

# ATI Shoptalk



Issue 3

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## Upcoming Courses:

### Shop Owners

- June 4-6
- June 12-13
- June 18-20

### Service Managers

- May 29-30
- June 9-10
- June 16-17

### Advanced Shop Owners

- June 26-27

### Advanced Service Managers

- June 23-25



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## Training Your Manager In Waiting.

By Chris Frederick



You have successfully built a wonderful business with a great reputation, everyone is proud of your accomplishments. Your family is very appreciative of all the hours it has taken you to build your business. Your customers love you for taking care of the safety of their family. Your associates have looked up to you for years and for the most part will follow you into any battle. You love your business and you enjoy working in it. You have rarely ever met anyone that can do it as well as you can. You have made mistakes, like most shop owners, but you have hung in there and learned what it takes to run a profitable business. You have the ability to run your business in concert where all the necessary ingredients to make everyone happy are at your fingertips if you just focus daily on the details. You have arrived!

So why would you want to change anything? Well, you may be just like many other shop owners that are experiencing requests from their loved ones to spend more time with them. I know during most of my life, the business had to come first at

times, and yes, I am guilty of missing games and recitals that were very important to the family. I justified it as, no one can do it like me but the truth was, I enjoyed doing what I thought no one else could do. You could say I didn't trust anyone with the keys to the city and maybe you have had some bad experiences



in your lifetime. I can recall many a terrible story from shop owners who complain of managers stealing their money, customers, and even sometimes their wives. So why would you want to take a chance with your baby?

So, if you're still with me, how do we train the 2nd in command? More importantly, where do we find them? Hopefully, they are right under your nose. The most successful businesses have proven time and time again that promoting from within a second in command is the very best way to go. This person understands your vision, systems, associates and customers. Their learning curve will be much shorter and the odds of them carrying on your

legacy is much greater. They understand the culture you have created in your business. They may be in your family, they may be selling service or turning wrenches. Remember, great leaders are not born, THEY EVOLVE from training and experience. I sincerely believe investing in someone inside your business is the place to start looking for a 2nd in command.

What if there is no one to promote from within? Then you have to get the right person on the bus and where do you find them? This is when owners really have to dig into the recruiting process to find the right manager. I would start with referrals, then advertise and yes, even headhunters. Don't delegate the interview process once you have some good candidates. Listen to their entire career and look for their real accomplishments. Micro-manage their references yourself by talking to their previous leaders. Then test their personality to ensure you have a winner. We have personality profiled thousands of managers since 1985 and there is a common thread to successful 2nd in commands that always comes to the surface.

We have built our own proprietary test but there are many testing products like Wonderlic in MN. In order to fill your shoes you are going to

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want someone with a very high, goal oriented drive for immediate results. This is a necessary ingredient you want to insure is present before you invest your time and money. Leaders may not be born, but they were born with personality traits that made them trainable. I am also an advocate of finding a candidate that has a very high desire to compete and win. As you are aware, there are always challenges and roadblocks every day in an automotive service center. You want a manager that can get it done and there are personality tests that will help you make a logical decision, not an emotional one.

When we developed leadership training for ATI, we knew we needed a different system for managers than owners. Most shop owners do not want a manager to disrupt order and create vision, the owners want to set their own direction for their companies. However, all the other traits are extremely important for a manager in waiting to learn. Send your manager in waiting to our leadership training & let our coaching staff prepare them to allow you to work on your business, Not In It!!!

At this point, you may be thinking they will never follow another leader. The truth is, your people aren't following you anyway. They are following what you believe in, & that has made their behavior seem like it is you they are following. After years of research, Harvard archaeology professor, Don SchMike, discovered that the 40 billion dollars invested every year in leadership training has failed at getting followers. I am not saying that character ethics and being a great leader by example to look up to is bad. But how many of you are great leadership examples and they still don't follow? History's great leaders who could motivate their followers to take action for a cause changed their followers beliefs first, then their behaviors to create the results they wanted.



# People In Glass Houses...

By Brian Canning



Our leaders, are responsible for delivering positive results and carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Working through their employees, they oversee every aspect of business. They are literally the ones who take our ideas and turn them into action, take our goals and turn them into driven reality. In order to lead and motivate, leaders need to be focused, task driven and nearly bulletproof. They do things that many of us would choose not to do and by stepping out from the crowd, they are often convenient targets, blamed and discredited at every step. We would be lost and rudderless without them. In their ability to move us and our agenda forward, despite their many imperfections and our resistance (kicking and screaming comes to mind); they find ways to make us extraordinary.

