

*The simple truth about...*

**How to create a clear & compelling  
Vision, Mission & “Commitment to Action”  
for your business!**

A step-by-step Guide to improving...

- clarity,
- focus,
- innovation,
- commitment,
- urgency...and,
- accountability.

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**Donald Cooper** is respected by clients in over 40 industries as both a “thought leader” and a passionate visionary in the areas of management, marketing & service excellence.

Drawing from his real life experience as a world-class manufacturer, award-winning retailer and business coach, he has helped thousands of businesses throughout the world to add more real value to their customers’ lives...and more dollars to their bottom lines.

To subscribe to Donald’s thought-provoking, idea-generating, FREE monthly Management E-Newsletter, email us at [newsletter@donaldcooper.com](mailto:newsletter@donaldcooper.com).

**His website, [www.donaldcooper.com](http://www.donaldcooper.com) also offers free articles and business tools.**

**Donald Cooper** transforms businesses and business people! He has helped thousands of businesses throughout the world to add more real value to their customers’ lives...and more dollars to their bottom lines!

Donald started his business career at the age of 6, sweeping the floor in the family business for five cents a day. Long days and low pay...excellent early training for an entrepreneur!

He earned an undergraduate business degree and an MBA from the University of Western Ontario Ivey Business School, back when dinosaurs roamed the earth. . . followed by 18 years at Cooper Canada, the family business.

Cooper Canada became one of the world’s the world's leading makers of sports equipment and a Canadian Brand icon. With over 2000 employees and exports to 30 countries, Cooper was a significant economic entity.

At age 43 Donald left the family business to do something less corporate, reinventing himself as an award-winning retailer. In just 3 years he fundamentally redefined the customer experience for which he received 7 Awards of Excellence for marketing, service and business innovation.

Now, drawing from his real-life experience as a world-class manufacturer, retailer and business coach, he helps companies rethink, refocus and reinvent themselves to create compelling customer value, clarity of purpose and long-term profitability.

For his unique, bottom-line business content and compelling presentation style, Donald has been inducted into the Canadian Speaking Hall of Fame and awarded the Certified Speaking Professional.(CSP) designation by the National Speakers’ Association in Phoenix, Arizona.

Donald’s clear insights into how to rethink, refocus and re-energize your business will inform you, challenge you, disturb you, inspire you...and leave you with a new and powerful understanding of your business, your customers and your life!

## 1. Creating a clear & compelling Vision for our business:

*"Where there is no Vision, the people perish." ...Proverbs 29:18*

### A) What a business Vision is...and what it isn't:

There's huge confusion about both Vision and Mission in most businesses today and just about nobody "gets it". Simply put, our Vision is a clear statement about what we commit to become.

Many business owners and leaders believe that there's no point in having a Vision for the future of their business in our fast-changing and unpredictable world. The best way to thrive in an uncertain future is to create the future...and having a clear Vision is the first step.

In our daily lives, we wouldn't think of travelling from where we are now to a place we've never been before without first obtaining a map to guide us. Our business Vision is simply a map that we create to clarify where we're going, how we'll get there and about when we'll arrive.

Developing a clear Vision Statement is a key part of the process of creating clarity, direction and commitment throughout our business. In fact, our first job as leaders is to be clear in our own minds about the customer value and experience that we commit to deliver, what we commit to become, how we'll get there...and how we commit to behave along the way.

Then our job is to communicate reinforce our .to create clarity throughout the organization If we, as leaders, are not clear about those four things, who else in the organization might be? The answer is "nobody".

Many business leaders believe that a Vision is a "Customer Promise" or "Statement of Values" and, although we need both of those, that's not what our Vision is.

I've worked with 100's business leaders who have spent years and tens of thousands of dollars on consultants and "Strategic Retreats" only to come up with a Vision Statement that isn't worth the paper it's written on...but they hang it up in the lobby anyway. It usually says something like this...

