



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, idea-generating, **FREE** monthly electronic **Newsletter**, email us at newsletter@donaldcooper.com.

His website, www.donaldcooper.com also offers free articles and business tools.

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Are you “watering down” what you do...and is it killing you?

I read recently that GM is introducing a new model of their famous Hummer, the oversized SUV that's based on a vehicle they produce for the US Army.

The original Hummer has a unique wide-track look, lots of power, has awesome off-road capability, is completely impractical for just about everyone and costs big bucks to buy and to operate. However, it's "look at me, I can go anywhere" Brand image caught the attention of Arnold Swartzenager and lots of other celebs. The Hummer has been a success in a very narrow market. A wonderful example of niche market positioning.

Then, to appeal to folks with as much ego but less money, GM introduced the slightly watered down, less expensive H2 model in an attempt to leverage the Brand and increase sales volume.

Now, they're set to introduce an even more watered down vehicle called the H3, which shows that GM doesn't understand the difference between leveraging a Brand and diluting a Brand.

Here's the sad story. The new H3 will be 6 inches narrower than the original Hummer, which means that the wide, aggressive "Hummer look" has been sacrificed. Then, because the narrower vehicle won't accommodate the size of engine that the vehicle should have, they're using a smaller engine that will result in it being underpowered.

Why have they compromised the vehicle and, therefore the Hummer Brand, even though they fully know what a Hummer is supposed to be in order to deliver its Brand promise? Because, in order to keep the Auto Workers Union happy and fill a sagging old assembly Plant in Shreveport, Louisiana, they need to produce the H3 there. Unfortunately, that assembly line wouldn't accommodate the H3 if it were designed the way it should have been, so they simply watered it down.

The long-term implications of this kind of "watered down" thinking are devastating and will lead to Toyota replacing GM as the world's largest car maker by 2010. The question for you is, "Are you compromising your product design, your quality, your market positioning or your customer service in any way by watering down what you do and how you do it? Are you clear about what you're promising and do you have the courage and passion to deliver that every day?"

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, email us at info@donaldcooper.com or contact us by telephone in Toronto, Canada at 1-(416) 252-3704.