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Upcoming Courses:

Shop Owners

- April 12-13
- April 18-20
- April 25-27
- May 9-11
- May 16-18

Service Managers

- April 2-3
- April 16-17
- April 23-24
- May 7-8
- May 21-22



Advanced Shop Owners

- July 18-19

Advanced Service Managers

- June 27-29

Mastermind Group

- June 7-8

Complete Human Resource Staff And Services For ATI Clients

By Chris Frederick



We have recently partnered with SESCO Management Consultants, who will address our clients' needs with their Human Resource issues. We are very happy that we are able to provide you with this type of professional service! We have added more information and we hope that you will take advantage of what SESCO has to offer!

As a client of ATI, your organization will receive the following services:

- Free Telephone/E-mail Consultation – The SESCO staff is available to answer your human resource questions on a daily basis at no charge. Whether it be a federal or state employment compliance question such as wage and hour, FMLA, COBRA, INS, Equal Employment, etc., the SESCO staff is ready to assist you. In addition, the staff assists in research, handling difficult staff problems such as terminations, disciplinary actions, substance abuse or other day-to-day issues that may arise. The only charge is the cost of long distance and, of

course, e-mail is at no charge.

- Employee Handbook Review – The SESCO Staff will review and analyze your current employee handbook or policies to ensure compliance with federal and state employment regulations, as well as to ensure the employee handbook is effective because it is the cornerstone communications tool of any employer-employee relationship in the workplace.



- The SESCO Report – SESCO's monthly newsletter is available to ATI clients online through SESCO's website.
- Human Resource Compliance Manual–The SESCO staff has prepared a custom compliance manual for ATI clients and the industry. It is over 200 pages in length and contains sample policies, forms and SESCO staff recommendations. It is a complete Human Resource Management compliance guide and is an excellent reference manual for your HR and Management Team.



- Discounted Consulting Services–The SESCO staff is available to provide consulting services which include:

- Management Development and Training
- Online Management Training
- Personnel Opinion Surveys
- Compensation Administration
- EEOC Charges
- Personnel Forms
- Online Recruitment Tools
- Employee Handbooks
- Affirmative Action Programs
- Criteria-Based Job Descriptions
- Performance Management Systems
- Employee Benefit Statements
- Screening and Hiring Systems
- Employee Retention Systems
- Team Development
- Organizational Change/Development
- Strategic Planning
- Labor Relations



Knowing Your Enemy, Your Business and The Concept Of Total War

By Brian Canning



Promising not to quote Sun Tzu or Clausewitz or (in particular deference to my Southern clients) William Tecumseh

Sherman, I would suggest to all of you that in the world of automotive repair, transmission repair, tire service and now maintenance, we are engaged in a desperate war and though in many ways we are better armed, it is a war that we are losing. Whole segments of our businesses are assailed by a long term enemy who has very deep pockets and in recent years, an increasingly aggressive strategy that is impacting our ability to generate sales & profits and this enemy is hitting us from coast to coast. The enemy I am speaking of is the new car dealer. Too many of the casualties in this war are small independent repair shops and tire stores. Too many of the casualties are shops just like yours.

If you are at all aware of what is going on in your market, you know that new car dealers are working desperately to attract (steal) your customers and in too many cases they are enjoying great success. A huge vehicle in all of this has been tire sales and other services they are now performing. Armed with prices on the tire side that are often much lower than what we are able to provide, the dealers are overcoming old perceptions of inconvenience by offering additional "express" services that allow them to compete with us very favorably and in too many cases we are losing market share and customers to this effort. If you were ever unsure about it, I

hope that going forward you will see all that the dealer is doing and know and recognize him as your enemy.

With the sale of a new car, the dealer very typically enjoys an advantage over the independent and franchise shop for up to two years but historically, with perceptions of price and convenience, we of the automotive aftermarket have enjoyed great success in converting the vast majority of these dealer customers



to our side of the fence and for many years we were able to retain these customers at least until they purchased a new car. It didn't happen by accident, we worked very hard to develop relationships and service these customers with quality and responsiveness to their needs. The dealerships assisted these efforts by doing little to address this mass exodus and overcome all the good reasons we have given our customers to forget about the dealer and visit us instead. Folks, if you haven't noticed it, the rules have changed and the dealers are working very hard to hold on to these customers and in too many cases we have allowed them to walk away with our customers unimpeded.

