



PROFIT MATTERS

HOW DO YOUR NUMBERS LINE UP? | BY CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK

Finding the Needle in a Field of Needles

Everything is going great. The phone is ringing, we have customers coming through the door wanting work done on their cars and all is right with the world. Except, we don't have enough technicians or maybe the right technician for the job.

his recommendations.

First thing that we need to do to find staffing in today's market is to take our head outside of the box. The old ways just do not work anymore. If you run an ad in the paper, it is expensive and a major gamble. You might as well go to Vegas and try your luck there.

However, if we are going to run an ad, let's be smart about it. Look at it from the employee's point of view and sell what they want to buy. What is different about your company that would appeal to a prospect? Do you have benefits, training, flexible hours? Are you closed on weekends? Perhaps someone who is currently working on weekends would want to come to work for you so they could spend time with their family. If you are going to run an ad, run one that will emphasize the benefits you have to offer. If it looks like everyone else's ad, then how are they going to find you?

The signing bonus ad (see opposite page) is very effective in many markets, because it makes the phone ring. A \$3,000 signing bonus can be given \$100 at a time for the first 30 weeks or over 30 months — it won't matter! I didn't believe this until the majority of shop owners told us the technicians

This is a very common scenario that plays out in shops around the country every day, and a common complaint from our clients is the problem of finding a good technician or the "right" technician. My first impulse is to ask why they lost a good technician and were they that good to begin with. Look at how you are hiring your employees. If we find that we are doing the old-fashioned "fog the mirror" test, then you got what you deserved.

Look at how you are treating your employees. I have found it is very difficult to steal a happy employee; they just do not want to leave. The majority of technicians tell us they stay for the relationship with the owner first and the money second. If you need to read further because you need staffing, focus on fixing the root problem first or you will always end up looking for people. One of our senior coaches at ATI, George Zeeks, helps shop owners solve the recruiting problem every day, and here are

If you are going to run a newspaper ad, run one that will emphasize the benefits you have to offer. If it looks like everyone else's ad, how will potential hires find you?

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

QUESTION:

Once I find the right person, how can I sell them on joining my team?

Take them and their significant other to a relationship building dinner where they can get to know you and your significant other in a relaxed setting. Our experience tells us the relationship is more important than the money, and the significant other is the person who really needs to be sold on you.

*Do you have a question for Chubby?
E-mail him at cfrederick@autotraining.net.*



RARE OPPORTUNITY

\$3,000 Signing Bonus
 For The Right Technician
 Business Booming!
 Call Chubby
 Cell Number (Not Shop)

Offering WDs and tool reps a bounty for a good potential employee makes a lot of sense. Offering a bounty to your current staff makes even more sense.

were more interested in the recognition of receiving the money and were not interested in it when they received it.

Internet dating, I mean employment services, can be a great resource or a total nightmare. We have a company that we recommend on a regular basis that does a very good job. There are, however, many companies that are not much better than placing an ad in a newspaper. Anytime you spend your money on a one shot deal, you had better do everything that you can to make sure you are reaching the right employees.

Also, keep in mind what part of the country you are in. The more rural your

situation, the smaller the demographic pool you have to work with and the less likely you are to have a positive result.

Just like with customers, referrals are the best way to find people. Do you have a Rolodex of the past employees who have worked for you? Do you keep the old applications for the applicants who impressed you in some way but were not right for the position open at that time? Why not? The “C” technician that you did not feel was ready three years ago may have turned into a skilled addition, provided that you parted company on the best of terms.

That happens quite often, by the way.

Networking with past employees is a great way to keep your options open and makes sure you have a good reputation among the technician community.

Talking to the parts houses and the tool guys can be a great resource. Too many times we ask them to “keep an eye out for a technician/ manager,” but we fail to make it worth their while. Offering a bounty for a good potential employee makes a lot of sense. Offering a bounty to your current staff makes even more sense. They know people in the field and would not refer someone just for the money, because they have to work with them. You only pay once you have found the right person and have hired them, and nothing works quite like cash on the barrel. Some people may find this distasteful, but remember that you can’t steal a happy employee.


A major target for many opportunities is the large corporate chain stores. If you happen to be employed by such a facility, keep this in mind. The further the employee is from a feeling of personal empowerment, the more susceptible he or she is to making a change. The extended hours and the weekends do not help to retain staff and can make other opportunities that come up very attractive. I have

been on both sides of this particular fence, so I know the pros and cons of each side very well. I just made sure my people felt appreciated and valued so that I would not lose them, but many corporate managers lose sight of that.

A major missed opportunity is what happens before and after work. Find your target area and spend some time in the coffee shops before work. Anyone in a uniform is fair game — just walk up and introduce yourself and start selling. It is amazing how many times this works.

Networking with fellow shop owners can become a mutual benefit by providing the prospective employee an alternative if you do not have a position for them right now, but make sure to keep their number on file for the future. It also gives you another possible source for staffing by having the relationship with the other shop owners.

Seminars and training sessions can be a great pool of prospects. The people there are looking to grow and advance in the field. Keep the conversation quick and simple, establish some basis for further communication and get their phone number and call back at a more convenient time. Here is the biggest chance to get your head outside the box; the only thing that will limit you is your imagination.

There are tons of employees out there; you just have to find them. It truly is finding a needle in a field of needles — you just have to find the right one. People change jobs every day, and the person who you need is working somewhere right now but they are unhappy. You just have to find the right needle. 

Chris "Chubby" Frederick is CEO and president of the Automotive Training Institute. He is thankful for assistance from George Zeeks and Brian Canning in preparing this monthly column. Contact Chubby at cfrederick@autotraining.net.

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