



Alabama Tire Dealers Association

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Spare Tire

January 2014

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**Alabama Tire Dealers Association
6096 County Road 434
Trinity, AL 35673**

2013 – 2014
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Letter from the President

Hello! I pray this letter finds each of you happy and healthy. It is being written from 37,000 feet above the ground as Cathee and I fly home from a budgeting seminar in Las Vegas. We left Hootie there with his walking shoes on, ready for the SEMA show.

The holiday season is upon us! This typically proves to be a slow time of year for us and often leads to many of us "singing the blues" about our businesses. I think it's important we keep in mind just how much we have to be thankful for, even when business is slow. Many of my Facebook friends are posting something they are thankful for each day of the month during November. This seems like a great way to not only express their gratitude to others, but to remind themselves of the many blessings they have. This holiday season, I'm going to make an effort to let customers know how grateful I am for their business. I also plan to thank employees for their continued dedication and hard work. I hope you will join me in thanking those who keep us in business!

On a personal note, many of you know my wife, Cathee, lost her father a few weeks ago. Cathee asked me to forward the following note to you:

*Dear ATDA Family,
I have been absolutely overwhelmed by your kindness over the past few weeks. Thank you so much for the many prayers, calls, visits, cards, and beautiful plants and flowers. Daddy was my first love and my first hero. Nothing could take away the pain of losing him, but wonderful friends like you certainly did make it a lot easier. From the bottom of my heart, thank you!
Much love, Cathee Gipson*

I appreciate your membership in the Alabama Tire Dealers Association. The directors, board members, and I want to help you and we're always glad to hear from you. Please call on us anytime. My best wishes to all of you for a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a prosperous 2014!

Bob Gipson
ATDA President
Gipson's Tire Pros



ATS Certified Technician Training Tour

The Tire Industry Association (TIA) is the industry leader in passenger and light truck tire service training and certification. TIA's Certified Automotive Tire Service (ATS) Program is designed to educate technicians on the proper procedures for servicing tires and tire pressure monitoring systems (TPMS) on domestic and foreign cars, SUV's, vans and light trucks. The 3-Day Certified Technician class is a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on training. This allows companies to certify their technicians in a local facility.

Technical certification is quickly becoming a necessity in our industry given today's legal environment. The ATDA wants to encourage all tire dealers to have their tech ATS Certified. The BEST way to implement the proper and safe techniques taught in the ATS Training Program is to get Owners/Managers involved. The ATDA invites all owners/managers to participate first to prepare themselves for the important information and techniques that their technicians will be bringing back to their shops!!

January 22-24, 2014

Gipson's Tires Training Facility

605 McQueen Smith Road S, Prattville, AL

Class is limited to first 20 participants!

Signup early for discounted rate.



First 10 Paid Participants: \$250

Next 10 Paid Participants: \$275

If you really desire to run a tire store at its safest and most professional way, TIA training is a must! After 25 years in the automotive industry, I thought I had seen about everything these was to see, TIA training was a real eye opener. Best training I have seen in many years. –Warry Sexton, S&S Discount Tire

We take pride in making sure we do things the right way, but until I attended the training I didn't realize that we were missing some important parts to tire safety. TIA has done an excellent job in the formation of this training and I can't imagine why any tire dealer would not want to take part in this invaluable training. – Scott Roberson, Royal Tire Service

Classroom Instruction (19 Modules):

Automotive Tire Service Intro	Tire Conditions Analysis
Tire Construction	TPMS Identification
Wheels & Fasteners	TPMS Service Requirements
Lifts – Raising a Vehicle	TPMS Relearn Procedures
Tire/Wheel Assembly Removal	TPMS Diagnostics
Torque & Clamping Force	RMA Care & Service Guide
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Demounting, Mounting & Inflation	Load & Inflation Tables
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Instruction:
Lifts
Tire Changers
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TPMS**

**For more information contact the ATDA office at 256-616-3587
or by email at alatiredealers@cs.com.**

Registration deadline is January 7, 2014.

THE INTERNET, OUR SHOPS AND OUR TECHNICIANS

The resources employees would have access to outweigh your fears about losing their focus.

By: Brian Canning Thursday, October 31, 2013

Though I think the automotive repair industry has decidedly not made the most of broadband Internet services, I strongly believe the future of training, troubleshooting and diagnostics is very much tied to the use of the Internet.

