

The **8** Essential Steps To Finding & Keeping The Best Staff!

Donald Cooper

Donald Cooper started work at the age of six, sweeping the floor in the family business for 5 cents a day! He earned an MBA from the University of Western Ontario followed by 18 years as a manufacturer and 12 years as a retailer. Winner of 7 awards of excellence in marketing and service innovation, Donald now speaks internationally on Human Marketing® ...How to increase market share and profitability in the face of ever-stronger competition!



STEP #1 - DEVELOP, DOCUMENT AND COMMUNICATE YOUR SERVICE MISSION:

(A) What are you going to do **better** than your competitors that really matters to your customers? Do you even know for sure what does matter to your customers, or what your competitors are doing? Do some research. It doesn't have to cost a fortune. Do it yourself, hire a research company, or even better, if you have a Business College or University anywhere near you, use marketing students to do customer and competitor research for you. They need projects, you'll get valuable information ... and it's probably free!! Do this on an annual basis. Build relationships with these schools.

They are one of the most underused resources in business today!

(B) As you work to develop and document your Service Mission keep in mind that every industry, including yours, is more fiercely competitive than ever before ... too many competitors and not enough customers! For this reason your Service Mission must promise and deliver Compelling Points of Difference (CPD's). "Compelling Points of Difference" are product, service, value or marketing strengths that are so powerful and unique that they clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you famous and "own" customers for life!". For years, marketing experts have told us that we must have USPs ... Unique Selling Propositions ... but the truth is that it isn't good enough to be unique, you must be compelling. You could paint your business pink and you'd be unique, but not compelling.

(C) To make your Service Mission compelling to your customers, redefine your business not by **what** your sell or **how** you sell it today, but by how you **help** people ... by how you add value to their lives. My favorite example is "ice boxes". The people who made ice boxes in the 1800s made a lot of money... everyone needed an ice box. But, if they defined themselves as being "*in the ice box business*", they were put out of business in 1917, by refrigerators. On the other hand, if they had defined themselves not by what they made and how they made

As I travel throughout the world, speaking to hundreds of businesses about how to create and implement marketing and service innovations that will "own" customers for life, this one question comes up more than any other ... **"HOW DO I FIND AND KEEP GREAT STAFF?"**

Clients say, "I love your concepts and I want to implement them! It would be great to redefine and reinvent my business to add more value to my customers' lives, create a WOW service experience and become their Trusted and Respected Authority, **but I just can't find good people! Can you help me?"**

Does this sound familiar? ... My response is always the same and it always stops them in their tracks! I simply ask, "What is your Service Mission?" Exactly what are you committed to doing, everyday, **better** than your competitors, to understand, serve and communicate with your customers?"

Most business people have to admit that they don't have a well-defined Service Mission. No wonder they can't find the right people. They don't even know who they're looking for!

You hire people to help you do something but if you don't know exactly what you're trying to achieve, you won't know what kind of help you need. So Step #1 is fairly straightforward.

Article: The 8 Essential Steps (Cont'd)

it, but rather by how they added value to people's lives, "We are in the business of making food last longer!" ... they would have had most of their staff turning out the best ice boxes possible at the time while a few of their brightest people were working on **better** ways to make food last longer ... and they would have been the first on the market with refrigerators. Redefine your business by how you add real value to your customers' lives by completing this sentence, "We are in the business of helping people _____."

Then ask the "Golden Question", "*What kind of help do they need?*" Create an ongoing list of help that your customers need and develop a Service Mission that delivers that help, better than your competitors.

(D) When creating your Service Mission it's important to understand how people decide what and where to buy. After 18 years as a manufacturer, 12 years as a retailer and 56 years on this planet, I've come to this powerful conclusion ... "*It is the stress in people's lives and their assumptions about what will make some of that stress go away, that determines what and where they buy!*"

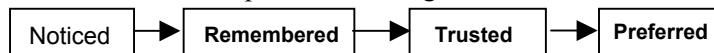
People buy things, spend their money, on the assumption that this will make some of their stress go away **better** than some other course of action. Therefore, your only value to any other human being on this planet is in your ability to make some of their stress go away! Your Service Mission should state specifically how you will make some your customers' stress go away **better** than your competitor.

