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Alabama Tire Dealers Association

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Spare Tire September 2015

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Don't FORGET!

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Letter from the President

Hello Members,

The kids have returned to the classroom which means that summer is winding down and hopefully means we will soon be enjoying cooler weather.

The cooler weather and changing of the seasons means less vacation travelers. It can also mean a downturn in business. History tells us it will slow down. The good news is we can plan and forecast prior to the downturn. As good business managers, I know all of you will be proactive and adjust your controllable expenses accordingly. Preparing now based on our historical data can prepare us for this season and reduce the stress that sometimes comes when we see a downturn in business. In fact, it may be that we can enjoy a little break in the action and appreciate the extra time with family and friends.

In closing, start preparing and enjoy the upcoming season. Roll Tide.

Shane Adams
ATDA President

T
r

Welcome New Member:

Grady's Tire Pros
R. Temple Anderson
P.O. Box 97, 1212 First Ave, Opelika, AL 36801
334-745-3568
rtanderson49@gmail.com

Government Relations State Legislation Update
AUGUST 2015

TIRE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
TIRE SAFETY STARTS HERE.

State	Bill Number	Name	Last Action	Action Date	Link
AL	HB1	General fund budget, appropriations for ordinary expenses of executive, legislative, and judicial departments	Motion to Carry Over Temporarily adopted Voice Vote	8/11/2015	http://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/653078
AL	HB25	Sales tax, exemption for certain motor vehicles exported or removed from this state, eliminated under certain conditions	Clerk of the House Certification	8/10/2015	http://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/653105
AL	HB26	Sales tax, automotive batteries, sales tax to be due on the net price less any exchanges.	Indefinitely Postponed	6/3/2015	http://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/593429
AL	HB268	Motor vehicles, sales and use taxes increased, refund process for certain trucks and truck-tractors used in interstate commerce, distrib	House W&MGF Public Hearing (13:30 4/1/2015 Room 617)	4/1/2015	http://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/619674
AL	HB46	Tax revenue, various taxes redistributed to General Fund	Read for the first time and referred to the Senate committee on Finance and Taxation General Fund	8/5/2015	http://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/653125

AL	HB593	Sales tax, exemption for certain motor vehicles exported or removed from this state, eliminated under certain conditions.	Indefinitely Postponed	6/3/2015	http://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/64058
AL	SB501	Sales tax, exemption for certain motor vehicles exported or removed from this state, eliminated under certain conditions.	Pending third reading on day 28 Favorable from Ways and Means General Fund	6/2/2015	http://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/646008

7 Deadly Email Phrases

By Nancy Friedman, Customer Service, Communication Expert, President Telephone Doctor, Customer Service Training

We did a survey a while back at one of my speaking engagements. I wanted to know what really bugged folks about emails they receive. We got a lot of good frustrations, but the top 3 were:

* Poor spelling and grammar (Your, you're; there, their; here, hear; to, too, two; and many more)

* Emails that ramble and are too long

* Wrong subject lines

Let's take them one by one

- Poor spelling & grammar – Use the old saying "when in doubt, leave it out." If you're not sure it's right – don't use it. Simple. There are always alternatives. Use those.

- Emails that are too long – Two to three short paragraphs are perfect. Or if you have a lot of info, use an attachment. Remember, people are getting emails on iPad, iPhone, and even their iWatch. Long rambling emails are deleted or left for later a lot.

- Wrong subject lines – Yes, not changing the subject line when the information in the email changed from one topic to another was a large irritant.

There were many more, but these 3 rose to the top.

Now I'm about to share some ineffective phrases used in emails. They are not bad; simply useless and unnecessary (i.e., not needed. Get it?) When these phrases are eliminated, the emails usually are stronger and read better.

Here we go:

- **"Just a note to let you know…"** or **"Just wanted to say…"** or **"I'm just checking back to see where we are on the order."** ***JUST*** is a weak, wimpy, word. Not necessary. In fact, pretty lame and useless. Eliminate the word **JUST** in your sentences. Read those sentences without the word "just" and see how much stronger they become.

- **"As I (or you) mentioned on the phone"** or **"Pursuant to our call** (conversation, whatever)**."**Double work, not needed, not necessary. Confirm the statement instead with: "Glad you liked the proposal" or "Enjoyed our call" or "Here's a handy recap of our call" or "Good call and excited we can make 'X' happen." Email is a time to use your personality. Formal sayings, unless you're a lawyer (sorry), aren't normally needed.

- **"Please let me know if you have any questions."** You gotta be kidding me! Hard to believe folks still use this, but they do. Most folks will let you know if they have questions. That's a real junior statement.

- **"If there's anything else I can do please let me know." This one goes with #3.** Seriously? That's a real 'get rid' of line. It's normally OUR responsibility to follow up. So a better phrase would be: "Trust me to follow up to handle your questions."

- **"Thank you for supporting us"** or **"Thank you for your support."** I admit, I used this one for a while until I realized, "Thank you for your order" or "Thank you for your business" or "Thank you for being a loyal, valuable client" was more effective.

There are more, but in keeping with shorter emails…stopping here.

TELEPHONE DOCTOR®
CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

Calendar of Events

ATDA Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, October 6, 2015 – 10:00 am
Timberline Golf Club, Calera, Alabama

ATDA Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Tournament

Tuesday, October 6, 2015
Lunch 12:00 Tee Time 1:00
Timberline Golf Club, Calera, Alabama
Registration Form Page 16

ATS Certified Training Course

October 13-14, 2015
Chelsea Tire Pros, Chelsea, Alabama
For more information Page 6
Registration form Page 7

Scrap to Profit Conference

October 28-29, 2015
Holiday Inn Express, Latham, New York

SCRAP TO PROFIT

2015 SEMA Show

November 3-6, 2015
Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nevada

The SEMA Show is the premier automotive specialty products trade event in the world.

Alabama SWANA Chapter
Fall Forum

Wednesday – Friday, November 4 – 6, 2015

STC Luncheon Meeting – Thursday, November 5th

Guntersville State Park Lodge

ATDA 2016 Annual Convention

June 24-25, 2016

Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, AL

Potential Solutions

So how should you address these challenges?

First, assess the needs of your company. A one-size-fits-all app-roach to the digital workplace simply isn't helpful. Instead, take the time to create a comprehensive digital governance program.

For example, does the majority of your workforce use a computer to perform their daily duties, or is the use of mobile devices while driving more of a concern? Do you have a marketing department that is authorized to use social media on behalf of the company? Is most of your workforce connected on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, and has that become a problem when you promote a former co-worker to a supervisory position?

The process of evaluating the digital needs of your company should be a group effort to which your business people, your legal counsel and your IT guru all contribute. A team approach is more likely to yield a practical solution – legally, technically and financially.

