

## Is Indifference Killing Your Business?

By Chris Cotton, ATI Coach

The reason most clients stop doing business with a company is not because of the product or service or price, or because the client moved away. It is because of the company's attitude of indifference.

Definition of indifference: Being neither too much nor too little; moderate. Being neither good nor bad; mediocre. Not active or involved; neutral.

Neutral, mediocre, moderate: does this describe your current level of participation in your business, as well as that of your employees? We have all been there. The difference is do you grab yourself up by your bootstraps, look yourself in the mirror and say today is the day I start making a difference in my business again? Or do you decide to remain indifferent and let your business wither and die?

Did I just call you mediocre? I believe I did, and I can get away with that because as Jeff Foxworthy so eloquently puts it, I can call you a redneck because "I are one." See, that was me. I had been doing the same thing for so long, and doing it well, that I became indifferent. Indifferent toward my employees and customers, and even toward my family. I had let everyone beat me down so bad that I actually started to believe what everyone was saying. I just fed off the negativity and became indifferent, instead of holding my head up and puffing my chest out like Superman. If you go to your bathroom and look at yourself in the mirror and it makes you uncomfortable to see what is staring back at you, it's time to make a change.

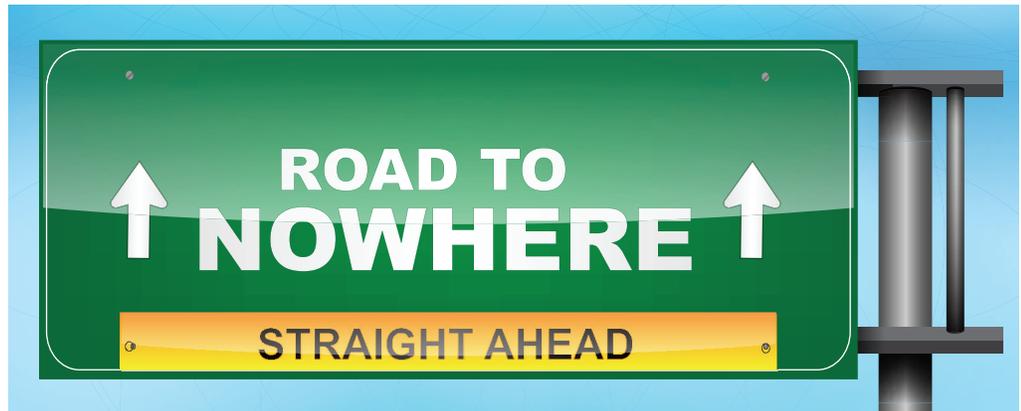
Are these people working for you now or if you can't recognize the indifferent one, maybe it's you?

An indifferent manager lacks the drive to push ahead and aggressively knock down all obstacles. An indifferent manager will give up easily, miss targets and fail to inspire his or her team. An indifferent manager models the wrong attitude.

An indifferent employee is one who doesn't care. They will show up, but won't stay late to make calls or smile when helping customers. They are there for the paycheck. This kind of behavior is unacceptable and should be stopped immediately.

### Can You Battle Indifference?

Take a good hard look at your business. Never assume that you or your employees are not giving



off an air of indifference. Ask your customers how they view your service. Really seek out the answers.



Ask a neutral, new third-party person to be a customer or "mystery shopper." It doesn't matter if it is over the phone or in person. After they go through the experience, ask for feedback without them holding back. Make sure it is someone that is going to tell you the truth, and be prepared for what you might

hear. Sometimes it isn't pretty. Be prepared to make the necessary changes to eliminate indifference. That could even mean eliminating employees or at least shuffling someone to a new position that does not require customer interface.

### Time for a New Direction



There is no telling how it started, but it is time for indifference to end — beginning today. Your business cannot

withstand the drain of energy that is caused by indifference. What if you are reading this and you are not the owner or even a supervisor? That is the best part. You can kill indifference beginning right now.

### Do these things:

1. Look the next customer in the eye, or speak with an upbeat tone in your voice if you are on the phone — as if you are looking them in the eye.

