

ShopTalk



www.autotraining.net

8611 Larkin Road, Suite 200, Savage, MD 20763 • 1.888.471.5800

June 2011

What Haunts You?

The comment I receive most often from ATI coaching clients is “I wish I had known this before; I would have made a lot more money.” This type of thinking is a symptom of a larger problem.

When we look back on an unpleasant situation in our lives, thoughts like these often occur: I wish I hadn't said that; I wish I had done things differently; I wish I had stayed home that night. A lot of us have lost our heads in the heat of the moment, and then, looking back, we have thought of the one thing we could have done differently that would have changed everything. That is exactly the wrong way to think. Instead, we should recognize that we created those bad circumstances because we weren't focused on the present moment.

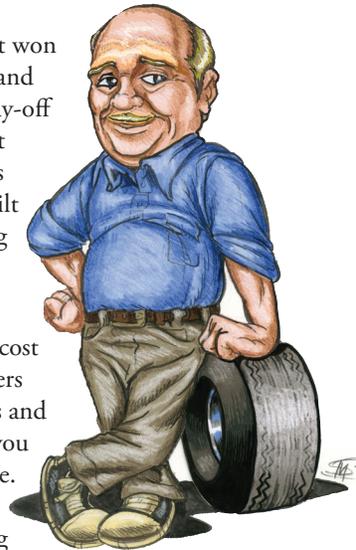
It's like driving down the road in your car looking only through your rearview mirror. Of course, that isn't as bad as never getting into the car at all, afraid of what might happen to you if you ventured out.

Brett Farve finally succumbed to injury and age, but during his NFL career, he was considered a brilliant competitor. Farve was able to improvise, to react to present circumstances in new ways. In 1994, he was playing in the first Division Title game for the Green Bay Packers in 25 years, with no time outs, no time left and on the 10 yard line. Coach Holmgren told him to make sure he didn't run the ball because the game would be over if he didn't get into the end zone. Farve dropped back, saw an opening and dashed toward the goal line. He dove into the end zone in front of two defenders for the game-winning touchdown.

Brett Farve made a decision in the moment. He was aware of present situations and opportunities, and he didn't let his or someone else's past mistakes dictate what he did when he needed to do it. A lot of Dallas Cowboys fans criticize Brett Farve's mistakes and interceptions. He made a bunch of them. However, the Dallas Cowboys never had a

quarterback that won as many games and had as many play-off victories as Brett Farve did for his teams. Farve built a career by living in the moment.

We all make mistakes. Some cost you money, others cost you injuries and others may get you into legal trouble. But the biggest mistake is letting your past dictate your future. You cannot feel bad about mistakes you made 10 years ago, five months ago or even two minutes ago. Repair what you can based on what's the most productive action you can take right now to build your business and your life.



And about wishing you had discovered earlier the best ways to run your shop? Yes, I'd love to have learned how to run my business better a long time ago. I wish I had all that money back that I lost, all those missed opportunities. However, that kind of thinking only distracts you and me from our focus on the present.

What's worse is a worry about the future. What's going to happen if that tech leaves? What's going to happen when they work on the road in front of my shop? What new things are auto dealers going to do to steal my customers?

It's important to look at trends, but we all must act in the present, working right now on the most important tasks to move our shops forward. Anytime you catch yourself regretting the past or worrying about the future, snap yourself out of it by asking yourself “What am I doing NOW to grow my shop?” If you can do something that's constructive about the future or the past, then do it. If you can't, then focus on the things you can do. **ATI**



How ATI Nearly Wrecked (but Ultimately Helped) Our Marriage

Sheila Kissane Signs Up for ATI; Gets the Silent Treatment for Three Weeks

Like many couples who work together in a business, Ron and Sheila Kissane don't always see eye to eye. But a good choice is a good choice, and after three weeks of refusing to speak to his wife (and another year to admit she was right), Ron agrees with Sheila that ATI was the best thing for their business – and their marriage.

Owning All A's Automotive & Transmission Repair in Midland, Michigan, was Ron's dream. "Ron wanted to provide people with a good shop where they could feel confident they were getting what they paid for," Sheila explains. "He was 19 when he got his first job at Goodyear. He worked there for seven or eight years and then left to be a manager at a transmission shop. He was there for about seven years and then decided it was time to go on his own. We built our business from the ground up."

Sheila says running the dealership was like being a hamster on a wheel going 90 miles an hour. "We weren't getting anywhere!" she laughs. "I knew there had to be a better way of doing things."

All A's is a service center for Bumper to Bumper, and it was during a tech expo that Ron and Sheila attended their first ATI boot camp. "Ron was all excited about what we had heard, and he is the one that signed us up to have a rep come to our shop to go through our financials," Sheila recalls. "He knew he wouldn't be there, and so he said, 'Just don't commit to anything.' I'm like 'O.K.,

then don't make me sit through the presentation and then not be able to make a decision.' When he came back, I had to tell him I had signed us up with ATI. He didn't talk to me for three weeks!"

