



Donald's "Quote of the Month"

"More and more, delivering outstanding customer experiences will be driven by passion, but delivered by technology!"

Greetings! Whatever your faith, culture or heritage, you're probably celebrating something this month...so happy "whatever you celebrate" to you! We have several timely, thought-provoking articles for you below...all of which will take a total of about 9 minutes to read.

1. More and more, delivering outstanding customer experiences will be driven by passion, but delivered by technology!

(time to read this article is about 90 seconds)

Great customer service and extraordinary customer experiences will always be driven by **passion**...but, more and more, are being delivered by **technology**.

In the "good old days" of small, local businesses we knew our customers by name. We got to know what they wanted and how they wanted it. Then, as businesses got larger and more spread out, that personal level of service was no longer possible.

For example, years ago, when you needed to know the status of a particular incoming or departing flight, you called the airline information number and listened to an endless recording, updated hourly, that listed the status of every flight...with the one you wanted to know about usually coming dead last. It was painful.

Now, with the power of technology, you can phone the airline's info "hot line", or go on the internet, key in the one flight number that you care about and get an up-to-the-minute status report from the airline's computer.

Technology is what enables Fairmont Hotels around the world to serve me as an individual by knowing...

- a) I'm a President's Club member.
- b) I want a non-smoking room with king-size bed close to the elevator on a high floor.
- c) I'm allergic to feathers.
- d) What morning newspaper I prefer.
- e) What promotions or packages I'm likely to be interested in...and,
- f) To call me by name when I dial the hotel operator.

Hilton Hotels, on the other hand, just can't get it right. Except for the wonderful Hilton Lac-Leamay, just outside of Ottawa, Canada, they apparently have neither the passion nor the technology.

Amazon.com has developed technology to recommend books that you'll probably enjoy based on books that you've already ordered. They delight and amaze customers that they've never physically met...and they proactively increase sales.

Is your business driven by a passionate commitment to create compelling value, extraordinary experiences and increased revenues? Does that passion start at the top and run through every part of the business?

And then, do you have the technology and processes that enable you to understand, proactively serve and delight customers as individuals? If not, some competitor who cares more and executes better will probably steal your customers away.

What needs fixing to get the passion and the technology right in your business? Who will do what to make it happen...and by when?

2. Let's stop this Christmas Bonus nonsense!

(time to read this article is about 75 seconds)

Paying your staff a bonus to coincide with the birth of a baby 2000+ years ago makes no sense at all. There...I said it!

Jesus wasn't even born on December 25th. Most scholars believe that he was born some time around March 21st. The Church cleverly chose December 25th to celebrate in order to tie in with an existing pagan festival of "the sun god" in an attempt to interest pagans in Christianity. This is the world's first example of "stealth marketing"...but I digress.

So, why not give your staff a "First Day of Spring Bonus", a "Halloween Bonus" or, better yet, a "Thanksgiving Bonus"?

Bonuses should be earned based on performance and not based on scripture, time of year or some manufactured holiday. If you want to give your staff a Christmas gift, that's great...but it has nothing to do with performance. Give them a turkey, a box of cookies or a nativity scene hand painted in China.

To tie bonuses to performance, consider these 4 steps...

- 1) First, be clear about what must happen in every part of the business, in the next year, to deliver your commitments to customers, to the bottom line, to the staff team, to the community and the planet...and to create an extraordinary, profitable and sustainable future.
- 2) Then, you need to engage your team in these outcomes, get agreement as to who will do what, by when to make them happen and then make sure that the training, processes and resources are in place to support the team.
- 3) You need specific performance commitments for each team member and there needs to be an effective way to measure that performance, not just at the end of the year but throughout the year so that corrective action can be taken, if necessary, before it's too late.
- 4) Finally, everyone needs to know what their reward will be for success...and what the consequences will be for failure.

Sure, this is a lot more work than slipping into a Santa Suit and passing out Christmas bonuses based on some faint hope that the business actually made a profit...but the 4 steps outlined above are what effective management is all about. It's your choice!

3. The Christmas Tree Man:

(time to read this article is about 70 seconds)

I've often spoken to clients about the danger of "judging" customers by how they're dressed or by their general appearance. Back in my days as a retailer of ladies fashions and gifts, I learned a powerful and moving lesson from "The Christmas Tree Man".

Our staff came to me one day to express concern about an unshaven, disheveled and generally unwashed gentleman who kept coming into our store. As he shuffled through our ladies clothing and gift departments he would glance out the window every few minutes and then, sometimes, he would rush out the door empty-handed. This process was repeated several times each day ...sometimes resulting in a purchase and sometimes in yet another mysterious disappearance.

When he did buy he always paid cash from a huge roll of bills with an old elastic band wound twice around it. But mostly he would look out the window, then rush out the door...and this strange behavior was spooking our staff.

