

ShopTalk



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March 2012

What You Can Learn From Disney's Laundry



When you enter the Magic Kingdom park at Walt Disney World in Orlando, you're really on the second level. Unseen to guests, there is an underground level where employees (or "cast members" as Disney calls them) enter the park. As part of a seminar I attended in Orlando, I was able to tour this underground area as well as other "behind the scenes" areas at Walt Disney World.

During this event we toured three Disney operational support areas: the laundry, horticulture services and the "utilidor" system underneath the Magic Kingdom.

After we boarded the bus, the Disney people told us they were taking us to the laundry facility. I thought "What? I've seen the inside of too many Laundromats already." I didn't think I needed to see Disney's washing machines. But I was wrong.

The laundry operation is enormous—with 160 employees, it is the largest laundry facility in the world. Walt Disney World includes 12 different resorts, each with 500 to 2,500 hotel rooms and their requisite supply of towels and sheets, plus restaurant linens and everything else that needs to be laundered for the resorts. The individuals who operate the towel-folding machines fold an average of one towel every four seconds over an eight-hour shift. The monotony must be excruciating; however, they have a staff turnover rate of only 3 percent. Some employees are second and third generation, their families having worked in the facility for years.

There is a lot of neat automation to see, but most significant, I discovered that the laundry can be a vital customer service area in two important ways.

Laundry as customer service #1: Each day, guests leave hundreds of items that get mixed in with the hotels' towels and sheets. When those items get to the laundry facility, each item is indexed by the date, resort name and room number, and then it's entered into a database. The laundry facility has a call center to handle the guests' calls looking for lost items. As you can

imagine, every day there are dozens of stuffed animals purchased in the park one day, and left in the bed that night, that end up at the laundry. If the guest has already returned home before calling to recover a stuffed animal, the laundry staff takes photos of the toy at several places throughout the Magic Kingdom and creates a small scrapbook of photos. Then the stuffed animal finds its way home, along with the scrapbook and a note explaining the animal wasn't done having fun and that's why it "snuck out" to stay back for a couple of extra days. The Disney staff goes through great pains to take this "guest mistake" and turn it into an opportunity to provide a terrific experience.

Laundry as customer service #2: Even at the Magic Kingdom, doing the laundry is not a fun job. It's wet, it's hot, it has to be pressed and folded—and just when you get done with one load, another truck filled with dirty sheets arrives. It's grueling, but it has to be done. Plus, these employees don't get to see guests enjoying their work. It's one thing to operate a ride; at least you get to see the excited children. In the laundry, there is nothing but more laundry. But Disney does a great job of ensuring its employees

understand why their work is a critical part of the guest experience. For the laundry services employee, there are mounds of wet sheets. But the employees know that for guests, a freshly laundered pillowcase is the last thing they see before they close their eyes at the end of a magical day.

Disney's laundry facility is a lot like your auto repair shop. To your people, it's just another car. But for your customers, it's their opportunity to get to work, to visit their friends and to go on vacation.

Rather than just repairing cars, you are giving people their independence. You are enabling them to get to their jobs, go to the store and enjoy better lives. Help your techs see their work in the same way Disney's laundry employees see theirs. It's not just another broken car; it's an opportunity to help someone accomplish his or her life goals. **ATI**



The Value of “Chasing Shiny Pennies” and Building Business Systems

Dave Erb is quick to tell you he has a unique personality quirk that keeps him “chasing after shiny pennies” and always striving to improve his business, Dave’s Ultimate Automotive in Austin, Texas. And it all started for him back in high school.

“It was one of those fall into it backward kind of things,” Dave laughs. “In high school I started working at an auto parts store, and one of the guys that bought parts all the time asked me to work for him. So I started changing oil and busting tires.”

In his early 20s, Dave and a partner opened a shop together. Dave brought his good credit rating, and the partner brought the tools and experience. While the shop is still in business today, Dave explains that he and his partner had different goals, so they parted ways.

Dave went to work for a friend at Ultimate Auto Parts in 1992. The friend was an accountant, so he needed Dave’s technical skills. Five years later, Dave and his wife, Ruth, were ready to buy the business. Since customers were already calling the shop *Dave’s Ultimate Automotive*, they made the name official.

In 2000, Dave purchased the lot next door and built a larger building. That’s when the business really took off.

