

ATI Shoptalk



Issue 5

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Upcoming Courses:

Shop Owners

September 29-30
October 1-3
October 15-17
October 22-24
October 27-29

Service Managers

October 6-7
October 13-14

Advanced Shop Owners

September 24-25



ATI's Superconference In Cancun

By Chris Frederick



ATI's annual Superconference is fast becoming an annual tradition for ATI's best of the best. Since this has always been your Superconference, we focused on your feedback. The overriding majority of past attendees want beach, fun in the sun, a high-end property & enough free time to enjoy it all. And there has always been a lot of interest in an "all inclusive" package since the out of conference food & beverage costs really add up at resorts.

However lofty the goal, ATI delivers! Superconference 2009 will be hosted at the Westin Resort & Spa in beautiful Cancun, Mexico - February 18th - 21st. On top of the perfect winter get-a-way location, ATI's incredible conference content, the resort's private beach, some of the prettiest waters in the world, and of course, Westin acclaimed service, ATI has negotiated the best possible value by bringing you for the first time, an ALL INCLUSIVE Superconference.

Number one, new ideas on what works in today's market. Hobnobbing with some of the sharpest and most forward thinking minds in the industry is a great way to learn new ideas. A large number of ATI's best clients, ATI instruc-

tors and coaches will be on-hand for presentations and Round Table discussions on your biggest shop obstacles and challenges with hard-hitting answers and easy to follow processes for implementation and performance management to see that you get the results you want and DESERVE.

Number two, the auto repair and service industry is facing the perfect storm. With the amount of new technology, tools, equipment, and training heading our way, and the fact that we are moving to a "White Collar" labor pool that has the ability to diagnose and repair these automobiles will not be cheap. This type of talent is going to want to get paid for what they know, not for what they produce. All of this combined with a down economy and high gas prices that has your customers running for the life boats. Unfortunately, many will not survive the storm, only the strong and the informed will. Come see what ATI and our clients have to offer...

- To increase and stabilize CAR COUNT
- To increase PROFITS and CASH FLOW
- To gain more FREE TIME for you and your family
- To become or stay the BEST shop in town

And to help you set a course for SURVIVAL for the years ahead. Our event starts with a Welcome Reception on Wednesday evening followed

by one full day of meetings, and then 2 half days of meetings. Half day meetings allow everyone to go out and enjoy their afternoons in Cancun. Rumor has it that there will even be an ATI "Beach Olympics" on Friday afternoon!

3 Of Our Guest Speakers

Sam Memmolo! Sam is a 40 year veteran of the automotive industry, and is well known in business circles from the aftermarket to the O.E.'s and performance segments. Sam hosts and produces nationally syndicated "Sam's Garage Radio Show" and is the host of "Two Guys Garage" on the Speed Channel. Sam will share with us what the dealers are doing everyday to lure your customers away and back into their bays. From his years of talking to thousands of call-in consumers, Sam will also give us insight into what your customers really look for when choosing a service facility. Check out Sam's website at: <http://www.speedtv.com/programs/two-guys-garage/>

Lauren Fixx – the Car Coach®! Lauren has appeared on *Oprah*, *20/20* & *The Today Show* just to mention a few. Lauren will be discussing strategies on "The Latest Techniques in Marketing and Selling Maintenance to Women". She has worked directly with the car dealers on how to get women in the door

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and sell to them. So, if you want to increase your CAR COUNT and ARO for INCREASED PROFITS, come see Lauren's new tools. If you want to become the BEST and most "WOMEN FRIENDLY" shop in town – Lauren is your WOMAN. Lauren is the leading female automotive expert in the industry; she has grown up in the automotive aftermarket, is ASE Certified and an SAE member. Lauren Fix has worked in the automotive industry all her life. She will be a great addition to this year's conference. Check out Lauren's website at: www.laurenfix.com.



