Want to Add More Healthy Years to Your Life?

IT IS TIME FOR A NEW WAY OF THINKING AND LIVING AS A BUSY SHOP OWNER! The medical community has forever focused on treating chronic diseases and reversing illnesses associated with aging – cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Since cancer and heart disease account for over 50% of all deaths, you would think you could live longer if you avoided these big killers. It turns out – this is NOT the case. Wiping them out only increases your life expectancy by 9½ years – not 30-40 like you might expect.

WHY? To add healthy, vibrant years to your life, you have to slow down the rate of aging at the cellular level – internally! Here are some tips to consider:

#1 – AGING IS ABOUT HOW YOU REPAIR YOURSELF!
It is less about your systems breaking down, but more about how your body repairs itself AND does your body have the proper nutrients to do this repair job!

#2 – IT IS TIME FOR A NEW WAY OF THINKING AND LIVING AS A BUSY SHOP OWNER!

BY SHERRY L. GRENADER
ACE, AFAA, NETA, ACSM, ASFA, BBU
Sometimes, even the smallest changes in auto shop management can have a big impact on the bottom line. Just ask Frank Palange.

Frank is the owner of V & F Auto Inc. in Agawam, MA, and, as is the case with many other auto shop owners across the United States, generating money has not always been easy for him. “I was doing fairly okay, but wanted to get to the next level,” he says, recalling the reasons that prompted him to enroll in ATI’s boot camp and Re-Engineering program about five years ago.

“I had done another course previously, but I didn’t like their philosophy,” he adds. “ATI’s approach suited me much better.”

That’s because at ATI, Frank received not only valuable, results-bearing skills to guide him to that “next level,” but also a much-needed support and encouragement to implement the strategies that turned his “so-so” business into a cash cow.

**Measurable progress**

How did Frank go about raising his auto shop’s performance up a notch? Among several specific steps his coach had suggested was a pay plan, an incentive-driven payroll that was surprisingly well received by his employees, even though such easy acceptance is not always a given.

Here too, ATI’s coaching was instrumental in smoothing out the potentially rough transition. “The coaches tell us how to tackle the subject and how to approach the shop staff,” Frank relates. “For example, when I explained how everyone will be rewarded once they reach their goals, there was no resistance.”

Frank says he also benefited from marketing training, which covered, among other topics, the importance of social media in promoting his business. Not only that, but “I got a lot of useful information on different ways of recruiting employees and finding vendors. The coach showed me sample ads and helped me tweak them to match my requirements.”

Of course, having everyone at Frank’s shop heading in the same direction is also a performance booster. To ensure that his employees stay on the same page, Frank makes sure they too follow the ATI training. “It’s important that they get the same concepts so we can all move ahead together,” he says.

Frank has been implementing many of the steps the ATI taught him – including the lessons on pricing structures, as well as parts and labor matrix – and he sees a measurable improvement in his shop’s performance.

Here is what Frank accomplished by diligently implementing what he had learned in the program: His shop went from making about $750 a week to a $4,042 weekly profit, which adds up to an impressive 433 percent increase.

**Coaches to the rescue**

While the instruction and guidance Frank received in the program have made a huge impact on his shop’s profitability – as the above numbers clearly show – he also derived much benefit from the coaching process itself.

When he first started working at the auto shop, Frank was in a partnership with his father, who was a sounding board for Frank’s business-related dilemmas. When it comes to problem solving, two heads are better than one, so when Dad retired “I had no one to talk to,” Frank says.

That changed when ATI’s coaches stepped in. While no outsider can fill a father’s shoes, at ATI Frank discovered the much-needed “shoulder to cry on” that he had missed since Dad’s retirement.

“They call themselves ‘coaches’ but they have been really my partners,” Frank notes. “I know that anytime I have a question or a problem in the shop, I can pick up the phone and call.”