2. Smile (whether you are in front of the person or on the phone). Yes, people can see you smile over the phone.

3. Ask the customer their name and then use it (at least three times).

4. Ask this question, truly wanting to know the answer, "How are you today and what can I do to help?"

5. Display your desire to help your clients by using language that shows you want to and are willing to help.

6. Empathize with those clients who are calling with a problem, but also share the excitement of those clients who let you know about something good that's happened to them.

7. Also be prepared to listen to the things you don't do so well when your customers tell you about them. We should always be looking at ways to improve.

8. Remember that your client is the reason you are there. Don't treat them as if they're an interruption to your day.

9. Focus on your client. In this day and age we tend to multitask. Doing that can give the impression you don't really care about your client, so maintain eye contact with your client and do not look around. Definitely don't look down. Even if you're speaking to the client on the phone, give them your undivided attention.

10. Smile some more; it will make your client feel as if you're more approachable. It will make you feel better too. Even if you're on the phone, your positive attitude will shine through when you smile.

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# How Do Consumers Learn About Your Culture and Who You Are? Here Is One Way They Can!



Most shops talk to me about having a “company brochure,” but few actually get one. I suspect the reason is it’s just too hard to figure out all the details. That’s why we have created a very nice template for you to use to create your own brochure. We have done all the work for you. All you have to do is put in your company info and you have a brochure. I would recommend you change the pictures from the generic ones we put in, to ones that better reflect your shop, but you don’t have to. If you like it, even the wording is done for you. These are great for sharing with your customers what you’re all about, as well as for attracting new business such as fleets and appealing to new customers through community events. If you have been considering a brochure but for whatever reason have been putting it off, here is your chance to get started. So go to the **Resource Center** and to the **ATI Marketing Tool Box** to check out a larger sample. If you need further assistance, you can contact your coach or Lori at FSR email: [customerservice@fsr1.com](mailto:customerservice@fsr1.com) or phone: 434-973-4152.



## Shop Owner Options:

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## Is Your Marketing Plan Ready?

*“Generally, he who occupies the field of battle first and awaits his enemy is at ease, and he who comes later to the scene and rushes into the fight is weary.”*

—Sun Tzu

What does this have to do with marketing? Everything. Those who have a yearlong marketing plan, a campaign, are prepared and at ease. Those who wait until they see their car count dropping and then rush into battle are ill prepared and have poor results. The problem right now is that shops are getting busy with the beginning of the summer season and we aren’t thinking past today.

Sooner than you realize, it will be back to school and the traditional slower time that comes to most shops *every year*. The time to prepare to *stay* busy in September is now.

What are you doing now to prepare for your future? How about attending ATI’s Always Be Marketing? Remember this is more than a “should do”; it’s a “must do”. Protect not just yourself but also the financial well-being of your staff. They will suffer right along with you if you fail to start preparing NOW! ATI’s Always Be Marketing is available to you on July 15, 16 & 17 and August 14, 15 & 16, enroll today with your Coach.

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## Sam’s Corner

# 2013 Motor Age Top Shop Contest

I can’t begin to tell you how proud of you I am! Regardless of your short or long term success in our program, it takes real guts to take feedback and attempt change in your business. Many of you have succeeded in re-engineering your business beyond everyone in your area and are looked up to as an authority in automotive service. It is truly important to the industry to be able to see what is actually obtainable by the top shops in North America. We all need to see the real high-water benchmarks in profits, marketing, operations, websites, aftermarket involvement and community activity. It helps make everyone better, and there are a lot of ATI clients that fit this description. ATI Top Shops are the best of the best! We don’t just measure sales volume! We are focused on being the best from our gross profit to our humanitarian efforts. Last year, longtime ATI Alumni members Judi and Dana Haglin, from Haglin’s Automotive, were featured among Motor Age Magazine’s Top Shop Contest First Place winners.

I am personally asking you to enter the 2013 Motor Age Top Shop Contest. Yes, you will be on the front cover of the largest automotive shop owner magazine in North America. Yes, you can hang it on the wall of your shop’s waiting room and receive tons of local press which will all be good for your business. But the most important reason is that you will give everyone in the industry standards to look up to that really mean something. You are so much farther ahead than the average shop in North America, and it is important you share your success so others have something to aspire to!

