Is Indifference Killing Your Business?

By Chris Cotton, ATI Coach

The reason most clients stop doing business with a company is not because of the product or service or price, or because the client moved away. It is because of the company’s attitude of indifference.

Definition of indifference: Being neither too much nor too little; moderate. Being neither good nor bad; mediocre. Not active or involved; neutral.

Neutral, mediocre, moderate: does this describe your current level of participation in your business, as well as that of your employees? We have all been there. The difference is do you grab yourself up by your bootstraps, look yourself in the mirror and say today is the day I start making a difference in my business again? Or do you decide to remain indifferent and let your business wither and die?

Did I just call you mediocre? I believe I did, and I can get away with that because as Jeff Foxworthy so eloquently puts it, I can call you a redneck because “I are one.” See, that was me. I had been doing the same thing for so long, and doing it well, that I became indifferent. Indifferent toward my employees and customers, and even toward my family. I had let everyone beat me down so bad that I actually started to believe what everyone was saying. I just fed off the negativity and became indifferent, instead of holding my head up and puffing my chest out like Superman. If you go to your bathroom and look at yourself in the mirror and it makes you uncomfortable to see what is staring back at you, it’s time to make a change.

Are these people working for you now or if you can’t recognize the indifferent one, maybe it’s you?

An indifferent manager lacks the drive to push ahead and aggressively knock down all obstacles. An indifferent manager will give up easily, miss targets and fail to inspire his or her team. An indifferent manager models the wrong attitude.

An indifferent employee is one who doesn’t care. They will show up, but won’t stay late to make calls or smile when helping customers. They are there for the paycheck. This kind of behavior is unacceptable and should be stopped immediately.

Can You Battle Indifference?

Take a good hard look at your business. Never assume that you or your employees are not giving off an air of indifference. Ask your customers how they view your service. Really seek out the answers.

Ask a neutral, new third-party person to be a customer or “mystery shopper.” It doesn’t matter if it is over the phone or in person. After they go through the experience, ask for feedback without them holding back. Make sure it is someone that is going to tell you the truth, and be prepared for what you might hear. Sometimes it isn’t pretty. Be prepared to make the necessary changes to eliminate indifference. That could even mean eliminating employees or at least shuffling someone to a new position that does not require customer interface.

Time for a New Direction

There is no telling how it started, but it is time for indifference to end — beginning today. Your business cannot withstand the drain of energy that is caused by indifference. What if you are reading this and you are not the owner or even a supervisor? That is the best part. You can kill indifference beginning right now.

Do these things:

1. Look the next customer in the eye, or speak with an upbeat tone in your voice if you are on the phone — as if you are looking them in the eye.
2. Smile (whether you are in front of the person or on the phone). Yes, people can see you smile over the phone.
3. Ask the customer their name and then use it (at least three times).
4. Ask this question, truly wanting to know the answer, “How are you today and what can I do to help?”
5. Display your desire to help your clients by using language that shows you want to and are willing to help.
6. Empathize with those clients who are calling with a problem, but also share the excitement of those clients who let you know about something good that’s happened to them.
7. Also be prepared to listen to the things you don’t do so well when your customers tell you about them. We should always be looking at ways to improve.
8. Remember that your client is the reason you are there. Don’t treat them as if they’re an interruption to your day.
9. Focus on your client. In this day and age we tend to multitask. Doing that can give the impression you don’t really care about your client, so maintain eye contact with your client and do not look around. Definitely don’t look down. Even if you’re speaking to the client on the phone, give them your undivided attention.
10. Smile more; it will make your client feel as if you’re more approachable. It will make you feel better too. Even if you’re on the phone, your positive attitude will shine through when you smile.

Continued on page 3
How Do Consumers Learn About Your Culture and Who You Are? Here Is One Way They Can!

Most shops talk to me about having a “company brochure,” but few actually get one. I suspect the reason is it’s just too hard to figure out all the details. That’s why we have created a very nice template for you to use to create your own brochure. We have done all the work for you. All you have to do is put in your company info and you have a brochure. I would recommend you change the pictures from the generic ones we put in, to ones that better reflect your shop, but you don’t have to. If you like it, even the wording is done for you. These are great for sharing with your customers what you’re all about, as well as for attracting new business such as fleets and appealing to new customers through community events. If you have been considering a brochure but for whatever reason have been putting it off, here is your chance to get started. So go to the Resource Center and to the ATI Marketing Toolbox to check out a larger sample. If you need further assistance, you can contact your coach or Lori at FSR email: customerservice@fsr1.com or phone: 434-973-4152.

Shop Owner Options:
• Shop Owner Home
• Message Post
• Resource Center
• Referral

Then click here

Is Your Marketing Plan Ready?

“Generally, he who occupies the field of battle first and awaits his enemy is at ease, and he who comes later to the scene and rushes into the fight is weary.”

—Sun Tzu

What does this have to do with marketing? Everything. Those who have a yearlong marketing plan, a campaign, are prepared and at ease. Those who wait until they see their car count dropping and then rush into battle are ill prepared and have poor results. The problem right now is that shops are getting busy with the beginning of the summer season and we aren’t thinking past today.

Sooner than you realize, it will be back to school and the traditional slower time that comes to most shops every year. The time to prepare to stay busy in September is now.

What are you doing now to prepare for your future? How about attending ATI’s Always Be Marketing? Remember this is more than a “should do”; it’s a “must do”. Protect not just yourself but also the financial well-being of your staff. They will suffer right along with you if you fail to start preparing NOW! ATI’s Always Be Marketing is available to you on July 15, 16 & 17 and August 14, 15 & 16, enroll today with your Coach.

