

# ShopTalk

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**ATI**  
Automotive  
Training Institute

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

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## Revenge Is Sweet Satisfaction

I want to share a story about “Bob,” a shop owner in Alumni and in a 20-Group. When he opened his shop five years ago, a competitor, let’s call him “Percy,” welcomed him to the auto repair business by sending him a bouquet of flowers. The card read, “Welcome to the auto repair business. Enjoy it while you can.”

You have to admire a good competitive jab. But what the competitor did next wasn’t good. Percy went to his parts suppliers and told them he’d stop buying from them if they sold parts to Bob. Percy tried to get Bob blackballed by the parts suppliers in town.

The flowers were one thing, but the flowers along with Percy’s underhanded attempts to lock Bob out of the business really ignited a fire in Bob. Now every time Bob was tired or struggling, all he had to think about was Percy’s card and he had all the motivation he needed to keep working.

When Bob went to his first ATI boot camp, Percy was there. Percy was all down on the program and even made rude comments during the training. Of course, Percy didn’t join the Re-Engineering program, but Bob did. Percy found out Bob had joined when they were together at a chamber meeting in town. Of course, he told Bob he was wasting his money.

Bob drove home that night in turmoil. There was no way Percy was going to be right. Bob made a plan of action with his coach and implemented it. He had to fire a tech, hire two new ones, implement an inspection program, change his pricing and learn a lot more about numbers than he ever thought possible.

About a year into the Re-Engineering program, Bob heard an ad about a going out of business sale for Percy’s shop. After a few conversations with the parts suppliers (who were happy to tell Bob that Percy was behind on paying their invoices), Bob learned Percy was a victim of the economy. He had a great downtown location with a legacy customer

base that had finally gotten too old to come into his shop. After 37 years, Percy went out of business.

For weeks, Bob tried to think of something fun to send to Percy. Flowers with a mean card, a bouquet of balloons so large that he could drift away like the old man in the movie *Up* and finally, the best idea, a bag of cow manure. That’s right, a bag of manure was the only fitting tribute for Percy.

But in the end, Bob thought better of it. He didn’t stick it to Percy, even though it would have given him great satisfaction to do it.

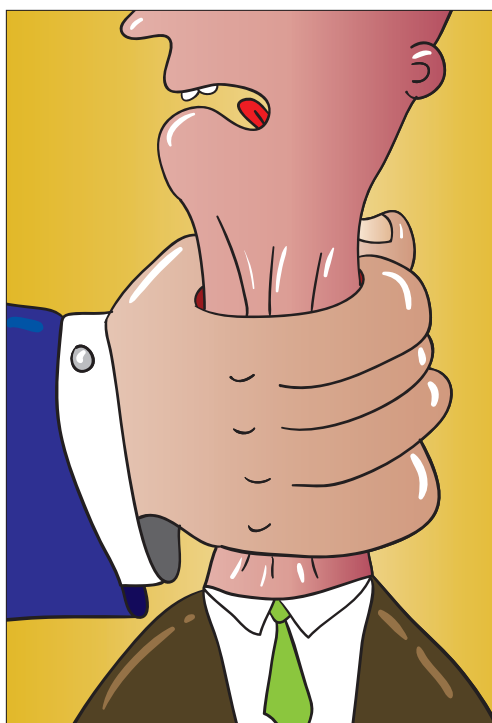
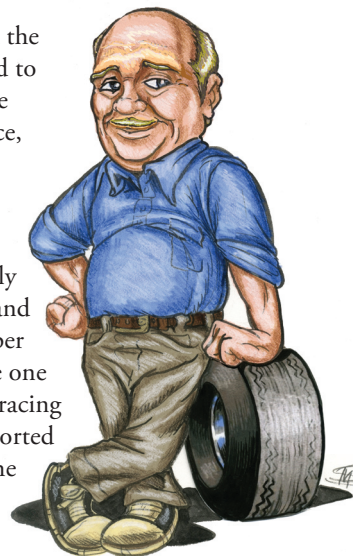
A few months later, Bob was behind the counter at his shop working on paperwork, and who walked in but Percy. It was the first time Percy had ever walked into Bob’s store. Percy explained that he had a new job as the director of a service fleet for a large plumbing company. He had a vehicle that needed some engine work and wanted to know if Bob would

do it. Bob took the keys and offered to give Percy a ride back to his office, personally.

