

# ShopTalk



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## Getting It All Done ... ... and Keeping It Interesting

I see it over and over again. A shop owner goes from struggling to success, but then he can't stand his business because everything is running so well that he becomes bored with it. It may be impossible to imagine, but I think dealing with boredom is a common challenge among successful shop owners.

I used to believe it was an exception, one shop owner here or there. But now I see it too often for it to be an exception.

For years these shop owners experienced a daily whirlwind in their shops. It was as if they were platoon leaders with their soldiers taking on their enemies. The shop owners talked to customers, got cars moving and, when necessary, turned wrenches. Now, after working with ATI and implementing changes in their shops, the "whirlwind" is gone. Each shop owner has a team in place to manage his shop, and it runs whether he is there or not.

For some owners, this is a huge blow. For years their presence in their shops was an absolute necessity. If they weren't there, nothing would happen. Now they aren't needed; their shops will run without them. And what happens? Many of these shop owners get bored.

Sometimes they tell us, "I just don't enjoy running my shop anymore. I want to find something else to do." Other times they'll demonstrate they are bored by jumping into some other business or by getting angry and firing a bunch of employees to put themselves back into the now-missed whirlwind.

I can draw a parallel with auto racing. You may do some racing yourself. On a 200-lap race in 96 degree heat on lap 127, what do you think the driver is thinking about? Get me out of this car! As he goes around the same corners, following the same cars trying to find a couple of tenths of a second on a corner or two around the track, don't you think there are times when the driver gets bored? Absolutely, some do.

So, if race car drivers get bored, what hope do the rest of us have?

As business owners we are often tempted to try a lot of new things. It's easy to tempt us into buying real estate, becoming "experts" on investing in the stock market or collecting classic cars. For you, it's important to keep up the excitement so you always have something to look forward to. It's crucial to do something to prevent the boredom that can lead to self-sabotage.

Here are a few strategies to fight business-owner boredom:

Get really involved in the marketing side of your business. Learning the psychology of people and studying the neighborhoods around your shop will be interesting and profitable. Marketing is an aspect of your business that you can always improve, and because customers are always changing, it stays interesting. So, in between watching your numbers and encouraging your team, create a marketing calendar and invest your time into executing it.

For years you've lived in the whirlwind, and you probably have a lot of family members who

could benefit from your attention. I understand it may be uncomfortable to reach out to them at first, but try. Go fishing, talk cars and attend a race together. Hang out with the people you haven't been able to hang out with for the last few years.

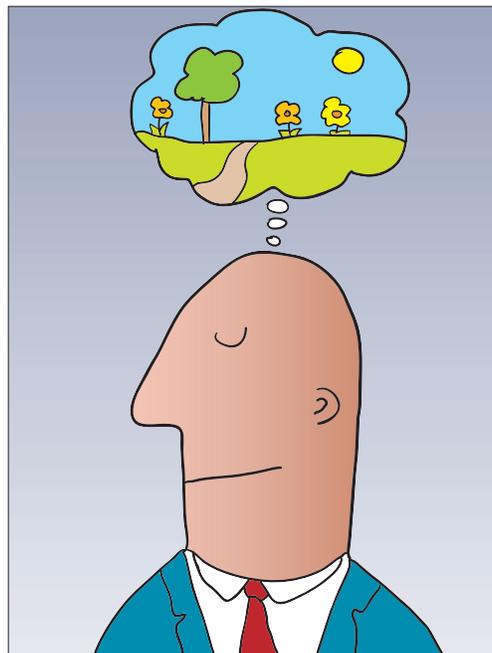
Next, build relationships with new friends in your community. Whether you are into classic cars, motorcycles, fishing, hunting or racing, participate in clubs and meet people. Build some relationships with new friends. These relationships will give you something else to look forward to and will maintain your excitement about life.

If you haven't experienced this shop-owner boredom yourself, I can imagine how farfetched it must sound. Who gets bored making money? It's especially easy to wonder this when you aren't yet making the money you want from your shop. But if you keep working with your coach and building your business infrastructure, chances are you'll soon experience this boredom yourself.

As shop owners working in the whirlwind for many years, it's easy to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. To believe that no one understands us because they can't possibly know what we've been going through each day. And now that the whirlwind is getting tamed, it's easy to panic and wonder what we are going to do with the rest of our lives. Here's some key advice:

Think of your shop as your personal ATM machine. Its job is to pour money into your checking account. It's important to keep the machine tuned and to watch over the numbers, but in the end, it's just a machine.