“The first month out, we had our first \$100,000.00 month, which blew me away!” Dave exclaims.

His excitement about his first \$100,000.00 month aside, Dave says he’s not so much motivated by money as he is by security.

“Obviously we all like money,” Dave says, “but really I’m security motivated. I have the need to make sure the customer doesn’t run out and tell bad things about me. So whatever that cost me, I’d do it. I had no idea if my market was right, my labor was right. I had no idea about shop supplies. Those kind of things.”

Dave was about to be offered an opportunity to learn all those things he didn’t yet know.

“I was fortunate to have somebody from ATI invite me to a boot camp in 2004,” Dave says. “I loved it and sent my wife to it the next day! We signed up for ATI, and it’s been fantastic for building my business. More than that, it’s been about building friendships with the team members at ATI and the folks we’ve met in Mastermind. We’ve gone on vacation with them, we lean on them for advice and comfort and confidence—all those things that go along with great friendships.”

One of the things Dave heard at his first boot camp really stuck with him: “Just because you have money in the checking account doesn’t



mean you’re running a profitable business.” That changed Dave’s perspective.

“When we bought the shop in 1997, I was saying ‘O.K., if I can make enough money to pay my bills and stay in business, I’m going to be a happy guy,’” Dave recalls. “And then the next year I was saying ‘If we can make a little money and take a paycheck, I’ll be happy.’ For me, it’s not how we did this year, period. It’s how we did this year compared to last. If we’re not growing, I feel like a failure.”

Dave was hardwired to “chase after the shiny penny” of success, and with ATI he gained the information he needed to chase after the right things.

“With ATI, I’m armed with all the information to know where we can grow,” Dave explains. “Whether it’s a car count issue or falling down on courtesy checks, I can diagnose the problem. Then I have the medicine to cure it right at my fingertips because of ATI.” >>>

Sam’s Corner

ATI Is Moving on April 1!

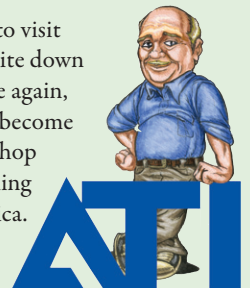
ATI is bugging out! That was the term used in the TV series *M*A*S*H* with Alan Alda when the field hospital in Korea was forced to move. Well, we certainly were not forced, but as many of you have witnessed we have outgrown our Savage facility. When we moved into Savage in 2001 we were helping about 50 shop owners a week, and today we are coaching 1047 every week. This has created lines for the bathroom, parking issues – and certainly more clients in training than we ever dreamed. I sincerely thank all of you for trusting us, which enabled us to experience incredible growth over the last decade.

Our new facility is located directly at BWI airport so the shuttles, hotels and restaurants will be much more convenient when you visit the training center. The new address is 705 Digital Drive, Suite V, Linthicum, Md. 21090 and we are

in Suites T–Z. The new facility is twice as big as Savage, in a new building with a million-dollar interior buildout. Our new facility is almost 18,000 square feet and is capable of running six classes at the same time. For those of you used to standing in line for the men’s room on breaks, the new restrooms will be plentiful and spacious. A new addition to our facility will be Chubby’s Garage, a climate-controlled classroom with a four-post Rotary Lift. The new cafeteria will hold twice as many students and has a full kitchen. When you arrive there is even a client luggage room to secure your things while you’re in class. We are also excited about the four conference rooms—you will have no problem scheduling private time with your coach. There will also be ample parking, which is one of the main reasons we picked this location.

There is even a walking path behind the building that winds around a pond in the woods, which we might stock with fish for lunchtime entertainment. The exciting part for you seafood lovers is we are right down the street from the famous G & M restaurant, which is the most famous crab-cake location in Maryland. My mom used to send me there from Savage to pick up crab cakes when I was able to stop by and visit her.

So if you are planning to visit us after April 1, please write down our new address and once again, thank you for helping us become the largest independent shop owner training and coaching company in North America.



SuperConference 2012

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>>> Still attracted by those “shiny pennies,” Dave says he takes what he learns from his colleagues at Mastermind meetings and immediately goes back to his shop to implement it.

