

I learned everything I need to know from Some Other idiot on the Internet, OR: You can only get expert advice from an expert

By Chris Alston

Before you get the benefit of my EXPERT advice you have to listen to me remind you how the universe works. It is not my intention to offend you or any particular internet experts. I just want to remind everyone that bad advice did not start when Al Gore invented the internet. And, to explain the way it is in a tone that will force you to think every time you get free advice. Pay attention you just might learn something.

There is a phenomenon in the car building world that I observe on a daily basis that just constantly reminds me knowledge and truth are in extremely short supply. As an example, let's assume you do not know how to decide what components to put on your car, so you ask someone either directly or you put a post on your favorite forum. In the "good old days", *being from that time I elect not to call it "back in the day" because I did not give some nobody the right to rename my time zone*, as your ability to ask people was directly limited by who you knew or who you could come across it was difficult to find people who knew how to answer your question. So you did what people did for centuries, you went to the library to research your subject. For those who have never turned to books for help, I will let you in on a little secret. Anything you want to know about any subject is certainly already known by someone else. Lots of those knowledgeable individuals wrote excellent books about their topic. This is how knowledge is shared and stored. It is documented then printed for others use. As this is an expensive proposition most individuals with inferior knowledge were not allowed to participate.

Libraries are very strange places. They are huge repositories of knowledge. "Ah" you say, "I would just go to the internet", but that is exactly the problem. The internet is not a grand repository of truth and knowledge. It is a repository of everything anybody wants to say with absolutely no accountability. How were you to know the professional "keyboard racer" dispensing advice that sounded so knowledgeable, does not even own a car? Or better yet, you get advice from some gunna-do whose only qualification is someone sold him a welder. He has such a high opinion of his skill set that his ego won't let him not respond with his preten-do expert advice.

This next observation is important. You can choose to ignore it at your own risk. I have been in this industry a long time and a good number of famous people you should expect to be experts are absolutely not. There should be a disclaimer, "Experts in this conversation are less intelligent than they appear." This creates a large amount of confusion as an uninformed person does not know what to believe. At least in a library the author had to convince another intelligent person, the publisher that he was qualified to write about his subject. In the online world all you need to be an expert is a keyboard and the willingness to expose your ignorance to the world.

The attempted solution to the pack of random idiots dispensing advice is to ask more of them. It seems that this generally accepted practice of surveying a group of individuals for their solution to your dilemma would be an excellent method to get a correct answer. It is exactly the opposite of what will happen. The more people you ask the more idiots are in the mix. People love to think of themselves as experts but what are their qualifications. It is a rare day when someone says, "I don't know anything about that." Their ego just won't let them tell the truth. "If you want a guess I could sure help". A books author at least would place his biography on the jacket so you could decide if his qualifications entitled him to your further consideration of his opinion. In case you're wondering my book jacket would say:

Chris Alston

"The author started his career in the automotive aftermarket in 1973 and has owned a manufacturing company ever since. He has personally been involved in the construction of hundreds of vehicles produced in house and delivered thousands of chassis kits over the years. The drag race door slammer chassis kit was invented by CHRIS ALSTON along with a large number of the industries current standard components. He wrote the first book on drag race door slammer chassis tuning. Chris Alston has been involved with the design and development of shock absorbers since 1979. VariShock is a Chassisworks brand with all its products designed and manufactured in house. Chassisworks was one of the first companies to market bolt-on g-machine suspension clips, years before pro-touring became popular. To this day Chassisworks is not just the largest manufacture of them but the only manufacture that had the design capabilities to do a clean sheet design so no products were used from OEM production vehicles. Those components are also all manufactured in house. Chassisworks is the only aftermarket chassis parts builder that has been successful in multiple markets. Chassisworks currently manufactures products for Drag Racing, Street Rods, Sport Trucks, Auto Cross, Road Racing and Pro-Touring cars. The Chassisworks product lines consist of over 8,000 manufactured items with another 10,000 purchased supporting components for those manufactured items. A total of over 18,000 items. The author has written thousands of pages of tuning guides, product instructions, technical manuals and installation articles. He has spoken to thousands of customers at chassis seminars all over the country. Chris Alston is also a recognized leader in modern manufacturing methods and automation. He has been invited to speak at numerous manufacturing industry events. The authors experience in the industry is unparalleled. He is the expert in the room."

A large number of survey takers don't actually take surveys they just keep asking people until an answer comes along that matches what they were going to do. Here is a hint for those people. If you are capable of having an original thought why don't you just get a little confidence sack-up and test your theory. If you are concerned your friends will think you're stupid without getting their advice... News Flash... "They already think you're stupid."

If you are asking for advice on the internet, you must get the person's qualifications to grade his answer. It seems every car guy on the planet has a web site with pictures of his latest "Build". It is fun to look at the pictures. Am I the only one who thinks this, or should all of them learn how to use a camera? Do

they not understand shot composition, lighting or focus? Once again, there are no standards on the internet. Just because someone posted a picture does not prove that the concept displayed was anything other than pure drivel. You wouldn't look at pictures of ugly girls. Unless it was late at night and everyone in the house had already gone to sleep. You know ugly when you look at girls. You just don't know ugly when you are seeking advice. That is what makes it so difficult. If you allow every Gunna-Do you meet to influence you with ugly pictures and conversation full of drivel, I promise, you will be unhappy.

With a survey driven decision making process the best you could hope for is the crowd's version of the truth. They call that mediocrity and that certainly won't even get you to the quarter finals. Remember years ago the great masses of the time believed the earth was flat. How is that working out for them?

My closing advice...

Remember most people don't know shit. And you will be fine.

Chris Alston