

ShopTalk



www.autotraining.net

705 Digital Drive, Suite V, Linthicum, Md. 21090 • 1-888-471-5800

June 2014

Is It Your Job to Push?

By Kim Hickey, ATI Coach

During my weekly conversations with my clients about the importance of upselling and educating our customers on benefits and features of services, many times the response I get is “I don’t like to be pushy.” I am writing today to tell you that it is your job to “be pushy,” especially when it comes to items that can affect safety, like brakes and suspension. If you are letting customers leave your shop with bad suspension or brakes, without doing everything you possibly can to educate them about the safety issues surrounding those needed repairs, you are not doing what you are morally and ethically obligated to do. While I understand that you cannot “force” your customers to make repairs that they don’t want to, you can make sure that you educate your customers, and that they understand exactly what could happen when items affecting safety are not working properly.

A year ago, I spent all day and night Father’s Day, watching a 28-year-old woman named Bridget on life support, with no chance of recovery. I then watched her mother and father agonize over whether they should continue to keep her on it or let her go. Bridget was involved in an automobile accident on Father’s Day morning, in which her car rolled over. While there were several things contributing to this, including Bridget not wearing a seatbelt and speeding, I can’t get the conversation her mom, Mary, and I had on the day before. Bridget just got a “new” car. It was an older Taurus and Bridget just loved it. Mary went on to tell me that Bridget had been fixing it up and was so proud of it, and all that was left to repair was the suspension. All I could think of while I was listening was saying “OMG Mary, the way Bridget drives, she better get that suspension done right away!” and I was all ready to get on my soapbox and explain what the suspension does, and how it can affect braking, your ability to swerve, etc. But just as I began to start my speech, Bridget called with news of finally meeting her “Prince Charming” and how she knew this time she had found the one. They were going to a baseball game Saturday night. Excited for her news, I left my speech for another day.

Could I have prevented the accident she had early the next morning? Chances not. Even if I

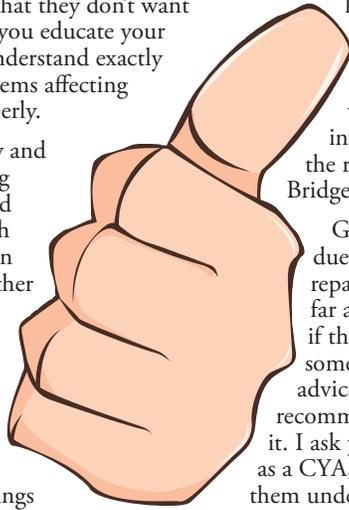
had dampened her exciting news with my boring talk of suspension and safety, I am quite sure Bridget would not have taken her car somewhere on Saturday night to have it repaired. Could her auto repair facility have prevented the accident? Did they do a good enough job of explaining to Bridget the importance of her needed repairs? When they prioritized her repairs, were the services and flushes given priority because they are gravy work? I will never know. I can’t imagine that if the service advisor had done a good job of telling Bridget about the possible safety issues regarding suspension, that Bridget would have ignored them. We will never know. What we do

know is that there were no skid marks at the scene, and no drug or alcohol impairment, she wasn’t texting or talking on the phone. According to witnesses, there were no other cars involved, no animals darting out into the road and no obvious reason to cause Bridget’s car to roll over so many times.

Going forward, I ask that you do your due diligence when explaining needed repairs that affect safety. I would go so far as to say that after you do your best, if they still decline the repair(s), you type something on the work order regarding your advice and that the customer declined the recommended safety repair and have them sign it. I ask you to have them sign it, not so much as a CYA, but as a last-ditch attempt to make them understand the importance of your advice.

Brakes being a safety issue is easy to explain to customers. Customers generally understand that brakes affect their vehicle’s ability to stop. But does your service advisor explain to your customers that shocks and struts affect their vehicle’s ability to stop too? Most people still think of shocks and struts as a ride comfort item, not a safety concern. Does your advisor explain that shocks and struts performing at 50 percent efficiency can add 12 feet of stopping distance for a car traveling 60 mph? Do your customers understand that worn struts or shocks will allow tires to bounce or dribble after hitting a bump and dip forward during braking, affecting both handling and braking performance, and that any time a tire bounces or dribbles it does not have full contact with the road?