In a previous career where I daily talked to shop owners and service managers across the country, I always was surprised how often I ran into shops that had dial-up Internet connections. The truth is about a third of all U.S. shops do not have any Internet connection. In this era of e-commerce, webinars and mobile technology, it is hard to imagine trying to run something as complicated as an automotive repair shop without the Internet. There are businesses trying to make it happen, though these shops are working with a handicap in an industry that is as changeable as automotive repair.

In this day and age, I do not know of anything that has revolutionized shop operations like the Internet and mobile technology. I say this knowing the automotive repair industry has been far too slow and much less imaginative in general than many other industries. But I would not want to think about creating estimates or ordering parts without the Internet, and certainly would not want to consider diagnostics and troubleshooting without the many



online resources available out there today. Maybe you feel 100 percent comfortable with your techs' broad knowledge and their ability to handle anything and everything that would come in the door. But with deference to their ability, the Internet gives me access to knowledge and experience way beyond my four walls.

There is no doubt that bringing the Internet into your shop or expanding access to it

could be a distraction to your technicians, but just understand that it is already there in the form of that smartphone your techs carry everywhere they go. And in the same way you need to provide oversight and set standards for the use of cellphones in your shop, you need to do those same things with Internet access at workstations in your shop. It is only a problem if you let it become a problem and fail to provide guidance.

Online Resources and Techs

I know in that previous life I referred to, three of our big initiatives were selling maintenance, selling diagnostics and identifying service trends in the industry. We worked hard to educate and reeducate our technicians to approach these areas in new and different ways. All three of these represent areas where we, as an industry, miss out and where we could do a much better job.

We partnered with Identifix, though there are similar companies that could have been great partners in this effort. Identifix is a group of automotive people who have taken their (and all of our) real world experience and made it available in an accessible, user-friendly format that allows me, as a technician, to troubleshoot, diagnose and recommend based on the experience of the thousands upon thousands of technicians that routinely use the service. Nobody knows everything, but sometimes our expectations of a technician would seem to put an awful lot of weight on his or her shoulders.

An Internet-accessible service allows a technician to know what manufacturer specific maintenance services to recommend, to identify applicable Technical Service Bulletins (TSBs) and to better troubleshoot and diagnose performance problems based on the experience of technicians from across the U.S., Canada and Central America. That's a lot of experience that would only be available to our technicians with Internet access.

Identifix started out as an auto repair hotline offering live technical assistance to professional shop owners and technicians seeking a trusted second opinion and additional expertise on various vehicle issues. These hotline interactions have enabled them to compile an exclusive database of shortcut tests and confirmed fixes that have been documented and made available to technicians standing in shops just like yours. The Internet has every opportunity to be a distraction and to be abused, but it also has untapped potential to make you, your shop and your techs better.

ALLDATA, a name that is very familiar to us of the automotive repair world, quite simply would not exist without the Internet. They are a huge, ready and available resource waiting for you and your technicians to log in.

With ALLDATA Repair, according to the company, you get online access that instantly provides unedited manufacturer information you need to deliver accurate repairs, including TSBs and recalls, complete OE wiring diagrams, diagnostic trouble code (DTC) descriptions, tests and procedure, component locations, Mode 6 data including PIDs, TIDs, CIDs and scaling, parts and labor integration information, TPMS reset procedures and more.

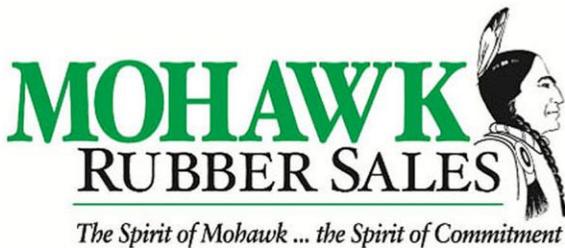
In addition to these two companies, the International Automotive Technicians Network (iATN), provides countless resources for your technicians. They can join forums with other techs, sharing information, solutions and asking questions of their own. It features a database of hundreds of thousands of vehicle fixes, a waveform library and OEM, industry and government resources. You can check it out at www.iatn.net.

Another important resource available is online training. In years past, training was both expensive and inconvenient, requiring our technicians to be out of the shop, often for days at a time. Now there are untold online training courses available, frequently broken into smaller modules, allowing for much more flexibility in getting our technicians trained.