I could easily pull examples from history that would support any comment or claim I would make about leadership but a more useful exercise might be to look at successful competitors and work to understand what they have done to not only survive but to grow and prosper. Look at your own operation over the years and track your highlights and low lights. I would suggest to you that in the case of your competition, it wasn't great ideas, it was leadership and thoughtful implementation. It wasn't marketing, it was drive and motivation and the courage to implement a great plan. Ideas and exposure by themselves do not win us market share. The conviction that something needs to change and the will & determination to see it through are what take a great

plan and make it into a success. Look at your own operation and look at your greatest successes. There were great ideas there but anger or a new determination or very real necessity made your dedication more complete, your determination more urgent. Take an idea and make it a new reality. Great leadership is where it begins and where it ends.

I know an individual who many would describe as brilliant but whom I see as a distraction and even an impediment to the things we try to do. There is no doubt that he is intelligent, that he is very aware of the challenges facing the industry and that he has great, innovative ideas. The problem is that he takes great pride in his demeaning interactions toward those he works with and would seem more interested in his own agenda and self promotion than in making the group better or more effective. Instead of bringing concerns forward & offering solutions, he mounts an attack on current policy or procedure that unfortunately includes staff members & though somewhere underneath it all there is likely a great idea, rarely does anyone see the benefit. His genius is lost in his scorn for those he is forced to interact with. I am sure, he ends up frustrated. The company, the team, those mere mortals around him, end up with no benefit of his genius. It is without a doubt, the messenger & not the message but remember; leadership is not leadership unless we can move our people. Scorn is a poor choice in getting people to move.

I would assure you that I could go into great detail in describing all of the traits that would make up the ideal leader. I could supplement this description with a list of principals that this hypothetical leader would live by. I could even display a genuine

passion and belief in these traits and principles but underneath it all I know that a willingness to be a leader is more important. An acceptance of responsibility and a stubborn determination to succeed and overcome, will serve you much better than anything else. I would suspect that even if you don't love people, you at least have to respect them and have an appreciation for them. You have to be willing to both lift them up and ask them for better. And this no matter how tired or busy or overwhelmed you already are. By description you are expected to have the answers even when they know you don't, to show the way when you don't have a map and are already lost, accept the blame even when it wasn't your fault and refuse to quit or give up, even in the face of many doubts. You are the leader and this is what leaders do. And don't worry about making mistakes or bad decisions; your loyal staff will be happy to note and expound upon and remind you of every one of these, ad-infinitum. They are your people and that is what people do.

Many of the clients I talk to are concerned about leadership style, most specifically frightened by the prospect of having to be a Patton when they feel more like Pee Wee Herman. Second only to the willingness to jump in that I describe above is the importance of being a leader you can be comfortable with. I admire Patton but also admire Eisenhower, who was much more the diplomat and though nearly always far from the fighting, was able to hold an alliance together and win a war. Be a leader. Be who you are comfortable with.



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



# Building A Bond With Your Employees, Pt. 1

By George Zeeks



One of the most common problems that shop owners have is employee turnover in the shop. We all

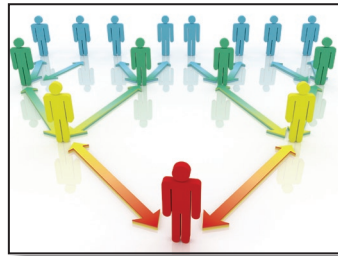
would like to have the perfect shop, with the perfect team, happy customers and no headaches. The problem seems to be that despite what we want, it is rarely what we get. The root cause is in your mirror each morning. You have been trained by your past experiences, by previous managers, even your parents on how to handle people and deal with the situations that come up each day. That training is many times not the best way to handle the current workplace.

In hindsight, I can see where my military experience dictated the way I would run the shops that I managed. I expected everyone to do the right thing, all the time, because it was the right thing to do. The punishment for not living up to my expectations was pain. I was the ultimate seagull manager but I never flew away. A seagull manager, if you did not know, swoops in, craps on people and then flies away. I was always there, ready to catch you doing the wrong thing (in my eyes) and ready to deal out a dose of sarcasm or another nasty job as punishment. I eventually ended up with good crews, but the turnover was horrific and I lost a lot of good people along the way. I eventually, through reading and research, was able to change my reactions, began to develop a better bond with my employees and the seagull was no more.

The following information is based on my experiences but more importantly on some extensive research in various fields to try and develop a

guideline for owners/managers to become more effective at bonding the staff to them, create a better work environment, and produce better results. It will work with different personalities to different degrees, but overall will produce better results than no plan at all.

**1. Confidant/Positive:** It is a proven fact that people will follow someone who is confidant in what they are doing and they exude a positive outlook. People want to be on the winning team and it is important that you portray that image. If the



business is having problems, or you are having problems in your personal life, you must leave them at the door. Cry in the shower if you have to but not at work. Anything negative can be grounds for speculation and rumor, distracting for the staff at best. A continued negative attitude will have people leaving like rats from a sinking ship and your worst fears will come to pass.

