

THE DONALD COOPER CORPORATION

Speaking and coaching internationally on management, marketing and profitability



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As business leaders or managers, our 1st job is clarity:

(Time to read this article is about 2.5 minutes)

Managing any business today is tough...and getting tougher. We're all faced with more demanding customers, more and stronger competition, increased complexity and shrinking margins. On top of that, great staff are hard to find and keep...and that problem won't go away any time soon.

Every industry and every market is over-served and under-differentiated. To thrive we must create, deliver and communicate extraordinary customer value and experiences that clearly differentiate us from our competitors, make us 'famous' and grow our bottom line. Then, we must create world-class operating efficiency. Mediocrity is no longer an option.

Our 1st job is 'clarity':

In spite of what anyone tells you, whether your business is large, small, or just getting started, your first and most important job is creating 'clarity'...and nobody talks about that. If we, as owners, leaders and managers, don't know clearly 'who' we are, where we're going and what we stand for, how will our target customers and staff know who we are and what to expect from us? How can we be focused and intentional in running the business...and how will we know what talent we need to attract, develop and retain to make it all happen?

Clarity always starts at the top so, as owners, leaders or managers, our 1st job is to be clear about these 10 things. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excellent, rate your business's clarity for each.

- ☐ 1. Who our target customers are and what life's really like for them. What they value and what they fear and how their needs, desires and values will change in the next 3 to 5 years.
- ☐ 2. The compelling customer value and experience that we *commit* to deliver. Value and experiences that will 'grab' our target customers, clearly differentiate us from our competitors, make us 'famous'...and grow our bottom line.
- ☐ 3. How we'll effectively communicate our compelling value story in a crowded and cynical market. There's no point being the best if we're also the best kept secret.
- ☐ 4. What we *commit* to become to be a profitable, sustainable and responsible market leader in 3 to 5 years (our Vision). How must our business be different from what and who we are today? How big must we be? How might our business model have to change?
- ☐ 5. The specific decisions and actions that we commit to take each year to get us to that 3 to 5-year Vision (this will be our annual Mission).
- ☐ 6. The extraordinary bottom line that we *commit* to generate. Without a healthy ROI, there is no business.
- ☐ 7. The talent, team, training & organizational structure we need to make our Vision happen.
- ☐ 8. How we must grow as leaders and managers and what talent and experience we need to add to our management and supervisory team...and who is being groomed to replace us.
- ☐ 9. The technology, systems, processes, equipment and facilities we need to be innovative, cost-effective, customer-centric and profitable industry disruptors...and to make our Vision happen effectively.
- ☐ 10. How we *commit* to behave along the way (our values, ethics, culture and standards). One of the most important roles of our leaders is to guard the integrity of the business.

_____ our total 'Clarity Score' out of 100

Most businesses lack this kind of clarity...and it's killing them. Clarity always starts at the top and if we at the top of the organization are not clear about these 10 things, who else could possibly be? The answer is...'nobody'. And without clarity, there can be no commitment or urgency and without commitment, there's no accountability.

To calculate your overall company 'Clarity Score' and compare your personal 'Clarity Perception' to that of your team, print a copy of the 10 'clarity factors' on Page 1 for each member of your management and supervisory team. Have them, individually, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excellent, rate their perception of clarity for each factor and then recap all the individual results and calculate your overall company 'Clarity Score'. The results will be hugely insightful.

How do you get started on improving clarity in your business? Clarity, commitment, urgency and accountability start with you and filter all the way down the Team through your words, actions and decisions, communication, rewards for performance and consequences for non-performance.

Using the insights gained from the 'Clarity Survey', sit down with your management and supervisory team for an open and honest conversation about how to improve clarity for each of the 10 'Clarity Items' in a way that will help them be more effective and engaged in their job. Get agreement on specifically what will be done, by whom, by when, at what cost, with what outcomes, measured how, to improve clarity, commitment, urgency and accountability in every part of your business. Then, follow up to ensure that action is taken and improvement is being made. A big part of your job is following up. The world is run by those who follow up.

So, for this year and beyond, what will you do, starting right now, to improve clarity in your business? From that clarity will come increased commitment, urgency, efficiency, accountability and profitability. If you'd like help with this, I'm easy to find at donald@donaldcooper.com.

Through Keynote speeches, interactive Workshops and 1-on-1 Coaching, Donald helps business owners and managers create compelling customer value, clarity of purpose and long-term profitability. To subscribe to his free, weekly 'straight talk' **Management Blog**, visit www.donaldcooper.com.