(E) Everyone talks about "Service" but no one ever defines it and if you can't define it, you can't deliver it. In Human Marketing™ we make it simple ... "*Service is anything that makes some of your customers' stress go away!*" whether it puts money in your pocket right away today, or builds a relationship that owns customers for life!

When developing your Service Mission understand that there are many ways to add value to your customers' lives, especially when you realize that there are four "Currencies" in people's lives, not just one. A "Currency" is anything of value to people that they don't have enough of. Many business people believe that there is only one currency in their customers' lives, "Money", so they can think of only one way to compete... "Cut their price" ... but when you understand that there are actually four "Currencies" in people's lives ... **Money, Time, Feeling Safe and Feeling Special** there are hundreds of ways to compete and add value that are not cutting your price. Remember to use all four "Currencies" when developing your Service Mission. Simply **think** and **feel** like a customer. What are their stresses about buying and using what you sell and about

buying it specifically from you. Then ask yourself, "How can we make some of their stress go away in a way that will save them money and time, and make them feel more safe and more special?"

(F) The objective of my speaking and coaching to clients is to help them increase market share and profitability ... to become the **Preferred Supplier** of what they sell. But no business automatically becomes the Preferred Supplier. It's a **process** and everything that you do ... from the design of what you sell and where you sell it, to your merchandising, advertising and promotion, how you look, how you sound, and how you behave must all contribute to this process of being ...



Look at every part of your business. Are you being noticed, are you remembered, and are you trusted, because only then will you be "**Preferred**".

STEP#2 – LIST THE QUALITIES YOUR STAFF NEEDS:

When you've documented your Service Mission, for each type of job in your company, create a list of all the **Qualities** a person must have to help you to deliver that Mission effectively and consistently. List the attitudes, personality, energy, interests, skills and knowledge required. Think about the education, training and experience that a person is most likely to have had to acquire the qualities you need, but remember, the important thing is that they've got them, not how they got them.

Either you will find people with these qualities or you will have to train them yourself. Be realistic about your training abilities. If you haven't the time, money and skills to train, you must find people that someone else has trained, or people who have a natural talent for doing what you need. A New York hotel world famous for it's service, ran a full-page ad recently that said simply, "We don't train our staff to be nice ... we hire nice people!" **BONUS TIP!!!** ... Only a small percentage of the population is "wired" physically, emotionally, and mentally to do what you need done. Focus your list of required qualities as if you're looking for a "needle in a haystack" ... because you are ... and search for people with the qualities you need as if your life depends on it ... because it does!!

STEP #3 - WHERE DO YOU FIND PEOPLE WITH THESE QUALITIES?

Now that you know **who** you're looking for, think about **where** these people are "hiding" now. First, look in your own company. Are any of them right under your nose, but in the wrong job? Do a "Skills Inventory" of your staff. You'll be amazed at what you discover about what they know and what they can do ... then use these talents in your business whenever possible. You'll both benefit! Keep this information in their personal staff file. Enclosed with this Implementation Package is a very effective ready-to-use "Skills Inventory" format along with "7 Questions to Ask Your Staff That Will Change Your Business Forever". Use these powerful tools!

Evaluate each of your existing staff. Are they capable of delivering your Service Mission? If not, what is preventing them? Consider the following possibilities ...

(a) Lack of clarity as to what they should be doing →
if so, clarify your communication and reduce confusion.

(b) Lack of knowledge or skills → *if so, supply ongoing training (see Step #6).*

(c) Lack of motivation, energy or commitment →
if so, communicate your standards, ask them if there's a problem that you can help with and agree on a date by which they will be up to your standards. Either way, on that agreed date the problem will be solved!

Looking outside your company, where are people with the qualities that you need working, playing, or attending school right now? What clubs or groups might they belong to? Get help with your search from your own good staff, from customers, suppliers, teachers and Trade Associations.

BONUS TIP!!! ... Form special relationships with clubs, schools, and Associations that the people you're looking for are likely to be involved with. Do speeches on some important aspect of your industry at their meetings, share your special knowledge, sponsor an annual award or prize for excellence ... raise your profile and good people will find you!!

