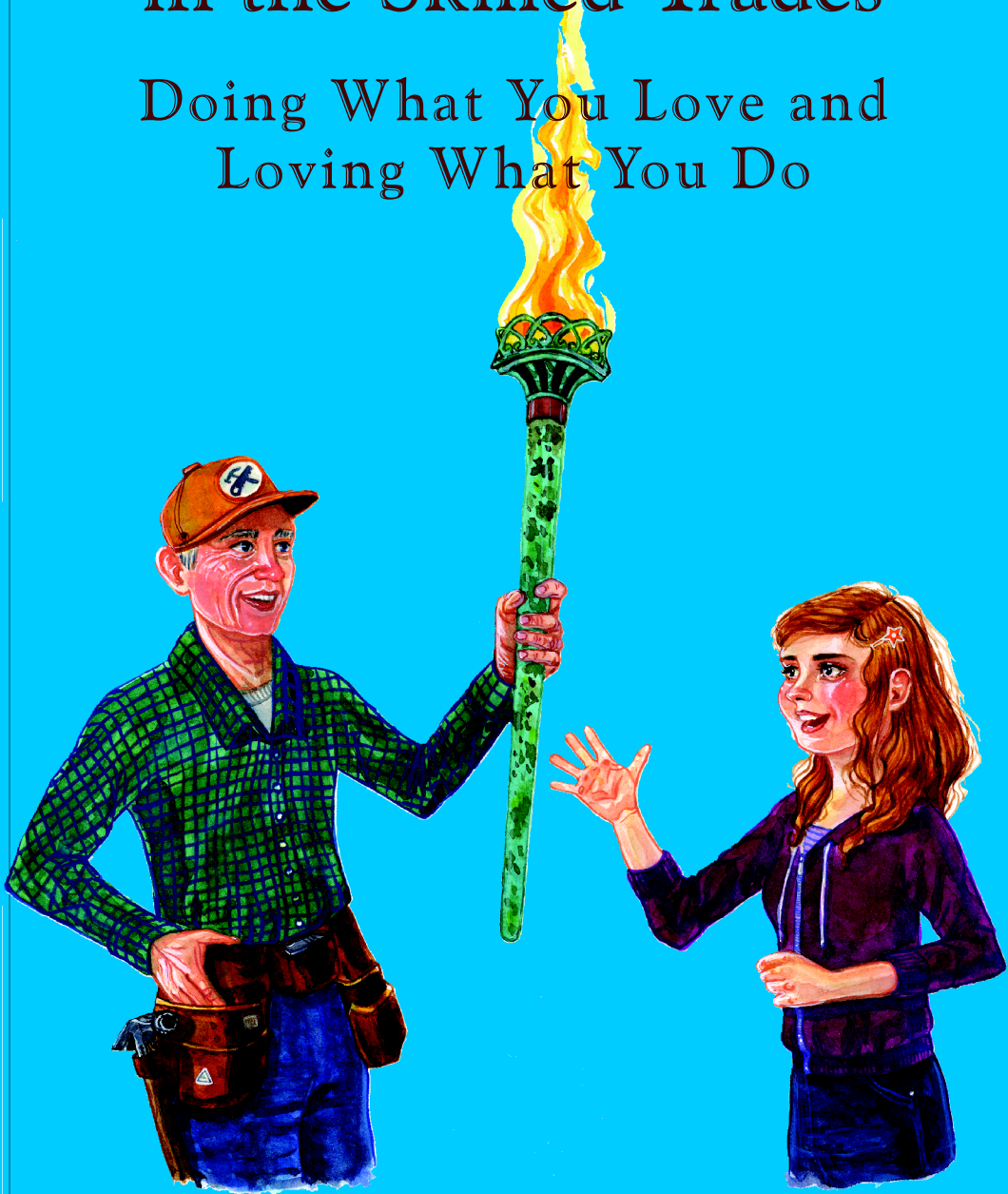


Inspirational Stories and Guidance About Work in the Skilled Trades

Doing What You Love and
Loving What You Do



Written By: Peter Tassi and Leo Paone

PREFACE

Early in my career, it became evident that there were a great many opportunities in the trades for our young people. I also recognized the great passion many of our young people had for the trades. However, because they were often ‘steered’ in another direction by societal pressures, it became my mission to do all that I could to cultivate the trades as viable options for our young people.