One of the tools I use a couple of times a year to bring awareness to this is a suspension log. For



Sam’s Corner

Safe Succession Planning: Part 2

Last month we discussed why it is so important for you and your family to weave your succession plan into your ATI Five Year Strategic Plan. We also talked about the three types of plans, so what’s your plan? If you fail to plan for more free time or retirement, you are planning to work until the day you die, which might be OK for you. But think about the family you are leaving behind.

So your first step is: you have to plan to leave. Shortly after I founded ATI, my wife was diagnosed with cancer and her prognosis was not very encouraging. She gave me a choice to keep spending all my waking hours growing ATI or spend the last years with her. I hope you never have to be faced with this, because at the time I thought I was not replaceable. Lucky for me my wife has been cancer free for 13 years, and I would never have changed without her pushing me. My coach encouraged me to start trying to replace everything I did, one job at a time, with associates that were willing to take on the responsibility. After about three to five years, I was able to completely work *on* my business versus *in* it — which I know some of you have accomplished as well. I hope you can take your time developing the plan you would like to see last into your retirement, and don’t get forced into doing it on the spur of the moment. So let’s begin your journey!

Should you sell your business or create a second in command to run it for you? Let’s explore both options: you moving to your dream location, or just sitting home collecting checks. If you don’t want to be bothered during

Continued on page 3



Continued on page 3

Book Review



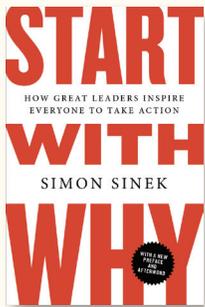
Simon Sinek

“Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone”

By Al Sutherland, Al's Certified Auto Repair



Wow! This book could have been written for or by the staff at ATI. It reinforces some of the concepts taught by ATI, using real-world multinational companies as examples. Simon Sinek has identified and quantified the importance of WHY in the true success of a business. Ever wonder how some companies are so hugely successful where others in the same market or with the same product seem to struggle? This book made me realize why, and more importantly, what I can do as a shop owner to really create a passion in my employees and my customers.



You will learn that WHY we do something is often more important than how we do it. With the passion and conviction of WHY, Sinek illustrates how a Herb Kelleher was able to take a small regional airline and make it into the discount giant Southwest, or how Sam Walton was able

to develop a small five and dime store into the largest retailer in the world, or how Steve Jobs was able to grow a small anti-establishment computer company into the juggernaut that is Apple — all because of the conviction of WHY.

Sinek discusses how these people were able to get their employees to buy into the WHY. Employees and customers get behind the WHY, not the HOW. Just look at Harley-Davidson; when was the last time you saw someone with your logo tattooed on their arm? Harley represents a WHY (rebel, open road, free spirit).

Sinek also illustrates what happens when a company and its leaders lose sight of WHY. It leads to decisions that are not in the best interest of the company or the employees.

Sinek lets you know that these successful companies also have a HOW component. The WHY inspires and the HOW gets it done. Southwest had Rollin King and Steve Jobs had Steve Wozniak. These were the HOW people, the ones that put the WHYS into action.

This book shows that a business can have great products, great people and even great processes; but if they have no WHY, nothing bigger than the product, nothing for the employees — and better yet the consumer — to become part of, there will be a struggle to reach greatness.



This book was a great inspiration to the development of my WHY for my company. The book can do the same for you. You can develop a WHY that both inspires and excites your employees, your customers and most of all, yourself.

Simon Sinek has done a wonderful job presenting the benefits of having and truly understanding your WHY, and the pitfalls of stepping away from it. Enjoy the book, apply the concepts in your business and watch the way your employees and customers respond. Maybe someone will tattoo your logo on their arm after all.

ATI Employees Give Back



Sarah's House is a supportive housing program, offering emergency and transitional housing for homeless families in Anne Arundel County, Maryland.

ATI's first event with Sarah's House was during the holiday time in December 2013, when ATI employees filled three large pallet size boxes of gifts to be distributed to the families staying at Sarah's House. In addition to gifts for the families, we collected enough money to purchase two large-screen TVs for use at their facility.



While delivering the gifts, our employees were given a tour of the facilities; and during the tour,

Continued on page 4

Fitness Matters A Series by Gary Siegel, Fitness Matters Gym

The Color of Healthy — Part 2

Here are critical micronutrients that processed food lacks — but which are readily available in the colored fruit and veggie skins we didn't cover last month.

