

# ShopTalk

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**ATI**  
Automotive  
Training Institute

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## How to Trust Your Skills and Be Skeptical of Your Beliefs

There are two main causes why shop owners fail. And luckily, both are avoidable.

I see it all the time with new shop owners attending ATI training for the first time. They get paralyzed by a foggy feeling in their brains. If you ask them about fixing cars, they have complete clarity, but when it comes to the numbers part of their business, they can't think straight.

And that's the first reason shop owners fail. They forget what they know. Or they think they don't know anything.

I do it all the time. When I'm working through a project, it's easy for me to become overwhelmed with all of the details. Within the maze of a new project, it's easy to get overloaded. And when I get overloaded, my brain wanders into the fog and I forget everything I know. All I can think is "I can't do this." Fortunately, I've learned how to recognize when I'm in the fog.

This is the plan I created to get myself out:

When I feel overwhelmed and frustrated and my urge is to stop, I start composing lists. Many times I do this together with my business coach. I write what needs to happen, what I know how to do and what I need help doing. Then, with my list of things I need help with, I determine whom I need to ask.

Yes, it's simple. Yes, it's a beginner's mistake, but we all fall into it. We get so caught up in our shops and our daily lives that we forget what we already know. We think someone else must have the answer, and we go searching for it. Instead, I've found when I just sit down and separate what I know from what I don't know, I really have more of the answers than I thought I did. I just have to get them out of my clouded head and onto paper.

Over the years I've had the privilege of working with a lot of great shop owners.

I'm proud to say we've had a lot of successes coaching them in their businesses.

My perspective also has allowed me to witness (and experience) a few failures. Those don't end up in the ATI newsletter. But they do happen. Most often, they are ambitious marketing campaigns that don't succeed.

Can you imagine anything more frustrating? You spend weeks creating a new marketing campaign, you unleash it on your market and then, nothing happens.

These failures always have a common theme: We didn't understand the customer. We thought we knew, it sounded like a campaign that couldn't miss, but we were wrong.

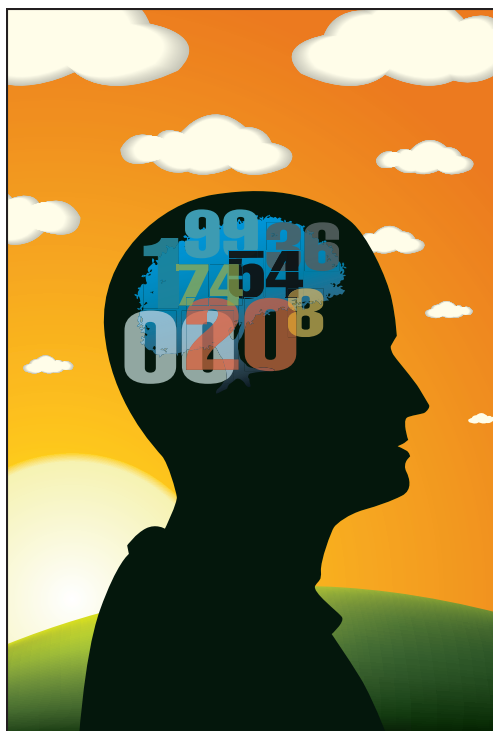
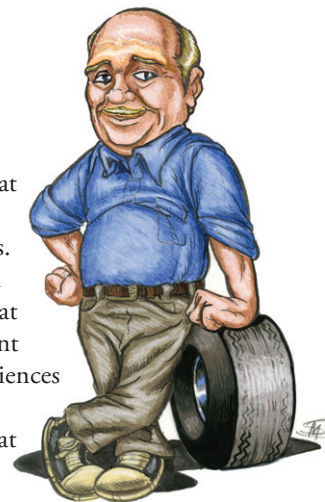
Our belief system is built over the course of our lives based on what we hear, see and understand. And to filter out noise, we quickly

reject anything that doesn't fit within our current beliefs. It's easy to make a mistake about what our customers want because our experiences are completely different from what our customers experience. Thus, our beliefs will be different.

Here at ATI we see it with new coaching members. You can explain something about their businesses or lives two or three times, yet they still hold on to their old beliefs. Then, two months later, they come back to you and explain how they had an "Aha" moment.