STEP #4 - ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS:

Now that we know **where** to find prospective employees, how do we choose the best? Go back to your list of required qualities and create a script of about 30 questions that you will ask to determine whether or not the person sitting across from you in an interview actually possesses these qualities ... then, ask each candidate every question, every time. Create a few different questions to test for the most important

THE DONALD COOPER CORPORATION

qualities in order to check for consistency in the candidates' answers.

Fine tune your list of questions over time. Use a fresh copy of the "script" for each interview, making notes as the interview progresses. This is especially useful when you have several interviews to keep track of.

Remember that serving your customers (*everyone* in your business serves customers, directly or indirectly) **better** than your competitors requires knowledge, skill, joy, energy and commitment. Only a few people will possess the exact mix of qualities required to do that wonderfully ... every day. Ask your questions, follow the script ... and **listen** carefully to the answers.

BONUS TIPS!!! ... If the job that you're filling requires working odd hours ... early, late, weekends, etc. ... Do your interviewing at those odd hours. If someone must be bright and energized at 5 a.m., that's when you should interview them. If you're interviewing a large number of candidates, take a Polaroid photo of each and attach it to their interview sheet and resume to stay clear on "who's who."

STEP #5 - COMMITMENT TO YOUR STANDARDS:

The time to let people know what your standards are, is right now, before you hire them. Document your Standards of Performance, Appearance and Behavior (start with "show up on time" and carry on from there) and remember that you're in the business of creating customer confidence. Explain to your staff that you have high Standards of Performance, Appearance and Behavior *not* because you're mean or dictatorial or just plain old, but because high standards create confidence and **customer confidence is the #1 factor in determining what and where people buy!** ... confidence that you will make some of their stress go away **better** than some other course of action. How your staff look, speak, perform and behave will either create or destroy confidence.

Business is theatre! The theatre of creating confidence and the theatre of creating a positive customer experience! **You** own the theatre and **you** write the play. You get to decide how the actors will act and how they will dress for their part.

If the job interview has gone well, show the candidate your list of Standards and your Service Mission. Have them commit to both by signing at the bottom and then put these in their staff file along with the interview script, complete with the notes that you made. This makes discussions of poor performance much simpler down the road.

Article: The 8 Essential Steps (Cont'd)

STEP #6 - INTRODUCTION & TRAINING:

It's critically important to have an introduction and training plan for each new person, even in a small business. I've seen surveys indicating that 70% of all employees feel that they do *not* have the skills or knowledge required to do their job well ... and other surveys showing that 70% of all employees *dislike* their jobs ... and my guess is that they're probably the same people!

(A) Here is what I suggest as a minimum effort in this area.. Write up a short history of, and introduction to, your company to give newcomers the "flavor and feel" and tradition of the business. Include information on the company founders, significant events, core values, and guiding principles, Service Mission, awards received, outstanding achievements, community involvement ... anything unique and interesting that will create pride and respect.

(B) Document standard information. This will save remembering and repeating the routine stuff to each new person. Items to include are ... policies & procedures (anything you want to be done the same way, every time), staff parking, employee discounts, vacation policy, safety & security, etc. It will take time to create a full list but you will save hundreds of hours in the long run ... and everyone will know the rules.

(C) Ensure that each new person is properly introduced within the company and to customers or suppliers, if appropriate.

(D) Most companies talk about training, but very few actually deliver the training required. *"Training is the effective, ongoing communication of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, standards, policies, procedures, responsibilities and authority required to deliver your Service Mission and achieve your business plan."* Anything less than this is not effective. Does your current training program cover all of these bases?

Design a simple one-page Training Guide Form to help you create a training program for each new person according to their individual needs. The Form should include: a list of the tasks, skills, information and procedures that they must learn; the specific staff that they will train with, what they are to learn from that person (include space for feedback from each "coach"); any courses they should take; books, catalogues and manuals to be read, magazines to subscribe to and tapes to be listened to from your Staff Development Resource Library. (Note: Two books and four good training tapes constitute a "library" to start with...then keep adding to it.) Keep track of who makes use of this learning material. People who are *not* interested in growing their

own life are probably *not* interested in helping you to grow your business. Encourage personal growth!

