Tire Dealer of the Year

All for one and

His employees say Bruce Halle is the key to Discount people be wrong about our Tire Dealer of the Year?

By Bob Ulrich

Pictured at Discount Tire's Scottsdale Road store near the company's headquarters in Scottsdale, Ariz., are, from left to right: Store Manager Jerry Marafioti, Josh Jarquin, Tony Cochrane, Chairman Bruce Halle, Andrew Townsend, Lyndon Slusher, Jordan Singer, Dustin Lobock, Andrew Tamutzer and Vice Chairman Gary Van Brunt.
All for one and one for all

His employees say Bruce Halle is the key to Discount Tire’s success. Halle says it is his people. Can 17,000 people be wrong about our Tire Dealer of the Year?

one for all

Tire’s success. Halle says it is his people. Can 17,000
The authors of the Bible knew how to lead by example. In the New Testament, a disciple of Matthew wrote, “Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant.”

Apostle Peter echoes that sentiment: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Bruce Thomas Halle takes God’s call to servant leadership seriously. He has built an empire of tire stores on a business philosophy influenced by his religious beliefs and family values. And Halle has a pretty large family.

“My people are part of my family,” he says. “Their health, security, their futures, that’s my responsibility. We have 17,000 people working for Discount Tire, but you have to take into account they are married and have children. I am really responsible for 60,000 or 70,000 people.”

As he grows the business — 887 stores and counting — he never loses sight of that. People are hired, they get opportunities, they move up into ever-expanding roles of leadership. It is self-perpetuating.

That’s how the business model started, and that’s how it will be run long after he is gone. Halle has seen to that.

He is both a man of means and a man of the people, as comfortable hobnobbing with members of high society as he is spending time with the technicians in any of Discount Tire’s more than 5,300 service bays. It is not unimaginable that while traveling to potential site locations on his Falcon 900 jet he is eating a Costco hotdog ($1.50, soda included).

Halle gives almost all the credit for his Scottsdale, Ariz.-based company’s success to his employees. They disagree, sometimes putting their dynamic yet soft-spoken leader on a pedestal, sometimes just appreciating him for putting them first.

“Among Bruce Halle’s many qualities is his invaluable ability to approach life in a way that inspires his colleagues to grow. He did that for me and I owe him a great deal. Thanks, Bruce.”

François Michelin, former managing general partner, Groupe Michelin

To the outside world, the 84-year-old Halle (pronounced “Holly”) is chairman of Discount Tire. He is also a billionaire; according to Forbes, he is the 336th richest man in the world.

To his inner circle, the executives, store managers and thousands of full- and part-time employees who operate Discount Tire on a day-to-day basis, he is their patriarch, the man who oversees the company without micromanaging them.

In Halle’s own eyes, he is “an old tire salesman,” not that much different from when he turned a former plumbing supply building in Ann Arbor, Mich., into the first Discount Tire store 54 years ago.

“In 1960, I would have described myself as a young guy looking for a job!” he says. He and a partner had just shuttered their combination wholesale automotive parts supply business and retail shop, leaving him with little more than his entrepreneurial spirit.

Halle decided he had three choices: He could sell factory-second shoes, day-old bread or tires. Armed with two new tires and four retreads from his previous business, he chose to open up a one-man tire store, right next to a Goodyear store, no less.

Vice Chairman Gary Van Brunt says Halle’s customer-centric business philosophy has guided the company since the beginning.

“It all comes down from Bruce. He sets the standards and it all filters down, and always has.

“When he was by himself, he thought taking care of the customer was the most important thing. Today, with so many employees, it is important to take care of each other first, because happy employees take care of their customers.

“You have to have integrity in everything you do,” says Van Brunt. “If something isn’t right, make it right. Fix it. Don’t cut corners. Make it right because people are relying on us.”

“I don’t think I’ve changed much over the years,” says Halle. “I’m pretty calm and organized. I trust everybody until they prove I shouldn’t. I respect them all. And I want all of our people to be successful financially, socially and morally.”

The prototypical Discount Tire store has six bays and carries 3,000 tires in inventory. Halle says six to eight bays is optimal for employee efficiency, based on the company’s Six Sigma-like Continuous Strategic Improvement procedures.
Congratulations, Bruce Halle!

Continental Tire. For what you do.

2014 MTD Dealer of the Year

CONTINENTALTIRE.COM
Scheduled store hours are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. “Some of the store managers open before 8,” says Halle. “That is their choice. They close at 6, but they have to take care of the customers who are still there. If they all get out at 7, they are doing well.”

The stores are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. They are closed on Sunday. “Sunday is a day for church and family,” says Halle. “I think six days a week is enough. We also close from 12 to 3 on Good Friday. That’s been the case from the beginning. ‘Everybody kept telling me we should be open on Sundays. But you have to stick to what you believe in. We’ve done OK with our business model.”

Definition of Discount

Halle liked the name “Discount Tire” because it instantly told customers they could get a good deal at his store. “Discount is a tricky word,” he says. “It could imply low quality. It could imply low price. As a customer, it’s a matter of which one you want or are willing to accept.

The first Discount Tire store opened in Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1960. Halle’s goal was to sell seven or eight tires a day, plus tubes, to cover his expenses and care for his family.

‘A rose, by any other name...’

Discount Tire does business as America’s Tire in (most of) California

Discount Tire is known as America’s Tire everywhere in California except San Diego County. “We needed another name because Discount Tire Centers was already there in the early 1980s,” says owner Bruce Halle. “America’s Tire works just as well as Discount Tire. By any other name, a rose is a rose. It looks like one and smells like one. We do business the same way for both.”

The vast majority of his 135 stores in California are run under the America’s Tire banner.

Modern Tire Dealer contributing writer Wayne Williams has competed against America’s Tire since the beginning. Some 30 years later, he is president of ExSell Marketing Inc., a “counter intelligence” firm based in La Habra, Calif. Here are his thoughts on what he calls “an unstoppable force.”