Success is balance on the middle of a beam with the two most common reasons for failure on each end. Reason one, you don't believe enough in your own skill and ability to get you out of your current challenges and break through a seemingly overwhelming situation. Reason two, you are so confident in what you believe about your market that you ignore the reality that's always changing and evolving.

What is overwhelming you? Make a list of what's necessary to overcome it, and then tackle your list. Now, what do you believe about your business and your market? Write it down: Who are they? How old? What is their experience? What do they need? Then look at that list and continue to modify it. Also, instead of listening only to your established customers, go talk to your new customers, community leaders and people who aren't yet your customers to find out what they are thinking. While it's often humbling, it's important to know so you can get more new customers, keep your customers longer and keep more money for yourself. **ATI**



## ATI Client Profile

# Everything's Different When You're Spending Your Own Money

Dave Murphy, owner of Murphy's Autocare in Dayton, Ohio, is a master licensed technician who brought 10 years of experience in training business owners with him when he purchased his shop. Even with all that going for him, he says everything changed when he put his own money on the line. Here is his story ...

"I had a close friend whose father owned a Sohio Gas Station, and I went to work for him while I was in high school," Dave begins.

He ended up working at the station for 10 years, eventually becoming a master certified technician. Then he became a sales rep for an automotive

parts company. But auto repair had gotten into his blood, and he seemed destined to return to it.

"I love working on vehicles," Dave says. "When the gentleman who had taught me everything about the business was ready to retire, my wife and I decided to take the plunge. We laid my retirement on the line and bought the business. That was 16 years ago, and it's been a great ride."

Naturally, there were some bumps in the road.

"Part of my previous job was to train business owners," Dave explains, "so I thought I already knew everything about it. But I got a big eye-opener within six months. I really didn't know what it was like to run a business with my own money."

The first rather large bump in the road? The employees Dave inherited.

"We had to get rid of everybody that was on staff when we bought the business," Dave says. "I went back to being a technician overnight, and I had to hire the fellow I bought the business from to come back and work with me!"

Running the shop became an all-consuming effort, and it wasn't all that profitable.

"My wife, Jan, was always thrilled when we were able to pay everybody at the end of the week," Dave says ruefully. "We thought we were successful because we were paying everybody. It took us the better part of a year to realize >>

### Sam's Corner

## Super Stock National Finalist

By Ronnie Sox and Chubby Frederick



Have you ever wished you had snapped a picture of an important event in your life? I sure wished I had. But here you are looking at the reconstructed mental image of my tech, Ed Warren, and me racing Ronnie Sox at the 1970 Super Stock Nationals in York, Pa. We had a lot of racing pictures, but this day was special for both of us because we made it farther against intense competition with mostly luck behind us—yet no pictures.

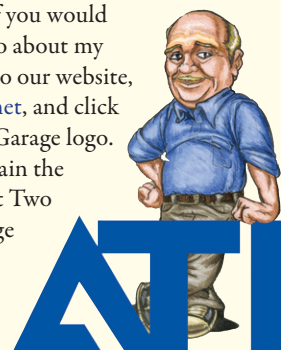
You are looking at a painting I commissioned from Dana Forester, the Corvette painting specialist in water color. There are a lot of painters

looking for work these days so if you have an image you want to look at and, like me, were not a shutter bug, you can remake history. The best part, you can alter it! You may notice I am ahead of Ronnie at the lights because he had to give me a head start. That was the only time I was ahead but what the heck, I commissioned the painting! Ronnie came by me like a freight train about halfway down the track and won the Nationals.

This '69 COPO Camaro was originally my Mom's and mine to drive to college. I flunked out of college, was caught street racing several times

and had my license revoked before I was 20 years old. My father made me take the COPO off the street, and I embarked on a career in racing that lasted two years before I decided to get married. I sold the car to Ed for \$300 in 1971 and bought it back in 2008 for \$16,000, completely rusted out. Peter Klutt of Legendary Motors took two years to restore it, which certainly helped the Canadian economy those years.

At last year's SuperConference I came out of the closet with my middle name, LeRoy, for all of you who have difficulty calling me Chubby. Now for the best part: my nickname growing up was Fizzy. I got suspended from elementary school because I put fuzzies in my mouth and let them bubble out all over my face. Yes, I was the class clown! So, we named the car Gin Fizz! Ronnie use to poke me and call us Sloe Gin Fizz! Those guys with their Hemis had their way with us Rat Motor guys in the '70s, but I was a legend in my own mind for a few seconds. All we have is our memories—surround yourself with them and it may put a smile on your face when you need it most! If you would like to watch a video about my Camaro simply go to our website, [www.autotraining.net](http://www.autotraining.net), and click on the Dream Car Garage logo. Part Three will explain the restoration and Part Two is a tour of my garage at my home.



