

Management tool #A-1: ©

THE BUSINESS 'KEY CHALLENGE' AUDIT SHEET ©

7 important things that the 'Business Key Challenge Audit' will tell you about your business and your Team:

Simply put, every business is trying to get from where they are now, to some better place they commit to be, with higher sales, more loyal customers, a more effective team, world-class operational efficiency and improved profitability. They're trying to get from 'here' to 'there'. The problem is that many businesses are not clear about where 'here' is. They're not being realistic about the challenges they face and how to fix them.

The 'Business Key Challenge Audit' process is important and insightful. By taking just a few minutes for you and your management and supervisory team to independently and honestly complete this 1-page exercise (see Page 2), then analyzing the results, here's some of what you'll discover...

1. The number of challenges that your business faces, now and in the foreseeable future. Challenges that require your urgent attention.
2. Is there agreement on what those challenges are? Did most team members put their Xs in the same place...or do you have wide disagreement about what needs fixing? *"Is everyone singing from the same hymn sheet?"* If you can't even agree on what needs fixing, how can you start taking effective action?
3. Which challenges are most important and need to be addressed first? Typically, these are the challenges that get the highest number of votes from you and your team or the ones that will give you the biggest payback.
4. Which members of your management team 'get it'...and which don't? Did some team members X off only 3-4 challenges, while most checked off 12 to 20? Do those who checked off just a few simply not 'get it', are they disengaged from the company and their job...or just playing politics?
5. Are you, as the boss, truly in touch with the challenges of the business, as seen by your team ...or are you in a state of 'comfortable denial'?
6. It will be revealing to chat with those who X'd off some items that most others did not. Ask them why they saw that particular item as a challenge in their part of the business. Often, what is first thought to be a marginal and minority view turns out to be a valid and highly important insight that most of you missed.
7. The 'Business Key Challenge' exercise, properly executed, will start a process of open and frank discussion, respectful debate, innovation, decision making, action, implementation and diligent follow-up that will make a major impact on the growth and profitability of your business.

Important note: For each decision that you and your team make to address a challenge, get very specific about **what action will be taken, by whom, by when, at what cost, measured how and rewarded how**. Remember, businesses don't die from a single shot to the head...they slowly and surely from a thousand uncompleted tasks.

THE DONALD COOPER CORPORATION

Speaking and coaching internationally on management, marketing and profitability



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Full name:		Title & Division or Department:	
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Clients around the world, in over 40 different industries, have found this **Key Challenges Audit Sheet** most helpful in identifying the specific areas in their business that need focus and innovation. It will take about 5 minutes.

Each member of your Management and Supervisory team and a cross-section of front-line staff will complete this Audit Sheet by **putting an X beside each challenge** that you currently face, or might face over the next 3 to 5 years. There are no right or wrong answers; just your candid impressions.

		Business Key Challenge Audit
1		We face increased competition and/or shrinking margins .
2		We face new competition from transformational technologies, aggressive new competitors and new business models that will fundamentally change our industry, or may even replace us.
3		We need to better understand our target customers ...who they are, why they buy and what they <i>really</i> want.
4		We need to do a better job of creating and delivering compelling customer value and experiences that will 'grab' our target customers, clearly differentiate us from our competitors, make us 'famous' and grow our bottom line.
5		We need to do more business with existing customers and attract new and profitable customers.
6		Some of our current and target customers are not aware of all the value we offer .
7		Some of our large, powerful customers have become dictatorial predators , resulting in greatly reduced margins.
8		We don't charge as much as we should , because of a lack of confidence in our value, or for some other reason.
9		We need to communicate our value story more effectively in a marketplace suffering from increased competition, customer confusion, cynicism and communication overload.
10		We need to find innovative and affordable new ways to promote our business in a market where traditional advertising is too expensive.
11		We need or want to increase our bottom-line profitability by at least ____%...by the end of the year _____.
12		Our industry faces trust or image issues that we must overcome to create customer confidence.
13		Our industry is consolidating and we need a strategy regarding that.
14		We're 'under attack' from offshore competitors or ' private label ' products that threaten our business.
15		We face changes in societal values, concerns, trends or preferences that make what we sell less desirable.
16		We serve a shrinking or declining market and need to reinvent or relocate ourselves.
17		Our business is seasonal, cyclical...or both , which creates cash flow, staffing and other challenges.
18		We face regulatory or environmental restrictions or oversight that make operating our business a challenge.
19		We need to attract, motivate and retain top performers at every level of our business.
20		We need to train and develop our staff more effectively in order to grow the business and remain competitive.
21		There's a need to improve our focus and productivity . We need to create a culture of commitment, urgency and accountability. Then we must reward and celebrate success and deal more effectively with non-performance.
22		We need more clarity and consistency from the top.
23		We need to improve our systems & processes to improve the customer experience and our operating efficiency.
24		We need more effective and consistent implementation of our ideas, decisions, processes and commitments.
25		We need to create true two-way communication throughout our business in a way that improves service, efficiency, innovation, employee satisfaction and profitability.
26		We need a clearer Vision for the future of our business...and a clear and specific Action Plan to get us there.
27		We do not have the working capital we need to operate or grow the business effectively.
28		Our industry and our market are changing quickly . Our current business model may not get us where we need to be. So, we need to redefine and/or reinvent some aspects of our business.
29		We have Partnership or Family Business challenges that need to be dealt with.
30		There's no Succession Plan and a lack of clarity about who will lead, manage and/or own our business in the future.