Besides the many manufacturers that offer timely and relevant training, there are broad and in depth training programs available from I-CAR, AutoShop 101 and CARQUEST Technical Institute (CTI). Training has undergone a revolution in recent years and whether you are trying to stay current on emerging technology or want to study for an upcoming ASE test, the Internet offers unlimited access to what is out there and what you need to know to stay current and relevant in today's automotive repair world.

The best argument for Internet access out in your shop is the revolutionary changes that have taken place on our counters. From parts ordering, to customer relationship management and marketing, the front end operation is barely recognizable from what it was 10 or 15 years ago. Customers often arrive at our counter as the result of an automated service reminder on their cellphone.

We now are able to communicate and interact with customers in ways that would have been unthinkable a few short years ago. Instead of describing the condition of their brakes to them, we now routinely send digital photographs of that wasted rotor or a video of the leak in their radiator. Why should you and your service advisors have all the fun. Access to all the resources that the Internet has to offer makes a good tech great and a great tech phenomenal.



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Three Ways to Promote and Sell More Service Through Your Website

Learn to utilize your website to sell more services.

By Nate Lehmann

November 19, 2013

The U.S. economy continues to change, resulting in more consumers keeping their vehicles longer. Consumers are also becoming more proactive in the care and maintenance of their vehicles, which translates into more opportunities for you to sell parts, accessories and full services

Here are three ways you can use your website to sell more service:

Service-specific Pages

You know the services your dealership provides inside and out – but customers visiting your site are seeking specifics on your offerings. Simply having one or two pages on your website that only list the services you offer could leave your customers wanting more information and lead them to your competition.

Best practice is to provide a page for every service; the more detail the better. This may seem like information overload, but it's not. Customers expect, and demand, to see what's included with the oil change you offer, so be sure to include:

- Number of quarts of oil included
- List of the services also included such as inspection of belts, wiper blades and exterior lights
- What else does the service include such as checking power steering fluid, windshield washer fluid and tire pressure

These details are vital to turning a shopper into a buyer. This is also a great way to educate your customers and show the value of the services you provide.

This content also serves to improve your organic search engine rankings in your particular area, since Google seeks out websites with relevant information.

Online Appointment Scheduling

One of the best ways to drive more service to your dealership is to make it easy for consumers to do business with you. An online appointment scheduling tool is becoming more common and, for many consumers, mandatory. If a customer is too busy to call during your normal business hours, having an online, 24/7 appointment scheduler will help drive more service business to your dealership and increase customer loyalty.

When setting up an appointment scheduler on your website, make sure you include, at a minimum:

- Type of service needed, displayed as a drop down menu for customers to select the service desired
- Pre-populated service date and time availability
- For multiple location dealerships, a drop down menu with each location listed

As a bonus, offer a special discount for any service scheduled online. And, don't forget to send an appointment confirmation to the customer by email.

Service Packages and Promotions

Who doesn't love a good deal? Identify the key types of service you regularly provide, and promote them like you promote tires and wheels. Include a "coupons" page on your website that has weekly or monthly services specials, including:

- Free oil change with the purchase of four tires
- Free car wash with a tire rotation
- VIP Customer Rewards card to save on repeat oil changes

Rather than your customers thinking about all the things they have to do to keep their vehicle in top condition, they'll remember one thing: the convenience and cost-savings provided by your dealership.

When it comes to selling more stuff to your customers — like service — you need to think about your business differently. Consumer demand for vehicle service is rising and is not expected to slow down. The tire dealership that finds smart ways to package and sell services will do well. This means that you must package, price and market your service department with the same zeal that you market tires and wheels.



Nate Lehmann is ARI's sales manager, automotive tire and wheel. ARI creates award-winning software solutions that help more than 2,100 independent tire and wheel dealers spanning more than 3,400 locations Sell More Stuff! – online and in-store. Nate can be reached at Nate.Lehmann@arinet.com or 218-740-1407.

Marketing During The Off-Season

By Heather Blessington

November 06, 2013

We are heading into the nail-bitingly slow season for many dealers. How about you try something different this year? Instead of sitting there, suffering the pain of watching your sales drop as each dreary winter month passes, take control of the situation and market the living heck out of your business right on through spring.