“When I go to ATI meetings, someone will present something they do and I’ll go, ‘I can’t believe we haven’t been doing this. How are we even successful?’ Then I’ll go back and implement it,” Dave says. “But the reality is that your people can only handle so much, and when you present something new, they drop something else.”

Dave realized he needed a way to make sure his employees could implement new ideas and continue to do the things that keep the shop running smoothly.

“At the end of 2009, I wrote out processes and procedures, creating my own VIP internal program,” Dave explains. “It details everybody’s responsibilities, from how phones are handled, to how we market, to how we are going to dominate Google. We were doing a lot of it already, but I put it to pen and paper.”

With his program in place to help his employees run the shop, Dave has more time to spend at home with Ruth and their 8-year-old son, Ethan, who Dave is proud to report is a natural athlete with a 2nd degree black belt in Taekwondo.

“Most days I take Ethan to school,” Dave says, “and I get to work at about 8. I get on the computer. I check Internet stuff. I Google myself, make sure my reputation’s looking good. I do my

The Coaches Corner

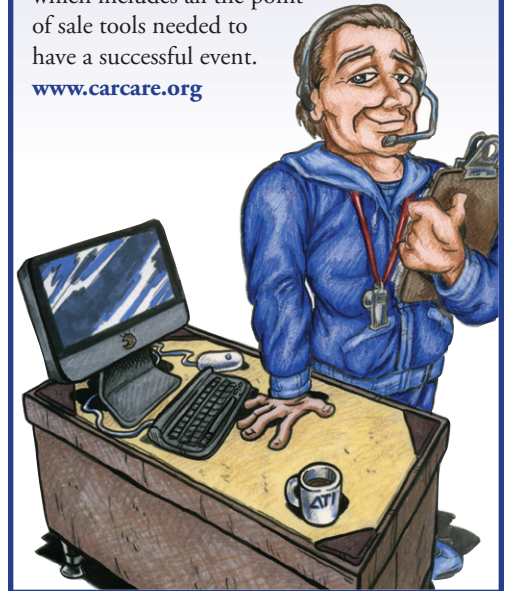
By Mike Haley



What if I told you there is an event you can do in April 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 fee of \$59.99 (tax deductible) you will receive your car care kit which includes all the point of sale tools needed to have a successful event.

www.carcare.org



Demandforce stuff. I manage my people, make sure they’re doing their job. I look over invoices. I adjust, and then by noon, I’m at lunch and then home watching my recorded shows for the afternoon.”


It’s not surprising that Dave’s advice for other shop owners is to trust the processes.

“You have to trust the numbers,” he says. “As long as you’re good at your customer service, as long as you back up your product, keep quality in mind and go after the right customer, if you don’t sweat the little things and you don’t get caught up in who’s right or wrong and you just take care of the customer, then everything else is going to work out.” **ATI**

Your Available Training Programs for March and April 2012

March 2012

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

			1 Shop Owner 2 of 9	2 Shop Owner 3 of 9	3/4
5 Service Advisor 1 of 4	6 Service Advisor 2 of 4	7	8 Service Manager 1 of 2	9 Service Manager 2 of 2	10/11
12	13	14 Super Conference Ft. Lauderdale	15 Super Conference Ft. Lauderdale	16 Super Conference Ft. Lauderdale	17/18 Super Conference Ft. Lauderdale St. Patrick's Day
19	20	21 Shop Owner 4 of 9	22 Shop Owner 5 of 9	23 Shop Owner 6 of 9	24/25
26 Service Advisor 20 Group	27 Service Advisor 20 Group	28 Shop Owner 1 of 9	29 Shop Owner 2 of 9	30 Shop Owner 3 of 9	31

April 2012

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

					1
2 Service Advisor 1 of 4	3 Service Advisor 2 of 4	4	5	6	7/8 Passover
9	10	11 Shop Owner 7 of 9	12 Shop Owner 8 of 9 California S.A. 1 of 4	13 Shop Owner 8 of 9 California S.A. 1 of 4	14/15
16 Service Advisor 3 of 4	17 Service Advisor 4 of 4	18	19 20 Group Baltimore	20 20 Group Baltimore	21/22
23	24	25 Shop Owner 1 of 9	26 Shop Owner 2 of 9	27 Shop Owner 3 of 9	28/29
30 Service Advisor 20 Group					



**Automotive
Training Institute**

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