Employees who have control over the design and layout of their workspace are not only happier and healthier -- they're also up to 32 percent more productive, according to new research."

**Compelling research showing the impact of a caring manager. This practical article provides development tips and techniques.**
Keeping Employees Happy in a Post-Recession World - BusinessWeek Businessweek.com

"With the worst of the recession behind us, workers who previously felt they didn't have options may start looking around. Keep them, advises CCL."

## KOUZES' AND POZNER'S BOOK PROVES THAT "WHAT'S NEW IN LEADERSHIP?" IS THE WRONG QUESTION

During decades of work in this field, I've seen many new approaches burst onto the scene only to fade away quickly. I have dozens of studies in my database showing the high failure rates of these "hot" programs. What's most important when dealing with change and turbulence is not to be on the leading edge of thought or fashion, or spouting buzzwords and jargon that will be outdated within a few months.

The key to effectiveness is implementing what works. And what works is the tried, true and proven. But even that only works if you put it into action.

Now Jim Kouzes and Barry Poszner, two leaders in the field of leadership development, have "sifted through the reams of data that had piled up over three decades, and isolated those nuggets that were soundly supported by the numbers." The result is their new book, *The Truth About Leadership: The No-Fads, Heart-of-the-Matter Facts You Need to Know*. Their goal in writing this book was "to record those enduring leadership truths that we learned over the years. We also wanted to make certain that the lessons we included in *The Truth About Leadership* withstood not only the test of time, but also the scrutiny of statistics this is a collection of the real thing no fads, no myths, no trendy responses "just truths that endure."

If you visit the Amazon page for *The Truth About Leadership* you can watch a two and half minute video with both authors explaining some of the book's core concepts. Nothing faddy or full of jargon and buzzwords. Jim and Barry outline powerful truths on the enduring qualities and skills of strong leaders.

Further down that page is a Q & A section with the authors. Here's part of their explanation for the origins of this book:

*"Shortly before we began writing this book, we had the chance to share the platform at an association meeting with renowned author and leadership educator Ken Blanchard. In responding to an audience question, one of us was saying, 'I don't know what you call something that's been the same for twenty-five years, but…,' and Ken interrupted with, 'I'd call it the truth!'*

*It was a moment of clarity. It reinforced our sense that some things about leadership just don't change that much over time, if at all, and that those things need to be understood for what they are "the truth."*

The authors' research led them to ten enduring "truths" about leadership. Each one forms a chapter:

1. You make a difference.
2. Credibility is the foundation of leadership.
3. Values drive commitment.
4. Focusing on the future sets leaders apart.
5. You can't do it alone.
6. Trust rules.
7. Challenge is the crucible for greatness.
8. You either lead by example or you don't lead at all.
9. The best leaders are the best learners.
10. Leadership is an affair of the heart.

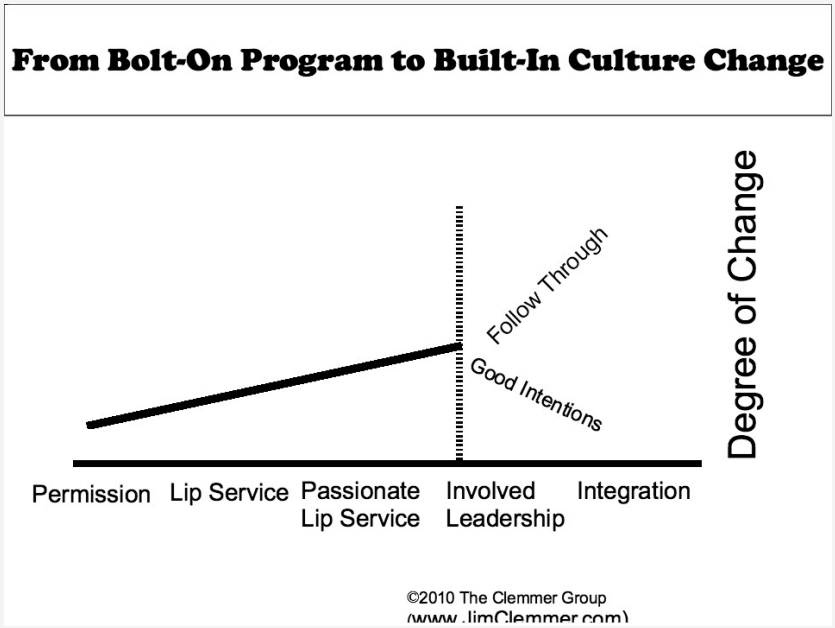
I'll admit to lots of bias in enthusiastically supporting their search for what works rather than what's new. And I am delighted to see their findings or Ten Truths align so strongly with my own work especially *The Leader's Digest: Timeless Principles for Team and Organization Success*.