The goal is to not let your foot off the marketing pedal for anything. Where is the logic in staring out the window, wondering where all your customers are when you have deliberately decided to stop communicating with them? I understand it's hard to spend money when the cash flow coming in is low, but you do need to keep your marketing efforts going at full speed year round if you expect to be a leader in your market.

Here are several ideas to get you thinking about the off-season. When these strategies are executed correctly, they will deliver the sales dollars you are looking for.

Grow Your Marketing Lists While The Season Is Still Hot

During your peak season, you must train your staff to gather email addresses and mobile phone numbers at every turn. I know, I know — the dealership is a nuthouse and no one has time to think, but you need to make time. Look at every customer as an off-season sale, and you'll be motivated to ask him or her for contact information.

Jam your website and social channels with multiple calls to action (CTAs) while traffic is buzzing, and you will find that gathering customer contact information is relatively easy. The most obvious way to do this is by offering something in exchange for them subscribing to your newsletter. Let's get creative here. Don't be above giving away a tchotchke or two in exchange for an email or phone number. What is an off-season customer worth?

Another idea I personally love is to publicize a gift card lottery. The lottery offers every customer who walks through the door a \$5 gift card (valid during the dead season, of course) with a chance to win a \$500 gift card (or \$5,000 if you're a big hitter). The reason this works is because no one spends \$5 when they shop — the temptation is just too great to spend more. Get customers in your store to pick up, use the card when you are most in need of revenue and have your staff ready to upsell.

Collect Customer Reviews

It seems dealers wake up to the importance of online customer reviews after they have racked up a few nasty ones. Get ahead of this game with a planned reputation management strategy rooted in regular, consistent requests to your customers. Simply ask your customer to write a review sharing their personal story, interaction with a salesperson, or a riding story that relates back to the vehicle they bought from your dealership. Keep asking for reviews even after you've achieved top ratings on relevant sites such as Google+ and Yelp. Users notice when there are wide gaps in time between review postings, so keep the reviews coming year round. This is particularly important in the dead of winter when people are bored and dreaming of getting their bikes back on the road when the snow melts; this desire pushes them to surf around online where they will find your dealership, the one that customers love.

Off-Season Content and Offers

Start promoting your off-season services with early bird discounts. If you offer vehicle winterization, encourage early signup so you reel in the business before your competitors even have a chance. Next, publish inspiring, dream-provoking content in the dead of winter. Immediately after a snowstorm is the best time to remind your customers that there are better days ahead. Give your customers something to look forward to and get them thinking about your dealership when they least expect it.

Stay Social All Year

Customers don't disappear during the off-season; they're just nestled up inside with even more time to connect with friends, family and businesses via social media channels. Produce off-season content that is funny, entertaining or lifestyle related. One of the most shared images on Facebook last season was a guy frozen on a motorcycle, icicles hanging from every limb. People just couldn't get enough of it.

Offer Sales and Discounts To Locals Only

Show your local customers some love! After all, they're the people with the most loyalty to your dealership. Create an email marketing campaign or Facebook ad campaign targeted to customers only in your ZIP code and promote it as an exclusive special for locals. For example, make Thursday "Community Day, Receive 10% Off," or host "Get Out of the House Fridays" at the dealership.

Historically, dealers who plan early and keep their marketing efforts going strong in the off-season are the ones that succeed in the end. Don't let the season stop you — it's full steam ahead, 365 days a year, seven days a week.



Award-winning blogger and CEO of Duo Web Solutions, Heather Blessington is a nationally-renowned speaker on social media marketing and a digital marketing veteran. Her company provides MPN monthly columns focused on best practices in Web marketing for powersports dealers.

Arrests Made In Andalusia Tire Company Theft

By Amanda Wade

Story Created: Dec 23, 2013

A theft ring spanning across six counties in both Alabama and Florida has been brought to a halt.

The Opp Police Department says Pete Jimenez, Joni Blair Diamond, Paul Daw, and Bobby Thompson, Jr. are being held in Escambia County on charges of theft of property, receiving stolen property, and burglary.

The Opp Police Chief says they are connected to the tire theft at the Andalusia Tire Company as well as several other Covington County business thefts. They say the four suspects allegedly stole tens of thousands of dollars worth in utility type equipment.

Opp Police Department, Andalusia Police Department, Covington County Sheriff's Office, and Escambia County Sheriff's Office worked together to make the arrests.



