ATI Shoptalk

Issue 5

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Upcoming Advanced Courses:

Shop Owners

June 21-22
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Service Managers

June 13-15
September.....19-21

A Vendor's Point of View: They Are People, Too

By Richard C. Menneg

I re-read an old article the other day by Mitch Schneider of Motor Age Magazine Service titled "Hey....Remember me?" The focus was on supplier responsibilities to shop owners. "Whatever happened to all the "support" you promised when I was asked to sign my life away on that five-year lease you pushed in front of me the night I bought you're package?'"

Schneider goes on to discuss five examples of "customer abuse" ranging from lack of promised support and training to equipment obsolescence and frequent breakdowns. I interpreted a major message to be, "Hey equipment vendors, we have choices in who we purchase our equipment and services from so do what you say you're going to do and support us."

We all know that the future success of anyone's business is heavily dependant on one's ability to give quality service. We also know that all relationships are two-way streets. Communication and good business practices are critical to the health and growth of any business. So to Mitch and all the vendors you do business with, I offer a counterpoint of a supplier's point of view. These ideas will help give you what you truly deserve from their products and services.

First, do your homework. Read the literature provided by the manufacturer. Pay close attention to the demonstration. Don't say, "I'm too busy and Al handles that anyway." That lack of attention may come back to haunt you when the product doesn't completely meet your needs. Demonstrations are the lifeblood of the outside sales representative. Understand that he generally has to cover all his own expenses, and in most cases he doesn't make a dime unless you invest with him. Although he may be very persistent and aggressive, try hard not to waste his time. If you agree to view a product demonstration, give him quality time and effectively evaluate what his product might offer your facility. After all, at the very least, you will keep abreast of what is happening in the industry. That alone should be worth the time.

If you do see value in investing, you should negotiate your best possible price. Keep in mind that most sales compensation plans require heavy participation for discounting. In a weak, competitive moment you may get a "killer deal" which also may kill some of the incentive for your representative to give you the kind of support you deserve. The old adage "you get what you pay for" is equally as real for vendors as it is for you.

Make sure that when you do invest, you and your people are willing to spend the time to be trained properly. Whatever it takes – days or nights, on site or off – you are 100% responsible for this end of the equation.

"Get it in writing." One of the most unsettling experiences either side faces is when the phone call comes in saying, "Hey, your rep said the equipment came with updates for life at no charge." The rep no longer works for the vendor, and there is nothing in writing. The problem is neither side can win here. Whatever happens, the relationship is tarnished.

Understand that deviations in services provided will need approval from someone with true authority. If you have any questions, pick up the phone and call his boss, or his boss' boss. Go to sleep at night knowing that if it appears too good to be true, it probably is!

If your representative tells you his equipment will never become obsolete, chalk it up to sales enthusiasm. He has no real way of knowing the answer to that question. Your most educated choice would be to look at the manufacturer historically. For example, find out how long have previous models been updated? You can safely guess that what a manufacturer has done in the past, they will continue to do in the future. Always keep in mind that equipment suppli-

Continued from page 1

ers are at the mercy of the manufacturers and in many cases the automaker.

When your equipment breaks, make every effort to work within the system. Even though service contracts may seem expensive, they do allow you to budget your expenses & put a ceiling on your exposure. Do you think it's a bargain to buy the service contract once it has broken and is out of warranty? Would you cover the repair if the tables were reversed? Would your life insurance company buy off on that request after reading the obituaries?

If you believe you are experiencing greater than normal breakdowns, take time away from the "heat of the moment" to talk it out with someone in authority. Do not make threats if someone doesn't respond in 30 seconds. Remember how you want to be treated by your customers. All of us have people and equipment problems, and all of us have comebacks. A little understanding goes a long way in moving you up to the top of the list.

Most important of all, make an effort to build a relationship with your supplier, not just the rep who calls on you. Problems are more easily solved when they are addressed with someone you know. Visit their facility before you invest. Make sure the place and the people give you confidence that they are capable of providing the after-sale support you need. Simply stated, don't set yourself up to be disappointed!

