Are You Better Than My 19-Year-Old?

By Kim Hickey, ATI Coach

I have a 19-year-old son. You’ve met him before. Well… you may not have actually met him, but you knew someone just like him in high school. He is one of those kids that just seem to have the Midas touch. Blond beach boy good looks. A natural athlete who can effortlessly play any sport and is the star of every team he’s ever played on. He is ridiculously smart and has been in the gifted programs at school since kindergarten. He is funny, articulate, girls love him, his friends look up to him, teachers love him, the parents of his friends love him. He is just one of those people who has been able to excel at everything he has ever tried — without even trying.

He is a full-time college student and certified as a personal trainer. I recently got him a job at my gym. My gym requires a different certification than the one he has. After interviewing him, the manager wanted him so badly, he put him in sales until he can obtain the new certification. My son doesn’t have any “sales” experience at all. I asked him what he thought about having to try something he doesn’t have any experience in, and he replied, “How hard can it be?” At last! This is great, I thought. With that attitude, he might just fail at something and learn a life lesson.

By the end of week one, my son was training new hires. He had the second highest close rate (behind only his sales manager by one deal). After his initial inflated week or so of sales to all of my friends, I only his sales manager by one deal). After his initial hires. He had the second highest close rate (behind

Weeks went by and he was still closing most of his walk-ins. My 19-year-old (who already knows everything) started asking me questions about selling and if I had any books on the subject. Due to his success with the walk-ins, they decided to send him out in the field. Instead of sitting behind a desk and selling to people who walked into the gym, he was sent out to approach strangers in malls and other places. “Cold calling” requires an amount of effort, which to be honest, is not normally displayed by him. To my surprise, he was not only doing it, he was doing it successfully. At the end of his first month, he had an 85 percent close rate. The appointments he made on the street actually resulted in people coming in and signing up. Next they assigned him the task of making phone calls to people that had visited the gym sometime during the past year to get them to come in for an appointment. I asked him if he was nervous about calling on strangers both in person and by phone and he answered, “Why would I be nervous? All they can do is say no.”

His questions about selling became more specific. He started telling me about some of the objections that he had been receiving and asking me “How can I respond to this objection, Mom?” He began to drive me crazy with turning everything I said into a closing question. The simple question of “Will you be coming over for dinner tomorrow?” was met with the response of something like “Mom, if I can be here by 5:30 tomorrow, will that work for you?” He continued to ask me on a regular basis “Why does everyone make such a big deal about how hard it is to sell? It’s easy.” I asked him if he was learning about buying personalities. He told me “No. They must not do that at our gym because they haven’t mentioned it.” I asked him if he used the same approach to sell to a woman my age as he would to a big guy that already had a muscular physique. He replied, “Of course not, why would I do that? If a middle-aged woman comes in, I tell her I know how important it is for her to want to tone up and feel good about herself and her appearance. If someone comes in that is already really muscular and built and doesn’t think we can do anything for him, I tell him how we can take him to the next level because we have two former NFL players on our training staff.” I explained that this is selling to different buying personalities.

My son is now in the practice of taking business cards with him EVERYWHERE he goes, along with some two-week passes. Every time he goes in to a store to purchase anything, he not only tries to negotiate a better buying price, but he tries to get the salesperson to commit to come in to the gym to see him. If he can’t get them to commit to come in just by asking a couple of times, he offers the free pass. I asked him if he had any concerns that they will just use the free pass and not sign up. He replied, “Not at all. Once they come in the door, I just convince them to sign up.” His gym has three levels of membership. While it is the practice of most salespeople at his gym to start with the middle package for the sales presentation, my son starts out trying to sell the most expensive one. He also attempts to get them to pre-pay for a year instead of month to month. Out of curiosity I asked him how he determines whom he should ask to pre-pay for a year versus going with a monthly contract. He looked at me like I had three heads and said, “Why would I try to guess who will or who won’t? I just ask everyone. All they can do is say no.”

Last week he mentioned that a lot of potential customers bring up other gyms and say that they can join them cheaper or that the other gyms have some type of equipment or class that our gym does not. I asked him how he handles those objections, and he said, “I just agree with them and then I tell them about what we have to offer and why we are better.”

