

ShopTalk



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June 2012

Choices

How about that tech who can't stop drinking? We've all had one of them.

The guy is really talented, he does great work, but then one day, he doesn't show up. A day or so later, he comes back to work as if nothing was wrong.

You ask him, "Joe, what's up? Where were you on Friday morning? We missed you." He gives you some excuse and apologizes profusely. Maybe you cut him some slack because he's a hard worker.

A couple of weeks later, another morning, no Joe. You call his cell phone, no answer.

By now some of the guys are talking. They tell you Joe gets wasted at the bar a lot. He probably didn't make it in this morning because he's passed out somewhere.

If this is your first time dealing with an employee in trouble, you may take it upon yourself to try to help Joe. Chase him down, clean him up and get him to work. That choice leads to more choices, and eventually you are tracking down where he buys booze, paying off his tabs and threatening the clerks to never sell to Joe again.

But no matter how many times Joe says he wants to quit, there will be some trigger to drink again. It might be the game on television, or he'll think of a certain girl or the sun will go down and he'll get bored. That trigger will drive Joe to take just one drink. But one always leads to another night passed out.

While it's easy to pity Joe, and before you and I give thanks that we aren't like him, let's think about his choices.

Joe has a self-destructive habit that prevents him from achieving his potential. He could have become an A tech one day if he had kept at it.

I see Joe every day in our clients. I'm not talking about drinking problems, but about habits. Habits that limit success. Habits that prevent our clients from reaching their full potentials. Habits passed down from one generation to the next within the store.

Habits formed in the beginning to help you survive may now be preventing you from thriving. Back in the day, maybe you had to work on cars to survive. Fixing cars was what you knew, and you were good at it. You did it to generate the money in your shop.


Today, if you are fixing cars, you aren't watching the numbers, marketing and working on your business. Sure, you know your time is better spent elsewhere. But when it gets busy or when you are feeling cash pressure, what do you do? You jump under the hood because 10 years ago that's what you did and it worked.

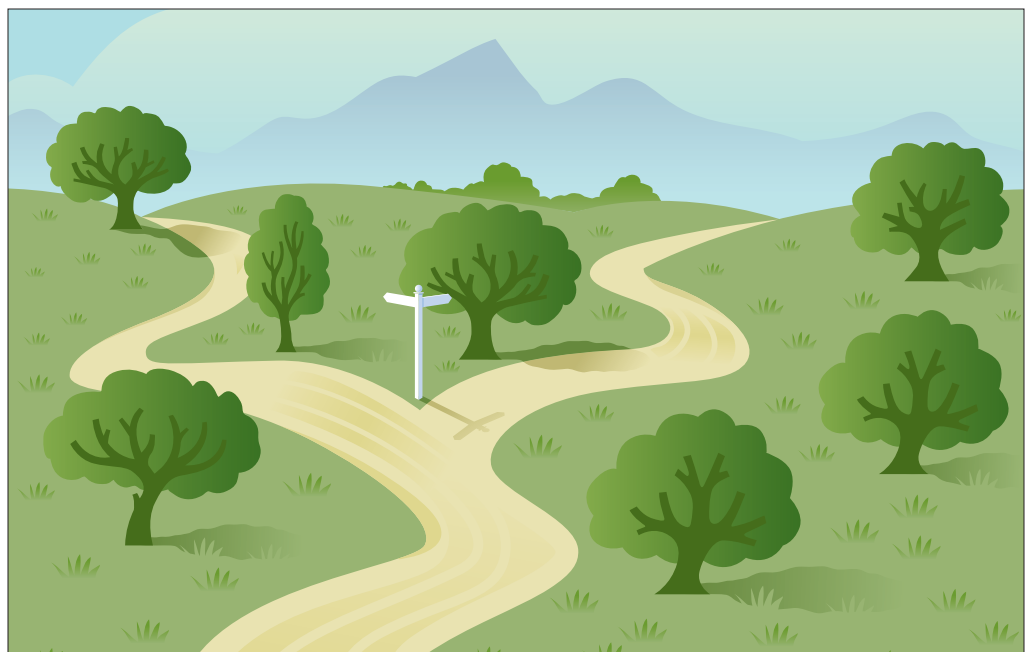
Your old habits may be holding you back from your true potential. Think you are exempt because you don't work on cars? For you it may be something else. What's comfortable for you? What do you do when you are the most stressed out and worried? Chances are that activity springs from an old habit, not because it's the most important activity to do that will get you out of the problem you are stressed about.

