

# ShopTalk



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April 2011

## We Sabotage Ourselves

Our brains are programmed to fight for survival, similar to other animals.

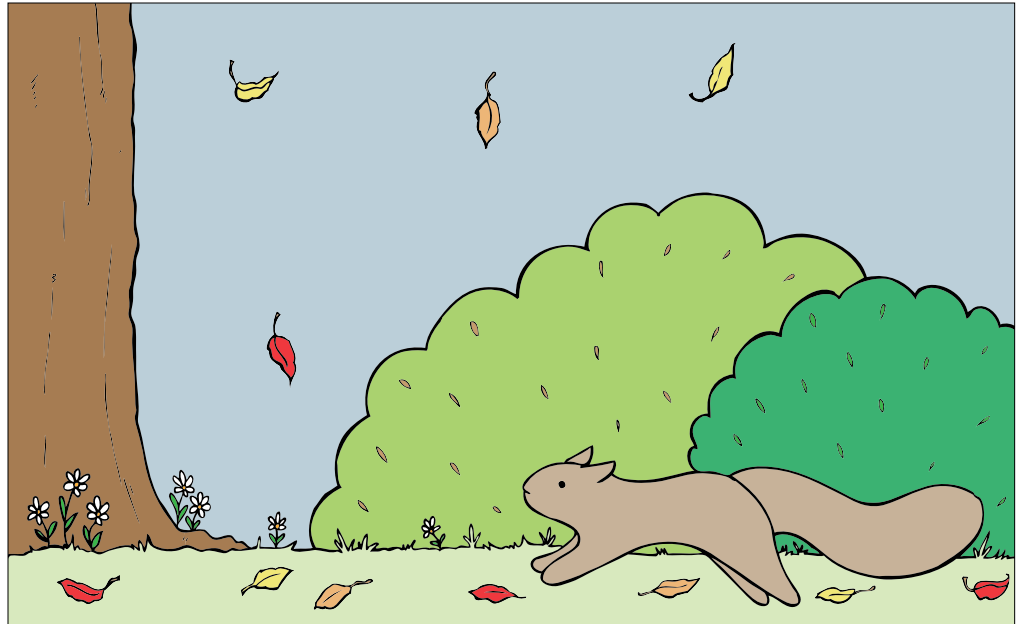
If a squirrel is on the ground searching for nuts, hears a tree branch break, feels a swoosh of wind and then feels a sharp pain in her side, she is going to escape by running into the woods, barely thwarting the hungry hawk. What happens the next time that squirrel hears a branch break and feels a gust of wind? She's going to run to the nearest tree, and her side is going to ache, even when the hawk isn't around. Running for cover is now an involuntary response every time she senses that combination of experiences.

Our brains are programmed in the same way. When we experience accidents or other traumatic events in our lives, our brains create responses to protect us from those things happening again in the future.

As an example, imagine you fell out of an oak tree when you were a child. You hit hard and were really injured; you even lost consciousness for a few seconds. Next thing you knew, you were lying on the ground next to a rake, looking up, seeing the sun through the leaves, your mother in a red dress rushing to your aid. You were lucky your mom was home to get you to the doctor. It only took a few weeks to mend your broken arm.

Now, just like the squirrel who runs when she hears the snap of a tree branch, your brain has been programmed to protect you from another scary fall. Different stimuli such as heights, trees, sunlight through leaves, rakes on the ground or even women in red dresses can trigger your brain to associate with that fall, making you feel scared and giving you pain in your now mended arm.

This works in other situations, too. Say you meet with an employee to get him excited about a new program in your shop. You are enthusiastic about this new program; it's going to make your people and you a lot of money.



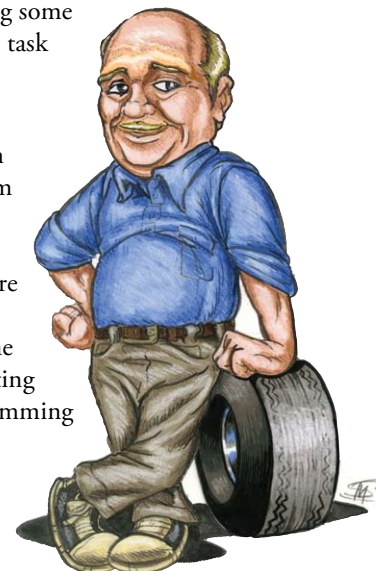
But the meeting goes badly. Your employee isn't excited, he doesn't like the idea, he's happy with the way things are. His reaction could be due to any number of reasons, from a bad situation at home, to preoccupation about his fishing trip this weekend, to being worried about a sick parent or child. Whatever the reasons, your brain connects that employee meeting with failure and disappointment.