TIA Issues New Best Management Practice



November 21, 2013

Bowie, MD - The **Tire Industry Association's (TIA's)**, Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) has issued a new best management practice for proper tire storage.

This best management practice outlines the steps that dealers should take to store tires properly to ensure that the condition of the tire is maintained to help maximize its service life. If tires are not stored correctly, it may result in the loss of performance as prolonged exposure to outside forces like heat, direct sunlight and ozone can affect the integrity of the materials. This best management practice also provides guidelines for outdoor storage and long-term storage on vehicles.

"Proper tire storage is critical to maintain the physical properties essential to the performance of the tire. We encourage TIA members and everyone in the industry to follow this best management practice," said TIA Board Member and EAC Co-Chair Dick Gust.

This document, along with six additional best management practices, is available for download free of charge on TIA's website www.tireindustry.org. Each of the best practices describes procedures that should be followed for handling, transporting, recycling and/or disposing of items such as used oil, fluids, degreasers, batteries and tires.

Anyone in the industry who has a best practices topic that they would like the EAC to consider researching and adding to TIA's library should contact LaKisha Pindell at lpindell@tireindustry.org.

About TIA:

The Tire Industry Association, with a 90 year history representing all segments of the national and international tire industry, is the leading advocate, as well as, instructor in technical training of tire service technicians. For more information, visit www.tireindustry.org or call 800-876-8372.

2014 Annual Convention

July 11 – 12, 2014

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Reservation Deadline: June 10, 2014

For reservations call:

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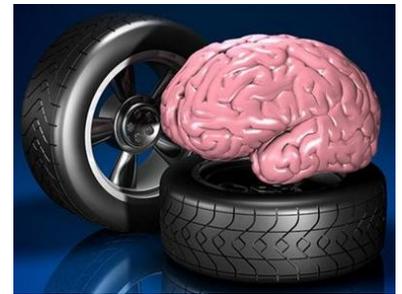
To be a part of the biggest event
in the Alabama Tire Industry in 2014:

The 2014 ATDA Annual Convention



Retail Tire Dealers who renew their membership with or join the ATDA by February 28, 2014, will receive Two (2) Free Registrations (\$234 value) to the 2014 Annual Convention.

- ✓ **Be a part of the most up-to-date industry education and news.**
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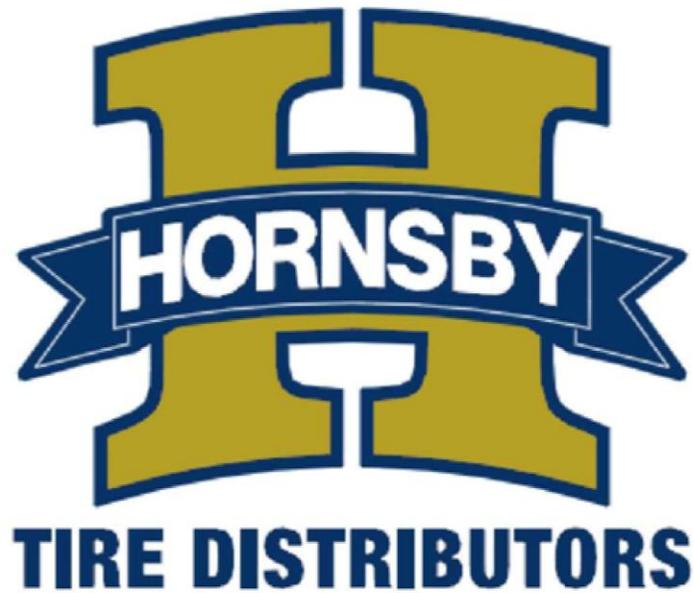


- ✓ **Develop important industry contacts.**
Multiple networking opportunities



- ✓ **Have a voice in the Alabama Tire Industry and its future.**
Strength in numbers protects our individual interests

*Don't just work in your business;
work on your business
and enjoy the weekend on the beach!
See you at the beach!!!*



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Tax Changes for 2013

By Richard Lipton, CPA, *Richard L. Lipton CPA & Associates LLC*, www.liptoncpa.com
December 13, 2013

Whether you file as a corporation or sole proprietor here's what business owners need to know about tax changes in 2013.



