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VOLUME 53 | NUMBER 7
JULY 2014

TRENDING

BOYD GROUP PURCHASES COLLEX COLLISION

16 COLLISION REPAIR SHOPS IN MICHIGAN, FLORIDA ACQUIRED

COMMUNITY

MATERIALS NOT INCLUDED

ADJUSTERS ARE INCORRECTLY INFORMING SHOPS ON INCLUDED MATERIALS

MANAGEMENT

MSO CONSOLIDATION GOES FULL SPEED

BIGGER DEALS, RISING PRICES, FUTURE UNCERTAINTY SPURRING SALES



DRESSING GMA (MIG) WELDS

WE KNOW A LOT ABOUT MAKING AND TESTING MIG WELDS,
BUT WHAT ABOUT DRESSING THEM AFTER THEY ARE ON A VEHICLE?

SHOP PROFILE

Collex Collision Experts;
Clinton Township, Mich.

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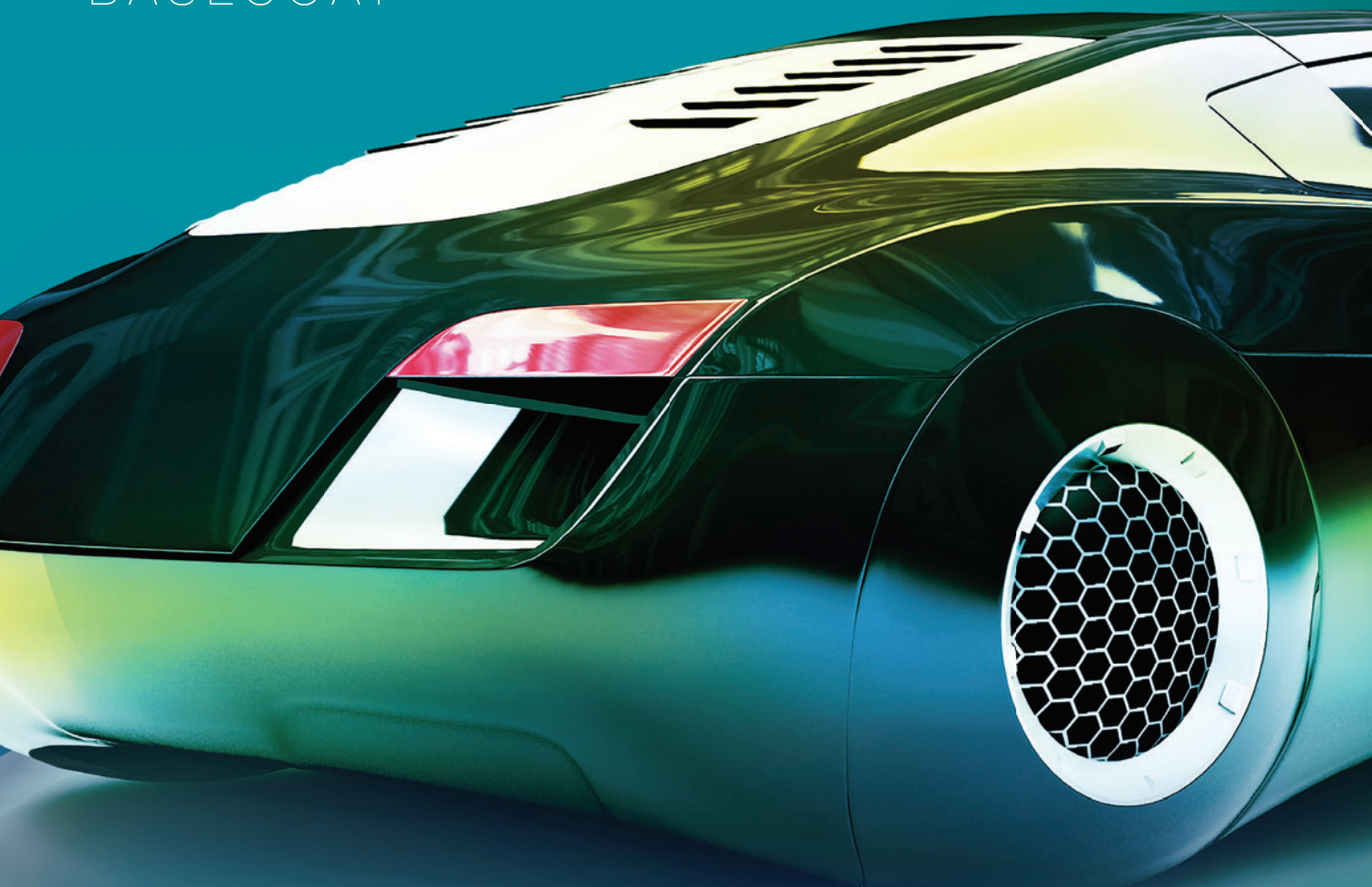
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PAINT TECHNOLOGY

NISSAN TESTS SELF-CLEANING PAINT COATING

BY ABRN STAFF

Nissan debuted a coating that repels water, mud and other substances that affect vehicle paint appearance.

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BOYD GROUP BUYS COLLEX COLLISION

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FEATURE

MATERIALS NOT INCLUDED IN ESTIMATED LABOR TIMES

BY ART HARRIS | ABRN BLOGGER

Adjusters are incorrectly informing shops that some materials are included in the labor times of the estimating system, when, in fact, this is not the case.

[COMMUNITY PULSE]

BEST OF THE BLOGS AUDIO TOP HOW 2 READER PHOTOS INDUSTRY CALENDAR MESSAGE BOARDS INDUSTRY GROUPS VIDEO WEBCASTS



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MINDING YOUR BUSINESS

CONSOLIDATION SPEEDS ON

BY DAVID ROBERTS | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

A look at consolidation in 2014, its impacts and how it is forcing the collision repair market to continue evolving.

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NITROGEN NOW!

BY TIM SRAMCIK | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

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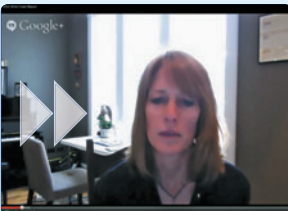
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JULY'S FEATURED VIDEO
CCC'S SUSANNA GOTSCH: 2014 CRASH REPORT

[URL ABRN.COM/CRASHREPORT]

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

PANEL DISCUSSION: Post collision repair inspections

A panel of industry stakeholders who are actively involved in post-repair inspections for consumers discuss the alarming trend of finding poor repairs, and not from small, untrained shops, but certified businesses.

[URL ABRN.COM/PRINSPECTIONS]



BLOG SPOTLIGHT

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MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS
Boyd Group purchases Collex Collision

Boyd Group Income Fund announced that its wholly owned subsidiary, The Boyd Group (U.S.) Inc., has signed a definitive agreement and concurrently closed, effective June 2, the acquisition of Collex Collision Experts Inc. and Collex Collision Experts of Florida Inc., which own and operate 16 collision repair centers in Michigan and Florida. The acquisition is expected to be immediately accretive to the Fund's earnings and cash flow. Collex generated sales of approximately \$46 million for the trailing 12 months ended January 2014.

"The acquisition of Collex demonstrates our continuing ability to add attractive multi-shop acquisitions as part of our three-pronged growth strategy," said Brock Bulbuck, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Boyd Group. "Collex, along with our previous acquisition of Hansen Collision and Glass, provides us with a leading market position in Michigan and increases our footprint in Florida. This reinforces our position as the largest multi-shop operator in North America in terms of number of locations and further strengthens our ability to serve our U.S. insurance industry clients."

Of the 16 Collex locations purchased, 13 are in Southeast

There are plenty of vehicle owners who would love to avoid cleaning mud, salt, slush, tar and other gunk off of their vehicles. Nissan may have come up with a solution with the "dirt proof" coating it is testing in Europe.

In April, Nissan released a video of its all-new European market Nissan Note, coated with a special hydro- and oleophobic paint that repels water, mud and other substances. The automaker said in a release that it planned to test the coating for its so-called self-cleaning car in a variety of conditions.

The Ultra-Ever Dry coating, sold by UltraTech International, is a two-part coating developed for industrial applications that prevents water, oil, and other substances from adhering to a coated surface. According to the

>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 12

Photos: Nissan; Collex Collision Experts



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	Model Year	Radiator*	AC Condenser*
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ILX	2013-14	\$166.65	\$133.33
ILX Hybrid	2013-14	\$166.65	\$133.33
MDX	2014	\$166.65	\$133.33
TLX	2015	\$166.65	\$133.33

*Prices listed are MSRP. Contact your local Honda or Acura dealers for details.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

BOYD GROUP PURCHASES COLLEX COLLISION

Michigan and three are in Southwest Florida. This brings the number of Boyd collision repair locations to 302 across 15 states.

"We couldn't be happier. This is a big win for all the team members at Collex Collision Experts along with our customers," said Nick Booras, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Collex. "You will continue to see the same friendly local faces that you always have."

"Paramount in this deal was the fact that the values of The Boyd Group matched those of Collex," Booras continued. "Making sure all of our customers are driving safe, reliable vehicles has been priority one for both organizations and will continue to be."

The implications of this acquisition are significant, says David Roberts, managing

director with FOCUS Investment Banking LLC. "In the past, Boyd's has tended to approach acquisitions with more modest offers and pricing. However, when they bought Collision Revision two months ago, they paid up for a platform adjacent to their strongest market. With the Collex acquisition, they have raised the bar again, not only for themselves, but for the other consolidators as well. Essentially they have paid 1x sales and likely, 7-8x EBITDA for Collex. At roughly \$3 million per shop, Boyd's has spent more on this acquisition than any previous acquisition on both a gross basis and on a per shop basis. The Collision Revision transaction of \$25 million overall was only \$1.3 million per shop."

"This is good news for MSOs who are sellers, not so good news for buyers who

are competing with Boyd's," he concludes.

From humble beginnings in 1990, The Boyd Group has grown to become the largest operator of non-franchised collision repair centers in North America. They operate as Boyd Autobody & Glass in Canada, and as Gerber Collision & Glass in the United States.

"You don't get to be number one in North America without providing excellent service and putting the customer first," said Booras. "We're proud to now be part of that same team."

Collex has served Michigan and Florida since 1975. Their AUTOWATCH software and eEstimate program allows customers to both get an estimate and watch their car through the process of being fixed, right online.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

NISSAN TESTS SELF-CLEANING PAINT

company, the surface chemistry creates geometric shapes in the coating with peaks that can repel water, some oils, wet concrete, and other liquids.

While the idea of an ever-clean car may be attractive to some consumers, it's unlikely the Ultra-Ever Dry coating will take off in the consumer sector any time soon. First, it has a matte finish that looks cloudy and white. Presently, the coating can't be tinted, although the company is actively developing a tintable version.

While Nissan is the first consumer vehicle manufacturer to test the paint, other customers have used the coating on different types of commercial and industrial vehicles. That's where the real value of the coating lies, says UltraTech

engineer Paul Sander. By using it as an undercoating on construction equipment, cement trucks, snow plows, and other vehicles, operators can reduce or eliminate the build-up of mud, dirt, and other contaminants.

"For industrial vehicles, you can prevent mud from building up in wheel wells," Sander says. "Any areas where mud and water-based slurries get built up, undersides of vehicles or mudflaps. Those would be excellent areas for the coating to keep build-up from occurring."

The two-part coating can be applied with pneumatic HVLP sprayers.

"It's the same type of application process, and you can use the same HVLP equipment you'd find in a body shop," says Jarvis Phillips, warehouse man-

ager and Ultra-Ever Dry applicator at UltraTech.

"The real challenge for the coating is exposure to ultraviolet light over long periods of time," Sander says. "Based on our North American testing, it has about a one-year outdoor lifespan."

