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**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.

To subscribe to Donald’s thought-provoking, **free, monthly Management E-Newsletter**, email us at [newsletter@donaldcooper.com](mailto:newsletter@donaldcooper.com).

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## **You can't grow your business without growing your people:**

Whether your business is large or small and whether you're a Department or Divisional Manager, or a business owner, one of your most important jobs is "growing" your people. In fact, you can't grow your business without growing your people.

Concours Auto Body in Calgary, Alberta is one Canada's most successful collision repair shops. This is an industry that struggles with a constant shortage of skilled craftsmen and high staff turnover as shops raid each other's employees.

So, how has Concours owner Ken Friesen created a stable, highly motivated and top-performing team of 50 employees that has helped him to double his business in the past few years? Ken has created a clear, step-by-step career path for every employee who expresses interest in growing with the company. He meets with each new employee at the end of their first day, first week, first month...and so on. Everyone knows where they stand, what their next few steps will be and what their promotion opportunities are.

If growing your business by growing your people makes sense to you, take a few minutes to consider these three questions...

**Question #1:** What will our business, my Division or Department "look like" in 3 to 5 years? How big will it be? Where will it be? What will it be doing? How will it operate? In what specific ways is it likely to be different from how it looks and operates today?

**Question #2:** What does our Department, Division, or the whole organization, need to learn to be a profitable market leader in 3 to 5 years? What knowledge, skills, customer insights, processes, attitudes, innovations and disciplines must we learn to be price-competitive, service-competitive and profitable? What technology must we master?

**Question #3:** Who are our top performers? Who on our team has the attitude, the ability, or the potential to help us to move this business forward? Given what we must learn and the potential of our team, where are there obvious "gaps" that we need to fill from outside our business?

Now, create a career path for your best people. Surveys show that the #1 thing that most top performers want is a challenging job with an opportunity to grow and contribute. Sit down with each of them individually and ask them three questions...

- 1) Where would you like to be in 3 to 5 years? What job or position would you like to have?
- 2) Whatever job or position they express interest in, ask them what they think that job or position will be like. If they say that they'd like to be the VP of Sales because they could play golf and enjoy expense account dining every day, write them off as lightweights.
- 3) Next, ask them what knowledge, skills, training and experience they think they'd need to do the job or position they're interested in with excellence.

## **You can't grow your business without growing your people: (Cont'd)**

Don't expect them to have immediate answers to these three questions. Most people won't...and that's OK. Invite them to take a few days to think about and research the possibilities and book a specific time when they will get back to you with answers. If they don't keep that appointment, you know everything you need to know about their commitment to move ahead.

Once you have agreed on a career path for each person, create a specific "Growth Plan" for them, including the training and experience that they'll get...and when and where they'll get it.

By the way, include yourself in this process. What do you want to be doing in 3 to 5 years...and what does the business need you to be doing? Do you honestly want to be doing what you must be doing in 3 to 5 years to grow the business, your career...and your extraordinary life? And, if not, what alternate plans are you making for the business, for your career...and for your life?

Interesting questions...and absolutely necessary in this fast-changing and increasingly competitive world!

**For more information** on how Donald Cooper can help you rethink, refocus and reinvent your business to create compelling customer value and long-term profitability, call us in Toronto, Canada at 1-(416) 252-3704 or email us at [sharen@donaldcooper.com](mailto:sharen@donaldcooper.com).