Sheila held on for those three weeks, knowing her decision was the right one: "I just knew ATI would be able to fill in the gaps and make everything better."

After three weeks, Ron was speaking with his wife again, but he refused to do anything their ATI coach said. "After about three months, Ron finally wanted to prove our coach and me wrong, so he started using the parts matrix," Sheila chuckles. "About six months into it, he jumped on the bandwagon – but it was about a year before he admitted I had done the right thing. Now he and I both agree we would not be where we are if it wasn't for ATI."

Sheila handles customer retention, and she says she has learned creative ways to keep in touch with customers and help them have a good experience. "Our customers know they can go somewhere cheaper, but when they walk in here, it's like family."

Ron and Sheila use many interactive ways to cultivate their relationship with their customers, including a page on Facebook, Demandforce service reminders and spending time in the community. "We participate in a charity car giveaway by donating the labor," Sheila explains. "The car goes to a family who has been in a domestic violence shelter."

Ron's first love is still auto repair, so it's hard to get him out of the shop. But sometimes it's a really good thing he's there. In a year when All A's was on track to become an ATI Top Shop, two auto techs got into a shoving match. It ended in a lights-and-sirens police call. "Ron fired them both!" Sheila exclaims. "He wasn't going to have guys in our shop who didn't portray a positive image."

Ron's goal that year was to be a million-dollar shop. When November came, Sheila recalls this conversation with her husband: "Ron said, 'You know what? I know in my heart we didn't hit it, but I don't care because we had to do some major things this year, including firing those two guys.'"

As it turned out, Ron and Sheila came to within just a few hundred dollars of their goal, and they are happy with their shop's progress. Their son has joined the business to implement social media strategies, and they have come through a difficult year with strong numbers.

Perhaps more important, the couple has more time for each other. Two years ago, they took a trip to Cancun for the ATI SuperConference. The funny thing is, instead of looking forward to the trip, both of them secretly feared they wouldn't have anything to talk about. "We were both sitting on that plane scared to death because we had been so wrapped up in the shop that we had forgotten about us," Sheila says.

But the time away proved to be a good thing, even if it was a bit like a Chevy Chase movie. >>>

Sam's Corner

Thank You ATI Vendors and Sponsors for Your Ongoing Support of ATI SuperConferences

Our attendees, speakers and coaches all contributed to a great 2011 event. But we couldn't produce our SuperConferences without the help of our sponsors and vendors, many of which actually contribute throughout the year to our ongoing conference fund. ATI's vendor program is facilitated by our Sales and Marketing Department for the exclusive benefit of SuperConference. I wanted you to know that our Training and Coaching Department is not involved with these agreements so they can focus on offering our clients the programs that will work best for them, regardless of the vendors' possible support of SuperConference.

We have operated this way since ATI was founded and it has proven to be the best possible win/win for everyone concerned. As I'm sure you know, it takes many ATI client recommendations to approve a new vendor, and of course their services must continue to perform for our clients over time.

This free-enterprise system is what has made America great. We want to encourage this discovery and growth so our clients can be exposed to a choice of the best vendors in North America for their business.

I want to thank each and every client once again for all you do to make ATI successful. Through our vendor relationships, we

are able to provide you with a high-impact SuperConference. If you didn't make it you really missed out. Check out the DVDs we have made available to you at a really low investment. And be sure you make plans for the 2012 SuperConference; it's going to be in a premium location with a power-packed lineup of speakers to stretch your mind and grow your bank account.

Thanks,

L. L. Frederick
Chubby



“Kissanes cannot go on vacation without some kind of adventure,” Sheila laughs. “The van that was supposed to pick us up from the airport wasn’t there. Then when it did show up, we thought it took us to the wrong hotel. Then we couldn’t get English on the TV. We hadn’t laughed so much as we did in those three days!”

Ron and Sheila continue to take days away from the office, and that helps them keep perspective on their business. Sheila admits that implementing everything their ATI coach recommends can be overwhelming at times, but worth it: “It can be tiring, but when your head hits the pillow at night, you feel good about what you’ve accomplished.”

These days, Sheila and Ron both agree that ATI was a great decision for their business – and their marriage. “We are making our relationship and then our family a higher priority,” Sheila says. “ATI has taught us that if we work very intentionally, both will be O.K. We are a lot happier with ATI.” **ATI**

The Coaches Corner

Are You Playing Chess or Checkers?

By Eric Twiggs



Time is our most valuable resource. Time is more valuable than money. Money can be lost and recovered. Once we lose time we never get it back. When it comes to time management, everyone is playing either chess or checkers. The game of chess is designed for the proactive. The successful chess player is thinking two to three moves ahead compared to the checkers player, who is only focused on the move directly in front of them. Which game are you playing? Let me share a story to help you decide. I was the shop manager of an automotive repair facility. I had my top technician tell me a month in advance that he was leaving my organization. He told me on May 1 that his last day would be May 31, plenty of time to find a replacement. I began my search for a new tech on May 30 at 4:00 p.m.! Sadly, I was playing checkers. The question becomes, how do we avoid playing checkers and make better use of our time? Stephen Covey, in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, divides time management into four quadrants. I will be reviewing these quadrants in this article. By understanding the areas that Covey highlights, we will understand what game we are really playing.