Create good plans and policies. Once you have made a guidance plan, create a social media policy that lawfully addresses the specific needs of your company. In general, social media policies should give clear guidance and specific examples of acceptable and prohibited conduct. If you ask that employees maintain the confidentiality of your trade secrets, specify what is meant by "trade secrets." Also, ensure your employees understand that they have no expectation of privacy on company time or company equipment.

Keep in mind that, according to the NLRB, a social media policy cannot prohibit the posting or publication of disparaging comments or criticism about the company, nor can it mandate courtesy. While courts may or may not ultimately agree with the NLRB's position, you probably would prefer not to be one of the test cases.

Disseminate (and train for) your policies. Perfect policies cannot save your company from unlawful conduct that occurs when your employees either don't know the policy exists or don't understand what it means. For example, if a front-line supervisor receives a complaint of alleged harassment between employees that occurred after hours and outside of the workplace, are you confident she will address it appropriately?

Create and maintain a paper trail. Especially when it comes to defending a legal action, any and all related documents are critical evidence. And one of the best ways to prove your innocence when it comes to applicant screenings or internal investigations of e-harassment is to provide a contemporaneous record of exactly what actions you took or why you decided to hire one applicant over another.

Take complaints of online harassment seriously. While you have no obligation to affirmatively monitor all activities of your employees after hours and outside of work, employers can and should prohibit illegal conduct online that has created a hostile work environment. Even the NLRB has approved policy language prohibiting "discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct."

As always, be consistent! For example, Googling only one of nine applicants who happens to look pregnant tends to be a poor idea.

And the Internet is forever. Individuals skilled in computer forensics can recover just about anything. Therefore, if you can't ask it or do it in person, don't do so online.

While social media is just one of the challenges faced by employers in the digital era, it is one that can be overcome by good strategy and consistent execution.

Susan Bassford Wilson is an attorney with Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete LLP, which advises and defends employers. She can be reached at swilson@constangy.com.

Walking the Social Media Tightrope

by Susan Bassford Wilson - July 1, 2015

In today's digital workplace, few issues cause more confusion than social media. Numerous laws are relevant to social media, ranging from Title VII to the Fair Credit Reporting Act to state-specific laws barring requests for applicants' personal passwords. However, employers can navigate the social media minefield by identifying and addressing the risks.

Screening of Applicants

When used properly, social media searches can provide a way for employers to learn helpful information they may not otherwise get during a typical hiring process. For example, resume inconsistencies, hobbies and civic involvement may be apparent from online searches.

And any information that allows you to make a better hiring decision may ultimately save your company money.

However, Googling applicants may reveal information that an employer would not (and should not) get during the application process, including age, religion or another protected characteristic. (Think: Happy 63rd birthday, Bob!).

And as I mentioned in a prior article, once you learn protected information, you can't unlearn it. This issue is particularly relevant since the EEOC has stated that eliminating systemic barriers in recruitment and hiring is one of its current priorities.

Further, practically speaking, the information you find online may not tell you what you think it's telling you. A 2013 study by researchers at North Carolina State University found that companies may misunderstand what personality traits are reflected in particular types of social media posts, e.g. that posting about alcohol use online means an applicant is not conscientious, when in fact this study found the two were not correlated.

Lawful Policies for Employees

Once you've hired an applicant, your social media worries are over, right? Not exactly.

The National Labor Relations Board has spent several years defending the right of employees to discuss the terms and conditions of the workplace online. According to the NLRB, many companies violate the Section 7 rights of employees by implementing "overly broad" or "ambiguous" social media policies that could potentially restrict the employees' ability to act as a group, or to prepare for group action, regarding the terms and conditions of their employment.

Commonly referred to as "protected concerted activity," Section 7 applies whether or not an employee belongs to a union – and whether or not the discussion occurs online. Thus any policy that can be interpreted as "chilling" employees' rights to, for example, complain about a mean boss on Facebook, is fair game to the NLRB.

There is some good news for employers on this front, however. Thus far, the courts appear to be more tolerant than the NLRB of company social media policies and restrictions, and some employers have been successful in using employees' own social media postings in defense of the company. Nonetheless, this is a rapidly evolving area of the law that savvy employers should continue to monitor.

Yet employers cannot allow uncertainly to prevent them from addressing workplace issues such as e-harassment or from protecting trade secret information. In fact, some online conduct must result in disciplinary action against an employee.

In recent years one company paid $2.3 million to settle a lawsuit brought by the EEOC alleging sexual harassment and retaliation via text messages. Another court upheld a $1.6 million verdict in favor of an employee with a disability who was harassed by co-workers on a blog outside the workplace. Remember: the medium – whether it be texting, talking or smoke signals – doesn't matter nearly as much as the conduct itself and whether it's creating a hostile work environment.

HR QUESTION ? of the month

FEDERATED Employment Practices Network® powered by Enquiron®

What is the risk of using a generic schedule of work hours?

Question: Are we at risk if employees' timecards are consistently showing a "generic" schedule of 8am - 5pm with an hour lunch? Even if the employee is entering the time themselves manually onto a timesheet?

Answer: The employer is at risk of a potential wage and hour violation if the generic schedule reflected in the employee's time cards does not represent the actual hours worked and the break times of individual employees. As you may be aware, employers need to keep accurate records of non-exempt employee hours worked to ensure they are paid properly for all hours worked and in accordance with the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and state law. Although there is no requirement for any particular system (such as a time clock or manually written time sheet), an employer should have some kind of reliable time-keeping system to document when non-exempt employees begin and end their shifts and take meal and any other unpaid break periods as well.

As a general matter and best practice, non-exempt employees -- and not their supervisors -- should record time in and out when beginning and ending work, as well as for any unpaid meal or rest periods and then record the time when they resume work when such break is completed (as opposed to having a system of where it is automatically done for them via a generic schedule, or not done at all). Whatever method an employer uses, the hours worked should be accurately recorded, and to this end it is not advisable that the employer have pre-filled or generic time records for their employees as this may not result in an accurate accounting of hours actually worked.

Note that even if an employee does not comply with the employer's policies for keeping accurate time records, while the employer can discipline the employee consistent with company policy and past practice (i.e. warnings, write ups, etc.), the employee must be paid for all hours worked and applicable overtime. Ultimately, the burden is on the employer to prove that it has maintained accurate and reliable time records in the face of any federal or state audit or a claim by an employee for unpaid wages. For this reason, we would advise against using generic time records. Employees also should be reminded of your timekeeping policies and the importance of employees recording their own time and doing so honestly and accurately. Managers or employees should be reminded that anyone who violates these policies will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

To learn more about the Federated Employment Practices Network®, contact your local Federated Marketing Representative, or visit www.federatedinsurance.com.

