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## **Anthony Smethurst**

**I started my mechanical career before the end of high school, like most young men a classroom seemed like a punishment to me.**

**My high school was offering a program called “ Gateway” which allowed students that were not engaged in school and wanted to get workplace experience in a trade. I chose automotive, my placement was at Albany Toyota. I knew that this was my path early on. It was extremely intimidating initially as I didn't even know how to drive a car at the time. I remember on my first day I was asked to put a wheel on and I fitted the wheel nuts the incorrect way around with the taper facing away from the rim. Obviously the mechanics found this hilarious, however so long as you have a thick skin and quick wit the banter was one of the best parts of the job.**

**Over my career I have worked in over fifteen different workshops from individually owned to franchised. The automotive industry covers a vast amount of possibilities. I myself have worked at light and heavy, marine and motorcycle automotive workshops as an in house and mobile mechanic. Over the years the main trait I have learnt that is critical in this industry is to be constantly learning and researching. As a mechanic you need to be an electrician, plumber, fabricator and have enough understanding of the many systems in vehicles to be able to efficiently complete jobs, not to mention the vast differences in the makes and models of cars. Henry Ford said “there is no item that the public uses day to day that is as easy to use but as complicated as an automobile”.**

**These are skills that you acquire over years on the tools, it's important to not rush this process. This knowledge is built over time. The best technicians I have worked with are the ones that take pride in their work and build a reputation of consistency. It's fine being able to get through jobs quickly but employers look for consistency and quality control as come backs not only hurt the business reputation but slow the work flow down. However it's important to remember that we are human and even experienced mechanics make mistakes, the trick is owning them and learning from them.**

That's where growth comes from and before you realize it you will have over a decade of experience. The automotive industry can lead you to countless opportunities even outside of the direct automotive field. Wherever there are people there's Machinery that requires technicians and I can guarantee no artificial intelligence will take that role. The industry is the third largest in New Zealand and globally. When I started my apprenticeship there was an abundance of mechanics, however over the last decade the amount of technicians worth their salt has dwindled. The truth is we need far more technicians than there are currently, as far as job security goes I believe that automotive is one of the safest bets.

Personally the role I have received the most enjoyment from was motorcycles, as they are a passion outside of work. But the trick in your career is to try as much as you can to find a place you are happy. Otherwise even a perfect job for the wrong person can be unfulfilling. There is power in having other workplaces to compare from to help you find where you're happy. The first step is getting at least level 2 qualification then finding an apprenticeship is critical, the time on tools in an active workshop environment is extremely important for growth and a complete understanding of how the industry operates.

Being a mechanic is not easy, it requires intelligence and above all else patience. A tip I learnt the hard way if you are struggling on a unit or job. Walk away and take a break, distract your mind on something else then when you return to it the problem will be easier to deal with. And remember mistakes are the best teacher.

Thank you for your attention and I hope this helps you along your path.

Regards Anthony

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