Peter Tassi and I wrote this book, “Doing What You Love and Loving What You Do,” with the goal of helping our young people understand the great value of trades, and the opportunities they offer. With the assistance of real-life inspirational stories, we hope to provide students with the necessary encouragement they need to pursue their skills and passions in the trades. The book also illustrates that the trades present a compelling and rewarding challenge to students.

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In addition to stories from former apprenticeship students, we offer the insight and advice from employers, managers, proprietors and human resource personnel to help young apprentices succeed in the competitive world of employment. The book also contains tips from successful business owners who were kind enough to reveal their secrets to success. Many apprentices dream, one day, of owning their own businesses, and this book provides them with valuable advice and ‘formulas’ that business people have used to create their own success.

Lastly, by providing valuable insight and real-life stories, this book is an excellent resource for students, apprentices, parents and teachers—in both high school and college.

Leo Paone

Introduction

A Change in Attitude Towards Apprenticeships and the Skilled Trades

The Skilled Trades are a key foundation in our society. Whenever we need something built, repaired or serviced, we call upon skilled tradespeople to complete the work. Unfortunately, unless attitudes change in the near future, we will be facing severe shortages in skilled tradespeople in just a few years. This presents both a ‘wake up call’ for society, and an opportunity for students to enter apprenticeships and move into careers that offer job satisfaction and good wages.

Apprenticeships provide a ‘hands-on’ training arrangement for students wishing to become skilled tradespeople. With 85 to 90 percent of the training occurring on-site at workplaces, the partnership benefits both apprentices and employers. Unlike the situation that existed in the past, Ontario now has many opportunities and programs to facilitate and promote a productive relationship between employers, educational facilities, and apprentices. There has never been a better time to enter into apprenticeship than now.

Despite their great importance, skilled trades have not always received as much recognition as they deserve. In many ways, society has ‘looked down’ upon the skilled trades. Instead of properly recognizing the valuable contributions they make to communities, we have devalued their importance. While there is a great need for more people in the skilled trades, many students, and their parents, still perceive a university education as more suitable to their career goals. This attitude has become so pervasive, that the trades are often ignored entirely when parents and students plan for their futures. For many, a career in the trades is not even considered as an option for young students.

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Societal forces cause many students to conclude that university is the only path to happiness and success. The tragedy here is twofold. First, the majority of students will not attend post secondary institutions immediately upon graduating from high school. This means lost time, lost opportunity, and a generally frustrating experience. While they often leave high school feeling that they are ill-suited for a university education, they are not sure what other path to choose. At the same time, they are unaware of the many other excellent career options that are open to them—especially in the skilled trades. The result is that there are far too many students leaving high school with poor self-esteem, insufficient skills, and no viable career goals.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, many students conclude that only university and the “professions” are the paths to happiness and success. By failing, or avoiding entrance on that path, they often leave school with a poor self image. This can lead to wasted time and effort, and can produce apathy towards further career development.

Our society is clearly in need of a change in attitude. We need to promote the idea that a career as a skilled tradesperson is desirable, challenging, fulfilling and financially-rewarding. Moreover, parents and educators must begin to teach our children, from the earliest ages, that all work is dignified and noble. In spite of the differences that exist in the nature of careers, we need to let our children know that, just as all people are equal in value, all work has equivalent value.

Chapter 1

Girls Can Fix Cars Too

Brittany Dilks

Brittany remembers she was often treated unfairly by some of the male technicians on the garage floor, but that the service manager would always defend her. He told the guys that they needed to treat her as an equal. Nevertheless, many of the guys would tease her, and relegate her to cleanup jobs instead of allowing her to work on the cars. While it is the job of any Cooperative Education student to do much of the ‘dirty work’, Brittany felt it was a bit excessive.

The treatment from some of the men in the shop bothered Brittany in the beginning. [Fortunately,] she decided that she wouldn’t let the men ‘keep her down’, and she began working even harder to prove that she was deserving of their respect. Her positive attitude and stoicism earned her the admiration of both the management at the dealership, and her school instructors. Eventually, Brittany won over the respect of the men in the shop. In fact, the mechanic that teased her the most became her greatest supporter. He invited her to go to car races with him, and began treating her as an equal. He also provided her with a strong job reference when the summer Cooperative Education placement ended.