Standard Mileage Rates

The standard mileage rate in 2013 is 56.5 cents per business mile driven, 24 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes, and 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

Health Care Tax Credit for Small Businesses

Small business employers who pay at least half the premiums for single health insurance coverage for their employees may be eligible for the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit as long as they employ fewer than the equivalent of 25 full-time workers and average annual wages do not exceed \$50,000. The credit can be claimed in tax years 2010 through 2013 and for any two years after that. The maximum credit that can be claimed is an amount equal to 35% of premiums paid by eligible small businesses.

Credit for Hiring Qualified Veterans

The maximum credit that employers can take for hiring qualified veterans in 2013 is \$9,600 per worker for employers that operate for-profit businesses, or \$6,240 per worker for tax-exempt organizations.

Section 179 Expensing

In 2013 the maximum Section 179 expense deduction for equipment purchases is \$500,000 of the first \$2,000,000 of certain business property placed in service during the year. The bonus depreciation is 50% for qualified property that exceeds the threshold amount.

Please contact us if you need help understanding which deductions and tax credits you are entitled to. We are always available to assist you.

10 Tax Breaks Set to Expire in 2013

Federal tax breaks come and go, and this year is no exception. Unless Congress takes action, 55 of them are set to expire on December 31, 2013. Let's take a look at the ones that are most likely to affect taxpayers like you.

1. Teachers' Deduction for Certain Expenses: Primary and secondary school teachers buying school supplies out-of-pocket may be able to take an above-the-line deduction of up to \$250 for unreimbursed expenses. An above the line deduction means that it can be taken before calculating adjusted gross income.

2. State and Local Sales Taxes: Taxpayers that pay state and local sales tax can deduct the amounts paid on their federal tax returns (instead of state and local income taxes)--as long as they itemize. In other words, if you're thinking of buying a big ticket item such as a boat or car and live in a state with sales tax, you might want to think about buying it this year.

3. Mortgage Insurance Premiums: Mortgage insurance premiums (PMI) are paid by homeowners with less than 20% equity in their homes. These premiums were deductible in tax years 2012 and 2013; however, this tax break is scheduled to end on December 31, 2013. Mortgage interest deductions for taxpayers who itemize are not affected.

4. Exclusion of Discharge of Principal Residence Indebtedness: Typically, forgiven debt is considered taxable income in the eyes of the IRS; however, this tax provision, which expires at the end of this year, allows homeowners whose homes have been foreclosed on or subjected to short sale to exclude up to \$2 million of cancelled mortgage debt. Also included are taxpayers seeking debt modification on their home.

5. Distributions from IRAs for Charitable Contributions: Taxpayers who are age 70 ½ or older can donate up to \$100,000 in distributions from their IRA to charity. Some people do not want to take the mandatory minimum distributions (which are counted as income) upon reaching this age and instead can contribute it to charity, using it as a strategy to lower income enough to take advantage of other tax provisions with phaseout limits.

6. Mass Transit Fringe Benefits: In 2013, commuters using mass transit can exclude from income up to \$245 per

month on transit benefits paid by their employers such as monthly rail or subway passes, making it on par with parking benefits (also up to \$245 pre-tax). This provision is set to expire at the end of the year, however and in 2014, pre-tax benefits for mass transit commuters drop to a maximum of \$130 per month, while parking benefits remain the same.

7. Energy Efficient Appliances: This tax break has been around for a while, but if you're still thinking about making your home more energy efficient, now is the time to take advantage of this tax credit, which reduces your taxes (as opposed to a deduction that reduces your taxable income). The credit is 10% of the cost of building materials for items such as insulation, new water heaters, or a wood pellet stove.

Note: This tax is cumulative, so if you've taken the credit in any tax year since 2006, you will not be able to take the full \$500 tax credit this year. If, for example, you took a credit of \$300 in 2011, the maximum credit you could take this year is \$200.

8. Electric Vehicles: Buy a four-wheel electric vehicle such as a Ford Focus Electric (Model years 2012-2014), BMW i3 Sedan (Model year 2014), Fiat 500e (Model year 2013), and Nissan Leaf (Model years 2011-2013) and take a tax credit of \$7,500. Other vehicles, such as a 2014 Accord Plug-In Hybrid and the Toyota Prius Plug-in Electric Drive Vehicle (Model years 2012-2014) are eligible for a lesser tax credit. Call us for additional information on tax credits for electric vehicles.

Note: The credit begins to phase out for a manufacturer's vehicles when at least 200,000 qualifying vehicles manufactured by that manufacturer have been sold for use in the United States.