Sam Memmolo



Lauren Fix



Bryan Dodge

Bryan Dodge is a professional speaker, radio personality, and author. His inspirational keynotes are on the subjects of personal and professional development, success habits of the wealthy, & leadership principles. The underlying thesis of all of Bryan Dodge's teachings are that "Life is too short not to be happy, and life is too long not to do well." Bryan's programs are designed to accelerate your personal and professional growth and produce the favorable results you're looking for in life.

Bryan is the author of three professional development audio programs, "*How to Build a Better You*", "*How to Build a Complete Sales Person*", and "*How to Build a Purpose Guided Life*" as well as being the co-author of the book "*Becoming the Obvious Choice*" which has sold over 125,000 copies. Bryan is also the host of the "Build a Better You" Radio Show on Dallas/Fort Worth's premier Radio Station, WBAP820 AM. Check out Bryan Dodge's website at: www.bryandodge.com.

If It Looks Like A Duck...

By Brian Canning



I have this very bad habit of looking at things, & short of them being cleverly camouflaged, I can make a quick determination as to what I am seeing, hearing, touching or smelling. Sometimes an object will seem out of place and I will try to determine how or why it got there, but for the most part, most of us can look at a duck, see that it walks like a duck and pretty quickly determine that it is in fact a duck. Despite the extraordinary efforts at camouflage, you are likely to see, this is particularly true of human behavior.

When I begin to look at a business in an effort to help the owner determine where the bleeding is, I always start with the numbers, though it is very rare that I am looking at sales. In my experience, the sales themselves are not likely to tell me anything other than whether we have enough or not. Sales will not tell me our profit margins or our productivity or how consistent we are in our inspection process and therefore, sales will get little more than a passing glance. The sales generally are what they are. Of much more interest to me is cost of the average repair order, effective labor rate and tech productivity & along with these numbers, the state of leadership and accountability in the store.

Leadership is a tough one for most of us, and too often we confuse it with management. Management is absolutely critical to our being successful as it involves our ability to handle objects as opposed to people, things like time, tasks and process. I have known many great managers who were disasters at leadership, guys who were organized down to the minute and final task but were

absolutely hopeless in leading their people. The impact here can be huge and is often most obvious in how the store is performing. Case in point: a great manager will develop the perfect process that will address a performance problem within a store and in doing so, will take into consideration available staff, anticipate the result and even develop a process to manage the exceptions. The problem will come for the manager the very second he tries to implement this "perfect" process and runs into resistance. Maybe at your store, technicians enthusiastically nod their heads as we attempt to change or try something new but in my world, any hint of change sets off a tidal wave of objections and threats. This is our moment of truth, and very often this is the moment that improved process dies; that is unless we are willing and prepared to lead.

I have a great client in the Midwest who owns four high performance stores; actually, he owns three high performing stores and one that is operating at something below where it should be. This store manager is knowledgeable, experienced, hardworking, a great manager, but completely blind to leadership. In recent weeks, I have become very involved in his store operation. In looking at his numbers, I immediately saw that average repair order, tech productivity & numbers of maintenance services being performed were out of line with the other stores. In investigating the causes for this, it became obvious that we were inconsistent in our inspection process and had put procedures in place that assured control but diminished production. We implemented the 'perfect' process to assure that the cars were seen by the salespeople but at the cost of production capacity and



shop flow. The result was reduced sales, slow turnaround, frustrated customers, and a store that under performed month after month. The manager was convinced that his guys were working hard and that car count was the issue. The truth turned out to be an inconsistent inspection process and a lack of appropriate oversight, which resulted in a crew working very hard to underachieve. Somehow we had an excellent crew failing to live up to expectations.

Another important aspect is buy-in and belief in what we are doing. Leaders are judged strictly on their ability to deliver the goods and being a great manager will not be a comfort when our store flounders. Neat files and having our work in on time only matters if the store is hitting its numbers and if it is profitable. In the end, profitability matters. You must believe to lead and lead to achieve. In my experience, leading without belief is like sailing without a compass. Your people will move, but never get to the desired destination. If you believe in the journey, your people will follow you wherever you go. There is no faking it.