When Brittany returned in the second semester for another Cooperative Education work placement, the people there were happy to see her back. This time however, she was registered as an apprentice through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), which meant that all the hours she worked would count towards her apprenticeship.

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Brittany participated in the Accelerated OYAP in the Automotive Service Technician Program at Mohawk. Her dedication and hard work

earned her more credits than required. There were only two women in the program, and the other woman left before completion. That left Brittany alone with 68 male students.

Brittany finished first place in her graduating class. She speaks highly of the instructors at Mohawk, who treated her with respect, and as an equal. The male students at Mohawk thought it was cool that a woman wanted to be a mechanic. Consequently, they also treated her as an equal.

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Brittany was a presenter at the Tech 2006 and the Tech 2009 conferences. When some of the young girls at the conferences asked her if they needed to be physically strong to do the job, Brittany would always explain that there were certain techniques you could employ to help you handle heavy jobs. She would go on to explain that, together with the more sophisticated tools that exist in the automotive repair industry today, as long as you have the necessary determination, ingenuity and desire, you can always figure out a way to get the job done.

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Most of the young men she has met thought it was cool that she was a mechanic. There have been times when male friends and fellow mechanics were embarrassed when they could not solve a problem with a car—only to have Brittany move into the situation and repair the car. In most cases however, they respond with gratitude and humility.

Whatever the situation, when she is working with fellow technicians in the shop, they always work together as a team. They help each other out, and rejoice in each other's individual gifts. Ultimately, her goal is to own her own auto repair shop in partnership with her father, and then eventually manage the shop on her own. With Brittany's talents and abilities, her persistence and determination, all things are possible.

Chapter 7

Discovering What You Love At Age 3

Mike Cino

Mike enrolled in the Transportation Course at St. Thomas More. His auto teacher, Mr. Barry Taylor, had a big influence on him... Mr. Taylor was a great teacher—who challenged the students to learn, and at the same time, patiently explained anything they did not understand.

Mike was a good, hard-working student, and scored high marks in every course. He could have chosen any of a number of professions, but he was certain that he was ‘called’ to be an automotive service technician. At times, his parents would joke with him, telling him that he should be a doctor or lawyer instead of a mechanic. In reality however, they were actually delighted that Mike found what he loved to do, and that he was very good at it.

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In Grade 12, Mr. Taylor chose Mike to enter the Ford/CAA Auto Skills Competition. Mike studied hard in preparation for the qualifying exam at Mohawk College... passed the exam, and then entered into the provincial competition at Copps Coliseum. For the competition, they had to work on a Ford Explorer. The vehicle was ‘bugged’ with twelve problems, and they had ninety minutes to locate the twelve problems and repair them. Mike... not only found the twelve problems, but also a thirteenth problem that was not set up by the judges.

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Mike is grateful to OYAP, because it gave him the Level One training he needed for his apprenticeship. This led to his registration as an apprentice at the same Ford dealership through which he had his high school Co-op placement. Mike feels that, without a doubt, OYAP played a major role in his progress and career development.

Chapter 8

Nothing Beats Working For Yourself!

Gerardo D’Andrea

While in high school, the [brothers] were both already convinced that they wanted to follow in their father’s footsteps and become self-employed auto technicians. With the assistance of Cooperative Education and OYAP, they began refining their skills while still in high school. Gerardo and [his brother] Onorato love working for themselves. They work at their own pace, making sure that their customers are happy, and that the job they do on every car is done properly.

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Gerardo lists six reasons why a life as an Auto Service Technician is a great trade:

1. In difficult economic times people cannot afford to purchase new cars, so they bring their existing cars to the shop to be maintained and repaired.
2. As a technician, you can expand your horizons. It has allowed Gerardo to teach new apprentices at Niagara College.
3. If you are a ‘hands on’ person, this trade will facilitate that disposition and offer you lots of challenges in becoming a great technician.
4. This trade leaves you with a real sense of pride and satisfaction. You feel great after you have worked on a car—having solved the problem and seeing the customer happy.
5. Financially-speaking, being self employed, along with the technical aptitude for being a technician, will provide a healthy income. The sky is the limit.
6. It provides you with the opportunity to open your own business. Tools and equipment can be expensive, but you start off small and build your business.

