

ShopTalk



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Too Many of Us Believe Our Own Excuses

Whenever I can, I enjoy sitting down with shop owners at lunch while they are here at ATI for training. This time, though, was a little frustrating.

Three shop owners were part of a recent class here at ATI. They had an open seat at their table, so I joined them. The conversation was nice enough for a while, and then we started talking about ATI's awards program and Top Shop.

One shop owner from a medium-sized city in the Midwest said, "Those awards are always going to go to people in bigger cities where there are more customers. We don't have a chance, so I don't bother with that."

That's not true at all, but instead of trying to correct him, I decided to keep listening.

After a pause in the conversation, a second shop owner spoke up, revealed he was from one of the five largest cities in the country and said, "I always figured you guys had the edge; in big cities there is a lot more competition. And while there are more people, they don't want to travel out of their neighborhoods for something like auto repair. Big cities are really nothing more than a bunch of small neighborhoods crammed together. In small towns people don't mind driving; they'll go for 60 miles to get work done. In big cities they won't circle the block."

This got the attention of the third shop owner, who said, "How do you expect me, in a city with fewer than 15,000 people, to ever compete with you in a city of several million? If you stood in your parking lot and yelled, more people would hear you than live in my entire town."

At that point I gave an explanation of the different awards categories and how there is a great chance for everyone to win, no matter the size of their city, the number of their bays or how long they've been in coaching. I excused myself, wished them a great training session and went to my office to get back to work.

But that conversation got me thinking. Here were three shop owners who had given up before they had even tried. A 100 percent defeat as far as my lunch table companions were concerned. They had made up their minds that their circumstances disqualified them from the competition. Really ironic was that each one envied the others' opportunities, thinking they were better than his own. But I know the real reason these shop owners said they didn't like the awards program.

It's a lot easier to blame some circumstance than it is to admit to yourself and your coach that you aren't trying as hard as you should. You probably won't believe this, but some coaching members don't work their hardest at improving their shops. They love the ATI program because it has gotten them some good results, and now they are comfortable. They have fixed their margins, are making some money and are happy with that. Trouble is, nothing in nature is stagnant. You either have growth or you have death, nothing in between. If you aren't growing, then I've got bad news for you.

The ATI awards program has several awards. A bunch of people will win, from small towns, from big cities and from everywhere in between. But that's not the point.

The awards ceremony isn't about the awards. It's about you. You need to be there to let it get under your skin. You need to see those winners walking across the stage and picture yourself up there. It'll give you that kick in the butt you know you need so you'll do what you should be doing anyway. You and I both know you need to jumpstart your motivation from time to time. Thinking you are going to avoid some discomfort by making excuses is exactly the wrong decision.

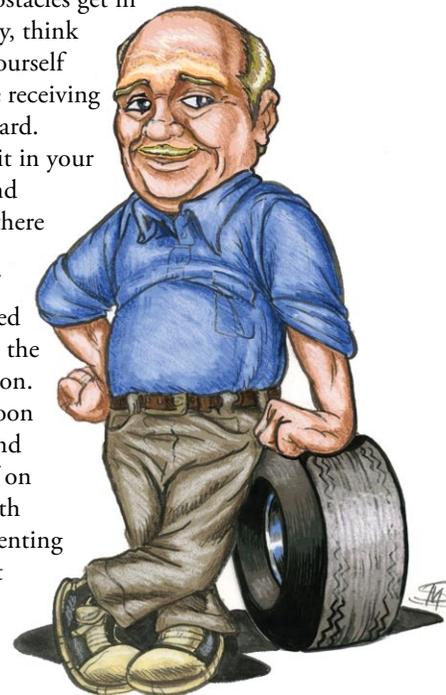
Your shop needs you motivated to make it better, your family needs you to be determined to succeed and above all, you need you to be excited and happy to face each new day. I

know you want to make your shop one of the top performers in the country. You just get frustrated about having to stretch yourself to make it happen. Excellence requires training and work. That's why excellence is cheered in sports, and that's why we cheer excellence at ATI with our awards ceremony at the SuperConference.

If you haven't registered for the SuperConference, what's the holdup? Get on with it so you can help celebrate and cheer on hard work, perseverance and excellence in the auto repair industry. Visit www.autotraining.net/SuperConference11 right now to get signed up.

