

ShopTalk

February 2017
ATI
 Automotive
 Training Institute

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Upcoming Classes:

Shop Owner

Align Your Shop for Profit Course 1

February 1, 2 & 3
 March 1, 2 & 3
 April 5, 6 & 7

Leadership Mastery Course Part 2

February 15, 16 & 17
 March 8, 9 & 10
 April 12, 13 & 14

A.B.M. Always Be Marketing Course Part 3

February 22, 23 & 24
 March 13, 14 & 15
 April 19, 20 & 21

Staffing and Hiring Course Part 4

March 6 & 7

Succession Planning Course Part 5

April 19, 20 & 21

Service Advisor

The Role of the Service Advisor

March 6 & 7
 April 10 & 11

West Coast Course

April 13 & 14

ATI's 7 Step Sales Process

February 23 & 24
 February 27 & 28
 March 30 & 31

Service Manager

June 15 & 16

Advanced Service Advisor

April 3 & 4

Collision

Keys to a Successful Collision Business Course 1

February 1, 2 & 3

Leadership Mastery Course Part 2

February 15, 16 & 17
 March 8, 9 & 10
 April 12, 13 & 14

A.B.M. Always Be Marketing Course Part 3

February 22, 23 & 24
 March 13, 14 & 15
 April 19, 20 & 21

Staffing and Hiring Course Part 4

March 6 & 7

Succession Planning Course Part 5

April 19, 20 & 21

Estimating & Sales Course Part 1

April 3 & 4

Estimating & Sales Course Part 2

February 27 & 28

Collision Repair Production

March 13 & 14

Please be sure to check out the exciting new feature of your ATICConnect App! With a tap on your phone screen you can now view the most current class schedule, check for class availability and register for classes! Class registration has never been easier!

How to Build Your Business on Hidden Diamonds

Eric M. Twiggs, ATI Coach

How do you build your business on hidden diamonds? I pondered this question after reading a passage from the book "Acres of Diamonds," by [Russell Conwell](#). He tells the story of an old farmer who had done well in life but wasn't satisfied. One day he heard that a number of other farmers had gone off in search of diamond mines and become instant millionaires.

He decided to sell his farm and go out to find his own treasure. He searched the African continent for 13 years without success. Sadly, in a fit of despair, he gave up and threw himself into the ocean and drowned.

Back at his old farm the new owner was out feeding the mule one day and noticed a rock beneath the creek that had a strange light to it. He took the rock to an expert who confirmed it to be a priceless diamond! As he continued to walk the property, he saw these rocks everywhere.

The farm that the original farmer sold in an effort to find a diamond mine, was discovered to be the greatest diamond mine on the African continent! **Instead of complaining about a lack of diamonds, he would have done better if he had spent the time mining his existing farm.**

Have you been looking for that one new acquisition strategy that will make you a millionaire? **Like the farmer, you're already surrounded by your best source of wealth.** What if you successfully mined your current data base and achieved a 10 percent improvement in the number of returning customers?

Well, I did this math on a shop with 1,514 active customers (**10% is 151**). Based on the shop owner's average repair order (**\$493.85**), and visits per vehicle (**1.85**), she would pick up an additional **\$137,957** in sales for the year! (**151 x \$493.85 x 1.85 = \$137,957**)

The math doesn't lie! **Aggressively marketing to your existing customers is the key to building your business on the hidden diamonds. I've discovered that it's hardest to see the solution that's right in front of you,** so keep reading to discover two mining strategies you may have overlooked.

 **Wedding Rings**

According to a recent study conducted by Experian Automotive, the average family has **2.28 vehicles, with 35 percent of households owning three or more cars.** Chances are, your customer who's wearing a wedding ring owns multiple cars. The question is, are you servicing her other vehicles?

Pay attention to who is wearing a wedding ring and check your customer history to see how many cars they have brought to you.

The following are the most common reasons customers don't bring their other vehicles to you:
 1. They're unaware of all the services you provide.
 2. They believe they have to take their newer vehicles to the dealer to keep their warranty intact.
3. Their previous experience wasn't remarkable, so the spouse didn't remember to suggest bringing the other vehicles back. For example, if the wife was wowed by your servicing of the Honda, she would remember to tell her husband to bring the Volvo to you.