It just so happened that Bob had recently purchased a brand new Dodge Viper convertible, the one with the white racing stripes. Bob escorted Percy around the building, and Percy stopped in his tracks when he saw that car. As luck would have it, it was a sunny day, and Bob had left the top down, showing off the car to perfection. Percy was awestruck. He wanted to see under the hood, look under the car and even in the little trunk (which was crammed with luggage because, as Bob was pleased to tell Percy, he and his wife were on their way to spend a few days enjoying their car in the mountains).

That ride with Percy made Bob’s entire vacation. All the work, all the hours, all the frustration of learning a new way to run a business was worth it. He’d done it for himself and his family, but he sure did enjoy proving Percy wrong.

You can believe this story or not. I had to hide the identities to protect “Percy” from having this rubbed in his face, and I don’t want to risk losing “Bob” as a customer. But I think it’s an important story for shop owners to think about. Who in your market is getting you down? It could be another shop owner, or it could be Sears or Walmart. Rather than using it as a reason why your shop won’t work, use it as a reason why you will *make* it work. Get with your coach, get your plan and get your Percy! **ATI**



# ATI Brings Calm to the Chaos for Folsom Car Care

Elton and Claire Carlomagno took an unusual path into the auto repair business. After the couple had spent 29 years in banking, their bank merged, offering them the “opportunity” to move to Los Angeles. It was an opportunity they didn’t want, so they began looking for something different in their hometown of Folsom, California. That was 11 years ago.

“We had a friend in the auto repair business, and we decided to give it a shot,” Elton says. “Auto repair is something people need, and it appeared to us it would be easy to be far superior to the norm within the industry in terms of service and the way you take care of customers.”

Elton and Claire’s commitment to excellence translated into a high car count – and chaos. Elton recalls, “We were doing well, but it was chaotic. We were seeing a lot of cars, but we weren’t maximizing our repair orders.”

Claire interjects, “And the structure was different, too, because it was Elton doing everything. We were spread too thin.”

The couple began looking for answers to their problem and discovered an ATI boot camp in Sacramento. The Carlomagnos liked what they heard about ATI’s coaching program, but they didn’t join right away. Because they were bankers, the issue for them came down to money.

“Someone from ATI came to our shop, showed us the papers and asked us to sign,” Elton recalls. “Even though we liked what we

saw, we felt pressure about how we could come up with \$40,000.00 for the training.”

When Elton and Claire finally decided to join the ATI program, again it came down to money. Elton explains:

“We had lunch with a gentleman who works for ALLDATA and while we were waiting for our meal, I told him we had gone over \$1.25 million in the last year. He said he didn’t care about that. The real question was ‘What did you make?’ That really set us back on our heels!”

The couple set out to make their business more efficient. They began calling other people in the industry to see what they were doing. “We’d call them up, and they were doing a fifth of the volume we were doing,” Elton recalls. “We began to feel like we were on an island by ourselves with no one to help us, so we decided to call Ken Brookings at ATI. He promised us the best coach on staff ...”

“... and the rest is history,” Claire smiles.

Since their path into the industry was a bit unusual, it isn’t surprising that Elton and Claire’s approach to improving their business with ATI was a bit out of the ordinary as well.

When the Carlomagnos came into the ATI program, they had all the cars they could ever want, but they weren’t maximizing their opportunities. With the help of their coach, they intentionally lowered their car count to give them the time to process and maximize

the opportunity with every customer coming through the door.

“We actually decreased our car count so we could increase individual repair order production,” Elton explains. “All that was a result of courtesy checks and reviewing those numbers weekly with our coach. It was almost embarrassing to have to say to yourself ‘Why wasn’t I doing this before?’”

As Elton and Claire learned more about increasing the value of each repair order, their confidence grew. “As a non-technical owner, the ATI program gave me more confidence as an owner to instruct service writers and technicians on what we were doing,” Elton says.

During their time in the program, Elton and Claire have been able to reduce their advertising costs by implementing email marketing, sending thank-you notes to customers and encouraging customer referrals. “We keep it very simple, and it’s working,” Elton says.