“Execution is the chariot of genius,” said British poet William Blake. That describes Bruce Halle and America’s Tire. Business and business success have fascinated me since my days as a district manager for Parnelli Jones Inc. My mentor there came to me one day and said, “You better get your act together. Discount Tire Arizona is coming to town, and these guys know how to sell tires.”

I used to wonder what it would be like to have my own tire store. I dreamed of a store with lots of tires in stock, thousands, as a matter of fact. I dreamed of a store that was well-merchandised, clean and easy to navigate.

In my dream, I would have a simple selling formula that was customer friendly, and I’d present my products to customers in a clear and concise manner so they would know they were getting a great deal, because they were. I would sell name-brand tires at great prices, and I would offer fast-and-friendly service. I thought to myself, why not have super clean service bays with the latest equipment and really good installation technicians? And wouldn’t it be nice to have windows, big windows in the showroom that allowed visibility into the shop area so customers could see their tires being installed on their vehicles?

Well, I was so disappointed when I visited an America’s Tire store for the first time. Somebody had stolen my dream, and even added to my ideas. The lighting in the store was bright and cheery. The waiting-room chairs were comfortable and color-matched the theme of the store. Restrooms were spotless and parking was easy. I loved selling aftermarket wheels and, apparently, so did America’s Tire.

Over the years, I phone-shopped and visited their stores. I noted the nuances as they evolved into a greater powerhouse. I watched as they opened stores in the best locations in California.

You can’t become the best accidentally. You can’t put together a run like these guys have without vision, determination, and the ability to lead and create. Bruce Halle and his people are the best.
CONGRATULATES BRUCE HALLE
Delivering excellence to our industry for 54 years and counting
“Back in the ‘60s, there were a lot of discount stores. Everybody thought they sold low-quality merchandise. It was something we had to live through.”

Most of his money came from selling associate or private brand tires and tubes.

“I mainly sold off-brands at the beginning because the manufacturers like Goodyear, Firestone, General and U.S. Royal concentrated on selling their name brands,” says Halle. “At the same time, they were manufacturing off-brands like Defender, Monarch, Carnegie and Fisk and selling them for less money. They also were making private brand tires for oil companies under different names. I was buying and selling many of those tires, which were close in quality to the major brands, so I could be very competitive. I also bought Firestones or Goodyears second-hand from distributors or wholesalers or another retailer.

“On a private or off-brand tire, we had a better markup. The costs were lower and the profits were higher.”

This strategy continued even after Halle began adding stores in Michigan, Arizona and Colorado.

“When you are a younger and smaller company, you don’t have the financial capacity to deal with the big manufacturers and the volumes that they want from you,” he says. “We didn’t have the credit capacity to do that. So we were buying from wherever we could.

“As the company got bigger and more solid financially, we started going more direct with the rubber manufacturers. And buying direct helped keep the costs down. We eliminated the middleman. The wholesaler and middleman make money, too. And they are our competitors, too.”

Discount Tire offers more than 40 brands through its retail stores or Discount Tire Direct mail order business. However, its three private brands, Arizonian, Mohave and Pathfinder (Halle acquired the rights to the brand from Goodyear years ago) are only sold through the retail stores.

“Discount Tire customers get good value for their tires,” says Van Brunt. “We price our competition. With so many people in the tire business, it’s hard to know who’s selling at what price, but we want to be at or below them.”
COOPER TIRE CONGRATULATES
BRUCE HALLE
FOR BRINGING AMERICA’S ROAD TRIPS TO LIFE.

Congratulations, Bruce, on being named "TIRE DEALER OF THE YEAR." Your dedication to ensuring quality service and products makes us proud to be associated with you and Discount Tire.
Help wanted
Van Brunt, 67, who is a cousin of Halle’s late wife, Gerry, was one of Halle’s first employees. Then 15 years old, he was hired by Halle to change tires in the winter of 1962.

In Halle’s biography, “Six Tires, No Plan,” by Michael Rosenbaum (see an excerpt from the book on page 48), Van Brunt shared that first educational monologue by Halle, the man who he calls his mentor. “He said, ‘The two worst people in the world to hire are friends and relatives. First off, if you hire a friend and he doesn’t work out and you have to fire him, then you’ve not only lost an employee, but you’ve lost a friend. The second is a relative. If you hire a relative and he doesn’t work out and you have to fire him, then the whole family is impacted, but you’re still a relative. That’s not good either. So from 8:30 to 6, you’re an employee.’”

Halle believes in roles-based management, with each store manager giving specific responsibilities to his three

Definition of a CEO

Guess who came out on top?
In 2006, the Vanderbilt University Owen Graduate School of Management held a class designed to “identify the traits, behaviors and tendencies that exemplify great business leaders.”
Classmates chose and studied 50 CEOs, including Warren Buffett, John Lampe (Bridgestone Americas Inc.), Fred Smith (FedEx Corp.) and Meg Whitman (eBay Inc.). Discount Tire’s Bruce Halle came out on top, edging out Whitman.

According to the study, there are at least four essential traits every CEO should have:

1. motivational skills (more than “carrot and stick” motivation).
2. a unique voice (influenced by talent, passion, need and conscience).
3. rapid cognition (combined with a sense of frugality).
4. the ability to manage strengths (a common myth is that improvement comes from focusing on weaknesses rather than strengths).

“Mr. Halle has figured out how to be overwhelmingly successful and profitable in a cutthroat industry with huge competitors and low barriers to entry,” concluded the study.

Tire Dealer of the Year

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BRUCE HALLE

2014 TIRE DEALER OF THE YEAR

CONGRATULATIONS!

He comes through year after year. An ultra-high performer in all seasons. Driving an entire industry to new heights, new achievements, new possibilities.

Bruce Halle just sees farther down the road than most and we’re grateful for that vision.

KUMHO TIRE

KumhoTireUSA.com | KumhoPortal.com
or four assistant managers on a rotating basis. The training prepares them to become store managers themselves.

Regional vice presidents and assistant vice presidents oversee all the stores, which are divided into 24 regions; Discount Tire Direct is its own region.

The importance of part-time help to the company’s success cannot be overstated. There are several reasons for this, according to Halle.