The best form of marketing is to create an experience that's so memorable, people refer you without being asked to. If you create an exceptional experience and educate your customer on the services you provide, you will get their second and third vehicles by paying closer attention to who's wearing wedding rings.

 **Oil Changes**

Hall of Fame hockey player Wayne Gretzky is credited with the following quote: **"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."** If you fail to include oil changes as a part of your retention strategy, you're missing the shot that can improve your retention.

In most markets, there is a major oil change retailer offering a low price basic oil change. What they're really doing is creating a **low price impression** by marketing the lower priced entry level option and then upselling to a more expensive package that's comparable to what you charge.

The key is to make sure you offer a competitively priced oil change service. Here's a news flash: **Holding margin on every oil change won't make you rich.** What will improve your wealth, is having more of your customers come back to maintain their vehicles. **I challenge you to shop your basic oil change prices to ensure you have a competitive offering.**

One of the most overlooked aspects of oil change marketing is refreshing the sticker and using this to initiate your exit appointment conversation. Here's how it would sound: "Mr. Smith, we refreshed your oil change sticker on the window and scheduled your next service for Friday, January 6, at two o'clock."

Summary

So there you have it. **Paying attention to the wedding rings and marketing with your oil change service** will help you build your business on the hidden diamonds. If the old farmer was able to give advice, he would tell you to look in the creek before selling the farm!

The Coach's Corner

Stop Taking The Easy Way Out Do You Know the Shortest Distance Between Two Points?

Geoff Berman, ATI Coach

Hard to believe, but last month we started a new year. If you're like most, you took at least some time to reflect on the past year and look toward the next one. You may have even gone so far as to set some goals. So, what is it you really want from your business this year? Do you see a clear path to get there, or is it just some wish or hope you wrote down?

It's the Straight Line

I want you to take a moment and look back on last year. Visualize where you're standing on January 1 of the new year, and now you're looking backward at the time that has passed. So first you see December, then November, then October, and so on all the way to the very beginning of the year. The path you see is what you did with that time and the things that you accomplished along the way. Was yours a direct route, or were you all over the place? How far did you move, if at all? Now we all know the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Imagine that straight line from the start of last year to the end. Are they similar, or is your line all over the place? That straight line was the path you needed to be on, and that zigzag squiggly line was the path you were actually on. Which path do you think will get you to your goals faster? Heck, if you zigzagged enough, you may not have gotten very far down your path at all. Your goals may still be far from your reach.

If what I just said confuses you, let me give you an example of what I mean. Let's say, at the beginning of the year you had set a goal to achieve a 60 percent parts margin. You spoke with your coach and you identified all the things that affected the parts margin. You decided one at a time you will implement them. The first thing you decided to change was your parts pricing policies. That included implementing 8 percent Shop Supplies and then installing the ATI Parts Matrix. You had a staff meeting to discuss and explain the changes. Your staff resisted the change just as you did with your coach. This happened because as I said last month, "You've always done it some other way" or you found yourself discussing "what might happen if..." because change was hard and scary. There was a certain level of fear you all shared. You may have even empathized with their reasons why it wouldn't work because you were not totally convinced yourself. Now the year is over and your parts margin dial barely moved. You can now see that zigzag line on the first month or two down your path but then it just stops completely. This is because you tried but never really got things implemented. You were all over the place and never really moved. This happened because you decided to turn back and give up rather than push through the hard. How many of these zigzag, dead-end lines do you see on your path now?

Stay on Your Path

There are many stages to making a concrete sidewalk. First you prepare the area. Then you frame the space. Then you lay the rebar. Finally, you pour the concrete, and let it dry. Think about your path as finished squares of dry concrete. You cannot move on to the next square of your path until the one before it is completely dry and can hold your weight. What makes this possible is two simple words. These are the most important words you will hear. This is the only way you can really build a sustainable path that will last for many years like concrete. Your behavior is what builds the path.

