

ShopTalk



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February 2014

Fourth Round Picks Are In!

By Bryan Stasch, ATI Vice President

Wow. Our SuperConference 2014 is just a couple months away. I can't believe how time flies. My favorite part of our SuperConference is the awards ceremony as we wrap up the conference. Why you ask? Because this is where I get the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and passion of a select few award winners with 20 Group awards, Re-Engineering and Alumni "Best of" and "Most Improved" awards, and of course the Big Daddy of them all, ATI's National Top Shop award.

As you may have already seen, ATI starts with the Top 150 producing shops in the ATI family. From there, a selection process based on a points scoring system, the Top 75, the Top 50 and the Top 25 shops were selected. Here are the ATI Top 25 Shops...



Shop Name	Owner(s)	Location	Status
Accurate Automotive	Lee & Kelli Weatherby	Mesa AZ	MasterMind
Bradham Auto Electric Service, Inc.	John Crowder	Alexandria VA	Peak Performers
D'Avico Auto Repair, Inc.	John & Rose D'Avico	Wayne PA	20 Group Alumni
European Auto Solutions	Tim, Scott, Ed, Art	Waltham MA	Peak Performers
Fifth Gear Automotive	Bill Bernick	Lewisville TX	Peak Performers
Franks Servicenter, Inc.	Frank & Wendy Dischinger	Southampton PA	20 Group Alumni
George's Sierra Shell	Doug Whiteman	Fontana CA	Peak Performers
Haglin Automotive, Inc.	Dana & Judi Haglin	Boulder CO	20 Group Alumni
Hillmuth Automotive - Clarksville	Doug, Billy Jr, Billy III	Columbia MD	MasterMind
Hillmuth Automotive - Columbia	Doug, Billy Jr, Billy III	Clarksville MD	MasterMind
Hillside Auto Repair	Dave Carney	Torrance CA	20 Group Active
Uncle Dave's Auto Repair	Dave Steward	Memphis TN	20 Group Alumni
Milstead Car Care	Mark & Stephanie Milstead	Conroe TX	20 Group Alumni
Minh's Auto Care, LLC	Tam Truong	Brooklyn NY	Peak Performers
Murphy's Autocare Inc.	Dave & Jan Murphy	Beavercreek OH	MasterMind
Performance Plus	Greg & Patti Budwine	Colorado Springs CO	MasterMind
Plymouth Auto & Tire Center	Al & Danielle Torcini	Plymouth Meeting PA	20 Group Alumni
Precision Auto	Bud & Jackie Wildman	Germantown MD	MasterMind
Pullen's Garage	Vince D'Antuono	Hamilton NJ	20 Group Alumni
Quality Motors	Mike Leeches	Laguna Niguel CA	20 Group Alumni
Rieger Motor Sales	Kirk Edelman	Forrest IL	20 Group Alumni
Rob'e Mans Automotive Service	Eddie Cleveland	Birmingham AL	MasterMind
Rocha's Automotive Inc.	Ken & Angie Rocha	Fortuna CA	20 Group Alumni
Sparks Computerized Car Care	John Eckrich	Muncie IN	20 Group Alumni
Taylor Company BMW	Bruce Taylor	Pomona CA	MasterMind
Walt Eger Service Center	Walt Eger	Severn MD	20 Group Alumni
West Town Monona Tire, Inc.	Gary Pivotto	Madison WI	Peak Performers
Westlake Independent Service	Bruce & Donna Nation	Westlake Village CA	MasterMind

Well, actually they are the Top 28. We had a 4 way tie for the 25th spot. From this group of great shops, the Top 12, and ultimately the ATI Top Shop for 2013 will be chosen. But you will have to wait until Saturday, March 15th, to see the winners of these prestigious awards. **See you in Puerto Rico.**

The Sato Project at SuperConference 2014

ATI will be supporting the Sato Project at SuperConference 2014. The Sato Project officially started in November 2011. Their work in Puerto Rico began long before that. The founder and president of the Sato Project, Chrissy Beckles, has been rescuing dogs in Puerto Rico since 2007.