What happens the next time you try to schedule an employee meeting? Nothing. Your brain finds distractions for you. It makes you feel like that work isn't important, and it keeps you busy with mundane tasks that are comfortable and safe. For many, that's working on cars. After all, the cars don't talk back.

During that employee meeting, you experienced pain and then a reaction. Now the computer in your brain will work to avoid that pain any way it can. It will try to prevent you from having an employee meeting in the same way it will keep you from falling out of another tree by making you afraid of heights.

Most of us try to fight this fear. We attempt to power through it. We get ourselves excited about a new project, we set deadlines and we make commitments. But our brains don't care. Those protective mechanisms kick in, and a few hours later, we find ourselves distracted – working on cars, running customers to their offices or doing some administrative task that “must get done now.”

The solution to this problem will surprise you. Next month I'll share what you can do to overcome this self-defeating mental programming forever ...



# ATI Client Profile

## Learning Comes Naturally for Rodger Cochran

Rodger Cochran loves to learn. In fact, this owner of Grassland Car Care in Franklin, Tennessee, considers ATI a college education specific to the industry, and he prides himself on being a good pupil. "I like to learn something new every day," he says.

Rodger did not grow up around a repair shop, and so when he got into the business in 1995, he had a lot to learn. For the first two years, he worked with a family member in a Bridgestone/Firestone affiliate. Then, in January 2001, he purchased his own shop. Nine months later, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the purchase of a second shop, Rodger was struggling.

"Opening the second shop was a huge mistake," Rodger says. "Near the end of 2003, I had two stores, both losing money."

Rodger closed his second store in fall 2003. In January 2007, things took a big turn for the better. Rodger attended his first ATI boot camp, a last effort before he began looking for a new career.

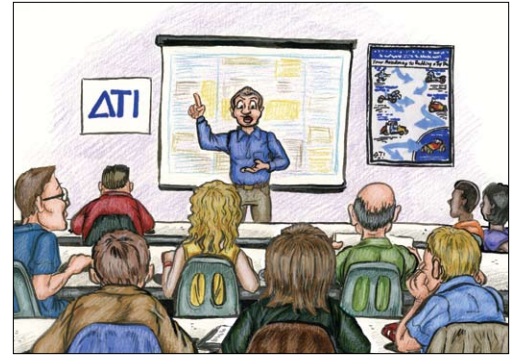
"I was considering putting a resume together, but first I went to an ATI boot camp," Rodger recalls. "I couldn't afford coaching – my business was way too fragile – but I liked what I heard. So I went back and implemented courtesy checks and the parts matrix and

increased my shop supply fee. Those three things raised my bottom line 10 percent over six months!"

When Rodger went to his second boot camp, he signed up for coaching. This student was ready to learn more ways to improve his business. "I looked at ATI as a college education specific to my industry," Rodger explains. "I saw what I had done by implementing just those three things from boot camp. So when I signed up, I committed to doing what my coach said."

Even before ATI, Rodger was a student of business, learning from those around him. He recalls this life lesson: "A businessman put it to me this way: 'There's no one single thing that will make your business successful. It's like bricks in a wall. It's always little pieces that you keep doing.' And that's what I have been doing with ATI."

Rodger has implemented personnel changes to make his shop more profitable. "ATI has an entire packet on interviewing, and I used it to hire my service manager," he says. "I interviewed several, tested them and, after consulting with my coach, hired the one who scored well. I've also implemented a compensation plan for both mechanics and my service manager, and I'm more thorough when I interview technicians."



That isn't to say Rodger never makes a poor hiring decision, but he is more proactive and selective now. He gives this example: "I had a great technician, but he and I had issues. Toe-to-toe he'd argue with me in front of everybody, and I dealt with that for seven years. It was only through the confidence I gained from ATI that I finally replaced him."

Now that Rodger has learned to stay ahead of the curve and make personnel changes as needed, he says he doesn't have any stress at all at work: "Literally I'm in my office 20 hours a week."

