

# ShopTalk



www.autotraining.net

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

August 2014

## Turn Your Staff Into Labor Machines

By Geoff Berman, ATI Coach

### Does this sound familiar?

Your day starts off like any other. You turn on the lights and the compressor, fire up the computers and pull out all the cars. The rest of the staff shows up, the doors open and your day is underway. What you didn't know is that there is a little surprise waiting for you on this day. A few hours in and all seems fine, just the normal chaos of any day. All of a sudden there is a loud boom. You run out to see what it is. It's the compressor and it looks bad. What do you do? For most of you, there is very little thought put into this. You act fast. The compressor is fixed or replaced in record time. This seems normal. Something any good business owner would do.

Let me ask you another question. Could you fix the cars without the compressor? Sure you could. The problem is, the time it would take to complete the work would be so much greater that the production could be cut in half. You know this is not good for business. This is why you act fast to get the air flowing again ASAP. That is what you purchased the compressor to do, right? To force air through the lines to always be there for the technician when he needs it. It is in this way he is able to produce the product as quickly and as efficiently as possible. That's why you buy any tool, a scan tool to pull codes, a tire machine to mount tires, a lift to raise the car, etc. Each piece of equipment has a specific job that you expect it to do every time it is needed. If it no longer is able to perform that task, it is repaired, replaced or in some cases retired completely.

### Understanding the problem

Your staff is no different. You lease them for eight hours every day. During that time they are just like all the equipment you have in the shop. You should expect them to perform their tasks as well as any other equipment you have. Just like they are counting on that compressor to always deliver air to the end of that line, you are counting on them to produce that eight hours of billed time every single day. If they do not, they are broken. Do you act as fast to fix this broken piece of equipment as you do that compressor? If you don't, why don't you? What good is having that compressor always have air where it should be if it is not being used efficiently?

Now I'm not saying there is no difference between human and machine. Of course there is. We'll save that for another article. All I'm saying here is that you must look at your staff as that crucial piece of equipment that must produce, and if it is not producing, you must work to fix it. As with the compressor, you must act fast and replace it if it



cannot be fixed. Let's face it. You are in the labor business and that is the reason they are there, to produce labor. Without labor you would be nothing but a parts store. Without labor you have nothing.

### Laser focus is the solution

The key here is to make production a priority! Don't just say it is, but really believe it, every aspect of it, the entire process. It is the actions you take and the consistency you bring to those actions that speak the loudest. I rarely hear what you say if it is not backed by action. You must show me it is important and I will follow. It is time to stop it from being something you wish for, and turn it into a nonnegotiable standard of your business.

ATI recently surveyed 64 students that came through the service advisor's class. One of the questions we asked them was: Tell us something the owner of the shop you work for could do to help you grow. It may surprise you the answers we heard. Here are a few:

Set goals for me	More thorough training
Provide more leadership	Encourage me to be better every day
Hold me and everyone accountable	Give me more responsibilities

Don't you find it ironic that what you fear the most (how they will react) is the same thing they wish you possessed as the leader? It is time to hang up that misguided fear and follow your gut. Learn to lead, your staff will follow, and there is nothing you won't be able to accomplish.

### Start here

You first need to recognize that they must have some skin in the game. Do you pay me for what I produce, or do you pay me to show up? If the pay

*Continued on page 3*

## Sam's Corner

### Safe Succession Planning: Part 4

Last month we discussed training, shadowing, empowering, mentoring and coaching your second in command to ensure a safe transition to give you and your family the freedom you all deserve. Now it is time to communicate with your staff so all of you will have a profitable future.

First, you must specify a timeline that will be woven into your ATI Five Year Roadmap. Next you must communicate the plan to your people and measure your progress with your coach. You and your coach should hold you accountable to keep on target with your plan. Remember, your safe succession plan is a written document with a backup plan for every employee.

It is critical that your second in command continue to build relationships with your employees, customers and vendors, just as you did. If they can't or won't do this, your entire plan will crumble in front of you. This is why it is a much safer bet to grow a second in command that understands and believes in your culture, so they can effectively work with your staff. When you attend the leadership course at ATI, I would strongly recommend you develop your own set of behavioral fundamentals like the ones we have at ATI. We have 24 behavioral character statements we teach our people when they join ATI and every week thereafter. If you don't explain how you want your people to behave when interacting with customers, vendors and fellow employees, they will do what they learned from someone else, which might not fit your culture. It is not a question of right versus wrong techniques, it is a question of fit. Your people have to fit into your culture, or their fellow employees, and your customers and vendors, will most likely not be happy with their new treatment.