The Sato Project takes their rescue mission very seriously. Rescuing dogs means more than just pulling them off a beach or the streets. They are dedicated to each and every one of their dogs

and they want to give them the greatest chance in life. After what the dogs have been through, what the Project members have witnessed, they never ever want the dogs to suffer again.

Their work concentrates on a place known as Dead Dog Beach. They are the dogs' ONLY source of food, fresh clean water and most importantly LOVE on a daily basis.

Their wonderful beach volunteer, Ivette, goes to the beach EVERY DAY — rain or shine, even during hurricanes and storms. Each and every dog is named. As funds and space allow, they rescue the dogs and take them to their vet.

The average stay at their vet's office for a "healthy" dog is between four and six weeks. Those undergoing treatments stay as long as it takes to get them healthy, free of communicable disease and ready to travel. Their vet, Bianca, and her team are incredible. They make sure each and every dog is socialized and handled and gets plenty of love every day.

When a dog is ready to travel, they are booked onto a flight either to JFK or to Sato's sanctuary in Boston. Volunteers get the dogs ready and take them to San Juan to catch their flight.

Their dogs average two to four weeks in foster care before going to their forever home. The Sato Project has rescued, vetted, spayed or neutered, rehabilitated, transported and found forever homes for over 750 dogs since 2011.

The Sato Project, C/O Gleason's Gym,
77 Front Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201

www.thesatoproject.org

ATI Client's: Then and Now



Between May 2010 and January 2013, ShopTalk ran a series of 24 profiles of independent repair shop owners, the challenges they faced and how they overcame them. The one thing all of these shops (and the stories about them) had in common was the owners' desire to create positive change in their businesses, and the role that ATI coaches, classes and camaraderie played in helping them achieve their goals. We are revisiting some of those shops to see how things are going today.

Frank Palange V&F Auto

FAVORITES



Car: his Kubota tractor
Color: red, white and blue
Entrée and dessert: lasagna and Cold Stone Cheesecake
Fantasy ice cream in a waffle cone dipped in chocolate
Film: "Wild Hogs"

Quote: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result."

Recording artist: James Taylor
Life priorities: family

In October 2010, *ShopTalk* profiled Frank Palange, whose V&F Auto in Agawam, Mass., had experienced some big changes through the implementation of small steps designed to re-engineer and optimize his shop's performance.

ATI had helped Palange discover and utilize marketing programs as well as fine-tune his labor and parts pricing structures and the shop's employee compensation plans. Taking many small, individual steps brought about a very impressive increase in weekly profit — more than 400 percent.

The ongoing relationship Palange had with his ATI coach had filled a void left behind when Palange's father (and original co-owner and partner) retired. And it became especially invaluable as

Palange presented a restructured compensation plan to the staff and addressed the source of some conflict with a well-meaning but frustrated service manager.

We caught up with Frank last month.

ShopTalk: Generally speaking, tell us how things are going.

Palange: 2013 has been a great year at V&F Auto. We have been excelling and moving in a positive direction. We have one of the strongest teams of staff members we have ever had and a chemistry that is helping take us to the next level.

ShopTalk: How has the ride been? Bumpy? Smooth?

Palange: It has been both smooth *and* bumpy. We of course have had to overcome many speed bumps along the way; but there has also been some smooth sailing which is what has encouraged everyone to keep pushing for success.

One of the biggest challenges we continue to face is staffing. We always strive to find quality help but have had difficulty in doing so. We have educated ourselves by attending ATI's interview/hiring class. While we still have not completely overcome the staffing challenge, we have now found several good employees.

ShopTalk: You've continued your relationship with ATI. What has that done for you?

Palange: My coach has helped by teaching and guiding both my service manager and my daughter, who is the centerpiece of my succession plan. The portal continues to give us the ability to track and set goals. It allows us to notice which KPIs we are missing and helps us narrow down to the true cause of the shortfalls. And ATI classes help remind us of the "meat and potatoes" — those basic strategies that help us excel and create WOW service day after day.