When they started making some very unflattering assumptions about this unusual character I assured them that there was probably a logical explanation and I promised to chat with him on his next visit.

Sure enough, a few hours later he reappeared. I approached him, explaining that our staff was quite intrigued by his mysterious comings and goings. "Oh", he said, "I'm the Christmas Tree man. That's my Christmas tree lot

just down the road with the little house trailer. I grow the trees on my farm up north, you know, and then I come down here for three weeks each year to sell them."

"I work all alone so I have no time off to buy gifts and I don't get back home until well after midnight on Christmas Eve. So, whenever I have a few minutes, I rush up here to shop. I really love your store. You have wonderful things and every day I choose a few gifts for the ladies on my list."

"But you keep looking out the window." I said. "Oh," he replied, "I'm just checking to see if anyone has pulled into my lot to buy a tree. And if they have, I've got to rush back before they leave, or I won't get the business. You can't replant those trees you know. Once they're cut, they're cut."

"By the way" he said, "I know that I don't look like your usual customer. In fact, I probably look a bit scary and I guess I don't smell too good either. I don't have much more than a bed and a stove in my little trailer. No place to wash up. There's not a lot of money in real Christmas trees anymore, you know. It's kind of sad. But your staff, they're so wonderful. They treat me with respect and I really appreciate that!"

The Christmas tree man spent almost \$3000 in our store over a three-week period. He came and he went, he came and he went, day after day, always looking out the window, sometimes rushing to serve a customer...and at the end, on Christmas Eve, before he left for home, he brought each of us a real Christmas tree!

4. Stop going to Trade Shows & Conferences without a "list"!

(time to read this article is about 90 seconds)

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 100's of these events, I often ask audiences, "How many of you came to this event with a list of 4 or 5 specific things that you 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,
- 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 up their hand. Apparently, nobody has a list!

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 profits 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 4 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 at you as you walk around?"*

Here's a plan. First, make a list of the challenges that you need help with in your business. What needs fixing, improving or innovating? Then, weeks before you leave for the Conference or Trade Show, find out from your Association leaders, your suppliers or industry consultants, 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 a drink or sit with them at lunch or dinner at the upcoming event. 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.

5. Bits & Pieces:

(time to read these bits of wisdom is about one minute)

Item #1: Could this be the beginning of **the end for \$200 sneakers?** New York Nicks basketball star Stephon Marbury is endorsing a new sneaker line, which sells for just \$14.95.

Marbury's message is that self-esteem shouldn't depend on expensive clothing. He remembers growing up poor in Coney Island, and not being able to afford the latest sneakers. So, although he's now the NBA's fifth highest-paid player, he plays in and promotes \$15 basketball shoes.

Says Marbury, *"If you take a chainsaw and cut 'em down the middle, they look the same as the \$200 shoes."*

Item #2: Here's **an economist's view of Christmas shopping.** *"It's a sure sign that both individual citizens and the entire economy are headed for big trouble when millions of people are running around spending borrowed money to buy imported goods."*

Item #3: Here are **2 amazing Cookie Recipes!** One of the great family traditions at this time of year is to make homemade cookies. For two of the world's best cookie recipes... Visit our Free Articles section at www.donaldcooper.com and click on the "Other Neat Stuff" section to print the recipes.

PS: Lots of folks wrote last month to rave about our **seafood chowder recipe.** A steaming bowl of delicious chowder is a great way to welcome friends and Holiday visitors...unless you're reading this "down under" and it's 34 degrees Celsius (for our American friends, that's 93 degrees Fahrenheit). If you didn't download the world's best chowder recipe last month, it is also available on our website under the section above.

Item #4: Quick...name the longest day of the year. If you live in the northern hemisphere, I bet you said June 21st and, if you live "down under", you probably came up with December 21st. But neither answer is correct. **Boxing Day** is the longest day of the year.

Although originally observed on December 26th and lasting for 24 hours, Boxing Day now runs for about 29 days, or a total of 696 hours. *"How can this be?"*, you ask. On December 3rd The Brick Furniture and Appliance stores across Canada launched their "Boxing Day Sale" with a huge advertising campaign. And most "Boxing Day Sales" run until the end of December...at which time they're replaced by the "New Year's Sale".

So, lasting a total of 696 hours, Boxing Day is now, officially, the longest day of the year!

Item #5: **When we outsource product development and engineering, we outsource our future!** At a recent National Academy of Engineering conference in the USA, of the 57 major research initiatives announced by member companies, all but 5 of them were being undertaken outside of the USA.

6. Does your business make a compelling customer promise...and do you keep it?

(time to read this article is about 45 seconds)

When the folks at Consumers Report recently studied nine name-brand wrinkle creams, they found that while the best of them reduced wrinkles by less than 10%, many of them made absolutely no difference at all. Furthermore, there was no connection between product cost and product effectiveness!