One of the areas where Frank received good advice from a coach was in the field of human relations – or, more specifically, employee management. He tells of the conflicts he used to have with his service manager, who resented that Frank always made shop-related decisions instead of allowing the manager to do it.

“He and I were head-bashing a lot over this and I didn’t know how to resolve it,” Frank relates. “I discussed this matter with my coach who suggested that if the service manager was in charge of the shop and wanted the responsibility of making the decisions, let him. The coach facilitated the communication between myself and the service manager, so we ended up understanding each other’s expectations better.”

Once Frank stopped micromanaging his service manager, there was no more head bashing: in fact, better relationship between them led to improved productivity and, in turn, to bigger profits.

“Having a mediator, a third party who was able to put this situation into right perspective for me made all the difference,” Frank notes. “When an issue comes up that I don’t know how to tackle myself, the coach is always there on the other end of the line walking me through it.”

It’s no wonder his advice to other auto shop owners in the program is: “Build a great relationship with your coach, because that’s the foundation of your progress.”

**Just do it!**

Frank has been in the auto repair business long enough to know that there is no miracle get-rich scheme or, as he puts it, “a silver bullet.”

To anyone considering whether to try out the ATI Boot Camp and enroll in the Re-Engineering program, Frank gives this well-worn advice: Nothing ventured, nothing gained. “You take out of the course what you put into it,” he says. “Any change is difficult, but if you give it a fair shot, it will work.”

Frank’s own successful experience is proof enough to encourage other auto shop owners to join the program. “Take it one thing at a time and see what works best for you,” he advises. “If you implement steps you learn in the program, your profits will rise.”

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**#2 – AGING happens on the INSIDE – NOT THE OUTSIDE!** Here is a secret about aging – your RATE of aging doubles EVERY 8 years and your job is to manage the inside to slow down the rate of aging.

**#3 – AGING is more about COMPOUNDED problems** rather than one individual problem. The small health issues you face may not have a big effect here and there, but if they get worse or begin to interact with other problems, that is when they spiral into bigger health problems usually triggered by several different causes.

**#4 – Can you REVERSE AGING?** ABSOLUTELY! You can nudge your systems to work in your favor and it is never too late to start making small changes that will have a huge impact on how you age. Just because you made mistakes in the past doesn’t mean you cannot reverse them.

**#5 – IF you perform a GOOD HABIT for 3 years –** the effect on your body will be as if you have done it your entire life. Within 3 months, you can start noticing visible changes as well as physical ones.

Most importantly, stay away from processed foods as much as possible. Exercise, and choose supplements that will support your body and mind. Look to my next article for more tips on beating the aging process.

I wish you glowing good health, always! See you at Superconference 2011 in San Diego!
The Coaches Corner

“Eating the Elephant”
Real World Leadership & Accountability

By Brian Hunnicutt

Leave the loose ends behind and learn how to easily take yourself, your employees and your entire shop to a whole new level of organization, professionalism and consistent growth.

Eating the elephant with a notebook, otherwise referred to as the “Notebook Technique.” A shop owner wants to feel that they are running their business, not the other way around. Unfortunately it’s very easy to find ourselves in the position of running around putting out fires and shoring up shortcomings, trying to be everything to everyone and never getting as far as we’d like to. Wanting to be good employers, trying to satisfy customers, getting new customers, running a business can be overwhelming. If you feel that your business is running you in circles you will love the simplicity of taking notebook in hand and finally becoming the leader of your business.

This simple technique requires the massive investment of a spiral bound notebook for each of your employees, one for yourself and one for the store in general. Or, use your computer and printer to the same end.

After acquiring the notebooks your first task will be to take the “Store Notebook” in hand and walk your entire store, starting from a street view, through the parking lot and front door path that a customer would take, all the way through to the front counter, waiting area, restrooms, office area and entire shop — all with an eye on what is good as well as what needs work. You will be writing down all that you see that looks good and right with the world on one list. The second list you will be making will be everything that needs improvement.

