



Donald Cooper, MBA, HoF

**Donald** is respected by clients in over 40 industries throughout the world as a “thought leader” and passionate visionary in the key areas of management, marketing, and service excellence.

Drawing from his experience as a world-class manufacturer, award-winning retailer, business speaker and coach, he has helped thousands of businesses to sell more, manage smarter and grow their bottom line.

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## An article by Donald Cooper, MBA...

### The biggest mistake you can make in your business is to be mediocre...so what are you famous for?

I’m amazed at how many of my clients can’t answer simple questions about what their Gross Margin is, how many different SKU’s (Stock Keeping Units) they have in inventory, who their 10 most profitable customers are or what effect increasing sales by just 5% would have on their bottom line.

We all make mistakes. My Father used to say that success in business is the result of being right slightly more often than you’re wrong. But the fatal mistake, the one that will put you under, is being mediocre.

Stop playing it safe; stand out. Be “famous” for something. The very successful Yard House restaurants in the USA are famous for offering the world’s largest selection of draft beers. They have over 150 different draft beers listed on their website, including a gluten-free beer for people with wheat allergies. Beer-lovers flock to the Yard House for an extraordinary beer experience.



Now, those of you who know me well know that I don’t drink booze of any kind. Several of my relatives were alcoholics and I pretty much knew by the age of 10 that I should stay away from the stuff. But, as a marketing guy, 150 kinds of draft beer blows me away.

They even offer “beer floats”...beer with vanilla ice cream. Now, that would make many people gag, but the point is that they’re doing some slightly bizarre stuff that makes them stand out and get talked about. Have you given your target customers something to talk about?

It is said that the famous Canadian architect Arthur Erickson never built a building that didn’t leak somewhere...but he was always pushing the envelope, always creating the extraordinary and, in the process, he made a few mistakes. His buildings are spectacular; they uplift, inspire and make emotional connections with people. If you build ordinary, boring square boxes that look ugly and destroy the soul, they probably won’t leak....but they’ll damage us in other ways. We lived in an Arthur Erickson-designed condominium building for several years...and it did leak here and there. But every day, it uplifted us and enriched our lives. So, when you go for “extraordinary”, you may mess up a bit...but people will still love you for making a difference.



As an award-winning fashion retailer I offered massage chairs for husbands, a pirate ship play area for kids, free diapers for young mothers, free beverages for everybody, an invitation to “Please take as many items in the change room as you wish” and honest savings...no games, no tricks, no lies. We were the only retailers in the world doing any of this stuff at the time, it was a heck of a lot of work to pull it off and from time to time we made a mistake of some kind. But women drove up to three hours to shop in our store, they loved us and our sales were three times the national average.

Is it more work to offer 150 kinds of beer, to design buildings that uplift and inspire, to build a pirate ship play area, or to do what you do at a whole new level of “amazing”? Of course it is. But, is it worth it? You be the judge. All I know is that in this highly competitive world where there are way too many other people selling what you’re selling, mediocrity is no longer an option.

So, what would “extraordinary” look like in your business? What has never been done before? What would truly amaze and delight your target customers...and what will you commit to do to become that?

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