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Mishandling phone calls costs dealer service departments

By: Brian Albright Tuesday, April 21, 2015 - 07:00

AFTERMARKET BUSINESS WORLD

Dealership service departments that let overflow or after hours phone calls slide into a voicemail black hole may be missing out on significant revenue and losing potential new customers. Research from DMEautomotive published in January indicates that dealerships are missing out on calls from customers who represent nearly one-third of their total service dollars.

The study of 8,537 overflow and after-hours service calls at 172 dealerships identified nearly 70 percent of those callers as "swing loyalists." These customers represent 31 percent of all dealership service dollars and have a high propensity to become loyal customers. The data also showed that one fifth of those potentially missed calls were from dealership "loyalists" who represent 59 percent of dealership service dollars.

“The message of this data could not be clearer: dealers must have effective programs and processes for handling after hours and overflow calls or risk losing a large chunk of service revenue and critically valuable loyal customers,” says JoAnn Bedenbaugh, vice president and general manager of DMEautomotive’s Customer Interaction Center. “With the explosion of smartphone usage, the phone call has once again become an essential source of leads and communication with customers. In fact, phone leads are growing at a greater pace than Internet leads – and, as our data shows, represent some of a dealership’s highest value service opportunities. Unfortunately, those are the calls most likely to be missed.”

According to Mike Martinez, chief marketing officer at DMEautomotive, after-hours calls usually go unanswered, which drives those customers to seek out service at other locations. "The go someplace else," Martinez says. "The dealers are missing out on an opportunity to service a customer that is halfway in the can, but also halfway out of the can."

When customers call after hours, they typically either get a generic message indicating the dealership is closed, or they go into a general voicemail system. In most cases, they never get a response if they leave a message. Overflow calls occur during business hours, but those calls also wind up in voicemail.

While many dealer service departments have extended their hours into the evening, this doesn’t necessarily help. "Our study suggests that the problem is more systemic than just the available hours," Martinez says. "It's a retail operation, they are busy working with customers, so the phones go unanswered. These calls are often coming from mobile phones. The great untold story of mobile is that, while the customer is using a mobile app or website to search out the dealership, when they are ready to make a decision they make a call. Retailers need a way of handling these overflow and after hours calls."

According to DMEautomotive, having an overflow call service in place is a critical best practice. That way, every call is answered and handled, even if it is by someone not at the dealership. Martinez also recommends dealers have a call monitoring and recording service in place so that dealers can spot check how the calls are being handled by internal and external staff. All calls should be logged into the dealer management or customer relationship management (CRM) system.

"The companies that handle this well tend to be more toward the luxury segments, because those calls are valuable," Martinez says. "But frankly you could do this in every dealership in America and find ways to improve call handling."

For example, even if someone answers the phone in the service department, opportunities might be missed because the employee is in a hurry to tend to another task. "This has to go beyond seeing the caller's question as a yes/no opportunity, and uncovering their real need," Martinez says. "And many calls are not logged because people aren't by their desks when they are answering the phones."

Strong CRM processes, call recording and routing, and round-the-clock call centers are key to making sure these potential sales aren't missed. "It's a 24/7 world now, so if you don't have someone staffing those phones you are missing opportunities," Martinez says.

SearchAutoParts.com

Updating Dealers on CSA Tire Violations

by Al Cohn - May 13, 2015

Tires play a major role when it comes to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s Compliance, Safety and Accountability (CSA) program. The two fleet Safety Management System for CSA categories are: 1) vehicle maintenance and 2) hazardous material compliance. Tires fall under the vehicle maintenance category.

Violations associated with tires receive either a three- or eight-point penalty. Since tires fall under the vehicle maintenance category, there is an additional point penalty assessed on anything in this maintenance category. So, what is considered an eight-point penalty?

- Flat tire
- Fabric exposed
- Belt material exposed
- Tread or sidewall separation
- Audible air leak
- Cut exposing ply and/or belt material
- Tread depth less than 4/32-inch for steer tires
- Tread depth less than 2/32-inch for drive, trailer and dolly tires

The three-point tire penalties include:
- Tire exceeding weight rating listed on tire sidewall
- Weight carried exceeds tire load limit
- Tire underinflated

When a vehicle is inspected either at a weigh station or pulled over by the highway patrol and the officer finds an eight point tire violation, that vehicle is considered out of service. A good example is a flat tire. By definition of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), a flat tire is a tire that has a pressure less than 50% of the maximum pressure molded onto the tire sidewall. For a low profile 295/75R22.5 LR G, the maximum load when run as a dual configuration is 5675 lbs. at 120 psi. Therefore, if the measured tire pressure is 60 psi or lower, the tire is considered flat and the vehicle is put out of service. You are not allowed to even drive to the next truck stop to get the tire repaired and aired back up. An expensive roadside service call would be required to get the tire repaired. An average roadside service call is over two hours that can lead to additional time penalties associated with just-in-time delivery loads.
The most common CSA violation when it comes to tires are those that are measured to have less than the legal tread depth limit of either 4/32-inch or 2/32-inch. This has always surprised me since it is so easy to identify tires with low tread depth. A quick visual inspection during the morning mandatory vehicle walk-around should be able to pick out these low tread depth tires. The use of a simple tread depth gauge will determine if the tires that may appear to have low tread depth really are below the target 4/32-inch or 2/32-inch number.

Flat tires are the second most common tire related CSA violation. Today’s radial truck tire construction makes it difficult to look at a tire and determine if it has the correct amount of air pressure. Using a baseball bat or club may identify a tire with 0 psi, however, a tire pressure gauge is highly recommended to determine the actual tire air pressure. Even if the tire pressures were checked while the vehicle was parked at the yard, running over a nail 20 feet outside the gate can lead to a low tire pressure. This is why automatic tire inflation systems are so popular on trailers. Air is automatically added as the vehicle is running down the highway whenever the pressure drops below the system’s control box setting.

Until just recently, tire underinflation violations were also an issue fleets had to contend with. There was no definition of “underinflation” in any of the literature. In CVSA’s April 1 edition of the North American Standard Out-of-Service Criteria Handbook, a new regulatory update was posted. In order to have a violation for low tire inflation pressure, the inspector must have a load/inflation chart for the given tire size and load range. These load/inflation tables list the minimum tire pressure for a complete range of loads.

Under the old guidelines, a tire may have a max pressure molded onto the tire sidewall of 120 psi and the fleet could be running, for example, 85 psi in their trailer tires. An inspector could have given a three-point underinflation penalty. With no clear definition of underinflation, he could have made the decision 85 psi was too low. With the new regulatory update, if the loads were relatively light, 85 psi would be more than acceptable to carry the load based on these load/inflation tables. You can review these load/inflation tables for all tire sizes at any of the tire manufacturer's website.