“One, we expect and hope that many of them will become full-time. In fact, that’s a great source of some of our permanent employees. It’s a recruiting tool. And, of course, from an economic point of view, using part-time employees helps control our operating expenses. It’s good management to use part-time people as much as we can.

“A lot of these part-timers are older high school kids or college kids who can work 20 or 30 hours a week or whatever their schedules allow. It doesn’t interfere with their school work or their social life because we’re not open at night, unlike a fast food restaurant, or on Sundays. They can work all day Saturday and make good money.

“We have set up a tire tech program for part-time techs going to college, which a lot of them are,” says Halle. “We pay $500 a semester to each one’s school while they are working for the company. And a lot of them stay with us after they graduate.”

All store managers start at the bottom. In addition to Halle and Van Brunt, former tire busters include CEO Tom Englert, 62, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Ed Kaminski, 56, and Chief Customer Officer Steve Fournier, 63.

Location, location, location
There are 887 Discount Tire and America’s Tire stores in 28 states. Because of a conflict with the Discount Tire name in Oregon and outside San Diego County in California, Halle

“During my lifetime, I have met a number of outstanding individuals and entrepreneurs, and Bruce Halle is right at the top of the list. He is a tremendous individual, a great businessman and a great humanitarian. I am proud to consider him a friend.” Jerry Colangelo, former chairman of the Arizona Diamondbacks and Phoenix Suns, member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and chairman of USA Basketball

Trevon Berry works part-time at the first Discount Tire store in northeast Ohio (see story on page 56).
FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY LEADS TO TRUE SUCCESS

Falken Tire is proud to honor Bruce Halle of Discount Tire for being named 2014 Dealer of the Year. Your leadership and dedication has paved the way for a true American success story.
Tire Dealer of the Year

Discount Tire is famous for repairing flat tires free of charge.

Due to local ordinances, the Discount Tire store near the company’s headquarters in Scottsdale, Ariz., features a different logo and design.

Discount Tire owns the land and the building. Halle hopes to have stores in at least 40 states, not including Alaska and Hawaii. “We will hit 900 this year or early next year. We are working toward having 1,000 stores in 2 1/2 years. And then we will start working toward 1,500.”

Discount Tire is always on the lookout for new locations, led by their regional vice presidents. “We have real estate agents in every market,” says Van Brunt. “They know what’s happening, whether a new location has opened up or a building will become available in six months or a year. We give them the parameters that we’re looking for, and if they do their jobs, we will work with them.” The arrangements with the agents are not exclusive, however. “If someone else brings us a piece of property and says, ‘I notice you guys are opening stores in wherever market, and I’ve got a piece of property or I know someone who has a piece of property,’ we will talk with them,” says Van Brunt. “That’s fine.”

Halle personally visits every possible site, usually with Van Brunt, President Mike Zuieback, 48, and Executive Vice President and General Counsel Jim Silhasek, 71. They travel four to six days a month in one of the company’s three jets, and visit five to 10 sites per trip, often more than they planned. “We study all the demographics: population within three miles, five miles, 10...
Congratulations to Bruce Halle and Discount Tire
2014 MTD Tire Dealer of the Year

Hankook Tire applauds Bruce Halle for being named MTD's Tire Dealer of the Year. The road to success is paved with hard work and devotion, we at Hankook Tire know that and are proud to be partners with a dealer who knows that as well. Congratulations Bruce Halle from all of us at Hankook Tire.

Hankook Tire America Corp.

VENTUS V12 evo²
Powerful performance with your safety in mind

© 2014 Hankook Tire America Corp.
Store managers: The key to Discount Tire’s success

Talk to any of the executives at Discount Tire and they will tell you their 887 store managers rule.

“We serve them,” says President Mike Zuieback, “and our whole focus is helping them be the best they possibly can be.

“They know what is required day to day. They’re out there in the field. They are living it, so we need to listen to them and learn from them and support them with what they need to be successful.”

The base salary of a store manager is based on the cost of living index in a region. Quarterly bonuses kick in from the very first dollar in profit; as the profit increases, the percentage of the bonus increases.

As Chairman Bruce Halle says, “they are really running their own businesses.”
Congratulations.
From the Yokohama team.

Bruce Halle  Dealer of the Year
A humanitarian
A visionary
A leader
Our friend

yokohamatire.com  ©2014 Yokohama Tire Corporation
miles; income levels; number of cars per household, all of that,” says Halle. “Then, of course, you have to go see the site. And it has to be in an area where people will go to buy merchandise, not just drive by.

“I like to be close to a Wal-Mart or Target. Home Depot and Kohl’s are OK, but the Wal-Marts and Targets sell groceries, and people go there every week. Being associated with big supermarket chains like H-E-B in Texas or Kroger is also good.”

Sometimes stores are built in underdeveloped areas ripe for growth.

“We have done that,” says Halle. “During the boom years, we would see a shopping center and all the new homes being built around it and buy property and put up a store there in advance of the growth. Some of the stores have been very successful and some have not.

“We have probably closed or relocated 120 stores over the last 50 years because they haven’t done as well as we anticipated. Maybe 20 to 25 of them were pure closings. The rest of them were relocations because of demographic changes. Some neighborhoods in the city that used to be dynamic are not anymore. Shopping centers and power centers are not really that big thing anymore.

“We have been doing this for so many years that we know what to look for. Are the

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**Tire Dealer of the Year**

**MTD Tire Dealer of the Year profile**

**Bruce Halle, Discount Tire, Scottsdale, Ariz.**

Bruce Halle can pinpoint when he received the best piece of advice in his lifetime. On his way into the Marine Corps in 1950, his older brother, Fred Jr., told him, “Bruce, keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut.”