Another problem is abrasion, which can wear the coating away over time. "We expect to see the life of the coating vary widely based on exposure to UV, abrasion, and the types of weather it is exposed to on different parts of the vehicle," Sander says.

One area the company definitely doesn't want you applying the coating: the windshield. "Because the coating is not clear, we don't recommend using it on windows and mirrors," Sander says.

SHOP CONTEST**ABRN 2014 TOP SHOPS CONTEST NOW OPEN**

BY KRISTA MCNAMARA | MANAGING EDITOR

ABRN is on the hunt to recognize the collision repair industry's best and brightest shops through our annual Top Shops contest.

You don't need to be the biggest in size or revenue to make an impact. We want to hear your story. Get started now by downloading the contest rules at ABRN.com/TopShops.

The contest runs through Aug. 29. Shop owners will be required to answer questions about their operation and submit photographs of the shop. Judges will review all of the entries, with a winner being announced this fall.

Shops from around the country will enter; 10 will be selected as finalists; but only one will be named the winner. The Top Shop will be featured on the cover of our December 2014 print issue. The winner and nine finalists will also be featured in articles in the issue, showcasing what sets these shops apart.

A few reminders about your entry:

You must enter digitally. You can send your entry on a jump drive/USB drive, or through an online retrieval site, such as DropBox or YouSendIt. Also, photos must be in the jpg or .tiff format, and must be high resolution (300 dpi or higher).



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COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY Stats & Trends

Of the **6.6 million vehicles recalled** in 2014, nearly **one third** were recalled for **airbag defects**, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.



Materials not included in estimated labor times

Adjusters are incorrectly informing shops on included materials

BY ART HARRIS | ABRN BLOGGER

It seems that more and more there are adjusters telling shops that some materials are included in the labor times of the estimating systems and this is incorrect. For example, when replacing a quarter panel and seam sealer is required, the labor for the application of seams sealer is included but the cost of the materials is not. Part of the confusion is that some of the P-Pages state seam sealer is included with replacing a part, but this is in reference to the labor of the application and not the materials. DEG website inquiry 6526 is a good example.

Replacing a body panel

I understand the cost of materials, i.e. seam sealers, caulk and adhesives, are not included in labor times, but the P-Page lists caulk/seam sealer under included items. We are being told



Art Harris

by the insurance company that because it states caulk/seam sealer under included items, this means labor and materials.

Suggested Action

Please confirm that materials for caulk/seam sealer are not included in the labor for a part, and also correct the P-Pages to state "Application of Caulk/Seam Sealer" like it does for "Adhesive:"

- Adhesive application if required (all types)
- Bolt on extensions & fillers
- Bumper and/or cover assembly R&I
- Caulk/seam sealer

Response from CCC/Motor

MOTOR stated: "After review, we have determined no material costs of any kind are factored

Continues on page 17

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Converting leads

BY TODD WESTERLUND

A new customer will almost always call you before bringing his or her car into your shop. Converting these calls into sales can be tricky, but you can increase the potential for success by establishing a game plan before the phone rings. Here are some strategies to consider when formulating your plan.

The Greeting: There are tons of shops out there with employees who answer the phones sounding grumpy, disappointed or tired. You can get an edge on the competition by being friendly, which should lead the person on the other end of the phone to be friendly in return. In addition to setting a welcoming tone, your introduction should always

mention the name of your shop, your name and the phrase: "How can I help you?" Remember to train your employees on this approach, so no matter who picks up the phone, the customer receives the same warm greeting.

The Pitch: We all know that customers like to price shop. Don't fall into that trap. Giving a price quote over the phone can set up your shop for failure if the repairs require more time or additional parts you didn't expect. Instead, sell your shop based on the value you provide - not the price of your services. If you specialize in certain makes and models, mention that expertise, as well as any warranties you offer for your work. Conveniences such as longer hours, oil changes under an hour or shuttle services can also make a difference. Don't forget

to offer a free inspection, so the caller knows you provide more bang for the buck. And last but not least, make sure you and your staff are familiar with any specials you might be advertising on your website. There's nothing worse than looking uneducated about your offerings.

Closing the Deal: Your goal should be to schedule an appointment before the caller hangs up the phone. Operate with a sense of urgency. Ask when a good time is to bring in the vehicle and provide specific options. For example, "Can you bring your vehicle in today at 2 p.m. or tomorrow at 9 a.m.?"

Always ask for contact information, including first and last name, phone number and email address. Read the information back to en-

sure you have it correct for future use. Give the caller clear directions to your shop, including the address, cross streets and any landmarks that might be helpful.

Finally, don't be afraid to follow up if you don't secure an appointment immediately, especially for maintenance services that may fall through the cracks. If you make the experience as easy as possible, you're more likely to score a sale.

An automotive industry veteran, Todd Westerlund serves as president and CEO of Kukui Corporation, a maker of marketing software solutions.

Read the full article at ABRN.com/ConvertingLeads.



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THE
SHOP OWNER

MIKE LEVASSEUR

*From Fore! to full
charity event*

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THE
FUTURIST

GREG HORN

*Embracing diesel
passenger cars*

PAGE
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MIKE ANDERSON

*Supplements are a
come back*

Materials not included - Continued from page 14

into any labor or paint estimated work times. MOTOR only provides the parts, part prices, images and estimated work times (labor and paint times). Please note the application of some materials may be included, but the cost of purchasing material is not. The cost of materials is the responsibility of the shop/repairer, which cannot be determined by MOTOR and should be

considered at the time the estimate is written. Please refer to the Guide To Estimating, page G10, Labor Time Premise for more information."

Another item to bring up is Feather prime and block. Most of the IP's consider this a re-finish operation so shouldn't the timer for FPB be in refinish? Continue reading at ABRN.com/NotIncluded.



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Noteworthy

READER FEEDBACK TO ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

Noe Flores, manager at Avenue

Body Shop asks, "Is there a way to get rid of a difficult appraiser? I work with an appraiser who will hold the job hostage for two weeks before finally sending the estimate. He will lie to my face and use the customer as an excuse to fight us on things."

Juan Martinez, manager, Autowest Collision Group:

Ban him and stop negotiating. Remember, you are the repair professional. You are fixing the car, not him. You assume all liabilities. Don't negotiate. Hand them the bill and let them figure it out. As long as you are 100 percent in compliance with all regulatory bodies, you are golden. Set that precedent and watch your business change for the better.

Truman Fancher, manager, Truman Fancher Auto Collision Repair:

Stop arguing and negotiating with insurance adjusters. They aren't part of the repair industry, and their influence should be eliminated. You and your customer are the only two people who can decide what to do to their vehicle, and only the customer can authorize any repair. It's not my job to pick over a non-repair professional's claims guesstimate. That costs me time and money.

Take control. And difficult appraisers make getting the customer to see the bad guy so much easier.

Michael Pollak, independent auto insurance claims professional:

If the appraiser cannot get his paperwork out, send your estimate to the insurance carrier and remind them they are paying for the customer's rental and that there is a storage fee involved for unnecessary delays. They can then bill him for additional costs. Sometimes it is all I can do to get my paperwork out. If I am overloaded, it is not possible. So I do not accept overload assignments.

Sean Macko, manager, Reichard Body Shop:

Work directly with the owner to get the vehicle repaired. Don't get bogged down with an appraiser who is holding up your production. In the words of Jon Tafer, "I don't embrace excuses; I embrace solutions."

Jerry Richardson, owner, Advanced Collision Repair:

Most insurance adjusters are just trying to do their job. If you are reasonable and the guy is just one of those rare jerks, you need to stand your ground.



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I-CAR's Jeff Poole explains the criticality of understanding repair techniques and their impact on structural integrity and passenger safety.
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2014 INDUSTRY CALENDAR

Q+A WITH RON OLSSON

PRESIDENT,
PRO SPOT INTERNATIONAL INC.

OLSSON TALKS WITH *ABRN* ABOUT HELPING CREATE OEM REPAIR PROCEDURES, GETTING THE BEST EQUIPMENT FOR YOUR MONEY

BY KRISTA MCNAMARA | MANAGING EDITOR



ABRN: Pro Spot and Ford worked together to create repair procedures for the 2015 F-150 and is the manufacturer's preferred vendor for repair. Tell us about this process.

RO: We've been working with Ford and other OEMs for years. We started knocking on doors in the early 90s trying to get them to recognize our repair procedures. Now, we are fortunate enough to have the OEMs contacting us for assistance with collision repair. With Ford, we've been working for quite a few years building up to the 2015 all-aluminum body F-150. The outcome is what you see now with our aluminum repair products and Ford's repair procedures for the vehicle.

ABRN: Tell us about the Pro Spot line of aluminum repair equipment.

RO: Pro Spot supplies three of the six required pieces of equipment for repairing the 2015 Ford F-150. First, our SP-5, SP-2, and SP-1, aluminum pulse MIG welders with individual torches, spools and liners weld aluminum, steel and silicon bronze. Second, the Riveter SPR Rivet Gun does rivet bonding. Third, our Aluminum Weld Station for dent extraction is equipped with a capaci-

tor discharge welder, single and large pulls for various dent sizes, all tools for aluminum dent repair, a portable ergonomic weld station and a folding work table. Ford is also recommending, but not requiring, a fume extractor to remove harmful welding fumes. Pro Spot supplies two fume extractors, a portable unit and a built-in unit for the Aluminum Weld Station. Ford is now allowing sectioning in certain areas of the 2015 F-150. For this, Pro Spot has three models of plasma cutters available, the PR-111, PR-112 and PR-113.

The amount of vehicles with aluminum in them is increasing dramatically; aluminum repair will become mainstream based on the sheer volume of F-150s being produced — 750,000 units per year. If shops want to keep up and not have to turn work and money away, shops need to step up and invest in the aluminum equipment and the training to do it.

ABRN: Aluminum repair equipment can be costly. If shops can't afford the entire line, what is most vital?

RO: The pulse MIG technology. Our SP-5 welder works on aluminum, steel and silicon bronze. Even if a shop

doesn't have aluminum jobs every day, you'll still be using the machine for steel or silicon bronze in the meantime.

ABRN: Pro Spot has also worked with Honda on MDX repair procedures and with GM, Toyota and Chrysler. Tell us more about these partnerships.

RO: We have been testing with GM on the new aluminum Corvette models and our SP-5 MIG has been approved.

Honda is coming out with a lot of the high-strength steels, and we've done a lot of testing and welding with them on existing and future models. These relationships have been growing throughout the years, as well as those with Chrysler, Toyota and others. We are very fortunate to work with these companies to help develop the equipment needed to do easier, reliable and quality repairs in the body shop.

Pro Spot is a US manufacturer solely focused on welding. We do welding for the collision repair industry. Our specialty on welding keeps us ahead of the curve on research and development. We will keep developing and making products that help this industry thrive, as we have for many years. Pro Spot is welding; Pro Spot means welding. 





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From Fore! to functional change

Golf tournament morphed from pure marketing effort to full-fledged charity event

Who knew back in 1999 that our effort to find ways to market to insurance agents would become a gateway to build a championship internal team and enhance the culture of our company? It all started by hosting a charity golf outing, with 100 percent of the proceeds going to the benefactors.

Although the focus and goal of the event changed within just a few years, our annual golf outing continues to be a highlight for our business, 16 years and counting. It brings together our industry partners, vendors and customers, and has helped us raise well over \$300,000 for charity.

Hosting a golf event is a lot like planning a wedding. There are lots of details that need to be handled to make it a smooth day. Here are the key elements to consider if contemplating this type of event at your shop.