***"We love our customers and we honour the diversity of our staff.  
God is a nice person, the planet's a great place to hang around  
... we'll work hard and have fun!"***

We've all seen lots of these Visions. Maybe there's one in your own lobby, right now. They're meaningless, useless and embarrassing! You may as well hung a picture of somebody's smiling grandmother on the wall.

The best way to create clarity on any subject is to start with "purpose". The purpose of your Vision is to inform, focus, challenge and inspire everyone on your team about what you commit to become. Any Vision that doesn't do that is missing the point.

So, here's the simple truth about our business Vision...

**"Our Vision is a clear and measurable statement of what we're committed to become to be a profitable and responsible market leader in 3 to 5 years."**

To be effective, our Vision will be a combination of what we **want** to become (our dream) and the reality of what we **must** become (our reality). And, if we're too tired, have lost interest or simply don't want to do the work required to become what we must become...we should have the good sense to admit it and get out now!

## **B) There's no such thing as business goals:**

Before we can have a clear business Vision, or clear business goals, we must, first, have clear personal goals. In fact, there's no such thing as business goals, only the personal goals of the people who control the business.

A business can't have goals. It's a thing and things can't have goals. Only people can have goals. Only people can have a Vision. If our personal goals for our business and our life are poorly defined, it's unlikely that our business has a clear Vision, focus or direction. When the people at the top have no clear personal or business goals, a vacuum is created. And, since the universe will not tolerate a vacuum, something has to fill the space.

In business, what fills that space is the fragmented, unfocused and often contrary personal goals of those further down the organization. Those fragmented, unfocused and often contrary personal goals become the goals, or Vision, of the business. The "animals are running the zoo"...and it's always a disaster!

It says in the Old Testament, *"When the trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound, who then shall prepare for the battle!"* As the owner, leader or manager in your business, you are the trumpeter. Are you giving forth an uncertain sound? And, if so, who is preparing for the battle for customer ownership, clarity of direction and a healthy bottom line?

## **C) A fundamental decision that we must make before creating our Vision:**

Every business, large or small, needs to address one fundamental question...and most never do! The question is, ***"In our target market, for our chosen customers, are we going to be the cheapest...or not be the cheapest?"***

Before creating our clear and compelling Vision, we must address this question. Why? Because everything else we do and every decision that we make in our business will depend on our answer to this one basic question. Clearly, Costco and Saks Fifth Avenue have very different Visions and, for that reason, virtually every decision they make is different.

What we sell; to whom we sell it; how and where we sell it; the staff we hire; how we train them and reward them; the policies and processes that we put in place, our advertising and promotion and the very look and feel of our business will all depend on how we answer this one simple question...to be the cheapest, or not to be the cheapest.

If our decision is to be the cheapest, just about everything we do will be focused on low overhead, cost control, world-class operational efficiency and effectively communicating our powerful "lowest price" message to a saturated and cynical marketplace. Wal-Mart, Costco and Southwest Airlines are great examples of companies that have succeeded wonderfully at "being the cheapest". They have a clear Vision, they're cheap, they're very efficient...and they make money!

If our decision is to succeed by being the cheapest, the rallying cry of our business will be, ***"Let us save you some valuable time. We are the cheapest...and here's how we do it!"***

Why do we need to tell them how we do it? Because so many businesses claim to be the cheapest these days, if we don't tell our target customers, in a clear and believable way, "exactly how we do it", they'll never believe that we actually are the cheapest and our compelling difference will be lost.

On the other hand, if our decision is NOT to be the cheapest, we must still be highly efficient, but we must also be passionately focused on creating and delivering enough functional and emotional value to easily explain the price difference between us and whomever is the cheapest. And then, we must effectively communicate that value in a way that clearly differentiates us from those who are "the cheapest", and all of those who are not.