How many physically talented teams in the world of sports fail to achieve because of poor coaching? On the other side of that coin, how many teams of average talent excel because of consistently excellent coaching. Are Duke, Carolina or Indiana's basketball team's accidents? Is it any different with General Electric? What about your shop?

Show me a shop with a poor inspection process, low ARO & low productivity & I'll show you a shop with leadership issues. What can we do about that? 🍎

ATTENTION SHOP OWNERS AND MANAGERS:
If you have something you would like to share,
e-mail your coach or ATI at
office@autotraining.net.

Lions And Tigers And Bears, Oh My!!

By George Zeeks



when your dog was your best friend, & the boogieman lived in your closet. On some nights, when the rain fell and the thunder shook the house, you could swear that the closet door was coming open. Not all of us had an evil spirit in the closet, sometimes it was under the bed and sometimes in the basement. We know now, as adults, that there never was anything in the closet or under the bed but it seemed awful real then. When something seems that real, then the effect it has on us becomes real. The economy we find ourselves in is filled with rain, thunder, and lightning; they are very real. The question is whether or not the recession boogieman is coming out of the closet to get us, while we are in our beds with the covers up to our nose shaking from fear.

A recession as defined by Webster's Dictionary is "technically defined as at least two consecutive quarters when the economy shrinks or fails to grow". Well then, I guess we find ourselves in a recession. The next step is to throw off the covers, drag this thing out of the closet into the light of day and examine just how bad things really are. I coach shops all around the country and find that most shops fall into two different categories. One group is shops that are doing well despite the "Recession", and many are even prospering. The other group contains shops that were doing poorly before the "Recession" and continue to do the same but worse,

Please remember back to when you were six yrs old, when the world was filled with fun and discovery,

sometimes much worse. A period of extended growth in the market place, especially inflated growth, is followed by a period of adjustment. Some of the owners reading this may not survive this adjustment unless you take a hard look at what you do and what you need to change. The shops that fail will create a windfall for the shops who survive. Technicians, managers and, most importantly, customers will be left looking for a new shop to go to. Good employees



& good customers are always hard to find, let's see what we can do to make sure that they did not belong to you.

The first step is to take a long hard look in the mirror. The owner is the "Role Model" of the shop and if you are worried, then everyone will be scared. Fear is false evidence appearing real. You must always lead with an air of confidence, knowing that it will be A-OK!!! It spreads like the flu, until everyone in the shop is infected with fear or enthusiasm. You make the choice! If you are afraid then cry in the shower but win the Academy Award while you are work. This is not a transactional business that we are in; people make their decisions based on emotions. People buy from people they like. If you are confident then your staff and your customers will share that with you; people

will purchase what you offer and come back. In times like these, the aftermarket repair industry is supposed to be doing better. People are afraid to buy new cars and are keeping their cars longer, so they need to take care of the maintenance on the car to keep it running. My question to you is why some shops do a great job on maintenance and some "not so much". It is because they ask!! The expectation in the shop should be to find the things

that the car needs and let the customer know what is wrong with their car. If your shop is not doing this basic task, then you will drop to the bottom of the food chain and you know what happens there.

A key step is to examine how we check out the customer's car. Many clients that I speak to need to be

reminded of the basic services that we provide. Take a look at your oil change's, are we doing a tire rotation on 50% of those oil changes? Statistically we should be. When we rotate the tires, are we taking the worst tire and checking the tire balance? How many battery services are we doing? Are we even checking? These items are labor intensive but are at a lower skill level and should be at a lower labor cost to us, which should result in more profit.

I was taught long ago that when things got tough, it was time to sharpen the pencil. What are you doing different to make your shop stand out from the crowd. The same old stuff, that didn't work before, will not work now. How do we treat our customers, how does our business look to a new customer and what image does

our sales staff project to our customers. When we answer the phone, do we make people want to come in to us or make yet another phone call to "check prices"? The phone, the initial greeting and the follow through as the customer leaves cannot be the same old thing if you want them to come back.