*My full name is: Bruce Thomas Halle.*

*My age is: 84.*

*I am most proud of: the 17,000-plus employees of Discount Tire Co.*

*My hobbies and interests include: tennis, art, being an executive of Discount Tire.*

*My favorite childhood memory is: being part of a normal, hardworking family with four brothers, two sisters, a wonderful mother and a father of great character and strength.*

*My biggest regret is: I do not think I have a big regret; many small ones, perhaps. But they are far outweighed by many good memories!*  

*My favorite book is: “And Why Not? Morality and Business,” an interview with François Michelin. (The book, a collection of the discussions Michelin held with French journalists Ivan Levai and Yves Messarovich, includes his views on his faith, the morality of business and the current state of French politics.)*

*My favorite sport is: tennis.*

*My favorite athlete is: I have admired, and respected, many athletes over the years. Some names: Lou Gehrig, Gordie Howe, Hank Greenberg and, of course, Jesse Owens.*

*My favorite food is: a good, old-fashioned hot dog.*

*My favorite passage from the Bible is: the parable of the prodigal son.*

*If I could change one thing about myself I would: have to ask my son, Bruce Jr.; my daughters, Susan and Lisa; my wife, Diane; and many of our employees what that should be!*

*Please describe Discount Tire in one word: blessed.*

*My ultimate business goal is: to create success and fulfill the dreams of all the families of Discount Tire Co., to never forget that I am not the ultimate boss.*

*The smartest thing I’ve ever done is: enter the tire business, and to find and work with wonderful people; to be part of creating the great company that Discount Tire Co. is today.*

*The best advice my parents ever gave me was: be honest, work hard, be fair, obey the Ten Commandments, remember to say your prayers every day — especially the guardian angel prayer.*

*My advice to a tire dealer who is just starting out is: Mix fun with hard work, smile, share, tell the truth to everyone, including yourself.*

*The greatest thing about the tire industry today is: the new opportunities, the challenges of the marketing changes we are all facing today. These are new tools that we must all adapt to and learn to use to succeed in today’s business environment.*

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CONGRATULATIONS TO BRUCE HALLE OF DISCOUNT TIRE!
2014 TIRE DEALER OF THE YEAR

As Chairman of Discount Tire, Bruce Halle has earned recognition for not only his business success but also his extensive community involvement.

Goodyear® thanks you for your business.
buildings around the site run down? Is the area a good place for a hospital? In addition to all the demographics and analysis, you have to have a feel, a sense for what will work. Today, if we go to see four sites, they are probably all pretty good.

“It’s just a matter of making a decision based upon your sense, your gut feeling and price.”

Building blocks
Silhasek monitors not only real estate acquisitions, but also construction of the stores for Discount Tire. He says he first looks at applicable zoning codes and land use restrictions.

“You also have to be concerned with the developer when looking at a piece of property. If it’s within a development, there are conditions, covenants and restrictions that affect building size, construction of the building, the type of building, things like that.

“You may also have a private sector to deal with. For example, when a Target takes over a shopping center, Target rules. You have to get their approval for everything if you want to build in the center.

“Usually a developer sells his soul to the devil when he sells to a Target or a Wal-Mart, although it does make his other nearby parcels more valuable.”

Silhasek says locating outside the developer’s property lines, such as across the street, brings city rules and regulations into play.

“Cities not only have zoning laws, but also special use permits. Or they might have an overlay that limits the amount of automotive repair businesses in a particular area. They also may only want buildings of a certain height, or located a certain distance from the road.

“Then the fire marshal gets involved. Water volume and pressure are real big issues. When we wash our buildings in California, we have to have a siphon truck there to siphon the used water.

“After you look at zoning, you look at accessibility. How many access points can you have? How wide can they be? How far from the corner can you have an access point? Let’s say you are right on the corner. Sometimes you have to have an access easement across the adjacent property to get to the street.

“You have to make sure utilities are available,” he says. “For example, on U.S. highways now, you have to tunnel under the road rather than cut through it to install utilities. That’s called jack-and-bore installation, and it is very expensive.”

With all the rules and regulations — “you have to make sure the building is safe for employees and customers” — plus legal setbacks, it takes almost six months to get all of the feasibility studies and permitting done, then another 120 days to build the store, according to Silhasek.

“In California, it takes approximately two years to get all your permits, and then you start building! And that’s just building a tire shop.”

Wild and crazy guys
Word gets around when you provide exceptional value and service. In the mid-1960s, however, Halle and his then partner, Ted Von Voigtlander, wanted to get the word out faster, with more flair. (The legal name of the company is Reinalt-Thomas Corp., which is made up of the middle names of Von Voigtlander and Halle.)

“We just sat around with different people and created newspaper ads based
Pirelli Tire North America Congratulates Bruce Halle,
Chairman of Discount Tire, Scottsdale, AZ on receiving the 2014 MTD Tire Dealer of the Year. We thank Mr. Halle for his unrivaled dedication to his company, employees and suppliers that has forever transformed the industry.
on what was popular at that time. Batman
was popular, so we dressed as Batman and
Robin. We dressed as the Cartwrights
because Bonanza was popular, and as
astronauts when the astronauts went
into space. Then we would put these
crazy pictures in the paper to promote
Discount Tire. It was fun.”
Van Brunt also got into the act in 1966.
Mimicking an earlier ad of Halle’s, he
gave the shirt off his back to make deals,
such as four tubeless blackwall tires for
$59.40. Discount Tire backed the price
with a 36-month guarantee.
“We also used to give away flowers
like geraniums at the store,” says Halle.
“And watermelons.”
That was good enough to gross $1.7
million in 1969 with six stores in Michi-
gan. But in a bold move, Halle and Von
Voightlander decided to take advantage
of rising populations — and the 300
days of sunshine a year in Phoenix —
by expanding in Arizona. The Phoenix
suburb of Scottsdale eventually became
the company’s headquarters.
It was there that the longest running
ad in television history was created.