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October 13-14, 2015
Chelsea Tire Pros, Chelsea, AL

I. WAYS TO REGISTER

MAIL	PHONE	FAX	EMAIL
Alabama Tire Dealers Association 6096 County Road 434 Trinity, AL 35673	256-616-3587	256-974-1480	alatiredealers@cs.com

II. ATTENDEE INFORMATION

Name ______________________ **Nickname** ______________________

Company ______________________ **Title** ______________________

Address ____

City ______________________ **State** __________ **Zip** __________

Phone ______________________ **Fax** ______________________

E-mail ____

ATDA provides lunch each day. Please note any special dietary considerations: __________

____

III. CLASS TUITION

ATDA MEMBERS:

Tuition Amount ……………………………….. $200

Successful completion of this 2-day Program certifies the individual as an ATS Instructor with the credentials to certify ATS Technicians in the field.

NON-MEMBERS:

Tuition Amount ……………………………….. $450

Non-member tuition includes a 1-year membership to the ATDA for 2015 (a $250 value) plus admission to the ATS Training Course. Successful completion of this 2-day Program certifies the individual as an ATS Instructor with the credentials to certify ATS Technicians in the field.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Days 1 -2: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm Day 2 - Certification Testing: 5:30 pm – 8:30 pm

One week prior to the class, you will receive an email from ATDA that includes directions and other class related information. For questions, contact the ATDA Office at 256-616-3587.

IV. METHOD OF PAYMENT

❑ Check (Make payable to ATDA) ❑ Invoice me Amount Due: $ ______________

❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard ❑ AMEX

Credit Card Number ______________________ Expiration Date __________

V-Code __________ Billing Zip Code ______________

Card Holder Name ______________________ Signature ______________________

Why Smart Employers Care About Work/Life Balance

By The NonProfit Times - May 28, 2015

The line between "work" and "personal life" has become really blurred for most American workers. Due to evolving technology and an unforgiving economy, we're under constant pressure to perform.

The result?

Even when we're not at our desks, we're tethered to our devices. While we're helping kids with homework, we're also thinking about how to fine-tune that proposal. While we're watching TV, we're checking our email. And when we're on vacation — wait, what is a vacation again?

You might assume most employers would love this scenario. Don't bosses want their employees to be "on" 24/7? Not at all, according to Dr. Carmella Sebastian. Counterintuitive as it might seem, smart leaders know that when people have a healthy work/life balance they are better employees, period. And the smartest employers don't just pay lip service to this idea. They actually take steps to make it happen.

"As an employer, you're in the best position to help employees turn the chaos in their lives into balance," according to Carm, a Wellness Council of America (WELCOA)-certified expert in workplace wellness. At Florida Blue, she oversees the National Committee for Quality Assurance-accredited wellness program "Better You from Blue" and manages more than100 client consultations per year. "You're the one who will benefit from their increased productivity — and frankly, you might be the main reason their lives are out of balance in the first place," she said.

Very few employers overtly discourage vacations, "mental health days," and sane work schedules, Carm admitted. But still, it's also true that few take the initiative to make sure that their people are maintaining a healthy balance. In fact, the OECD Better Life Index, released yearly, concludes that the U.S. ranks 28th among advanced nations in the category of "work-life balance." That's just nine steps from the bottom. That's not too surprising; after all, going out on a limb and encouraging your people to stop working so hard is pretty scary!

Carm has to help your employees separate their work lives from their personal lives and enhance both in the process:

First, walk the walk yourself. If you're serious about helping your employees achieve a healthier work/life balance, you have to be willing to set the example. This isn't negotiable.

"If you want your people to unplug from their devices, take time for themselves, de-stress, and more, you can't be sending them emails at 10 p.m., frantically making requests of others on their way out the door, and constantly calling in while you're on vacation," according to Carm. "They'll follow your lead, not your suggestions. And have you ever considered that maybe improving your own work/life balance might make you a better leader?"

Encourage employees to take those unused vacation days. According to Expedia's 2013 Vacation Deprivation study, on average, Americans were given 14 vacation days but used only 10 of them. That's twice as many unused vacation days as the previous year. Let's not forget that this is paid time off we're talking about. So why do employees leave those four or sometimes more days on the table? In some cases, they're too busy. In others, they might feel that company culture discourages "too much" absence, or they might want to prove themselves indispensable. And, of course, some people are workaholics or simply forget to plan.

Specify that the beach is *not* a sandy office. No, you might not go as far as France, which recently passed a law specifying that workers in the digital and consulting industries must avoid email and switch off work phones before 9 a.m. and after 6 p.m. But it's still a good idea to encourage your people to back away from their devices when they're not at work.

Fair warning: This might be an uphill battle. According to Expedia, 67 percent of Americans stay connected to the office (checking voicemail and email) while on vacation.

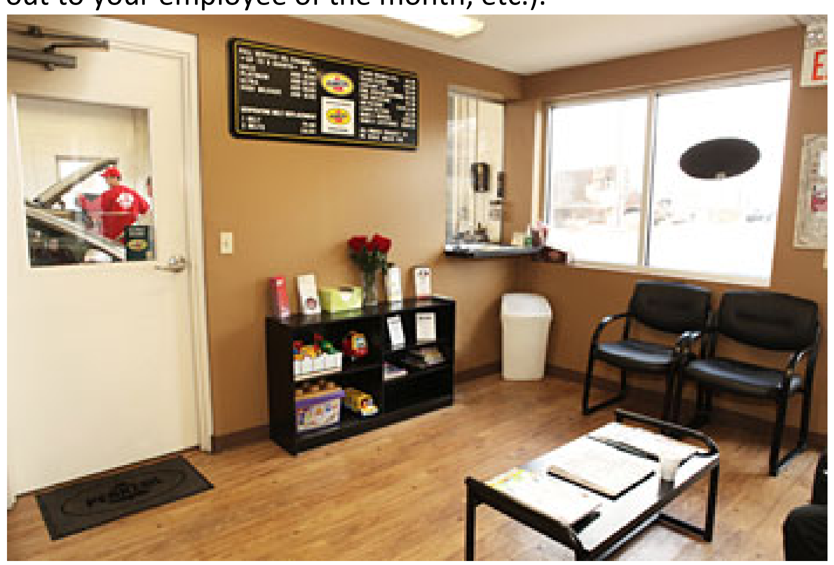
Teach time management. Often, employees remain tethered to their devices in the evenings and on weekends because they're worried

On the flip side, we also found success by publicly recognizing our customers. We would have a "customer of the month" whose picture was prominently featured in a place where other customers could see it in our waiting area. The program started when I asked a high-profile, regular customer of ours if I could take her photo and display it. Initially, we offered a free oil change or some other discount if a customer "made the wall," but after awhile, seeing their photos displayed became more important to customers than receiving a discount or perk.

We had customers wanting to be a "customer of the month," and it became a great way to garner buzz and connect our shop to the community.