The classes have also helped teach my daughter more about the automotive industry in general.

ShopTalk: Have you been part of a 20 Group?

Palange: Yes. We were just welcomed to the Peak Performers 20 Group. So far this group has been terrific! It is great to know you have roughly 20 other shops you can rely on for help and support.

ShopTalk: How about SuperConference? Have you attended?

Palange: Yes! We go every year. SuperConference gives us the opportunity to network and mingle with shop owners and vendors from all over North America.

ShopTalk: Have you established new friendships with other shop owners through ATI?

Palange: Most definitely. And that has given us the opportunity to learn from others while having someone who understands the challenges we face as business owners, more specifically, auto repair business owners.

ShopTalk: At this point in time and looking forward, what are your new short-, mid- and long-term goals?

Palange: Short-term: beat our all-time record for sales, which was established in 2006!

Mid-term: complete the change in location of our auto parts store, which will allow our repair facility to expand by updating and modernizing our waiting room.

Long-term: have my daughter ready for an ownership role followed by substantial growth. That includes staffing up a new auto parts manager's position. We currently have managers for service and sales, but need a dedicated position on the parts side to be where we want to be. With the proper staffing in place, she will be able to oversee the overall business operations. **ATI**

Sam's Corner

Chubby's Economic Outlook for 2014–15

We all know what opinions are like; however, I would be remiss not to weigh in on my beliefs about our economic outlook for the next several years. For the last decade I have been following several famous economist projections on our future, and although not perfect, they have been able to come close to their predictions. If you run any business, it is important to at least try to predict what could happen, especially if you are in a growth mode and adding overhead or manpower.

After spending 40 years in the automotive repair business, I would have told you at 30 years in, that we were recession proof. Then there was 2008 and everything as we know it changed. I believe our intangible sales like maintenance can be directly linked to consumer confidence in the economy. I believe the economy's projected rate of growth in 2014 (1.9%) will be below what is posted for 2013 (2.6%). We will have a seasonal softness in late 2014 and early 2015, but the annual economic trend will not decline. In the core economy, consumers and businesses appear to be

more settled and less anxious than one year ago and likely feeling wealthier. Annual retail sales were up 4% through November from last year, despite headwinds consumers faced in 2013. Employment has been improving, however at a mild rate of 1.1%. Many economists are predicting 2015 growth will accelerate to 3.2%.

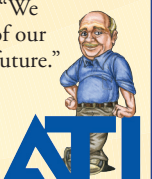
Auto production is projected to soften in the second half of 2014 and the first half of 2015. This should help increase the number of consumers holding on to their car during this 12-month period; however, the second half of 2015 will improve to near 2013 production levels.

I believe we should focus on developing a relationship business model vs. a repair model. Make sure you tune up your entire front counter this year in Randy's Service Advisor Course. Selling and retaining relationships is not like riding a bike, we need to go back to basics as a reminder every year. Soft skills like leadership and culture are critical to keep your team focused on maintaining relationships and performing the way you want

while you work on your business. Don't just think because you attended one leadership class you are now a great leader — revisit this course every year and work with your coach on these skills to ensure your personal growth. Business as usual is over, and along with your many responsibilities you must stay focused on stabilizing car count. Since acquisition and marketing technique results are different all over North America, I strongly recommend that if you are invited to join a 20 Group, accept the offer. Having twenty shop owners on your Board of Directors is an incredible value, and many of your members will be really focused on stabilizing car count. We all have a Win Number that is driven by a daily car count number. There is nothing better for your enthusiasm than to spend time with owners that have like interests.

As George Bernard Shaw once said: "We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future."

C. L. Frederick
—Chubby



Is Your Shop Straying? By John Leslie, ATI Coach



If you don't know whether your shop is straying or not, guess what? It probably is!

Beyond profit margins and compensation plans there lies a far deeper issue. That issue is leadership or lack thereof.