We must take on the factory issues directly and highlight our ability to handle all routine factory maintenance

services. Even in the midst of the aggressive efforts by the dealers to attract and steal our customers, we are nearly always able to provide a great deal more convenience to our customers and this is a strength you need to play to. Do not exaggerate or make promises beyond our ability to deliver but do everything humanly possible to turn your bays quickly and efficiently and complete repairs when promised. Dealers suffer significant customer

impact due to convenience & repairs not being completed when promised. In these key areas it is important that we strive for something better and exceed our customer's expectations. Price, warranty and our ability to be flexible in meeting our customer's needs

are additional areas where we enjoy huge advantages over the dealer, though only if we highlight them and make sure our customers are seeing the value we build into our repairs and services.

There is little doubt that we are far better than the dealer at developing and nurturing the relationships we have with our customers but they have a perceived advantage as being "factory" approved and at least on the surface, a perceived advantage in the quality of our techs. We could accurately argue this latter but in this fight for customers we need to realize that perception is often reality and in every possible way we need to counter this by presenting our highly trained and experienced staff and live and breathe the quality that they represent. Training certificates, certifications and any award

that our techs might have received over the years must be prominently displayed and referred to and highlighted. The one thing we cannot afford to do is ignore the dealer and the impact they are having on our market and on our customers. It is far too late when they have migrated to the dealer with our inattention and lack of concern.

If you would take your customers for granted I can assure you that there are plenty of shops out there that would be happy to unburden you. If you are tired of dealing with all of their complaining and impossible expectations, I wouldn't worry, I'm sure they will find their way to your competition and in due time you will not have any customers to worry about, they will all be happily gone. And you needn't worry about what this does to our industry or perceptions of us; you likely never worried about that anyway. If, on the other hand, you love your customers and care about your business, I would take this as a call to arms and make sure that they see and feel your care and concern.

Shots have been fired, casualties have been taken, and the enemy is at the gates. I would look to annihilate and destroy them before they destroy me. Ulysses S. Grant was able to defeat a very able adversary, not by finesse but by dogged, unrelenting, determined, stubborn, & unwavering pressure. He would not go away. It is up to you but he, who would hesitate here, might well be lost.



ATTENTION SHOP OWNERS AND MANAGERS:
If you have something you would like to share,
e-mail your coach or ATI at
office@autotraining.net.

Second In A Series: Organizational Expectations To Change

By George Zeeks

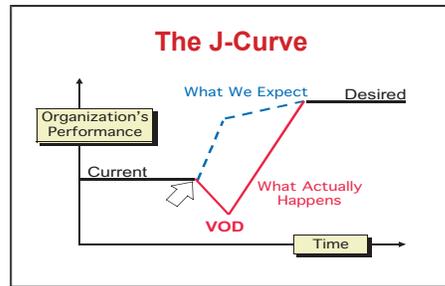


Every organization goes through many changes throughout its lifespan. One researcher, Karl Albrecht, defined the effect of unrealistic expectations on an organization. He defined it as the “J-curve”; fantasy confronts reality.”

Every organization or group within the organization must go through changes throughout its lifespan. It falls upon the leadership within the organization to make sure that any effort to change is performed within realistic expectations and the appropriate supporting infrastructure. When these items are not present, the “J-curve” inevitably becomes apparent.

Karl Albrecht’s “J-curve” shows what happens when the organization is not adequately prepared to make the changes. Management may expect the level to rise immediately from the current to the desired. However, problems within the organization, due to communication, information sharing, expectations, and the psychological contract, may cause performance to drop. As the drop continues, the “bottlenecks” will begin to appear, corrections can be made, and this is typically at the point called the “valley of despair”. This goes back to the measurement and accountability of all employees to complete the task assigned to them. The problem arises in different organizations when the employees may not feel empowered to confront management with the problems that they are facing. This causes the employee to become dysfunctional & may end up resulting in the loss of the employee.

The “J-curve” applies to an organization, a section or group within the organization, and can even apply to individual employees. A newly promoted employee may not fully understand his functions or how to perform them and they will experience the same type of frustration. The more stable



and proactive the organization, the less likely the “J-curve” will occur and the valley of despair, becomes much less pronounced.

Building Blocks of an Organization

As defined by Booz Allen Hamilton Corp.