Create a committee. Now is actually the time to start planning a golf event for next summer. Pull together three or four people within your organization to oversee the planning. Although each committee member will likely work on all aspects of the event, it is helpful to appoint one person to be in charge of each component.

Choose a date and venue. Booking a golf course well in advance is key. We started at a public course, but after about a decade, we approached a private course and found they could meet our criteria. We've changed locations only once, but we do shop it every year.

Choose a charity. From the start, we've worked with non-profits involved with helping children, such as the Make-a-Wish Foundation and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. This year, our event raised money for the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House and

Little Smiles of Philadelphia, which brightens the lives of children in hospitals and shelters. When choosing a charity, research their finances; reputable charities post what percentage of their donations are used for the organization's own administration and fund-raising efforts. Once you choose a charity, get them involved in your event planning.

Seek vendor support. Our paint manufacturer and distributor are the primary sponsors for our event. But we offer a variety of ways for vendors to get involved, from tangible donations for our auction at the awards banquet, to sponsoring a hole on the course or one of the beverage carts that circle the course.

Sign up golfers. Insurance agents and personnel are among the 120 golfers we have each year, but so are some of our customers, vendors, brokers and friends. They all pay to play, and every dime they pay goes directly to the charities (as does any leftover sponsorship money). We play scramble-style rules, so no one has to be a serious golfer. We often we hear, "I haven't golfed since your last outing."

Create some fun. We include some games throughout the day, such as a drive-the-marshmallow tournament, a putting contest against our operations manager, or a helicopter ball drop.

Line up volunteers. Some employees help with the planning process, but it's really the day of the event you'll need the most help. We need about 10 volunteers, particularly at registration. In that hour, you need to get everyone signed in with their foursomes, adjust foursomes on-the-fly, get everyone their bag of give-aways, etc. It can be a chaotic hour, but we must make it look effortless because players always tell us that it's an easy process for them.

We start midday with registration and the driving range open. As golf concludes about 6 p.m, we move inside for a reception, banquet, live and silent auctions and awards. Everyone stays until the end, a good sign that we're keeping them entertained. Like a wedding, everyone goes home happy.

Our management team and some of our employees come to the banquet for networking. They and all our employees like to see the efforts we make to help local charities. As I said, what started out for us as a marketing event is now a full-fledged charity event, which has made it much more rewarding. And it's a boost to our culture - another benefit we didn't anticipate when we started the golf outing 16 years ago. 📶

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Mike LeVasseur is president and COO of Keenan Auto Body, which has 11 shops in Pennsylvania and Delaware.





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Embracing diesel passenger cars

U.S. taxes may be hampering consumer demand for diesel vehicles

The U.S. is unique among developed countries in that consumer demand for diesel-powered cars is practically non-existent.

Sure, there are rabid fans of "oil burners," as diesel power plants are called, but they account for a small number of vehicle owners. Consequently, they simply are not offered in the U.S. by many car companies that have robust diesel sales in other countries.

So why don't Americans like diesel, despite their reputation for exceptional fuel economy? Many blame the ill-fated General Motors Oldsmobile and Cadillac modified gas-into-diesel engines of the late 1970s. The fact that those models self-destructed after fewer than 30,000 miles may well have scared off Americans from diesel power. Others say the old diesels that belched exhaust like a smoke screen from a James Bond car and accelerated like an arthritic snail left a long-lasting negative impression as well. While those two factors undoubtedly steered generations away from diesel, our federal and state governments' tax rates also play a role in limiting diesel's acceptance.

The United States federal excise tax on gasoline is 18.4 cents per gallon and 24.4 cents per gallon on diesel fuel. On average, as of January 2013, state and local taxes add another 30.4 cents to each gallon of gasoline and 30 cents to diesel, for a total US average fuel tax of 49.5 cents per gallon for gas and 54.8 cents per gallon for diesel.

The United States is one of the only developed countries where diesel costs more at the pump than regular unleaded gasoline, despite the fact that diesel costs less to refine than unleaded gasoline. So, if it costs less, why is it taxed

more and why, when prices fluctuate, does it not rise or fall at the same rate that gasoline does?

The theory behind the different taxation stems from the fact that the U.S. still views diesel as the fuel of heavy trucks, and heavy trucks cause more damage and wear and tear on the highway infrastructure. To compensate for the added wear and tear, the excise tax is higher. In addition, refineries don't produce diesel #2 for passenger cars in the same volume as unleaded gasoline. This keeps U.S. diesel prices higher than in the rest of the world. It also means that the rate of replenishment differs at fuel stations, causing the price of diesel to change at a different rate than unleaded gas.

This is unfortunate and short sighted. Modern diesel cars behave much differently than those we remember from the 1970s. Diesels today are reliable (including the Opel-based GM diesel engine offered in the Chevrolet Cruze) and offer great torque and acceleration. They are also significantly easier on the ears both inside and outside the vehicle. Gone too are the soot-laden exhaust fumes; today's diesels have been re-engineered to burn cleaner and, for larger diesel engines, each manufacturer has developed a urea injection system. (Smaller Jetta diesels don't require urea injections). The urea additive adds some complications to diesel vehicle ownership since the tank resides in the truck and sprays the exhaust to lower emissions output, creating a "clean diesel." However, the tank must be refilled every 10,000 miles or so, and while it's not expensive (about \$30 for the liquid and is DIY friendly), if you ignore the warnings about the tank running low, the car will not start if the urea tank runs dry.

So, will it change? If the lobbyists for BMW, Mercedes, VW and GM are successful in their lobbying efforts for a fairer tax rate, running diesel will offer a bigger financial advantage. It's an advantage that could potentially be better than hybrid running costs. That should bring buyers interested in high mileage and low-running costs into dealerships. My advice is to start educating yourself about diesels, because I think we'll be seeing more of them soon. ☞

"DIESELS TODAY ARE RELIABLE AND OFFER GREAT TORQUE AND ACCELERATION. THEY ARE ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY EASIER ON THE EARS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE VEHICLE."

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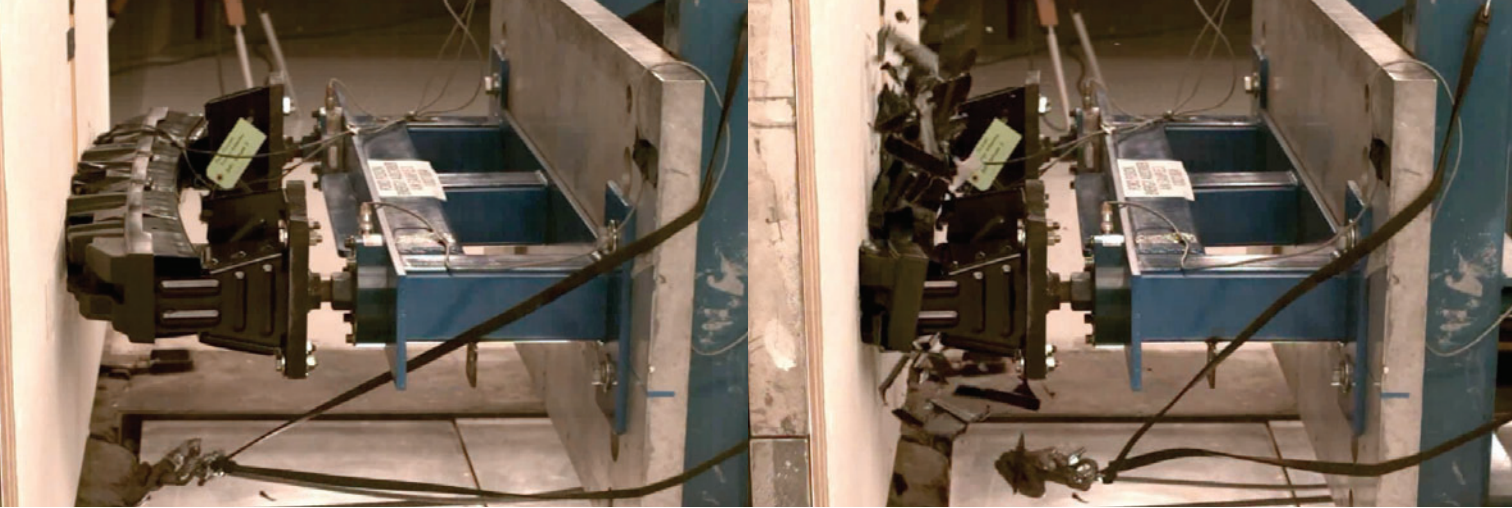
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Greg Horn is vice president of industry relations for Mitchell International.





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MSO CONSOLIDATION GOES FULL SPEED

BIGGER DEALS, RISING PRICES AND UNCERTAINTY FOR THE FUTURE ALL SPURRING SALES IN 2014

BY DAVID ROBERTS | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

SPURRED by dramatic growth of large consolidators, as well as many regional and local MSOs, consolidation continues to evolve and impact the collision repair industry. Let's take a look at the numbers on acquisitions, valuations and markets.

Ownership in transition

In the past 24 months, nearly \$3 billion of sales volume in the collision repair industry has changed ownership. The industry transition has not been limited to one type of buyer or seller. Consolidators have sold to large private equity firms, large family-owned businesses have sold to strategic buyers, and a variety of large and medium size MSOs have been acquiring smaller players in hopes of creating attractive platforms for their own growth. This wave of acquisitions is dramatically changing the face of the industry.

The Numbers

In the first five months of 2014, the 4 top consolidators have acquired or opened 163 shops, including Boyd's recent purchase of Collex. This is on top of 179 shops acquired or opened in all of 2013.

Why this sudden acceleration? Bigger deals, rising prices

and uncertainty about the future have combined to spotlight how consolidation is accelerating. But why now?

- **Capital is cheap, especially for the consolidators.** With Carlyle's and OMER's extraordinarily deep pockets, Gerber's access to the public markets, and ABRA's ability to attract additional investment seemingly at will, acquisition capital has been widely available at very attractive rates.

- **Plenty of targets are available.** There are more than 44 MSOs with \$20 million or more in revenues with another 110 between \$10 million and \$20 million. Many of their owners are taking advantage of the opportunity to realize a liquidity opportunity that may never present itself again.

- **Insurers are rewarding size with volume.** Large insurers have increasingly rewarded the best performing consolidators and large MSOs with more volume. Cars are repaired faster, with less hassle, and more predictable costs and quality. Customers are satisfied and score consolidators and larger MSOs well on almost every measurement of satisfaction over industry averages.

- **Scale has rewards.** For large operators, the increased volumes enable them to increase their margins, their total EBITDA and continue to make the investments that improve their performance for insurers. And as they improve, insurers send them more volume.





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Consolidation rewards large consolidators and MSOs, investors, insurers and their customers.

When will it end? In our estimation, the current explosion of transactions will continue for several more years, but volume and prices may taper off over time.

In a \$31 billion industry with 34,000 shops, approximately 26 percent of that volume is concentrated in 2,500 shops owned by 170 entities. However, \$23 billion is still produced in the remaining 31,500 shops. We expect the larger entities will be relentless in their growth because their investors want growth in volume, which leads to growth in EBITDA, which leads to higher values for their investments.

While the largest consolidators will continue to acquire attractive MSOs, over time we expect to see more investment in brownfield opportunities. Once these larger players have established their platforms, management teams and DRP relationships in attractive markets, they will recognize that bringing their relationships, purchasing advantages and management skills to large, well-located brownfields will produce higher returns on capital. We expect they will then compete less aggressively for shops in more fully penetrated markets and valuations will likely decline.