So far, we've discussed marketing approaches for your waiting room that are subtle in nature and really focus on developing brand awareness and long-term relationships for your shop. If you decide you want to use your waiting room to also increase sales, technology can play an integral role.

If you can afford it and have the room, I highly recommend mounting a flat screen in your waiting room to display your marketing messages. Think of your flat screen as a roving billboard that you can easily customize thanks to a slew of user-friendly slide show applications. I suggest developing a 2 minute "slide show" that changes every six to eight weeks and includes a mix of offers, educational information and the occasional personal tidbit (team photos, a call-out to your employee of the month, etc.).



The educational information you feature should spur a dialog between customers and front counter staff. A list of frequently asked questions is a good place to start because it provides a way for you to address questions and include unique features about your shop. Maybe one of your defining characteristics is that you provide a warranty for all your work. That fact alone might lead a customer who delaying some major repairs to book the service with your shop because they know they're protected if anything goes wrong.

Another option is to tie your messages to seasonal events. Reminding customers about getting an A/C check before summer road trips or winterizing their cars in the fall can serve as strong calls to action. Remember to tailor the information you incorporate into your slide show to your market or specialty. So, if you're based in a college town your display might include safety tips and maintenance schedules – advice geared for younger, inexperienced drivers. If you're in a tourist town, you might consider offering guidance about the terrain and tips for driving in weather conditions common to your area.

The offers you include should also be customized for your market or niche. Oil changes are something everyone needs, but if your specialty is tires, then be sure to provide a promotion geared towards that product.

Lastly, don't forget to inject your presentation with items that help reinforce your brand identity. Posting testimonials from current customers or news about important employee milestones (weddings, significant work anniversaries) or local community events you sponsored helps build allegiance and trust among you and your customers.

Remember that marketing to your waiting room is a relatively inexpensive proposition and if you capture additional sales from one out of every five customers that visit your lobby, that's a meaningful return for a minimal investment.

Worth the wait

Engage customers in your waiting room to ensure long-term relationships

By: Mike Giblin Wednesday, August 5, 2015 - 07:00

Shop owners spend a lot of time and money trying to figure out how to grab the attention of potential customers. Yet, they often forget about the one place where they have a captive audience on an almost daily basis - their waiting room. Marketing to your waiting room offers the opportunity to drive additional sales, build your brand and foster long-term relationships.

The truth is, your waiting room already serves as a marketing platform whether you intended it to serve that purpose or not. Customers are making judgments about your operations and quality of service based on the first impression they get when they walk in the door. A tidy, welcoming lobby area staffed by friendly employees provides customers with a sense of comfort and confidence about your service and operation.

But imagine walking into a shop where the coffee looks like it was brewed three days ago, the magazines are strewn all over the furniture (which is torn and tattered) and the employees barely acknowledge you when you approach the front desk. There's a good chance you might walk right back out the door. If you stayed, you'd probably question whether the lack of attention in the waiting room was reflected in other parts of the operation.

Don't be that shop. Even if you have a small waiting area or try to limit the time customers are in the waiting area because your emphasis on speed of service, make sure your waiting area is clean, well-organized and that staff greet everyone who enters the shop.

Now, let's say you want to go a bit further in exploring your waiting room's potential as a marketing vehicle. If you're not ready for a full-court press, one easy first step is to use the space to educate customers about who you are and what you value. For example, you might consider posting information about your community involvement – whether in the form of a small banner listing the causes/charities you support or by posting certificates of appreciation or thank you notes you may have received for you sponsorship. It's also nice to display photos of your team engaged in community service projects. This approach shows customers that you care about the local community and gives them the opportunity to get to know you and your team in a different light.

Along that same vein, highlighting your employees in your waiting room is another way to develop a relationship with your customers and increase loyalty. If you have an employee of the month program, I suggest featuring that employee's photo and years of service somewhere in your waiting area. This a great way to better familiarize your customers with your staff and establish your shop as one willing to take the time to recognize and reward good work – a fact that should leave customers with the feeling that your employees have more motivation to do a good job.

Another method of creating credibility for your employees- particularly your technicians - is to display certifications or licenses that take a lot of work to achieve or hold special value in the industry. At my family's service station, we found that seeing these difficult to obtain industry distinctions was an immediate confidence builder for our customers and elevated the trust they had in our services.

about unfinished tasks and loose ends that might require their attention. While you might not be able to guarantee that your people can leave work at work every single day, you *can* help them gain the skills that will reduce their amount of "homework."

"Training on time management, prioritization, organization, the effective use of lists, and so forth can be surprisingly effective," Carm commented. "I can almost guarantee that all of your employees have unproductive work habits. By addressing them, you can help your team manage their workloads and be in a more comfortable place when it's time to go home each evening."

Teach stress management techniques, too. Unless you oversee an organization of ice cream tasters or mattress testers, there's no such thing as a stress-free workplace. That's not a bad thing; a small amount of anxiety keeps us alert and motivated. But too often, employees feel an unhealthy amount of stress that bleeds into and affects their personal lives, too. Believe it or not, stress costs American businesses around $300 billion each year. "Work-related stress contributes to health problems, absenteeism, burnout, and turnover," Carm points out. "If you offer a short workshop that teaches stress management techniques like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga, for instance, your employees will reap the benefits. And just knowing that you're concerned about their mental health will also lift a weight from their shoulders.

Help them understand the business cycle. As a leader, you know from years of experience that your business goes through (more or less) predictable seasons. For instance, September through December might be crunch time, but you know that after the new year things will be more relaxed. Just don't take for granted that your employees share this understanding!

"Educate your people, especially newer hires, about your company's natural business cycle," says Carm. "If things are hectic and overtime is mandatory, rookies might assume that it will *always* be like this and worry that they've bitten off more than they can chew. You can reduce their anxiety by pointing out that in a few weeks the pace will slow down. It's easier for people to push hard through crunch time if they know a lull is just around the corner."

Include exercise in the workday. Exercise is one of the most effective stress management tools available. It's also fantastic at increasing energy, improving focus, and boosting attitudes. And, of course, it's good for your health. Best of all, exercise can be both easy and inexpensive to integrate into the workday: Think lunchtime walks or even walking meetings (assuming your company has enough land to make it feasible). This is a great solution for employees who just can't find the time to stop at the gym in the midst of their hectic personal lives.

Be flexible on when and where work happens. Depending on your field, technological advances may mean that many employees are no longer tied to their desks. (And isn't that one of the reasons why our personal lives and professional lives have become so hopelessly enmeshed?) If possible, allow your employees to take advantage of being able to do work from their homes or from the coffee shop down the street.

"Unless it's absolutely necessary that someone be at a desk from 9 to 5, allow them to work from home, on their own schedule, from time to time," suggested Carm. "This will allow your employees to live their lives while also doing their work. Think about it this way: You don't want a payroll full of clock punchers—you want people who are self-directed goal achievers. That's the message that offering flex time sends."

