

# Behind-the-Scenes



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Friends, today I'm going to take you on a "behind-the-scenes" journey. Certainly, reading about what happens behind-the-scenes is nothing like experiencing it for yourself, but you might just hear a few things you didn't know before and it might open your eyes up to some "behind-the-scene"

opportunities in your own life. So, sit back, relax and enjoy what's to come as we travel behind a few scenes together.

Our first "out-of-this-world" destination is SpaceX in Los Angeles, CA. Never, did I ever imagine I might have an opportunity to go behind-the-scenes of any SpaceX facility, much less with the tour guide being my very own son. But friends, it happened this summer and I am here to talk about it.

Jayden, our twenty-three-year-old son, received his Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering at UW Madison last December and is currently pursuing his Master's degree in an accelerated one-year program. After completing a twelve-week internship last summer at the Tesla facility in Austin, TX, he learned that programming was an interest he wanted to pursue. So, when SpaceX contacted him for an interview, followed by an internship offer for this summer in LA, he took advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Of course, my husband and I not only supported his decision but we did what any awesome parents would do in our position—we took advantage of his opportunity too. Ha!

So, a few weeks ago we packed our bags and headed to sunny California. After landing, renting a car, and heading toward Hollywood to check into our Airbnb, I began to wonder ... coming from the Midwest, would our "out-of-this-world" experience be our tour of SpaceX or of Southern California?

During our brief trip, we managed to visit numerous popular attractions both when our son joined us and during his work hours. We rented bikes and rode from Santa Monica to Venice Beach, strolled the Venice Canals, walked over the stars on Hollywood Boulevard, caught a glimpse of the iconic Hollywood sign (from afar), cruised along Rodeo Drive, and savored incredibly tasty gluten-free cuisine. But truly, the pièce de résistance was SpaceX.

I genuinely wish I could personally guide you through the premises or share photographs of the magnificence within. Unfortunately, cameras were prohibited, and I must admit that my son's brilliance far surpasses mine, making me a less-than-stellar tour guide. Nevertheless, I can share with you some snippets of my time behind-the-scenes.

A massive American flag hung from the ceiling at the center of the facility—and while "God Bless America" lyrics sprang to my mind I was grateful to know that Elon Musk's patriotism runs so deep that he keeps a reminder of the greatness of our nation prominently displayed for all to see.

The level of cleanliness and tidiness was unparalleled—and the floors were so clean and shiny that you could simply forget about the five-second rule and just use the floor as your plate!

A used space capsule was suspended from the ceiling at the exact angle that it reentered the Earth's atmosphere—complete with burn marks from the intense heat generated during reentry.

Behind the glass elevators stood a life-sized replica of "Iron Man"—since parts of the movie were filmed at SpaceX, it is said that the creators gifted this back to Elon Musk as a "thank you".

The building featured multiple rooms, including a mission control center with an active countdown clock for the next launch, a 3D metal printing room showcasing intricate printed components that visitors could examine, and a controlled "clean room" to minimize dust and contaminants during assembly. There were also sections dedicated to testing and inspection—the extent of scrutiny each part undergoes is truly remarkable. The expansive facility also housed a manufacturing area, engineering zones, and assembly spaces—complete with substantial lifts to facilitate the movement of components.

Naturally, amenities such as a cafeteria and other conveniences for employees were present—and Jayden said that lunch is a real steal at five bucks per day!

Though we had special clearance to tour the facility behind-the-scenes, there were certain areas—including Jayden's work area and meeting rooms, that were off-limits—even to the prestigious parents of an intern. Ha! We did view the area at a distance and as Jayden was explaining the setup, it was interesting to learn that when Elon Musk visits, he chooses to work amongst his teams at a regular desk (with the highest level of computer security measures in place of course) rather than in a private office.



Following the tour, we went into another secured area outside the facility for a photo op with our son in front of the freshly repainted Falcon 9. Though a whole article could be written about the remarkable nature of the Falcon 9, here's the abridged version.

The development of the Falcon 9 rocket began in the mid-2000s and the first test flight was June 4, 2010. It has undergone several iterations and improvements over the years, with various versions being introduced to enhance its performance and capabilities.

What's cool about the Falcon 9 is that it can be used more than once. Normally, rockets are used just once and then thrown away, but the Falcon 9 can land back on Earth after its job is done and be used again. This makes going to space much cheaper. It has done many different jobs, like putting satellites in space and sending supplies to astronauts on the space station. The Falcon 9 is like a space superhero, making space missions and travel easier and more affordable.

Speaking of travel, our next behind-the-scenes destination is right here in Rochester, MN at the business of the parents of the SpaceX intern—Babcock Auto Care. I'm not talking about what happens with your vehicle from start to finish behind-the-scenes (though that might be a good article because I hear confusion about this constantly!). I'm talking about the business—and the behind-the-scenes of how it has grown and developed.

Just as the Falcon 9 has undergone several improvements over the years to enhance its performance and capabilities, so has our business. And I can guarantee Babcock Auto Care would not be what it is today without two guiding lights that have shone so brightly we have had no choice but to succeed!

For small businesses that aren't big corporations, dealerships, or franchises and lack initial guidance, where do they begin? Before opening Babcock Auto Care, my husband owned a previous automotive shop with two partners, but there was much room for growth and development in order to take our new business to the next level. So, the question arose, where might we discover the support and guidance we were seeking? Our answer became clear when we learned about ATI.