In this case, the rallying cry of our business, and focus of our advertising will be, ***“We may as well tell you right now, we’re NOT the cheapest...and here’s why.”*** Our “here’s whys” will be the compelling functional and emotional value and the extraordinary experiences that we always deliver, that make us worth the higher price we charge.

So, if we aren’t the cheapest, exactly what are our clear and compelling value and experiences that make it OK for us to charge more?

#### **D) Will our Vision include both success & significance?**

“Success” is anything that we do that makes a difference in our own life. “Significance” is anything we do that makes a difference in the lives of others! Our “significance” is our legacy.

When we die, our success dies with us. It was for us...and we’re gone. It is our significance that lives on. In fact, if there is a heaven, perhaps it’s in our significance.

We all enjoy the comforts, conveniences and benefits that are the legacy left by those who preceded us on this planet. Every time you turn on a light switch you benefit from the legacy of Thomas Edison. Every time you walk into the comfort of an air-conditioned room, thank Willis Carrier. Every time you step into an elevator, your life is made easier by Elisha Otis who invented the elevator and made cities as we know them possible. And every time you enjoy the convenience of inside plumbing, do you thank Sir John Harrington, the inventor of the flush toilet?

Hundreds of times every day our lives are made more comfortable, more productive and more fulfilling by the Vision, the efforts, the curiosity and commitment...in a word, the “legacy” of those who preceded us on this planet. What will our legacy be? What “significance” will live on after we’ve gone?

#### **E) Let’s talk about “commitments”:**

Most businesses make the mistake of talking about “goals, targets, aims and objectives”. They have sales “targets”, customer satisfaction “goals”, profit “objectives” and they “aim” to be a good employer.

I think that we need to stop “aiming” and start committing. We need to replace all of those weak and wishy-washy words, “goals, targets, aims and objectives”, with one powerful word... **commitments.**

A “target” is something that we hit sometimes and miss other times...and it’s OK. It’s just a target. A “goal” is something that we score sometimes and don’t other times. And that’s life. At least we tried. But a “commitment” is something fundamentally different. And when we change our language, we change our business culture. You can’t have committed staff without clear commitments.

So, from now on, in every memo, every meeting, every conversation, we will not talk about goals, targets, aims or objectives. We will talk about our clear commitments...

- a) To the **extraordinary value and customer experiences** that we will always deliver.
- b) To the healthy **bottom line** that we will generate.
- c) To the **extraordinary and more profitable future** that we will create.
- d) To create a **staff team** that is effective, engaged and fulfilled ...and,
- e) To make a difference in the **communities** in which we make a living and to the **planet** on which we all journey.

## F) Do we have a “See-aheadscope”?

*“The future belongs to those who can see the possibilities and know what to do with them!”*

...Donald Cooper

To create a realistic Vision, we need a “**See-aheadscope**”. This is an imaginary instrument that allows us to look into the future.

Keep in mind that there are two kinds of future. First, there’s the future that will happen. This is the “stuff” over which we have no control, but which we spend much of our time worrying about. Then there’s the extraordinary future that we can choose to proactively create. Who will create the future in your industry? Will it be us...or will it be our competitor?

Can we close our eyes and picture what our business will look like in three to five years? How is it structured? What is the business model? What is it selling, and to whom? Where is it doing business? Is it local, regional, national or global? How good is it at delivering value and making money? What are its values and principles? How is it financed? Who owns it? Who runs it? What is it famous for? Is it a profitable market leader; a quick, adaptive and profitable follower...or a struggling ‘also ran’?

What will our customers demand from us? Who will our competitors be? What technologies will revolutionize your industry...or replace us completely? Do we have a clear understanding of how our industry will change in 3 to 5 years, and what our position will be in it? Will our industry or market be an emotionally and financially healthy place to be in 3 to 5 years?

Every industry, today, is undergoing some degree of consolidation in which the "big few" are gobbling up the "smaller many". Often, it doesn't even make sense, but that won't stop it. In a consolidating industry, are we a buyer or a seller? Or will we find some small niche market within our industry that the big guys can't or won't serve...or will we do nothing and lose everything?