(E) Speak with new employees at regular intervals to check on their training, review their performance and answer their questions. Remember, two weeks is a very long time without feedback to a new person in your company. I suggest meeting with them after one week, two weeks, four weeks, two months, and three months, and every six months after that, at which time you will discuss, rethink and document their **ongoing** training needs. Training is an ongoing process.

BONUS TIP!!! ... Make use of suppliers for ongoing staff training. Suppliers of raw materials, products, packaging, systems, and machinery. Make it a "condition" of doing business with you. Most will welcome the opportunity.

STEP #7 - EMPOWER YOUR STAFF:

You are in the business of creating confidence. Reality is that your customers will never have more confidence in your staff than you do. Empower your staff to take the action required to deliver your Service Mission. If you cannot empower your staff and still sleep at night, you either have the wrong staff or you've done a lousy job of training them. Either way ... fix it! Many owners and managers do not empower their staff because **#1**, they are more comfortable "*doing*" it themselves than "*managing*" others or **#2**, because they are afraid that someone else will do it better than them, making them look bad. I have two suggestions here ... For **#1**, buy the wonderful book "Managing Management Time" by

Bill Onken (Prentice Hall) or Audio Tape Seminar (214) 613-2084. For **#2**, help these people (including yourself) to replace the good feeling of "doing" with the extraordinary joy of being a "grower, developer and encourager of others"!! Bill Onken will help you there too!

STEP #8 - RECOGNITION & FEEDBACK:

Measure individual and team performance! What gets measured gets managed. What doesn't get measured, gets out of control! You cannot have measurement without specific standards to measure against. In Step #5 we urged you to document your Standards of Performance, Appearance and Behavior, and then have each employee commit to those Standards, preferably in writing.

When you have specific, well communicated Standards, including financial standards for sales, costs and margins, measurement is not difficult.

Article: The 8 Essential Steps (Cont'd)

When your staff do perform, recognize, celebrate and appreciate them. Recognize their contribution. Say “**Thank You**” every day! As an owner or manager your job is to make your staff’s stress go away, so that they will make your customers’ stress go away. Celebrate your successes! You are the source of joy, energy and passion in your business. That’s your job! Look for behavior to praise, not just behavior to criticize.

One of the most important things I ever learned is this ...
“High turnover of staff or customers is their emotionally healthy response to your emotionally unhealthy environment.”

When standards are *not* met, deal with it immediately. Relate the unsatisfactory performance to your Standards and Service Mission (which they agreed to) and get a commitment to the required improvement within a specified time. All such conversations must be documented and filed.

Create an environment that gives people every opportunity to succeed but recognize that not everyone will. Deal with non-performance in a firm, fair and dignified manner. The good news is that when you implement these 8 Steps most of the people you hire will be great, and the ones who do get in by mistake will be quickly found out and will, in most cases, quietly leave on their own.

BONUS TIP!!! ... Buy and use the book, “1001 Ways to Reward Your Employees”, by Bob Nelson. It’s fabulous and it’s only 15 bucks!

For small businesses, this entire 8 Step Program will fit into a three ring binder for safekeeping and easy reference. Larger companies will have to get more elaborate...but not much.

To summarize, you will have ...

- A documented Service Mission.
- A list of required Qualities.
- Specific Interviewing Questions.
- Documented Standards of Performance, Appearance & Behavior.
- A written History of and Introduction to the Company.
- An ongoing Individual Training Plan for each employee.
- A Skills Inventory for each employee.

GETTING ON WITH IT!!!

Commit to the time required to create this powerful support system. Get a few of your best staff involved to help you. Discipline yourself to use it consistently. It will save you a huge amount of time and money in the long run and you will be **amazed** at the difference that finding and keeping the best people will make in your business!! ***LAST BONUS TIP!!!*** ... When you really *are* the best at what you do, the very best people will *want* to work for you! They’ll seek you out ... But you will still want to use this 8 Step Program to help you select & keep the “best of the best”!

*For information about booking Donald Cooper to speak to your Company, Association or Community, or to order Donald’s **Human Marketing** - 4.5 hour Audio Seminar, or 2.5 hour Video Seminar, or Workbook call (416) 252-3704 .*