In 1975, a friend of Halle’s, Bob Natkin,
shot a 10-second ad centered on a little
old lady rolling a tire.
“If ever you’re not satisfied with one
of our tires, please feel free to bring it
back,” says a voiceover. Then the lady
throws the tire through the window of
the store. The narration concludes with
“Thank you. Discount Tire Co.”
The little old lady has since died. But
the 39-year-old ad lives on, and is featured
in the Guinness Book of World Records.
Only once has a customer actually
thrown a tire through a store window,
according to Halle.
“It happened in Grand Rapids, Mich.,”
he says. “Back in the late ‘80s, a customer
came to the store on a Saturday and
was upset about something. He left,
then came back with a tire and wheel,
all mounted, and he says, ‘I’m going to
throw this through your blank, blank
window.’ So the manager says, ‘Well,
let me get people out of the showroom,
because there is going to be glass all over
the place.’ He gets everybody out, but in
the meantime, somebody had called the
police. ‘The police report went out on
the wire services, so reporters arrived.
“The police called me and told me what
he was doing and said they were going to
arrest him. And I said, ‘You’ll do nothing
of the sort. You’ve got to make him the
happiest man in the world.’
“The guy is about 10 or 15 feet from
the window and thinks he’s Superman.
He thinks he can throw the tire and wheel
that far, but he can’t. He throws it and it
bounces, and he’s really upset. He gets
closer, and he does throw it through the
window. But it’s all on film. In those days,
there were no computers, and the news
hit the wire services all over the country.
“We gave him a new set of tires. We
couldn’t begin to pay for that kind of
publicity. It was worth a fortune to us.
In fact, it made the front page of the
Pittsburgh daily newspaper, and that
really disappointed me because we didn’t
have any stores there!”

Robert Natkin Advertising also cre-
tated two other well-known Discount
Tire TV ads.
One ad featured little baby chicks
with the tagline, “Cheap, cheap, cheap,
cheap, cheap! That’s what Discount Tires
are, cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap!”
The other parodied the Goodyear
blimp. An old, patched up blimp falls from
the sky, with the following voiceover:
“With the money we save on blimps, we
can sell good tires cheap.” (“Goodyear
never said anything to us about it,” says
Halle.)
The company often uses the word
“cheap” on its billboard advertising as
well. “People are afraid to use the word
cheap,” says Halle. “I think it’s a brave
Congratulations

BRUCE HALLE

DISCOUNT TIRE

Bridgestone America Tire Distributors congratulates Bruce Halle on his outstanding service and exemplary leadership that continues to inspire the entire industry.
Tire Dealer of the Year

word to use because cheap implies low quality or low price. But again, people accept it.

“Cheap is a good word. We don’t say inexpensive prices, we say cheap prices, even now. I think it’s great.”

Discount Tire uses all forms of advertising to increase brand awareness. The basics include direct mail, radio, newspapers, billboards and the Internet (e.g. social media and mobile advertising). The company also sponsors Team Penske drivers Brad Keselowski, Joey Logano and Ryan Blaney in the NASCAR Nationwide Series and Sprint Cup Series.

Keselowski won the Sprint Cup championship in 2012. “It's a good marketing tool for us,” says Halle. “It's a popular national sport that our employees enjoy. NASCAR fans all around the country see the photos in our stores. The older race cars are moved to the front of our stores and lots of people and families take photos with the cars.”

Discount Tire videos, including the “Adventures of the Racing Cowboys” (Keselowski, Logano and Blaney), can be seen on YouTube.

**THEY SAID IT ABOUT BRUCE**

“I’ve known Bruce Halle for almost 50 years; we have done business and life together, and he is a person of the highest integrity. He built Discount Tire Co. from one store in Michigan to over 880 stores, and it continues to grow. He is probably one of the best entrepreneurs of all time!” Karl Eller, author of “Integrity is All You’ve Got, and Seven Other Lessons of the Entrepreneurial Life,” and, as the onetime chairman and CEO of Clear Channel Outdoor Inc., a pioneer in outdoor advertising.

Brad Keselowski won the NASCAR Nationwide championship in 2010 and the Sprint Cup championship in 2012.
CONGRATULATIONS, BRUCE HALLE!
Chairman of Discount Tire
Scottsdale, AZ

Modern Tire Dealer’s
2014 Tire Dealer of the Year

Congratulations, Mr. Halle, from your friends at Coats® on your Tire Dealer of the Year Award! Your leadership, vision and innovation continue to inspire us today... more than 40 years after Coats first appeared in your tire bays.
Charity begins at home

If Bruce was the patriarch of Discount Tire, his first wife, Gerry, was the matriarch. She was there from the beginning, and, like her husband, welcomed store employees and their spouses into their circle of friends and family.

When she died of ovarian cancer in 1989, that support group helped Bruce carry on. Nearly six years later following a whirlwind courtship, Halle married for the second time. Diane Cummings, a widow with a passion for philanthropy and art, quickly became invested in the Discount Tire family.

“After hearing me expound on the good foundations do, Bruce decided we should start our own foundation,” she says. The result was the Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation. She is chairman and president.

“The mission of the foundation has been to improve the quality of individual lives by focusing on women and children issues such as homelessness, hunger, education, arts and culture, and health and medical research,” she says. “The foundation also oversees a scholarship program for the children of Discount Tire employees so that they may attend college.”

Diane Halle has involved the wives of the regional executives in similar issues with the formation of Driven to Care, a regional philanthropy program. Since 2005, the wives have granted $4.3 million for more than 260 deserving organizations throughout the United States.

Their work inspired corporate female executives and the wives of the executives at the company’s headquarters in Scottsdale to form the Bridges to Hope program. The group identifies opportunities to strengthen and enrich the community, then awards grants to worthy local organizations in order to address those issues. This year, Bridges to Hope is supporting education for autistic adults.

“What if?”

Over the last 54 years, Halle has successfully coped with extraordinary “What if?” moments that could have favorably or adversely affected the company’s fortunes. For example, what if his experiment with automotive service had been profitable? Discount Tire grossed $4.2 billion last year just selling and mounting tires and wheels.

What if his competition, like the nearby Goodyear store, had chosen to match or undercut his low prices when he first opened in Ann Arbor? What if real estate values had declined in the late 1970s, when Halle and Von Voigtlander, borrowing on appreciating property values, were expanding at the rate of 25 stores per year?

What if Halle had died following a horrific mountain bike accident in 1993?