*Continued on page 3*



## ATI West

### Local Sandpoint business adding jobs



SANDPOINT – The Automotive Training Institute's locally-owned West Coast Center is expanding and adding more positions. After moving to roomier suites in The Old Power House, ATI West needs to fill five inside sales positions and a sales management position.

ATI, which has maintained its West Coast Center in Sandpoint for more than 10 years, has been in a period of constant growth.

"We outgrew our old facility and recently moved into a great new location," said Danelle Pickett, one of ATI's team leaders. "The new office has lots of room right on the marina in downtown Sandpoint. We love it here."

ATI's West Coast center currently employs 12 people locally and several more positioned around the West Coast. ATI is a 38-year-old company that helps small businesses all over the United States and Canada through education, coaching and mentoring. ATI has helped more than 19,000 automotive industry businesses achieve their goals through close, continuous coaching. The coaching effort is supported by a broad offering of business and leadership classes. ATI's 100-plus employees are spread throughout the United States.

Tiffany Smith, another team leader, says she finds working at ATI rewarding. "We get to positively impact so many lives," she said. "We help struggling small- and medium-sized businesses achieve their dreams."

Located near Washington D.C., the institute is a 20,000-square-foot, modern education center supported by satellite training offered in several locations around the country. ATI carries an A+ BBB rating and has been endorsed or certified by many sources including the Automotive Service Association.

## Mirror Mirror on the Wall

By Kim Hickey, ATI Coach

I can't think of anything that drove me more crazy at my shop than when my service advisors (and heaven help us, an occasional tech) would answer the phone sounding annoyed or like they had just been interrupted. When you think of all the time and money you spend to get your phone to ring, the thought that someone could single-handedly sabotage those efforts in a 15-second phone greeting should send shivers down your spine.

Why do the service advisors sound annoyed and interrupted when they get a phone call? Because they are probably in the middle of ordering parts or typing up an estimate or dispatching work, or going over a repair order with a customer. And what are most of the incoming calls about? Well, there's the "What time will my car be ready?" call, the "Is my car ready yet?" call, the "Did you look at my car yet?" call, the "When am I due for service?" call, and the "I'd like to make an appointment" call. Hmmm. Too bad there isn't anything we could do to limit the amount of incoming phone calls at inopportune times.

But wait a minute — I think I may have heard our instructor Randy Somers, during a class, mention a thing or two about how to limit the amount of incoming phone calls that come in at inopportune times. I think I might even have also heard about some of these crazy ideas in a teleseminar or two:

Could checking the status at 11 o'clock and 2 o'clock and calling the customer to update them on their repair progress limit the amount of "When will my car be ready?" "Is my car ready yet?" and "Have you looked at my car yet?" calls? Could it also be that you could choose to call the customer, not when you are in the middle of a big estimate, but instead when it's the opportune time for you? Wait, I'm having another vision...hold on... I got it! *What if YOU* told your customers every time they left what service would be due for their next appointment *AND* gave them an appointment card with a date and time for that appointment? Do you think that could possibly limit the amount of "I'd

like to make an appointment" and "When am I due for service?" calls that come in at inopportune times? Do you think that you could then call your customers to remind them of their appointment when it was convenient for you to call and not when you are in the middle of going over a work order with a customer? By now I am hoping you realized that I am asking you these questions because we already *ALL* know these answers. But are we *ALL* doing these things?

Another thing you should try doing is to mount a mirror by each of the phones. Anyone who answers the telephone should look in the mirror before they answer. The face they are seeing in the mirror is the face the person on the other end of the phone is hearing. If they look annoyed, they are going to sound annoyed. If they look mad, they are going to sound mad. If they look happy, they are going to sound happy. If they look passionate about what they do, they will sound passionate about what they do. As soon as you implement the use of the mirror, most people are shocked when they see what their face looks like. The results are immediate. Of course with me being me, I had to have fun with it. I got bored with the regular mirrors after a while and found ones with 3-D tiaras, fire-chief hats, faces, etc., and would switch them out. How could anyone not smile when they look in a mirror with a silly face or hat on it? Smiles are infectious. Smiles come through the phone.

If you are not doing all of the things I have mentioned, you are working harder and not smarter. I also would highly recommend that you and your advisors sit through Randy's classes again. You should also listen to the teleseminars in our library regarding telephone skills (they can be found under the marketing category), and also the ones on exit appointments and keeping a phone log (they can be found under the sales category). Your coach can provide you with scripts and phone logs as well. **ATI**



SuperConference 15

Registration Now Open!

Go to [www.autotraining.net/superconference15](http://www.autotraining.net/superconference15)

and Registration Today!



Westin Mission Hills March 11-14

# Are You Running a Reverse Car Wash?

By Eric Twigg, ATI Coach



“Eric, you don’t understand, it’s hard to find good people in my area,” said Ray, a former client. He had just lost his best technician to a competitor and didn’t know what to do next.