The 10 largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), including Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Atlanta, are so huge that the number of acquisitions required to have a significant impact is daunting for even the largest consolidators. Certainly, Caliber has significant penetration of Los Angeles and Dallas Ft. Worth, while Gerber has significant penetration in Chicago and Atlanta. ABRA has deeply penetrated Atlanta and Seattle. While Service King is heavily invested in Houston and Dallas/Ft. Worth, it is much more broadly diversi-

fied in other markets. Consolidators have found it easier to penetrate those MSAs below the top ten such as Charlotte, Nashville, Denver, Austin and Seattle. We expect continuing acquisitions in all of the top 100 MSAs in the coming months and years. However, as these markets become more deeply penetrated by multiple consolidators and large MSOs, we expect acquisition activity will increasingly shift to smaller markets.

Acquisition valuation drivers

Ever since the Caliber acquisition by OMERS in November 2013 at an alleged 11x multiple of EBITDA, the industry has been awash in speculation about purchase prices. Operators are asking "What am I worth?" or "What should I pay for someone else?" The answer? It depends.

Valuations of MSOs acquired by consolidators have been driven by five key characteristics of the acquisition targets:

1. Total revenue and number of production locations
2. Reconstructed EBITDA as a percentage of total revenue
3. Geographic market size and attractiveness
4. Market share
5. Strength of management team

Other important factors include production capacity, reinvestment requirements and DRP relationships.

At the larger end of the spectrum, consolidators focus on platform acquisitions (those with numerous locations) to enter attractive new markets. This allows the consolidator to quickly achieve scale within those markets and add existing management teams capable of adapting to their cultures, systems and processes.

A prime example is ABRA's recent platform acquisition of Wilburn's in Charlotte, NC. Charlotte is a fast growing, unconsolidated market of 2.3 million

people with one Sterling shop and two Gerber shops. Wilburn's 13 stores had a market share of roughly 25 percent of this \$200 million market. While EBITDA margins, management and DRP relationships were average for the region, ABRA paid a reputed high, but not startling, multiple for a market-dominating platform with average store volumes of more than \$3 million and substantial expansion capacity.

Similarly, Boyd's acquisition of Collex Collision's 13 shops in Southeastern Michigan at nearly 100 percent of revenue, attests to the critical value of a market-leading platform. With the Hansen's acquisition in 2012, Boyd's is the dominant MSO in Michigan with no other MSO remotely close.

For large MSOs in the \$20 million to \$120 million range that are acquiring smaller MSOs and single shops, acquisition prices are substantially less. First, the availability of targets is greater and the sellers are more flexible. Many sellers in this category are looking for a retirement exit and are willing to help finance the sale.

Smaller MSOs and single shop operators are also increasingly looking to merge their businesses with comparable entities in order to increase their scale, management capabilities and impact in their markets. Rather than pure buyouts, these deals are often combinations of entities with a variety of liquidity terms including long term leases, earnouts and consulting arrangements.

Value vs. price

The valuation drivers mentioned above affect actual price, but nothing drives price more than competition among multiple potential buyers. The most noticeable example of this was the competition to acquire Caliber. That transaction was extraordinary for a number of reasons – scarcity value, quality of management, total revenues, a disciplined expansion strategy and a successful track record over many years. But perhaps the most important factor was an auction process that created multiple offers from private equity groups (PEGs). With more than 10 PEGs looking at Caliber, the highest bidder prevailed at a price much greater than anyone expected – because of competition!

Smaller sellers are beginning to engage in the same competitive process. In

Consolidator	Unit Growth 2013	Unit Growth 2014	Total	Growth since Year End 2012
ABRA	51	37	88	77%
Boyd	40	45	85	47%
Caliber	46	16	62	55%
Service King	42	65	107	170%
Total	179	163	342	73%



the past, many relied on their personal relationships with acquisition executives at the consolidators and other MSOs, resulting in “exclusive” discussions that prevented the sellers from creating any real competition. This is rapidly changing as quality sellers recognize their value is enhanced when they engage in a process to bring multiple buyers to the table at the same time. Potential buyers don’t walk away from attractive sellers simply because they have some competition. They “sharpen their pencils” and stay engaged in the process.

Recent prices

The actual prices paid are closely guarded by acquirers and sellers – for good reason. Acquirers don’t want the prices they have paid to drive up prices in the future. Sellers are bound by confidentiality agreements by their acquirers.

Despite all the speculation about the stunning price that a consolidator may have paid for some platform MSO in a critical expansion market, deal prices in general are not absurdly high. From our industry research and without disclosing any confidential information, we can summarize activity in the past 15 months as follows:

- Highest prices paid are in the 6.5 – 7.5x reconstructed EBITDA range. These are very rare transactions and the targets are market-dominating platforms in attractive markets with high EBITDA percent and management with senior leadership potential for the acquirer.

- Prices are closer to the 5.5 – 6.5x reconstructed EBITDA range for MSOs with significant market presence, high quality operations and significant tuck-in or bolt-on potential.

- Smaller one-off acquisitions are in the 3.5– 5.5x reconstructed EBITDA

range, generally paid for single shops with limited market leverage, average quality operations but complementary to existing shops in the market.

- Asset value purchases, often at depreciated values, are usually single shops with little or no EBITDA, primarily acquired for their location, asset or capacity value.

So what is your business worth? And what should an acquirer pay for someone else’s business? It depends on how many bidders are vying for the business, the direction of the business’ performance, the quality of its management, the amount of improvements an acquirer has to invest in, and so on. “It depends.” 📧



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David M. Roberts is managing director of FOCUS Investment Banking and team leader of its Automotive Services Group, which provides strategic and merger and acquisition guidance. He is also co-founder of Caliber Collision, the world’s first consolidator and now its largest collision repairer.

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ALL IT TAKES IS SOME TRAINING AND
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ESTIMATE INTO A REPAIR ORDER

BY KEVIN MEHOK | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

EACH OF US are consumers. In an average day, we are bombarded by endless advertising, which gives us reasons why one particular product is better than another. Radio, TV, the Internet, social media, newspapers — everywhere we turn, someone is trying to sell us something.

Sales are a huge part of every industry, including ours. Also in every industry are choices and a great deal of competition. Some items or services are easy to sell because they are something consumers may need or want every day — for example, Coca Cola.

In Coke's market, there are many choices: Pepsi, RC Cola, Tab, Diet Rite, and many more. Why buy Coke over other brands? It tastes good, but much of the reason consumers buy it is based on emotion and how the advertisements make them feel.

Can we use emotion to help sell our services? Absolutely! Services we offer as collision repairers are needed less often than everyday items like Coke. Therefore, it is extremely important that when a customer comes into your shop needing

repairs, you do everything possible to capture the sale. Unfortunately, most of us don't get taught how to do that. We generally provide the customer with the requested estimate, and hope they pick our shop over the competition.

However, hoping for success won't get you very far. So let's look at some tactics that will help you close the sale. Always keep in mind what you look for as a buyer, and try to provide those same things to your potential customers.

Measure and track your success

You cannot successfully improve unless you track and measure your performance. Think about a runner — they time themselves during a run. The next time they run, the idea is to improve on that original time by exercising more, losing weight, etc. The only way they can tell if they are getting better is to measure their performance and try to improve on it.

You need to do this with regard to your sales. Track opportunities by comparing the number of estimates you write in a given time period against the number of those estimates that are converted into repair orders.



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If you use a management system, you should have the ability to track this now, but if you don't, use a spreadsheet to keep track of the numbers. You have to consider every estimate as an opportunity.

Understand customer needs

Daily, your potential customers may visit your shop and say they need an estimate. Your potential customer doesn't need an estimate; they need to get their damaged car repaired. Giving them an estimate is part of it, but just a part.

Your job is to get the keys, sell the job, fix the car, however you want to say it, not provide estimates!

The customer knows they need to get their car fixed, but the insurance company may have told them they need estimates. Your job is to educate the consumer about their situation, and explain how you can help them resolve it.

Think of our industry in comparison to others — I look at the restaurant business. Sometimes a great-tasting sandwich or burger is OK, for an everyday meal. But when you want something special, (kind of like the collision shop visit, once in a while) you want to go to the nicest place in town with unbelievable service. Think about how you feel when you are there. You are important and treated like royalty. It's a little out of the way, and maybe a bit pricey, but wow, it's just great to go there.

Now, let's leave this wonderful picture and think about the reality of your shop. Is it the cleanest place in town? Do you treat your customers like royalty? Do they feel great just walking in your door?

Probably not. The atmosphere that you provide your customers is one of your greatest sales tools. You don't have to have the biggest or most modern place in the world, but it can easily be the cleanest and most comfortable. You can be the most gracious host, and greet all of your guests with a smile and a warm welcome. Make them feel

good to be there, that you are there to solve a problem. You are the solution they are looking for.

In general, anyone looking for a collision repair who walks into your shop believes you can do a quality repair. They wouldn't even come in if they didn't already think that. No one believes that you are going to do a poor job repairing their vehicle. Quality isn't as important as the emotional part of the sale. Obviously, all of us know how important quality is, so it cannot be discounted; however, my assumption is that if you are reading this, your shop already focuses on quality work and performs it as a matter of routine.

Does your favorite restaurant have dirty floors, junk laying all over, dirty menus piled in the corner and poorly trained people waiting on you?

I doubt it. But it is entirely possible your shop has these things, and maybe worse. Look at your facility when you go in the morning after reading this. Look around with your eyes wide open. Really critique what you see. Would you, as a consumer, feel comfortable walking into your facility and trusting whoever waits on you with your brand new car?

If the answer is no, then you have to make some changes in order to grow in this increasingly competitive marketplace. I am not advocating renovating your whole place and going into huge debt to create a nicer shop. Your building and budget will certainly dictate what you can do, but cleaning and getting more organized costs very little, and can net great results.

I also believe you have to make your facility kid and women friendly. Auto repair has traditionally been an area ruled by men, but this has changed dramatically over the years. Women have to feel comfortable coming into your shop, especially with kids in tow. Many places have an area dedicated to kids, much like doctors offices have had for years. This is easy to do, and doesn't have to be expensive. Chalkboards and dry erase boards are fun

for kids, and easy to maintain.

Use your imagination and have fun with this. Set up a small area for kids, and moms will love it.

Take some classes

It is really important for you and all of your staff to take some sales training classes. Estimators in a modern shop are not really estimators, they are sales people with technical ability. The position has always been geared towards sales, but is now even more so. Believe me, the big groups in your area already know this, and are working on it daily. In order for you to compete on a more even field, you have to get on board.

Every large paint manufacturer offers classes in closing sales, and they are often free. Talk with your paint company rep to see what they offer. I think you will be pleasantly surprised. I have been through many of these offerings, and they are really quite good, and usually are only one or two nights of classes.

You can also get training through organizations like Dale Carnegie in just about any area of the country. I know of several class offerings that are outstanding for any potential sales person.

The worst thing you can do is nothing. The sooner you take action, the sooner you will become better. Always keep in mind how you as a consumer want to be treated. If you do so, and treat your customers that same way, you cannot fail. 📧



Kevin M. Mehok is CEO of CrashCo Collision Centers, a division of Auto Care Collision Group, Inc. In his more than 30 years of experience in the collision industry, he has worked with CarCare Collision Centers and Collision Centers of America. He also served in an executive level position with Collision Team of America, Gerber and several other Chicago-area consolidators.

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PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Adding a sales rep to your team

Turn your estimators, repair planners into advocates for your shop and service

BY TOM MCGEE | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I conduct several shop owner events across the country every month. When I ask, “How many of you have a sales representative on your staff?” almost none raise their hand. In fact, they all do! By definition, a sales representative is a person employed to represent a business and to sell its merchandise.

We use titles such as repair planner or estimator for the person who creates and presents an estimate to the vehicle owner. With continuous change in systems, vehicle construction materials and new vehicle technology, this is a challenging position that requires expertise in many areas. In many shops, we tend to overlook that one of the estimator’s major responsibilities is to sell.