Chapter 10

12 Golden Rules for Business Success

Robert Besseling & Ben Craig

While large businesses are undoubtedly crucial to Canada's prosperity, it is small businesses that are the real economic 'engine' of growth for the country. There are many reasons to start a small business, but a common theme amongst apprentices is that they do not want to work for someone else. Moreover, they are looking for financial prosperity, as well as new and exciting challenges. Starting a business can bring great satisfaction, and enable people to exercise many skills beyond their trade. To be successful with business however, there are many qualities a person requires.

We spoke to two businessmen: Robert Besseling and Ben Craig. These knowledgeable men have learned the qualities of great leaders, and offered many suggestions for what it takes to be a successful business leader... Students wanting to start their own businesses should use this list to see if they have the requisite qualities, and decide if they are willing to perform the necessary steps for success.

Twelve Golden Rules For a Good and Successful Businessperson and Leader

1. **Seek to Understand.** Always be a good listener. Listen to your customers and your employees. You have to be able to listen intently, and be genuinely concerned and interested in what you are being told. With strong and acute listening skills, you should be inquisitive, always asking questions, and wanting to know more so you can understand the full picture.
2. **Exceed the Customer's Expectations.** Once you understand a customer's requirements, and have a full grasp of the issue at hand, try to exceed the customer's expectations. This will earn...

Chapter 12

From a Parent's Perspective

Joe Baiardo

Like many other immigrants, [Joe] came from a tradition that encouraged their children to go to university. They did not like the idea of their children practicing a trade, and hoped their children would find a profession where they didn't get dirty, and where they did not have to work physically hard or put themselves at risk of injury... Such an attitude was an integral part of much of their generation's philosophy.

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In spite of this attitude, which seemed to permeate much of society, it was more important to Joe and Maria for their children to follow their passions and lead a fulfilling life. They wanted them to “go with their strengths and do what they loved”. In the end, all they really wanted was for their children to be happy.

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As a parent, Joe always says, “Patience is a virtue,” when you have a child in the trades. Without trying to discourage students, he cautions that the whole process of finding placements, or an organization to ‘take you on’, begins at a rather young age. Moreover, in many cases, your child will not be paid for work while in Co-op Education, or working through OYAP. On the positive side however, they do receive school credits, and may participate in an accelerated program and start their first year of apprenticeship while still in Grade 11 or Grade 12.

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Like many others, Joe... saw a lot of young people who completed university without being able to find suitable work... [and] many graduates who had secure, well-paying jobs who were unhappy, or unsatisfied... Some of these graduates actually returned to school to acquire a trade, and thereby fulfill their true passions.

Chapter 13

Qualities of a Good Apprentice

Tony Ciccone and Nick Ciccone

Tony and his son Nick both work at the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA)... [Tony] is the technical instructor for the students enrolled in the LIUNA Co-op program. His son Nick started at LIUNA as a custodian, and because of his keen interest in the trades, he returned to school to acquire the appropriate degrees. He is currently the Training and Apprenticeship Co-ordinator for LIUNA.

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It is the responsibility of students to find their sponsors. Tony and Nick will help place them with a company if they demonstrate that they are good and reliable workers... LIUNA offers... great opportunities to enthusiastic students. It isn't like the "old days" when you had to figure out for yourself a way to 'squeeze' your way into an apprenticeship.

With so many in the trades retiring in the next five years, there are many opportunities arising. However, there are certain qualities a student should have in order to excel in the program—and as a tradesperson. Tony and Nick list seven examples below...

Seven Qualities of a Good Apprentice:

1. **Punctuality:** This is a critical attribute. If a worker is late arriving for a job, and his lateness holds up the team, they will never be called back. When material is ordered and paid for, and other workers are on the site and ready to go, a late worker can cost the company money and can derail the specific job planned for that day. The calculations are as exact as possible, because they do not want to be paying extra people to fill in if someone does not show up. The bid they give to the customer must be met, and they can't afford to run over budget...