Once it's working, leave your machine alone and go live the rest of your life. There's no need to retire as long as you have the freedom to do what you enjoy and you have a business that's depositing money into your bank account. **ATI**



# ATI Client Profile

## David Steward on Opportunity and Commitment

Honda and David Steward go back a long way. His dad bought the first Honda that came into town in the early 70s, and his older brother started a repair shop where Dave worked after school. He took what he learned from the family business and went to work for an Acura franchise as shop foreman and lead tech. After nine years in corporate America, Dave struck out on his own and opened Honda Haven of Bartlett in Memphis, Tenn.

"I already had a shop doing side work," he says. "Monday through Friday, 8 to 5, I was a dealer. After hours I was at my 'home away from home,' working at the shop. I was making more money at home than I was at the dealership, so it was a logical progression."

Dave sought out some business advice from Management Success and followed its principles for about a year.

"I got burned out on a lot of things at Management Success," he says. "They had some good ideas, but not all of it was for me."

A big opportunity came for Dave in 2006, when the railroad purchased his land. The settlement allowed him to build a new facility and recreate his business.

"I knew when we built the new building, I wanted it to be different," Dave says. "I wanted a cleaner, nicer environment. I finally had the opportunity to do things the way I thought they ought to be done."

Another big opportunity arose for Dave six months later when ATI came calling.

"We went to the ATI Boot Camp," Dave says, "and I just sat back and said, 'Yes, yes, yes. This is the other half of the puzzle.' The first 15 years I was in business, I fit the classic example of somebody who had gotten frustrated working for someone

else and had set out to prove them wrong. I learned the hard way they had their rules for a reason!"

Dave began working with ATI in 2006, and he hasn't looked back.

"My service manager was on board with it, too," Dave recalls. "So he and I went to training over the next year, tweaking and tuning, plugging all the leaks."

Then Dave went to Baltimore: "I knew it was the place for me! I'm in it for the long haul because I realize you have to have a coach, somebody who's watching over your shoulder."

Dave quickly realized the value of having a coach as his business went through transition after transition.

"No one on my staff has been with me longer than a year," he says. "So we've had quite a bit of transition, but we're back and doing all the right things." >>

### Sam's Corner

## SuperConference 2012 – Bigger and Better



Hello, ATI clients and associates, it's Chubby. I am really excited about our annual client-appreciation event in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on March 14–17. I know it's going to be bigger because already a record number of ATI clients are registered. How do I know it's better? Every year attendees go home and give us feedback on the SuperConference survey. Then we make every attempt to change what you don't like by listening to your suggestions. Last year we almost had it perfect, but this year it will even be better!

The half-day work/play agenda has been a huge success with the significant others who are not involved in the business, and many clients have even brought their entire family. The Dinner Celebration Saturday night will be spectacular,

and the many awards will be fun to experience. Our eleven 20 Groups and our MasterMind group will be sharing what they did in 2011 to make themselves even more successful. This is your chance to meet the best of the best and carve out relationships that will last a lifetime.

Richard and Karen have been searching all year for the best speakers to help you learn new skills never before taught at ATI. We will share with you how to stay profitable forever. The most costly mistakes shop owners make with their employees. How to examine customers from a recency, frequency and monetary value. The long-term view of what's down the road for you so you can put your money to work for you rather than you working for it. Oh, and then we will all see what

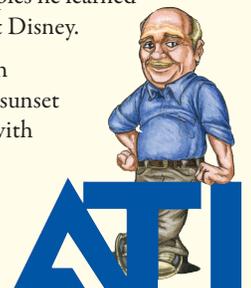
makes for the best possible shop website. Learn how focusing on the most profit-rich services and implementing them effectively will drive your net to all-time highs. And there is more...

Meet Scott Burrows and hear his personal stories of perseverance and triumph after two life-changing experiences, which will inspire you and touch you! Then listen to Commander Waddle of the USS *Greeneville*, a fast attack submarine stationed in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Remember the tragic accident when the submarine performed an emergency surface maneuver and collided with a Japanese fishing training vessel, sinking the Japanese ship in three minutes and killing nine aboard? Commander Waddle will explain how failure is not final and how to thrive in difficult times.