## G) Creating our clear & compelling Vision Statement:

As we’ve stated, to be of real value, our Vision Statement needs to be a clear and measurable statement of what we’re committed to become to be a profitable and responsible market leader in 3 to 5 years. It will make specific commitments, including completion dates, for each of these six essential focuses in our business...

1. Sales growth, market share and profitability.
2. The compelling customer Value & Experience that we’ll always deliver.
3. Any key issues that we must deal with that make us vulnerable or unpopular with our target customers, or key influencers.  
*E.g. In the food industry the issue could be food safety or to reduce cholesterol or trans-fats. In cosmetics, it’s animal testing. In the auto industry it could be improving fuel efficiency. In the renovation business, the big issue is probably ‘trust’.*
4. The internal business culture that we’ll create. How things will be done and how people will be treated in our business. Our values, standards, management and communication style.
5. Operational effectiveness, which is essential to our commitment to be price-competitive, service-competitive and profitable. Our commitment to excellence, efficiency, urgency and accountability.
6. How we’ll make a difference in the world.

**With specific time commitments for each.**

## H) Two examples of a focused and effective Vision Statements:

Below are two examples of a clear, focused and effective Vision Statement. The first one is for a small business and the second one is for a large corporation. Both of them make specific and measurable commitments to the six essential focuses in their business.

### Vision Statement Example #1...a small company:

#### Vision Statement--- XYZ Instant Sign Company

**1. Our specific commitment to sales growth, market share and profitability:**

We are committed to being largest and most profitable supplier of computer generated instant signage in the greater Oshawa area, in three years, with sales of \$1 million...and an ROI of 18%.

**2. Our specific commitment to the customer value and experience that we'll deliver:**

We will deliver world-class creative assistance to our customers to help them communicate clearly, stand out, increase sales and build their Brand image in a way that will make us both trusted and preferred, within three years. We will win the "Sign Maker of the Year Award" from our industry Assoc, within 3 years.

**3. A specific key issue that we commit to deal with:**

We will recycle 100% of our scrap raw materials starting within 3 months.

**4. Our specific commitment to the internal business environment that we will create:**

We are committed to creating an internal business environment that makes us the preferred industry employer in our area, within two years, so that we readily attract all of the talented people that we require to grow the business.

**5. Our specific commitment to operational efficiency, which is essential to our commitment to profitability:**

We are committed to being the most efficient designer and producer of computer generated instant signage with the highest sales per employee in Canada, within three years.

**6. Our specific commitment to how we'll make a difference in the world:**

We are committed to creating and maintaining a donor acknowledgement wall in the lobby of our local hospital, within one year.

## Vision Statement Example #2...a large company:

### Our Vision Statement - XYZ Cosmetics Company

- 1. Our specific commitment to sales growth, market share and profitability:**  
We are committed to being North America's largest supplier of mid-market cosmetics in five years, with sales of \$12.7 billion...and an ROI of 23%.
- 2. Our specific commitment to the customer value & experience that we'll deliver:**  
We will deliver the industry's most effective marketing support to retailers and truthful, professional coaching to consumers through in-store, on-line and special events that will make us both trusted and preferred, within three years.
- 3. A specific key issue that we commit to deal with:**  
We are committed to eliminating animal testing of our products in 15 months.
- 4. Our specific commitment to the internal business environment that we will create:**  
We are committed to creating an internal business environment that makes us the preferred employer for the top people in the cosmetic industry, worldwide, within three years.
- 5. Our specific commitment to operational efficiency, which is essential to our commitment to profitability:**  
We are committed to being the most efficient producer and marketer of cosmetics in the mid-market segment, with the highest sales per employee, in three years.
- 6. Our specific commitment to how we'll make a difference in the world:**  
We are committed to investing ½ of 1% of sales to help disadvantaged women in America to achieve their potential through education. This program will start in one year.