Halle would be the first one to tell you he is blessed, and that luck and timing have had a lot to do with his success. However, he has made sure the company will live on as a private company without him.

One hundred percent of the company’s stock, originally owned by Halle, has been put into a family trust fund set up to make ever selling the company financially imprudent. His goal was to keep the company in his family for generations to come, and to secure the jobs of all his employees.

“I’ve spent the last 10 years planning for this scenario,” he says. “I knew if I didn’t, upon my demise, the company would have to be sold in order to pay the taxes. That would be a disaster for my family and my people.”

As CEO Tom Englert says, it comes down to one man who has his priorities straight. “Bruce told me, ‘Tom, no one’s life should change because I’m no longer here.’ I think that proves his devotion to the people who have helped him and his family become so successful. That is the mark of a remarkable man.” ■
FROM 6 TIRES AND NO PLAN TO A LEGEND.

Congratulations Bruce Halle on being named Modern Tire Dealer’s 2014 Tire Dealer of the Year.

Michelin is proud to work with Discount Tire and its founder Bruce Halle, who’s grown his business from 6 tires to 875 stores in 54 years. If you ask us, that’s pretty legendary.
Reset button

How Discount Tire gives its employees multiple chances to succeed

Michael Rosenbaum’s 2012 book about Bruce Halle is more than a biography. It is also a business management book that reveals how Halle built Discount Tire into a multibillion dollar company. The late Harvey Mackay, author of “Swim With the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive,” called it “an inspirational road map for business and life.”

Here is an excerpt from “Six Tires, No Plan: The Impossible Journey of the Most Inspirational Leader That (Almost) Nobody Knows.” In it, Rosenbaum offers insight into how the company handles employees who don’t seem to be working out.

Todd Meerschaert had it made at Discount Tire after winning the keys to his first store. Just 28 years old, he’d moved up from senior assistant to manager of the sole Discount Tire outpost in Lakewood, Colo. He loved his job, loved the company and loved his location.

In 1990, though, life fell apart as the father of two preschool
Starting in 1960 with only six tires, four being retreads, in an old plumbing supply building, Bruce Halle has been an inspiration to many in the tire industry. Chicago Pneumatic commends Bruce’s effort and dedication to his family of employees, and the care given to them throughout the years. “Do a good job, and I’ll provide lifelong opportunity for you.” Congratulations Bruce!

From our family to yours, thank you for your business!

Chicago Pneumatic provides top quality tools to the modern tire dealer

From removal, repair, and final torquing of wheels, to the tools used for general mechanical repairs, Chicago Pneumatic provides the quality tools demanded by tire industry professionals.

www.cp.com

boys went through a painful divorce that also led to poor performance at work. Eventually, Tom Englert, then vice president of the Colorado region, sat down with Meerschaert for a life-changing conversation. Englert had talked to Meerschaert about his performance before, going so far as to buy him an alarm clock with the admonition to show up on time each day. Now, Englert was taking his store away and moving him to Boulder as an assistant manager.

Englert was hitting the reset button, a tool used regularly at Discount Tire to salvage the careers of good employees who hit a wall. In some cases, a family illness or other personal challenge will affect job performance. In many situations, though, the management team has simply made the mistake of promoting someone too early or moving a manager into the wrong job.

The reset button is a parable for the life of (Discount Tire founder) Bruce Halle; in fact, it’s a normal pattern of life for most people. As a child, as a college student and as a new dad starting out in business, Halle hit dead ends and had to reboot several times. When his employees hit a wall in a similar way, he wants to give them the same opportunity he received.

Englert says the company gives its employees a wide circle of latitude and a small number of rules that allow no deviations. Steal from the company, abuse your employees, or mistreat customers, and the exit door is wide open, Englert says, “but if you’re over-promoted, that’s our mistake, not the employee’s. We can’t and shouldn’t penalize people because they can’t fulfill a role that we asked them to handle for us.”

Englert’s decision was a hard blow to his ambitious store manager, but “it gave me a good opportunity to refocus and rediscover how I felt about my position and how I had let that get away from me,” Meerschaert says today.

After less than two years in Boulder, Meerschaert had regained his momentum. Regional Vice President Richard Kuipers, who had taken over as Colorado VP when Englert moved to the corporate office, promoted Meerschaert to manager of the Grand Junction store, which Meerschaert took as a sign of immense confidence.

“The amount of trust they gave me, to take over a store that was five hours away from the regional office, knowing I wouldn’t get visited much by the regional office — that showed me they believed in me,” Meerschaert says today. He repaid that trust by building sales and profitability and, later, transforming the Fort Collins store into the highest-profit shop in Colorado.

In 2000, Tom Englert called again, this time to promote him to assistant vice president of Discount Tire’s San Diego region. In turn, Meerschaert has taken the opportunity to hit the reset button and salvage several of his own employees’ careers.

“While I was running the Fort Collins store, my senior assistant left and we had two other assistants to consider as a replacement,” he recalls. One person was excellent at details but not as strong on personality, while the other was stronger on personality and not as good at details. “Of course, we chose the person with the stronger personality, who didn’t improve on details, while the detail guy got much better dealing with people.”

Mr. Halle:

Twenty years ago while living in Scottsdale, Arizona, my father told me he always buys his tires from Discount Tire, because the guys there are honest, give you a good price and always go the extra mile to take care of the customer. Since then, as a product planner, tire marketer and salesman, I have heard many customer accounts of excellent service at Discount Tire. America’s Tire stores around the country are run by good people, all working hard to give the customer the service they deserve.

Steadfastly,
P. Hyland
Sales and Marketing Manager

Vee Rubber
PERFORMANCE TIRES
“Be fair, be truthful, work hard, be there on time, and help people”

Bruce T. Halle

Congratulations on your unwavering vision and life-long leadership in the Tire Industry.

From all of us at Dill Air Controls in Oxford, North Carolina!
After about eight months, Meerschaert switched the two, demoting his senior assistant manager to an assistant level. Ultimately, the demoted assistant, Cleveland Muller, worked his way back, taking over as manager in the same Fort Collins store where he had been demoted years ago.