During the eighteen months that I had been coaching him, his shop had been a revolving door for techs and he was on his third writer.

“What is the morale like at the shop?” I asked. He replied, “Eric, the morale isn’t the issue. My area is less populated than your other ATI shops, and my competition is able to pay more than I can. *My shop is different.*”

I decided to conduct an exit interview with the technician, Jack, who was leaving. Jack went on for 20 minutes about how Ray belittles him and the staff, never recognizes anything positive that he does, and refuses to get any of the equipment fixed. He then told me that the rest of the staff is looking for other work as well. As it turns out **RAY** was the problem, NOT his area.

If I were to interview one of your employees, what would they say about working for you? If you don’t know or don’t want to know, chances are you have a culture problem. Think about it, if you were the best technician in the market with several offers on the table, would you work for Ray?

**Bad culture corrupts good people.** It’s like a **reverse car wash**, they come in clean and leave dirty! So how do you establish the right culture and avoid the reverse car wash syndrome? Keep reading and you will learn the three types of meetings that will drastically improve your shop culture.

## Daily Morning Huddle Meetings

The morning huddle meeting should last between five and fifteen minutes and is conducted before the shop opens. It gives you a chance to celebrate your wins, and address what went wrong from

the previous day. It also provides a platform to communicate individual goals along with the game plan to accomplish them.

A recent University of California study concluded that a person who communicates their goal to a coach or mentor is 33 percent more likely to achieve it in comparison to someone who doesn’t. People support what they help to create. Having your employees tell you their goals will improve their morale and increase your bottom line.

## Weekly One-on-Ones

This style of meeting is typically done with the owner and the second in command. The one-on-one should last between 15 and 30 minutes. Quite often, the owner and second in command are like two ships passing in the night and are not on the same page. As a result, problems go unresolved, which negatively impacts the morale. The weekly one-on-one opens up the lines of communication and keeps both parties accountable.

## Monthly Team Meetings

Having scheduled monthly meetings gives your employees the opportunity to voice their concerns about how the business is running, and be a part of the solution for improvement. Bad news doesn’t get better with age. Having a regular day and time set aside where issues can be addressed keeps the small fires from becoming big ones.

When I ran shops, I always had the monthly meeting on a day that I was scheduled to be off. When my people saw me coming in on my off day, it sent a message that it was important and took away any excuses for them not being able to attend.

So there you have it. If you commit to implementing the three meeting types, you will attract good people that can develop into great ones and pull the plug on your reverse car wash.



*Continued from page 1*

plan does not support what you hired me to do, then what incentive do I have to do it? Are you going to keep leading me by fear, or show me how your win is my win? If I reach or exceed the goals, what’s in it for me? You will never truly achieve what you want, if the pay plan you have in place does not motivate the staff to get there by helping them achieve their goals, too. There should be no limit to what they can make if they are willing to do what is necessary to get there. What is necessary is to produce labor.

## Now follow these steps:

Here are the steps you must follow to make this paradigm shift in the culture of your business. The shift from doing the best I can to get through that day, to making sure I am focused on a productive day.

### Set the expectation

First you must make sure they understand this concept that they are there to produce. They are

labor machines and that is what they were hired to do. Produce labor. Make sure they understand that this is nonnegotiable.

They should be there ready to go at 8:00 a.m. That means mind and body ready to go. Do not punch in until breakfast is eaten and the uniform is on and make sure it is before their start time.

Discuss monthly, weekly and daily shop goals as it relates to hours turned. Make sure these goals are broken down for each tech so they know their individual role in the bigger picture. This will be different for each tech, based on their hours in the building and their skill level.

### You must measure it

You should have a daily production board in the shop that tracks each tech’s performance each day. This should be looked at on a weekly and monthly basis as well, but you cannot impact tomorrow,



*Continued from page 1*

Once your plan is operational, you must monitor your plan and collect both metric data and nonmetric data. Examples of metric data are courtesy checks and maintenance as a percent of car count, along with your financial KPIs. Hopefully you have been faithfully putting your data into the portal so you can compare your different seasons when your second in command is in charge versus when you ran the business. Examples of nonmetric data are how your tech teams are performing, manpower, soft skills and customer satisfaction.

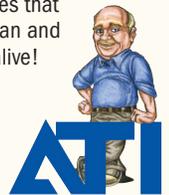
To help you on your journey we have created the ATI Safe Succession Planning worksheet. I suggest you, your significant other and your coach begin filling in the blanks. This will give you the information to weave into your ATI Five Year Roadmap so you can begin your journey to freedom.