Red provides lycopene, ellagic acid, quercetin and hesperidin, which reduce prostate cancer risk, lower blood pressure, reduce LDL cholesterol and harmful free radicals, and help prevent arthritis.

Orange and yellow deliver beta-carotene, zeaxanthin, flavonoids, lycopene, potassium and vitamin C, which reduce macular degeneration and prostate cancer risk, lower LDL cholesterol and blood pressure, promote collagen formation for joint health, fight harmful free radicals, encourage alkaline balance and work with magnesium and calcium to build healthy bones.

White contains beta-glucans, EGCG, SDG and lignans, which provide powerful immune-boosting activity, activate natural killer B and T cells to reduce the risk of colon, breast and prostate cancers, and balance hormone levels to reduce the risk of hormone-related cancers.



Stop Making Excuses!

Your very own **Virtual Fitness Coach** is as close as your desktop or tablet.

www.fitnessmattersgym.biz

Gift Certificates Available

Never Stop Asking Yourself

By Don Walter Sr., ATI Coach



I have to start this article by saying that I and some of my fellow coaches spend a lot of time talking about how to market an automotive shop. This includes big shops, small shops and all those in between. We also dig deep into what it takes to keep a business running and keep good employees. We are constantly trying to expand our knowledge in this ever-changing world, and I came up with some questions you may want to start asking yourselves about your own businesses.

Here are the questions that you, as an owner, need to ask yourself because, as your market changes, your employees change and your strategic plans change. It is important that you change as well when it is necessary.

1. What business are you in? I mean really in?

Any typical owner will answer this question by explaining the service that they sell. Understandable, but that's not the point! The business that you are in is *customer satisfaction*. As an owner, you must always define your business in terms of what your products or services do to improve the life or work of your customer.

In order to implement a successful business plan for your company, you must realize that your customers' wants, needs, desires and expectations are constantly changing; and you must change with them, or your sales, cash flow and profitability will suffer.

2. What business will you be in in the future, based on current trends?

In business, the trends are everything. Which way is the market going for you today, and what changes do you need to make in your business plan to move with the trends? If you could wave that magic wand and make your business perfect in every way, what would it look like? Especially how would it be different from today? These are questions that you must answer over and over again as an owner. If you are wrong in any of these answers, your business can go sideways and your business plan could fail.

3. Who is your customer? Your ideal customer? Your perfect customer for what you sell?

You can't hit a target that you can't see. As the market changes, your ideal customer changes as well. You can tell that you have targeted the right customer if you have high sales, cash flow and profitability. If you do not have high sales,

etc., you need to revisit this question. Who is my ideal customer?

4. What does your customer see as value?

What does your customer want or receive from your service more than anything else? What must your customer be convinced of to buy from you rather than from someone else? The answer to this question is right in your business plan or marketing plan. It is the core of all your marketing, advertising and selling activities.

5. What do you do well?

What areas do you excel in? What is your competitive advantage? What makes your service superior to that of any competitor? Do your employees give superior service? What makes you stand out from your competition? What makes you different?

6. What are your goals?

Does your company have goals, and do you share them with your staff? What are your sales goals, and do you have them broken down into daily, weekly and monthly? What are your goals for profit? How much do you need to earn? What are your sales growth goals? The more specific and clear you are about your goals, the more likely it is that you will achieve them.

Most of all, does everyone in your business who is responsible for achieving those goals know exactly what those goals are? Please share them!

7. Do you expect excellence?

Set high but not unattainable standards and expect your employees to meet them. Be clear

on those high standards. Communicate with your employees. Provide positive or negative feedback, provide direction, prioritize and delegate effectively.

Based on your answer to the above questions, what strategic plan of action should you take immediately? What should you stop doing? What should you discontinue altogether so that you have more time to work on those things that can make the biggest difference in your business? Don't forget you will always have limited resources of time, money and people. You must therefore allocate these resources carefully in order to get the greatest return on your investment. So are you this business owner who has it all figured out? Sometimes, asking and answering these questions can be the push you need to trigger a business development plan.