Meerschaert’s current boss, San Diego Vice President Ray Winiecke, ran into the reset button in the early 1990s while working as a senior assistant store manager in Troy, Mich. “I wasn’t accountable and I didn’t take ownership when I was left in charge of the store,” Winiecke recalls today. “I didn’t treat the job like I had much to do. I was in charge. I had made it. I wanted to be friends with the workers instead of supervising them, and if I didn’t enjoy it, I didn’t think of it as critical.”

Both Winiecke and Meerschaert use their own experience as a training tool for newer guys coming up the ladder. “The choice is theirs,” Winiecke says. “This is either going to be a blip on the radar or a trail of breadcrumbs leading back to them. I can tell them this has happened to me, and now the choice is theirs. What they choose to do now is up to them.”

Meerschaert applies his own experience to help challenged managers change direction and get back on an upward arc at the company. The first step, of course, is getting those people to ask for help. “When I teach a class, one of the first things I share is that I was demoted and re-promoted,” Meerschaert says. “It always brings somebody up to talk to me at the end of the class. Guys who are struggling and in a room with a lot of guys they don’t know won’t necessarily stand up and make themselves vulnerable in front of a group, but they will if you make yourself vulnerable. It gives them a chance to connect with you, and it gives you a chance to talk to them. Whether they have been demoted or think they are in danger in one way or another, I can let them know it doesn’t have to be the end of their career. It can be an opportunity to refocus.”

Halle says the reset button is often a reflection of the company promoting an employee into a position where he is adding less value than before. Getting back to the earlier contribution

THEY SAID IT ABOUT BRUCE

“Bruce Halle demonstrates a remarkable ability to connect with employees across chasms of differences — including age, power, wealth, and status — that would stymie most business owners. As I interviewed Discount Tire employees, I was struck by the connections — not intimate, but very real — among people who live in a very different space from Halle, but identify with his journey. Michael Rosenbaum, author of “Six Tires, No Plan.”

Bruce Halle
2014 MTD Tire Dealer of the Year

Congratulations from Nokian Tyres North America

nokiantires.com
In Recognition of Your Success, Skills, Industry Knowledge and Community Involvement

Congratulations Bruce Halle, 2014 MTD Tire Dealer of the Year!

From your friends at The JD Companies
Serving Discount Tire’s Wheel needs for over 40 years
level is the most important goal when that happens, he says. “We’ve had people promoted to levels that were probably a mistake on our part, a level they couldn’t achieve at. Nice people. Good people,” Halle says. “And, of course, in our company, we don’t let them loose and say goodbye. We reassign them and they’re fine. Somebody who’s a great manager, it doesn’t mean he’s going to be a great assistant vice president, and a good AVP won’t necessarily be a good vice president. So how do you find that out? You give people an opportunity. You give them the chance to try it.

“Now, if you have a guy who’s a great store manager and you promote him to AVP and it doesn’t work for him, he’s still a valuable person to you. Use him in some other way. We’ve got many years invested in him, maybe 10 or 15 years, whatever it is. You can’t let that guy go. You’d be insane to do that.”

The reset button also encourages employees to take appropriate risks, knowing they aren’t putting their careers on the line when they agree to spearhead a new venture for the company.

When Halle established the Tires Plus Club in 1988, Jack Chambers, who had joined Halle in Michigan in 1967 and subsequently opened the Houston region for the company, was tapped to head the new venture. The experiment was a flop, and Halle pulled the plug three years later. Chambers kept his job, though, as Halle reassigned him to the corporate office to run the company’s advertising programs.

Halle sees setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow. If people learn from their mistakes and recommit to achieving more — as Halle did in opening his first store — the company would be foolish to lose their contributions. The only way to adjust effectively, he says, is to have the right person in the right job, even if it takes a while to figure out which job that is.

Rosenbaum’s book on Bruce Halle and Discount Tire can be ordered on www.amazon.com or sixtiresnoplan.com.
Tire Dealer of the Year
Bruce Halle

Liquidmetal Motorsports
congratulates
Bruce Halle
2014 Tire Dealer of the Year
‘What would Mr. Halle do?’

How Discount Tire builds a culture around its employees’ success

By Ann Neal

It starts with Mr. Halle,” says Chris Sallie in reference to the man whose influence is felt everywhere at the first Discount Tire store in the northeast Ohio market. “It” is attitude, not car count, bay turns, tire sales, or other measures of a tire shop’s business success. Says Ken Knake, assistant vice president for the region, “Mr. Halle expects everybody to be a Boy Scout and do the right thing every time, especially when nobody’s looking.”

The respect and affection the employees have for Discount Tire founder and Chairman Bruce Halle is evident. Although they are nearly 2,000 miles from the corporate headquarters in Scottsdale, Ariz., “Mr. Halle” rolls from the lips of Sallie, Knake and others at this Discount Tire store as naturally as “aspect ratio” and “TPMS.”

“We work hard,” says Sallie, who manages the store in Macedonia, a Cleveland suburb. “We have positive people with great attitudes. You work for a company that’s going to take care of you; you work for a man who’s going to provide a lot of opportunities to you.”

Sallie was looking for help with a flat tire, not opportunities, when he walked into a Discount Tire shop in 1998. He had brought a wheel that did not match his flat tire to the store. “I took in a different wheel and asked for a tire to be put on it. I didn’t understand why the wheel would not fit the car so I went back. They took care of me,” he recalls.

Values over skills

Sallie was just out of high school and knew nothing about tires. But values, not skills, guide hiring decisions at Discount Tire. The technical aspects of the job can be taught. What a potential hire expects as far as career development matters most, according to Sallie. “We’re not going to ask if you know how to change a tire, that’s not what interests us. We’re interested in people.”

The assistant manager helping Sallie 16 years ago saw traits essential to a successful Discount Tire employee: an outgoing personality and positive outlook. Sallie was offered a job as a tire tech. He accepted and began working a few hours a week while taking college classes. “I had plans of playing small-town college football,” says Sallie. “I started changing tires and having fun. I wasn’t as good as I thought at football, and I was a little better at changing tires than I thought I would be. The company just kept offering me more and more opportunities.”

