



BOB PARKER

# Wheel life experience

**WHAT DO MAKING DECISIONS** at work and a NASCAR pit crew have in common? They both involve groups working together to achieve specific results. When groups work well, great. But if they falter, you lose the race, you lose the edge.

London-based corporate trainer and speaker Bob Parker has just released a new book, *The Pit Crew Challenge: Winning Customers Through Teaming*, based on the innovative program he designed to teach companies better methods of teamwork.

Parker's program is hands-on, using a real race car and a professional race car driver. He takes groups of people drawn from all kinds of workplaces out to a track, a parking lot or sometimes an indoor facility and divides them into teams. "These are all people who may not have worked with each other before," Parker explains. "Their task is to change the race car's four tires under the clock in several rounds, benchmark their time and improve. People love the sound of the car, the quickness of action, the power tools, the seeming realness of it."

Lasting about four hours, The Pit Crew Challenge experience reveals just about every dysfunction a team could encounter—being overly competitive, making wrong assumptions, making decisions based on ego, taking the company's values for granted or out of context, not consulting each other (silos), not focusing on their customers—and shows ways to address those problems.

Parker's idea for the program stemmed from his own interest in NASCAR-type racing. He teamed up with professional racer Ron Sheridan and crew chief Ken Kellestine, co-owners of Strathroy's RKR Motorsports, to create an experience that resembles the work of a real pit crew, "with modifications for safety issues," Parker notes.

Parker's first client for The Pit Crew Challenge was ITW Hobart Brothers of Woodstock. The company's enthusiastic response made Parker realize the program was "on to

something." Then, quite by chance, representatives of Duke Corporate Education, affiliated with Duke University in North Carolina, found Parker's program on the Internet. They invited him to offer the program to several of their top corporate clients. This led to an explosion of engagements in the U.S. with clients such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Bank of America (Parker has done 30 Pit Crew experiences for the bank's 100,000-plus workforce) and numerous other global Fortune 100 companies. Parker's winter 2008 pit crew schedule will take him to Texas, California, Chicago and Toronto.

Other clients include Schneiders Foods, Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Business which, similar to Duke, retains Parker to do The Pit Crew Challenge with its high profile clients.

At time of printing, 8,302 participants in The Pit Crew Challenge program had changed a total of 14,306 tires, including several at a recent event for Hanover-based New-Life Mills Limited. "It brought a lot of people out of their comfort zone and people found themselves depending on each other in a whole new way," says Nadine Schwandt, general manager of New-Life Mills Feed Division. "It was also a lot of fun, very active and physical.

"The next day we had a management meeting and it turned out to be one of the most open and productive discussions we've had in a long time," continues Schwandt. "Much of it was spurred by what had happened in the pit crew." ■ Sharon Lindenburger

## ROBERT A. PARKER & ASSOCIATES

<b>BUSINESS</b>	Corporate training, including The Pit Crew Challenge program
<b>ESTABLISHED</b>	1992
<b>EMPLOYEES</b>	1 (plus contract workers)
<b>MARKETS</b>	North America
	<a href="http://www.pitcrew.ca">www.pitcrew.ca</a>