Dare to get personal. On a regular basis, try to connect with your employees in a way that doesn't revolve around "shop talk." Ask about their kids, what they're planning to do over the weekend, and whether they watched the latest episode of *Mad Men*, for example.

"When you establish a personal connection with your employees, you'll have a finger on the pulse of what's going on in their lives and how it might be affecting them at work," points out Carm. "They'll also feel more comfortable coming to you with requests to attend an upcoming out-of-town wedding, a child's recital, or a relative's funeral. Working with employees so that they can attend to personal obligations without feeling guilty is a great way to gain their long-term loyalty."

Play hard to work hard. Work doesn't have to be all, well, work. That's why Carm suggests integrating "fun" activities in the workday once a week or so: office scavenger hunts, trivia, darts, hall putt-putt, bring-your-pet-to-work days, cookouts on a Friday afternoon, etc. Use your imagination, and if you're lacking ideas, ask your employees what they'd like to do.

The NonProfit Times
The Leading Business Publication For Nonprofit Management

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

"In the beginning, God…" Genesis 1:1

On Saturday, August 29 I attended a family reunion. This gathering was for family members of my father's grandfather, the late Luther Eugene Davis. He was the father of eight children, none of whom are still alive. Only a few of the grandchildren are still alive and several of them were unable to attend. I enjoyed looking at old pictures and visiting with relatives I seldom see. As I anticipated this reunion and later reflected upon it, my mind was drawn to this family's beginning. I am quite sure my great grandparents had no idea on their wedding day of the large offspring that would result.

Since creation, the earth and its population has seen vast changes. The threat of terrorism and nuclear attack threatens our existence as we know it. For many this threat is cause for great anxiety! The good news of the Bible is that different from my great grandfather, God, **who had no beginning**, knew exactly what would happen to the creation he "birthed". Not only that, God knew exactly what would have to be done to save it.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

GOD bless.
Dolan Davis Jr.
Chaplain ATDA
205-758-6624
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5 Affordable Employee Perks

by Tire Review Staff - June 1, 2015 TIRE REVIEW

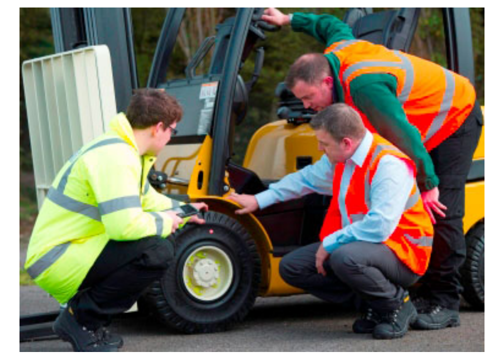
Studies say that employees who are happy tend to be more productive than those who aren't. Tire dealers looking to boost employee morale without breaking the bank should consider these five simple, inexpensive ways to give back to their employees:

- Recognize major life events, such as marriage or the birth or adoption of a child.
- Give employees a paid day off on their birthdays.
- Offer employees $100 a year for personal enrichment activities, such as classes or cultural events.
- Bring bagels or donuts to work one Friday a month.
- Offer recruitment bonuses to those who refer potential employees who stay with your company for at least six months.

TIA Releases Basic Industrial Tire Service Program

Bowie, Md. - The Tire Industry Association (TIA) announced the release of the new Basic Industrial Tire Service (ITS) Program. Basic ITS is a 200-level training and certificate program that is focused on pneumatic, solid resilient, press-on and polyurethane-filled tires used in industrial applications. Like all TIA training programs, it is comprised of difference modules and covers the service procedures for different types of tire and rim assemblies.

"With the completion and release of the ITS Program, TIA has a complete slate of technician training resources for our members. Industrial tires pose specific risks for employees, so there is a definite need for a training program that identifies the hazards and outlines the step-by-step procedures for servicing these assemblies," said Kevin Rohlwing, TIA Senior Vice President of Training.



Basic ITS is a training and certificate program, so technicians who successfully complete the final exam and skills demonstration will receive a TIA Certificate of Completion. The member price for the Basic ITS Kit is $295 ($600 non-member) and includes the Instructor's Guide, DVD and one student workbook. Student workbooks start at $55 each ($85 non-member) and additional tests are available for $30 each ($60 non-member). Basic ITS will also be available at TIA's Online University by the end of 2015.

For ordering information on Basic ITS and other technician training and certification programs, contact Christine Hoogenboom, TIA Director of Training at 800-876-8372, ext. 106 or choogenboom@tireindustry.org.

continued from page 17…

If you stop to think about it the person who cuts your hair has to be licensed. I am sure that in some way that has something to do with Sweeney Todd because really otherwise how bad can an accident cutting hair be? It grows back for crying out loud! I have concerns about enforcement because have you seen some of the haircuts people get from professionals? All kidding aside there are health concerns related to cutting hair that drive licensing.

The last I checked, working on a 2,500 to 8,000-pound people mover that can travel in more than 70 miles per hour with very little thought or skill required had some more serious health concerns over and above the pilot. From that perspective a world where the folks who work on cars do not have to prove their skills and knowledge really leans towards negligence.

So what are the upsides? For starters I would love to say to one of those guys who comes in telling me about the pearls of wisdom he received from some alleged expert, "Is your neighbor a licensed technician? No? Then I will be inclined to discount his skill set against my licensed, ASE Certified Master Technician. I hope you understand."

That may be a little pie in the sky but I think it does underline some opportunities to limit the input from people who are distractions to the process. While I am on ASE there is a real opportunity to partner with them to make a federal program that is consistent state to state. Some might argue that the ASE tests are too generic but unless you have taken a test like the L1 advanced diagnostic test and worked against the

"Composite Vehicle" it is hard to see that you are not testing a technician's knowledge of a particular vehicle. What you are really testing is their ability to work out problems and apply processes, and isn't this what you want in a guy who repairs the second biggest investment people have?

Would licensing limit the number of candidates coming out of trade schools? Maybe, but it seems likely that our industry might be forced to develop a quality mentorship program to assist technicians in preparing for the automotive equivalent of the bar exam. The more likely result would be more technicians staying in the industry, generating more revenue for their shops and of key importance, providing the legitimacy to a skilled trade in the eyes of parents and school councilors.

Licensing would also allow cities to verify the ability of the technicians and maybe shops operating in their area helping to avoid the guess and replace tactic that empties customer's bank accounts.

What about the shops? Should they be licensed too? Should there be requirements that say if you are going to work on a particular brand you should be tooled up and service ready to work on it? Would that provide a competitive edge against dealers or maybe a level playing field against the low price places that clearly do not meet the most basic standards?

Clearly this is a huge topic and there are many areas to consider. Let me know what you think. I will be happy to do a follow up with your thoughts.

What is the Ideal Waiting Room Temperature?