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2013 Motor Age Top Shop Contest

I can’t begin to tell you how proud of you I am! Regardless of your short or long term success in our program, it takes real guts to take feedback and attempt change in your business. Many of you have succeeded in re-engineering your business beyond everyone in your area and are looked up to as an authority in automotive service. It is truly important to the industry to be able to see what is actually obtainable by the top shops in North America. We all need to see the real high-water benchmarks in profits, marketing, operations, websites, aftermarket involvement and community activity. It helps make everyone better, and there are a lot of ATI clients that fit this description. ATI Top Shops are the best of the best! We don’t just measure sales volume! We are focused on being the best from our gross profit to our humanitarian efforts. Last year, longtime ATI Alumni members Judi and Dana Haglin, from Haglin’s Automotive, were featured among Motor Age Magazine’s Top Shop Contest First Place winners.

I am personally asking you to enter the 2013 Motor Age Top Shop Contest. Yes, you will be on the front cover of the largest automotive shop owner magazine in North America. Yes, you can hang it on the wall of your shop’s waiting room and receive tons of local press which will all be good for your business. But the most important reason is that you will give everyone in the industry standards to look up to that really mean something. You are so much farther ahead than the average shop in North America, and it is important you share your success so others have something to aspire to!

There will be one Grand Prize and nine First Place Prize winners. First Place winners and their shop will be featured in a shop profile in the Top Shop section of the December 2013 issue of Motor Age. Your coaches and I have been writing articles in Motor Age for almost a decade. They are a class act and read by 150,000 owners and service advisors. Mention Chubby and ATI in your training and education responses, it might help!

Simply go to www.searchautoparts.com, then hover over Motor Age and then click on Top Shops. Download the Top Shop Rules and start the process of filling out the information. It will take some effort on your part to answer the questions, and those of you working on your business instead of in it will have the time! I will also be giving special recognition at our next SuperConference, and dinner with yours truly, to show our appreciation. Now’s a good time, get started and delegate some of it, prove you’re a great leader! I always knew it!

Thanks,
Chubby
Is Indifference Killing Your Business?
Continued from page 1

When you think about all the time and money that is spent on the product or service, the aesthetics, pricing and marketing, it’s sort of funny that at the end of the day, it is often a company employee’s attitude — of concern or of indifference — that determines whether or not that customer actually comes into your store. What time and effort is going into ensuring that customer actually comes into your store. Is Indifference Killing Your Business?

The economy is bad, the weather is horrible, your guy didn’t win their vehicle’s condition, and make honest recommendations, it’s a win for everyone. 

Identifying the opportunities and putting into place processes so we can make the right changes seem to be the client’s hardest hurdle to jump over. Now this is when the Coaching skill is needed to find out what the client’s challenges are. I’ve learned that stepping back, listening to what the client thinks his or her hurdle may be is a very valuable exercise. In my old life, I would have just gone and fixed it for them, but what I have learned is that fixing their problems is not the solution. Letting them fix their own problems, and teaching them to be problem solvers themselves is. Getting the client motivated to take all the information back to their employees and teaching them the new processes has been another learning experience for me. I have a “let’s get it done now” personality, so sitting back, asking open-ended questions and letting the client think about their own solution by asking questions like “How does that feel?” and getting them to name “it” is new to me; but these are great tools for Coaching.

Another learning experience for me is having clients set expectations for themselves and their employees. Putting in scheduled tracking and measuring tools for my clients so I can do follow-ups is also a great Coaching tool I have learned. So let’s name “it”: what are YOUR expectations? Are you going to let this learning experience pass you by?

Exercise and the Successful Business Owner
A series by Gary Siegel, Fitness Matters Gym

It boils down to this: If you overeat during the five week period from July 4th to the dog days of mid-August, you are likely to gain an extra two to five pounds. I know it’s a lot, and the unfortunate part is, it doesn’t just magically disappear as summer ends.

Think about it. You have to consume an extra 3,500 calories (beyond what your body is burning already) to make up a pound of fat. So if you eat an extra 350 calories per day (which is not hard — just a couple of your favorite ice cream treats), you will gain 3.5 pounds well before Labor Day (an additional 2,450 calories per week multiplied by five, and divided by 3,500).

So what can you do? Not to worry — here are a few tips ranging from the practical to the very unusual.

EAT FIRST
It may sound absurd, but if you are going to a summer barbecue, eat ahead of time. I know plenty of people who starve themselves before going to a party so they can have “room” for all the great food. Then they arrive at the party — stomachs rumbling — and make a beeline for the high-calorie and high-fat appetizers and finger foods, easily eating more than a day’s worth of calories. Instead, if you eat normally throughout the day, because that’s what will make the difference.

LITTLE THINGS MATTER
If you are only going to a couple of cookouts over the next few weeks, just relax, enjoy yourself, and eat what you want. The summer can become problematic if you decide to indulge every day. Watch the little things you eat each day, because that’s what will make the difference.

IT PAYS TO BE PICKY
There are a lot of food choices during the summer— foods you wouldn’t normally eat become more appealing (especially with a “you only live once” attitude). Be selective. “Eat the things you really love — maybe a small serving of potato salad, a thin slice of blueberry pie — and ignore the not-so-thrilling stuff.

www.fitnessmattersgym.biz
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fitness-Matters-Gym/169644349752404
garyksiegel@gmail.com
240-354-7565
With two gym locations:
1612a Professional Blvd.
Crofton, MD 21114
13200 Vanessa Ave.
Bowie, MD 20720
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