There's professional help for Joe. There are people who work with people like him every

day to confront their limitations, to overcome them and to live at their full potentials. They start by helping them develop new habits. Rather than drinking when they get lonely, they form new habits like taking a walk or writing poetry.

The good news is there is professional help for you, too. It's easy to discount the advice your coach gives when it doesn't fit with what you believe. But the truth is your coach is speaking based on years of experience with dozens of shops, each with its own unique needs. Your coach's recommendations are in your best interest.

Don't be like Joe. Don't allow past triggers to send you back into your comfort zone. Instead, break out and break free of limitations. You'll soon develop new habits, better habits that are more productive than your old ones. ATI is all about helping you reach your full potential. 



No Silver Bullet, Just Success – One Step at a Time

Dana Haglin put himself through college by buying cars, fixing them up and selling them. So when he and his wife, Judi, graduated, opening an auto repair shop seemed like the logical thing to do.

“It was back in the 80s, when the economy was about as bad as it is now,” Judi laughs. “So Dana started the shop, and I managed a McDonald’s for three years to pay the bills.”

Haglin Automotive started small.

“Real small,” Dana says, “as in I was by myself. As we grew and hired employees and so forth, it became more complicated. We weren’t making the money we thought we should be making for the effort we were putting into it.”

When Dana and Judi heard about the ATI Boot Camp, they were interested but had reservations. Judi explains:

“We knew going into it that we wouldn’t get a simple bump in the financials because we were already doing shop supplies and hazmat and some of those easily gained profit margins. I think I had the most reservations about it, but I saw the opportunity for Dana to become a better owner/manager versus a technician. And car count was a huge issue for us back then. So those were my two criteria for making the decision to go with ATI.”

Dana interjects, “Fixing cars and fixing the shop are totally different skill sets.”

“Cars don’t talk back,” Judi continues. “Dealing with the personalities of the employees has always been somewhat of a struggle, and at that point, we had some personalities!”

In the five-plus years that Dana and Judi have been in ATI coaching, they’ll tell you the only thing that hasn’t changed is Dana and Judi.

“Everything else has changed,” Judi says, “starting with getting our labor margins in line.”

“When we looked at the labor hours with our coach, we saw that we had 80 more hours available than we were selling, so we probably didn’t need those extra two or three people on the payroll,” Dana explains.

Judi continues, “We also discovered we were overpaying several people, thinking we needed to have the higher end A-techs when we really didn’t. When we did an actual labor analysis of all the jobs we did, less than 10 percent of them required an A-technician.”

Another positive change for Haglin Automotive came when Dana and Judi evaluated their car count. Did they need to focus on acquisition or retention?

“Back then, we had no money, so I took over the marketing program,” Judi recalls. “Using ATI’s marketing calendar as a starting point, I was able to quantify what we spent on each program and the kind of return we got.”

The couple found they needed to focus first on acquisition, and that required revamping their database of potential customers.

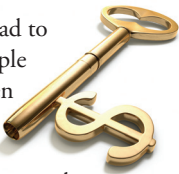
“We’re in a college town, so we had to focus on getting more business people and residents,” Judi explains. “When students and professors leave for the summer, that’s 30,000 people gone. We also needed to clean up our mailing list. When we tried a first class mailing, we were surprised by how many pieces were returned. Bulk mail is very different from first class!”

Now using in-house retention marketing, Dana and Judi are focusing on using the Internet to bring in business. They are using a search engine optimization program, working on landing pages for their website and using social media such as Facebook and YouTube to stay relevant when it comes to customers searching for Haglin Automotive on Google.

“When we first started acquisition marketing five years ago, direct mail was the focus,” Judi says. “Now we’re putting a lot of the focus and energy into the Internet. We are working with Demandforce to get more reviews online, which gives us higher relevancy on Google, because so many people are really searching for repair shops that way.”

“Or just looking on their smartphones,” Dana says.

Judi picks up on Dana’s thought and tells this story: “This gentleman’s car wasn’t running. He was stuck right in front of one of our competitors. But he looked up ‘auto repair’ on his cell phone and called us.”



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Sam’s Corner

2012 Motor Age Top Shops Contest

I can’t begin to tell you how proud of you I am! Whatever your short- or long-term success in our program, it takes real guts to take feedback and attempt change in your business. Many of you have succeeded in re-engineering your business beyond everyone in your area, and you are looked up to as an authority in automotive service. It is truly important to the industry to be able to see what is actually obtainable by the top shops in North America. We all need to see the real high-water benchmarks in profits, marketing, operations, websites, aftermarket involvement and community activity. It helps make everyone better, and there are a lot of ATI clients that reach these benchmarks. ATI Top Shops are the best of the best! We don’t just measure sales volume! We are focused on being the best, from our gross profit to our humanitarian efforts.