Have you ever heard of the Automotive Training Institute (ATI)? Likely not, since it's automotive-specific and you really wouldn't have a reason to learn about it if you aren't in our industry. ATI offers a range of programs and resources designed to help automotive shop owners and managers improve their business operations and enhance customer service. Their training covers areas such as marketing, leadership, customer service, financial management, and operational efficiency.

We started our relationship with ATI and our coach, Mike even before we opened our doors in 2011. Though the ATI classes and groups are extremely beneficial, I cannot begin to tell you the value that Mike has had on our business and in our lives. He is kind, caring, trustworthy, truly brilliant, motivating, empathetic, confident, respectful, and is one of the best communicators I have ever known. His mentorship, guidance, training, support, and even counseling have been invaluable to my husband and I both professionally and personally.

Additionally, the value of ATI extends to our membership in one of their 20-groups—the Peak Performers. We've been active participants in this group for a decade now. And though the group's composition has evolved, it is currently comprised of fifteen shops, each represented by one or two owners/managers, from all over the nation. Here's our group's defining statement:

As our name indicates, we are Peak Performers. We are an awesome, high-level, tight-knit group of business owners focusing on creating an operational business structure that functions on its own. We are constantly evolving, adapting to the needs of our members, and focused on the growth of each member. We also work on the growth of our individual business teams. We are a passionate and diversely skilled group committed to sharpening our skills to reach our peak potential and we work diligently to achieve our goals. Together, we share our successes, struggles, ideas, and plans in a safe, supportive environment.

Wow! Do you see the power and value of such a group? Now, imagine a successful group like this, taking time out of their busy schedules and businesses to visit each other's shops to help them see things they might not see, give fresh insights on their teams/leadership, and offer advice on improvements of the facilities, processes, and anything else discovered during the visit. The visiting shop owners also learn from the host shop and take ideas back to implement in their businesses. It's almost like having a whole group of personal trainers focused on different areas of the body to make the whole body be the best it can be, while also learning from the people they are training. Friends, it's a real win-win!

The Peak Performers came to our shop eight years ago and visited again this summer. Though we've made tremendous progress since their last visit and have grown from the help, guidance, and support we have received from them and the whole ATI community, we learned of new areas we could improve upon this summer and are dedicated to doing so.

Let me be clear, 20 groups are not for the faint of heart. It's not like plastic surgery. They don't come in and do the work for you with some nips and tucks in all the right places. They are personal trainers. They help you discover work that needs to be done, then they call you to make sure you are putting in

all of the work by eating right, drinking plenty of water, completing your cardio routines, and lifting the proper weights with the right form. It is hard work and it's work that you may not necessarily want to do. But the payoffs of such training come with great rewards. And because of their care, you can continue to improve the care you offer to your team, your customers, and your community.

Did you know groups like this existed? Have you ever wished to be a part of such a dynamic group? Would you ever seek one out to better yourself and your business, while also helping to better other people and their businesses? The majority of individuals involved in 20 groups possess a fervent commitment to their businesses, striving to optimize them. However, their aspirations go beyond that; they're motivated to assist others in achieving the same.

This reminds me of Proverbs 27:17; "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another". The members of the Peak Performers are committed to reaching higher peaks, but they know that in order to reach the summit, they need help getting there and they are committed to doing what they can to help others reach it with them.

ATI has definitely been one of the guiding lights to our success, but the other brighter Light that has guided our path "behind-the-scenes" is God.

The week before we opened Babcock Auto Care, our pastor dedicated our business to the One who brought it into existence—our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I would need to write an entire book were I to list all the ways He has worked "behind-the-scenes" in our lives, in our hearts, and in our business.

The mountains that God moved in the very beginning—making all of the pieces come together, were miracles. The people He has brought to us along the way—our ATI community, our team members, our customers, and all of our cheerleaders and supporters, have been miracles. The ways in which God has grown us—into better leaders, better owners, better spouses, better parents, better everything's, have been miracles.

Jesus has a mission for each of our lives. What's your mission? Are you fulfilling it? Do you seek the help of God and others to guide your path?

People are always talking about their purpose (or mission). Oftentimes, they expect it to be something grand—like a missionary journey to a third-world country, starting a non-profit to benefit the "least of these", or being a key influencer in some area that makes big changes in the world.

But what if your mission is ever-changing and it's grand just because it's unique to you? What if you can make a difference just by the way you serve others in the roles God has assigned you to? What if you can lift someone's spirits just by speaking positivity into their lives? What if you can help grow others into better people in all of their roles by speaking truth and modeling Christ? What if by sharpening others, you get sharpened as well—and what if you use the goodness of it all to reach higher peaks in order to accomplish the mission you were created for—loving God and serving others?

Thank you for taking this "behind-the-scenes" journey with me. May you know that you were created for a great mission—and just like the Falcon 9, you are a superhero. You don't have to do grand things to matter—the grandness is in the little stuff, the grandness is in how you treat others, the grandness is in your smile when someone is having a bad day, the grandness is in the way your support others behind-the-scenes to lift them to higher peaks, the grandness is in following the Light and sharing Him with others. If you do these things, you will achieve your mission. All praise and honor and glory to God.



**"We care for people and fix cars!"**