**2. Set The Standard:** Everyone needs to know what their job is and what is expected of them. What time is late if you have not set the standard for "On Time". Job descriptions help to eliminate this problem but it is not enough to have an employee read and sign it, they must agree to live by it, understand why it is needed, and what the consequences

will be for failing to live up to your "agreement". Many times I have talked to a client with an employee problem and the first place we start is "what is the expectation that you have set concerning this situation". Too many times, it is not clear to the manager what the standard is because it has not been clearly set. The standard, by the way, applies to both of you. The staff needs to know what they can expect from you and what you will be doing. I should not have to say this but too many times I do; you lead from the front. What you do right they will do 50% of it right; what you do wrong, they will do 110% of it wrong. Make sure they know what to expect from you and you make sure that you live up to it.

**3. Uniforms/Dress Code:** One of the first things the military does is to place everyone in the same uniform. This helps to establish their role as a member of a team and they are no longer purely an individual. The uniform in the work place does the same thing. It reminds them they are part of a team and must function within that framework. In talking to many of my clients I find, consistently, that the "problem employee" is the one who will not keep his shirt tucked in, keep the uniform clean, and follow the code. This desire to express themselves as an individual, outside of the team, needs to be dealt with when it occurs. If you do not hold them responsible for the "Team" standards, then how are you going to get the results that you want on the other issues.

**4. Praise, Praise, and Praise:** Too many times we focus on the faults and not the positive things around us. It just seems easier for some reason for all of people. In order to build the

foundation between you and an employee, you need to focus on the good things. Sometimes it can be a challenge but if we can find a reason to praise an employee for their actions, however small it might be, it can start a chain of events that can result in a change of the whole concept of the workplace. Take the time to recognize the person, not just the employee and they will start working for you and not the company.

**5. Constructive Criticism:** We have all heard that we need to sandwich our criticism when we are counseling our employees. Positive, Negative, Positive. Almost everyone has heard it, or read this concept somewhere but so few people put it in practice on a daily basis. Starting with a positive statement lets the person know that we see the value and potential that they have. It is what makes the process constructive. The negative part of the conversation is also, many times, improperly handled. It is important that the employee understands what the problem is and admits ownership of what went wrong. Then we have to have the employee help us identify the solution to the problem. Finally, the employee has to give us the time frame in which the solution can be accomplished and commits to the changes needed. This has to be a 2 way conversation or it ends up being something very close to your mother nagging at you to pick up your clothes. You may have gotten to say what you wanted and you may feel better about it, but the clothes will soon be back on the floor yet again.



## Sam's Corner: Superconference 2009, Cancun, Mexico!

By Karen Dee

Please join us for our 2009 Superconference at the Westin Resort & Spa in beautiful Cancun, Mexico February 18-21. The Westin is an all-inclusive property (food and drinks included), offering spectacular views of the turquoise Caribbean Sea.

Our event starts off with a Welcome Reception followed by one full day of meetings, and then 2 half days of meetings. Half day meetings allow everyone to go out & enjoy their afternoons in Cancun. The many activities include everything from site seeing at Chichen Itza or Tulum

(2 of the largest Mayan sites ever uncovered) to deep sea fishing, swimming with the dolphins, horseback riding on the beach or just sitting by the pool and relaxing. The Westin has the world's 2nd largest living coral reef only a few steps away which is the perfect place to go snorkeling.

We promise to have an exciting agenda with special guest speakers and our Round Table discussions. Make sure you join us in February to learn about the latest industry trends and reunite with old friends and



meet new ones.



### AMI Accreditation

We would like to announce that our Service Advisor class is now **AMI approved for 64 credits**. If you complete all 4 days of the Service Advisor classes, we will give you a form to receive your credit. This is very exciting news and we are now in the process of making our Shop Owners class AMI accredited as well. So stay Tuned.....

## Seven At the Top, *Congratulations To All!*



#### This Month's Winners are:

##### Ed Shelton

Virginia Automotive Services  
6601 Jefferson Davis Hwy  
Richmond, VA 23237

##### Ken Benhamou

SAS German Auto  
26-A California Avenue  
Pleasanton, CA 94566

##### Dan Harding

Hardings Garage  
37 Currier Road  
Fairfield, ME 04937

##### Bill and Theresa Marion

Superior Auto Service  
1213 23rd Street  
Vero Beach, FL 32960

##### Paul and Terri Brauning

Brauning Auto  
10734 Courthouse Road  
Fredericksburg, VA 22408

##### Barry Balaban

Black Bear Auto  
56 Frederick Street  
Bristol, CT 06010

##### Monte Dybvig

Doctor Monte's Auto  
115 N. Main Street  
Cambridge, MN 55008



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