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**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...

### Six “oddball” ideas to find or attract top performers:

Over the past few months I’ve been collecting and passing on to you a number of unusual tips from clients regarding how to find or attract top performers. Here’s a recap of some of those ideas...plus a few new ones.

**1.** One client, with a downtown production facility, has found some stellar long-term employees by handing out business cards to homeless people. Not only have many of these folks turned out to be extraordinary, he has the great joy of knowing that he’s making a difference with those who need a break.

**2.** A group of bicycle retailers in Toronto, desperate for trained mechanics, has partnered with an organization that’s committed to helping at-risk youth in order to create a bicycle mechanics’ training course that will develop 50 skilled employees per year.

**3.** A Technology Integrator client of mine in New York taught night school classes at his local college while starting up his business. This accomplished two things. First, it brought in some extra income while his business was getting off the ground and, second, he was able to identify the sharpest up-and-coming talent and offer them jobs. Very clever.

**4.** A Mr. Sub franchisee in Humboldt, Saskatchewan has established a college scholarship program for their employees, many of whom are high school students. Anyone who works for them for 18 months qualifies for a minimum of \$250 towards any post secondary training or education.

To quote Pattie Durand, the vey kind and sharp franchisee, “We tell our staff that we don’t want them to be making subs for the rest of their lives and encourage them to pursue their dreams. Since it costs at least \$1200 to train a new employee, \$250 is more than worth it. We also make sure the scholarships are awarded at school ceremonies, in order for other potential employees to see what type of company we are.”

This program has reduced Pattie’s staff turnover by almost 50% and it has greatly improved the quality of people applying for jobs. She’s attracting hard working, committed students, instead of those who have no future goals or ambitions. Brilliant.





5. The president of a home alarm company in Edmonton Alberta happens to be a Mormon. So, who does he recruit to do door-to-door alarm sales? He hires clean cut young Mormons, who have just returned home after a two year stint as volunteer missionaries going door-to-door in foreign countries to save souls.

These young people get some of the best “sales” training in the world from the Mormon Church, they sure know how to deal with rejection and, trust me, if you can stand in a doorway in Mexico, one of the most Catholic countries in the world, and sell folks on becoming Mormons...you can sell alarm systems in a subdivision outside of Edmonton. This is creative recruiting.

6. Red Carnation Hotel Group, which owns extraordinary high-end hotels in the UK, Switzerland, South Africa and Florida, proactively forms partnerships with the top Hotel and Hospitality Schools in Europe and South Africa. Their hotel management people regularly lecture at these schools and for that reason they get the best students for their internship programs.

What I’ve suggested to them is that they’re missing a huge opportunity to take this partnership one step further. In order to associate themselves with hotel “excellence” and catch the attention and respect of the top students each year, they should offer the “Red Carnation Hotel Group Award of Excellence”, presented to the top graduating student at each school.

This award would consist of a personal plaque, a trophy that stays in the school for all to see...and a cheque to help pay off their student loan, or to celebrate their graduation. An executive from Red Carnation would be invited to each graduation ceremony to present the “loot” to the winner and give a short talk on the importance of excellence.

So, how could some of these innovative recruitment and retention ideas work for you? What gutsy, proactive, outside-the-box things will you do to find or attract a continuous flow of top performers in your business? Where are the passionate “up-and-comers” in your industry being educated and trained right now and what will you do to get “first dibs” on those talented folks?

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