

# DON'T LET YOUR SPONGES DRY OUT



**NEW EMPLOYEES ARE MOIST SPONGES, READY TO SOAK UP INFORMATION AND TRAINING — TAKE ADVANTAGE**

BY **CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK** | CONTRIBUTOR

**HAVE** you ever tried to introduce something new to your staff? A new tool, a new way of doing things, a new product or a new process? You were excited about how this would benefit the business, the staff and the customers, and you couldn't wait to get started. The only problem is some or all of the staff didn't see it quite the way you did. They liked the old way and didn't want to change. You asked, you coached and you even demanded they do it, but the results you got were minimal. They just couldn't or wouldn't grasp it. This month, ATI Coach Geoff Berman is going to help you solve this problem. Geoff says there is a very good reason why they don't want to change. Their sponge is dry. Let me explain.

## **It starts when you hire them**

Jim Collins said, “People are not your best asset, the right people are!” Sometimes we hire the wrong people and those people will always be a struggle, but often we hire the right people, and we just don't provide the right environment for them to grow. We do not invest in them and nurture

Photos: Thinkstock

## “WHY DOES IT TAKE MOST NEW HIRES SO LONG TO LEARN SHOP OPERATING PROCEDURES? MOST ADULTS HAVE TO READ, WRITE AND HEAR NEW INFORMATION SIX TIMES FOR 62% RETENTION.”

CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK [ATI CEO]

what is important to us and to our business culture. The result is a good employee ruined, and by the time we realize it, it's too late to recover.

Let's say you have a spill to wipe up and you reach for a sponge. You aren't going to go right at the mess. You're going to first get the sponge wet, wring it out, and then wipe up the spill. When you're done, you will rinse out the sponge and put it aside. Now let's say it is a few days later and you need to wipe up another spill. Now that the sponge hasn't been used, it has become dry and hard. You can't wipe the spill like that. The sponge is not going to do a very good job absorbing. So you once again get it wet, wring it out and proceed to wipe the mess.

Your new employee is that moist sponge, ready and eager to absorb. This is the time to cram as much information and learning (training) in as you possibly can before the employee dries up. The bad news is you only have up to a year before that happens. After that, they cannot absorb until their sponge is moist again. That's why you end up beating your head against the wall when introducing change to existing staff. You are trying to teach a dry sponge, and they cannot soak it up. Eventually they may get it; and if that does happen, you have spent time before the change began to be absorbed. And all that time was necessary to moisten the sponge enough first so that then the knowledge could sink in.

Think of all the time you spend with staff that has a dry sponge. Over and over and over again you keep working on the same thing. The time you

invest in this could be five or ten times the effort you would spend with a new moist sponge. The answer to this dilemma is training. Most shop owners I speak with don't really understand what training truly is and what it takes to train someone properly. It is like investing in your retirement. The sooner you get started, the larger the payoff when you retire.

### Training is crucial

For most shop owners, training looks a lot like this: “You can put your toolbox here. Meet Jim our service advisor. Here is where we stock the supplies you will need, and here is the shop bathroom. We work from 8:00 to 5:00 and you can go to lunch from 12:00 to 1:00. Any questions?” Now this may be a bit of an exaggeration, but I'm guessing it is not that far from the truth.

Training should be specific and clear. It should have a start and an expected end and all of this should be in writing and explained to the new employee. This way you both start off on the same page and know what to expect from each other. If this is done correctly, not only will the new employee learn more but they will do better long term. They are more likely to stay longer and to like what they do and where they do it. You have made your vision clear, and they can now choose if they want to be a part of that vision or not.

Have you ever heard this: “My toolbox has wheels for a reason.” This is someone looking for a temp job. They are already planning their exit before they even start. That sponge could be so dry it isn't even moist at the interview. Yet we hire them and wonder why we can't get them to see things the way we want them to.

I'm guessing you're reflecting on current and past employees. You can identify those you never should have hired and those that you ruined

because you did not provide the proper structure and training. The good news is it is much easier to do this right than you think.

### Download free checklist

You can download our outline for how this training process should look and tips on how to create your own. We will also include a list of what every new hire should know regardless of the position you hire them for. If you would like your own copy of the ATI New Hire Training Checklist, for a limited time you can get it free at [www.ationlinetraining.com/2015-08](http://www.ationlinetraining.com/2015-08).

### Is that all?

Training alone is not going to get the job done. We must learn to be masters of our interviews and be able to paint the picture of life in our shop in a way that excites the interviewee. We must learn the right questions to ask to discover if they are a good fit for our business and to help them decide if we are a good fit for them. If after an interview like that we make a hire, it is likely to be a good hire. Back that up with an excellent training process and continue to reinforce your culture, and the sponges in your shop are likely to never completely dry up. **ZZZ**



**CHRIS  
“CHUBBY”  
FREDERICK  
CONTRIBUTOR**

Chris “Chubby” Frederick is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 108 associates train and coach more than 1,250 shop owners every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. Our associates love helping shop owners who are having 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 ATI Coach Brian Hunnicut.

 E-mail Chubby at [cfrederick@autotraining.net](mailto:cfrederick@autotraining.net)