# Phone Follow Up

By Randy Somers

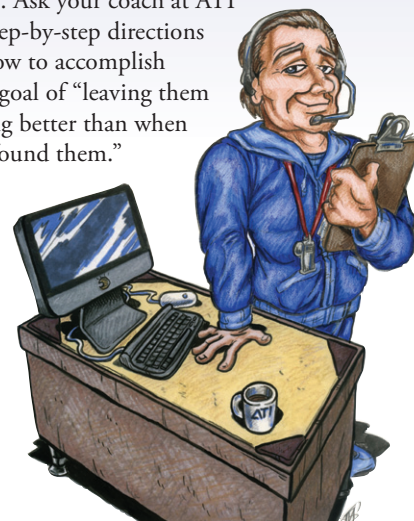


The telephone is the lifeline of any business and the first contact a customer has with your shop, whether they are an existing or a potential customer. A phone call from a customer can result in one of two things. One, they come into your store or two, they go to some else's store for vehicle service or repair. We at ATI talk about the telephone and its purpose in your business in every class and in most coaching sessions we have with our clients. There are incoming and outgoing calls, but for this article I want to focus on the outgoing. We can make thank-you calls, previous recommendation calls, "where have you been?" calls and customer satisfaction follow-up calls. One thing that I have noticed is the difference between the "buy-in" for the need to make phone calls when we are in the classroom environment, and the lack of enthusiasm to make those same phone calls once we get back behind the counter of our shops. In the classroom setting we get excited by the potential to "take control of the telephone," to tame the beast, to restore order from the insanity that the telephone can create.

We are pumped, we are enthusiastic and we are determined to do it differently this time. But when we get back to the shop and reality takes hold, our enthusiasm diminishes and makes us view the telephone as a vile hideous thing that we cringe away from and just want it to disappear like a nightmare from our childhood. We get busy. We have customers coming in that we need to WOW with our superior service. We have tickets to dispatch to technicians. We have estimates to build and estimates to present to customers. We have parts to order. We have tickets to finalize. We have customers to close out. And all of that happens on a good day, a day that the parts are correct, the bolts don't break, the diagnostics are accurate, there are no fires to put out, etc., etc., etc. We can't seem to get caught up and have time to make those calls, "time" being a relative term. Time is not something that you can get more of. There are only 24 hours in every day no matter who you are or where your store is located. If you received a phone call from a customer wanting to bring their vehicle in for a 90k and a timing belt you would "find the time" to take the call, even though we can never really "find extra time." What we really do is "make" the time. We make time for things we deem important. Follow-up calls are under-utilized by most of us. The purpose of any follow-up call, in the words of Coach Geoff Berman, is to "leave the customer feeling better than how you found them." A simple thank-you after the service is powerful if it comes from the person who handled the customer at the counter. It is even more powerful on the smaller jobs that we do

*"...leave the customer feeling better than how you found them."*

in our shops every day simply because it is so unexpected. It is a tremendous way to separate yourself from the competition. Reminding customers of needed services and repairs on their vehicle should not be considered a "cold" call. A cold call by definition is a telephone call or visit made to someone who is not known, often in order to sell something. Your customers are known by you, you are known by them. After all, customers don't come to your shop because you make the bolts on the water pump really tight. They come to you because they like YOU. Ask your coach at ATI for step-by-step directions on how to accomplish your goal of "leaving them feeling better than when you found them."



>> there's got to be more money than just paying our bills."

Dave turned to a consulting company for help in improving profits, but he says that experience left "a bitter taste" in his mouth.

"When we went to their training programs in California, they didn't have a real office," Dave recalls. "They were leasing a room in a hotel. I felt like we were giving our money to a bunch of gypsies that didn't know what they were doing."

Fortunately for Dave, he attended an ASA conference where he heard a speaker from ATI who did know what he was doing.

"Chubby Frederick was a speaker, and we met him and talked to him," Dave explains. "Later that year we went to a Boot Camp in Indianapolis. Then we went to Baltimore to

visit the ATI offices. There was a real call center and real coaches."