In the meantime, here's what you need to do: tell your coach you want to be on that stage receiving your award for excellence next year. Your coach will work with you to set goals to get you there. If you start to feel frustration when obstacles get in your way, think about yourself on stage receiving your award. Picture it in your mind and hold it there to keep yourself motivated through the frustration. Pretty soon you'll find yourself on stage with me presenting you that award.

I can't wait to shake your hand. **ATI**



Bringing All the Parts Together to Make Haver's Service Center Excel

The Haver brothers, Jim, Jeff and Joel, will tell you it takes a complete system to make Haver's Service Center in Omaha, Nebraska, run the way it should – and that's what they got when they signed on with ATI. Spokesman for the trio, Joel Haver, describes the positive difference ATI coaching has made in their repair shops: "ATI brings a whole atmosphere to the organization to get it on track. Yeah, we might be great at fixing cars. We might be great at dealing with people. We might be great at dealing with employees. But ATI brings it all together as one thing. You get a management system that runs the whole business. That's the key to it."

Lee Haver, father to the three brothers, started the business in 1957. The oldest brother, Jim, began working in the business right out of high school in 1980. Joel joined the business after college in 1996, and Jeff spent 11 years as a mechanical engineer before coming into the business in 2000. Three years later, the brothers purchased their dad's company, and in 2004, they opened a second location.

The Havers had several advantages as new business owners: the company was already successful, it had a stable clientele and it had a good location in Omaha. The downside? "We didn't know we needed to be making more profit on our parts," Joel shrugs.

The trio went to a local eight-hour ATI seminar that really opened their eyes. "We left reenergized because it was a different management training than you normally go to," Joel recalls. "Most training focuses on one little part of a business. You go to a class on how to empower your employees, and then you go to a different management class about how to drive up car count. With ATI, the eight-hour session shows you how to run the whole operation and bring it all into one unit. We left there pretty jazzed up about it. Then, after our consultant came in and did the study of the shop and looked at our numbers, it was a no-brainer to go with ATI's Shop Re-Engineering Program."

Jim and Jeff headed to Baltimore, Maryland, to attend shop owners' classes, and it became clear right away that the Havers needed to have both of their shops in the program. "In the beginning, we were teetering on whether or not to bring the other shop on with ATI," Joel explains; "but after Jim and Jeff went to

Baltimore, they came back to me and said, 'We really need to put our other shop into this also.' So, there was about a two-month difference between when our first location started and when our other location started."

Joel says the first few months in the program brought big changes to the way the Havers run their business. "I'd say that first two to three months of training is just massive change, which is sometimes hard to grasp," he says. "But then after you implement the changes, get into a rhythm and get used to doing the things your coach tells you to do (like using your parts matrix), it becomes part of life. And you always have the weekly calls from the coaches to make sure you're on track."

After going to ATI, the Havers have learned to keep their eyes on the numbers, their parts markup in particular. "Watching our numbers has brought the biggest improvement to our business," Joel says. "When you don't have the car count, the temptation is to give away the work just to have work, but ATI has taught us that you have to keep that profit margin coming the whole time. That's really helped us a ton."

The Havers have also benefited from using ATI's ideas and resources for customer acquisition and retention, including using

their customer link more, availing themselves of programs with their parts houses, sending direct mail to customers and implementing a customer referral program. Joel says the ATI training brings clarity to their marketing decisions because their coach can tell them how certain marketing tools have worked in various markets. "It saves us from making mistakes that would cost us a lot of money," he says. "There were some things we didn't used to do because we thought they were way too much money. Well, come to find out, those were good places to invest our marketing money. And then we also found some things we used to do that were just wasting money."

Asked about the biggest turnaround idea for getting and keeping customers, Joel says it has to be using customers to get customers. "Now our Service Advisor always tells our customers, 'If you have friends with car problems, tell them to bring them on in.' It's amazing what your customers will do if you only ask!"