May 12, 2015

What temperature should your waiting area be? The answer to that question varies based on which of the four seasons of the year you are in and the outdoor temperature/humidity.

Winter Conditions

64 degrees F is acceptable winter waiting room temperature

Summer Conditions

For summer the values below may be used as an indiction of acceptable waiting room conditions.

68 to 71.6 degrees F is optimum Summer temperature

40% to 65% is optimum Summer humidity

Preferred indoor conditions for exposures less than 3 hours			
Outside Temp	Inside air conditions with dew point constant at 57.2 F		
°F	°F max	°F min	%
95.0	80.6	65.3	44%
89.6	78.8	64.4	46%
84.2	77.0	64.0	52%
80.6	75.2	63.5	51%
75.2	73.4	63.0	57%
69.8	71.6	62.6	57%

A temperature of 64 degrees in the winter is considered acceptable (by many engineering standards) but geographical location can impact this number. During summer, a range of 68 to 72 degrees will keep most of your customers comfortable. Consider installing a ceiling fan in your waiting room to increase your customers comfort level. If you have a drop ceiling, consider this fan, Dropfan iNV Suspended Ceiling Drop Grid Fan, that mounts into a 2 x 2 drop ceiling grid.

Remember, if your waiting room is too cold or too hot, your customers wait may seem longer to them than it actually is. Centrally locate an indoor thermometer to monitor the temperature. It's a good idea to place your thermometer in an area where only you can see it as your customers may have a different idea of what an "optimum temperature" should be.

DISCLOSURE: The information in the table used in this article is from: The Engineering Toolbox - Tools and Basic Information for Design, Engineering and Construction of Technical Applications www.engineeringtoolbox.com

Tip#194 - Seven Interesting Benefits of an Exceptional Customer Area

1. It attracts good customers
2. It repels bad customers
3. Customers are less likely to be rude or angry if things don't go perfectly
4. The pressure from waiters is greatly reduced and often disappears
5. Prices that allow for a reasonable profit are justified and expected
6. It says that you are better at diagnosis and repair
7. You feel better about yourself and your shop - you live there

Tip#195 - Customer Lounge Done Right

5 characteristics of an exceptional customer area:

- It has a consistent theme.
- It has a focal point.
- Less is best.
- Car service related things are subtle or not there at all.
- It is professionally designed - hire a pro.

Yes, it will take square footage - which most shops have one way or another if they are a bit creative. Yes, it will take money - and it may end up being the best "equipment / remodeling" ROI you've ever experienced.

The case for and against auto repair shop licensing

By: Donny Seyfer Wednesday, April 29, 2015 - 07:00

AFTERMARKET BUSINESS WORLD

As automotive professionals it never ceases to amaze me how much everyone else second-guesses us. I don't know about you but in my shop a missed diagnosis is a pretty rare thing. Rare enough that when it does happen there is considerable discussion about the impending end of the world as we know it. The facts are that humans work on cars, humans build cars and things are going to happen even in the very best environments.

But what about the truly bad environments? What is the percentage of missed diagnosis there? Do those shops have insurance? Do they even have a general license in their own city? Herein lies one of the key sources of the second-guessing.

Almost everyone has had a bad experience with a service provider that drove them to become an "expert" in the related field. Often that education comes from other "experts" like friends, family members, Internet bloggers or worse yet a repair shop or dealer who is not intimately familiar with the customer or vehicle.

Does this sound familiar? For those of us who work very hard on our craft these "experts" are a frustrating, counter-productive exercise that causes loss of sales, bad reviews or any number of other unwelcome problems. The worst part is that we are almost certainly doing the right thing by a customer but they are more willing to take the word of an invisible expert on an Internet blog who could very well be a 17 year old kid who has absolutely no training but is qualified as an expert by virtue of owning the particular model of vehicle.

So you know the scenario and I apologize if I dredged up some painful memory for you. The question is what can we do about this?

In many circles I travel through the idea of technician or shop licensing is the silver bullet. Before I start down that path I have to tell you that I have about a 70/30 split in my mind for licensing. Basically that means I am more for it than against it, but there are many considerations. So let's start with the anti-licensing ideas.

A wise friend of mine once told me that when you go into a government building where laws are made you can parade in on a thoroughbred and walk out with a zebra. No truer words were ever spoken.

We have seen the way bills can start out with a single purpose in mind and wind up barely serving their original purpose. Licensing is certainly going to involve fees because anything worth doing should generate funds to support its newly created or extended bureaucracy (insert sarcasm). There are many who will be concerned about some kind of a fine attached to forgetting that your license has expired or just the invasion of business that might occur. They are well founded as we have seen government programs that are staffed by folks who are not state of the art imposing rules on those who actually are state of the art.

There will have to be testing – more on that later because that really sits in the plus column for me. If this is not a federal program then what happens if a tech moves from state to state and while I am on that, should it be licensing techs, shops or both? Who sets the criteria? How does licensing affect current state regulations?

Golf Tournament

Alabama Tire Dealers Association

Tuesday, October 6, 2015

Lunch Included!

SWING *for* SCHOLARSHIPS
GOLF TOURNAMENT

All proceeds benefit the ATDA Scholarship Foundation

Where: Timberline Golf Club
300 Timberline Trail, Calera, AL 35040

When: Tuesday, October 6th
Lunch Included (Lunch served at 11:30)
1:00 pm Start

Fee: $150.00 per entry ($500.00 per team)
Includes 2 mulligans and 1 power drive per player

Hole Sponsorships: $100 (Includes Sign)

Mail entries to:
A.T.D.A.
6096 County Road 434

Registration

TEAM NAME:____

PLAYERS NAME ______________________ **Handicap/Avg. Score** __________

PLAYERS NAME ______________________ **Handicap/Avg. Score** __________

PLAYERS NAME ______________________ **Handicap/Avg. Score** __________

PLAYERS NAME ______________________ **Handicap/Avg. Score** __________

Mailing Address: ______________________________________

City ______________ **State** ________ **Zip** ________ **E-Mail** ______________

Phone ____________________ **Fax** ______________________

Entries must be received by September 22, 2015
Limited to first 20 paid Teams

For More Information Contact:
Mike Craft at 205-678-4944 or ATDA Office at 256-616-3587

Frequently Asked Wage and Hour Questions

WHD U.S. Wage and Hour Division

1. Does an employer have to give an employee rest breaks and meal periods? The federal regulations do not require rest or meal breaks. However, many states have adopted rest and meal break laws and as such, you need to check your state.

2. Is there a restriction on how many hours an employer can work an adult employee? No — the federal law allows an employer to work the employee as long as they want. The employer only has to make sure that the employee is paid at least minimum wage (or the promised wages) and overtime.