Typical sales process

Every day, vehicle owners come into a shop and need an estimate. So “Bob” will disappear outside to look at the car, enter the visible damage into the computer and hand over the estimate. Bob will commonly say, “Call your insurance company and find out what they want to do,” or “Call when you decide if you want your vehicle repaired.” Bob never even asks for the keys!

A typical process you would find in any sales environment would have several stages. For example:

Lead. A lead is any person or business that needs your services. Leads are generated through your marketing efforts — handing someone a business card, contacts made at a community event, a visit to your website or social media pages, or through a referral. An opportunity is created anytime

a vehicle owner calls or walks into the shop asking about a service that you offer.

Discovery. This is a time for the estimator to gather information on contact numbers, insurance company, accident details, frequency and type of communication the customer would prefer (phone, email, text, etc.), and how they selected your shop. Discover what their needs are, show empathy and build a relationship and trust with the vehicle owner. Ask open-ended questions such as, “When is the best time to have the vehicle repaired?” or “Can you bring the vehicle in Thursday morning?” These types of questions give you insight into your potential for closing the sale.

Presentation. Explain the benefits of selecting your shop — prepare a 30-second speech that shows you care about the customers, why other customers prefer your shop and the benefits they gain by allowing you to repair their vehicle. This is also a great time to get the commitment from the owner that they will allow you to repair their vehicle so that you can do a complete teardown before generating an estimate. If you present an initial estimate in this phase, explain it in terms they will understand.

Close. This can be the hardest part for estimators, most of whom have little to no sales training. The close is asking for the sale. Some customers will want an initial estimate; but if you can get the sale before you write the estimate, you will be that much more efficient in the repair process. If you have to write one, try to get a confirmation that you will be getting the sale before you write the estimate.

Overcome objections. Listen closely to everything the vehicle owner is saying. Listen to the objection, then formulate your response and educate the vehicle owner.

Communication. If you didn’t close the sale, you need a process to follow up, either to schedule the repair or to find out why they did not select your shop. During the repair process, communicate with the customer at the frequency they prefer and use their preferred method. If there are delays, inform them. At delivery, go over the vehicle and review the final invoice. Also follow up after delivery to make sure they are satisfied with the repair and service.

Measure your opportunities

Measure all sales opportunities and closed sales. If you don’t measure it, you don’t know how you are doing. Measure by estimator and as a business.

We have created a great interactive tool to help you calculate the additional revenue you can gain by focusing on your close ratio. Try it free for a limited time by going to www.atonlinetraining.com/abrn1407. It also makes a great tool for training and coaching your staff on how the work they do makes a difference to the business. ■

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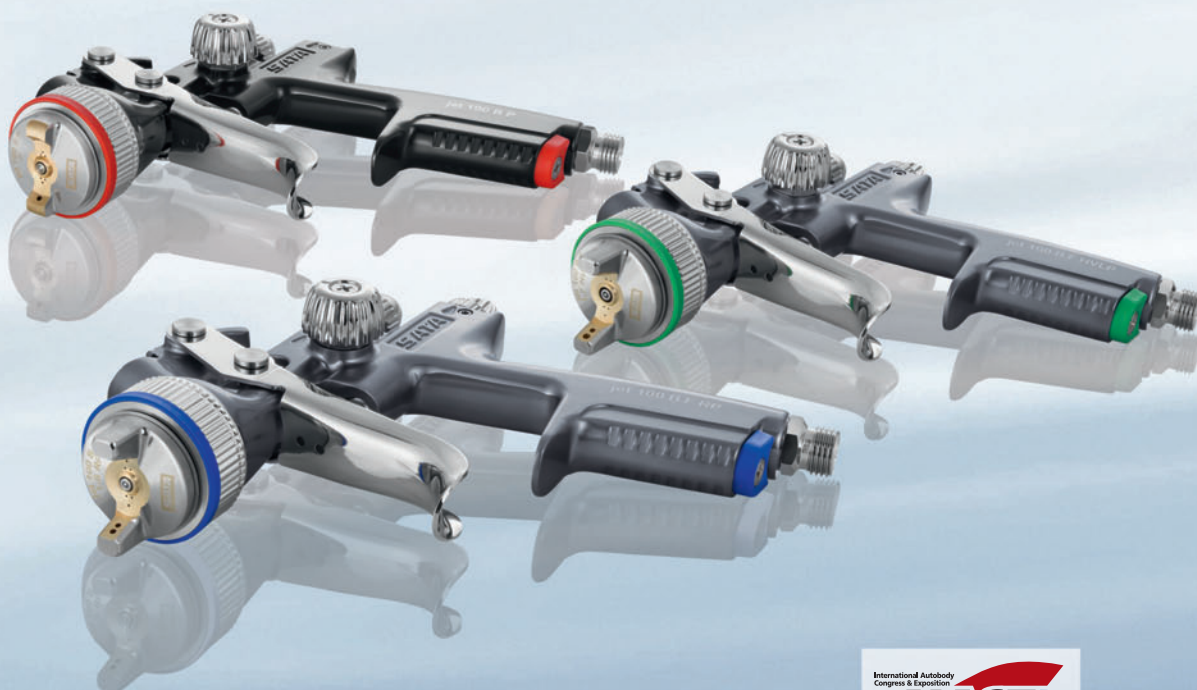


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SATAjet 100 B F HVLP 12.4 cfm @ 29 psi	1.4	146373	147447	146399	146381
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SHOP PROFILE

A snapshot of one of the industry's leading shops

COLLEX COLLISION EXPERTS / CLINTON TOWNSHIP, MI



North and South

Partnerships prove successful for duo-state chain

BY JAMES E. GUYETTE | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Based in Clinton Township, Mich. with 14 locations in the Great Lakes State and three in Florida, the family-owned Collex Collision Experts is tightly focused on forming partnerships. Insurers, vendors and customers are all viewed as partners throughout the entire repair process.

Editor's Note: At press time, the acquisition of Collex Collision Experts by The Boyd Group was announced. Please see page 12 for more details on the purchase.

"To sum it up in one word, it's *listening* – sizing up the goals of the organization," says Nick Booras, vice president of sales and marketing. From ownership on down among the 300-plus employees, the entire company keeps an ear close to the ground to ensure they deliver the best outcomes for everyone involved.

Included in this strategy is an ongoing adherence to the 5S Lean Process. Originating with manufacturing executives in Japan following World War II and known as Kaizen, meaning continuous improvement, the concept roughly translates as sort, set in order, shine, standardize and sustain. Famously applied to the automotive industry by Toyota, the five-step concept aims to reduce waste and streamline operations to ultimately increase efficiency and productivity.

"When we adopted it, we went through the history of it, and we've done very well with it. It separates us from the competi-

tion," Booras says. "We have standard operating procedures that have proven to be very efficient, so we can come in at a good price point," he explains. "It's proven itself time and time again with the results."

Being keen on lean drives a cooperative spirit in dealing with the 23 direct repair program (DRP) affiliations and other insurance providers. "We want to help lower the car rental cost, lower the claim cost and increase customer satisfaction, which in turn increases policy retention" for the carriers.

"With our insurance partners, we tailor to their needs and keep them well informed," says Booras. "We also make sure our employees understand what is important to our insurance partners and that we have done everything we can to go above and beyond the vehicle owner's expectations."

Making use of in-house conference facilities, the company conducts continuing education courses for insurers along with presenting an array of the latest training programs for the staff, which holds ASE Blue Seal certifications and meets numerous OEM and industry gold standards.

AT A GLANCE

Collex Collision Experts

Name of shop

Clinton Township, Mich.

Headquarters location

John, Rick and Rob Gagliano,

Grace Lopez

Owners

17

No. of shops

39

Years in business

300-plus

No. of employees

23

No. of DRPs

7.7 days

Average cycle time

Ranges from 6,500 to 31,000

Square footage of shops

Sherwin-Williams

Paint supplier

Chief, Celette

Frame machines used

CCC One

Estimating system used

www.collex.com

Website

When a worker is hired, he or she begins their career at the state-of-the-art training center. "In addition to their individual specialized training, all new employees are taught the importance of customer satisfaction. Doing whatever it takes to please the customer is stressed from the first day," he notes.



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“They’re always educating themselves in working on tomorrow’s cars,” Booras reports. “Our employees need to know what they’re doing and stay in tune with that, and that’s very challenging because there’s a lot of courses that you have to go through.”

Citing statistics that a given driver typically experiences a wreck every seven to nine years, he observes that “it’s like going to a doctor’s office – you don’t want to go very often, but when you do, you want to see the certificates on the wall.”

Continuous improvement carries through to making the repairs as painless as possible regarding the comfort levels of today’s drivers. “Their expectations in the lobby are different than in the past. They don’t want to sit around waiting, they want WiFi and a thorough explanation of what’s going to happen to their vehicle,” he points out.

Out on the shop floor, waterborne paint is applied to assure that each customer’s vehicle gets the finest finish. “It was not terribly difficult to switch to; our management really understood the investment,” Booras recounts. “We had a good partner in Sherwin-Williams, and when we went through it, we made sure the leadership was all on board with it.” Sherwin-Williams experts were at every location on a daily basis to ensure that the painters were at ease, fully versed and confident in the process.

With laser alignment machines, downdraft paint and bake booths, computerized estimating systems and much more, Collex remains always on the cutting edge.

Sound decision making

It was in 1975 that founder, CEO and President John Gagliano opened his first body shop in Warren, Mich. A decade later came his second shop in Sterling Heights, Mich. The company name was changed from Gagliano’s Auto Craft to Collex Collision Experts as the business continued to expand into new territories under the forward-thinking direction of John and his siblings: Rob Gagliano is the chief operating officer, Rick Gagliano is president of human resources and Grace Gagliano Lopez serves as chief information officer.

A full-time, three-member information technology department is continually developing and refining systems and programs to keep Collex ahead of competing shops. An in-house-designed management system provides what is described as “incredible data, which allows company managers to make sound decisions and efficiently operate the business.”

“The company’s growth is directly attributable to its high quality of workmanship, excellent customer service and the company philosophy combined with its code of conduct,” says Booras. “The motto, ‘Doing nice things for people and the cars they drive,’ is more than the company slogan, it’s the company philosophy.”

This mindset is further enhanced by “staying committed to our standard operating procedures and our value statement of always treating our customers and each other with honesty, respect, trust and excellence – ‘love your neighbor as yourself,’” according to Booras.



COO Rob Gagliano with his 1970 Corvette at the 2014 Detroit Autorama.

Photo: Anne Nicolazzo



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He notes that fewer young people are entering body shop careers so the company associates with several technical schools and earlier this year sponsored Student Career Day at the 2014 Detroit Autorama. Efforts included a raffle at the display, with a spray gun and cordless tools being awarded as prizes.

"We're making sure we're educating the leaders of tomorrow in this industry. The Autorama was a great recruiting event for us," Booras says. "It was incredible; 650 people a day came by our booth – it was pretty exciting."

Among the sought-after qualities is a desire to learn and succeed. "As long as they're coachable, they're promotable. We look for a great attitude and a good heart."

More than 70 percent of the sales come through referrals and repeat business, emphasizing the importance of providing the best in customer service. The endeavor is augmented by an aggressive advertising program covering radio, television, strong Internet initiatives, sports sponsorships and charitable contributions.

The company's support of Detroit's professional hockey team is especially effective. "The Red Wings are an important partner of ours. We're trying to be the leader in our industry every day, and so are they in their industry. There are a large percentage of people here who are Red Wings fans, and the two pair up really well," says Booras.

"We make sure we're engaged with the community. We've served almost a million customers, so it's easy to be connected," he continues. "TV is good for brand awareness when we're launching a new store or advertising campaign."