After his experience in California, Dave recognized "the real deal" when he saw it: "Chubby cares about the people who are his clients. You can feel it, Jan and I knew it and we've never looked back. It's been the best business experience we've ever had."

Dave says ATI has taught him to be a student of his business, to look at what he does and how he can be a coach for his own employees. Of course, there's a learning curve.

"For me it's very hard at times to not say 'Just let me do it for you. Get out of my way and let me do it,'" Dave laughs. "But I find that when I let the people do what they were hired to do, the company grows. ATI has taught me that lesson."

Another lesson learned is paying attention to key performance indicators.

"ATI has taught me to watch my numbers on a daily basis," Dave says. "Sometimes I'm looking at them hourly so I can make course corrections throughout the day. It's the barometer of our business."

Having that barometer has allowed Dave to focus on being a businessperson instead of being caught up in the whirlwind of daily operations. Dave acknowledges they encounter problems every day, but he doesn't let those problems stop him from achieving his goals.










"We are making a good living," he says, "and we can do the things we want to do."

*Continued on page 4*

# Your Available Training Programs for January and February 2012



## January 2012

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  | 1 New Year  |
| 2  | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7/8   |
| 9 Service Advisor<br>1 of 4  | 10 Service Advisor<br>2 of 4  | 11 Shop Owner<br>1 of 9   | 12 Shop Owner<br>2 of 9   | 13 Shop Owner<br>3 of 9   | 14/15   |
| 16 Service Advisor<br>3 of 4<br>M.L. King Day                                    | 17 Service Advisor<br>4 of 4  | 18  | 19 MasterMind Birmingham<br>California S.A.<br>1 of 4                             | 20 MasterMind Birmingham<br>California S.A.<br>2 of 4                             | 21/22   |
| 23 Shop Owner<br>4 of 9  | 24 Shop Owner<br>5 of 9   | 25 Shop Owner<br>6 of 9   | 26  | 27  | 28/29   |
| 30 Service Advisor<br>1 of 4   | 31 Service Advisor<br>2 of 4  |  |  |  |  |

## February 2012

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

|   |  |                         |                                      |                                      |       |
|---|--|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|
|  |  | 1 Shop Owner<br>1 of 9  | 2 Shop Owner<br>2 of 9               | 3 Shop Owner<br>3 of 9               | 4/5   |
| 6   | 7  | 8 Shop Owner<br>7 of 9  | 9 Shop Owner<br>8 of 9               | 10 Shop Owner<br>9 of 9              | 11/12 |
|   |  |                         | California Service Advisor<br>1 of 4 | California Service Advisor<br>2 of 4 |       |
| 13  | 14 Valentine's Day   | 15                      | 16 Service Advisor<br>1 of 4         | 17 Service Advisor<br>2 of 4         | 18/19 |
| 20 Service Advisor<br>20<br>1 of 2  | 21 Service Advisor<br>20<br>2 of 2   | 22 Shop Owner<br>4 of 9 | 23 Shop Owner<br>5 of 9              | 24 Shop Owner<br>6 of 9              | 25/26 |
| 27 Service Advisor<br>3 of 4  | 28 Service Advisor<br>4 of 4   | 29 Shop Owner<br>1 of 9 |                                      |                                      |       |

### *Everything's Different When You're Spending Your Own Money, continued from page 3*

Family is very important to Dave and Jan, and recently their family has grown dramatically.

"We have four children, and three of those four got married in the last six months!" Dave exclaims. "Because our business runs correctly, my wife and I were able to devote our time to those events."

One of their sons is a technician in the business, and Jan works half-days keeping the shop's books and handling human resources. Dave and Jan are already working on their succession plan, and that plan includes ATI membership.

"We're going to be life members," Dave says. "We have a provision in our succession plan that whether we sell it to one of our children or to someone else, they have to stay members of ATI. We believe in it that strong. It really made our success."

Part of the Murphys' success is reflected in the way they spend their free time.

"We're avid boaters," Dave explains. "We have several boats on a lake that's four hours south of here. We've been able to spend a lot of time there over the last 10 years. Before we were with ATI, we typically didn't take time off."

Dave has this advice for fellow ATI members: "You're never finished implementing, but the reward is large. So hunker down and do the things you're coached to do, even though they may feel awkward, because obviously what you've been doing is not getting you where you want to go. If you follow your coach's advice, it will come back to you tenfold." **ATI**



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