These two Vision Statements actually mean something! They make specific and measurable commitments, with specific deadlines, in six key areas of their business. These Vision Statements will truly inform, focus, challenge and inspire everybody on their team as to what they commit to become. They create clarity and call for action....and they set the stage for creating a culture of accountability.

**Here's a bonus:** Our clear, 1-page Vision Statement will also become a **powerful recruitment tool** when we're hiring key people. When we're hiring top quality candidates for key positions, the truth is is that we're not actually interviewing them...they're actually interviewing us to see if we deserve them.

One of the questions that strong candidates should ask is, *"Where will this business be in 3 to 5 years, and if I can help you get there, how will I be rewarded?"* That's when we can pull out our 1-page clear Vision Statement and say, *"Here is where we commit to be in 3 to 5 years. Is this something that excites and challenges you? How can you contribute to this journey?"*

We will likely be the only business that has such clarity about where it's going...and we will attract the best and smartest people to our team.

**II) Creating our own clear 1-page Vision Statement:**

Referring to the Vision format and examples on the previous pages, and using the template below, we will create an effective 1-page Vision Statement that clearly defines what our business commits to become in 3 to 5 years.

**Our Vision Statement**

1. We are committed to being the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_ years, with sales of \_\_\_\_\_ and an ROI of \_\_\_%.

2. We commit to delivering the following compelling value and experiences to our customers  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
by doing \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ that will make us the \_\_\_\_\_ within \_\_\_\_\_ years.

3. We are committed to dealing with the key issues of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ within \_\_\_\_\_ years.

4. We are committed to creating an internal business environment that makes us the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ employer in \_\_\_\_\_ within \_\_\_\_\_ years.

5. We are committed to achieving a level of operational effectiveness that will make us the most efficient \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ with the highest \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ years.

6. We are committed to making a difference in our community, in the environment and in the planet in the following ways \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ within \_\_\_\_\_ years.

**J) Updating our Vision Statement annually:**

Because our Vision Statement should always be looking 3 to 5 years out, we will update and extend it by one year, each year. So, prior to the beginning of each business year, we will review and update it. Because our Vision is a one-page document, this important process can usually be done in two days of focused work, except for very large businesses, where it will take longer.

**K) From our Vision comes a “Reality Check”:**

Now that we know exactly what we’re committed to become, it’s time for a 5 point “Reality Check”:

1. Do we have the right **business model** to get us to our Vision? If not, how must our business model change? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do we have the **people talent** to get us to our Vision? If not, what specific talent and experience do we need? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do we have the **management structure** to get us to our Vision? If not, how must our structure change? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. What amount of **working capital** will be required each year to create our Vision? What portion of that can be generated by the business operations and what portion must be raised by other means?

YEAR	WORKING CAPITAL REQUIRED	PORTION GENERATED WITHIN OUR BUSINESS	PORTION TO BE RAISED BY OTHER MEANS
2010	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2011	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2012	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2013	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
2014	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

5. Do I, as the current owner, leader, or a manager of the business, have the ability, management style, energy and desire required to effectively lead this business to its Vision? If not, how must I grow...or what alternate career and / or ownership decision must I make?

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## 2. Creating our clear, annual "Mission":

### A) What is a Mission?

As we've just established, our Vision is what we're committed to become. Our "**Mission**", on the other hand, is what we commit to do, this year, to move towards our Vision. Our annual Mission Statement is a clear statement of what we're committed to achieving this particular year, in each of the following six areas to...

1. Achieve specific, quantified **sales, market share and ROI** commitments.
2. Create, deliver and communicate specific compelling customer-owning **value and experiences**.
3. Deal with **issues** that make us vulnerable or unpopular with target customers or key influencers.
4. Create a **business environment** that attracts, challenges, inspires and rewards the best people, at every level of our business....and deals with non-performance.
5. Create world-class **operational efficiency**, specifically quantified, that allows us to be more price-competitive, service-competitive and profitable.
6. Be a **responsible and positive force** in our community, and on the planet.