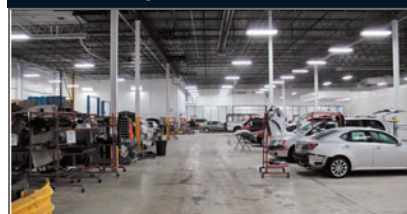
Radio spots air on a shifting variety of formats depending on the type of promotion in play. Sports talk is a consistent winner and oldies stations are a good driver when Collex's involvement with the famous Woodward Dream Cruise is being highlighted. "The Christian Radio Network down in Florida has been an important partner of ours as well."

Yet the online aspect generates the most intriguing returns, according to Booras. "Who is in front of that TV is a guess – who is in front of their computer is known. It's a captive audience, digital tends to be more of an engagement – they're interested in what we have to offer."

With company apps available for posting on cell phones and tablets, "mobile is



The company conducts continuing education courses for insurance personnel.



the way that everything is heading," he reports. "We're on all the social platforms and we're targeted geo-specific to every community that we serve. It's good to keep people informed on other things, too, such as preventative maintenance and safety."

Booras goes on to reference the company's history as being a top performing repair destination. "We have longstanding relationships going back for well over 30 years, and that really helps with the marketing."

When Collex began expanding into Florida in 2007, it became apparent that this positive reputation was on the move in the Sunshine State.

"We have a lot of Michiganders in Florida," he says. "Our dealership and fleet partners recognize our name from Detroit, and they like to spend their winters there and return here (for the summer months)."

Year-round Floridians are impressed by John Gagliano's decision to settle in the area, which brings home the point that "you've got some skin in the game and you want to service them." 📶



James E. Guyette is a long-time contributing editor to ABRN, Aftermarket Business World and Motor Age magazines.

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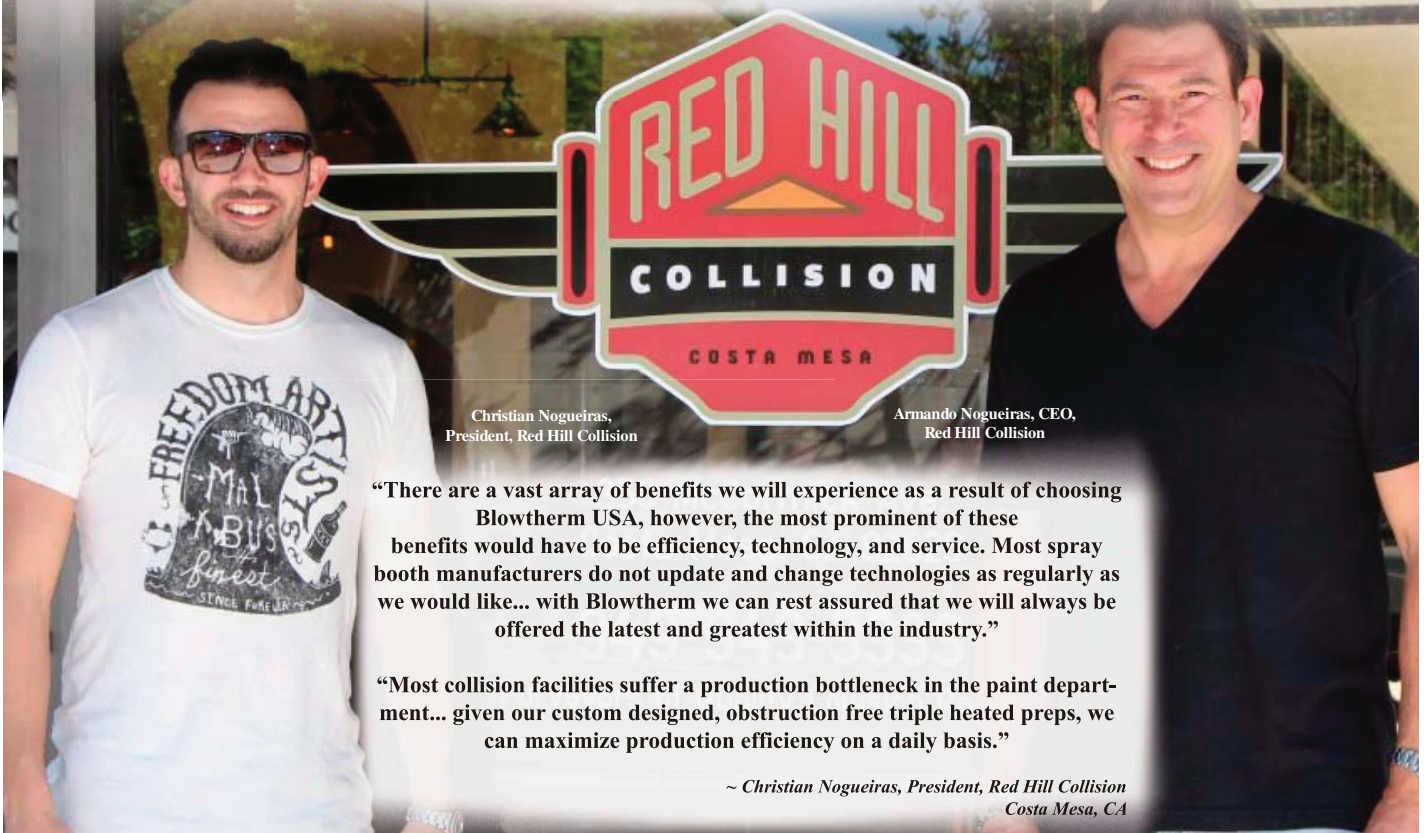


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Armando Nogueiras, CEO,
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Red Hill Collision is located at 350 McCormick Avenue, Costa Mesa, CA. “...We plan on opening multiple locations throughout the Southern CA area ... all utilizing Blowtherm USA prep stations, spray booths and mixing rooms.” ~ Armando Nogueiras, CEO



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1

DRESSING GMA (MIG) WELDS

WE KNOW A LOT ABOUT MAKING AND TESTING MIG WELDS,
BUT WHAT ABOUT DRESSING THEM AFTER THEY ARE ON A VEHICLE?

BY **JASON BARTANEN** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

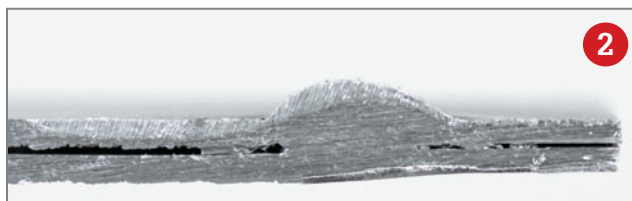
There's a lot of information in the field on making and testing GMA (MIG) welds, but not too much on dressing the welds after they're made on a vehicle. Any GMA (MIG) usually requires dressing the top surface of the weld.

Does dressing reduce strength?

There is a belief by some that dressing a weld reduces the strength of that weld. If you look at a cross-section of an undressed plug weld, it looks similar to the shape of a blind rivet, with the crown of the weld the head of the rivet (**FIG. 1**). Once the weld is dressed, it would be like grinding off the head of the rivet. Is the joint as strong? With a rivet,

the answer is no, but then again, a rivet is not fused to the metal around it. A good plug weld is fused to the metal around it (**FIG. 2**).

We made several plug welds on identical size coupon



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strips so we could pull them on our tensile testing equipment, some dressed flush and undressed. In general, there was an insignificant difference in tensile strength between those that were undressed and those that were dressed flush. Some of the dressed

welds started failing on the top piece, rather than starting to pull a nugget out of the base metal. These welds had porosity or some other dressing, and we don't believe the dressing to be a factor.



The process

So how far do you dress a weld? The short answer is so that it is flush with the surface. It's important to not reduce the thickness of the base metal, because that will weaken the structure. The only way to prevent that is to use light pressure and check your progress often.

As far as tool selection, a common initial tool to use is an angle grinder, with a 36- or 50-grit disc depending on the size of the bead or nugget (FIG. 3). The disc is lightly applied to the weld and moved slowly back and forth. If there are multiple welds, like a row of plug welds, they are ground one at a time. On a butt joint, again use a light touch and slow movement. It doesn't matter if you move the grinder across the weld or lengthwise down the weld, whatever works best for you. The important part is always being conscious and careful to not grind into the base metal.

Another tool that can be used is a cutoff wheel, but this tool is not as precise as an angle grinder (FIG. 4). There's a temptation to use this tool exclusively because it's aggressive, as in fast, but it's difficult to control, especially when you get close to the base metal. If used at all, it should only be the first step, then followed with an angle grinder.

When using a cutoff wheel, just like the angle grinder, use light pressure. Hold the tool with two hands for better control. Start at a high RPM and walk the edge slowly across the surface of the weld, like you're planing off

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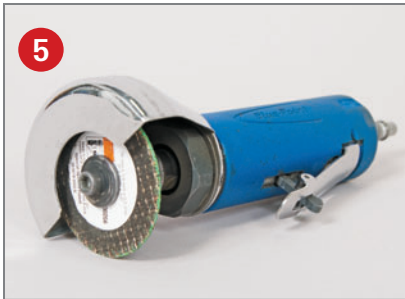



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the surface of the bead. Stop when there is still a slight profile left on the weld. Do not touch the base metal surrounding the weld at all. This should keep you out of trouble. Again, follow this up with an angle grinder to get flush with the base metal.

Still another tool that can be used is a carbide rotary file. There are a couple different profiles available (**FIG. 5**). This is used when the plug weld is in a recess or access won't allow for a disc. This tool is difficult to control, so

use extreme caution or you could damage an adjacent area.

You can finish the dressing with a hand file, maybe progressing through a couple different threads until the surface is flush as it needs to be.

Conclusion

Nearly all GMA (MIG) welds require dressing. The goal of dressing GMA (MIG) welds is to make the surface flush. Gouging below the surface of the base metal not only looks bad, it weakens the steel. Keep this in mind whenever doing this process.

It's important that you equip your facility with the proper training, tools and equipment to allow for complete, safe and quality repairs. I-CAR's® Welding Training & Certification™ program includes instruction theory, a hands-on evaluation by the instructor of the facility's gear, equipment and infrastructure prior to the in-shop training, practice and the industry-

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As part of I-CAR's ongoing commitment to the industry, I-CAR has reduced prices to make it more affordable for every technician to have the hands-on training needed to complete a proper weld. 



JASON BARTANEN
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Jason Bartanen is technical director for I-CAR, the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair, a not-for-profit training organization focused on education, knowledge and solutions for the collision repair industry.

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When you begin repairs on a plastic bumper, start with the back of the part.

Photo: ProSport

BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Changes in technology come to the collision repair industry much the same way they do to most other business markets – first as a trickle, then a rush when businesses are confident that the change will benefit them.

Collision repairers most recently experienced such widespread change with the adoption of waterborne paints. Many repairers first balked at these finishes, believing their promised benefits to be too good to be true. Others decided they would wait to make a transition only when the law mandated they do so. Once an initial group of shops made the change and raved about the results, shops waited in line with their vendors to buy in.

Nitrogen welding, arguably, is going through much the same process. It promises financial benefits such as lower costs and shorter cycle times by allow-

ing shops to quickly perform plastic repairs in lieu of ordering, refitting and replacing damaged plastic parts. Additionally, it provides repairers with the opportunity to boost their revenue even further with convenient bumper and other repairs. Like waterborne paints, it offers repairers another scenario where the potential benefits seem a little too good to be true, leaving most shops waiting to be convinced and, therefore, losing out today on what could be a significant upgrade to their operations.

Should your shop get ahead of the curve and buy into this technology? Let's delve into nitrogen welding a bit

deeper with a look at all the benefits it promises and the steps your techs soon could be taking to perform state-of-the-art plastic repairs.