A less simple part of the transition into becoming an efficient repair shop was the need to change staff members. “We tried to massage our employees through this program, but sometimes you can’t push a car uphill with a rope,” Elton shrugs. “We finally had to take some drastic means, and now we’re hiring better-qualified people who have better attitudes.”

Elton says it’s the ATI portals that make it possible to manage the Folsom Car Care’s

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## Sam’s Corner

### People don’t leave their jobs, they leave their LEADER not YOU!

If anyone in your life has suggested you are a High Maintenance Leader it could cost you the most important assets your business has going for it! Author John Maxwell says these leaders can exhibit any one of the following weaknesses:

1. **Have wide mood swings**
2. **Overload and under-empower**
3. **Think of themselves first**
4. **Fail to take responsibility**
5. **Are negative**
6. **Do not practice win-win**
7. **Are political**
8. **Are poor communicators**
9. **Lack integrity**

Under stress it is highly possible to have one or more of these weaknesses, after all we are

human! However, no one will forgive you if you don’t try to improve your behavior. I often thought I must be a great leader, heck, I have been in business for forty years! The truth is most of my life I just worked real hard to make up for all my mistakes. You have an excellent opportunity to fix your weaknesses before you lose any more valuable and irreplaceable assets, namely your people.

If you have not taken the time to attend our new three-day Leadership Program taught by George Zeeks, I strongly recommend you invest some time in yourself. We have had hundreds of shop owners through this course and they have been shocked at how much fun this course has been. The best part is it has changed their behavior. And with your coach helping you improve yourself, you have a recipe for serious

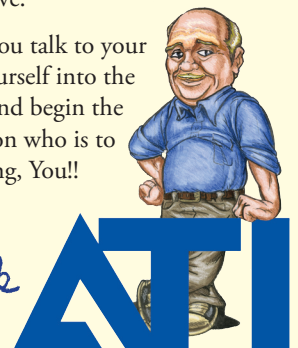
leadership improvement. The reason leaders blame others is that there is only one other choice! You can’t have an effective second in command until you fix yourself because they will end up behaving like you. Once you feel you are the best leader you can be you are ready to work on your business, not in it, enjoying the free time you deserve.

So, the next time you talk to your coach, schedule yourself into the leadership course and begin the growth of the person who is to blame for everything, You!!

Sincerely,

*L.L. Fredrick*

Chubb



# ATI First Day of Summer

By Randy Somers



While the first day of summer doesn't officially happen until June 21, already we are experiencing the smell of fresh-cut grass, and graduations, swimming pools and vacations. Cookouts, picnics and the smell of the grill. The bountiful days of summer are here. The world of automotive typically experiences a boom in the four or so months of summer that can rival the other eight months of the year. There is air conditioning work, overheating vehicles, clients preparing for trips by catching up on their needed maintenance. My mom used to have a saying "make hay while the sun is shining." She said this in spite of the fact that we never made hay, not once in my entire life.

One time when I was younger I asked my mom when we were going to start making this hay she kept talking about. My mom, with the patience that only moms can have, tried to explain to me what an idiom was. I thought an idiom was something that my sister called me and got grounded for. Mom explained that the saying was an idiom and that it meant that you should take advantage of the opportunities available while you can: "do not put off till tomorrow what you can do today." Now being curious as a child I sat and pondered what this meant and I believe I experienced my first ah-ha moment. In the wisdom of my youth I finally figured out what she was trying to say. What I took away from that conversation was that I should be playing Nintendo every chance I had because if I didn't then one of my sisters could start playing it if I went out to cut the grass. Of course I never shared this ah-ha moment with my mom while I sat and played video games. Well, not until my father got home and he noticed that I hadn't cut the grass like he asked. When I tried to share my ah-ha moment with my parents, they somehow didn't think it was as clever an idea as I did. My mom then explained to me again what the "make hay" statement was all about. She said that sometimes you need to do what you don't want to do, when you don't want to do it. That is how you get things done in life. We all have things we want to do but we also all have things that we need to do. Balancing the wants vs. the needs is a key to mastering life.

