



Shop Consultant Cecil Bullard tells ASSCA members how to succeed in any economy

"There isn't any magic solution to success in this business," Bullard said. "The secrets to flourishing in the automotive service industry are not complicated; they involve practicing sound business principles, consistent smart work, a little luck, and a clear vision. It used to be that just working hard was enough, but that's not the case anymore."

Bullard has 27 years of experience working in the aftermarket automotive repair industry and has owned and managed several successful automotive repair businesses, he said. He is a speaker approved by the Automotive Management Institute (AMI), and all of the ASSCA shop owners and managers in attendance received credit from the institute for their participation in the seminar.

Bullard is an expert in tracking and understanding key business numbers that affect shops and using them to diagnose and improve business. He is also an expert in designing and implementing systems and processes for the aftermarket automotive repair industry.

Bullard said his seminar helps shop owners focus on business principles that will allow them to increase revenues, such as pricing, markup, and profit margins.

He said he is shocked when he sees many shops being poorly managed, thereby setting themselves up for failure.

"I've probably been in more than 1,000 independent repair shops in the last three years," he said, "And most of them are poorly managed. They don't have set goals or the systems to meet those goals."

Many shops don't change their business model fast enough when car counts go down, Bullard said. "There are basically three ways to make money when business lags," he said. "You can sell more work, raise your prices, or bring in more cars."

Bullard's method for increasing sales during a rocky recession is to set goals, know precisely what your numbers need to be in order to make money, and to help your employees consistently meet the goals you've set for them, he said.

"It's an ongoing battle, but if you're systematic and proactive about it, you'll see the results almost immediately," Bullard said. "You have to stay on top of absolutely everything, from your marketing, to your labor and parts costs, to the amount of your average repair order," he said.

"Are your techs finding the right amount of work on every vehicle that comes into your shop? And then, are your service guys selling that work? You can't ask the right questions if you don't know all the accurate numbers," Bullard said.