Chapter 15

Suggestions for an Apprentice

From an Employer and Manager

In this chapter, we look at the advice of Lou D'Amato and Karen Saunders. Both Lou and Karen are from Brantford Nissan, which is a regular supporter of OYAP and Cooperative Education.

A. Lou D'Amato (Proprietor, Brantford Nissan)

Lou is one of the owners of Brantford Nissan.

Lou lists qualities he looks for in potential apprentices and employees:

1. Performance in school is important (although it is not the only factor). Employers look at the marks that people receive in school, and they are especially interested in determining whether those marks reflect a hard worker, and someone who got along well with his/her teachers.
2. When he meets them for the first interview, he looks at how they present themselves. He asks himself, "Is this someone who is trustworthy?"
3. He also considers if they are a sincere person. Are they genuine, and will they be committed to their work and career?
4. Lastly, he is interested in their past. Have they done any volunteer work? What are their hobbies? What is their past work history? He wants to know how committed they were to all these work experiences and hobbies? He wants a well-rounded person who will be committed to their job, but still have other interests. While it is good for a person to have hobbies, it is important that those hobbies don't interfere with their work performance.

Lou believes that good technicians often share the same characteristics:

1. They are consistent. They use their knowledge and experiences...

Chapter 16

Myths and Facts

There are many misconceptions concerning apprenticeships and working in the skilled trades. This chapter attempts to dispel much of this misinformation and erroneous understanding, and encourage students, parents and educators to consider a career in the skilled trades as a viable option.

Myth

Apprenticeships are for people with low academic ability.

Reality

- Twenty to twenty-five percent of all certified trades people have university degrees or college diplomas.
- Many college programs are designed to help students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain an apprenticeship.

Myth

Most apprenticeships are dirty and involve heavy manual labour.

Reality

- Most certified trades people work in very clean conditions, and work with the most up-to-date high tech equipment such as CAD/CAM, robotics and computers.

Myth

Trades are better suited to men.

Reality

- There is no reason why women should not pursue these high-paying, highly-satisfying careers.
- More and more women are entering the skilled trades through apprenticeship each year.

APPRENTICESHIP IS “WIN-WIN”

Although secondary school graduation is required for most apprenticeships, the Ontario government has made one exception to this rule. Students taking part in a special program like OYAP may start their apprenticeship while still in secondary school. This allows students to make a smooth transition into their post-secondary apprenticeship programs.

In most apprenticeships, depending on your trade, it will take three to five years to complete your certification. The certification for most trades takes about four years. Fifteen percent of the time will take place in apprenticeship courses, traditionally taught at a local community college, with the government paying ninety percent of the tuition costs.

In apprenticeships, you earn while you learn. Eight-five percent of the learning taking place on the job. You are taught one-on-one by a journeyperson while you are being paid. This is a stark contrast to university, which costs up to \$15,000 a year, and college, which costs up to \$8,000 a year.

Once you finish your apprenticeship, you can earn a very nice income. If you are willing to work overtime and advance your skills with continued education, you can earn over \$100,000 a year. Moreover, a substantial proportion of tradespeople start their own businesses, which can increase income and opportunities further. Some of the trades such as Tool and Die Maker can even earn more money than a mechanical engineer technician or a mechanical engineer. Lastly, many tradespeople have opportunities for advancement to management-level positions.

***With increasing shortages in skilled trades,
the opportunities available in the world of
apprenticeships have never been better.***

Parents, teachers and students will find **Doing What You Love & Loving What You Do** very helpful along the critical path of workplace decision-making. The book chronicles real life, honest challenges of students and their families as they consider whether work in the trades might be for them.

Stan Cameron
30 year Faculty Member, Centennial College

What is most evident to me in this work is that people eventually find and follow their passions. It's human nature that draws us to what we enjoy and to what makes us happy. Once we find happiness and fulfillment in our working lives, everything else takes care of itself.

Piero Cherubini
Dean, Faculty of Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship
Mohawk College
(Largest Trainer of Apprentices In Ontario)

WE have a huge shortage of skilled trades applicants and it is an excellent career opportunity for many students seeking employment. Indeed a great book, great idea and innovative. More students should be considering skilled trades as a career.

Ron Foxcroft
Inventor, Businessman, Referee and Philanthropist