

THE DONALD COOPER CORPORATION

Speaking and coaching internationally on management, marketing and profitability



Management tool #A-14: ©

WANT TO INCREASE SALES? HERE ARE 23 QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Sales will not automatically increase just because we want or need them to. And there's much more to increasing sales than just adding more sales staff, or running another ad.

Sales will increase when we do the work to become the 'wise choice' and clear market leader for our target customers. Then, we must effectively and consistently communicate the compelling value that we deliver, and the values that we live by. First, we must be a 'story'...then we have to tell our story.

So, just like with any other challenge in our business "wishing and worrying" will achieve nothing. Understanding what needs doing and then effectively doing the work is the only solution.

Note from Donald: Below is a checklist of 23 questions to ask that, if honestly answered, will shed light on what can be done to increase sales. Review the list with your staff. They know stuff and they hate it when you don't ask. Put an 'X' in the box beside any item that needs improving or investigating and write thoughts and suggestions in the space below that item.

Not all of items on the checklist will relate to your business. Select the ones that do. Not all of the things that need doing to increase sales will be listed here. Add your own and your Team's 'sales growth ideas' at the end at point 24.

When you've completed the list below, prioritize those items in order of importance and potential impact, by using the box to the left of each item. You can't do everything at once. Then, for each item on your priority list, get specific about what will be done, by whom, by when, measured how and rewarded how, to make it happen? And who will follow up to make sure the work is being done?

1. Do we have clear, specific and realistic sales increase 'commitments' for the next 12 months that are understood and supported by everyone on our Team? Are we clear about how much of that increase will come from existing products, services and customers, and specifically how we'll achieve that...and how much will come from new customers, new products and services or new markets, and specifically how we'll achieve that? Do we have the resources to support and deliver our sales commitments?

2. Do we have clearly defined target customers? Do we understand what life is *really* like for them, what they value and what they fear? The better we understand our customers, the more we'll sell.

- 3.** Realistically, is what we sell extraordinary and current, or mediocre and boring? Are we consistently 'in-stock' of what they want? Do we offer clear and compelling value and experiences that 'grab' our target customers, clearly differentiate us from our competitors, make us 'famous'...and grow our bottom line? Do we need to improve or update the quality or assortment of our products or services, or improve and update how we present them?

- 4.** Is our pricing right? Are we too expensive or, perhaps, not expensive enough for all the functional, emotional and long-term financial value we deliver? For example, if we're priced too low, the easiest way to increase sales by 5%, and perhaps grow our bottom line by 60% to 100% is to raise prices by 5%.

- 5.** In what ways are our competitors better than us? Why do some of our target customers choose to buy from them? Specifically, what do we need to do to close the gap and then take the lead? Also we should look at what some of our target customers dislike about our competitors? How can we use that to our advantage?

- 6.** Are we easy and convenient to find, wherever our target customers might look for us? Are we easy to contact?

7. Do we share our customers' sense of urgency? Do we deliver what they want, *when* they want it? Are our response times better than our customers expect at every 'touch point'?

8. Do we have policies that irritate and alienate customers and drive them away? Do we have a negative reputation about our ability or integrity that hurts us in any way?

9. Are we creating customers or 'fans'? Customers give us business. 'Fans' help us grow our business. What 5 specific and extraordinary things can we do to turn customers into 'fans' who become our most cost-effective, believable marketing force? What would 'WOW' them?

10. Are we order-taking rather than proactively marketing and selling? Are we making sure that customers have everything they need from us to be successful with what we sell them? Are we using technology to track when existing customers might need a product, service or reminder from us? Do we have a 'Hit List' of key prospects, especially those who could not only increase our sales but, because of their reputation and influence, could also convince other people or businesses to do business with us? Who's working that list?

- 11.** Do we have the right sales people and do we have enough of them to do the job? Do they have the sales training, product knowledge and supervision they need? Are they compensated appropriately and fairly? Are we measuring performance by sales person and celebrating their success? Are we coaching poor performers and then terminating them if they can't perform?

- 12.** Do we need to deliver more extraordinary customer experiences? Do we need more staff, or more engaged staff in our front-line positions? Are we joyful and welcoming? Do people feel better every time they interact with us?

- 13.** What improved packaging (graphic look or functionality), display, merchandising presentation or information might we need to maximize sales at the point of purchase?

- 14.** Do we need better systems and processes to serve existing customers more effectively so that they buy more and so that potential new customers are attracted by our consistency, accuracy and efficiency? Do we have an excellent 'contact management system' to follow up on leads and prospects...and do we use it effectively?

- 15.** Is our business name confusing or limiting, so that many folks don't know exactly what we do...or all of the things that we do?

- 16.** Does our physical location, or the look of our premises, confuse customers or turn them off in any way?

- 17.** Do we have an up-to-date customer database and do we use it effectively to add value, build relationships and remind customers how we can be helpful? Do we send out a regular, helpful, engaging customer blog or E-Newsletter? Do we use social media effectively to build a following and empower customers to interact with us.

- 18.** Do we have an up-to-date database of media and key influencers in our field and do we regularly send them important and interesting information that gets us talked about and referred. Creating 'celebrity status' in our market is a powerful differentiator but first we have to be a story and then we need to tell our story.

- 19.** Is our website 'best of class'? Does it attract, inform and engage our target customers? Does it add value in the form of helpful information and support? Does it contain lots of helpful and interesting video? Does it make it easy for customers to buy from us or contact us? Does it have an engaging 'Meet our Team' page?

- 20.** “Advertising is creative bragging.” What is our compelling value message that’s worth bragging about? Is our advertising message clear and compelling, or is it boring, confusing or inconsistent in any way? Do we stretch the truth in any way? Is our advertising all about price and discounts, or about our unique and compelling value?

- 21.** Do we have a bold and dramatic quality, service or ‘performance guarantee’ that creates confidence, makes us famous and attracts more customers? If not, what extraordinary guarantee could we create?

- 22.** What special events, seminars, consumer or trade shows, demonstrations, sampling or other innovative marketing could help us be noticed, stand out, create confidence and increase sales?

- 23.** With whom can we partner to create and proactively market more extraordinary customer value and experiences to a wider audience, or to specific niche markets?

- 24.** List any additional insights on how we can increase sales, not already covered here:

- a) _____ .
- b) _____ .
- c) _____ .

Donald Cooper, MBA, CSP, HoF, works with business owners and managers to rethink, refocus and re-energize their business to sell more, manage smarter, grow their bottom line...and have a life.

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