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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).

Donald’s website, [www.donaldcooper.com](http://www.donaldcooper.com) also offers free articles and business tools.

### Do NOT attend one more conference or trade show before reading this:

Will the next conference or trade show that you attend help you to be "light years" ahead of your competitors, or just two days further behind at the office?

I'm constantly amazed at how many business owners and managers invest lots of time and money to attend trade shows and industry conferences without first making a list of things that they need know more about to improve in their business.

As a speaker at 100s of conferences and trade shows, I often ask audiences how many of them came to this event with a list of 4 or 5 specific things that they need to know more about in order to...

- grow your sales,
- create more customer value,
- buy smarter,
- find and keep great staff,
- update your facilities or systems,
- improve your selection,
- advertise more effectively,
- be a more effective manager...or,
- get a better handle on your costs, your inventory or your bottom line?

...and nobody ever puts their hand up. Apparently, nobody has a list!

Here's a thought...if you're not going to go to a trade show or conference with a list of four or five specific objectives and a plan...don't bother going. On the other hand, how tough would it be to take a few minutes to quietly think about how all that knowledge, gathered together in one place, could help you and your business?

Last year at the huge Pizza Expo Show and Conference in Las Vegas, a number of folks gathered around to chat following my presentation and one lady started to tell me about how she had increased sales by 30% and just about doubled her bottom line by adding a "drive through" to her pizza restaurant in Portland, Oregon.

As she related her story, the man standing beside her started hyperventilating with excitement. He said, *"I've been thinking about adding a drive-through to my pizza business for years...and I've just never gotten around to it."* They sat down on the side of the stage and she spent 20 minutes telling him everything he needed to know about how to make a drive-through work.

But, the point here is that it happened accidentally. It was just dumb luck. So, for you the question is, "*Are you proactively managing your time at trade shows and conferences to find out what you need to know...or are you just hoping that something good will jump out and stick to you as you walk around?*"

Here's a plan. A few weeks before going to a trade show or conference, sit down and make a list of the major challenges that you need help with in your business. What needs fixing, improving or innovating? Next, call your industry association, industry trade magazine, suppliers and respected industry consultants to find out who already does that excellently. Then, call those people who already "get it", introduce yourself and tell them that "so and so" has recommended them as outstanding operators, brilliant marketers, great innovators...or whatever.

Next, ask if you can buy them breakfast, lunch, dinner, or a drink, and chat with them about their success. Most people will be so flattered that they just can't say "no". Just don't call a direct competitor in your immediate market. When you meet with them, be prepared. Not to be prepared is an insult. Politely ask them important questions and ask them if they mind if you make a few notes.

You don't have to "reinvent the wheel" to improve your business. You just have to know what needs improvement, who has already done it and then proactively search them out and learn from them. So, never go to another conference or trade show without a list.

**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.