**B)** Using the template **on the next page**, we will document specifically what we commit to achieve this year, in each of the six areas of our Vision. If we are not moving forward in specific ways in each of the six areas of Vision each and every year, clearly we will never become our Vision.

The finished document will likely be a few pages long in order to cover all of our commitments in each of the six points.

**Our Mission Statement for the year \_\_\_\_\_:**

1. This year, we commit to generate sales of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ with a Gross Margin of \_\_\_\_%, market share of \_\_\_\_%, after-tax profit of \$ \_\_\_\_\_, which will give us an ROI of \_\_\_\_%.

2. We commit to deliver the following compelling value and experiences that will 'grab' our target customers, clearly differentiate us from our competitors and make us 'famous'...

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ this year.

3. We commit to make the following progress in dealing with key issues that make us vulnerable or unpopular...

a) For the key issue of \_\_\_\_\_ we commit to make the following progress. \_\_\_\_\_ this year.

b) For the key issue of \_\_\_\_\_ we commit to make the following progress \_\_\_\_\_ this year.

4. We commit to make the following progress this year, as part of our commitment to create a business culture that makes us the \_\_\_\_\_ employer, by the year \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

5. We commit to achieving the following specific improvements in operational effectiveness that will make us the most efficient \_\_\_\_\_ in the

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ with the highest \_\_\_\_\_ by the year \_\_\_\_\_.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

6. We're committed to making a difference in our community, the environment and the world by doing, investing and contributing in the following ways \_\_\_\_\_ this year.

### 3. Creating our specific and detailed annual “Commitment to Action”:

*“Businesses don’t die from a single shot to the head...they die slowly but surely from a thousand uncompleted tasks!” ...Donald Cooper.*

#### **A) Creating our “Commitment to Action”:**

Failure to effectively implement their ideas, decisions and commitments is where most businesses fall down. The solution is simple...for each initiative, activity and outcome that we’ve committed to in our annual Mission Statement, we will create a **specific and detailed “Commitment to action”** stating...

- a) What will be done,
- b) By whom,
- c) By when,
- d) With what measurable result...and.
- e) Rewarded how.

Then we will follow up...follow up...follow up. The world is run by people who follow up!

#### **B) Creating a culture of accountability:**

To create a culture of accountability, we will involve our team in this entire process and get them to sign off on **“Performance Agreements”** for their specific part of the “Commitments to Action”.

We will no longer talk about “goals, targets, aims or objectives”. We will talk about “commitments” in every part of our business. Specifically, we will talk about...

- a) What we commit to deliver in the way of compelling customer value and experiences,
- b) The extraordinary bottom line that we will generate,
- c) What we commit to become (our Vision),
- d) How we will get there...and,
- e) How we commit to behave along the way (our values and clear standards of performance, appearance and behaviour).

When we assign projects, we’ll always ask the magic question, *“By when can we agree that this will be completed?”* Then, we’ll document that commitment and always follow up. This one question, and the subsequent follow-up, will do more to create a culture of accountability than almost anything else we do.

Salaries, bonuses, promotions, acknowledgements and hugs will all depend on performance...and non-performance will be dealt with quickly, firmly and fairly. Failure to deal with non-performance is one of the biggest problems in business today.

### 4. In conclusion:

So there it is...the simple truth about how to create a clear Vision, Mission and “Commitment to Action” for our business. This is how we will improve clarity, focus, innovation, urgency, commitment and accountability. This is how we will “own” our target customers and grow our bottom line.

**For information about booking or recommending Donald, contact us in Toronto, Canada at 1-416-252-3704 ... or by email at [sharen@donaldcooper.com](mailto:sharen@donaldcooper.com).**