There will be one Grand Prize and nine First Place Prize winners. First Place winners and their shop will be featured in a shop profile in the Top Shop section of the December 2013 issue of Motor Age. Your coaches and I have been writing articles in Motor Age for almost a decade. They are a class act and read by 150,000 owners and service advisors. Mention Chubby and ATI

in your training and education responses, it might help!

Simply go to [www.searchautoparts.com](http://www.searchautoparts.com), then hover over Motor Age and then click on Top Shops. Download the Top Shop Rules and start the process of filling out the information. It will take some effort on your part to answer the questions, and those of you working *on* your business instead of *in* it will have the time! I will also be giving special recognition at our next SuperConference, and dinner with yours truly, to show our appreciation. Now’s a good time, get started and delegate some of it, prove you’re a great leader! I always knew it!

Thanks,  
Chubby



# Life as an ATI Consultant/Coach By Donald Walter



The automotive business is not an easy business to be in. We have customers that REALLY hate walking through our doors because they just know that it's going to cost a fortune, and they assume we are all dishonest.

Being in the industry for 34 years and doing just about every level of management, from being a service manager of a 1.2-million-dollar retail tire and service department, to managing four locations, to being a district manager of 10 retail tire and service stores, I think that I can say I have seen just about everything. I'm here to tell you that, though I may have seen everything, I have not learned everything.

Since working here at ATI, I really have learned a great deal. Starting off sitting in all of the on-site training classes at first, and later listening to all the teleseminars reminds me that this business is always changing. In fact, it is changing at record speeds, and to be in this automotive world, you need to change with it. Here at ATI, change is embraced.

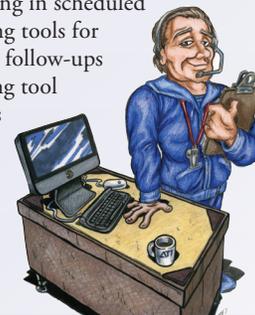
Labor rates are a pretty simple thing, right? You want to make more money, you raise the labor rate, right? Do you know just how much money you are making? I now know how to change the labor rate so you can make the money that you should. I had never been shown how an effective rate changes my businesses. The old rule of thumb was call around to all your area competition to check their rates and adjust

accordingly; we all do it. Have you ever sat down to do the math of what your tax and benefit load is on each one of your employees? Just how much it costs you to have those employees on the clock, not including all the other expenses that we have just to open the doors. So just how much money are we really making for ourselves?

The art of the courtesy check is another very simple concept that I can't believe how many of our shop owners don't have as part of their regular procedures. In this day and age of self-service gas stations and with the importance of maintenance on today's vehicles, why we would not have this setup in our shops is beyond me. This is just another example of the money that shop owners leave on the table. The best saying I've heard from my team leader is "What's Good for the Car, What's Good for the Customer and What's Good for the Company?" I understand that it is a belief system that shop owners have, but I think that if they learn it's their responsibility to give the customer a complete report of their vehicle's condition, and make honest recommendations, it's a win for everyone.

Being a Management Consultant/Coach here at ATI is a daily learning experience, from breaking down so many different types of profit-loss statements, to the owners' daily needs. As a Consultant, I think profit-loss statements are the easiest part of the job. We can look at the information that is given to us, and just by looking at a few categories I think that we all can make the right recommendations to make an effective change.

Identifying the opportunities and putting into place processes so we can make the right changes seem to be the client's hardest hurdle to jump over. Now this is when the Coaching skill is needed to find out what the client's challenges are. I've learned that stepping back, listening to what the client thinks his or her hurdle may be is a very valuable exercise. In my old life, I would have just gone and fixed it for them, but what I have learned is that fixing their problems is not the solution. Letting them fix their own problems, and teaching them to be problem solvers themselves is. Getting the client motivated to take all the information back to their employees and teaching them the new processes has been another learning experience for me. I have a "let's get it done now" personality, so sitting back, asking open-ended questions and letting the client think about their own solution by asking questions like "How does that feel?" and getting them to name "it" is new to me; but these are great tools for Coaching. Another learning experience for me is having clients set expectations for themselves and their employees. Putting in scheduled tracking and measuring tools for my clients so I can do follow-ups is also a great Coaching tool I have learned. So let's name "it": what are YOUR expectations? Are you going to let this learning experience pass you by?