What's new in leadership is clearly the wrong question. It's often motivated by a search for a quick and easy fix. The key to increasing effectiveness is asking – and practising – what works.

## LASTING CULTURE CHANGE MEANS GOING BEYOND PASSIONATE LIP SERVICE TO INVOLVED LEADERSHIP

We are working with four executive teams this fall who are looking to implement major new initiatives aimed at dramatically shifting their organizational culture and performance. One is a large international retailer completely revamping their entire supply chain process. Another is a major global mining company determined to dramatically boost their safety performance. A mid-sized law firm is concerned about succession planning and changing how their partner team works together. And an executive team of a large nuclear power plant are using the concepts of "Lean Production" to streamline and improve their operations (if you're not familiar with Lean, see Wikipedia's Lean Production article for more on this tool.)

During a recent teambuilding session with the nuclear executive team we used our Bolt-On/Built-In Chart below to discuss their critical role in leading the Lean implementation. I first developed this chart when I wrote *Firing on All Cylinders: The Service/Quality System for High-Powered Corporate Performance*. My previous company, The Achieve Group and Zenger Miller used it to help executive teams assess their readiness and discuss what behaviors they needed to change for their service and quality improvement efforts to succeed.




The Commitment Continuum has now been used to successfully frame executive behaviors for many improvement initiatives. Here's a selection of links to a series of blogs, newsletter items, and other articles around the Continuum as well as related issues and examples:

- Assessing Management Commitment – a blog excerpt with a general description of the five stages.
- How Total is Your Quality Management? – an article I wrote drawn from my book, *Firing on All Cylinders*, in the earlier years of the what's now become the Lean Production and Six Sigma approaches.
- Bolt-On Programs versus Built-In Culture Change – features a chart with the critical difference between change and improvement initiatives as a program versus deep and lasting culture change.
- Why Most Change Programs and Improvement Initiatives Fail – brief summary of the top five failure factors.
- The "Soft" Side of Productivity Improvement is Really Hard – this blog post focused on productivity but is equally applicable to implementing Lean, safety, customer service, or quality improvement.
- Walking the Talk – an article by Barrick Gold's SVP, Don Ritz, on how they focused on executive behavior and the Commitment Continuum to drive dramatic culture change that ultimately reduced their safety incidents by 75%.
- Practical Role Modeling: Barrick Gold Provides Specific Guidelines – this newsletter item outlines some of the early work we were doing with Barrick Gold when they were just starting to see dramatic results. Click on the link at the end of the sentence "you can see the tool he developed here" to see a high-level description of the behavior guidelines Barrick developed for all positions in their company.
- Lean Leadership: Energize Lean, Six Sigma, and Other Quality/Productivity Improvement Initiatives – a description of approaches we use to work with Clients implementing Lean. It features our Transformation Pathways and Leadership Principles frameworks for assessing and aligning organizational culture and leadership skills.