Proof positive

If you're not convinced that nitrogen welders are ready to take their place in collision repairs, consider the fact that they've been an integral part of the industry for years, most notably in automotive bumper remanufacturing facilities. If you've ever installed a remanufactured bumper, you've utilized a part likely repaired by nitrogen welding.



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This fact is one of the driving forces for having this technology in your shop. By performing this work yourself, you'll reduce the cycle times involved with ordering and receiving a replacement part. You'll also collect revenue since you'll perform work that would otherwise go to someone else.

These factors play into further benefits. By reducing cycle times and of-

fering more repair options, you'll make your operation more appealing to customers and insurers. You'll also set your business up to add additional profit lines such as fast lane bumper repairs.

Some plastic repairs can be handled with two-part adhesives, but welding manufacturers note that nitrogen welding provides a stronger repair (manufacturers also declare nitrogen builds

a stronger repair than other hot air welding methods). Further, nitrogen welding can be performed on part areas impossible to repair with adhesives, including slots, mounting holes and tabs (thick or thin), grille bars, high-stress areas, flexible tabs and fender liners.

Nitrogen welding also can provide other benefits over adhesive. Welding can generate greater profits and be completed more quickly. The Urethane Supply Company says that an average 6 in. (15 cm) welding repair costs less than \$2, with typical welding speeds of 4 in. (10 cm) to 6 in. (15 cm) per minute. There's also no wait time for curing. When the weld is complete, the work can immediately be given to a painter who cools the weld area with water, then sands and primes the part before finishing.

If you still need more convincing, consider that the number of plastic parts incorporated into vehicles continues to grow – translating into even greater repair opportunities.

The basics

Hot air welding is performed by using extreme heat (usually 345 degrees C) to melt two pieces of plastic together – the base plastic on the part and a plastic filler rod/ribbon. The welder typically cuts a V-groove into the damaged part and sets the filler rod/ribbon into the groove. The welder melts the two plastics together with extreme heat, usually 345 degrees C, produced by blowing compressed air over a heating element. (Unlike other welders, nitrogen welders don't use a feeder tube-type or flat shoe tip.)

Nitrogen is used since it eliminates oxygen from the weld area, thereby removing contaminants (while producing less smoke) and creating a stronger bond.

Welders must stick to two rules when using this technology:

1. Identify the plastic in the part. Nitrogen welding can only be performed on thermoplastics such as polypropylene/thermo plastic polyolefin (PP/TPO), which is used to make most bumper covers. The type of plastic can be determined from the ISO code, usually located on the back of a part. If no code is present, check the vehicle manufac-



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turer information. Next, select the appropriate filler rod, which usually is made of pure plastics like thermoplastic olefin (TPO), polypropylene (PP) or acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS). Note that filler rods are available in different widths, diameters and shapes.

2. Keep the air flowing. Maintain the airflow over the welding heating element at all times, whether you're preheating, welding or cooling. To help conserve the nitrogen supply, nitrogen welders only release it during the actual welding.

Repair steps

The key to a proper plastic repair job is proper technique. This involves the coordination of both hands, with one controlling the welding torch and the other feeding the rod. Typically, you'll need to melt the bottom surface of the rod and the top of the base plastic. Do not "puddle" the rod like you would in metal welding since keeping the



(Left) You'll use a wider welding rod on the back of the part to help increase the structural strength of the rod. (Right) Focus the hot air just a bit in front of the rod. With wider welder rods, you won't need to lead as much.

basic structure of the rod intact creates a stronger weld.

Nitrogen welding incorporates four factors: Temperature, angle, pressure and speed – or TAPS, for short.

Temperature. Set the temperature

on the welder to the proper setting. For example, the PP/TPO setting will generate an air flow of about 550-600 degrees F. Adjust higher or lower for varying thicknesses of plastic.


Angle. Use a 45 degree angle be-



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tween the welder and the part. Aim the stream of hot air a little in front of the rod. For thicker rods, focus the heat back toward the rod.

Pressure. Especially when working on bumpers, put as much downward pressure on the rod as possible to help the rod fuse with the part. Place steady, downward pressure on the rod and keep the rod moving slowly. Do not overheat the rod and allow it fold over backwards.

Speed. Maintain welding speed of about 4 to 6 inches per minute. Note, however, that it will be difficult to move this slowly with thinner rods while thicker rods may require you to move more slowly. Regardless of the rod being used, always move steadily while keeping proper downward pressure on the rod and a small bead of melted plastic in front of the rod.

Most nitrogen welders use the same basic following steps to repair a bumper:

1. Identify the part plastic. As already noted, you'll need to identify the damaged plastic (1) to see if it can be repaired and (2) to match it will the appropriate filler rod.

2. Clean the weld area. Wash the area thoroughly with automotive soap and water. Next, apply a cleaner recommended by the welding manufacturer. Be sure to wipe the area in one direction to avoid creating static electricity, which can draw contaminants to the repair area. Also, do not apply any solvent cleaners since they can become trapped in the repair area and produce bubbles when the area is baked or exposed to sunlight.

3. Align the part. Because the plastic in the damage area usually has been stretched or distorted, try to get the crack back yo pre-damaged shape as closely as possible. (If the plastic is dented or stretched, heat with a heat gun and push the plastic back into position.) Use aluminum tape to realign the damaged area



Use a thinner rod for the front of the bumper. Also, always try to keep the welder at a 45 degree angle.

and hold it in place. After the front of the part is realigned, sand the back with P80 grit paper. Use clean, oil-free compressed air to blow the area clean.

4. Weld the back of the bumper first. For maximum strength, use a wider rod that offers more surface area and/or thicker stock for greater strength. Begin the weld by focusing the heat of the

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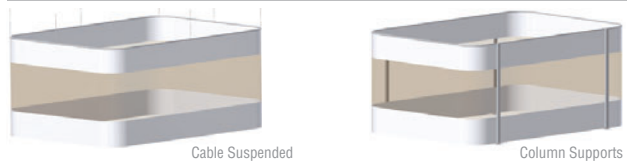
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welder about 1/2 in. past the crack on a solid part of the bumper. After the plastic starts to turn glossy., stab the end of the ribbon rod down into the plastic and bend it toward the welder.

5. Prepare the front of the bumper After the back has cooled, remove any aluminum tape from the front. Using a 1/2 in. ball cutter in a die grinder, grind out a V-groove in the plastic 1/2 in. wide about 1/16 in. deep. Put some sanding scratches in the plastic with a 50 grit Roloc or 80 grit paper in a dual action sander. Blow any dust away.


6. Weld the front side of the crack. On the front, it's usually best to use a more narrow rod so it can be tucked down into the V-groove and retain most of its strength even after it's been sanded flush. Use the same process as on the backside to weld it. Focus the heat from the welder a little farther in front of the point where the rod meets the bumper to prevent the rod from becoming too weak. Apply about a pound of

downward pressure on the rod as you weld to make sure the rod fuses properly with the bumper plastic.

7. Finish the weld. Once the weld is completely cool, sand with 50-80 grit paper. Do not sand too quickly since this will melt and smear the plastic. Instead, use a sharp, new piece of paper and slow the sander a bit to keep the plastic from melting. Sometimes the repair may be finished out and feathered with the welding rod. Most often you'll use filler paper to fill in any low spots.

One word of caution: this type of repair can have a very bad effect if it is not used in the right way. For example, if the bumper cover comes off a highly optioned Lexus with rear blind-spot radar, and your plastic repairs to the rear bumper cover change the thickness of the plastic, is the shop prepared to warranty that? Will the system still work? Plastic repair, just like metal repair, is case by case. Research how the vehicle and related systems are de-

signed and how they work. Only then, determine the best repair plan.

Getting your techs up to speed on plastic welding will require some practice and experience. Consider starting this journey by letting them practice on damaged plastic parts that you'll be tossing out. Shops that take this direction report that it doesn't take long to "sell" this technology to skeptical workers – and skeptical owners, as well. 



TIM SRAMCIK
CONTRIBUTING
EDITOR

Tim Sramcik has written for ABRN, Motor Age and After-market Business World for more than a decade. He has produced numerous news, technical and feature articles covering every aspect of the collision repair market. In 2004, he was recognized for his work by the American Society of Business Publication Editors.

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A tale of counterfeits

Is that 30-lb. jug of R134a you bought online REALLY R134a?



This newest model of identifier can work on R1234yf and R134a systems.

Photo: Neutronics

BY **PETER F. MEIER** | TECHNICAL EDITOR

Back in March 2011, Auto A/C Reporter (AAR), a respected publication serving the automotive air conditioning industry in Europe, reported the discovery of severely contaminated R134a in several locations across the European Union. The magazine reported that these containers contained large quantities of R40 and R22, and there had been instances of severe system damage as a result of the use of these contaminated sources. About the same time, it was found that hundreds, if not thousands, of international refrigerated shipping containers had been serviced with the same formulation of counterfeit refrigerant.

Inside those containers, a bomb was brewing.

R40 is more properly known as Methyl Chloride. Any material can be used as a refrigerant if you can manipulate its pressures accordingly, and any material considered for use as such is assigned an “R” designation. The problem with using this particular gas in any modern refrigeration unit — be it a shipping, automotive or aerospace application — is that it doesn’t play well with the aluminum

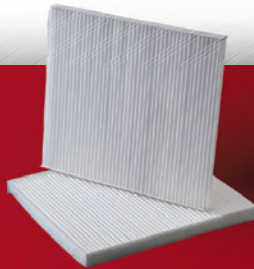


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found in most of these systems. When it interacts with aluminum, it forms a third compound called Trimethylaluminum (TMA) that is “pyrophoric.” That means that it is a flammable liquid and vapor that ignites in contact with air.

Kind of like the contact with air you might see in a leaking system, or when connecting your service equipment.

U.S. Army issues alert

As the evidence grew that the use of R40 in formulating counterfeit refrigerants was not limited to a particular geographical area, the Department of the Army issued a G4 All Army Action (ALARACT) message entitled “Counterfeit R-134A of 021415MAR12,” highlighting the discovery and potential dangers of R40 present in these counterfeit supplies. Andrew Schultz, lead engineer of TARDEC’s (Tank Autom-

otive Research, Development and Engineering Center) Power lab, told *ABRN*, “When we became aware of the news about counterfeit refrigerant problems, we surveyed our vehicles at various locations. This revealed that we had contaminated refrigerant in our (ground) vehicles.”

An Integrated Process Team (IPT) was formed to tackle the problem. There were several issues related to the contamination of military refrigeration systems that had to be determined: the ability to detect the presence of R40 and other potentially dangerous contaminants, understanding how R40 and other substitute chemicals used in the production of counterfeit refrigerant reacted with system components and the safety impacts related to these interactions, and what to do with a system that was found to be charged with these counterfeit blends. In addition to TARDEC



The European mag, *Auto A/C Reporter*, ran early stories about unexplained catastrophic failures on some EU automotive systems.

Photo: Automotive A/C Reporter

staff engineers, subject matter experts from the aftermarket (Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)) were also involved in finding the answers to these and other questions.

According to Schultz, after the initial discovery, messages were sent to field personnel warning of the problem. All local purchases of R134a was placed on hold and any needed supplies had to go through normal supply channels. Early contaminated vehicles are said to have been discovered in Afghanistan and may have been returned to depots in the continental U.S. or shipped to other overseas duty stations. Add in the consideration that when a contaminated vehicle’s charge is recovered during a needed service to a previously uncontaminated recovery machine, it becomes clear that a means of isolating and identifying contaminated vehicles was needed. To date, it has been determined that nearly 25 percent of the Army’s ground vehicles returning from theater contain contaminated refrigerant. And it’s not just R40.

