

The magic bullet for auto shop success

The shop owner — not the next big thing — drives the business direction

If you are looking for the ultimate magic bullet, then let's listen to an ATI coach and former shop owner, Rick Johnson: Over the many years of owning and running my shop, I was constantly being approached by salespeople with their special one-of-a-kind solution. Whether it be the latest brake lathe, Freon machine, or shop management software — what they were selling was truly amazing and would certainly produce wonderful results. I was always left wondering would it work for me . . . could it work for me?

One great example goes back to 1992, a time when I was still using handwritten tickets. A salesman came knocking on my door peddling his new shop management system. He demonstrated the system wonderfully, showing me how it would automate so many of my processes and make my life easier. What's more, I was so excited about his claim that my shop would soon be paperless! Wow, did that sound good! After years of handwriting tickets, copying and filing duplicates and triplicates of nearly everything, this was going to be

a game changer! The reality is that after I bought and installed this wonderful new system (the latest "shiny penny"), I was now generating more paper than ever before! I began to wonder, was it me? Did I do something wrong?

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Three years later, here comes another salesperson selling a competing shop management system with more bells and whistles than the system I had. Thankfully, I didn't buy it, but I did realize something about myself. Truthfully, I was looking for shiny pennies and magic bullets that would take my shop

to the next level — and I must admit, I tried most of them. Some worked, while others failed miserably. For the ones that failed, I wondered what went wrong, or what I didn't understand.

It's common to want the next big thing

I know I'm not alone in my line of thinking. As a coach today, I work with lots of different shop owners. I'm often asked what I know or think about this widget or that marketing tool, or vendor. They often want to try some exciting, new kid on the block that's preaching radically different ideals that go against proven business practices. Shop owners try these shiny pennies and then get discouraged when they don't get the results promised. It's also frustrating when they know of shop owners that are using the same widget, service or advice and getting "killer" results. As we talk about these things and dig into why, I have the same answer I've learned many years ago at my own shop.

Before I give you the answer, I'm going to share a story that I was told many years before I ever bought my shop, and yet it still applies today.

The story goes something like this: a big shoe company sent two salesmen to a remote developing country. They gave each salesman 10 cases of shoes to sell. The first salesman sent a telegram that said he was sending the shoes back because no one there wears shoes. The second salesman sent a telegram that requested 10 more cases of shoes because no one has shoes — it's a wide-open market! Think about it: same market,

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same products, same opportunities and yet totally different results. Do you know why? The difference is in the salesmen and their perspective and approach.

Your sure-fire strategy for magic bullet success

By now you're probably thinking, there's no magic bullet for my shop's success, but I'm happy to tell you that's not true. The magic bullet is actually you. At the end of the day, whether these widgets, advice or services succeed or fail, comes down to you as the shop owner. Can it really be that simple and yet that hard at the same time? You're darn right it can! Your success with these endeavors will depend on how hard you're willing to work.

At minimum, before implementing anything new that will cause a major change in your shop, you must be ready to answer these five questions:

1. Does it align with my shop strategy?
2. How will it impact my current processes and procedures?
3. Will I get buy-in from my staff and will they be engaged?
4. How will I train my staff?
5. How will I measure success?

Until you can answer these questions, I would ask you to wait on making your new shiny penny purchase, or it will soon dull to be like all the others. Instead, challenge yourself to determine why you're not getting the results that you want rather than look for the next

new thing. Ask yourself if you are doing all that you can with what you currently have. Because no other shop in America has you, and you are the difference maker! Remember, it's a wide-open market, now go out and sell!

Get started today!

A great place to start would be with the

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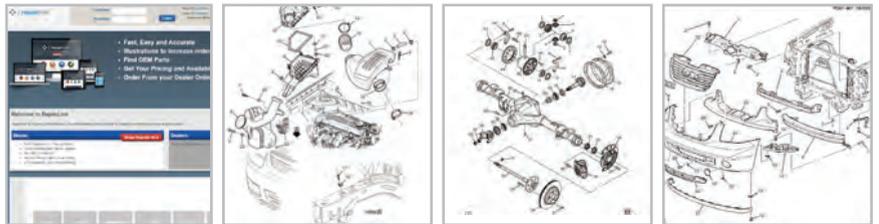


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CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 130 full-time associates train and coach more than 1,500 shop owners every week to drive profits and dreams home to their families. Our full-time coaches have 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 former shop owner and ATI Coach Rick Johnson.

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