

Auto Shop Tips© by Michael Strautman

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Auto Shop Tip #18

Creating Independent Teams

By Michael Strautman

Are there times as a business owner that you feel held hostage by your staff? Are you unable to leave your shop for fear that your business will falter? If this is the case for you, your employees are likely not thinking independently. I have even heard one business owner in the past utter the following, "I don't pay you to think...." Would you work for that guy?

There are strategies in communication which bring principles of teaching to the workplace. Managers that learn principles of great teachers often find themselves with a more tenured staff and with lower attrition rates (saving loss of production, recruiting, and training dollars). There are four attributes of great teachers:

1. **They provide authoritative and accurate information** – In the automotive repair circle, this can be likened to ensuring that the employees have resources to handle situations of all sorts. Physical documents help the education of the policies and procedures; however, this could also be considered providing resources for diagnosis, technical support, etc.
2. **They ask questions** – Many managers lead by directive instead of through questioning. When the absence of questions is evident, employees tend to wait for a direction from their superior before taking action. This allows for difficulties such as lack of understanding of procedures, production delays, and blame placing between co-workers.
3. **Their students become independent of the teacher** – We have a saying here at TurnaroundTour.com. "Learn it – Use it – Teach it."© This phrase means that true understanding is only evident if "IT" (the subject) can be taught back by the learner. Creating independence of themselves should be a chief concern of a great teacher. It can be a liberating experience to have an employee reading your mind.
4. **They praise in public and coach in private** - A great teacher makes examples out of great performers, and speaks individually with those that are falling. Underperformers are encouraged when they are given an example of how appreciative their boss can be of a job well done. In the same way, underperformers are not publicly humiliated in front of co-workers.

Having independent teams will allow more time for you to work on important things such as ensuring the longevity of your business, advertising, and being involved in the public. Learn to be a great teacher, and you may find yourself with a better business, better staff, and more freedom than you have ever enjoyed in your life.

If you have the desire to become a teacher rather than an order-giver, and don't know where to begin, I'm happy to help. Please feel free to email or call me:

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