



JIM CLEMMER

Practical Leadership:

Inspiring Action, Achieving Results

Jim Clemmer's Leader Letter

March 2008, Issue 60

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Heather and I enjoyed a marvelous two-week cruise in February just as the winter's worst stretch of snow and cold hit Central Canada. We were pretty happy with that timing. Our 20-year-old daughter, Vanessa, who so ably looked after our home (and Riley, our little King Charles Cavalier Spaniel) wasn't as thrilled!

The highlight of our cruise was passing through the Panama Canal from the Pacific to the Caribbean. I hadn't known a lot about this engineering marvel before this trip. Between onboard lectures by a retired geography professor, narration through the canal from a Panama tour guide during the day as we traveled through it, and reading David McCullough's highly entertaining and extremely well researched book, *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870 - 1914*, I learned a lot more about this fascinating story.

The Panama Canal is a tale full of scandal, intrigue, blundering, and politics. It's also a tale of visionary leadership, methodical problem solving, daring innovation, and dogged persistence. Many key people played significant roles in "breaking through the bull," the fear, and the uncertainty (nothing on this scale in these disease filled tropical conditions had ever been done before) to bring this modern wonder of the world into being.

Leading Change from the Middle

Recently I was working with a Client struggling to bring about cultural change in her organization. Senior managers were paying "passionate lip service" to the organization's core value, but their actions clearly conveyed that "hitting the numbers" ultimately trumped all other behaviors. Unfortunately, this is an all too common situation.

This HR professional was reinforcing a leadership development program for supervisors and department managers we designed for them using [*The Leader's Digest*](#) and its [*Practical Application Planner*](#). She decided to now use [*Moose on the Table*](#) as pre-reading to a refresher follow-up session.

I wrote [*Moose on the Table*](#) based on what my experiences have taught me about what is needed to bring lasting cultural change to organizations. If change facilitators like HR professionals or middle managers are not able to get senior executives leading this charge from the top down (and even if they are), a critical component



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to success is equipping supervisors and middle managers with the skills, tools, and processes to change the way their part of the organization is led on a day-to-day basis. This does tie directly into metrics, priorities (what we call Strategic Imperatives), processes, systems, and the like.

Pete Leonard (the central character in *Moose on the Table*) made a feeble attempt to do some moose hunting in Chapter Six (I'd like to rename that chapter "Wild Moose Chase".) It's not until he goes through a deeper team/organizational analysis (Chapter Eight) and gets into identifying Strategic Imperatives with his team (Chapters Nine and Ten) that things start to happen (the Strategic Imperatives of Pete's team start on page 120). But as he gets back to the organization, his boss and the organizational culture pushes back and he needs to really screw up his courage to break through that inertia.

"Breaking Through the Bull" Webcast Now Available for Download Online

If you missed my complimentary webcast highlighting how you can break through the barriers to building a high-performance organization, you can now download this very informative (no bias there) webcast from www.breakingthroughthebull.com. We recorded this as Windows Media Audio format (WMA) so it will play on any Windows machine with the latest version of the media player installed. This jam-packed presentation is a powerful tool for you and your team. Download it for yourself and share it with your colleagues. There's not a team or organization that wouldn't benefit from better communications. This webcast is a great place to start!

***Moose on the Table* Review**

"I just finished reading [Moose on the Table](#). I couldn't put the book down! Jim did a fantastic job. How true the fictional story was. I hope that Jim will write more books in fable form."

Sharon Walling, Team Leader
Holy Family Memorial, Manitowoc, WI

Of course, I love to get reviews like this on my newest book. Since we've now sold thousands of pre-release copies of *Moose on the Table*, I'd love to get even more specific feedback on the innovative ways you and your management team might be using this fictional tale. Please e-mail me at Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net.



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"Breaking Through the Bull: Removing Barriers to Building a High-Performance Organization" National Workshop Series

Space is limited for my new "Breaking Through the Bull" workshop, and registrations are now pouring in. Don't miss this rare opportunity, as I take to the road for a series of public workshops that will improve your team and organizational effectiveness by identifying "moose" issues and help you to break down the barriers to better communications.

It's not often that I do public workshops. In fact you'd have to go back to 1999 and the launch of [*Growing the Distance*](#) for the last one. This new material will become a core part of my program for the next few years.

As part of this special offer I'm discounting my fees by up to 75% to give organizations better opportunities to bring all their supervisors and managers. And since participants also receive a copy of my new book, *Moose on the Table: A Novel Approach to Communications @ Work* AND its new *Breaking Through the Bull* workbook, the deal is even better.

