



Donald Cooper, MBA, HoF  
Certified Speaking Professional

**Donald Cooper** is respected by clients in over 40 industries as both a “thought leader” and a passionate visionary in the areas of marketing, service and business excellence.

Drawing from his real life experience as a world-class manufacturer, award-winning retailer and business speaker, he has helped thousands of businesses throughout the world to add more real value to their customers’ lives...and more dollars to their bottom lines.

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### **The simple truth about effective business leadership...in just 3 minutes:**

Much of my work over the past few years has been in helping business owners and managers become much more effective leaders. Most of these folks spend 90% of their time working "IN" their business and 10% or less of their time working "ON" on the business. They are not proactively managing their business, leading their people, creating compelling customer value, managing their bottom line and creating an extraordinary future...and it's going to cost them big time!

Working "IN" their business is easy, they've done it for years...so they retreat to the familiar. If you fall into this category, here's the short version of what leadership is...and how you can make it work for you.

**1.** Our first job as leaders is to **create clarity** about what we commit to deliver, what we commit to become...and how we'll behave along the way. By creating clear commitments we *"get everyone singing from the same hymn sheet."*, to quote my grandmother. Specifically, leaders must be clear about...

**a)** The **compelling value and experiences** that we commit to deliver to every customer, every day ...and what that value and experience must look like in 3 to 5 years to be both competitive and profitable. What value and experiences will "grab" your target customers, clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you "famous" and grow your bottom line?

**b)** Then, we must be clear about what the business commits to become in 3 to 5 years, including...

- how big it will be.
- the bottom line that it will generate.
- where it will do business, including where it will buy, sell or produce.
- what the business model will be and how the organization will be structured.
- the values it will live by. Our "values" are our fundamental commitments to ethics, excellence, life's priorities and the treatment of others.
- the technology that will drive it.
- what the organization will need to learn and the talent that it will need to attract.
- how it will communicate with customers and prospects as a group...and as individuals.
- who its competitors are likely to be and what their compelling value will likely be.
- what % of our growth will come from the organic growth of what we're doing now...and what % must come from new products or services, new locations, new markets or acquisitions.
- what the working capital requirements will be. How much of that will come from operations, how much from outside...and from where?
- the processes, systems and training that will be required to make all of this happen.

2. Our 2nd job as a leader is to **create a staff team** that can deliver the businesses commitments to customers, to each other and to its extraordinary and profitable future.
3. Our Leadership Job #3 is to passionately **communicate and reinforce each of our commitments** in everything we do, say and decide, every day.
4. Then, we must **measure performance** & constantly look for behavior to praise, celebrate & reward.
5. Finally, look for **behavior to correct**. Lack of accountability and failure to deal with non-performance are two of the biggest challenges facing many businesses today.

As leaders, how do we create accountability and deal with non-performance? It's actually quite simple. First, we must create that clarity about what we commit to deliver, what we commit to become and how we commit to behave along the way. That's why creating "clarity" is Leadership Job #1.

Then, when we see behavior or results that are not living up to any of our "commitments" we sit down with the individual(s) responsible and ask them four straightforward questions...

**Question #1:** *"With regard to this specific performance shortfall, do you **understand** what we're committed to?"* And the answer is either "Yes" or "No". If the answer is *"Yes, I understand what we're committed to with regard to that."*, move on to Question #2. If they say that they did not understand, there are two possibilities.

The first possibility is that they truly did not understand the commitment, in which case, you haven't done your job as a leader and it's up to you to fix that by creating and communicating commitments. The second possibility is that they understood perfectly what they were to do and how they were to do it, but they're trying to "weasel out" of taking responsibility.

In my experience, over many years in business, at least half the time that our people tell us that they didn't understand what they were to do or how they were to do it, they're just being "weasels". They're trying to put the blame back on you, the boss. Get rid of "weasels"...they're killing you.

**Question #2:** Next, ask them, *"Do you embrace and support that commitment?"* And the answer is either "Yes" or "No". If the answer is, *"Yes, I embrace and support that commitment."*, move on to Question #3. If the answer is *"No, I don't."*, there are now three possibilities.

The first possibility is that they honestly believe that this particular commitment is unrealistic and out of touch with reality, in which case they have a responsibility to engage you in respectful debate to get you to change your mind about that commitment. A business that encourages 'respectful debate' is a healthy environment.

The second possibility is that they could change their mind and 'get with the program'. The third possibility is that they could leave. There is no room in a business for people who do not fully support the very things that business is committed to.

**Question #3:** The third question is a call to action. It is, *"Can you make it happen? Because the reason that we're having this conversation is that it isn't happening right now."* There's another important question to ask at this point which is, *"Is anything preventing you from making it happen? Because I'm here to provide support and eliminate roadblocks? But, given all of that, can you make it happen, or not?"* And the answer is "Yes" or "No".

If the answer is, *"Yes, I can make it happen."*, go to Question #4. And, if the answer is, *"No, no matter how much help and support you give me, boss, I just can't make it happen."*, it's time for them to move on.

**Question #4:** The fourth and final question is, *"When will I see it happen?"* Agree on a time by which the deficiency will be corrected and then follow up religiously. Without diligent follow-up, the entire process collapses.

If the solution to the problem is longer term, you will want to alter the fourth question to, *"When will I see a step-by-step plan?"* and then you will monitor each step to ensure that the project is on track.

So, to briefly recap, the four questions that create accountability and deal with non-performance in your business are, *"Do you understand our commitments? Do you embrace them? Can you make it happen? When will I see it happen?"* These four simple questions can transform your business.

There you have it...some clear insights about effective business leadership in just three minutes. How will you use these insights to proactively manage your business, your team, your extraordinary future... and your bottom line?

**For more information** on how Donald Cooper can help you redefine and reinvent your business to create, deliver and communicate compelling, customer-owning Value, visit our website at [www.donaldcooper.com](http://www.donaldcooper.com), email us at [sharen@donaldcooper.com](mailto:sharen@donaldcooper.com) or contact us by telephone in Toronto, Canada at 1-(416) 252-3704.