

Self Discipline – Your Key to Success

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If there is one focus that can truly affect every aspect of your career and determine whether you'll be successful or mediocre in business, as well as life, it's this: Self Discipline. "For what is each day but a series of choices between the right way, and the easy way." I remember reading that somewhere years ago, and there's a lot of meaning in it. Chances are if you're reading this, you're tasked with managing others. You may have arrived at this position by strong performance, or by necessity when your superior was promoted or moved elsewhere. Or, perhaps you've proven yourself in other ways and were offered a position of management as a means of retaining you within the organization. Management and leadership of others is no easy task, employee attitudes and ambitions change on a whim. Events in their personal lives often dictate the type of performance they bring to their work, and consistency is often a difficult thing to master.

Before you fly off acquiring books and blogs on how to effectively keep your flock in line, consider this: How well are you managing your own life and job description? What are your priorities, what do you hold sacred, what processes and habits do you follow daily to effectively manage yourself and your personal productivity? And while this may seem off topic on the surface, consider also what you are eating and drinking during the day. Yes, I know, it's not easy to fit in a good lunch or healthy snack in our busy world. Not easy doesn't mean not possible though. And fast food and soda's, while convenient, are not the type of foods that fuel long term success. Throw some more vegetables down your neck and lay off the processed foods and pizza. I know that may not sound enjoyable, but I also know you'll be more energetic and your brain will operate more efficiently if you oblige. Are you willing to spend a few minutes at night or in the morning prepping your meals now, to acquire much greater success and happiness in the future? To me it's a no brainer. I want to feel good and achieve the most I possibly can with my life.

When month after month you put off enacting successful habits and processes with your team, because it's too difficult, or they just won't stick with it, or you can't find time, what are you committing to? When you don't spend the time mentoring and training your teammates, leading by example and holding them accountable to the plan, what are you committing to? I can tell you what you're not committing to, a bright future. You're not committing to success. Are you keeping key performance benchmarks and sales numbers in front of your team every single day? Are you focused on their goals and your own, and communicating continually about where you are and where you're heading? There are countless distractions in the dealership

each day. Problems that need immediate attention, manufacturers that are continually changing the rules of the game, employees who are absent that you need to help fill in for. This is a daily reality, and as a result, you're going to have to deploy your most effective weapons to win the battle on eventual mediocrity. The nice thing is that they don't cost much, and you've got them inside you already. What are they? Again, they are willpower and self-discipline. If you've sat down and made goals to yourself, or to your dealer principle, and you're not working an effective plan each day that will position you to reach them, you've not committed to yourself and your future. If you fail to hold yourself accountable to your own daily self-disciplines, you will likely fail to meet the long-term expectations of your superiors, and more importantly, the expectations and desires of your customers. If you struggle with this, and many of us do, take that as a clear indicator that partnering with a company that can help you design and implement your goals, and achieve your benchmarks is money well spent. The return on investment with a reputable training and process implementation company can literally be exponential. There are some simple ways however, that you can get yourself and your team on the right track, heading for a future of success on your own. Start with creating a list of the things that you need to stay consistent and disciplined with. I know, that sounds like something you've heard a thousand times doesn't it. If it sounds like a waste of time, then working on the disciplines of optimism and positivity could also be helpful for you! What should you put on your list though? Well, there are many things that make up a good leader in the dealership environment, here are just a few of the basics:

- Tracking key performance benchmarks and keeping them in front of your team often

- Identifying new ways to attract new traffic and retain your current customer base

- Coaching and hands on mentoring with your service and parts front lines on how to increase customer satisfaction while also improving your stores bottom line

- Creating a culture that is optimistic and growth oriented, where each member of the team's opinions and ideas are not just valued, but asked for and considered routinely (BONUS, this is a major contributor to employee retention)

- Managing each process you utilize, and not only holding your team accountable to using them every car every time, but continually evolving them to be the most effective based upon changing market conditions and manufacturer requirements

If you're thinking some of these areas could possibly benefit from some attention, but you're not sure where to start, read through this list one more time and ask yourself this question: Which one of these listed topics gave you the largest sense of dread? Which was the one you least want to work on in your store today? You've now got your answer. That is where you start. Get the ball rolling on the one that sounds the worst, it's probably the area that needs the most attention.

There are a lot of ways to spend your time during the day, and there are so many tasks that "need" to be done, that it's always possible to give yourself the excuse that *"well, I do really need to get some of this policy paperwork out of the way, and respond to these emails, and check out the automotive professionals group I'm in on social media to see if there are any great new ideas or products that could benefit our store, etc."* You'll never run out of things to do with your time that you can justify as work. You will, however, eventually run out of time to deploy the right systems and plans of action that will enable you to create long term success for yourself and your team. If you don't make it happen, you know that eventually you could be replaced by someone else who claims they will. Make the list.

Next, write or type out what you've committed to doing. Thinking it is one thing, writing it down turns on another part of your brain and aids you in your mission to succeed. It also helps prevent you from forgetting about it 30 minutes after you read this article when you inevitably need to react to that upset customer that wasn't on your calendar.

Once you've got your commitments written down, you need to share them with your team. Not just so that they are on the same page with the changes you want to make, and the goals that you have, but to have another element of accountability for yourself. You may think that doing this will make you look weak or incompetent, as your chosen topic is likely to be an area that truly needs a tune-up and you may not have excelled at in the past. I can tell you though, that nine times out of ten, your team will respect you more for acknowledging the area of weakness and the commitment to strengthening it for the greater good of all of you. If you make them part of the process, they'll rally with you as well as help keep you accountable. The final step is to map out the time to make these changes happen. Often the time needed is less than you'd imagine. To keep your team up to speed on their benchmarks and goals requires running a couple reports on your DMS that are probably already created, or could be quickly, and then bringing in your team for 5 minutes each morning and going over them. Ask them what's holding them back from reaching these goals, ask how you can help. Give praise to those who are meeting their goals, let them know how much you value them. Praise is free, and often neglected. Trust me, they won't quit pushing just because you told them they're doing a great job. To teach them to be more effective with their appointments, you could have them spend 10 or 15 minutes each evening going over the next day's scheduled visits, looking at the history of each vehicle and analyzing what may have been recommended or needed in the past, while also verifying that any special-order parts required for their visit are on hand and available. I know it sounds simple, but I'm willing to bet not all of your advisors are doing it. To give your customers a more consistent experience no matter which advisor they visit with and improve your CSI, you can spend a little time making sure they are presenting a service menu and doing a relationship building walk around with every car that pulls into the drive. These last two are high up on the list of simplest and cheapest ways to make friends and money, and two of the most neglected of all processes in the industry. It baffles me, but also offers myself and my team something to teach and help implement with our partners to make a major impact on

their profitability in no time at all. We'll even design them both for you and your unique situation.

Chances are, you know the areas in your life, and your business that you need to have more self-discipline with. Subconsciously we typically do, and we are usually avoiding those things because they are out of our comfort zone. As I mentioned earlier though, when you fail to commit to stepping out of your comfort zone and holding yourself accountable, you are negatively impacting your current and future success and job security. The biggest thing standing between you and your dreams, is your self-discipline. Start with the worst, confront it, and be amazed at how it will propel you onto the next item on your list. And more importantly, be pleasantly surprised at how it will change your future, and the future of your team for the better. Whether you can pull it off on your own, or you partner with an organization that will commit to helping you achieve the goals you desire, the result will be the same. You'll be looked up to as an influencer and an effective leader, and you'll feel proud and accomplished.