Quadrant #1 Important and Urgent

The main reason that we end up playing checkers is that we wait until a task becomes important AND urgent before we start on it. When I needed a technician and did not start looking until the last minute, I was operating out of this quadrant. This is what leads to firefighting. Waiting until the cash flow is depleted to begin a marketing plan, and not being able to balance tires because we delayed the wheel weight order are other common examples that will put us in firefighting mode. In the past, it seemed like I drove to work in a red fire engine. If you find yourself just reacting to what the day brings, you may have a red fire engine parked in your driveway.

Quadrant #2 Important and Not Urgent

This is the quadrant of chess players. By performing tasks while they are important BUT NOT urgent, you position yourself to control your time and not let time control you. Implementing a recruitment strategy BEFORE you have an opening, planning your marketing activities on a marketing calendar, and writing out your daily activities for the following day as you close out the current day, are examples of operating in this quadrant. We have the opportunity to help our customers play chess. We can save them time and money by communicating to them the value of investing in a maintenance schedule for their car. Coming in every three months for maintenance is important but not urgent compared to having to purchase a new engine, which would fall under the first quadrant. Think about how much better our businesses would be if we were all playing the same game.

Quadrant #3 Not Important but Urgent

Daily interruptions, and specific phone calls and emails fall into this category. Oftentimes, a failure to effectively delegate keeps us operating in this quadrant. As business runners we sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that we have to solve every concern, work on every car and satisfy every customer ourselves. If we compare our daily activities to the grand scheme of our business vision, we may find that many of the things that we involve ourselves in are not important. I discovered this many years ago while in my first District Manager assignment. Initially, I would find myself talking to three to four customers per day regarding issues that should have been resolved at the store level. I managed 17 locations at the time. The managers would come to me asking for my guidance and involvement on very basic issues. I would go home every day frustrated and fatigued. Then one day when one of my managers approached me with a basic issue, I asked him the following powerful question: what

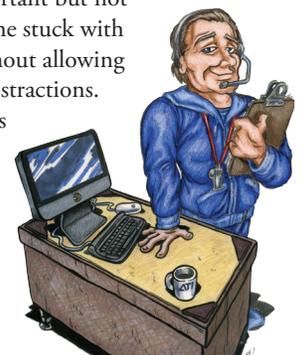
do YOU think we should do to resolve this? To my surprise, he had the answer. I then thanked him for handling the situation and told him to update me on the final outcome. Taking this approach allowed me to play the game I wanted and return my fire engine to the fire station where it belongs. It will do the same for you.

Quadrant #4 Not Important and Not Urgent

Busy work, time wasters and certain phone calls and emails would fall into this category. For an owner, any task that is not important or urgent is a distraction. It is important for us to identify and eliminate those daily distractions that we all have. The question that we must ask ourselves is, how does the activity align with the vision that I have for the business? If we cannot come up with an answer, then the activity falls in this quadrant and must be eliminated. We must be careful not to allow our people to spend time in this quadrant. Many of the shop owners that I speak to have a “no cell phone policy” in their shops. This can help to prevent our people from playing checkers on the clock. We live in the era of smart phones, text messaging and social media, which can be major distractions. The cell phone policy is a great example of eliminating unnecessary distractions.

I am reminded of the lead character played by Tim Robbins in the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*. He was serving a life sentence for a crime he did not commit and he made a surprising escape from jail after 20 years. Each day he would dig into the wall of his cell, a task that was important but not urgent. Each day, he stuck with this discipline without allowing any unnecessary distractions.

Tim’s character was playing chess and it allowed him to go to the next level. What game do you want to play? **ATI**



Your Available Training Programs for June and July

June 2011

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

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

July 2011

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|-------|
|  |  |  |  | 1 | 2/3 |
| 4 Independence Day | 5 | 6 | 7 Service Advisor 1 of 4 | 8 Service Advisor 2 of 4 | 9/10 |
| 11 | 12 Shop Owner 1 of 9 | 13 Shop Owner 2 of 9 | 14 Shop Owner 3 of 9 | 15 | 16/17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 Shop Owner 7 of 9 | 21 Shop Owner 8 of 9 San Jose, CA | 22 Shop Owner 9 of 9 San Jose, CA | 23/24 |
| 25 Service Advisor 3 of 4 | 26 Service Advisor 4 of 4 | 27 Shop Owner 4 of 9 | 28 Shop Owner 5 of 9 | 29 Shop Owner 6 of 9 | 30/31 |



**Automotive
Training Institute**

8611 Larkin Road, Suite 200
Savage, MD 20763