Take a hard, objective look at your shop and ask yourself if you would come back. Have a friend or neighbor do a "mystery shop" and check the results. I would often have my wife do a visit to a shop I was running and the results were often disturbing. She would often complain about the appearance of the customer area or the bathroom, something I took great pride in, and it always gave some new insight on the gap between the customer's expectations and mine. Look at how long it takes to perform the services you provide and what is the customer's expectation. It does not matter what we think is an ok length of time, the only thing that matters is what does the customer think. Do you have the proper systems in place to ensure we keep the customer informed on what is going on? Every time the customer has to call you to check the status of the car, YOU HAVE FAILED!!

My father was a highly decorated Veteran of two Wars and one of the things he said to me, long ago, has stuck ever since. "When in doubt, do something, do anything, maybe even the wrong thing, but do it with great enthusiasm". Throw the covers off and go boldly to open that closet door. You need to be the one to lead your crew to a better future. The alternative is to stay in bed, under the covers, and I promise you that the boogieman will not have to come out to do anything bad. You are already doing it to yourself. 

Sam's Corner: Advanced Driving School At SEMA

By Chris Frederick

If you had the opportunity to see the movie "The Bucket List" with Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson, you would have witnessed two cancer patients doing everything they wanted to do before they died. One of the fun things on their list and mine was to attend a high performance driving school. I was a drag racer and going around turns and circles was not my speciality. As a matter of fact, a few that have never done it wonder how hard it could be to go straight, but I won't mention any names. At any rate, I recently invested in a

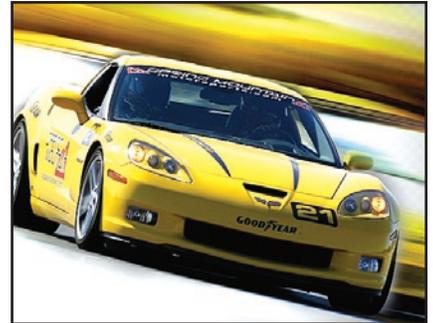
Corvette Z06 & I am convinced that after scaring myself several times, I need training. So, I will be speaking at the CARS ASA Convention during SEMA week and I heard the Spring Mountain Advanced Driving School had a fleet of Z06 Corvettes.

On November 3rd & 4th, I will be attending the Level 1 school in Pahrump, Nevada which is 45 minutes from the Las Vegas strip. I will be staying at the CARS Convention Hotel at Mandalay Bay and commuting daily. If there are any of you who are as crazy as I am and want to give it a try,

join me. I have never experienced driving fast in circles so it should be a hoot. We must arrive at the track at 7:30am and the class will end at 4pm. They suggest sunglasses, sunscreen, a hat and Piloti driving shoes. I don't know what they are, but I am sure that I will be wearing tennis shoes.

For others, there will be shoes sold at the track.

You can visit their website at www.SpringMountainMotor



www.SpringMountainMotorSports.com or call 1-800-391-6891 for reservations. Make driving your passion!

Seven At the Top, *Congratulations To All!*



This Month's Winners are:

Ralph Brutus

Brutus Auto Repair
148 Merrimack Street
Manchester, NH 03103

Ron & Sue Erickson

Ron's Automotive
511 Stevens Street
Geneva, IL 60134

Patrick McAleer

West Deptford Auto Repair
466 Crown Point Rd
Thorofare, NJ 08086

Jim & Diana Donahue

Jim's Auto Service
N 9688 Highway 69
New Glarus, WI 53574

Michelle & Bob Horcher

Horcher's Service Center
415 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Wheeling, IL 60090

Mike & Pam O'Hara

Mike's Auto Clinic
1817 Cole Street
Enumclaw, WA 98022

Gary Clark

Clark's Tire & Automotive
Service Center
724 S. Chester Rd.
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