

Baby boomers are sinking your ship

Those exiting our industry on a daily basis are far surpassing those entering

I have been in the automotive industry for over 40 years now, and the one thing I can say that has never changed, is change itself. For example, cars are being built so much better. Consumers are more educated and more demanding than ever as the internet has become the go-to for almost everything. Technology, hybrids and electric vehicles are totally changing the game. These are the obvious changes, but the not-so-obvious changes are usually the most vital changes to focus on. In addition, they are often the most difficult to overcome. I was listening to one of our coaches who helped me start ATI — Geoff Berman — share with a class he was teaching on interviewing technicians when I thought you would want to hear what he said.

Stop technician recruiting frustration

According to Pew Research Center, Baby Boomers are retiring at a rate of 10,000 a day and have been since Jan. 1, 2011. This trend will continue until Dec. 31, 2030. In

my 30-plus years in this business, I have never experienced a more difficult time than now to find good, qualified staff. The consensus from the shop owners I speak with is the same.

EVERY BLUE COLLAR INDUSTRY IS FACING THE SAME CHALLENGE — THEY CAN'T FIND QUALIFIED STAFF — FOR THE SAME REASON: BABY BOOMERS ARE RETIRING.

When I ask, I always get the same answers: "There aren't as many vo-tech schools out there." "No one wants to work in our industry." "The schools are pushing all the kids into college." "If they aren't headed to college they are going into the computer field." And the list goes on and on. My answer is always the same. These are the same challenges we have faced for the last 20-plus years. We are still seeing the same 5 percent

coming into our industry that we always have. What has changed? What has created this giant hole in our labor pool?

Every blue-collar industry out there is facing the same challenges. This means plumbers, electricians, HVAC companies, truck drivers, machine operators, etc., all desperately need skilled laborers. We all have the same challenge and for the same reason: Baby Boomers are retiring.

In January 2008, EveryCRSReport.com reported that 55.5 percent of the labor force for repair and maintenance business across the country was made up of Baby Boomers. More than half of our industry is made up of Baby Boomers and over the next 12 years they will be gone. Ever wonder why the same people you don't want to hire keep answering your ads? These are the ones no one will hire. There are so few good ones left you'll never get them, because their employers will do anything to keep them. Wouldn't you?

If you think it is tough to find people now, you ain't seen nothin' yet. From today on, this is a 20-year challenge. My guess is that up to 25 percent of the current shops out there will go out of business for no other reason than they can't find qualified staff. The bulk of the rest will hang on by their fingernails and survive. But there will be a smattering of shops that will do something about it. These are the shops that will thrive because they have figured out they can't keep doing the same things they did 20 years ago to find staff. The world around them and their challenges have changed, and so must they.

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Chris "Chubby" Frederick, CEO



Automotive Training Institute

There are two very important things that any shop must consider if they want to be one of those shops that thrive, not just survive, during this mass exodus from our industry.

Most shop owners make the mistake of only advertising when they have a position to fill. This may have worked in the past, but it is unlikely to work now. All it will do is attract the ones you don't want. Remember, the ones you want already have good jobs. They aren't looking at those ads. You need to find other ways to attract them.

Recruiting vs. advertising

The first way is recruiting. Recruiting is the act of attracting, engaging, assessing and onboarding talent. The key is in the attracting and engaging. It is not one interaction. It could take months or even years of networking and staying in touch with any potential candidate before they decide to come onboard. I'm sure you have experienced something like this in your career already. Go look at qualified past applicants, call them up periodically, and stay in touch. One day, something will happen in his current position and he will think, "I'm out of here." When he does, who's he going to call?

The second thing is a big shift that is hard for most. You must learn to stop looking for people only when you need them, but to always be looking. If you have embraced recruiting in the manner I have suggested, then you will have many opportunities for interviews. Interview everyone, especially when you're not hiring. This gives you the opportunity to start the recruiting process and stay in touch with the ones you like. This also gives you another opportunity. If you're asking the right questions in your interview, you will also find other potential recruits through the relationships they have. If done right and done consistently, you will easily be able to grow your bench, and before you know it, the best of what is left will find themselves on your team.

Help them get what they want

Now I must be clear about one very important thing. What I have suggested here will only take you so far. You must have a shop environment that attracts the people you want. These are good people that are fed up with the way their current employer runs his shop and the way they are treated. They are looking for something better. The money that has been thrown at them time and time again is no longer adequate, because nothing has really changed. Promises have been broken too many times in their current position. Promotions, raises, equipment and the lists go on! You must provide a path to what they are looking for and they will find it easier to make that change. You must discover what they really are looking for through the interview process and they need to see you as that solution. If they do, it is only a

matter of time before they decide to come aboard.

Technician recruiting questions to always ask

Many shop owners get frustrated with the interview process. One reason for that is the difficulty in knowing what questions to ask to get the person you really want. If you skip these questions, you run the risk of hiring the wrong person, which will cost you more money in the long run than turning down work today. These questions will work for hiring advisors, managers, bookkeepers or technicians. Let's make it easy for you. Simply go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2018-10 for a limited time to receive the questions that make the difference in finding that "right" new employee. *ZZ*



CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 130 full-time associates train and coach more than 1,500 shop owners every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. Our full-time coaches have helped our members earn over 1 BILLION DOLLARS in a return on their coaching investment since ATI was founded. This month's article was written with the help of ATI Head Coach George Zeeks.

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