

Looking for more free time and longer vacations?

You need someone to fill the role of three managers wrapped into one

Get it. You started this business on your own and grew it all by yourself. Now, you want to have time off — some time for yourself and your family. But one important question remains: Who can you trust to run your baby?

It's an incredibly hard decision, and this won't make it any easier. Keep in mind that every coach we have at ATI never ran a shop with the owner present. It's just not the way we do things here. You pay us very good money to run your shop, and you shouldn't have to be there.

If you want time off but still want to have confidence in your shop running so effectively that you don't have to be there, then you need something very complicated to find: three managers, all wrapped into one, to give you the best results.

Let's listen to our Director of Client Fulfillment George Zeeks explain how you can accomplish this, which is one of the toughest challenges in any business owner's life.

The retail manager

This is the easiest and most routine type of manager you can have. They keep the bathroom clean, the coffee area running right and the magazines neat and orderly. There is not a lot of creativity needed here — just attention to detail and always keeping the basics in mind. The daily deposit is run and correct every day. The cash drawer is right and on the money.

The biggest issue that we see many shop owners facing is that many of

you haven't trained your manager to do these things because you assume they are too basic and that the person you have hired in this role should just know what to do. However, nothing is too basic.

You wouldn't believe how many owners don't reconcile the cash drawer every single day. They don't even make a deposit every day. Communicating the expectations of these basic tasks is a huge first step in becoming an owner who is not in the business every day. This can be a challenge, but nothing compared to the next level.

RUNNING YOUR OWN BUSINESS IS HARD. YOU NEED TO FACE UP TO THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE TO GROW OTHERS IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

The sales manager

This is the manager who not only sells stuff but who can manage the overall sales of service advisors across many cases and scenarios.

The basic principle of every business is that you have a product or service and you sell these products or services or a combination of both to your customer. The sales manager must relate to your customers in the most basic way possible and relate to why the customer needs your goods or services.

Most owners do not do a great job of this due to fear. A lot of owners are afraid

that people won't like them if they give the bad news. Customers don't want to hear bad news, and being the bearer of bad tidings is a difficult task. But I say suck it up. That's the job. We have to let people know what is wrong with their car. If it's a lot of money, then they really need to know. Maybe they would want a new car? Maybe they don't have the credit for the new car? We have a responsibility to tell them what is really going on, so they can make the right decision.

The key is to have someone who can explain what is going on in a way that the customer can understand. I have, personally, never believed in selling someone a repair on their car. I have always believed that we need to explain and cover everything that they need in a way they can understand, and then it becomes a logical choice as to whether a customer should do the repairs or not.

You need to build value in what you are going to do to a customer's vehicle and why you are going to do it. You have to clearly explain the pros and cons. You must cover, in detail, the features and benefits of what the repairs entail.

The customer needs to understand what is involved in your recommended repairs, what everything costs and why it is important that it be done now. Offer anything less than that and you are taking shortcuts that will always eventually cause pain to the customer or the business.

The sales manager also manages the promises made to the customer and the true end result that they receive and experience. Is the car done

when promised? Are we communicating with the customer along the way? Many shops have said that they receive way too many phone calls on a daily basis from customers. One reason for that may be because the shop isn't setting the proper expectations and then following up on them. The customer must be kept informed throughout the entire repair process so they always know what is going on. Anything else can turn into a disaster.

The sales manager also has the responsibility to secure the customer's next visit. A lot of people don't want to hear this, but this is the foundation of any business. Employees typically don't quit the overall business; they quit the manager. And this is often reflected in the behavior of the customers as well. The sales process doesn't end until the customer picks up the vehicle and is happy. Anything less than that will cost you your future.

So, let's say you have the first two covered and all is right with the world. That still doesn't mean that you are profitable; that doesn't mean that your shop is running anywhere near capacity. What you need now is the production manager.

The production manager

This is the next and most important step needed in order for you to have a shop that runs without you there. The manager that can drive production, in addition to all the other things, is crucial to a profitable shop.


This manager gets the most out of the crew and always gets the most out of the shop. Technicians love and can also hate a good production manager. That manager demands higher performance and expects more overall from the staff. The common phrase is that "you'll hate me today, but love me on payday." The manager gets the most out of each member of the crew.

The production manager is always concerned with the technical training and job skills improvement of every staff member so that the shop is always moving forward, improving and growing. They understand the time deadlines that everyone across the business is facing. They always have a hand in making sure that the right person is adequately assigned the right job. It doesn't help anyone to give the wrong job to the wrong person. In that scenario, everyone pays a penalty. Why would you want to set someone up to fail? It doesn't help the staff member or the shop and especially not the customer.

This is the hardest job in the shop and most owners have a hard time growing the manager into this role. I know that you can do it better than anyone else. I get it. If you want the time off, then you must put the quality time into the person who will replace you. This is the hardest thing to teach and to learn. This manager is constantly checking on the crew. Did you get the parts you needed? Have we gotten the approval for the repairs? Is there anything that you are having a problem with? If any of the above things are going on, then we take a step back and evaluate where we are. Do we need to call the customer and get more time? Do we have an issue where we must

sell more time? These things are an ongoing process that the production manager must deal with. So you don't have to!

To some of you, this must sound like an impossible task. How can I find one person who can do all three things at one time, especially to do them the way I want them done? I will be honest. It can be hard. It takes time and patience. It takes commitment and an investment in the individual to help them reach the next level. It doesn't always work out, but every attempt makes you better prepared for the next one. Life isn't easy, and running your own business is even harder. You need to face up to the fact that you have to grow others in order to be successful. That's what makes it all worthwhile.

If you would like a checklist to help evaluate your shop to see if you are ready to reach that next level, you can go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2017-12 for a limited time. 



CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 115 associates train and coach more than 1,400 shop owners every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. This month's article was written with the help of Coach George Zeeks. chubby@autotraining.net

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Chris "Chubby" Frederick, CEO