Communication, courageous leadership, and culture change, are keys to higher personal, team, and organization performance. It would be a shame to pass up this opportunity - when the costs are so slight and the benefits so real.

To find out more about this rare workshop series, please visit www.breakingthroughthebull.com or www.mooseonthetable.com.

Health and Safety Program Versus Culture

Building on the highly customized [Courageous Leadership for Health & Safety](#) training program we designed for Barrick Gold (see [July 2006](#), [December 2006](#), and [December 2007](#) issues), The CLEMMER Group's training and consulting division has been rapidly expanding our offerings and expertise in this area. As word of the dramatic results of Barrick's program (75% reduction in safety incidents over three years) spreads, I'm having more conversations with health and safety professionals as well as senior executives about The CLEMMER Group helping them improve their safety performance.

But far too many leaders don't get the difference between "sheep dipping" people throughout their organization in a training program and truly shifting the culture and daily leadership behaviors.

See [Health and Safety Bolt-on Programs or Built-In Processes](#) from the August 2003 issue for a deeper look at this critical distinction. The article also has a "commitment continuum" that is central to Barrick defining expected leadership behavior and one of the keys to their success. You can also watch me presenting this difference in a nine-minute video clip at <http://www.clemmer.net/video> (scroll down to "Quality and Safety Leadership".)



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Resources to Guide Organizational Culture Change

A reader watched some of my [video clips](#) and sent me a short e-mail. My response follows.

"I'm currently trying to lead an organizational change in my company, I would like to know if you know of a place where I can find the resources and guides on how to assess the current culture we have and pointers on how can a cultural change be driven."

Organizational/culture change is at the heart of many of my books and much of my work. This can take the form of workshops such as [Leading a High-Performance Culture](#) or more customized [senior management retreats](#) to clarify the type of culture an organization wants to build and creates an action plan to get there.

Looking for a formula for culture change is like asking how to get healthier. It depends on where you are now, what kind of culture you want to build, and how radical the change may be to make that happen.

If you go to our web site and type "culture" into the search box (click "search" in the top right corner beside our logo) you'll come up with a list of documents on our site you can peruse to see what might fit. The [October 2003 issue](#) of *The Leader Letter* is focused on leading a high-performance culture.

Truth as Strange as Fiction

At the end of January I provided the opening workshop for a senior executive retreat at the Savage River Lodge in Maryland. The executive team of a large U.S. security software company was together for a 2½-day planning retreat. Each participant was required to read [Moose on the Table](#) before we got together. When I got to the very remote lodge at the end of a narrow dirt road (they warned me to rent a four wheel drive Jeep), it was eerily similar to the fictional "Elkhorn Lodge" that Pete Leonard (the book's central character) takes his team to for a two-day retreat in [Moose on the Table](#). As I walked into the lobby area and met a few participants, one of them couldn't wait to show me they'd spotted a copy of the children's book *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* on the side table. I had referenced this book in [Moose on the Table](#).

At lunch, the president of this company had asked the lodge to serve everyone chocolate mousse so we'd start the whole retreat by putting the "moose on the table." When I opened my session right after lunch I referenced these connections to the book. I added that if the place had been called Elkhorn Lodge, they'd all feel like we were doing an episode of "The Twilight Zone!" Throughout the afternoon we connected my standard workshop material to [Moose on the Table](#) and Pete Leonard's experiences. This provided a lighter and deeper look at the issues of leadership, courage, fear, and difficult conversations than I've experienced in many other sessions.



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Sight and Site Seeing

My friend and fellow Canadian Association of Professional Speakers member, Donald Cooper sent me this photo of very rare "white haired" moose. Are they waiting to jump on a car?

Donald and I regularly compare notes and experiences in our work with management teams around the world. He astutely noted in his e-mail "while these albino moose are rare...moose on the table in most businesses are an everyday occurrence."

Donald has very strong powers of observation and finds life and leadership lessons in lots of everyday situations. Visit his web site at www.donaldcooper.com for some of those insights and to subscribe to his excellent newsletter.



At What Point Do You Just Let People Be?

A reader raised an excellent point in the e-mail below after reading this [Improvement Point](#):

"Reading about imagery and visioning awakened me to the enormous power between my ears that I wasn't using. I began reading many books and magazine articles on these topics and I attended presentations and workshops given by many of the leading authors, trainers, and speakers. I bought dozens of audio tapes on this and related "mental attitude" topics."

- from Jim Clemmer's article, "How Visioning Changed My Life"

[Read the full article now!](#)

http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_281.aspx



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My response follows.

