

What to do when what you want to happen doesn't

Hold yourself and your staff accountable to ensure changes are made

In the coaching business, many times you come across a shop owner who knows what to do but just can't seem to get the strategy implemented. Let's listen to how veteran ATI coach Brian Hunnicutt accomplished this with his members:

At a young age I had the fortune and misfortune to become a district manager for a big chain of tire and auto stores in Houston. Not really knowing what I was doing, I would walk into a store and verbally create a clear level of expectation of what I wanted to see happen. Well, at least it was clear to me.

What would happen? You guessed it: nothing. So I went and got a notebook for each store and wrote my clear level of expectations of what the store needed to get done on the first page. Reviewed it with the manager, and guess what happened? You guessed it again: nothing happened. I went to each manager and the answers varied, but they were basically the same — nothing but excuses. They called them "reasons."

Have them list the obstacles

I had them list each reason they could not get done what I wanted in the back of the book. Then the store manager and I would go through the "reasons." I would start at the front of the book, and I would help him remove the obstacles. When it was all said and done, we would meet in the middle of the notebook with a fixed store.

EVERY SHOP HAS PROBLEMS. THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE AND FOCUS ON THEM IS KEY TO SOLVING ISSUES THAT KEEP US FROM BEING MORE PROFITABLE.

What that notebook has evolved into over the last 30 years is a simplistic tool to help with holding your employees and yourself accountable. When it does not work, the owner does not want to be held accountable. Owners are smart

enough to figure out that the main person held accountable first is them. This creates an accountability that no one can escape from.

You can control the meetings on your computer with a folder and a Word or Excel document for each player in the folder. You can have a spiral notebook for each one. What I prefer is a big three-ring binder with separator pages. A page for the store, yourself and each employee.

The pages inside of each separator page are as follows: first, what does the store, you or the employee do well? The second page lists what needs to be worked on. Third, pick two things from page two that you are going to work on. Fourth, what are the goals? The fifth page is the overflow from section two, if needed, since you should not have more than 15 items on page two. Sixth is the schedule.

Start with a notepad

You need to take good notes. Drive to your store from every direction and when you are seeing your store, really look at it. What is good about the store? Is the signage good? Does it have good curb appeal? As you pull onto the property, what does the parking lot and store front look like?

You need to always wear at least two pairs of glasses — one that sees the world with a tint of rose and one that sees it with what's wrong. For the beginning part of this, please use the rose-colored ones, the ones that see the good only.

Walk through your store from every

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angle: what is good about it? Write it down and transfer it into the store notebook later.

Now put on the other pair. For most of us, it is a normal pair of glasses. No tint. You see the world as it truly is. Now do the same exercise and what does the store need to work on? It can be cosmetic like a bathroom remodel. It can be courtesy checks. It can be tech productivity, higher ARO. What does your store need to work on?

Now sit down and think about each employee with the pair of good glasses on: what do they each do well? If you cannot think of anything that they do well, we have a problem. The first thing that you need to work on is seeing the world differently.

Last, but not least: what about you? This is where most of us get really antsy; looking into the mirror is not that much fun. You can take it — what do you do well?

Then once again the fun part — what do you and your employees need to work on?

The rule is simple for both good and bad — if it comes out of your mouth more than once or hits your brain more than twice, write it down. Then transfer the notes into the notebook under the store, employee or your section depending on what each note is about and who needs to work on it or who did something good.

The third page is the two things that the store, employee or you are going to work on from page two. That's right, we only work on two things at a time each. You pick a hard item and an easy item to work on. Never pick two hard items because then it feels like we never get a win. Write down the first item, leaving room to have the employee write down what they are willing to do to work on it.

Develop a mentoring plan

You may need to mentor them on what to write down, but they need to write

it down in their own words and then own it. Have them date it as well. The critical part is that it has to be trackable and measurable. They cannot just write down that they will work on it. We need a plan on how to work on it.

An example would be a technician who is not doing courtesy checks in a timely fashion or at all. I would have a manual timer ready to give to them. Teach them how to do a courtesy check so that they can start the timer before doing a courtesy check and before the timer goes off at 15 minutes they will have the check done and turned in to the writer.

This way, at a glance during the process you can see if they are doing what they wrote down. If not, then you write down the time and the invoice number and put it in their notebook, along with addressing them at the time of the occurrence, as well. If you catch them doing what they wrote down, then commend them.

Once they are doing a consistently good job, then move it to the front page. They now can do a timely, accurate courtesy check and pick another item from page two and move it to page three. Start the process again.