Suppliers have a lot of room for improvement in customer support. Don't we all? You deserve the highest quality customer support available. Your equipment investments will continue to grow over the years, and your need for increased training and service will grow right along with it. Invest time in building a relationship, and if service continues to be inferior, then exercise your choice to go elsewhere. If the relationship works to your satisfaction, repay your supplier with referrals and loyalty. After all, Vendor's are people, too.

More Announcements...

Nadine Brumfield, Coach... Businesswoman...mother of 2, grew up in the tire and automotive industry in Central Virginia. The families business is a dominant retailer in their market with 7 locations…5 tire and automotive stores, an automotive parts reclamation center and a body shop/used car operation.

Nadine worked in all aspects of the business over the last twelve years. As Vice President, she was responsible for the entire operational effort of the seven-store chain. Duties included establishing and achieving sales and profit objectives, marketing & advertising, inventory control and management, establishing policies and procedures, managing receivables, payables, and cash flow, budgeting and forecasting, and the management and training of all sales and technical personnel.

Her decision to leave the business and join ATI was a difficult one. She knows firsthand the demands and stress of running a seven-store operation. As a welcome addition to the ATI team, she will utilize her training and experience to help her clients at ATI become more profitable.

Nadine and her two children have relocated to the Maryland area. She enjoys getting involved in her children's active lifestyle, and when not coaching the youths sports teams she enjoys traveling and relaxing at the beach.

ATI Family News

- Happy **50th birthday** to **Dan Reichow** of **Dan R's Automotive** (our big fish catcher)
- Happy **50th birthday** to **Moe Kondich** of **Crescent Service Garage**
- Happy **25th anniversary** to Moe, Steve, Mark, and the rest of the gang at Crescent Service Garage

Our prayers and thoughts go out to **Maureen Loynd** of the **Grand Garage** on the passing of her father.

ATI Graduates

First Quarter Graduates of 2005

Pete Sohortis-owner of Pete's Auto Service Charlotte, NC

Sam Nasios-owner of Golden Gears Automotive Rockville, MD

Tim Potter-owner of Action Tire & Service Shawnee, KS

All 3 have completed the ATI 2 year Re-engineering and coaching program, and are eligible for the Alumni & Mentoring program.

Congratulations!

Loren and Jennifer Veldman of **Veldman's Auto Service** in South Bend IN, are the proud parents of a new baby boy; Adian Veldman. He weighed in at 6lbs, 14 oz and was 19" long.

John Smith of **AIR Import Repair**, 4th child born on Mothers Day, May 8, 2005 daughter named Natalie.

California Summer School

August 16th-17th
Advanced Owners
August 18th-19th
Advanced Service Managers

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

Announcements...

Darcel Pugh, Art Director. Darcel has a true love of Graphic Design & bringing life to the blank page. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland where she majored in Applied Design. Darcel has 19 years of design expertise.

Her first job was with Levitz Furniture where she designed direct mail, newspaper ads, and catalogs. After Levitz, she began a free-lance design career with such clients as Ringling-Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus, NASA, The American Association for the Advancement of Science, World Wildlife Fund, American Chemical Society, American Health Lawyers Association, National Wildlife Federation, The American Council on Education and more.

Recently she was a Senior Graphic Designer at Northrop Grumman Information Tech-nology where she designed direct mail pieces, print advertising, web sites, trade show murals/ exhibits and collateral materials for the Information Technology sector. In her spare time, she loves church, the theater, museums, traveling and just hanging out with friends and family. She also loves drawing and painting. "I know that I will enjoy my position here at ATI and I look forward to beautifying the printed pieces that we produce."

Jim Maranto, Coach. I was born & raised in Maryland. At age 16, I started working part time at a local service station pumping gas and learning how to perform minor repairs and quickly realized that I wanted to become a technician. At 24 I became shop manager for a large Exxon Station and eventually managed multiple locations for the owner. I became ASE certified and took advantage of as many automotive courses as I could. I attended many of Chubby's classes over the years including computer diagnostic and management classes. In the early eighties I went into business with 2 full service stations. I spent many years in the tire business with one of Maryland's largest tire chains Mr. Tire running an 11 bay store which was the top store in sales & gross profit. Eventually I transferred into Mr. Tire's corporate office as operations and customer service manager.