9. Donation of Conservation Property: Also expiring this year is a tax provision that allows taxpayers to donate property or easements to a local land trust or other conservation organization and receive a tax break in return.

10. Small Business Stock: If you've been thinking about investing in a small business such as a start-up C-corporation, consider doing it this year because this tax provision expires on December 31. If you hold onto this stock for five years, you can exclude 100% of the capital gains--in other words, you won't be paying any capital gains. If you wait until January, you will only be able to exclude 50% of the capital gains.



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Chaplain's Corner

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 21:4



It may not be so, but it seems like every year after Christmas the obituary section of my local newspaper has an unusually large number of death announcements. I have been told that the critically ill patients sometimes fight really hard to survive until Christmas passes. Before I wrote this devotional, I was addressing condolence cards to the families of two customers and one friend who died over the weekend after Christmas. However, if you give careful thought, is not that the “real joy” of Christmas? The baby of the manger ultimately became the SAVIOR on the cross so that HE could leave the grave as the RISEN KING and all who put their trust in HIM could one day experience the promise mentioned above. No wonder the angels sang “*Glory to GOD in the highest*”.



**GOD bless.
Dolan Davis Jr.
Chaplain ATDA
205-758-6624 dolan@davistires.com**



Driving Force to Help Future Managers, Owners

How to help key employees become more effective and to retain them to make this a career for them.

December 01, 2013

Tire dealers looking to develop the next generation of managers, leaders and even owners for their business now have a real-world option. Tire Leadership 21, a new multi-session program created by the recently formed Center for Tire & Service Education (CTSE) and offered by Northwood University, was unveiled formally in early December.

The new business education program was specifically designed to develop the next generation of tire dealer managers and owners. Tire Leadership 21 covers a wide range of business, management and leadership topics that are critical to the success of future independent tire-dealer managers and owners.

The program was created through a unique collaboration between a group of leading tire dealers and industry professionals and Northwood University, a fully accredited, private, non-profit business university that specializes in managerial and entrepreneurial education.

"This program addresses a long-standing need in the tire industry," said Rich Brahler, president of commercial tire dealer Brahler's Truckers Supply Inc., in Jacksonville, Ill., and a founding member of the CTSE Advisory Board.

"Every tire dealer has wondered where they will find good managers to run a new store or how to retain and grow key employees to make this a career and not just a job. This program was designed to foster that growth."

Kim Sigman, co-owner of Community Tire Pros & Auto Repair in Phoenix and another founding member of the CTSE Advisory Board, added, "More and more, independent tire dealers face serious questions about growth opportunities, key employee retention, even succession planning. With every one of those questions, we came back to the same conclusion: This industry sorely needs an effective, proven way to help our employees grow as businesspeople and managers. This program accomplishes that goal."

The program's structure features a pair of one-week, on-campus sessions (participants attend both sessions). Session I will be held April 14-18 at Northwood's campus in Midland, Mich. Participants will reconvene Sept. 7-12 at Northwood's campus in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Between Sessions I and II, participants will be required to complete an individual project that must deliver \$25,000 in annual additional revenue or savings to their employers.

That aspect alone, said CTSE board members, makes the program well worth the investment.

University Support

The 2014 Tire Leadership 21 program will be limited to 30 participants on a first-come, first-served basis. The program cost, which includes tuition, meals and class materials, is \$5,995. Hotel-style, on-campus accommodations are available.

Academic support of the program comes from Northwood University, founded in 1959, which offers bachelor and master degrees in a variety of business disciplines. Although Tire Leadership 21 is a non-degree program, it still leverages Northwood's extensive academic resources, including its world-class faculty and residential campuses.

"Northwood University has a long-standing relationship with the motor vehicle aftermarket parts and service industry," said University President Keith Pretty. "We are especially pleased to partner with such an outstanding group of independent tire dealers to develop a business skill program of this caliber."

The Center for Tire and Service Education (CTSE) is a wholly independent organization founded in March 2013 by a group of independent tire dealers and others allied to the tire industry to be the driving force behind an educational effort to benefit the North American tire industry.



On hand at the Tire Review offices to help roll out Tire Leadership 21 were advisory board members (from left) Kim Sigman of Community Tire Pros in Phoenix, Tom Gyuriak of Strategic Alliance Group in Indianapolis, Brian Cruickshank of Northwood University, Stu Zurcher of Strategic Alliance Group, and Rich Brahler of Brahler's Truckers Supply in Jacksonville, Ill.

