

Halfords Autocentres and ATA (Automotive Technician Accreditation)

The Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) commissioned the University of Leicester to undertake a study of the return on investment (ROI) from ATA at Halfords Autocentres Ltd. . The study focused upon ATA-LV (Light Vehicle) for the role of Service and Repair Technician.

ATA is the first national voluntary accreditation scheme for individuals working in the automotive sector. ATA-LV proves current technical competence, giving reassurance to customers as well as raising the professional status and credibility of skilled individuals and their businesses. It is open to individuals working in both franchised and independent businesses and is backed by all major vehicle manufacturers, independent service and repair organisations, as well as consumer groups.

Halfords acquired Nationwide Autocentres in 2010. Nationwide Autocentres had introduced ATA Light Vehicle back in June 2005, the year ATA was launched by the IMI. ATA was quickly adopted by the company with a view to not only acknowledging the competency levels of technicians who were successful in the assessments, but also to providing a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) towards achieving ATA recognition for those who were not.

ATA and the Technician

Employee retention is much higher amongst ‘accredited’ technicians compared to their non-ATA counterparts. The average length of service is 6 and 2.5 years respectively.

Using 2008, 2009 and 2010 as our metric, the retention savings emanating from the technician population with ATA compared to those without it, were £487k, £382k and £315k respectively.

An anecdotal survey was conducted covering 5 sites with Technicians and Managers selected at random at each location. The survey showed clear benefits of ATA to technicians, customers, the business and the motor industry (NB. the survey was anonymous).



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ATA and Halfords Autocentre Management

Productivity for accredited technicians was, on average, higher than for their non-accredited counterparts.

Each technician has a weekly gross profit productivity target. The average gross profit as a percentage of targets in 2010 was 7% greater for technicians with ATA compared to those without the accreditation.

In 2010 technicians with ATA generated, on average, a dividend of £81 per week – this equated to £3,600 at year end.

Productivity dividends for 2008, 2009 and 2010 were £1,551k, £554k and £727k respectively.

Combining productivity and retention savings against fully loaded costs, gives ROIs of 233%, 82% and 145% respectively – taking an average over the over the 3 year period, the ROI is an impressive 153%.

In 2008 for example, for every £1 invested in ATA, there was a return of over £3 to Halfords Autocentres (then Nationwide Autocentres).

Anecdotal Evidence

Quotes from Vehicle Technicians:

‘With an ATA card, you have to be of a certain level to be doing your job. You have to know what you’re doing.’

‘ATA is all about people who know what they’re doing and you can trust when they’re working on your car.’

‘... it’s another way to prove your level. The reputation of our industry has made it hard to build trust with customers. ATA helps us to prove that we are working well and are trustworthy.’

Quotes from Managers:

‘They [the technicians] have a lot more confidence in their job role. Increased output to a higher standard and consequently better profit and earnings for all concerned.’

‘Any form of accreditation identifies the individual benchmark. It benefits all disciplines and is beneficial to the customer too. It is still important to monitor even those who have attained it but the benefit is that it has a subconscious effect on how our people work.’

‘Cars on the road are better repaired – gives more confidence to the consumer in our industry.’

‘More accurate work – lowering costs. More competence and a better delivered service through better explanation to the customer.’

For more information about accreditation, visit:
www.automotivetechician.org.uk



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