Congratulations to ATI President’s Award Recipients

Every year, ATI recognizes our best of the best by inducting them into The President’s Club. These associates have consistently demonstrated an unparalleled commitment and dedication to ATI and our clients. Please join us in congratulating them on their outstanding performance in 2013.

Frank Rose, Jason Hawkins, Vicky Giddings, Brian Hunnicutt, Chuck Dailey, Geoff Berman, Kevin Allen, Kevin Myers, Mike Bennett, Paul Colison, Rick Johnson, Tom Ringle, Bryan Stasch and Steve Privette.
The Challenge

In early December, ATI Coach Kim Hickey received an email from her dental office offering a “pre-paid” service plan. Feeling this was something that could easily be done for our industry, Kim sent the rest of the coaches a challenge for shops to come up with their own plan. Chubby volunteered to take the contest winner to lunch, and suggested that Randy Somers act as the contest’s judge. Entries were due February 1, 2014.

The winner of the contest came from Team Kim and was submitted by Andrew and Charlene Parlett from Southeast Auto Service & Repair in Hinesville, Ga.

Congratulations to Andrew and Charlene and thanks to Chubby and Randy!

Sam's Corner

Upcoming 20 Group Meetings

What a year 2013 was for our 20 Group program! We now have a total of nineteen 20 Groups, with more to follow. In those 19 groups we have 369 active members, led by 13 seasoned ATI coaches.

2013 brought many achievements for the 20 Group program: each group held their first virtual meeting, and out of 369 members, 360 attended at least one 20 Group meeting. 2013 also brought the 20 Group challenge coin, a token of gratitude and unity given to members who have shown their commitment to ATI and to their group. Challenge coins are made to strengthen bonds, promote friendships and encourage success. One hundred forty-four challenge coins were handed out to the members who attended both meetings in 2012. Great job, 20 Group members!

Below, you will find the spring 20 Group calendar. Don’t forget to bring your challenge coin to the meetings and to SuperConference 2014!

How About Taking the Car Care Month Program on the Road?

By Mike Haley, ATI Team Leader/Coach

I have tried throughout my life to practice what I preach — when I lead by example with my children, in the way I treat people and even when I try to remember to go on Google and leave that glowing review. I assume other people also think in a very similar way. With that being said, I have wondered over the past years why we don't get the participation we would like out of a Car Care event. Well, if everyone thinks like me, the Car Care event sounds like one I would like to participate in when it is explained to me. But when the day finally comes, I will tend to come up with any excuse to not go, or I could simply just forget because it is not part of my normal routine. I think the reason for people not attending these events is simply because it requires effort. Let’s face it, at the end of a long day or on a weekend our time is valuable and we are constantly wrestling with deciding which tasks have the highest priority and deserve our time and attention.

So why don't we go to the people? Why don't we take our show on the road and conduct our Car Care event at their place of business? Get with a medium to large company with plenty of cars in their parking lot as the place to hold the event. Schedule a meeting in advance with the company to go over the program and how it benefits the company by showing they care about their employees. An event right in their parking lot now requires little effort on the part of the employees. I would suggest holding the event during lunch hours so as not to disrupt business. If you want to include some other vendors I think that could give the event even more impact. Come off a section for the parking lot so the employees can simply drive through to receive their free car care checklist and any other free giveaways or information packets. I would also include food in the event. As we all know, food will get them there.

By taking the event to a place of business, you eliminate a person's objection of time or effort. You get to network with other businesses in your neighborhood and perform your much-needed acquisition marketing. If this process proves to be successful, it could turn into an annual event at several businesses in your town.
I remember years ago when as a client I went to class in Savage at the old building, and I heard Chubby talk about goals and the importance of setting goals, and more importantly, having written goals. Chubby said that only 5 percent of us actually have written goals. On the plane ride back to Nebraska, I was thinking about something else that I had heard at an investment seminar, that only 5 percent of Americans retire with more than Social Security to live on. It got me to thinking, and I wondered if the same 5 percent that retire with more than Social Security are the same people that set goals?

Could there be a connection between setting goals and having more to retire on than Social Security, or could it be possible that people who set goals are more successful? I really don’t know how to one hundred percent prove this, but I think it is safe to assume (and I know what they say about assuming) that very possibly those who set goals are most likely to be those same people on the beach in Cancun or Florida in their retirement years sipping a nice tropical drink. While those who are greeters in Wal-Mart in their retirement years are most likely from the 95 percent who did not set goals!

