

Introduction

Little three-year-old Kim had just dressed herself and was ready to head out the door when her dad stopped her. "Just a minute," he said. "You've got your shoes on the wrong feet." Kim looked down at her feet, looked back up at her father solemnly and said, "But Daddy, these are the only feet I have."

THIS LIFETIME IS THE ONLY ONE WE HAVE. And now is the time to make the most of it.

We can't change our past, but we can change our future. We can't control others, but we can control ourselves. We can meet the challenges of today's rapidly changing world by changing ourselves. We can advance from where we are now to where we want to be tomorrow. We can take action — right now — and start growing the distance.

This growing process is all about developing the qualities of leadership that each of us has, regardless of our position in society or the workplace. Because how we change and control ourselves will determine the effect we have on others. That's real leadership. And that's what this book will help you develop.

LET YOURSELF GROW

*All speech, written or spoken, is a dead language,
until it finds a willing and prepared hearer.*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Reflections and Remarks on Human Life*

I AM DELIGHTED WE'VE FOUND EACH OTHER. This book is written for seekers on the grow — people who are constantly looking to improve. You're clearly one of us or you won't be reading this.

I've been studying, applying, and helping others to use key leadership principles from the fields of personal, team, and organizational development since the early 1970s. During that time, I've seen many people dramatically improve their lives, as well as those of their families, teams, communities, or organizations using the leadership principles we'll be exploring.

Some of these recharged leaders have developed a personal mission to help others understand and apply these life-changing leadership approaches. And what many of these “missionaries” have discovered is that those who need the most development are least aware of it. Their unawareness is what keeps them unaware. Since they don't seek, they don't find.

At The Clemmer Group, my development and consulting firm, we are always fascinated by the wide variance in receptivity to our development materials, workshops, coaching, or presentations. For some, it can be a life changing. For others it's a big yawn. Since the message being transmitted is exactly the same, the big difference is in the receiver's readiness to receive. I hope that our messages and your readiness come together in the pages ahead.

JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT

Of all days, the day on which one has not laughed is the one most surely wasted.

Sébastien-Roch Nicolas de Chamfort, *Maxims and Considerations*

HERE'S AN EXCERPT FROM MY FIRM'S VISION statement that explains where I am coming from with the writing style I've tried to use throughout this book:

We're having the time of our lives. Our meetings and communications are filled with humor and fun. An important measure of our corporate health is our Laughter Index, and it's high. We know that we fly highest by taking ourselves lightly. We don't suffer from "jest lag." We've developed an image of "professional light-heartedness." We maintain a professional image with strong doses of humor and humanity. We take our purpose, vision, and values — but not ourselves — seriously.

All of which means you will be exposed to my own peculiar sense of humor. Our three teenage and pre-teenage kids (Chris, Jenn, and Vanessa) feel this book should come with a bright red warning label about that. One night at our dinner table I cracked what I thought was a pretty funny remark. Chris rolled his eyes to the ceiling and said, "Dad, I hope you don't use any of that humor with your audiences. If you do," he continued, "I am really concerned about our future." Vanessa bought me a Christmas card that read: "Dad, you've always done so much for me, so I am going to put a lot of effort into your Christmas gift." The inside continued, "That's right — I'm going to laugh at one of your jokes."

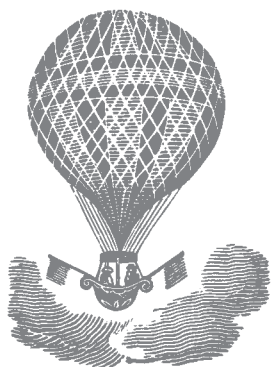
It's all too easy for a development book to be like a pair of steer horns — a point here and a point there, with a whole lot of bull in between. I will do my best to keep my points sharp and minimize your need for a shovel.

AND I QUOTE...

What is all wisdom save a collection of platitudes? Take fifty of our current proverbial sayings — they are so trite, so threadbare, that we can hardly bring our lips to utter them. None the less they embody the concentrated experience of the race and the one who orders his life according to their teaching cannot go far wrong.

Norman Douglas; Count Caloveglia's old teacher, in *South Wind*

I'VE LONG BEEN A COLLECTOR OF QUOTATIONS. I heartily agree with Benjamin Disraeli's observation that "the wisdom of the wise and the experience of the ages are perpetuated by quotations." This book attempts to boil down huge fields of study and simplify centuries of leadership wisdom. Insightful or humorous quotations (a combination of both are my very favorites) can instantly provide the "ah-ha picture" that's worth a thousand words. In other cases, I'll use current quotations from books or research to reinforce the point of a section or chapter. If I couldn't have said it better myself, I won't make you wade through pages of text to prove it.



TELL ME A STORY

Man is eminently a storyteller. His search for a purpose, a cause, an ideal, a mission and the like is largely a search for a plot and a pattern in the development of his life story.

Eric Hoffer, *The Passionate State of Mind*

SINCE OUR ANCIENT ANCESTORS FIRST GATHERED around the campfire, we've communicated through stories. The incredible number of movies produced and books of fiction written each year show how much we still love to be told a good story. Throughout *Growing the Distance* I have pulled from or created fables, examples, and tales. They are meant to be entertaining. I hope you enjoy them. At the same time, each story is designed to illustrate a timeless principle in that section. I hope they drive you to thinking.

Where's the action?

The secret of a leader lies in the tests he has faced over the whole course of his life and the habit of action he develops in meeting those tests.

Gail Sheehy, American journalist and author

RESULTS COMES FROM WHAT WE DO with what we know, not just from what we know. You have heard some of the ideas in this book before. The skies may not part and the hallelujah choir come down to reveal some blinding new insight to you as you read. (If you do have any heavenly visitors, however, please let me know; my contact information is on page 000.)

We all know much more than we do. We understand, but we don't act.. But the key isn't knowing, it's doing. Successful people do those things that less successful people aren't willing to do – even though they know better. Use this book to review and reflect... than act.

As personal development speaker, Zig Ziglar puts it, make this your time to give yourself a “check up from the neck up.” Reflect on your actions. When it comes to leadership, knowledge isn't power. Only applied knowledge is power.

Jim Clemmer