## Is Indifference Killing Your Business?

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When you think about all the time and money that is spent on the product or service, the aesthetics, pricing and marketing, it's sort of funny that at the end of the day, it is often a company employee's attitude — of concern or of indifference — that determines whether or not that customer actually comes into your store. What time and effort is going into ensuring that your clients do not experience an attitude of indifference at your company?

The economy is bad, the weather is horrible, your guy didn't win the election. So what? These are all things that are beyond our control. What can you control? You can control your attitude and you can control who works for you. It's more important now than ever before to have rock stars working at your front counters. In the current times, the stores with great leadership up front are doing well, but the average service advisors are not able to thrive and keep up. Stop being indifferent and start making a difference. **ATI**



## Exercise and the Successful Business Owner A series by Gary Siegel, Fitness Matters Gym

It boils down to this: If you overeat during the five week period from July 4th to the dog days of mid-August, you are likely to gain an extra two to five pounds. I know it's a lot, and the unfortunate part is, it doesn't just magically disappear as summer ends.

Think about it. You have to consume an extra 3,500 calories (beyond what your body is burning already) to make up a pound of fat. So if you eat an extra 350 calories per day (which is not hard — just a couple of your favorite ice cream treats), you will gain 3.5 pounds well before Labor Day (an additional 2,450 calories per week multiplied by five, and divided by 3,500).

So what can you do? Not to worry — here are a few tips ranging from the practical to the very unusual.

### EAT FIRST

It may sound absurd, but if you are going to a summer barbecue, eat ahead of time. I know plenty of people who starve themselves before going to a party so they can have "room" for all the great food. Then they arrive at the party — stomachs rumbling — and make a beeline for the most high-calorie and high-fat appetizers and finger foods, easily eating more than a day's worth of calories. Instead, if you eat normally throughout the day, there's a good chance you will not overeat at the gathering. I always make sure that I go to an event with a full stomach.

### LITTLE THINGS MATTER

If you are only going to a couple of cookouts over the next few weeks, just relax, enjoy yourself, and eat what you want. The summer can become problematic if you decide to indulge every day. Watch the little things you eat each day, because that's what will make the difference.

### IT PAYS TO BE PICKY

There are a lot of food choices during the summer — foods you wouldn't normally eat become more appealing (especially with a "you only live once" attitude). Be selective. "Eat the things you really love — maybe a small serving of potato salad, a thin sliver of blueberry pie — and ignore the not-so-thrilling stuff.

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## August 2013

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

|  |   |   |                                   |                                   |       |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|
|  |  |  | 1                                 | 2                                 | 3/4   |
| 5<br><b>Service Advisor</b><br>Part 1  | 6<br><b>Service Advisor</b><br>Part 1   | 7<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 1  | 8<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 1  | 9<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 1  | 10/11 |
| 12   | 13  | 14<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 3   | 15<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 3 | 16<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 3 | 17/18 |
| 19   | 20  | 21<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 2   | 22<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 2 | 23<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 2 | 24/25 |
| 26<br><b>Service Advisor</b><br>Part 2   | 27<br><b>Service Advisor</b><br>Part 2  | 28  | 29                                | 30                                | 31    |

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## September 2013

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

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|---|---|--|--|--|--|
|  |   |   |   |   | 1  |
| 2   | 3   | 4<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 1   | 5<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 1   | 6<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 1   | 7/8  |
| 9<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 4  | 10<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 4   | 11   | 12<br><b>20 Group</b><br><b>Baltimore</b><br><b>Potomac</b>                          | 13<br><b>20 Group</b><br><b>Baltimore</b><br><b>Potomac</b>                          | 14/15  |
| 16<br><b>Service Advisor</b><br>Part 1  | 17<br><b>Service Advisor</b><br>Part 1  | 18   | 19<br><b>Master Mind</b>   | 20<br><b>Master Mind</b>   | 21/22  |
| 23  | 24  | 25<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 2  | 26<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 2  | 27<br><b>Shop Owner</b><br>Part 2  | 28/29  |
| 30<br><b>20 Group</b><br><b>SLC</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Service Advisor</b><br>Part 2  |  |  |  |  |  |

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