So by the time I got back to the shop, I decided that I wanted to be in the 5 percent that set goals (I really don’t want to be a greeter at Wal-Mart). I also decided that my entire crew was going to set goals, and I picked a night and bought pizza and beer and goal poster material and told the crew that attendance was not optional. And yes, I heard the usual “Is this more of the new-age stuff ATI is teaching?” or “I really don’t want to be a greeter at Wal-Mart. At that point, I have to say I had their attention, and at that point this was not “more of the new-age stuff ATI teaches.” You might even say I was starting to get their “buy-in.”

So I handed out the goal poster materials and the magazines to cut out pictures of what they wanted and the glue sticks, and we got down to business. Pretty soon the guys were laughing and having a pretty good time, and as the posters started to fill out, I was amazed to see some of the things my employees wanted on their developing goal posters. New vehicles, bigger homes, new toolbox, family vacation, start a savings account, new shotgun (I really loved that one) and so on. One tech put two ATV four wheelers on his goal poster. I asked him about them and he said he wanted them for his two young sons. They were the little ATVs and were about $700 apiece.

When the guys were done with their individual posters, I had them all brainstorm on a goal poster for the shop. Of course the service writer had a goal for weekly sales and the techs for hours produced per week. Then they added that they wanted a new hoist in the back and a few other things. When all done, I had each tech hang their poster up by their toolbox and the advisor by her desk and the shop goal poster by the time clock. This way, every day when they came to work they saw the shop goal poster when they punched in and their individual goal posters at their toolboxes.

The tech that had the ATVs on his goal poster was the lead tech in my shop, and the others pretty much followed his lead. So I sat him down and talked to him a few days later about the ATVs and asked if he had a plan as to how to reach that goal. Of course not, so I told him that I had an idea of how he could reach that goal in three months — and he was all ears. I simply pointed out to him that he billed out 40 hours week after week and that was great, but I felt he could reasonably do one more hour a day and that one more hour a day would be enough extra income to purchase those two ATVs in about three months. I pointed out that if he spent less time on the three tool trucks that showed up every week and stopped being the go to McDonald’s for breakfast burritos guy, that he would most likely bill 45 hours a week instead of 40 hours. He did just that and in fact did reach 45 hours, and within almost three months to the day showed up at work one morning with two brand new little ATVs and a huge smile on his face!

We all made a big deal out of him being the first one to cross a goal off his poster, and the best part is that 45 hours a week became his new normal instead of 40 hours (that put a huge smile on my face). Later in the year, I was able to install the new hoist that they wanted because of better production and goals being reached, and this was a real win as well.

So who needs goals? You do, your entire shop does! Just set a night, buy the pizza and goal poster material and get it done. Will you get push back? Yes. Will you survive it? Yes. But once done, I can almost assure you that you will be happy with the results. But it’s up to you to lead the way. See you on the beach in a few years — or maybe as you greet me on my way into Wal-Mart to buy sunscreen.

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Last night I asked what he thought was the biggest key to his success so far. He answered with one word: “passion.” He said that on the days that he doesn’t love doing what he is doing, and his heart and head are not in it, his close rate drops.

I can’t help but replay my son’s comment “Why does everyone make such a big deal out of selling? It’s not hard” in my head. Why isn’t it as hard for him as it seems to be for everyone else? Is it because he has the Midas touch, or is it because he is doing what we all know we should be doing? He practices. He does what we should be doing at our counter. He asks for the sale. He does what we should be doing every place we go. He gives our business cards to everyone he talks to and asks them to come to the gym. At its core, making a sale is simple. We complicate it. We sell from our pocket, we pre-judge our customers. We make excuses. What watching him has reminded me of is that we have to practice, all the time. We
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All of the things my son is doing are the same things we should be doing. Networking and marketing. Determining buying personalities and tailoring our close to fit them. Asking for the whole pile first. Making “where have you been?” calls. Setting exit appointments. Presenting the information without selling from our pocket or assuming what someone will or will not buy.

Refusing to make or accept excuses about the economy or our competitors. Exude passion.

Because he is constantly practicing, he is improving every day. Some days he even has a 100 percent close rate.

Ask yourself this, are you better than my 19-year-old?