3. Can an employer pay someone a salary and not have to worry about overtime pay? No. If an employee is exempt from the overtime regulations, then the answer is yes. However, just putting an employee on a salary does not necessarily mean that employee/position is not due overtime pay.

4. I am an hourly employee and I am paid every two (2) weeks. Does my employer figure my overtime pay after 80 hours? No, overtime is based on each individual workweek (a workweek is a 7-day consecutive period as defined by the employer).

5. Does a part-time employee have to be paid overtime? Yes — any employee who works over 40 is due overtime.

6. Can my employer require that I work overtime? Yes, the employer can require that you work overtime even if it was not scheduled.

7. Can I give comp time to my employees instead of paying them time and one-half (150%) overtime pay? No. A business in the private sector cannot give comp time in lieu of overtime. However, in the public sector this practice is allowed.

8. Do the hours that I am paid while I'm out on a holiday or vacation have to be counted when my employer figures overtime pay? No — only actual hours worked are counted when figuring total hours for overtime purposes. Thus, an employee can work 40 hours plus one (1) 8-hour holiday and be paid 48 hours at straight time.

9. Does my employer have to pay me time and one-half (150%) if I work on a holiday or on the weekend? No, from a federal law standpoint. However, some states require premium pay for holidays and weekends.

10. What are the legal holidays that my employer has to observe? None — there is no such thing as required legal holidays that employers have to observe.

11. Can an employer pay its employees by direct deposit and make this a condition of employment? Yes, on a federal basis. However, check your state as state laws vary.

12. When I separate from a job does my employer have to pay me within 24 hours? No, from a federal standpoint. However, check your state laws as states vary regarding final paychecks.

13. Does an employer have to give its employees vacation time off with pay? No – vacation is a wage benefit which is provided at the discretion of the employer.

14. I am an hourly-paid employee, does my employer have to pay me for jury duty? No, from a federal Wage and Hour standpoint. Check your state laws as state laws vary regarding jury duty pay.

15. Can my employer require me to take a drug test? Yes – an employer can require than an applicant or an employee submit to a drug test as a condition of hiring or of continued employment within established policy.

There is a significant amount of misunderstanding and misconceptions within federal Wage and Hour guidelines regarding pay, overtime and fringe benefits. Education and training of managers and employees alike will help reduce internal questions/morale issues as well as potential complaints to a federal or state Department of Labor office.

How the Buy Local Movement Works for Your Independent Tire Dealership

by Tire Review Staff - May 12, 2015
Editor's Note: This article was written by Bill Brunelle, co-founder of Independent We Stand.

TIRE REVIEW

Bill Brunelle, co-founder of Independent We Stand

If you've ever seen a 'buy local' bumper sticker or stopped at the local farmers' market on a Saturday morning, then you've seen the buy local movement at work. Through business alliances, local chambers of commerce and community events, the movement encourages consumers to support locally-owned, independent businesses because of the unique and rewarding benefits they have to offer. It's a growing movement that's making a difference in the minds of consumers and in the pockets of small business owners nationwide – but it's up to you to make it work for your business.

The buy local movement promotes the idea that small businesses make better communities. Our communities are inevitably weakened by natural disasters, national economic crises and government gridlock at all levels, but small businesses are the key to making them strong again. According to Civic Economics and the American Booksellers Association, small businesses return more than three times as much money per dollar of sales to the community than national chains. They also create high-quality jobs for members of the community and give back to local causes.

Buy local groups, like Independent We Stand, the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) and the American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA), raise awareness of the buy local movement on a national level and help individual businesses to leverage the movement in their communities. They do this by providing marketing materials, research and networking opportunities for small business owners. They generate buzz about the buy local movement online and they help small businesses celebrate their independence with campaigns like Small Business Saturday and National Small Business Week.

This work translates to real results for the members of buy local groups. First, the buy local movement has transformed the way consumers make buying decisions. For example, 94% of U.S. consumers say that shopping at small businesses makes them "feel good," according to the 2014 Small Business Saturday Consumer Insights Survey. The same survey revealed that two-thirds of consumers say they patronize small businesses mainly because they value the contributions that they make to their communities. The buy local movement has made consumers aware of the benefits of shopping small, and consumers have responded by showing their support.

Second, buy local groups have helped divert consumer spending to small businesses and away from national chains. As consumers become more aware of the benefits of buying local, they increasingly choose to spend their money at small businesses rather than at big box stores.

Buy local groups also advise their members on how to engage with new and existing customers online, in the community and at the point-of-sale. According to the 2015 Independent Business Survey by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and Advocates for Independent Business, small businesses located in a community with an active buy local initiative saw an average increase in sales of 9.3% throughout 2014. Meanwhile, small businesses located elsewhere saw an average increase of just 4.9%. That's clear and measureable progress as a result of cooperation among small businesses and buy local groups.

What's more, support for the buy local movement grows every day – even among big brands. Tire Pros, a franchise division of American Tire Distributors and the nation's largest network of elite, independent tire dealers, is the latest to join the Independent We Stand sponsorship team, enabling their independently-owned dealers to reap the rewards of joining a buy local group. In 2013, Tire Pros launched its "Feel Good, Buy Local" campaign that continues to position it as the premier group of independent and family-owned tire stores with the same national products at competitive pricing, warranties and other services as the big box retailers, but with the approachable and friendly customer service of the local independent.

Feel Good, BUY LOCAL

"Tire Pros has always been committed to the independent tire dealer, and our sole purpose is to help them become more profitable. One way we are doing this is through marketing branding initiatives where we can tell our story," said Quick Chadwick, marketing director for Tire Pros. "We strongly believe that our elite independent dealer network provides a better retail experience for customers and a more sound economy for the communities because Tire Pros dealers are dedicated to investing in them. That's a big part of the story we want to tell, and our partnership with Independent We Stand is helping us do that."

Brands like Tire Pros and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles drive the buy local movement forward by supporting their independently owned dealers and contributing to a movement that aligns with their values.

For stronger communities, more resilient local economies, and more charming Main Streets, the buy local movement is a must. The buy local movement works for small businesses so that small businesses may work for the community. To make the buy local movement work for your business, join a buy local group like Independent We Stand and start spreading the word about the importance and strong economic benefits that your business brings to the local community.

Bill Brunelle is the co-founder of Independent We Stand and has spent more than 25 years helping small local businesses. Independent We Stand is sponsored by STIHL, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, PPG Pittsburgh Paints and Tire Pros.

WHY CERTIFY?

CERTIFIED TIA TIRE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION TIRE SERVICE

Alabama Tire Dealers Association "The Tire Professionals"

TIA Certification reduces liability exposure because technicians must demonstrate proficiency in both the classroom and the shop.

TIA Certified Instructors are qualified to train and certify technicians back at your company which allows you to standardize training by establishing consistency and quality control in every location and with every technician.

An educated workforce results in higher productivity and happier customers.

Next ATS Training Class:
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