

Improving the Image of Service Technicians



National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)

PRESIDENT/CEO:
Timothy Zilke

LOCATION:
Headquartered in Leesburg, Va. with 750 test centers throughout the U.S.

BUSINESS:
Provide certification credentials to automotive service professionals

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 43

OBJECTIVE:
"Certifying the Automotive Professional"

Certifying the Automotive Professional

The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) was founded in 1972 in response to allegations of repair service fraud in the early 1970s. The National Association of Attorneys General did an investigation and found that it was actually technician incompetence, not fraud, that had given repair shops a bad reputation.

Automotive service industry leadership decided that it was time to keep up with the training necessary to stay abreast of changing automotive technology by developing a system that ensured that technician technical knowledge stayed current through periodic testing and certification. Thus, ASE was established to recognize competent mechanics through voluntary technician certification. ASE

certification is still the only nationally-recognized credential for professionals working in the service, parts and collision segments for passenger and heavy-duty markets.

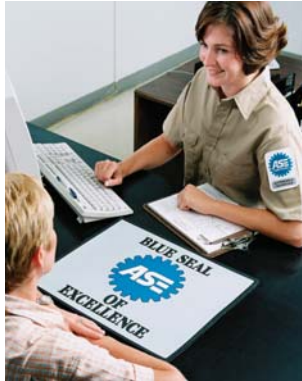
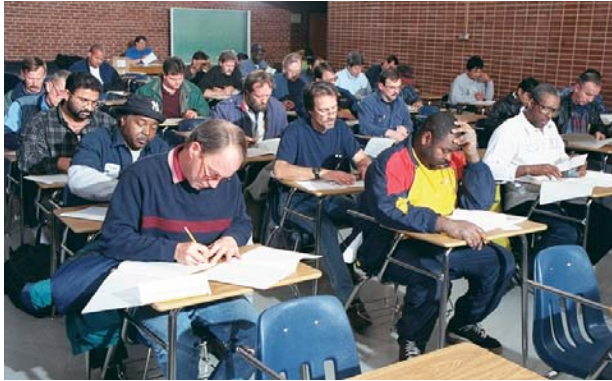
"ASE is unique in the automotive industry in that it engages all segments, both OEM and aftermarket. Our founding is a clear demonstration that, working together, our industry can accomplish anything we set our minds to achieving," said Tony Molla, vice president, communications.

ASE has gone on to provide common ground for knowledge standard development for not only working technicians but also secondary and post-secondary programs. ASE partners with the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation

(NATEF) to provide training as well as provide management services for the Automotive Youth Educational System (AYES) and the Automotive Training Managers Council (ATMC). A joint project with SkillsUSA, NATEF and AYES has resulted in the development of the National Student Skills Standards Assessment (NA3SA).

Providing Credentials

ASE provides certification credentials in 12 different areas, making a total of 53 tests covering auto, truck, parts, collision, machinist, school bus, transit bus and specialty areas in advanced engine performance and undercar specialist categories. Tests are offered four times a year—twice in written and twice in electronic formats.



Tests are administered in secure testing facilities to ensure integrity and value. ASE has also recently introduced an online e-learning product and new line of practice tests to help candidates be better prepared for certification tests.

From “Mechanics” to “Technicians”

“The most obvious impact we’ve made has been the change referring to service personnel as ‘mechanics’ to today’s ‘technicians.’ We like to think ASE certification has improved the image and professionalism of facilities that display the ASE sign and employ certified professionals. Consumers recognize the value of a certified technician and this has hopefully promoted confidence and improved public perception of our industry,” said Molla.

Either way, ASE has become a forum where all industry segments can come together to address changing needs of education, training, recruitment, retention and industry image and develop solutions together.

A Small, Dedicated Staff

ASE’s corporate headquarters are located in Leesburg, Va., with 750 testing centers around the U.S. Forty-three staff members make up the organization, of which 13 hold ASE certification and eight are master technicians.

“ASE staff has the opportunity to contribute directly to the cause of improving the image and professionalism of working technicians and our industry in general. We really find that compelling here and it makes for a very positive work environment,” said Molla. “Our code of ethics promotes the highest levels of integrity, commitment and competence.”

ASE is also active in the community, from supporting local youth sports and programs to sponsoring an annual fundraiser for a local career and technical education school called Summer Thunder. ASE supports nationwide events like career days and other activities that raise awareness of the value of the service industry and careers in the automotive field.

Involved in the Aftermarket Community

ASE has been a member of AAIA for five years and each year cooperates in the World Class Technician program. The program recognizes technicians that have achieved ASE certification in 22 specialties (eight automobile, eight medium/heavy truck, four collision repair and refinish and L1 and L2 levels). The partnership has proven beneficial for both parties as well as the aftermarket as a whole.

“Being an AAIA member has given ASE a great opportunity to interact in a variety of segments. We also find the statistical data and market intelligence provided to be invaluable in keeping abreast of changes in the market. With functions like Leadership Days and our committee involvement, ASE’s return on our membership investment is outstanding. Perhaps more important is that our membership in AAIA helps support the work they do in achieving our common goal of improving the aftermarket in many ways,” said Molla.

Meeting the Changing Needs of the Industry

ASE continues to evolve with the industry. Constantly introducing new tests and products, their programs continue to adjust to the varying needs of the service industry. For the future, ASE is working on developing products aimed at the hybrid segment and analyzing feedback from their workshops to keep up with ongoing technological changes.

For more information, visit www.ase.com. If you would like your company profile featured in *Aftermarket Insider*, contact Beatrice Livioco at beatrice.livioco@aftermarket.org or call 301-654-6664, ext. 1019. ■