Then, it wouldn't be Florida if we didn't learn lessons from the Mouse! There are a lot of less expensive places you can visit, but none of them provide you with the same experience as Walt Disney World. Dennis Snow will show you how to implement the principles he learned in his 20 years with Walt Disney.

So come hang out with your coach, join us for a sunset dinner cruise, have fun with your significant others and let's catch up on your ATI experience.

See you soon.



# Learn to Do What Your Doctor Does

By Geoff Berman



Have you ever had a new customer come in for service, and after you looked over her vehicle and told her what it needs, she replied, “That’s it, I’m going to get rid of the car.” You could tell

by the way she reacted that she probably didn’t mean it, and you were pretty sure you were never going to see that customer again. Have you ever wondered why this happens, and if there is a way to stop it?

Not only is there a way to make it better, but it really isn’t that hard. The underlying goal in any interaction with customers should be: make them feel better than the way we found them. Here is one way to get on the path toward that goal.

I think it is a fair assumption that we all do a reasonably good job of looking over a car, finding out what it needs and informing the customer. The disconnect occurs because we don’t do as good a job when identifying the customer’s needs – his buying personality. We assume that the car’s needs and the customer’s needs are the same. They are not! That is why a customer says he is getting rid of the car. We did not find out right at first how the customer feels about the car and how long he plans on keeping it. You ask him to spend \$800 and he takes the path of least resistance and tells you he is getting rid of the car. He runs from your shop as fast as

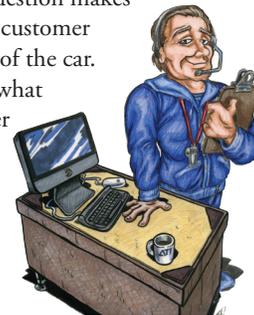
he can. He feels like he is being sold. We must identify the customer’s needs at the drop-off. Get the horse back in front of the cart so to speak.

While you are checking the customer in next time, at an appropriate moment, ask a few questions that help you identify the customer’s needs and at the same time make her feel good and build rapport. This will set the stage for success. You ask, “I see that your vehicle is six years old. How long have you owned it?” This question should get her talking. Remember your goals are twofold: to find out how long she is going to keep the car and to build rapport. With most people this should be enough. With some we may need to ask a follow-up question if we need more information. “It sounds like this vehicle has been good to you and you really like it. So, how long do you plan on keeping it?” You will discover vital information to help you sell to the customer’s needs while making your customer feel good about her decision.

Remember the first time you saw your doctor? She gave you a stack of forms to fill out and asked you every question under the sun. She asked about your family history and your military background, if you have traveled to foreign countries, what your eating habits are, how often you exercise and if you smoke. The list goes on and on. Why does your doctor do this? She needs to know this vital information in order to better serve your needs. That is how a doctor helps you see why high blood pressure

is a big issue for you. She does a “courtesy check;” she consults with you and collects information regarding your specific needs while screening your health status through tests. If we do the same in our courtesy checks, we will make the customer feel good about sharing, show them how unique we are and how much we care about them.

After the initial consult, we look over the car and call the customer. We have \$800 of work to sell – the difference between the original request and the items found during the courtesy check. First and foremost, we must remind the customer of his needs and at the same time let him know we are paying attention to those needs, essentially showing we care. We say, “When you dropped off your vehicle earlier today you told me this is a car you plan on keeping for at least another three or four years. Is that correct?” This is very important because it creates the bridge you need to show that the maintenance the vehicle needs fits with his needs. This essential question makes it very difficult for the customer to say he is getting rid of the car. In the end, no matter what happens, your customer will know you care and will “leave feeling better than the way you found him!”



>> Honda Haven has gotten through all the changes, and now Dave says he doesn’t need to talk with his coach as often.

“We’re almost in cruise control mode,” he says. “My daily business stuff is up and running, and I don’t have to be here every single day, but I still am.”

One of the reasons Dave still comes to the shop every day is to manage another business venture. At the 2008 SuperConference, AAA approached Dave and asked him to be a AAA-approved repair facility. That led to Honda Haven becoming a towing company for AAA. Dave says it was like being “eaten alive,” but he means that in a good way.