Rodger is able to run his business with so few hours in-house by using this formula he learned from ATI: "You take a square and divide it into four. The top left square is 'urgent and important'; that's dealing with fires. The top right is 'important but not urgent.' And then

## Sam's Corner

### Where Are You Going to Live?

Even when you have an ATI Army behind you to help you implement change you are the one who has to do it! If you don't feel energetic or are stressed out when trying to change things there is a good chance you will mess up the best laid out plans. Physically feeling good is one of the secrets to successful implementation of new ideas. Let's face it, change doesn't always go as planned so you better be prepared to roll up your sleeves and try something else, but that takes energy.

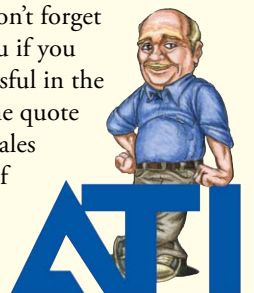
Sometimes I share with new clients on Day One the fact that I exercise every day. I am one of the most energetic fat guys you will ever meet and most of the time with a smiling happy attitude. My secret has been 40 minutes of cardio training every morning on an elliptical or treadmill machine. When I don't exercise I feel sluggish and don't want to work long hours when I need to! Many of our ATI

clients have realized it's not about losing weight but about having the energy to handle change and stress, plus, you will feel so much better!

Thanks to our new nutritionist, Sherry Granader, I have risen to a new level of energetic determination and wonderful internal feelings. Sherry has me eating whole foods and putting everything I eat in an electronic daily calendar so she can teach me right from wrong. I don't know about you but I was a grazing machine eating everything and anything all day till I fell down and went to sleep. The daily diary has 350,000 foods preprogrammed in so all you have to do is start typing the stuff you just shoved in your mouth and boom, it shows you the nutrients and metrics of its entire ingredients. You can buy the app for \$9.95 by going to [www.mynetdiary.com](http://www.mynetdiary.com) and the program will guide you to foods that are better for you.

Sherry reviews it with me every two weeks and has literally helped me drop 30 pounds, yep 30 pounds. Chubby ain't so Chubby anymore! More important, I feel so much better and have so much more energy.

Last but not least, Sherry taught me that baby boomers need to build muscle to help burn calories and keep your metabolism energetic. I have been lifting weights after my cardio exercise and the man boobs are evaporating before my eyes and it makes me feel euphoric! So, don't forget about taking care of you if you really want to be successful in the ATI programs. I love the quote from our own veteran sales manager, Mike Tuttle: if you don't take care of your body, where are you going to live?



you have 'unimportant and non-urgent' and 'unimportant and urgent.' These are things you can delegate or just completely not deal with. I spend most of my time in 'important but not urgent,' which is exactly where I need to be."

One of the "important but not urgent" tasks Rodger handles is the daily books. "They're just not done daily," he laughs. "Once or twice a week I'll take care of several days. I know my bank balance. I know what my sales are. I track certain things, like who's doing courtesy checks. I also have a part-time assistant who matches invoices, handles payroll and does all those other things I used to have to do."

Having an assistant frees Rodger to focus on business strategy. "I come back from a

20 Group meeting and start implementing," he says. "Recently I evaluated my marketing and decided to peel off a couple of layers. I hadn't realized I was spending as much as I was. So I'm being proactive and stretching my boundaries on where I market."

When it comes to boundaries, Rodger is careful to set some around his personal life. He regularly carves out time for prayer and reading his Bible, and he exercises to maintain a healthy lifestyle. He has the time because he has learned to harness technology to run his business.

"Today I talked to my assistant for a few minutes," Rodger says. "Then I logged in remotely and selected the bills I wanted to pay. When I first started with ATI, I remember one of the guys in class with a laptop, taking care of

his business, and I thought I'd never be able to do that. Part of ATI is growing in who you are."

Another way Rodger is growing is in learning not to limit himself. "Most shop owners limit themselves," he shrugs. "Till recently I've limited my marketing to within two or three miles of my store. I'll be expanding my marketing this year with radio and TV."

And he'll keep on learning. One of Rodger's most recent "classes" has been with Michael Gerber, author of *The E-Myth*. From reading this book, Rodger is learning to implement systems within his business. "I'm learning to treat my business as if it's the prototype for 3,000 more just like it," he explains. "Whenever I find a problem, I want to come up with a policy that'll keep it from happening again, or at least less often."

## The Coaches Corner

# Staffing Up for the Busy Season

By Mike Haley



We have all experienced the summertime blues when it comes to not having the proper amount of help during our busy season. We all know how

frustrating it is when we are running on the edge of our production capacity, but how bad is it when we know we don't have the proper staffing to get the work done. We need to become proactive to ensure we have the proper resources when the busy season hits.