Knake’s introduction to Discount Tire 20 years before was nearly identical. He was in high school in 1978 when he went to a Discount Tire store to buy a tire for a girlfriend’s car. He asked if they were hiring and was offered a tire technician job. “I felt like I belonged there and was a part of something. As time went on, I became a bigger part of it and liked it even more.”

The right time

Training emphasizes servicing customers quickly, efficiently and safely. A store’s goal is 15 minutes to service an average vehicle, but newer vehicles usually require up to 25 minutes.

The 6,930-square-foot store in Macedonia has three double bays. A Discount Tire store averages about 3,000 tires in inventory. As far as tire brands, Sallie says the store “carries everything, whatever the customer wants or needs.” The company’s press releases tout the largest tire and custom wheel selection available. Tire brands include Goodyear, Michelin, Bridgestone, Yokohama, Kumho, BFGoodrich, Pirelli, Hankook, Falken and GT Radial, along with Discount Tire’s exclusive brands such as Fisk and Arizonian. If a customer wants a tire that is not in the store’s inventory, Sallie gets it direct from the manufacturer, via a
manufacturer transfer program or from another Discount Tire store. Discount Tire also offers wheels from Enkei, Konig, Liquidmetal, TSW, Akuza and exclusive brands including MB Wheels and G-games. Wheels make up about 10% of sales, according to Sallie.

Discount Tire opened its Macedonia store in October 2013. At the time, Tim Ehinger, regional vice president, said, “Based on the market size and demographics of the area, it was the right time to open a store and serve the residents of the Cleveland area.” Macedonia is about 20 miles southeast of downtown Cleveland. A Google search shows about a dozen consumer tire retailers in the suburb.

The company says it is satisfied with the Macedonia store’s results after nearly a year in operation.

Discount Tire stores offer no auto repair services; employees focus all their attention on selling and installing tires. The Macedonia store is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday.

Discussions with employees center on doing whatever it takes to help a customer, according to Sallie. “We don’t have conversations on why did you do that for a customer. Our conversations are about what else you could have done for them.”

The corporate office in Arizona takes care of everything a store needs to function. “The entire corporate structure is set up to serve store managers,” says Sallie. Inventory, forecasts, special orders, technical support, questions about applications, TPMS and more are handled at the corporate headquarters. “If we can’t figure something out, we’re on the phone to an expert who will walk us through it,” says Sallie.

Managers are special
Sallie says store managers have the autonomy to manage their business and the responsibility to do what it takes to make customers safe and happy, including giving away sets of tires. “We have a ‘what-would-Mr.-Halle-do?’ mindset and mantra. As store managers we want to emulate Mr. Halle, as he was the first store manager.”

Managers are special to Halle, according to Knake. “Managers to him are the most important people in the company. Everybody else is here to serve our managers. We’re here to help the stores.”

Halle visited the Macedonia store about a month after it opened, during the week of Thanksgiving. Sallie says the store was “crazy busy,” but Halle focused on employees. “His first questions are...
always, ‘How are you, how’s your family?’ His last question is, ‘What else can I do for you?’ He says we do this together.”

Employees follow Halle’s example. “We’re focused on our four walls and our people,” says Sallie. “We’re a very large company, but it feels like a small company because you get so close to the people that you work with.”

As a manager, Sallie says his job is 100% employee development. “I take care of customers and I change tires, but it’s still about employee development because I’m leading by example. I want my people to treat a customer a certain way because they are the people taking care of customers. There’s no script, it’s just doing the best job we can to truly understand a customer’s needs.”

The dream

A typical Discount Tire store has one manager, one senior assistant, three to four assistant managers and several tire techs based on business levels. There are a total of 12 to 17 employees, with five or six being full time and the rest part time. However, the store in Macedonia is staffed differently to support growth in the Cleveland market. Sallie and five assistants moved from Michigan to Ohio in order to bring the company’s culture to the Cleveland stores. They hired 31 people and trained them to staff two Discount Tire stores that opened in the Cleveland suburbs of Avon and Parma Heights in September.

A new store opens up opportunities for current employees and job candidates, according to Knake. Eight tire techs in Macedonia were promoted to assistant managers when the Avon and Parma Heights stores opened. In fact, all assistant managers start as tire techs. New stores “keep the dream alive for people who want to move on,” says Knake.

“The Dream” is the title of Discount Tire’s vision statement, which says in part: “Our unique success is based on caring for and cultivating people, delighting our customers and growing responsibly.” Sallie is continuing the dream as manager of the new Discount Tire store in Parma Heights. “We’re driven to help our people succeed and pay it forward to the next group of people coming up. Our culture builds the camaraderie. It starts with Mr. Halle. From day one we have a responsibility to each other and to our customers.”

Ken Knake, assistant vice president, says integrity is the number one personality trait at Discount Tire. “We go for trust; any one of our employees can have the keys to a store.”
Welcome

Modern Tire Dealer congratulates Bruce Halle on his induction into our prestigious group of TIRE DEALER OF THE YEAR award winners

2013 Dan and Diane Hennelly, Hennelly Tire & Auto Inc., Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
2010 John Snider, Snider Tire Inc., Greensboro, N.C.
2009 Bill Ziegler, Ziegler Tire & Supply Co., Massillon, Ohio
2008 Ken Towery, Ken Towery’s AutoCare SuperCenter, Louisville, Ky.
2007 Charlie Creighton, Colony Tire Corp., Edenton, N.C.
2004 Bob and Juanita Purcell, Purcell Tire & Rubber Co., Potosi, Mo.
2002 Tom Raben, Raben Tire Co., Evansville, Ind.
2001 Larry Morgan, Morgan Tire & Auto Inc., Clearwater, Fla.
1999 Raynal Pearson, Pearson Tire Co., Richfield, Utah
1998 Tom Gegg, Team Tires Plus Ltd., Minneapolis, Minn.
1997 Walt Deatrey Sr., Service Tire Truck Centers, Bethlehem, Pa.