Don’t be tempted to skip the good list and go straight to everything that needs work. It’s important to acknowledge what is right with your store even if you’re eager to address the problems.

Nobody can function very well in a lose/lose environment. Even if your store is full of problems you and your employees need to feel that there is something positive to base further growth upon. People want to win and as the leader of the store you need to show them that winning is possible. By acknowledging the good you show them that further wins are within their reach.

Now you need to hold a meeting with all of your employees. The purpose of this meeting is to have your employees help you assess what your store does well and what needs improvement. Make the environment friendly enough that people feel free to open up and give real responses. You will be taking notes and will only add valid items to your “Store Notebook” — valid meaning those comments that have a general consensus, not random ranting. Some items to consider: Is the communication between front and back effective? Is the courtesy check being done correctly? How is the store answering the phone? As the “Notebook Technique” a simplified, action based, results oriented employee and store evaluation. You must buy in to the process knowing that consistent use will propel your business forward in ways that are hard to imagine.

If you believe in your right to lead your business your valuable employees will respond and you can create great things together. Remember, this is business, not friendship, and there is no need to get angry or overly emotional when having these meetings. Conduct them as an owner with clear expectations of successfully moving forward. The notebook affords you a way of stepping back from personal involvement with your employees — it allows you to track and measure without the prejudice of emotion clouding the picture.

Now comes the most difficult task: your very own notebook. If you are interested in becoming a more successful business owner you will need to become a better leader and your personal notebook is the ideal tool for the journey.

You know the routine: write down what you do well as a business owner. Take a good look at that list and give yourself credit for where you are. Now you need to take a long hard look at yourself and come up with areas that you need to improve. This exercise alone will often paralyze people. It’s not easy to know that we will need to step out of our own comfort zone and address habits and behaviors that are not serving us well. This is much more comprehensive than putting down a cell phone. We may learn that we have overstepped our fears and bad habits and when it’s in black and white it becomes harder to ignore. Using this tool on yourself can literally change your life. The results you get with this process will be directly related to what you are willing to give, your commitment level and ultimately your desire to have a well run, successful business.

Once your business is running smoothly and profitably and you want your Service Advisor to take over it will be easy to make the transition. Have your Service Advisor sit in on your meetings from your perspective. At the end of these meetings have your Service Advisor step out of the meeting so you can have one-on-one time with the employee. This will give the employee the opportunity to address any issues they may have with the Service Advisor. When your Service Advisor is comfortable allow them to take over the meetings while you are still present. This will be a clear indicator of them being ready to take over management of the store.

The “Notebook Technique” is a real-world method to help you develop leadership skills that will allow you to take control of your store, manage your employees and ultimately grow your ideal business.

What you put in is what you get out!
## Sam’s Corner

### ATI Mastermind 20 Group Goes Fishing

Once a year members of our ATI Mastermind group head out of Annapolis to tackle the Chesapeake Bay after their two-day meeting. From left to right are Gregg Caldwell, Bud Wildman, Steve Ammazalorse, Eddie Cleveland and Head Coach Mike Haley. This group has been fishing with me many times and typically catches stripe bass in record numbers. These guys had to work all day to catch their limit but succeeded, so fish were available for dinner.

My father exposed me to fishing at a young age, which is what created my passion for the sport. Many of you had the same experience. Many of our Mastermind members have brought their families with them over the years and made a lasting impression on them as well. Whether we are taking the family to a car show, fishing or a movie it is important we always remember to spend time with our loved ones while we have the opportunity to.

My family couldn’t afford a boat when I was growing up so it gave me a burning desire to have one someday, which motivated me to create ATI so I could afford it. However, lately I have been chartering since I have experienced the greatest two days of boating, buying them and selling them! I am off to Islamord, Florida, next week to fish the World Championship All Tackle Bonefish Tournament with Capt. Greg Poland in his new Hal Chittum flats boat. Wish me luck, I will really need it!

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### Your Available Training Programs for October and November

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