Olay Regenerist at \$57 was one of the cheapest...and was rated "most effective". On the other hand, La Prairie's wrinkle treatment, at \$335, was rated second from the bottom. But remember, none of them reduced wrinkles by more than 10%. That's a bit like paying for an airline ticket to go from New York to Los Angeles and then they drop you off in Cleveland.

So, what's the clear and compelling customer promise in your business? What do you commit to do or to deliver that will "grab" your target customers, clearly differentiate you from your competitors, make you "famous"...and make you money? And, truthfully, do you *always* deliver that?

If you don't have a clear and compelling customer promise, you're a commodity...and you're in trouble. If you make a promise that you don't keep, you're still in trouble.

So, sit down with a few of the best minds and hearts in your business and figure out exactly what your clear and compelling customer promise is and if you're keeping that promise. If you don't have one, create it. Make sure that everyone on your team knows what it is and why it's important. Then, put in place the training, the processes, the measurement tools and the follow up to ensure that the promise is being kept. Finally, reward promise keepers and deal with promise breakers!

7. Our "Quiz of the Month":

(time to read this section is about 30 seconds)

"Thanks" to all of you who answered our November Quiz question which was, "Which emerging country is the world's largest democracy and has 35% of its population, or 380,000,000 people, currently living on less than \$1.00 a day?" **The answer is India.**

Congratulations to Keith Garrity of Ceuta Healthcare in the United Kingdom this month's winner who selected as his prize of our "The simple truth about effective business leadership!" DVD Seminar.

This month's Quiz:

This month's quiz is perfect for the month of December. **What attraction in the USA draws more visitors each year than Disney World, Graceland and the Grand Canyon combined?**

Send your guess to Sharen Skene, our wonderful Director of Marketing, at sharen@donaldcooper.com. Each correct answer received within 15 days will go into the 'pot' and **one winner will be randomly selected**. The winner will receive their choice of any of our excellent Video Seminars worth \$60 to \$80.

8. How can your business give back, make a difference and 'grab' customers' hearts?

(time to read this section is about one minute)

Guy Gagnon is a grocer with a good heart, a sharp mind and a very successful business. He runs a grocery store in the town of Bracebridge, Ontario.

This year Guy has started what he hopes will become a Christmas tradition in the community by offering a free, home-made Christmas dinner, at their store, for anyone in town who's alone on what is traditionally a very special family day. To join in, all you have to do is phone the store before Dec 24th and say that you'll be there.

In one brilliant act of kindness Guy will make a huge difference in many lives and touch every heart in the community. The local newspaper and radio station, of course, have picked up on this, as have the Community Support Agencies, all of which will make Guy the true "hero" of Christmas in Bracebridge. And when you own hearts...you own customers.

I don't know if any individuals or community groups have stepped forward to offer transportation to those attending the free dinner, but somebody should. If I lived in that community, I'd latch onto that in a hot second.

When it comes to giving back, Guy is no one-trick-pony. He has a history of making a difference. In November he ran several flu shot clinics at his store in partnership with the local Public Health Unit. And his store was actually designed and built to serve the community. It has a combined classroom, cooking school room and community meeting space, that is available to groups, no charge. For example, this year's Annual Meeting of the Bracebridge Chamber of Commerce was held there. How clever is that?

Is all of this "giving back" stuff more work and more expense? Absolutely! Is it worth the commitment? I think so...but you'll have to make the decision for your business. What decision will you make?

9. Where in the world is Donald?

(time to read this section is about 20 seconds)

We share this info, not to brag, but to create opportunities for clients to save money by tying in with our existing bookings. About 85% of my work is repeat and referral business clients often want to know if I shall be in their "neighbourhood" in the next few months.

New holds and bookings are added to our calendar each week so if you are considering dates, we encourage you to **contact us** to put a courtesy hold on your preferred dates in 2007.

a) January: Toronto and Indianapolis.

b) February: I'll be in Toronto, Calgary, San Francisco, Montreal, Las Vegas and Halifax and Vancouver.

c) March: I'll be speaking in Australia and New Zealand for the entire month and then speaking in Vancouver on the way back home at the end of the month.

10. That's all for this month!

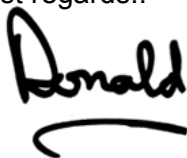
"Thanks" for all of your great feedback and suggestions! We especially love to hear of your successes using our insights.

Don't forget to visit our Free Articles section on our website for lots more valuable info on how to sell more, manage smarter and make more money in your business.

Also, let us know what you'd like to hear more about...or less about. And, do send us your stories and examples of great, horrible or just plain bizarre business practices that you find in your travels.

Finally, if you know of others, anywhere in the world, who will find value in this E-Newsletter, we'll appreciate your sending this along to them and inviting them to sign up at www.donaldcooper.com.

Kindest regards!!



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