“It has been fantastic!” he exclaims. “We have a constant source of new customers, and we have a continual cash flow that is just phenomenal. We have taken over almost the entire county for AAA towing. They say a new customer’s worth \$30,000 to \$40,000 in lifetime sales. So, hey, every week that’s \$90,000 over the next 10 years I’m building. All out of a SuperConference.”

Dave is enjoying his business too much to step away. That and he’s a self-described control freak.

“When I started realizing the importance of numbers and monitoring what we’re doing, I got the big picture,” Dave says. “I’m here because I like to be involved in the action. I’m too much of a control person to let somebody else take over every aspect of it. It’s my own little pet project, and I’m still manipulating it, trying to see what I can do.”

One of the things Dave can do is keep a very close eye on his numbers, thanks to a “cheat sheet” he developed.

“We use a special form that shows what we would’ve made if we had the numbers right in the parts and labor margins. It shows what we’re missing as far as extra profit,” Dave explains. “It is an eye-opening whack that has been the biggest help for my service writer. To look at it and go “Wow! Those little numbers do add up.”

While Dave still enjoys going to work, he

makes time for his family. He and his wife have four children, all adopted.

“Our oldest is a sophomore in college,” Dave says. “The others are 14, 11 and soon to be 9. We’re pretty heavily involved with Boy Scouts with the two younger ones. We’re off on Saturday all day, that’s pretty much family day, and we do whatever we’re going to do together as a family, plus routine activities throughout the week.”

Asked for his advice for someone struggling to implement the ATI coaching program, Dave jokes, “Give up. Get out of the business. Turn it over to me, let me have it!”

Turning serious, he says, “I get busy, and some days I don’t have a chance to be as thorough as I should. You have to make the determination that you’re either going to be in it or you’re not. It’s a commitment. It really is. I think it’s worth it in the long run if you have the right attitude and if you have the right customer base that appreciates what you do.” **ATI**

# Your Available Training Programs for February and March 2012

## February 2012

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

		<b>1 Shop Owner</b> 1 of 9	<b>2 Shop Owner</b> 2 of 9	<b>3 Shop Owner</b> 3 of 9	4/5
6	7	<b>8 Shop Owner</b> 7 of 9	<b>9 Shop Owner</b> 8 of 9	<b>10 Shop Owner</b> 9 of 9	11/12
13	14 Valentine's Day		<b>California Service Advisor</b> 1 of 4	<b>California Service Advisor</b> 2 of 4	
		<b>15 Shop Owner</b> 4 of 9	<b>16 Service Advisor</b> 1 of 4	<b>17 Service Advisor</b> 2 of 4	18/19
<b>20 Service Advisor</b> 20 Group Regulators 1 of 2	<b>21 Service Advisor</b> 20 Group Regulators 1 of 2		<b>23 Shop Owner</b> 5 of 9	<b>24 Shop Owner</b> 6 of 9	25/26
<b>27 Service Advisor</b> 3 of 4	<b>28 Service Advisor</b> 4 of 4	<b>29 Shop Owner</b> 1 of 9			

## March 2012

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

			<b>1 Shop Owner</b> 2 of 9	<b>2 Shop Owner</b> 3 of 9	3/4
<b>5 Service Advisor</b> 1 of 4	<b>6 Service Advisor</b> 2 of 4	7	<b>8 Service Manager</b> 1 of 2	<b>9 Service Manager</b> 2 of 2	10/11
12	13	<b>14 Super Conference</b> Ft. Lauderdale	<b>15 Super Conference</b> Ft. Lauderdale	<b>16 Super Conference</b> Ft. Lauderdale	<b>17/18 Super Conference</b> Ft. Lauderdale St. Patrick's Day
19	20	<b>21 Shop Owner</b> 4 of 9	<b>22 Shop Owner</b> 5 of 9	<b>23 Shop Owner</b> 6 of 9	24/25
<b>26 Service Advisor</b> 20 Group	<b>27 Service Advisor</b> 20 Group	<b>28 Shop Owner</b> 1 of 9	<b>29 Shop Owner</b> 2 of 9	<b>30 Shop Owner</b> 3 of 9	31



### Congratulations to our President's Club winners – ATI's Best of the Best 2011

(from left to right) top row: George Zeeks, Mike Haley, Bryan Stasch, Phil Baum, Steve Privette, Brian Hunnicutt, bottom row: Randy Somers, Bill Bittner, Kevin Myers



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