Well needless to say I never made the Nintendo/grass mistake again, but I did learn

a valuable lesson that I want to pass along to you. This is your hay-making season. As with all good things it is hard to remember the rainy days when you are playing in the sun. Unfortunately September is our rainy day and it is on its way. As much as we might wish, hope and pray that the good times last forever, we cannot stop time from marching forward toward our "rainy day." Who wouldn't want a full schedule EVERY day? Who wouldn't want to take out the peaks and valleys of car count? Who wouldn't like to know what your work week looks like before it starts instead of managing your week on the fly? Who wouldn't like to manage car count instead of car count managing them? Who is going to train our customers to do this? Will we hope the customers train themselves or will we hope someone trains them for us?

I vote to start retraining our customers now and to start preparing for the dreaded "back to school." What are you doing today to prepare for three months from now? There are a ton of different options. You can and should start with the basics. Start asking today for the next appointment. The average driver in the United States drives between twelve and fifteen thousand miles a year. That is an oil change three to five times a year depending on your recommendation of a service either every 3,000 or every 5,000 miles. When your customer comes in to your facility to pick up their car, do you have a process? Is there a procedure for handling this vital relationship-building process? Asking for the next appointment is a simple process, one that gets better with practice.

When a customer comes in to pick up their car, we should let them know that they are a good customer. Taking care of good customers is what makes you love your job. Tell them that keeping that fact in mind you went ahead and penciled them in for their next service. If they say they do not know what their schedule is in three months or so tell them not to worry. You just wanted to hold them a spot because you know how difficult it can be to get an appointment at times. Let them know you will call them one week before their appointment to make sure it is convenient for them. If it isn't you will just reschedule them. Also let them know that you have a referral rewards program and that you like to do follow-up with all your customers after the service. Ask

how they prefer to be contacted. Now comes a very important fact. You cannot pause after the statement "if it isn't convenient then I will just reschedule it." You need to move right into the rest of your check-out procedure. Referrals, e-mail addresses, visit us on Facebook, etc. If you pause then the customer will take that as a sign that you are asking about the next appointment instead of informing them of their next appointment.

You might even want to use a mystery envelope. A mystery envelope is an envelope that is handed to the customer with the instruction that it must be brought back when they come in for their next service and opened at that time. The envelope can contain all kinds of gifts and/or offers. A free rotation, a \$5.00 off coupon, a pair of movie tickets or a free loaner car. Use your imagination. Be creative. Ask your coach for help if you get stumped or just want to bounce ideas off someone. This will give the customer something to look forward to and may help your counter person with the appointment process by making it more fun. Fun is a word not always associated with our business but it can and should be.

After all, we have educated customers on how to conduct business in our shops. We can also reeducate them on what is the best way to take care of their vehicles. Good for the customer, good for the car and good for the company. I believe that trying and not succeeding is not a failure. It is a lesson learned. Being afraid to try is the true failure. I think we should all learn more lessons. The next appointment process is a first step to learning more lessons. **ATI**





# Your Available Training Programs for July and August

## 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 Service Advisor 1 of 2	22 Shop Owner 9 of 9 San Jose, CA Service Advisor 2 of 2	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

## August 2011

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

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

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employees well: "The portals keep everybody on the same page with the processes. It allows us to manage the business from afar because we all know where we're headed and what we have to do."

With the help of ATI, Elton and Claire are now realizing their dream of being absentee managers. Elton describes how life was before ATI:

"I would sign things and you'd have contracts come back and they would go, 'Well, you signed this.' And I'd say, 'I don't even remember.' We did the marketing. I'd sit at the desk at 6:00 at night

after everybody left, and that was my 'downtime.' I mean I was just hyperventilating. I don't know how you do all these numbers and processes and manage it and still try to turn a wrench or write service. I don't know how people do it. So it has to be what ATI preaches. You have to get away from it to get a better perspective."

How's this for perspective? For the last two summers, Elton and Claire have spent 40 percent of their time outside the shop! Claire explains how they do it:

"With the help of our coach, we know the type of employees we need. We're not afraid to

reorganize, and we're going forward. We're really happy with ATI."

And who wouldn't be? Elton and Claire spend Thursday to Monday during the summer at their place in Lake Tahoe, leaving their shop in the capable hands of employees who understand and implement the ATI matrixes to keep things running smoothly.

Elton says, "We come and go as we please. It's like ATI says: 'Build your dreams and get out of the business.'" **ATI**

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**A U T O M O T I V E T R A I N I N G I N S T I T U T E**