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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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## **Five important business lessons from the birdfeeder:**

At the end of every year we retreat to our country place on Sparrow Lake for three wonderful and peaceful weeks to reflect, refresh and relax. Although it’s only 90 minutes north of Toronto, it feels like a million miles from anything ‘city’...especially in winter! But, even here, one learns important business lessons.

As soon as we arrived this year, I hung a bird feeder right outside our kitchen window. Think of this as a new business start-up with a great product (ok, so it’s peanuts from Bulk Barn), no customers, but great potential in the form of a nearby forest full of hungry birds. This new venture had ‘success’ written all over it!

But how, I wondered, do I promote my ‘grand opening’? First, I thought of advertising but birds don’t read newspapers, don’t listen to the radio or watch TV. Then, I thought that maybe I should create a ‘grand opening special’ by lowering my price...but heck, I was giving my peanuts away. How much lower could I go than that? I even considered sampling, but didn’t fancy myself standing outside, under the feeder, at minus 30 degrees, holding out a handful of frozen peanuts.

Here’s what happened during the first five days of my new ‘business venture’...

**Day #1:** No customers. Not one single bird. Our new business was a failure!

**Day #2:** Things are looking up! We are visited by one chickadee, who apparently loves free, imported Spanish peanuts. He stays to shop the entire day.

**Day #3:** Things are really looking up. We have dozens of chickadees and two kinds of nuthatches. Apparently birds tell other birds.

**Day #4:** We have dozens more chickadees, endless nuthatches and two sizes of woodpeckers ...both males and females. Apparently, peanuts are a one-size-fits-all item.

Our ‘grand opening’ is officially declared to be a huge success! We now have line-ups. It’s like an IKEA grand opening...our customers are actually fighting for the ‘merchandise’.

By the end of the day we’re running out of peanuts and make a special trip to town to replenish our inventory and purchase two additional feeders to expand our operation, eliminate line-ups and improve our customer service.

**Day #5:** Our customer base grows even more with the addition of one blue jay and a red squirrel. He doesn’t fit our demographic, but we welcome him anyway, as long as he doesn’t frighten away our primary target customers.

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## Five important business lessons from the birdfeeder: *(Cont'd)*

**So**, here are your five important business lessons from the bird feeder...

1. You can't build a business in one day. Be in it for the long haul.
2. Word-of-mouth works! One delighted customer can profoundly affect the success of your business.
3. Don't run out of what your customers want.
4. Expand your business only when you have lineups. Don't get ahead of yourself. Too much inventory or too much overhead can kill you.
5. You may get customers that you didn't expect. Welcome them...embrace them! They create a whole new possibility to grow your business.

Another thing we learn from this little adventure is that insights and ideas are all around us if we just remain curious, passionate and open to possibilities.

**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.