

REALIGNING YOUR FOCUS

IF YOU FOCUS ON THE ROLE, NOT THE HUMAN, YOU COULD FIND MORE SUCCESS IN MOTIVATING YOUR EMPLOYEES.

BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK | CONTRIBUTOR



OUR PEOPLE we employ are our biggest, most important asset in our business. However, if you don't focus on their roles first, it will be difficult for the employees and the employer to be happy. This month, our coaches' coach, Bryan Stasch, is going to share with you how to focus on your people's roles so your operation can become more profitable and run smoother, to help you stay the best shop in your area and still allow you to take some time off. Let's listen to Bryan.

The people aspect of the business is one of the biggest challenges that I, as a consultant and business coach, face with all of my clients. For it's the people who fill the roles who make everything work.

Every automotive repair and service facility has roles. You have technicians, service advisors, managers and whatever other roles you have in your shop. And you have people, or need people, who fill these roles. Along with the people in these roles, you have expectations. The question is, are your people there for the right reason, and are they living up to expectations?

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“IF CHANGE REQUIRES SKILL, KNOWLEDGE AND COMMITMENT, WHICH ONE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT? IF YOU STAY COMMITTED TO CHANGE, YOU WILL FIND THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL TO HELP YOU IMPLEMENT.”

CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK [CEO OF ATI]

Service Advisor Role

Let's start with service advisors. Now, before you go off thinking that I am just picking on people, please remember that I spent almost 20 years of my life behind a service counter and made many mistakes, too. This would be the perfect time to throw in, “I wish I knew then, what I know now.”

But the expectations for a service advisor are endless. Maintaining gross profit margins on parts and labor, keeping big Average Repair Orders (AROs), keeping techs motivated and busy and keeping customers happy, just to name a few requirements, are crucial to a peak-performing shop. You need service advisors who can meet the expectations.

I hear way too often that the service advisor is a great guy or gal, and customers love him or her, but that person “cannot” or “will not” price appropriately and keeps discounting. Or they show up on time and never miss a day, but “will not” or “cannot” manage and motivate the technicians.

Come on, man! Focus on the role, not the human.

Now, if your service advisor cannot hold the margins and create the AROs needed, it's time for training. But if your service advisor will not hold the margins and create the AROs needed, it's time for replacement. But this is done only after you

have done your due diligence: setting the expectations, demonstrating how to do it, providing performance feedback, holding the person accountable and giving reinforcement.

Technician Role

What about the technicians? Yes, they have performance expectations also. They are required not only to fix cars, but also to be efficient and productive, and to get the tools (courtesy checks, fluid samples and mileage-recommended services) to the service advisor, just to name a few of their duties.

I hear way too often that the technician is a great guy or gal, and customers love him or her, but he or she “cannot” or “will not” do the inspections or get the tools to the service advisor. Or they show up on time and never miss a day but “will not” or “cannot” be productive or efficient.

Come on, man! Focus on the role, not the human.

Now, if your technicians cannot fix cars or be productive and efficient, it's time for training. But if your technicians will not get the tools to the service advisor, it's time for replacement. (There is a difference. See a trend here?)

But this is done only after you have done your due diligence: setting the expectations, demonstrating how to do it, providing performance feedback, holding the person accountable and giving reinforcement.

Have I mentioned teamwork yet? Yes, that's part of expectations also. Your technicians need to work together with the service advisor to maximize production and to minimize comebacks and rechecks.

I could go on and on about expectations of the roles, but that's not the point. The point is, you need to focus on the roles in your shop, not the humans who fill them.

The Process to Fix It

Now that you have what you have, how do you fix it? This is a several-step process, and it might not be pretty or painless. You just need to decide what you want. Are you happy accepting mediocrity, or do you deserve better?

First, you need to know exactly what you should expect from each role. If you are not sure, feel free to contact us at ATI, and we will be happy to help. Create the list of expectations for each role, and write them down.

Second, you need to know how to measure performance against expectations. What are the metrics?

Third, your crew needs to know what you expect from each role they fill in the shop.

Fourth, your crew needs to know how they will be measured. What are the metrics for performance?

Steps one and two are all you. But steps three and four start with one-on-one meetings with your crew members. Share the expectations and get their feedback. And feedback will come at you in several ways.

We will talk about a couple of them. One, they will accept the new expectations and move on. If so, consider yourself lucky and thank them very much. Two, they will be reluctant to change and will give a bunch of reasons why it will not work. This is much more common, and is what we call deflection. It might be fixable; but if not, it might lead to the third scenario.

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Chris “Chubby” Frederick, CEO

With deflection, you need to listen to why they feel the new expectations are not realistic and start removing the obstacles. For example, if the problem is technician efficiency, show them how they can eliminate wasted or unproductive time. If it is technician productivity, show them how better inspections lead to more hours per ticket, and so on.

And the same exercise can be completed with the service advisors. But with deflection, there might come a time, after you have done your part, that you need to call them out and put the burden on their shoulders. You do this with what we call Five Questions of Accountability. You'll love this.

The Five Questions of Accountability

Question 1 – Do you understand why this change is necessary? (Deflection and denial can kick in here, and if you can't get a yes, it's time to replace them.) If you can get the yes here, move to the next question.

Question 2 – Do you know that you are the only one who can make the change?

Question 3 – Are you willing to make the change?

Question 4 – When can I expect the change to start?

Question 5 – When can I expect the change to be complete and part of your normal role?

After going through these five questions, you have just put the burden on them, and it's time to start measuring performance and providing feedback on how they are doing with continued one-on-one meetings.

If you would like to learn more about ATI's expectations for service advisors and technicians, go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2012-11.

The third scenario I mentioned earlier is that they leave. This honestly might be the best outcome for someone who is not living up to the expectations of their role.

Now I know this sounds harsh, but in today's world, with increased expenses, thinner margins, fewer cars and bigger demands on payroll, it is more important than ever. The roles in your shop need to be filled with people who can live up to the expectations.

Focus on the role, not the human, and you can line up the key people you need to keep your business moving forward. **ZZ**



CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK
CONTRIBUTOR

Chris "Chubby" Frederick is CEO and president of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 98 associates train and coach more than 1,100 shops every week across North America. This month's article was written with the help of Bryan Stasch, the Director of Client Fulfillment at ATI.

E-mail Chubby at cfrederick@autotraining.net

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