After all they have learned from ATI, life for the Haver brothers has gone from good to great. "There's definitely less stress," Joel says. "We're in a good routine of using the parts matrix, doing courtesy checks and making follow-up calls to our customers. That's the key to the whole deal. It becomes a lifestyle." **ATI**

SuperConference Tips for Healthier Travel



By Sherry L. Granader
Sports Nutritionist

SuperConference is right around the corner and traveling can be fun; but it can also disrupt our sleep and exercise routine and add stress to our bodies, causing hormonal imbalances.

All of this can cause weight gain and a depressed immune system.

It doesn't have to be that way – here are some healthy travel tips so we will see you in tip-top shape in San Diego:

1. **Layovers** – instead of using this "waiting" time to text and check emails on your laptop, get some exercise in by going for a walk

through the terminal and stretching your arms and legs often. Check out www.airportgyms.com for gyms in or near the airport.

2. **Meals** – There are no more FREE meals on most domestic flights except in first class. Most in-flight options available for purchase are full of salt, fat and sugar so make sure you bring your own healthy snacks with you: protein bars, an apple, cut-up veggies and nuts are all good choices. If you prefer to get something at the airport, look for healthy options like sandwiches filled with grilled chicken and veggies, yogurt sprinkled with whole-grain cereal or fruit – good food that will keep you full and ensure that you reach San Diego feeling alert and awake, not bloated and tired.

A Walk Down Memory Lane

By Karen Dee



I remember my first day on the job selling training classes for technicians (night school) for ATI like it was yesterday. My first thought that day was I will be walking

into greasy, grimy repair shops in a mostly male-dominated business. I will have to say that first thought was right on target. Twenty-two years later, it is refreshing to see the many positive changes that have occurred in this industry.

How times have changed.

I used to go out of my way to use a restroom at a hotel or fast food restaurant because I would never use a restroom at one of the repair shops I called on. Actually I was surprised even the men used them back then. Now there are contests for proud owners to send in pictures of their bathrooms. ASA ran one of these contests back in 2008. You have to check out some of these restrooms: http://www.autoinc.org/photo_women.htm. I will have to say, some of these are now nicer than the fancy hotel restrooms I used to seek out.

Even the days of calendars picturing scantily clad or sometimes completely naked women are gone. Now you see child-friendly play areas and fish tanks. Sort of makes you want to be a kid again.

Back in the early '90s, most of the shops comprised only men – Service Advisors, technicians, shop owners and even customers. Although I stopped in shop after shop on a daily basis, I rarely ever saw another woman all day long. Today at ATI, I love seeing the equal number of women that walk through our doors every day.

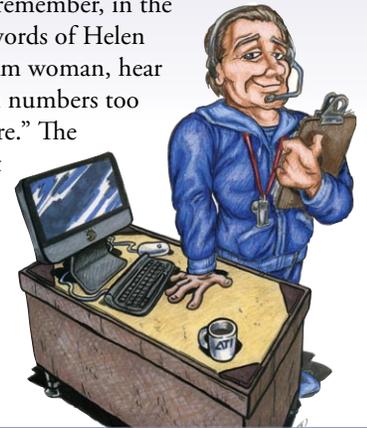
About nine years ago, I joined the Car Care Council's Women's Board. It is amazing to see how much it has grown over the years. The goal of the Women's Board is to "encourage women to become active in vehicle maintenance and to promote career opportunities for women in the automotive parts and service industry." The Women's Board is composed of professional women and men (and yes I said men) who are dedicated to getting information to female audiences, educating women about car care and encouraging young people to investigate "automotive" as their career choice. We meet twice a year and I encourage you to go to www.carcare.org/womens_board to learn more about this great organization and

the opportunities it might offer to you and your shop.

I think most people agree by now that women consumers are the driving force in the automotive repair industry. Most businesses saw this trend many years ago but some have yet to embrace the full potential of the female consumer. Depending on what survey you read or listen to, 65 to 75 percent of your customers are women. Women love to talk to other women and if they are happy with your shop, their word of mouth referrals could be one of your best forms of advertising.

So there you have it – my short walk down memory lane with a keen eye for some of the positive changes that have taken place in our industry. For those of you who are old enough to remember, in the immortal words of Helen Reddy: "I am woman, hear me roar/ In numbers too big to ignore." The aftermarket has been listening.

