



# INTRODUCTION

While interviewing the legendary Jack Nicklaus, a reporter once remarked, “Jack, you have had a spectacular career. Your name is synonymous with the game of golf. You really know your way around the course. What is your secret?”

Nicklaus replied, “The holes are numbered!”

If only leadership were so easy. (Given the sad state of my game, I’m the last person who should use “easy” and “golf” in the same sentence!) Unfortunately, there are no handily numbered steps that we can follow in growing our leadership. But after decades of studying leadership – of writing and speaking about it, of trying to practice it, as well as providing leadership coaching to thousands of managers – we at The CLEMMER Group have become convinced that there are timeless leadership principles which all of us can use to be more effective in our personal and professional lives.

These principles were introduced in my previous book, *Growing the Distance*. The response to that book, and the “timeless leadership principles” outlined therein, was so strong that I continued to develop them (see page 205 for more information). *Growing the Distance* focused on personal or self-leadership. A central theme of the book is that leadership is an action, not a position – each of us, as individuals, need to be leaders, regardless of whether or not we have a formal leadership role. This is where leadership begins – “in here,” before moving “out there” to influence, guide, support, and to lead others.

Now, with *The Leader’s Digest*, we take the next step, applying those same timeless leadership principles to the workplace. This book is written for anyone who has the responsibility of leading people in an organization – including supervisors, team leaders, managers, and executives. (Throughout the book I will use the generic term “leaders” and “managers” to describe all those who occupy leadership positions and roles.) Regardless of their organizational position, all these leaders can benefit from the principles described in *The Leader’s Digest*.

## Getting to the point

*“Thousands of grapes are pressed to fill one jar with wine, and the grape skin and pulp are tossed to the birds. So it is with these grapes of wisdom from the ages. Much has been filtered and tossed to the wind. Only the pure truth lies distilled in the words to come.”*

OG MANDINO, *THE GREATEST SALESMAN IN THE WORLD*, THE SCROLL MARKED I

**W**ant to read up on the subject of leadership? Well, be my guest. A recent Internet search revealed that there some 10,000 leadership books in print!

What’s more, it often seems that there are as many different interpretations of “leadership” as there are people using the term. The result is a confusing multitude of leadership grids, charts, formulas, jargon, fads, and buzzwords. New ones seem to pop up every week.

One of my goals in writing *The Leader’s Digest* was to distill all the information on leadership down to its essentials – to provide a series of “executive summaries” or briefings on the key elements of leading people. Building on my previous work co-founding and leading the Achieve Group and now The CLEMMER Group’s many years of research and writing on leadership, as well as our experiences in training and consulting with hundreds of organizations, I have attempted to identify, illustrate, and demonstrate the application of the timeless leadership principles found in our Leadership Wheel (see page 22). To do this I have used a variety of both original and classic fables or stories, real-life situations, pithy quotations, citations from current research, personal examples, and how-to points – all punctuated with whimsical illustrations and graphics.

*The Leader's Digest* is designed specifically for browsing, with a magazine-style presentation that allows you to leaf through the book to find the sections or approaches that are most meaningful to you. Some people, like me, are “quotaphiles” (sounds kind of suspect, I know, but it’s perfectly legal) and appreciate the pithy wisdom found in a succinct quotation or turn of phrase. Others like to read the sidebars with stories, illustrations, or research. Some people like to follow the main text and then read the other areas.

It’s your book and your choice.



## What's new?

*“A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever...What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, ‘See, this is new?’ It has already been in the ages before us.”*

ECCLESIASTES

**H**istorians, anthropologists and scholars of classic literature tell us that there are really just a small number of recurring stories in the entire history of humanity. Our books and movies provide us with endless variations on the basic stories of the human condition. That's one of the reasons why my favorite recreational reading is historical fiction. So many of the same themes keep showing up in the stories of people and cultures thousands of years or miles apart.

The leadership principles outlined in my books are just as timeless. They aren't new. But that doesn't make them any less important; indeed, it is the timelessness of these principles that proves their value. We need to continually rediscover and repackage them for today's circumstances.

# Finding your own path

*“Buddha left a road map, Jesus left a road map, Krishna left a road map, Rand McNally left a road map. But you still have to travel the road yourself.”*

STEPHEN LEVINE, SPIRITUALITY AND PERSONAL-GROWTH AUTHOR

After a strenuous afternoon of climbing up the face of a steep mountainside in the hot sun, two rock climbers — Pat and Andy — finally reached a plateau. It was an idyllic setting with a clear, cool glacial stream running through the alpine meadow. They had just started drinking the refreshing water and bathing in the stream when a large mountain goat came charging into the clearing and headed straight for them.

Pat’s first reaction was to scramble into a nearby small cave, leaving the goat to chase after Andy, who ran halfway around the clearing and desperately climbed up a small tree. The goat began ramming the tree so hard that it was all Andy could do to hang on as it swayed back and forth. Suddenly Pat came out of his cave and ran around the clearing, yelling and shouting. The goat dashed off after Pat, almost catching up with him before Pat

had made a complete circle and slipped back inside the cave. Then the goat spotted Andy, who had started down the tree. He raced over to the tree and resumed his violent ramming of the trunk.

Just as Andy was losing his grip and about to fall, Pat came running around the clearing yelling and screaming again, luring the goat away from the tree, just before diving back into the cave. The goat then spotted Andy coming down the tree and ran over to ram it again. By this time, Andy finally had a good grip on the tree. He bellowed down at Pat in the cave, “Why don’t you stay in that cave and be patient. We can wait out this goat until he’s tired. This too shall pass.” Pat yelled back, “You wouldn’t be handing out all that fancy advice if you saw the size of the bear that’s sleeping in here!”



Obviously, I don't know the size of the bears in your cave. So I'm not going to attempt to give you a lot of fancy advice about how to grow your leadership. Throughout *The Leader's Digest* I will present research, experiences, illustrations, and application suggestions. It's up to you to pick what fits your situation and what doesn't.

A key part of our continuous leadership quest is finding the approaches that fit our individual values, personality, and style. It's like trying to find a path in a field of newly fallen snow. Once we walk across the field, we've discovered our path.

After years of consulting work, I realize there is no one leadership size that fits all. There are timeless principles we can all apply, but we have to make them fit our unique circumstances.

## Principles in practice

Thomas Henry Huxley, the 19th-century English biologist, once said that “All truth, in the long run, is only common sense clarified.” Leadership is really just common sense. The problem for most of us is that it’s not common *practice*. One of my goals in writing *The Leader’s Digest* is to remind us all of common-sense principles where the practicing may be slipping.

It is one thing to *know*, it’s quite another to *do*. And many a manager has confused *understanding* leadership concepts with *practicing* them. Just like maintaining our physical fitness, growing our leadership is a never-ending activity.

*Please visit our large and ever growing website at [www.clemmer.net](http://www.clemmer.net). We are continually adding material to make the site a major resource center for transforming personal, team, and organization performance. Join our mailing list and we will keep in touch as new programs and services spin off from The Leader’s Digest, as we update the resources on our website, and as my next books become available. (See page 207 for more information on our website.)*

## Growth can hurt a little

Another of my goals in *The Leader’s Digest* is to be a comfort-zone stretcher. In my workshops and speaking engagements, I know I’ve been successful when I look at the faces around me and see some measure of discomfort or resistance.

The worst response is no response. The real enemy of growth and improvement is apathy. So please let me know how this book affects you. I would love to get your personal responses to *The Leader’s Digest*. Please email me directly at [Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net](mailto:Jim.Clemmer@Clemmer.net).