Last month I told you the biggest challenge of all was you. What must change is you! But what is it about you that must change? You're not a bad person. Neither is your staff. What must change is your behavior, and the behavior of your staff. How you approach any initiative or innovation in your business, has everything to do with the results or lack of results you might get. Change your approach (your behavior), change your results.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Think about the example I mentioned earlier in this article. You met with your staff to discuss parts margin. If your approach was seeking their opinion ("What do you think of this parts matrix, guys?"), then you asked them to fight back. That will never work. You need to go into this meeting making sure they understand things are going to change. That is not negotiable. Parts margin is going to improve. You have decided to implement the matrix so that is going to happen. What is negotiable is how the goal will be accomplished and the best way to implement the change. Discuss the possible scenarios that could arise and the solutions. Help them feel heard, more comfortable with the change, and a part of the process. Let them know you will be paying close attention to the margin each day. You will be discussing results with them daily to keep them on track. You will all come back together in one week at your next meeting to share your successes and challenges, to work through the failures, and find what does work. At some point, you will see the change has happened, and your concrete square is dry. Now you can move on to building your next square.

Everything I just mentioned is a change in your behavior. If that is still not clear for you, read the preceding paragraph again and look for the changes in your behavior. Write them down as you read. As you read, you should find at least five changes in your behavior. Now you have the list you need to start down the straight path to achieving your goal.

Do It Again

Now it is time to create or recreate this year's goals. This time (under each of your goals) I want you to write down the changes in your behavior that will keep you on the path to whatever you set as your goal. The more specific you are, the more you will stay on your path. When the year is over, you will look back at the trail you blazed. How straight a line will you see? If you see a different straighter line than the line from the previous year, congratulations, you have changed your behavior.

If you send me the list you made with the five or more changes you wrote down, I will send you my goal setting process, that if you follow it exactly as it is written, you will accomplish your goals this year. You can email your list to gberman@autotraining.net. Please title your email "I want to change my behavior and set better goals this year."



Sam's Corner

Book Review

"The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever"

By Michael Bungay Stanier
Reviewed by Eric M. Twiggs, ATI Coach

A good leader has all the answers, right? During my career as a district manager, I believed this to be true. Up to that point, I had been trained to believe that a good leader always took an authoritative approach and told everyone what to do.

Since I had the answers, my managers would contact me about how to deal with their unhappy customers without first attempting to resolve the issues themselves. Being **the answer man** left me feeling secure, self-confident, and stressed out.

For six months, I would speak to three managers per day about store problems that could have been easily resolved without my input. Then one day, my stress had reached a tipping point. One of my managers named "Jeff" contacted me wanting to know how to deal with a customer who wanted to use a ten-dollar coupon three days after it expired. Normally, I would just tell him what to do, but this day was different.

I responded in the following manner: "So Jeff, if I were unavailable and you had to make the call, what would you do?" To which he replied, "I would go ahead and honor the coupon!" "Great idea, Jeff, thank you for handling it," I replied as I hung up the phone.

This was a life-changing moment, because Jeff never called me again with a problem that he already had the answer to. Prior to this exchange, he was calling me every day! I applied this approach with the rest of my team and experienced similar results. I went from fielding three calls a day to one call per week in a thirty-day time period. What changed things for me? I had stumbled upon **a coaching habit**.

I could have reached this point a lot faster if I had read **Michael Bungay Stanier's** book before I became a district manager. If you are looking to experience less stress and have more time to focus on your priorities, this is the book for you.

Book Summary

In "The Coaching Habit," the author refers to the innate need to provide answers as "the advice monster." According to Stanier, most leaders have a tendency to jump in and try to solve the problem based on what they believe they know.

This is problematic for three reasons:

1. We don't always know what the issue is and what's really going on with the person asking the question.
2. Always providing the answers creates a culture of overdependence.
3. In a culture of overdependence, the leader spends their time putting out fires and becomes disconnected from the work they should be doing.

