

# LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP FROM A 2-YEAR-OLD

YOU'LL BE AMAZED AT WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM CHILDREN'S CARTOONS IF YOU TRULY TAKE THE TIME TO LOOK AT THE LESSONS BEHIND THE ARTWORK.

BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK | CONTRIBUTOR

**I WANT** to share a great story that will help you continue to be the best shop in your market. Our head coach, George Zeeks, shares what he has learned from helping hundreds of shop owners obtain a better life. Let's listen to his story.

Spending time with my grandson is a joy for me, but the repeated cartoons can really become mind-numbing. That is, until I began to look at the lessons behind the stories.

Passion is something all of you had when you started your business. You were filled with excitement and optimism when you first opened your shop. Nothing could stand in your way. So what happened? The burden of all of the decisions slowly began to weigh on you, and it just wasn't as much fun as it used to be.

## Pinocchio's Dedication

Maybe you were a great technician and just wanted to give your customers the best you had. The problem is that you just can't work on the cars anymore and you have to rely on your crew.

Maybe you thought that this new role as the owner would be easier, but you constantly wonder why your staff doesn't quite see things the way you do. Try to remember Pinocchio, a marionette who just wanted to be a real little boy. He went through many trials and just when failure was certain, he became a real boy.

This fanatical dedication to a mission is a lesson to all of us. Do you still have the passion and dedication that you started with? Have you accepted so many of life's redirections that you can't recognize the shop that you ended up with? Have the values and dreams that you started with become twisted by the reality of the day-to-day grind? The problem is that most of the daily decisions are not black and white, but grey. Like Pinocchio, you have to stay focused on the end result that you want. Pinocchio had an advantage that you don't, a friendly cricket that helped him with his problems.

So who do you have? The staff around you! You just have to know what you want and accept nothing less from them. It might seem that I'm



## “IS CULTURE THAT IMPORTANT TO PROFITS? YOUR CULTURE DRIVES YOUR PEOPLE’S BEHAVIOR WHICH DRIVES YOUR PRODUCTIVITY, CUSTOMER RETENTION AND CAR COUNT.”

CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK [ATI CEO]

oversimplifying the situation, but think about this: Have you shared your vision and passion with your crew? We root for Pinocchio because his dream is clear. Is yours?

People want to be a part of something larger than themselves and to see the impact that they have on growth and the future. Have you allowed your staff to see the impact they can have on the shop’s future? Maybe it’s time to think back to why you got started and share that with your crew.

### The Dysfunctional 7 Dwarfs

Let’s take a look at the most dysfunctional business owners I have ever seen: Snow White and the seven dwarfs. They own a small mining enterprise with Snow White keeping things going on the home front. Doc seems to be the one with the brains, but let’s look at some of the others.

Grumpy is the ultimate prima donna technician who thinks he’s better than all the rest. I think we all know this guy. Then we have Dopey. He’s a bit “challenged” in the smarts department, and who knows what he does on a day-to-day basis. I’d be willing to bet that no one is tracking his production. Sleepy is probably sneaking into some remote spot to catnap all day, and his production is the stuff of nightmares. Sneezy is going to drive up the insurance premiums with his pre-existing condition. A crew this screwed up is never going to make a profit, but yet they seem to get by OK.



The reason they get by is in how they make it work. They are a family that believes in one another, and they all do the best they can every day to keep the mine going. What would your shop be like if your crew worked that hard for one another? They would share a common goal and passion that work as a glue to bond them. Have you created that common goal or that passion in your shop? I’m not saying that you should keep your Dopey, Sleepy or Grumpy. But if you have them, are they helping or hurting your shop?

The behavior of the people who work for you shows the culture of the shop. Does your staff share the values that are important to you? Can you see the behaviors that reflect those values in the actions of your staff toward your customers? How about toward one another? Do you feel good about going in to work each day and knowing that things are going to be OK? What if you want to take time off, will things function the same way if you’re not there? These are hard questions to ask yourself, but if you don’t like the answers, then make some changes. Most importantly, start changing by looking at what you could do better to set the right example.

### You Must Be Worth Following

The real world is a messy place. There are no clear divisions of right and wrong. The things we hope and dream for end up twisted and slightly out of shape. It doesn’t have to be that way. You have the option and the obligation to make things better for yourself, your staff and your customers. I’m not saying it’s easy, but it can be accomplished.

You should start with sharing your dreams and visions with your crew. If they buy in, great! If not, then you probably need to make some changes; and when you hire the new people, make sure they have the same basic values that you have. Everyone invests some of their self-image and ego in the job they have. Remember that your job as an Owner, with the big O, is to get your people to invest more in you and in the company. The problem is that you, yes you, have to be worth the investment. So start with a basic question: Would you want to work for you?

Everyone needs a coach to point out their shortcomings, because we will never see them by ourselves. So ask your coach if you are worth following, and how you could become more effective as a leader. For a free checklist of the things you as an owner need to demonstrate to create a better culture, simply go to [www.ationlinetraining.com/2013-2](http://www.ationlinetraining.com/2013-2). **TT**



Chris “Chubby” Frederick is the CEO and founder of ATI, the Automotive Training Institute, founded in 1974. ATI’s 99 associates train and coach more than 1,150 shops every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. They love helping shop owners who have had the same struggle as many of them have had and who are looking for the same answers — and in some cases looking for a lifeline. This month’s article was written with the help of Head Coach George Zeeks.

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