Many shops operate without a leader. Sure, they have shop owners, service managers, service advisors and capable lead techs, but they lack that fully tuned engine. The one which pulls all of that potential energy together. Just as when you build that engine, you have to start with that keystone.

There is a leadership skill shortage in our industry which hinders advances in shop performance. Shops need someone that can bring out the strengths in all of the employees. By leveraging employees' strengths, we can increase not only tech productivity, but also tech efficiency. This also frees you up to handle more important issues like working on your business and not in it! As leaders, we have to look past judging employees' weaknesses to seeing their special talents that can help pull together a productive and efficient shop — a shop that fires on all eight cylinders.

As leaders, we are tasked with looking past our own biases. This tech isn't as assertive as I am or that tech is too boisterous and outgoing for my tastes. I don't like the fact that my service advisor challenges my belief systems. Do not be blinded by looking for answers only from people who are like us or whose character traits are like our own. Listen and listen very hard to everyone, even those who are quietly restrained socially and act differently than us.

Cultivate the talent you have in order to tune up the productivity of your team. This requires you to interact outside of your comfort zone and remember true growth happens when we leave the cushy confines of the comfort zone we ourselves built!

Beyond listening, we need to manage expectations: make sure that the expectations are clear and concise and that the staff are working toward the same short- and long-term goals.

Meetings are a great way to bring everyone's ideas to the table, but for heaven's sake don't make it boring. Keep it interesting and proactive. The last thing you want is to start a meeting and five minutes later half of your staff are falling asleep! Don't talk at them, talk with them. Structure your meetings so everyone can be heard. In addition, it is your job as a leader to keep everyone directed toward the original agenda. Focus on the objectives you have set prior to the meeting, contain the boundaries and get a consensus. This doesn't mean constrain healthy debate. Everyone needs to feel that they are being heard and acknowledged. Above all else be firm, but encouraging!



As a leader, you are accountable for making sure your tasks and objectives are met. No one else! Champion your team on their accomplishments, be gracious, and that will help take your team to the next level.

CAUTION... CAUTION! There is one thing I must warn you about as you evolve into a great leader! With leadership comes **power** and guess what? **Power changes people.** Stay the course! Companies with poor leadership lack direction and urgency. You have the potential to be incredibly powerful or wield a negative power throughout your shop. Be selfless and empathetic. By this I mean do not fall into the trap of becoming self-centered and entitled, filled with bad behaviors.

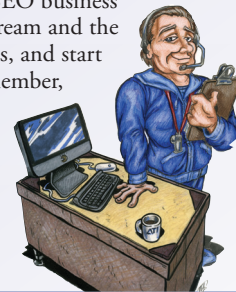
When I see a shop with low productivity, I try to read between the numbers and margins.

Nine out of 10 times it stems from a failure of leadership. Most owners and managers may not admit it, but when leadership improves so do margins, productivity, gross profit and net operating percent.

Failure has taught me many things. Once you have become a good leader, it is always a good idea to reflect upon what made you a stronger person, someone with perspective. Failure comes in all forms such as bad hiring decisions, unreasonable expectations and failed relationships. Yet it is life's most profound enabler. The acceptance of failure makes it much easier to shy away from the intangible items every shop needs. I'm referring to proper leadership of your staff and the management of your shop operations. It is ultimately how you proceed after failure that shapes your character. Be accountable, persevere and build your legacy.

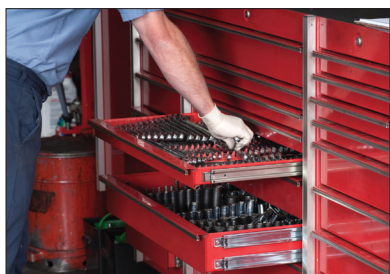
Build your shop around your leadership and improve your business. Find effective systems and processes, trust your gut, make more decisions and ultimately become stronger and wiser. Some people say there are no second chances, but I disagree. They are all around us. With failure, you finally know now what you did not know then. I am now at a point where I can practice what I preach. We are all students of leadership. Seize the opportunity when it arises.