1. Decision rights - At some level, every employee in the organization has to make decisions on a daily basis. It is important that they understand their level of decision-making. Each employee must be empowered to make decisions at the highest level that they are capable of. This helps to prevent “bottlenecks” at the management/owner level that can become bombarded with decisions that should have been delegated to a lower level. If the correct level of empowerment is in place, management will have more time to deal with their more primary functions, ensuring an increased likelihood of achieving the desired goals.
2. Information - How information

is passed through a system, how performance is measured, how activities are coordinated, all effect the ability of the employees to perform their tasks. If information does not flow properly through a system, “bottlenecking” may occur where one or more employees/groups are unable to continue their tasks to achieve the organization’s goals. Once again, the basis of this building block is the empowerment and understanding of all employees of their functions & limitations. Systems must be put in place to ensure information flows in a logical fashion.

3. Structure - The overall organization model must be designed with the employee’s capabilities in mind. Any organization that does not have the proper employees in the appropriate positions will run into “bottlenecks” which will limit all of the above basic blocks within the organization. One of the most difficult problems is to define the appropriate structure. Once again, the longer the employees have worked within a specific framework, the less likely they are to accept major changes in the structure of the organization. Any major growth will inherently require a change in structure. The restructuring of positions becomes a necessity.

4. Motivation - Individuals are motivated on various levels. It is important to make sure that the motivation supplied by management is appropriate to the person they are dealing with. Many people feel that money is a prime motivator. However, research has found money to be much lower on the motivational

list than acknowledgement, recognition, or security. The key factor in motivating employees is communication with the employee, understanding the needs and desires of the employee, and how those needs & desires fit into the organization’s goals.

Throughout these 4 building blocks of the organization, the consistent key to all of them is matching employee capability to the job, ensuring communication throughout the organization, defining the working relationships between the employees and the most important element of all is the leadership at the top. Group cohesion and guiding all of the members of the organization to a common goal is one definition of appropriate leadership.

In one psychological study, research shows that employees who feel increased job satisfaction are more prone to identify and stay with the organization if they...

1. Feel accepted and acknowledged by the organization.
2. Perceived a similarity of goals & values among the group.
3. When asked about the group experience, they made specific references to others in the group to help define the group’s goals & achievements. The group’s acceptance of each other and themselves is interdependent.

Leadership must provide and oversee all of the four building blocks of the organization in order to ensure the health of the entity. Possible diagnostic tools and traits have been included to help identify the following personalities, but they are by no means limited to only these items. The Wonderlic test and the behavioral personality test are just two of the possible tools that are available.



Sam's Corner: PMS A Little Louder... By Brian Canning

I have often heard that perception is reality and in my role as "Coach", I have often been heard to say this. In the critical arena of customer service I often get to hear why we are failing to thank our customers or failing to get their cars done when promised or that in some other way we are failing to live up to our customers expectations. When we fall short, the 'why' doesn't matter, perception is that we don't care or that we are unprofessional or that we

are a rip off. Perception in our customer's mind is reality.

Many years ago, as a far less than proficient single parent, I overheard my oldest daughter in the next room, living out a common childhood fantasy, pretending to be a cheerleader and going through several cheers and by the sound of it, several cheering routines. At a certain point I became very upset and concerned at one of her cheers and came very close to charging into the room where she was

and letting her know that I didn't like her cheer one bit and that if she thought it was funny she might have to spend a couple of days grounded. I would note here that my daughter was a great kid and I was completely shocked by what I was hearing. In perfect rhythm (well almost perfect anyway) the pride of my life, my beautiful daughter was screaming "PMS a little louder! PMS a little prouder! Over and over again. I was offended. I was upset and not going to

put up with that kind of behavior. Where the heck did my 10 year old daughter learn about PMS? I was pretty darn sure that my ex-wife had something to do with it and I wasn't at all happy about that.

Only at the last second did I realize that my daughter attended Parkland Middle School.

There is no doubt that perception is reality but you know what? Sometimes it's not. Sometimes it ain't even close.

Seven At the Top, *Congratulations to All!*



This Month's Winners are:

Dennis Guzik

A1 Radiator
2921 Avenue of the Americas
Englewood, FL 34224

Nathan Merrill

Good Works Auto Repair
2348 E. Broadway Road
Tempe, AZ 85282

Jennifer Fedus

Active Green & Ross #999
999 Upper Wentworth Street
Hamilton, ON L9A4X5

Brandon Hollenbaugh

Charles Service Center
220 E Pulaski Highway
Elkton, MD 21921

Alex Siegel

Alex's Autohaus
7470 South State Street
Midvale, UT 84047

Chris Couch

Professional Automotive, Inc.
7226 East 87 Street #a
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Kris Cesena

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330 S Claremont Street
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