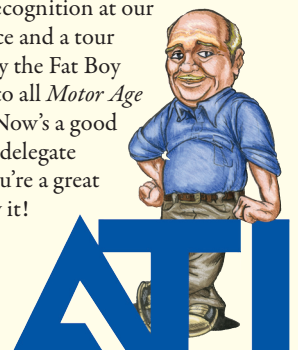
I am personally asking you to enter the 2012 Motor Age Top Shops contest. Yes, you will be on

the front cover of the largest automotive shop owner magazine in North America. Yes, you can hang it on the wall of your shop’s waiting room and receive tons of local press, which will all be good for your business. But the most important reason is that you will give everyone in the industry standards to look up to – standards that really mean something. You are so much further ahead than the average shop in North America, and it is important you share your success so others have something to aspire to!

There will be one Grand Prize and nine First Place Prize winners. First Place winners and their shop will be featured in a shop profile in the Top Shop section of the December 2012 issue of *Motor Age*. Your coaches and I have been writing articles in *Motor Age* for almost a decade. They are a class act and are read by 150,000 owners and Service Advisors. Mention Chubby and ATI in your training and education response; it might help!

Simply go to www.searchautoparts.com then click on *Motor Age* and then click on Shops. Download the Top Shops rules and start the process of filling out the information. It will take some effort on your part to answer the questions, but those of you working on your business instead of in it have the time! Eddie Cleveland, you might have to give up your afternoon nap but this is important! Special recognition at our next SuperConference and a tour of Chubby’s garage by the Fat Boy himself are awarded to all *Motor Age* Top Shops winners. Now’s a good time, get started and delegate some of it – prove you’re a great leader! I always knew it!

Thanks,
Chubby



KPI #1: Is Your Personal Life in Balance With Your Business Life?

By Mike Bennet



“I own the business so the buck stops with me” or “I have to do it because no one else can (or will)” are excuse phrases we have all used at one time or another, right? Admit it, as a shop owner you have used

one of these or many others to justify missing a family event or personal obligation. Don't be ashamed, we all have. It's a trait that makes us “owners,” right? This attitude is common and yet problematic, and finding a balance with life and business can be a horribly difficult thing. Trust me I know! From missed recitals to forgotten game times, or never seeing the kids before bedtime, all are part of the sacrifice of owning a business. If this has been your existence, then I'm here to tell you it doesn't have to be and I'm going to tell you how.

Being a shop owner should not be a death sentence to a life away from the shop. You need to find some balance in your life for many reasons. Health is one of the greatest reasons. It is just not healthy to work 12 to 14 hours a day, six or seven days a week. Lack of proper sleep, poor exercise, poor eating habits and stress are just a few of the health risks associated with long hours at the shop. Efficiency or the lack thereof is probably the second reason. Working the longer-harder plan usually leads to one thing – inefficiency. How many times have you stayed at the shop until 10:00 p.m. racking your brain over a drivability issue or something similar, only to go home frustrated and have an epiphany the next morning that miraculously solved the problem? It's simple. Your brain was tired and it needed to reboot. Probably the most important reason, though, is your family. Missed time with the spouse and kids is time you will never get back. Getting your priorities straight and bringing balance to your life will almost certainly bring you greater happiness and success in both areas.

So, the question is how? How can you find some balance and yet still be the captain of your ship? Well, like every great solution in life, it starts with a decision. You can only make a true change in life when you make a decision for yourself to do so. I remember my decision-making point as clearly as if it was yesterday.



More than five years ago, I signed my shop up with ATI. One of my two goals for doing so was to re-engage myself with my family. At that time, I had one daughter leaving for college and another just getting ready to start middle school. Up to that point, I had missed most of the important events with the family. You know the story. Home after bedtime, never eating dinner with the wife or kids, rarely at school events, showing up after the start of the birthday party, all of the normal things that happen when you own your own business. Certainly we all know the sacrifices for owning your own business, right? The business was doing well. We were turning over good cash and we had a great reputation in the town, but I wasn't happy, so I made a decision. I was going to take control of my business and figure out a way to bend it to my will (not the other way around). To cut to the chase, over the next four and a half years I was able to attend 91 of 92 NCAA soccer matches my oldest daughter played in while in college, and I have yet to miss any other family activity because of “work.”

Once you have made the decision, the process is not so daunting. My formula was rather simple:

Track your time. Track everything you do that is work related for one week. Make a list of everything you do. Decide what tasks are necessary for you to engage in and which ones you could delegate to someone else or perhaps even eliminate. I think you will be surprised.

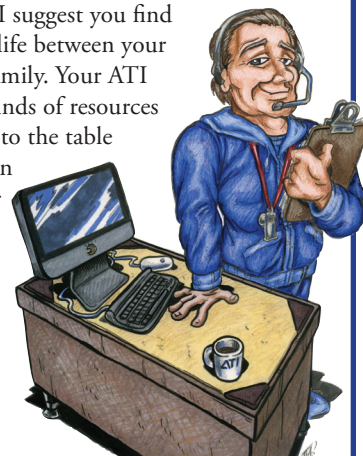
There are probably a ton of mundane tasks you hold on to that someone else could do just as well as you. Once you have a list of jobs you could shed, determine who you have that may be best suited to take the task over, or decide what type of candidate you will be looking for if you need to hire someone. Create a job description and lay out your expectations for the individual who is going to take the job over. Empower your people by refusing to always be dad. One of the suggestions I often give clients is to suggest they encourage the staff to come to them with solutions they want to discuss, not with problems they need an answer for.

Get organized. Set priorities, work smarter not harder, delegate (and really let go!). Create lists and save them for reuse. Keep a main calendar centrally located to post everyone's activities.





Leave work at work. With the technology to connect to anyone at any time from virtually anywhere, there may be no boundary between work and home – unless you create it. Make a conscious decision to separate work time from personal time. When you're with your family, for instance, turn off your cell phone and put away your laptop computer.

Learn to say no. Remember that it's OK to respectfully say no, whether to a client or to an employee. When you quit doing the things you do only out of guilt or a false sense of obligation, you'll make more room in your life for the activities that are meaningful to you and bring you joy.

Life is something you should enjoy and excel at, not just survive. That includes life at home as well as at the shop. Rarely would you see the phrase “...and he ran a great shop” on a tombstone, so I suggest you find the balance in life between your business and family. Your ATI coach has all kinds of resources they can bring to the table to help you gain control of your responsibilities at the shop – to help you find the balance in life you should be enjoying.



Your Available Training Programs for June and July 2012

June 2012					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday/Sunday
				1	2/3
4 Service Advisor 1 of 4	5 Service Advisor 2 of 4	6 Shop Owner 1 of 9	7 Shop Owner 2 of 9	8 Shop Owner 3 of 9	9/10
11	12	13 Shop Owner 4 of 9	14 Shop Owner 5 of 9	15 Shop Owner 6 of 9	16/17 Father's Day
			20 Group 13 Women's Group	20 Group 13 Women's Group	
18	19	20 Shop Owner 7 of 9	21 Shop Owner 8 of 9	22 Shop Owner 9 of 9	23/24
25 Service Advisor 3 of 4	26 Service Advisor 4 of 4	27	28 Service Manager 3 of 4	29 Service Manager 4 of 4	30

July 2012					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday/Sunday
					1
2	3	4 Independence Day	5	6	7/8
9 Service Advisor 1 of 4	10 Service Advisor 2 of 4	11 Shop Owner 1 of 9	12 Shop Owner 2 of 9	13 Shop Owner 3 of 9	14/15
16 SA 20 Group Regulators	17 SA 20 Group Regulators	18 Shop Owner 4 of 9	19 Shop Owner 5 of 9	20 Shop Owner 6 of 9	21/22
23	24	25 Shop Owner 7 of 9	26 Shop Owner 8 of 9	27 San Jose S.A. 1 of 4	28
				28 San Jose S.A. 2 of 4	
29	30 Service Advisor 3 of 4	31 Service Advisor 4 of 4			

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Both Judi and Dana are happy with the results they are seeing from their ATI coaching.


Judi: "We have money in the bank account."

Dana: "Our car count's almost double what it was."

They also report that their employee mix is much better.

Dana and Judi's success came just in time. They have a son, 24, and a daughter, 22, and their years in college overlapped. They are happy to report that both have now graduated.

Looking back at how they implemented their coach's advice, Dana says, "There aren't any silver bullets. It's one step at a time. You have to put it all together as you go and not get discouraged. It is a number of things put together that makes it work, not just one thing."

Judi agrees and says, "I think the most important thing is to have a good connection with your coach. When he gives you four or five things to work on, you need to write them down and then work on them. Dana and I joke about 'drinking the Kool-Aid' when we go to SuperConferences or 20-Groups. But if they say you need to do three day follow-up phone calls, you need to do three day follow-up phone calls. It's about getting back to basics, implementing and having a direction." 



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