

# Avoiding the black hole that is “what if...”

Keep a firm balance between your dreams and reality to avoid disaster

**M**ost of us have had these thoughts. What if I won the lottery? What if my business got better and I could take some time off? What if it grew so successful that I didn't have to be there at all? What would happen if I lost my key people? What if they treated the customers so bad they didn't come back? What if I had to go back to turning a wrench again?

There are the good “what ifs” that turn bad and the bad “what ifs” that turn even worse. It's part of human nature, but how do we defend ourselves? Let's listen to ATI Head Coach George Zeeks explain how to prepare yourself.

## What are what ifs?

“What if” is the key behind every invention, every new idea and every success story. This can only happen when you balance the “what is” right alongside of it.

I graduated from high school at 17. I had no real intention of going to college, but my mom demanded otherwise. She

was in the process of fighting the cancer that would eventually kill her and she made me promise that I would go to college and finish. It didn't really sound that bad, at first. The problem was that there was no money in the family. I had envisioned a great summer. I worked three jobs that summer, caught up in the “what if.” I saved every dime I could. The amount of money that I would need to pay, just for the fall semester, would take that much. I had to adjust to the reality of “what is.”

I tried to work while going to school but found that I couldn't work enough and study enough to get it all done. It looked like a choice between flunking out or not having enough money for the spring. I thought college was supposed to be fun. What if I failed? What if I broke my promise? Would it affect her health? The black hole of “what if” had full control of me now. Everything started to slide downhill in a self-fulfilling prophecy. I was 17, and I was already a failure.

When you balance “what if” with

“what is,” things begin to change. I saw some people at my neighbor's house who were cleaning the carpets inside. I stopped and talked to the two guys. The conversation led me to ask my neighbor, Mrs. Baker, if I could watch the men clean her carpet. As I watched, I learned that the work wasn't that hard. It didn't take that long. Then I asked Mrs. Baker how much it cost to do those carpets. Then I got interested. I did some quick research on what I would need. I took all of my money out of the bank and bought the equipment and the chemicals. Now I just needed some customers.

**TOO MUCH WORRYING AND YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE ON DIES. THE KEY IS TO BALANCE THE “WHAT IF” VS. “WHAT IS.” KEEP YOURSELF BALANCED AND UNDER CONTROL.**

I took the change I had left and went to the library to photocopy phone numbers out of a crisscross reverse telephone directory. Now I had pages of phone numbers to call and get appointments, so I could clean the carpets in their house. I was on cloud nine! I was going to make a ton of money. I was stuck, once again in the land of “what if.”

## The reality of what is

The reality of “what is” crashed down again. It took ridiculous amounts of work

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to call the people, get the appointment, sell the job and finally do the work. At first, I made far less money than I had working for someone else. Don't forget I still had a full load at school and was trying to help take care of my mom. Things got better, then they got worse. I hadn't counted on having almost no work after the holidays. It seemed that after the New Year's parties had been cleaned up, no one needed my services. What if I failed?

I understand the roller coaster that many of you are on. I have been there many times. The key is to balance the "what if" vs. "what is" and to keep yourself grounded and under control. Too much dreaming and the dream dies. Too much worrying and your ability to drive on dies. In case you're wondering, I did graduate from the University of Maryland, with a degree in marketing. It took five years, but I did it. The business did well enough that by the time I had graduated in spring of 1982, I was making between \$800 and \$1,000 a week in net profit. I gave my business, contained in my Atari 800 home computer, to my father. I kept the promise and I was off to do what I wanted to do. By the way, I still hate carpet to this very day.

### The technician shop capacity calculator

Some of you may be going through simi-




**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 Head Coach George Zeeks.

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lar times. You may be stuck, wrapped up too tight in one of the black holes. Some of you may have hit a ceiling that you can't break through. Some of you may be wondering what is the answer to the what if/what is that YOU may be going through. If it has to do with your shop, a great place to start is with a solid "what is." How about answering the question:

what is possible in my shop? What is my shop built to do? How much can my technicians produce? How close to the best practices are we? If you are curious, simply go to [www.autotraining.com/2018-09](http://www.autotraining.com/2018-09) and receive the Technician Shop Capacity Calculator to find out what is possible for your business. 



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