Remember that you don't have to be a high-powered CEO of a multinational corporation or launch a billion-dollar SEO business in your twenties. Have a dream and the courage of your convictions, and start as a leader of yourself. Remember, if you don't step up to the role, someone else will and you will probably not be happy with where they take your shop.



Tools of the Trade

When is the last time you checked out the Toolbox? By Geoff Berman, ATI Coach



This year more clients have visited the Marketing Tool Box than ever before. Thanks to you, 2013 was a great year for new products, and 2014 will be even better. This past year we've added the CSA program, improved the holiday gift card program, introduced thick plastic postcards and thick plastic door hangers. For those of you that have

used them, all of these programs, and many others, have had a tremendous impact on your businesses. So make sure once a month while you're in the portal, to check out the tool box and see what's new. Maybe even set a recurring reminder in your smart phone.

Since so many of you have had such great success with the products you have purchased from the tool box, I'd like to share your stories. If you have a story you want to share, please email it to me at gberman@autotraining.net and I will put

it in future newsletters. I know there are some good ones out there because I hear them every month in the marketing class and on my weekly phone calls.

You can access the Marketing Tool Box by going to your portal, **logging in** and then to the "Resource Center." Once in the resource center, click on the "ATI Marketing Tool Box" and you will see all the products and programs there. If there is any product you are looking for and do not see, you can contact Jennifer at FSR directly. She will be happy to assist you. She can be reached by email at customerservice@fsr1.com or by phone at 434-973-4152.

Shop Owner Options:

- [Shop Owner Home](#)
- [Message Post](#)
- [Resource Center](#)
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Then click here

Click here



Your Available Training Programs for March and April 2014

March 2014

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

					1/2
3 Service Advisor 1 of 4	4 Service Advisor 2 of 4	5 Shop Owner 1 of 9	6 Shop Owner 2 of 9	7 Shop Owner 3 of 9	8/9
10	11	12 Super Conference Puerto Rico	13 Super Conference Puerto Rico	14 Super Conference Puerto Rico	15/16 Super Conference Puerto Rico
17 Saint Patrick's Day	18	19 Shop Owner 4 of 9	20 Shop Owner 5 of 9	21 Shop Owner 6 of 9	22/23
24 Service Advisor 3 of 4	25 Service Advisor 4 of 4	26	27 2nd in Command 20 Group	28 2nd in Command 20 Group	29/30
31 Shop Owner 8 of 9 Staffing & Hiring 1 of 2					

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April 2014

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

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7 Service Advisor 1 of 4	8 Service Advisor 2 of 4	9 Shop Owner 7 of 9	10 Shop Owner 8 of 9	11 Shop Owner 9 of 9	12/13
20 Group Dallas	20 Group Dallas				
14 Shop Owner 4 of 9	15 Passover Shop Owner 5 of 9	16 Shop Owner 6 of 9	17 California Service Advisor 1 of 4	18 California Service Advisor 2 of 4	19/20 Easter
Service Advisor 3 of 4	Service Advisor 4 of 4				
21	22	23	24	25	26/27
28 20 Group SLC Advanced Sales	29 20 Group SLC Advanced Sales	30 Shop Owner 1 of 9			

Fitness Matters A Series by Gary Siegel, Fitness Matters Gym

Fueling the Incredible Machine for Exercise

To provide energy and endurance during exercise, you need quality carbohydrates, lean protein and heart-healthy fats and fluids — all of which provide fuel and water to your body's engine and radiator. Without them, your body simply can't run.

Your muscles rely on **carbohydrates** (breads, cereals, pasta, rice, fruits, veggies) for a quick energy source. **Protein** builds and maintains healthy muscles and blood cells. Blood cells deliver nutrients and oxygen to working muscles.

The ideal **pre-sport meal** is low in fat and fiber and moderate in carbohydrates and protein; it contains water and is familiar and easily tolerated. **Avoid** fried or greasy foods and soft drinks.



Stop Making Excuses!

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www.fitnessmattersgym.biz

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