

# Education is On Our Mind

by Emily Schmitt



As anyone in the quick lube industry can attest, this industry is changing, and it's changing fast. One way to stay ahead of these changes is to attend continuing education courses. The Automotive Oil Change Association (AOCA) assists quick lube owners and managers in this area by offering its AOCA Management Certification Course.

The AOCA Management Certification Course provides participants with the knowledge and tools to hone skills in organizing, planning, staffing, leading and controlling for the purpose of accomplishing a goal. It is geared toward everyone from quick lube owners to up-and-coming managers. It is also beneficial to those working in sales and distribution. The class is open to both AOCA members and non-members.

The next class is scheduled for April 28-29 in Indianapolis, Indiana. It will be taught by Kevin Davis, former AOCA board member and owner of Fast Change Lube & Oil, which has 21 locations throughout the South. Davis felt compelled to assist with the course after attending one in 2007.

"It is a great course in which I have a great passion for. I attribute a lot of the success of my business to the knowledge and resources I attained while attending the course. It's easy to sell something you're sold on," Davis said.

The class covers topics that owners and managers need to know. It builds a good foundation for new managers, and all participants will take home a CD filled with resources to implement the topics covered during class.

The following are just some of the topics covered in the AOCA Management Certification Course:

- Leadership, including the eight steps to becoming an effective leader
- How to attract and retain quality customers and understanding customers' perception of service
- Financial management, with emphasis placed on how managers can use the profit-

and-loss statement and a tutorial on how to determine the true cost of a damage claim

- Safety and OSHA standards, such as reporting requirements, lube center safety requirements and OSHA inspection requirements
- How to attract and retain quality employees, including an outline for conducting a quality interview
- Regulatory compliance, including proper waste disposal and the importance of having a Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure plan

The management course was revised last fall to ensure it is in line with current business practices. For example, the management course revision team added new steps to handling customer claims as well as more tips on how to satisfactorily resolve a complaint.

While there have been new topics added to the management course, other topics may be new to attendees simply because they have yet to learn about them. One of these topics is Superfund liability.

Superfund is a government-run program meant to clean up hazardous waste sites. Under this program, certain parties, including quick lube owners, can be held liable for contributing to these waste sites. Attendees of this course will learn more about this liability, as well as the service station dealers exemption. Davis said other regulatory topics, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) Rule and OSHA requirements, are new to many attendees of this class.

"It's amazing to me that, as many times as I've taught this, when I ask the class if anyone knows what SPCC is, most people who have been in the business for years still don't know what it is," Davis said. "Most people also don't know what the OSHA form posting requirements are, even though they are regulatory processes they must follow."

There are other benefits to attending the management course. For example, participants attain credibility by showing they have third-party, industry-leading certification. Networking is another benefit. Attendees will have opportunities to learn from and discuss best practices with other participants in the classroom.

"Every time I instruct a course, I come home with an idea from someone who was in the classroom, either through networking or just because they shared the idea with the group," Davis said.

Beyond attending this management course, quick lube owners can gain value in seeking continuing education opportunities for themselves and their staff – a point that is particularly true in the quick lube industry. Considering all that has occurred recently – a fledgling economy, extended drain intervals and the increase of oil changes offered with warranties, to name a few – quick lube owners and managers must be careful to stay on top of these changes, and continuing education can help.

"I've read that successful people are learners," Davis said. "In this industry, if you don't stay on top of it, you're going to get left behind or you're going to get out," Davis said.

AOCA Management Certification Course attendees will also learn best practices for implementing a training program – even taking home some resources to allow them to do this – so they can extend this benefit of continuing education to their own staff.

Continuing education is important for all quick lube owners and managers to stay on top of industry changes. AOCA makes it easy for them to do this with its Management Certification Course. To learn more about the course, or to register, please visit: [www.aoca.org](http://www.aoca.org) ♦

*EMILY SCHMITT is editor at the Automotive Oil Change Association. For more information on membership in AOCA, call 800.230.0702 or visit: [www.aoca.org](http://www.aoca.org)*