Continued from page 1



retirement and have a low personal overhead and a very profitable business sitting on a very valuable piece of land, you might be able to sell it and live off the proceeds. If the buyer is not a

big corporation, you will probably have to hold the paper and be paid over time. In this case, you will need to have a life insurance policy on the buyer and stay focused on how the business is running, since your retirement is at stake. In this situation your biggest enemy is culture: will the buyer keep your culture or try to change it? I can almost guarantee that if they try to change it your employees won't stay around, because they are conditioned to your leadership style. Needless to say, that would make it difficult for you to continue collecting checks, and you might be back to work sooner than you would have thought!

Having your second in command buy the business or run it for you might be a much better bet, assuming they do not change the culture of your business. If they have been running it in your absence and your people like your second in command, you have a good chance that he or she can continue the business for years to come — especially if you have your ATI coach work with them and watch over the KPIs in your absence.

Next month, we will discuss how to select a second in command and build a backup organizational chart that will help you anticipate obstacles, so you can enjoy retirement.

C. L. Frederick

— Chubby



Is It Your Job to Push?

Continued from page 1

a period of one month, I have my service advisors log the year and mileage of each vehicle along with marking if the shocks or struts are original. You would be amazed at what an eye-opener it can be to see a long list of vehicles with high mileage that still have original shocks and struts. I usually have them fill this out in conjunction with the shock manufacturers' spring and fall promotions. If you would like some more information and statistics on shocks and struts and/or a copy of my suspension log, please email me at khickey@autotraining.net or ask your coach for a copy.

Remember that EVERY vehicle that comes into your shop has a person that comes with it. That person is someone's parent, child, cousin, etc. Don't be the cause of anyone spending Father's Day or any day in the hospital.

Is it your job to "push"? You better believe it is.

Your Available Training Programs for July and August 2014

July 2014

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday/Sunday
 1 Service Advisor 2 of 4	2	3	4	Independence Day	5/6
7 Advanced Sales	8 Advanced Sales	9 Shop Owner 1 of 9	10 Shop Owner 2 of 9	11 Shop Owner 3 of 9	12/13
14 Service Advisor 3 of 4	15 Service Advisor 4 of 4	16	17	18	19/20
Shop Owner 7 of 9	Shop Owner 8 of 9	Shop Owner 9 of 9	24 Shop Owner 5 of 9	25 Shop Owner 6 of 9	26/27
21 Staffing & Hiring 1 of 2	22 Staffing & Hiring 2 of 2	23 Shop Owner 4 of 9	California Service Advisor 1 of 4	California Service Advisor 2 of 4	
28	29	30	31		

August 2014

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday/Sunday
				1	2/3
4 Service Advisor 1 of 4	5 Service Advisor 2 of 4	6 Shop Owner 1 of 9	7 Shop Owner 2 of 9	8 Shop Owner 3 of 9	9/10
11	12	13 Shop Owner 7 of 9	14 Shop Owner 8 of 9	15 Shop Owner 9 of 9	16/17
18 Service Advisor 3 of 4	19 Service Advisor 4 of 4	20	21 California Service Advisor 3 of 4	22 California Service Advisor 4 of 4	23/24
25 2nd in Command 20 Group	26 2nd in Command 20 Group	27 Shop Owner 4 of 9	28 Shop Owner 5 of 9	29 Shop Owner 6 of 9	30/31
					

Copyright © 2014 by the Automotive Training Institute, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Printed in The United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be produced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the Automotive Training Institute.

ATI Employees Give Back

Continued from page 2

one of our employees observed that the library at Sarah's House was severely under-stocked. This resulted in the idea for doing an ATI book drive during March and April. This was very successful, and the first week in May volunteers delivered nine big boxes of contributed books to Sarah's House.

Like any good charity, they let us know, when we delivered the books, what their most pressing current need is. During the summer months, their food bank contributions drop to almost nothing,



yet people still need to eat. Counting on us to deliver like we came through for the holidays and with the book drive, they have asked for our help. Beginning June 1, we will begin conducting a food drive to help fill the Sarah's House pantry with canned and boxed foods to distribute to the needy people they help out. Our goal will be to deliver the food by the first week in July.

Future consideration is currently being given to raising cash contributions in order to purchase gift cards that the school children can use to buy their own back-to-school clothes, and also another holiday gift project. 

AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE