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Upcoming Courses:

Shop Owners

- April 2-4
- April 7-9
- April 10-11 (CA)
- April 23-25

Service Managers

- March 25-26
- March 31-April 2
- April 14-15
- April 28-29

Advanced Shop Owners

- March 19-20



Superconference 2008, Who Would Have Thought?

By Bryan Stasch



After the Superconference in Scottsdale, Arizona, who would have thought that it could be t o p p e d ?

But somehow, we did it. Fort Lauderdale, in February, what an incredible place to work on your business and learn something new! I know, my wife doesn't believe it either, but we actually work at these events; it's not all play and pleasure. This year, we had over 200 attendees join us at the beautiful Westin Hotel and Oceanfront Resort in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for what I feel was the best event we have ever had. The event kicked off with a welcome reception Wednesday evening on the Inner Coastal Waterway with cocktails, fresh seafood, and good music.

The following morning, we kicked off the show celebrating some results of ATI clients and how they have transformed their business. Then we moved into this year's theme of the conference, "DASH". The "DASH" represents life's journey, as the dash in between the date of birth and the day we pass on a tombstone. What is in the middle is what really counts; what we do with our lives, who we've touched along the way, what kind of legacy we leave behind, and how will

you be remembered? We got into the nuts and bolts of the event as Chubby kicked off the first day with his normal sense of humor, immediately followed by the first days list of speakers, Jeff Lagges, President of ALLDATA, with his presentation "Survive & Thrive in The Changing Market", then John Adams, President of Big O Tires, and his "Secrets to Making Money in the Tire Business", who had left us all



with a special gift, and then as the last speaker of the day, Dr. Paul Hartunian with his presentation on "How to Increase Car Count with Local or National Publicity". After we enjoyed a delicious lunch on the ocean, surrounded by my three favorite colors, WHITE sand, BLUE sky and water, and GREEN palm trees, we went back to work, with "Back By Popular Demand" round table sessions with 9 topics available from Leadership to Car Count, Staffing to Productivity and many in between for a chance to review and work through implementation challenges with your peers. We then ended our first information packed day with our ATI

Master Mind Makeover. I am really proud of this group, the audience had thrown them some great questions and the Master Mind members just knocked them out of the park.

Last but not least for the day, were the Cocktail Reception and Trade Show and our Dinner Celebration, with ATI partners ALLDATA, NwzWorx, Customerlink, Moving Targets, Leasing Strategies, and One Source POS, Inc. on hand for demonstrations and examples for ATI clients. Then onto Dinner, and as you can expect, Chubby spared no expense. The best food the Resort had to offer, seafood, prime rib, salads, and so on, and more than you can imagine. All while trying to figure who killed Chubby. Yes, I said who killed Chubby. But all in fun, as part of our evening's entertainment, a "Murder Mystery", with staged actors and volunteers/clients, some of whom I may never look at the same way again. Andy Tilton, Ron Kissane, Kris Ryser, Sid Spencer, Tim Goldthwaite and my Nadine Brumfield and George Zeeks all did a great job and really dug into their role. They blamed it on the alcohol. Once the crime was solved, I had a chance to give away some awards. ATI's "Humanitarian of the Year Award" went to Mr. Walt Eger, the "Shop of the Year" went to Mr. Norm Jones of Kirkwood Auto, Delaware, and the "Tire

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Dealer of the Year" went to Mr. Gary Pivotto, West Town Monona Tire of Wisconsin. Picking these winners is not an easy task, I had over 800 possible to choose from, but the math does tell the tale and all of my coaches had plenty for me to review, all with good arguments.

Having some rest, a good breakfast, and a chance to catch our breath from the first day; we started all over again the following morning with a few more guest speakers. Kathleen Schmatz, President & CEO of AAIA, with her presentation "Inside the Automotive Aftermarket", John Nielsen, Director of Auto Repair Network and Consumer Programs, AAA, and his presentation, "The Auto Repair Industry through the Eyes of AAA", and Lee Phillips, Attorney, with his presentation "Accumulation and Preservation of Wealth", really opened some eyes with stats and surveys on market trends, what's ahead for the industry, and what you have to do to protect yourself financially. The speakers were followed up again with lunch beachside, more round table sessions and our ATI Car Count Idea contest, where I had a chance to give another award. The award for the car count contest was given to Dana and Judi Haglin, for their "Total Package" for marketing. Utilizing several vehicles, they compiled an impressive tracking and measuring system to show a return of 9 new customers per week in 2007. This total package approach won Dana & Judi a 32" Flat screen TV. We at ATI want to congratulate Dana & Judi, and all award winners for your efforts, ideas, and passion to an industry that we all have worked so hard to protect.

In jest, I may say, "the crappy part of my job is that I have to go to really cool places, hang out with great people, and speak or entertain them". I can hardly wait for next year!



Only Leaders Need Apply

By Brian Canning



We in the automotive world are challenged by negative public perceptions & too few qualified technicians.

Our greatest challenge & our greatest failure is in our unwillingness to lead.

Although it may sound strange with me both writing about leadership & asking you to stop reading about it, at a certain point, leadership will require you to close that book or magazine, log off or otherwise depart from the world of written word and actually go out there and move somebody. Leadership is one of those things that can certainly benefit from knowledge, but will benefit most from the willingness to just do it. A leader must grab hold of a situation, an obstacle if you will & set his people to fixing it, climbing it or knocking it over.

There is no doubt that dealing with our people is complicated, with their emotions, varying motivations and levels of commitment but set them to the task and they might just surprise you. By being thoughtful and committed in the process, you might just surprise yourself.

I would confess to having read every book on leadership known to man but I am strongly of the opinion that leadership does not reside in books or in magazines or on-line. This is only the rumor of leadership. It never moved anyone. That is our job as leaders. Conventional wisdom would tell us that great leaders are not born, they are made and I would agree with that. I would even want to believe that anybody has the potential to be a great leader and that it takes nothing more than the willingness to jump in with stubborn determination to see it through. The reality is that most

people do not want to be leaders, but will strive to be great, or not so great, followers. Most of us are not comfortable pushing the group, even if it does make them better or more efficient. We try very hard to avoid situations where we would have to pass judgment on another person's performance. For most of us, our first experiences with leadership is where we are the senior, most experienced person & are unceremoniously thrust into a position of increased responsibility. Sometimes we buy or open a business. Sometimes we end up there because we have an incompetent supervisor whom we keep saving from himself and somebody notices. They fire the supervisor, promote us, with the obligatory pittance of a raise and oh damn, what are we going to do now? Why we are going to lead of course. Clumsily at first, but we are going to lead.

There is no doubt that life gets interesting from the very moment you try on that mantle of leadership, hoping that you will grow into it because it sure doesn't feel comfortable that first time. As if your lack of confidence wasn't tough enough, your coworkers suddenly aren't acting the same and there seem to be rumors of favoritism swirling all around you and those happy people you've worked with all these years are suddenly far less friendly. Don't worry this is only your first test. It will get much worse before it gets better. Actually this is a critical moment, one that a lot of would-be leaders do not survive, and with your actions you will progress and grow as a leader or you will disappear back into the anonymity of the flock. Will you be a leader or will you be a sheep?

6 months ago, I was asked by a client to play mystery shopper to his several stores.

In the aftermath of this, we had a managers meeting to discuss all that had been observed. The next morning I was fortunate enough to be driven to the airport by one of the manager's whose store suffered most horribly at the hands of the mystery shopper. In his effort to react, he asked for my opinion on what the store's issues were. I believe he was prepared to discuss process and I think I shocked him when I told him that I thought a failure in leadership was the root cause to his problems. To his credit, this manager accepted what I said rather than deny and asked me to recommend a book that would help him improve. I thought about this for a minute, wanting to be careful in making such an important recommendation. I knew this manager very well. I knew he would do whatever I asked and avidly read whatever I suggested. In the end, I told him to forget the books and just lead.

This manager was about as far from a natural leader as you could possibly get. I would tell you that he would rather praise & credit his people for success than taking one drop of praise for himself. At a certain point, he got tired of falling short of goals and being embarrassed. He learned to set expectations and learned to hold his people accountable. He learned how to lead. Quite suddenly he was inspecting all that he expected. Quite suddenly, results mattered and sales, profitability and productivity were where they should be. It should not surprise anyone that this store is now hitting their numbers and that they have regained their ranking. It is not a rumor, leaders lead!



ATTENTION SHOP OWNERS AND MANAGERS:
If you have something you would like to share,
e-mail your coach or ATI at
office@autotraining.net.



Finding The Needle In A Field Of Needles

By George Zeeks



Things are going great, the telephone is ringing, you have customers coming through the door wanting

work done on their car & all is right with the world. Except, we don't have enough technicians or maybe the right technician for the job. A very common scenario that plays out in shops around the country everyday, a common complaint from our clients is the problem finding a good technician or the "right" technician. My first impulse is to ask why we lost a good technician and were they that good to begin with? Look at how you are hiring your employees. If we find that we are doing the old fashioned "fog the mirror" test, then you got what you deserved. How do you treat your employees? I have found that it is very difficult to steal a happy employee; they just do not want to leave. If you need to read further, because you need staffing, focus on fixing the root problem first or you will always end up looking for people.

First thing that we need to do to find staffing in today's market is to take our head outside of the box. The old ways just do not work anymore. If you run an ad in the paper, it is expensive and a major gamble. You might as well go to Vegas and try your luck there. However, if we are going to run an ad let's be smart about it. Look at it from the employee's point of view and sell what they want to buy. What is different about your company that would appeal to a prospect? Do you have benefits, training, flexible hours? Are you closed on weekends and perhaps someone who is currently working the weekends would want to come

to work for you so they could spend time with their family. If you are going to run an ad, run one that will emphasize the benefits that you have to offer. If it looks like everyone else's ad then how are they going to find you?

Internet dating, I mean employment services can be a great resource or a total nightmare. We have a company that we recommend on a regular basis that does a very good job. There are, however, many companies



that are not much better than placing an ad in a newspaper. Anytime you spend your money on a one shot deal, you had better do everything that you can to make sure you are reaching the right employees. Also, keep in mind what part of the country you are in. The more rural your situation, the smaller the demographic pool that you have to work with; the less likely you are to have a positive result.