**1. What did history teach us?** Use last year's records to determine when the upswing in car count began. If your system allows, pull a report of what services you performed. What type of staffing does it take to perform these services? Also look at when the car count declines. This information is not an exact science but it will give you a window of when your shop should be ready.

**2. Who's on vacation?** If you don't already have a calendar for tracking employees' personal time off please do so. At the beginning of every year ask your employees to get with you as soon as possible to go over their vacation request. In order to know how much work I can produce I will need to know which employees will be there. This also helps

with the prevention of too many employees on vacation at one time.

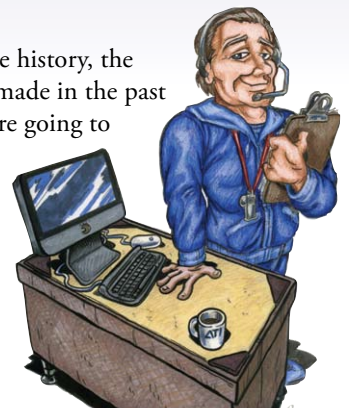
**3. What skill set do I need?** For this you will need to assess your current staff. Most of the customers coming in are preparing for summer travel and a general service technician will fill the void nicely. Depending on your current staffing and your location in the country a technician that is proficient in A/C may be necessary to keep up with demand. Using your history report you can determine what work is expected versus the current staff you have. Remember we make more profit having the correctly skilled and compensated technician performing the correct job.

**4. Where do I find the help?** Most of this work force can be found the same way as if you're looking to fill a C-technician or general service void. The vocational schools and local community colleges that teach automotive are a good resource. Start relationships with student placement coordinators at WyoTech and Lincoln Tech. Did you have a great general service technician last year that left for school and will be returning home this summer? Did a service writer leave for family obligations but would be available to fill in for a week or two while vacations are taking place? Have we kept in touch with past employees that we liked but they moved on? Having a file of potential employees that

we have kept in touch with can be a great resource. Could we ask an employee who we successfully moved off the desk to work on the business adjust their schedule during vacation weeks? Do we have someone who is eager to prove themselves and with proper preparation we could cross train and have them fill a different role while vacations are going on?

**5. How do I schedule?** During the peak times it may be necessary to get creative with scheduling. Shops that are facing the west during the heat of the afternoon could start earlier so the guys are not working over half their time during the hottest part of the day. Could we staff our shop to have shorter work weeks? I once built a schedule in a seven day a week shop where the technicians would rotate between a four day work week and then a three day work week. The two shifts would rotate the Wednesday. It was a big motivator and I was able to keep the shop producing 24/7. Think outside the box in a way that accomplishes your goal and is also a win for the team.

Knowing the history, the mistakes you made in the past and what you're going to do differently in the future is what will define the success of your busy season. **ATI**





# Your Available Training Programs for April and May

## April 2011

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

4 <b>Service Advisor</b> 1 of 4	5 <b>Service Advisor</b> 2 of 4	6 <b>Shop Owner</b> 7 of 9	7 <b>Shop Owner</b> 8 of 9 <b>California S.A.</b> 1 of 4	8 <b>Shop Owner</b> 9 of 9 <b>California S.A.</b> 1 of 4	2/3 9/10
11	12	13	14	15	16/17
18 <b>Service Advisor</b> 3 of 4	19 <b>Service Advisor</b> 4 of 4	20	21	22	23/24 Easter
25	26	27 <b>Shop Owner</b> 4 of 9	28 <b>Shop Owner</b> 5 of 9	29 <b>Shop Owner</b> 6 of 9	30

## May 2011

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday/Sunday

2 <b>Service Advisor</b> 1 of 4	3 <b>Service Advisor</b> 2 of 4	4 <b>Shop Owner</b> 1 of 9	5 <b>Shop Owner</b> 2 of 9	6 <b>Shop Owner</b> 3 of 9	1 7/8 Mother's Day
9	10	11	12	13	14/15
16 <b>Shop Owner</b> 7 of 9	17 <b>Shop Owner</b> 8 of 9	18 <b>Shop Owner</b> 9 of 9	19 <b>Master Mind</b> <b>California S.A.</b> 3 of 4	20 <b>Master Mind</b> <b>California S.A.</b> 4 of 4	21/22
23 <b>Service Advisor</b> 3 of 4	24 <b>Service Advisor</b> 4 of 4	25	26	27	28/29
30 Memorial Day	31				



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