These tire dealers and industry professionals are actively advising Northwood University on all aspects of Tire Leadership 21's marketing and content.

Faculty for Tire Leadership 21 will come from a combination of Northwood's DeVos Graduate School of Management and subject-matter experts from within the tire and service industries, explained Jim Smith, editor of Tire Review and a founding member of the CTSE Advisory Board. The program will also include a series of recognized experts – from within and outside of the tire and service industry – to serve as guest speakers.

The program includes on a range of university-level tire dealer focused business, management and leadership subjects: finance, accounting, business strategy, management, corporate vision, leadership, operations, industry trends, marketing and social media, team and corporate culture, customer experience, critical thinking, and problem resolution.

"This is not about the mechanics of changing tires, understanding regulations or even a basic community-college business course," said Marc Pons, owner of Chapel Hill Tire Car Care Center in Chapel Hill, N.C. "Tire Leadership 21 is at whole new level, and the subjects and coursework were specifically selected by the CTSE Advisory Board to engage and challenge attendees, and result in stronger, better run, flourishing tire businesses."

"One of the keys to long-term growth and success is continuity of management," said Mike McGee, president of McGee Auto Service & Tire in Lakeland, Fla., and another founding member of the CTSE Advisory Board. "That continuity has to come from employees who are engaged and invested in that business – they have to see a career, not just a job. When they see that long-term opportunity, their positive attitude and excitement drive the entire staff."

Dealers See Importance

"Where do I find good managers I can trust to run a new store? How can I help key employees become more effective? What can I do to retain key employees, to make this a career and not just a job? Where can I find resources to help my kids become better prepared to take over this business? Those are questions we have asked countless times," said Steve Hamilton, US AutoForce in Appleton, Wis., and a founding member of the CTSE Advisory Board.

"I see this effort as a real-world way to answer those questions, and to give tire dealers the best opportunity to grow in a tough, competitive environment."

When asked why Tire Leadership 21 is vital to his business, Brahler offered, "I want my key employees to see the 'bigger picture.' I want strategic thinkers capable of implementing our business plan. This program will challenge and enhance their decision-making, build morale and show our key people that we truly want to build them up as much as we build the business," Brahler said. "I want to build a team that doesn't need me. Can the business thrive without my input? That is where I want to be someday."

"Currently, there is nowhere to send a potential store manager to learn the in-depth skills it takes to efficiently manage a tire and service facility," said Sigman. "This is a university-level education program geared directly to the tire and service business – retail, wholesale and commercial – that will elevate all independents and allow them to grow and thrive."

Discounts are available for tire dealers sending more than one participant to the program. Contact program director Brian Cruickshank (brianc@northwood.edu) for more details. To register for Tire Leadership 21, visit www.universityoftheaftermarket.com or call 800-551-2882.

Business Tips:

Tip #172 - Who are your Primary Competitors?

Can you name them? Are you sure, or is it an educated guess? For most shop owners it's the latter. How could you make your reply more accurate? Actually, it's right in front of you every day. Put a reminder on your tech work sheets right now to save the oil change stickers that the techs remove and put them in a container just for that purpose (next to the oil change sticker printer is perfect). Assign someone to empty it weekly and create a spreadsheet with the results. These are the shops where your customers definitely have been the ones who are emailing and mailing them just like you do.

Tip #173 - One thing I don't like about selling...

What's the one thing that you would like to eliminate about the customer service process? What part of customer service interaction makes you the least comfortable? It shows and it costs you sales. It is critical that you fix it. One of the simplest things that you can do is to practice it. Rehearse it. Role play. Over time, it will improve and it will show.

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celebrating success.

Calendar of Events

Membership Renewal for 2014

Billing – January 2014

See Page 15 for more information!!!

Deadline for free convention registrations is February 28, 2014

ATS Training Tour

January 22-24, 2014

Gipson's Tires, Prattville, AL

Owners/Managers encouraged to participate!!!

See Pages 3 & 4 for more information!!!



ATDA Board of Directors Meeting

February 12, 2014 – 9:00 am

Location to be announced.



Annual Convention

July 11-12, 2014

Island House Hotel, Orange Beach, Alabama

Golf Tournament, Educational Sessions,

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