Just like with customers, referrals are to best way to find people. Do you have a rolodex of the past employee's that have ever worked for you? Do you keep the old applications for the applicants that impressed you in some way but were not right for the position open at that time? Why not? The "C" technician that you did not feel was ready 3 years ago may have turned into a skilled addition, provided that you parted company on the best of terms. That happens quite often, by the way. Networking

with past employees is a great way to keep your options open and makes sure you have a good reputation among the technician community.

Talking to the Parts houses and the Tool Guys can be a great resource. Too many times, we ask them to "keep an eye out for a technician/ manager" but we fail to make it worth their while. Offering a bounty for a good potential employee makes a lot of sense. Offering a bounty to your current staff makes even more sense; they know people in the field and would not refer someone just for the money because they have to work with them. You only pay once you have found the right person and have hired them and nothing works quite like cash on the barrel. Some people may find this distasteful but remember that you can't steal a happy employee.

A major target for many opportunities is the large corporate chain stores. If you happen to be employed by such a facility, keep this in mind. The further the employee is from a feeling of personal empowerment, the more susceptible he is to making a change. The extended hours and the weekends do not help to retain staff and can make other opportunities that come up very attractive. I have been on both sides of this particular fence, so I know the pros and con's of each side very well. I just made sure my people felt appreciated and valued so that I would not lose them, but many corporate managers lose sight of that.

A major opportunity is what happens before & after work. Find your target area & spend some time in the coffee shops before work. Anyone in a uniform is fair game. Just walk up and introduce yourself and start selling. It is amazing how often this works. Networking with

fellow shop owners can become a mutual benefit by providing the prospective employee an alternative if you do not have a position for them right now. Make sure to keep their number on file for the future. It also gives you another possible source for staffing by having the relationship with the other shop owners. Seminars and training sessions can be a great pool of prospects. The people there are looking to grow and advance in the field. Keep the conversation quick and simple, establish some basis for further communication and get their phone number and call back at a more convenient time. Here is the biggest chance to get your head outside the box; the only thing that will limit you is your imagination.

First & last is they way you treat your employees. Most people invest a certain amount of their self image into their jobs. It is your responsibility as a leader to encourage that investment by providing a positive atmosphere where the employee can feel a sense of growth, advancement and team spirit. We often hear that we need to praise our employees more to encourage positive behavior, but this also increases the connection to management and each other. It is not a catch phrase, it is hard work and requires constant attention to change the way we deal with those around us. If you do not make this change, you will always be searching for new employees.

There are tons of employees out there, you just have to find them. It truly is finding a needle in a field of needles; you just have to find the right one. People change jobs every day and the person that you need is working somewhere right now but they are unhappy. You just have to find the right needle. 🎯

Sam's Corner: Passion and Being Part Of Something Great!

By Brian Canning

I have toiled behind more counters than I would care to remember over the years, and I would admit that I am one of the luckiest people in the world when it comes to where I work and who I work with. I am one of those very lucky people that never have to work. I would assure you that this is not a declaration of personal wealth. It is a declaration of love for my job, for the people I work with and for the things I get to do everyday.

As I've toiled behind those counters I've mentioned, I suppose that in some kind of way,

I have paid a few dues and probably picked up a thing or two along the way. But until I started coaching, until I got to share my days with the highly experienced, highly motivated All-Stars that make up the coaching department, I never really thought about my various jobs in terms of love. It was work and I needed to do it to pay the bills. Here at ATI, I can honestly say that I love my job. I get to share my days with highly motivated, experienced professionals and get to make a difference in people's lives and

help them achieve their dreams. There is an experience worth having! The first time a client cries because they have money in the bank or time for their family makes it all worthwhile. Making a difference makes all the difference for me.

I have shared the stage with some pretty incredible people in my life. I have been a part of some pretty incredible teams. I find it very easy to get up early every morning to be with a group of men and women that work selflessly & hard everyday to make a difference in the lives



of their clients. Every decision and recommendation they make is weighted with consequence and huge responsibility. That is the courage of conviction.

Extraordinary would only begin to describe the team I work with. We build possibilities.

Seven At the Top, *Congratulations To All!*



This Month's Winners are:

Junior and Lisa Bailey
Express Auto Center
9720 Jefferson Davis Hwy
Richmond, VA 23237

Larry Nasey
Automotive Clinic
2035 Divisadero Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

Chuck Kimbrell
Advance Auto Repair
452 S. Extension #1
Mesa, AZ 85210

Ron and Sheila Kissane
All A's Automotive
1300 S. Poseyville Road
Midland, MI 48640

Mike Swartz
Express Automotive, Inc.
188 Main Street
Metuchen, NJ 08840

Mike Hurd
Big O Tires #5046 of Placerville
5046 Placerville
Placerville, CA 95667

Steve Thomas
Rossi's Automotive Service, Inc.
903 Selim Road
Silver Spring, MD 20910



8611 Larkin Road
Suite 200
Savage, MD 20763