If you like to read, I would recommend a few books to explore while you are building your plan. While I was creating this course, I read about six reference books. My favorite was “The E-Myth Revisited” by Michael Gerber, because it will remind you what it takes to build a business that will run without you. My next favorite was “Family Business Succession” by Stephen McClure, which I strongly recommend if your successors are family.

Next month I will discuss mistakes that will sabotage your succession plan and the ten ways to keep your plan alive!

*C. L. Frederick*

— Chubby



and discuss strategy to improve tomorrow, if you are not looking at these numbers each day. If you wait till the end of the week it is too late, the week is over. It does not drive the point home that this is important to you, because you ignored it all week. Remember, your actions support your words. Words alone will not get you there.

### Provide feedback

Every morning your service advisor or manager needs to have a five-minute huddle with each tech to review how yesterday went, and discuss how that affects today. What is the strategy and how many hours are necessary to get on, or stay on, task.

Every week you should be providing feedback on their progress or lack of it. Make it important. Coach me if need be, but work on that broken machine. If it can’t be fixed, it is time to replace that piece of equipment. Remember, production is priority and that is nonnegotiable. **ATI**

# Your Available Training Programs for September and October 2014

## September 2014

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday/Sunday
1 <b>Labor Day</b>	2	3 <b>Shop Owner</b> 1 of 9	4 <b>Shop Owner</b> 2 of 9	5 <b>Shop Owner</b> 3 of 9	6/7
8 <b>Staffing &amp; Hiring</b> 1 of 2	9 <b>Staffing &amp; Hiring</b> 2 of 2	10	11 <b>20 Group</b>	12 <b>20 Group</b>	13/14
15	16	17 <b>Shop Owner</b> 7 of 9	18 <b>Shop Owner</b> 8 of 9 <b>20 Group</b> <b>Master mind</b>	19 <b>Shop Owner</b> 9 of 9 <b>20 Group</b> <b>Master mind</b>	20/21
22 <b>Service Advisor</b> 1 of 4 <b>Service Advisor</b> <b>20 Group Profiteers</b>	23 <b>Service Advisor</b> 2 of 4 <b>Service Advisor</b> <b>20 Group Profiteers</b>	24 <b>Shop Owner</b> 4 of 9	25 <b>Shop Owner</b> 5 of 9 <b>20 Group Peak Performers</b>	26 <b>Shop Owner</b> 6 of 9 <b>20 Group Peak Performers</b>	27/28
29 <b>20 Group</b> <b>Service Advisor</b> 3 of 4	30 <b>20 Group</b> <b>Service Advisor</b> 4 of 4				

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.

## October 2014

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday/Sunday
 6 <b>Service Advisor</b> 1 of 4 <b>20 Group</b>	 7 <b>Service Advisor</b> 2 of 4 <b>20 Group</b>	1 <b>Shop Owner</b> 1 of 9	2 <b>Shop Owner</b> 2 of 9	3 <b>Shop Owner</b> 3 of 9	4/5
8 <b>Shop Owner</b> 4 of 9	9 <b>Shop Owner</b> 5 of 9	10 <b>Shop Owner</b> 6 of 9	11/12		
13 <b>Service Manager</b> 1 of 2 <b>20 Group</b> Columbus Day	14 <b>Service Manager</b> 2 of 2 <b>20 Group</b>	15 <b>Shop Owner</b> 7 of 9	16 <b>Service Advisor California</b> 1 of 4 <b>Shop Owner</b> 8 of 9 <b>20 Group</b>	17 <b>Service Advisor California</b> 2 of 4 <b>Shop Owner</b> 9 of 9 <b>20 Group</b>	18/19
20 <b>20 Group</b>	21 <b>20 Group</b>	22	23 <b>20 Group</b>	24 <b>20 Group</b>	25/26
27 <b>20 Group Leading Ladies</b> <b>Service Advisor</b> 3 of 4	28 <b>20 Group Leading Ladies</b> <b>Service Advisor</b> 4 of 4	29	30	31 <b>Halloween</b>	

## Car Care Month Is Coming! Are You Ready?

By Mike Haley, ATI Team Leader

What if I told you there is an event you can do in October to bring in new customers, get reacquainted with old customers and provide a community service. Would you want it? If I told you this event has national



recognition and sponsorship. This event already exists and it is the Car Care Month performed every year in October and April. The Car Care Council was developed to help

educate consumers on the second largest investment they have, their vehicles. Car Care offers everything you need to help schedule, plan and promote your event. For a small fee, you will receive your car care kit which includes all the point of sale tools needed to have a successful event. [www.carcare.org](http://www.carcare.org)

AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE

ATI  
Automotive Training Institute  
705 Digital Drive, Suite V  
Linthicum, Md. 21090