

What is wrong with people? Or is it just me?

Set expectations and lead your employees to get the best out of them

We all have our own opinion on the answer to the first question, but very few ever think they are the problem. When we started coaching shop owners, one of my favorite competitors told me he had no interest in coaching and he just wanted to train. When I asked why, he told me it was because the biggest problem is usually them, though you will never convince them of it. My first thought was that he has been doing this too long; however, I find myself guilty at times thinking everyone else is the problem, not me. I overheard one of our former shop owners and now ATI coach, Bobby Poist, tell a story to a group of new shop owners that you might be able to relate to:

A couple months ago I had a conversation with a shop owner. He was having problems with his service advisor and had decided to let him go. He searched for a few weeks and found a new service advisor. To quote his own words, "This guy is the greatest thing since sliced bread!"

Ironically, in a few weeks he was having similar problems with the new service advisor. He wasn't following up with customers or selling maintenance packages. He had no desire to keep the shop busy and was having problems completing his day-to-day tasks. This made me think a little. Why did we start having problems with the new guy? How could he go bad so fast?

Ever wonder why your employees don't do what you ask of them? You hire someone new and they start out

OK. Then something happens and they start making all sorts of mistakes. You find yourself wondering, "What happened to the person I hired?" I thought they were amazing, and now they aren't even the same person.

HOW CAN YOU HIRE SOMEONE AND LET THEM GO WITHOUT GUIDANCE? AN INABILITY TO LEAD IS USUALLY THE CAUSE OF HOW EMPLOYEES GO BAD.

I am confronted with this situation a lot. What I usually find is that the business owner is the problem. Seems hard to swallow, but it's the truth. They are unable to set expectations, they avoid confrontation, and they expect others to lead their employees. This usually leads to good people getting let go and then moving on to be great in another organization. How can you hire someone and let them go without guidance? Then get mad when they don't perform to your expectation levels? You may as well roll the dice and hope for a good employee. Unfortunately, this mentality only leads to failure. An inability to lead is usually the cause of how employees go bad. So, how do you fix this?

Create processes

Process is the key ingredient that makes a business successful. A process is a step-by-step guide on how something should be done. There are 11 steps to

making a Big Mac, yet the process is so thorough that anyone can learn to make one in no time. What do you think would happen if someone negated the process and put all the condiments on the outside of the bun? It wouldn't be a Big Mac. This process is utilized worldwide. Why can't your processes be the same? Can you simplify the processes that will make your business successful?

Hire the right people

Know what you want: Envision the perfect employee. What does he/she look like? How do they dress? What traits do you expect? Who will be the person that represents your business? Statistics show that knowing what you want in advance will help you decide who will fit your mold.

Having a tough interview process will help to weed out the wrong employees. Get to know them. Ask them tough questions and let them talk. Most people will turn state's evidence if they have enough time. Use hiring tools such as personality profiles and tests to help you determine the best candidates. Check their references. (Most potential employers won't check references because of some fear that they might get sued.) As far as I know there are no laws that keep you from checking a potential employee's work history.

Onboarding new employees

Every new employee should go through an orientation period. This will introduce them to how your business operates — how to open the shop, write up

a customer, set a lift, perform a proper courtesy inspection, etc. Knowing how the business operates and understanding expectations are keys to your success. Everybody needs direction if they are to reach their potential.

Give feedback and progress reports. Have one-on-one meetings with your employees, and review expectations with them. A good leader will help employees succeed by holding them accountable. Set goals and recognize the good as well as the bad! One-on-one meetings and agreements not only hold employees accountable; they also help with important documentation if proof is ever needed.

Hold team meetings and recognize the wins your staff has accomplished. Try to focus on positives, which help everyone feel good. The saying “Negativity breeds negativity” comes to mind when most people think about meetings. Most shop owners and managers hold meetings when something is wrong. The problem with this is employees recognize a meeting as a beating. Once this mentality has been set, your employees will shut down.

Become a great leader

Businesses are most successful when the employees understand the owner's values. Ensure that everyone in your organization operates by them and you will be successful. If you find someone operating outside of your values and guidelines, it is your responsibility to counsel them. If they don't comply, you probably have the wrong person.

Hold people accountable. Talk about their performance when necessary. Waiting to handle an issue is the same as not doing anything at all. People will take advantage of you because they feel you won't do anything about it. Statistics show that employees are happier when they have direction and are accountable. If we both agree on something and

I don't comply, it is your responsibility to hold me accountable. If you don't, then you are just as much to blame as I am.

Cultivate a take-ownership environment. One of the main complaints I hear from shop owners is that their employees won't give them feedback. They state everything is OK when asked, yet their actions prove otherwise. A great way to cultivate a take-ownership environment is to ask your employees for help. Discuss key issues you have and ask them to help you solve problems. The employee may not be able to help, but will appreciate your asking. If they can't offer feedback, you can turn the opportunity into a learning experience. The term “buy-in” comes from a person's ability to agree with a process and take ownership toward its success.

Allow praise to be praise. Don't praise an employee with a negative. “You did great here, but...” only leaves your employees feeling derailed and frustrated. When you recognize something good, mention it. Only the good thing — there is no need to cloud the situation with words like “but,” or “if.” A feel-good moment is a feel-good moment. When praise is used properly people will become more engaged. They will also be happier in their environment.

After many years in the automotive industry, I have seen a lot. I have worked with many great leaders, and many not-so-great leaders. The lead-

ers that made me who I am today are the people who weren't afraid to outline their expectations. They held me accountable and praised me when I did a great job. They talked to me and recognized my strengths. They helped me develop my weaknesses so that they became my strengths.

Do you have what it takes to be the best of the best? Taking a long, hard look in the mirror could be just what you need to be successful. What can you do to help your employees become the best of the best? The key to their growth lies in your ability to take ownership and lead them to glory. Although this approach may seem painful, you might just eliminate the one obstacle keeping you from achieving your goals — you!

Test yourself

If you would like to see where your strengths and weaknesses are, simply go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2017-05 to take the Business Owners' Evaluation Checklist. 



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