I spent several years running an auto restoration shop including running the day to day operations and performing ground up restorations on classic automobiles. Realizing that I have spent 29 years in this business I find myself wanting to share my experiences with others in the automotive industry.

Fishing Corner

Striper Season Opens

By Chris Frederick

On opening day 2 boats full of ATI advanced owner clients set out to catch a world record striped bass. The spring is when the female Stripers from new England come into the Chesapeake Bay to spawn. The 57 inch Striper that hangs in the galley was caught in spring. The rain has been heavy recently and the rivers have poured muddy water into the bay making it difficult for the fish to see the baits. Nadine, our newest and first woman coach, hosted the Natural light sport fishing boat to victory over Chubby fishing with Capt. Ed Darwin with the BECKY D. Chubby offered dinner for the winning boat and Dave and Cathy Richlow caught the biggest fish pushing the 39 inch mark. Dan and Jan Murphy caught fish in the 34 to 36 inch range. Nadine caught her first fish going back to the theory that women and children make better anglers.

On chubby's boat Jim Williams of California and Alan Magee of Arizona caught fish in the 36 inch class. Tim Potter of Kansas and Chubby didn't get the opportunity to pull one in. Chubby's boat took a chance and tried to chum some bigger fish up but the water clarity was not cooperating. Evidently, the Captain on the Natural Light had a satellite map from the day before and he knew where the clean water was. Guess where Chubby will be next time!!

Hope you enjoy the pictures it was a beautiful day in Maryland. If you are interested in fishing simply tell your coach you want to attend the advanced owners class and we will take you fishing.

Sam's Corner

by Chubby

This article was created in Memory of Sam Young who owned Total Automotive with his lovely wife Mary. Sam had hundreds of models in his showroom and after my visit I have been collecting model cars ever since. The look on big & little kids faces when they see the car of their dreams is wonderful. Fathers Day, Birthday's, or any day, they make a great gift if you are car crazy. Most of us with the real toys have dusted them off and started "Cruzan" the highways. I discovered a new model car distributor called the Exoticar Model Company. They have a catalog with most of the die cast model makers in it. You can call them toll free at 1-800-EXOTICAR or log on to their web site, www.exoticar.com. They carry muscle, classic, roaring, and exotic cars.

I am creating a new display in our lobby after visiting with Steve Brauer, CEO of Hunter Engineering, in St. Louis, Missouri. He has a beautiful collection of 1930-40 classics called the Hunter Classic Collection. Those of you that have visited Hunter's training center have seen the beautiful Lincolns, Cadillac's, and more on display in their beautiful facility. Steve took me to his restoration shop which housed about 40 more beauties from Lee Hunters first XKE Jaguar to a stunning 300 SL Mercedes Gullwing.

He taught me that if you are car crazy and have a passion for collecting, start with investing in every book you can get your hands on. Steve had a giant library in his office of classic car books which were as interesting as the cars. Thank you for the personal tour Steve and for sponsoring the Motor Assurance Program (MAP) Meeting.

Exoticar has a new classic model collection in 1/18 scale with carpeted interiors for approximately $29.95 each. A true bargain if you are CAR CRAZY and it flames up your passion.

Seven At the Top, *Congratulations to All!*

This Month's Winners are:

Ian Baggett
Master Tech Automotive
Eldersburg, MD 21784

Greg Kelly
Greg's Automotive
El Cajon, CA 92020

Alan McGee
Milex Auto Service Store #1
Tucson, AZ 85710

Gene Morrill
Certified Automotive Specialists
Glendora, CA 91714

Voted #2 Shop in the DC Region by a Consumer Magazine
Tom Lapham, Auto Stop
Arlington, VA 22206

Jim & Sandy Ellison
Ellison Auto Clinic
390 W. Liberty Street
Wauconda, IL 60084

Congratulations to:
Ben Stallings & Bill Amonett
for being Randy's Top Performer and Leading Sales Team for May 2005!
Beck Service Center
Indianapolis, IN 46227

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