"I have five employees who will be retiring in a few years. They like what they do and want to continue until they retire. They have indicated they are happy. I'm happy with their work. At what point do you just let people be?"

Jim has been growing, changing, and developing for years. Good for him. That's what he wants to do. He seems like a Type A personality.

Why can't people that are happy stay that way? Who am I to tell them that yes, they might think they are happy now but if they went into an area they don't want to go, became nervous, became stressed out about the next day and what's ahead, that eventually they will be happier? Isn't forcing people into the unknown or uncomfortable, NOT listening to them?

I 'get' where you are coming from and have applied some of your teachings to myself, for my own good, but it's not for everyone. Appreciate that people are different and not like ourselves and they don't want to be. That's also listening."

I certainly agree that people are very diverse and what works for me or you may not work for someone else. I think the best we can do as spouses, parents, friends, or managers is help people we care about clarify their strengths, passions, and vision and then do what we can to support them - even if we personally might not understand why they want that.

Healthy Workplaces Conference

I am pleased to present a version of my "Moose on the Table" ("Breaking Through the Bull") workshop at the Healthy Workplaces Conference at the White Oaks Conference Resort and Spa, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON, on March 27. All conference participants will receive a copy of *Moose on the Table*. Go to <http://www.yourworkplace.ca/conference> for details on this powerful session. You can save \$50 on your registration by putting the code JIM401 on your registration.

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm...on Constructive Conflict

"I have never in my life learned anything from any man who agreed with me."

- Dudley Field Malone, American lawyer and politician



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"Couples who never argue are 35 per cent more likely to divorce. On the surface, that seems like a strange finding, since we associate arguments with bad outcomes, but an inability to share frustration is a dangerous thing, he says. If you don't argue, [frustrations] build up within you until they get bigger and bigger."

- David Niven, psychologist at Florida Atlantic University, and author of *The 100 Simple Secrets of Relationships*

"Although many leaders pride themselves on their willingness to take unpopular stands, research has consistently demonstrated that most people - including leaders - prefer conformity to controversy. And the pressure to conform rises with the degree of agreement among those around you. Even if widespread agreement doesn't actually exist, the very appearance of it can be hard to resist."

- Lynn R. Offermann, "When Followers Become Toxic," *Harvard Business Review*

"When it comes to resolving broken promises, violated expectations or bad behavior, resorting to high tech methods such as e-mail, voice mail or text messages can amplify workplace problems. More than 87 per cent of 202 U.S. workers polled in a new survey said using high-tech means to resolve a workplace confrontation is not effective, according to Provo, Utah-based corporate trainers VitalSmarts. Moreover, 89 percent said e-mail, text messaging, and voice mail can get in the way of good workplace relationships."

- "Tech worse than talk in resolving conflicts," *The Globe & Mail*

"Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional."

- Max Lucado, Christian author

"The Table Group, the consulting firm of business author Patrick Lencioni, identifies a major trend plaguing teams today - team members readily avoid holding their peers accountable for both their performance and behaviors that might hurt the team....the essence of this dysfunction is the reluctance of team members to tolerate the discomfort that accompanies calling a peer on his or her behavior. Team members have a general tendency to avoid difficult conversations."

- "Online Team Assessment Study Reveals Accountability Crisis on Teams," *HR.com*

Most Popular February 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



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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 short 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 the three most popular Improvement Points we sent out in February:

A key difference between real leaders and those who struggle to get by is self-discipline. As Confucius wrote, "The nature of people is always the same; it is their habits that separate them." Successful people have formed the habits of doing those things that most people don't want to do.

From Jim Clemmer's article, "Growing with Change"
http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_58.aspx

Bribing people to perform turns them into mercenaries. It debases, degrades, and demeans work. It sets a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle into motion -- incentives, inducements, rewards, and the like leave people feeling manipulated and overly focused on what they get for complying with management's goals and direction (tuned only to WIFM -- "what's in it for me").

From Jim Clemmer's article, "Weak Leaders Try to Use Money as a Motivator."
http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_183.aspx

Our self-vision or picture of ourselves is a major factor in our self image. Years ago I heard the radio commentator and personal effectiveness speaker, Earl Nightingale, say, "We become what we think about most." Luckily I didn't hear this earlier in my life or I would have been a girl by the time I was 17!

From Jim Clemmer's article, "What We Get is What We See"
http://www.clemmer.net/articles/article_47.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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Please post or forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested – or on a 'need to grow' basis. If you received this newsletter from someone else, and would like to subscribe, click here: http://www.clemmer.net/newsletter/leader_signup.aspx

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