If they do not do a good job and you give them a failing grade on what they wrote down, you have them reiterate that they are willing to do it. Then have them sign it and write today's date on it. Let them know that this is a big deal.

Make them commit

The next week goes by and if they did not do what we both agreed on, then we get serious. Remember this phrase: as the owner of the store, I need to know that I can count on you for results. Can I count on you for this result? Of course they will say yes, or it is a deal breaker. Once they say yes, have them write it down so that you can count on them for the results. Then have them

sign and date it again.

The best part of this process is that only 2 percent of the time do we have to fire someone. This really works. Most people will step up and get the job done. When you run into someone who just isn't able to get it done, they know it even before you do. Now you don't have to fire someone; they will just choose to leave. If we do have to fire them, then we have the perfect paper trail.

Page four is their goals. Have them write down where they see themselves going and the store going. What are the things they want or want to accomplish? It's important that you review this every week with them. Help them get where they are going, and they will help you get where you are going.

Page five is the overflow page from page two. Never have more than 15 items on page two.

Page six is your schedule and the first item on your schedule is these meetings.

Stop the productivity robbers

Every shop has a collection of problems, large and small. The ability to recognize and focus on them is the key to solving the issues that keep you from being more profitable. To get a list of the common issues that rob a shop of its productivity, for a limited time you can click on www.ationlinetraining.com/2018-06 to get our Productivity Robbers Checklist. 



CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 130 full-time associates train and coach more than 1,500 shop owners every

week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. Our full-time coaches have helped our members earn over 1 BILLION DOLLARS in a return on their coaching investment since ATI was founded. This month's article was written with the help of ATI Coach Brian Hunnicutt. chubby@autotraining.net

A SHOP OWNER GUIDE: STAY AHEAD OF YOUR COMPETITION

BOB COOPER // Technical Editor

Not long ago it was easy to beat your competitors. All that you needed was more equipment, a healthy advertising budget and the ability to fix cars right the first time. Well, those days are long gone. Today, cars are being built better and require service less frequently. Customers have more choices than ever before, and they are able to do a tremendous amount of research online before they even pick up the phone. Additionally, this industry is experiencing an extraordinary shortage of qualified technicians, and profit margins are being squeezed every day. To top it all off, the dealerships have their eye on one thing and one thing alone: Your customers. So the question is, during these challenging times, how can you stay ahead of your competitors?

First and foremost, you will need to have clearly defined goals in place, and you'll need to create a plan for reaching those goals. The right goals and an action plan will enable you to make far better business decisions and improve productivity and profits.

Secondly, your success will be predicated on the caliber of people who work with you. We

can never forget that whenever someone buys a product, they will always remember the product, but when they buy a service, they will always remember the people who provided the service. How will the top shop owners find and hire the superstars in the coming years? In addition to having an apprentice program in place, they will create a recruiting plan that contains a well-designed compensation program, and they will market to the superstars in the same way they market to their retail customers.

The top operators will also create marketing plans that target their ideal customers, and they will use the right media. The successful shop owners will be brand builders rather than price promoters, and they will invest at least 4 percent to 6 percent of their total sales into their marketing programs. They will recognize that the Y Gens and Millennials hold the key to their future, so they will be investing a part of their marketing budget into campaigns specifically directed towards them.

The successful shop owners in the coming years will constantly analyze every component of their customer process with their crew, and they'll create policies

and procedures that better ensure extraordinary service at every customer touch point. They will also embrace the philosophy that keeping their superstars happy, motivated, well-trained and productive will depend on their employee management skills. They'll realize that their brand is their people, so to further develop those skills they will invest in books and courses that are directed towards employee management.

And lastly, the top shop owners in the coming years will not only know their numbers, but will know what needs to be done in order to reach each and every one of their performance goals.

In conclusion, if you want to build a world-class shop, you will need to have clearly defined goals with a written plan and will need to know your numbers. You will also need to have a team of superstars and a well-designed marketing plan that brings in your ideal customers. If you do these things, if you never forget the importance of the people who work with you, and if you live by the principle that you will never put money ahead of people, then you will not only stay well ahead of your competitors, but you will have a far more profitable, successful business in the coming years.

Since 1990, Bob Cooper has been the president of Elite (www.EliteWorldwide.com), a company that strives to help shop owners reach their goals and live happier lives, while elevating the industry at the same time. The company offers training from the industry's top shop owners, service advisor training, peer groups, along with online and in-class sales, marketing and shop management courses. You can contact Bob at contact@eliteworldwide.com, or at 800-204-3548.