Most of the work we do with the Commitment Continuum is highly customized around a Client's organizational dynamics and the objectives of each executive team we're working with. If you are leading or are part of a management team looking to implement an organizational change or improvement initiative, use the Continuum to assess your readiness and establish the Involved Leadership behaviors that will lead you to longterm Integration.

## COMPLIMENTARY TORONTO E-LEARNING CONFERENCE AND KEYNOTE ON CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR ONLINE LEARNING

SkillSoft is a leading provider of e-learning and performance support programs and services. The company provides comprehensive e-learning content, online information resources, and learning technologies for global enterprises, government, education and small to medium-sized businesses.

I am delighted to be partnering with SkillSoft and providing the keynote presentation at their October 14 conference at the Sheraton Toronto Airport Hotel. There's no charge for attending the full day conference also features presentations on e-learning from Open Text, Toyota Canada, Overwaitea Food Group, MD Physician Services, and KPMG. It's a great chance to hear from leading edge organizations on how they're applying leading edge learning technologies. Go to Perspectives Canada for more information and no-charge registration.

SkillSoft provides powerful online tools and services. As with all improvement tools and change programs, moving them from bolt-on to

built-in. My keynote presentation is entitled *Culture and Leadership Development for Online Learning*. I'll start by illustrating the Partial Improvement Programs and Pieces issue focused on in my last item above (Lasting Culture Change Means Going Beyond Passionate Lip Service to Involved Leadership.*)*

Years ago I was talking with a training professional about the disjointed development programs their company executives were bombarding the organization with. Here's how he framed the challenge:

*"We've had recurring cycles of leadership development, learning programs, and culture change initiatives. We're constantly setting strategies and new action plans.*
*But we seldom see anything through to completion before we launch yet another new initiative. We seem to operate by 'random brain impulse' and "HBR management."*
*We're like nervous water bugs with ADD that frantically flit from one new program to another."*

Clearly there aren't any quick and easy fixes to the deeply rooted leadership and culture issues that move beyond lip service to involved leadership and ultimately integration. In my presentation I'll explain, illustrate, and challenge learning professionals to step up and step out to apply these six key practices for building stronger cultures for their learning tools, programs, and services:

1. Coach/Develop Your Top Management Team to Better Balance Technical, Management, and Leadership
2. Have/Foster Courageous Conversations to Address the Moose-on-the-Table
3. Model and Facilitate Two-Way Communication versus Information Dumps
4. Pull the Pieces Together with an Integrated and Strategic Approach Linked to Critical Organizational Goals
5. Search for Systemic/Root Causes and Teach Holistic/Strategic Thinking to Recurring Learning Issues
6. Build-in Higher Flexibility and Change Adaptability with Shared Leadership at All Levels

Everyone attending this conference will also get a complimentary copy of my book *The Leader's Digest* provided by SkillSoft. And there's even a free lunch! I hope to see you there!

## THE FACEBOOK FACTOR

We've integrated a lot of the main site and blog into Facebook to make it easy for folks to share and comment on our content and articles.

If you're on Facebook, please take a second to join the Jim Clemmer page.

It's quick and easy. You will also see Improvement Points, blog postings, *The Leader Letter* and any videos that are posted to YouTube in your Facebook news feed as soon as they are published.

It's another way for you to access all my content where and when it's most convenient to you. Click here.

## 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."

## MOST POPULAR SEPTEMBER 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 September:

> **"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"
> Read the full article now!

> **"Weighing yourself ten times a day won't take off the pounds. No matter how sophisticated, your measures are only indicators. Measurements that don't lead to meaningful action aren't just useless - they're wasteful."**
> - from Jim Clemmer's article, "Measurement Traps"
> Read the full article now!

**"Suggestion systems work best in traditional "command and control" or paternalistic organizations. Workers come up with ideas and managers decide which ones get implemented. In a highly involved organization, teams generate and test ideas as part of a bigger focus on improving their own key processes."**
- from Jim Clemmer's article, "How to Make Effort Rewarding"
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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