ATI



- 3. The GERMS** – start fighting infection now by exercising and getting a good night's rest the day before you leave for the airport. Exercise boosts your immune system for at least 24 hours and getting enough sleep before "travel day" will eliminate another big stressor. Wash your hands often and choose foods that are rich in Vitamin C like orange sections, grapefruit, red peppers and broccoli which are packed with natural chemical compounds that increase your immune system.
- 4. Sitting TOO long** – sitting for long periods of time increases the risk for deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a blood clot that forms deep in the veins, usually in the lower legs or thighs. Symptoms include pain, swelling, skin redness, warmth or tenderness over the vein. Walk up and down the aisle every one to two hours for five minutes.

Stretch your legs often and rotate ankles and feet several times during the flight. Avoid crossing your legs for too long and wear loose clothing because tight garments restrict blood flow to and from the legs.

- 5. Water, water, water** – sip water, not alcohol or cocktails during the flight. Alcohol dehydrates the body, putting you at more risk for DVT – the blood becomes thicker and more prone to clotting.
- 6. Jet lag** – the more time zones you fly through, the more out of sync or sorts you can feel when you arrive in San Diego. Try to adapt to your new time zone immediately by setting your watch to local time. Get out in the sun upon arrival and eat meals at the appropriate time locally – avoid the mini-bar. Travel safe and above all, healthy.



I look forward to meeting you all at SuperConference 2011 in San Diego!

Your Available Training Programs for February and March

February 2011

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

	1 Service Advisor 2 of 4	2 Shop Owner 1 of 9	3 Shop Owner 2 of 9	4 Shop Owner 3 of 9	5/6 Super Bowl
7	8	9 Shop Owner 7 of 9	10 Shop Owner 8 of 9 San Jose Service Advisor 3 of 4	11 Shop Owner 9 of 9 San Jose Service Advisor 4 of 4	12/13
14 Valentine's Day	15	16	17 Service Advisor 1 of 4	18 Service Advisor 2 of 4	19/20 Daytona 500
21 President's Day	22	23 Shop Owner 4 of 9	24 Shop Owner 5 of 9	25 Shop Owner 6 of 9	26/27
28 Service Advisor 3 of 4					

March 2011

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

	1 Service Advisor 4 of 4	2 Shop Owner 1 of 9	3 Shop Owner 2 of 9	4 Shop Owner 3 of 9	5/6
7 Service Manager 1 of 2	8 Service Manager 2 of 2	9	10	11	12/13
14 Valentine's Day	15	16	17 Super Conference San Diego	18 Super Conference San Diego	19/20 Super Conference San Diego
21	22	23 Shop Owner 4 of 9	24 Shop Owner 5 of 9	25 Shop Owner 6 of 9	26/27
28 Service Advisor 3 of 4	29 Service Advisor 4 of 4	30 Shop Owner 1 of 9	31 Shop Owner 2 of 9		

Sam's Corner

Let's Catch UP!!

I have met the vast majority of you on your first training day at ATI, and I would love to catch up on your ATI experience at our annual client-appreciation event in San Diego, California, on March 16th-20th. We have put together a completely new and exciting event and I promise you it will be the best SuperConference ever!

SuperConference is a critical event to attend, even if you haven't had as good a year as you hoped. A hundred and fifty of the most successful ATI shop owners in North America will be present to share with you what they did

to make themselves successful in 2010. Our 983 clients averaged a \$2,189.00 weekly cash profit increase in 2010! The awards banquet for the Top Shops will be spectacular and the prizes will be fun to experience. Richard and Karen have searched the entire continent this year to recruit the most entertaining and knowledgeable speakers to help motivate you to a record 2011. The speakers were handpicked to show you how to increase your car count, your free time and your cash flow, and help you stay the best shop in your market.

The half day work/play agenda has been a huge success with the significant others that are not involved in the business.

Visiting the sights of San Diego in winter can be a wonderful experience for the entire family. Those of you in driving distance to SuperConference wouldn't want to miss out on the best automotive repair industry conference of the year, where the average attendee is way above the average shop owner in North America. So come hang out with me and my entire SuperConference staff for four days of fun in the sun. And let's catch up on your ATI experience.

C. L. Frederick
Chubby



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A U T O M O T I V E T R A I N I N G I N S T I T U T E