To overcome the advice monster, Stanier lays out a step-by-step plan to help the reader establish a coaching habit instead. He outlines the following seven question types:

1. **The Kickstart Question** – "What's on your mind?" Discover the power of the opening question.
2. **The Focus Question** – "What's the real challenge here for you?" The goal is to focus on the actual problem instead of the first problem.
3. **The A.W.E. Question** – A.W.E. stands for "And What Else?" and helps to generate additional options.
4. **The Foundation Question** – "What do you want?" This will uncover the true concern that is beneath the surface.
5. **The Lazy Question** – "How can I help?" This question moves the conversation forward when the person is stuck.
6. **The Strategic Question** – "By saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?" Helps to define priorities.
7. **The Learning Question** – "What was most useful to you?" Can verify that actual learning took place and adds perceived value to the discussion.

For each question type, Stanier provides numerous illustrations and examples to reinforce the learning. He also provides links to his training videos that include additional definitions and examples.

Conclusion

I am living proof that being the answer man is a stressful job. Implementing the strategies contained in "The Coaching Habit" will connect you to the work you should be doing and change the way you lead forever.





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Fourth Round Picks Are In!

By Bryan Stasch, Vice President

ATI's Top Shop Quest Continues: Our SuperConference 2017 is just a few weeks away! I can't believe how time flies. My favorite part of our SuperConference is the awards ceremony as we wrap up the conference. Why you ask? Because this is where I get the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and passion of a select few award winners with 20 Group awards, Re-Engineering and Alumni "Best of" and "Most Improved" awards, and of course the Big Daddy of them all, ATI's National Top Shop award.

As you may have already seen, ATI starts with the Top 150 producing shops in the ATI family. From there, a selection process based on a points scoring system, the Top 75, the Top 50 and NOW the Top 25 shops have been selected. Well, actually there are the Top 26, since we have a tie. From this group of great shops, the Top 12 and ultimately the ATI Top Shop for 2016 will be chosen. But you will have to wait until Saturday, March 25, to see the winners of these prestigious awards.

Accurate Automotive	Lee & Kelli Weatherby	AZ
Babcock Auto Care	Jeremy & Jeana Babcock	MN
Ben Nielsen's Skyline Automotive	Ben & Erin Nielsen	VA
BG Automotive, Inc.	Bryan & Cendi Gossel	CO
Caton Auto Clinic	Ken & Diane Steinbach	MD
Fifth Gear Automotive	Bill & Rhena Bernick, Rick & Nicole Jordan, Rick Jordan, Jr.	TX
Frank's Servicenter, Inc.	Frank Dischinger III	PA
Haglin Automotive, Inc.	Dana & Judi Haglin	CO
Hillmuth Certified Automotive - Clarksville	Doug & Eileen Hillmuth	MD
Hillside Auto Repair	David & Zoie Carney	CA
Ken's Automotive & Transmissions	Mark & Donna Mead	MD
Ledom's Performance Equipment and Diesel Repair	Greg & Patti Budwine and Larry Ledom	CO
Morrison's Auto-Rite, Inc.	Fred Morrison, Rob Morrison & Michael Gallagher	MA
Murphy's Autocare, Inc.	Dave & Jan Murphy	OH
Paul Campanella's Auto & Tire Center - Wilmington	Paul & Karen Campanella	DE
Precision Auto	Bud & Jackie Wildman	MD
Rob'e Mans Auto Service	Eddie & Trish Cleveland	AL
Rocha's Automotive, Inc.	Ken & Angie Rocha	CA
Sacramento Specialty Automotive	Joe & Carrie Brazil	CA
Service First Automotive Centers - Champions	Nathan Pruski, Terral Hill, Chris Pazderny	TX
Service First Automotive Centers - Spring	Nathan Pruski, Terral Hill, Chris Pazderny	TX
Silver Lake Auto & Tire Centers	Dan & Darren Garlock	WI
Sloan's Automotive	Terry Sloan	FI
V & F Auto, Inc.	Frank & Sheila Palange	MA
Walt Eger's Service Center	Bruce & Donna Spencer	MD
Westlake Independent	Bruce Nation	CA

Top 25 Shops