“Various other benign and hazardous refrigerants have been found,” says Schultz. “The initial risk of R40 has thus far been proved to be a minimal issue in Army ground vehicles. However, flammable contaminants have been significantly more prevalent. Army fielded equipment, which is commercial automotive, is not certified to handle these chemicals and can result in fires. Some of the non-flammable contaminants have been found to destroy seals/hoses causing system failure.” That’s not good

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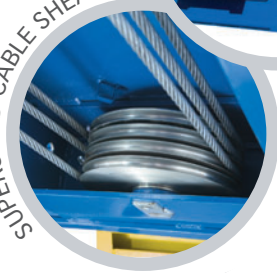
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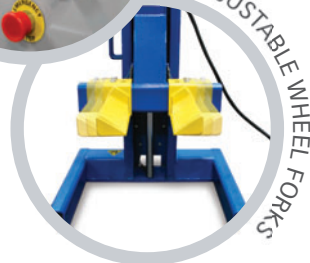
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Photo: TARDEC

TARDEC Senior Engineer Jeffrey Marcinok uses a refrigerant identifier to field test a vehicle.



Sealant is a leading cause of compressor failures and system woes.

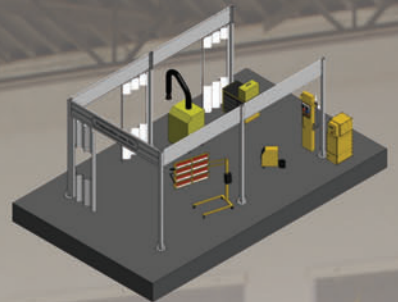
if you're on a convoy mission in the middle of the desert.

Is this strictly an overseas or military problem? Peter Coll, vice president at Neutronics Refrigerant Analysis and

vice-chair of the SAE Interior Climate Control Service committee told *ABRN* that the processes and protections in place for U.S. imports of refrigerant help keep the occurrence of dangerous coun-

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terfeits at a minimum here, it's a much more serious issue in other parts of the world. "The most problematic areas right now include South America (Brazil), Southeast Asia, (Vietnam, Korea) and the Middle East (Dubai, Arab Emirates)," Coll adds.

Why? These are all major shipping ports. But if you think this is more of a

shipping industry issue, think again. The same container of refrigerant they use is the same one we do.

Many forms

"There are different forms of counterfeiting," explains Coll. "You can have brand counterfeiting (for example, a generic refrigerant in a name brand

container). Then there is content counterfeiting (for example, R12 in an R134a container). And then there is the pure counterfeit where they are calling the product R134a (in a faked "brand name" container or not) but using whatever chemical cocktail they want. That's the most dangerous one."

So far, the IPT team has found 18

GOOD DEAL FOR WHOM?

While putting this article together, I Googled the price of R134a and found a range of costs from just under \$90 for a 30-pound container to over \$200 per jug. That's a substantial difference in price, but before you log on to eBay and stock up on the cheap stuff, consider just how good a deal you and your customer may be getting.

First is the obvious question of quality. Is the manufacturer of that jug you're buying a reputable one? And as we discussed in the main article, are you really getting 30

pounds of product or 20 pounds of refrigerant and 10 pounds of sand?

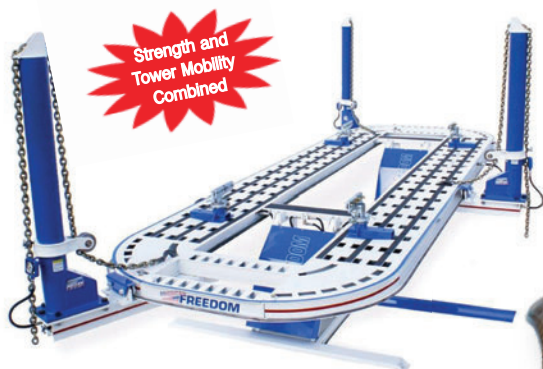
Another reason for the price difference is a practice called "dumping". Dumping occurs when a foreign company sells a product in the United States at less than its fair market value. Manufacturers in the Far East have easier (and cheaper) access to mineral resources critical to the production of R134a and may even receive unfair government subsidies to allow them to sell on the global market at a price that places all other

manufacturers at a disadvantage.

For those reasons, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced the initiation of antidumping duty and countervailing duty investigations of the imports of R134a from the People's Republic of China. Once it is determined that these Chinese imports "materially injure or threaten material injury to" domestic manufacturers, it may impose import tariffs to level the playing field. But don't expect that to happen until later this year.

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different refrigerants contaminating U.S. military vehicles. Coll added, "We've tested about 2,000 contaminated systems from shipping companies, military and other facilities and we found that every single one of them had a blend of refrigerants. We're talking about things like R22, R142b and a lot of things. More recently, we've gotten word of some new contaminants, including R30. With the focus on R40, the counterfeiters are looking for other refrigerants they could use that we wouldn't be able to detect."

And that's where the challenge grows. Every time a counterfeit is discovered, the counterfeiters learn from their mistakes. The only sure way to tell if R40 is present is with a gas chromatograph of the suspect refrigerant. So forget using a simple pressure/temperature test. Most counterfeiters learned long ago to use a blend of cheap-



It is considered a best practice to test and verify what's in the car before servicing.

Photo: Neutronics

er refrigerants that would mimic the PT relationship of R134a. Even if you're not concerned about R40 in your shop's supply, the only way to know that you have pure R134a in the tank is to test it with an identifier.

And that great online deal you found? "If I hand you a 30-pound cylinder of R134a," Coll asks, "How do you know it's R134a? You don't. Thirty pounds of water weighs the same as 30 pounds of R134a, 30 pounds of sand weighs the same as 30 pounds of R134a." Hey, we're not making this stuff up. It's happened!

Supply or vehicle charge

Most of our discussion has been centered on the challenges faced by our military in identifying potentially dangerous situations involving counterfeit refrigerant. The need to test supply sources prior to use and to know what is in the vehicle prior to servicing is clear when that potential involves the risk of explosion. But that's not the entire picture. Consider our fighting men and women caught in a Humvee in 120° heat and the A/C fails or worse, leaks a flammable refrigerant into the cabin? Consider the cost to identify, safely recover, repair and then recharge vehicles damaged by the blends used by the counterfeiters?

Those same issues apply to our work here at home. Even if you take all the precautions, buy your virgin refrigerant from a known supplier, there is still one factor you have no control over - what the customer (or another shop) put in before he brought it to you.

"Anything less than a pure R134a test result is no good and should not be used [or recovered]," says Coll. "This has become a serious enough issue that, going forward, all new RRR (Re-



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Anything less than a 100 percent pure test result should be considered a red flag to servicing the system.

covery, Recycle, Recharge) and recovery-only equipment will require refrigerant identification before recovery of the vehicle's charge."


And while a refrigerant other than the one you want to install can be considered a contaminant to the system, there are additional ways to contaminate to be aware of. Air is a common contaminant that has a tremendous impact on system performance. It is also one of the easiest to add. Not per-

forming a system evacuation prior to recharging will insure air in the system and who among you is willing to bet that every DIY job that finds its way to your doors has air in it?

Sealant is another common contaminant. "The low cost of sealant additives is attractive to consumers due to the typical cost of repair," Coll offers. A customer arrives at your door asking for help in getting his system blowing cold again, and learns that just to find where the leak is coming from may run him \$300. His favorite DIY supply store offers sealant he can put in himself for under \$20. What's the worst, in his mind, that can happen? It doesn't work and he's out the \$20? If it does work, he's saved himself \$280!

And when it doesn't work, he'll either add more (if one can is good, two has to be better, right?) or he'll bring it to you. Do you honestly think he'll tell you what he's done? If you don't test for the presence of sealant on every car you service, you run the very real risk of

damaging your equipment, putting you out of the A/C repair business for at least a few weeks. And if your season is short already, you'll lose a lot more money from lost sales than you would by purchasing the sealant testing kit and a refrigerant identifier.

Today, procedures and processes are in place to inspect, detect and dispose of contaminated refrigerant in our Army's ground vehicles. It's not a bad idea for your shop to do the same. 



Pete Meier is an ASE certified Master Technician and sponsoring member of iATN. He has over 35 years of practical experience as a technician and educator, covering a wide variety of makes and models. His primary goal is to bring working techs the information they need.

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TRUCKBED LINER

SEM Products, Inc. releases a truckbed liner solution for VOC regulated states with their new Rock-It Liner 1.7. This high quality, urethane, textured coating provides a durable, protective finish for truckbeds and restoration projects. VOC regulated regions include California, Maryland, Delaware and parts of Canada. SEM has produced Tintable and Black Rock-It Liner kits for half a decade, and the Rock-It line has become SEM's No. 1 selling truckbed liner brand.

semproducts.com/rock-it-liner-kits

(866) 327-7829



ELEKTRON

MIG/MAG WELDERS

Elektron's new MultiMig 511 and MultiMig 522 MIG/MAG inverter welders help techs weld aluminum as easily as steel. Both welders are included in the Ford 2015 F-150 Collision Repair Program. The welders can weld and braze aluminum alloys, galvanized sheet metal, stainless steel and high-strength steel, and come programmed with synergic curves that preset welding parameters so technicians can start welding immediately.

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T H E L A S T D E T A I L [✓]



sometimes ask shop owners, "What would you do if you had a body tech who fixed 10 cars a week, and six of them came back with a problem?" They usually say they would talk to the technician. And if it happened the next week? Then, they say, they'd fire the tech.

I'll then ask them, "What if you had a painter who painted 10 cars a week, and had to repaint six of them because of runs, drips or color match?" The shop owners usually say they'd talk with the painter, maybe get him or her some more training. And if the painter continued to have six re-dos for every 10 jobs? That painter would be fired, they usually say.

"So what if that was your estimator," I ask them, which usually results in a puzzled look. What exactly is a supplement? Isn't it a come back or a re-do on your estimate? So if you're writing a supplement on 60 percent or more of your estimates, why aren't you firing the estimator? You wouldn't put up with a tech or painter doing that much re-work.

It's time to stop the madness. We have to look at a supplement as a re-do, a defect, a problem.

Now I'm not saying if a job gets dropped off with an insurer-prepared estimate you shouldn't submit a supplement. And I know there are times when someone insists they want an estimate while they wait. In those cases, when you're starting from a 'visual only' estimate, there likely will be a supplement.

But once you've taken possession of a vehicle, when you can do a complete tear-down, you should be writing a complete work order without the need for any additional supplements.

Think about it: Lean is all about eliminating waste, eliminating the things that bring little value or for which you don't get paid. You don't get paid to write an estimate. So if you write one or more supplements on top of that, you're now doing something two or three times for free.

You don't get paid to order parts. So if you have to go back and place a second or third parts order for a job, you've just done something for free multiple times.

So start measuring what percentage of jobs require a supplement (aside from an initial supplement of a visual-only estimate) and the reasons for those supplements. If you don't measure it, you can't manage it. I can tell you there are shops that have been able to drop their supplement rate down to 11 percent on non-drivable vehicles,

“Lean is all about eliminating waste, eliminating the things that bring little value or for which you don't get paid. You don't get paid to write an estimate.”

SUPPLEMENTS ARE A COME BACK

Three Ts will help reduce the number of re-dos your shop has on its estimates

and down to 4 percent on drivable vehicles. That's eliminating a lot of unpaid estimating and parts ordering re-work and inefficiency.

How are they doing that? They're using what I call the three Ts.

1 THOROUGH DISASSEMBLY. That means 100 percent tear-down. Not 70 percent, not 90 percent, but 100 percent. Ask why this isn't happening, and you'll usually hear an excuse that includes a "but." "I'd do 100 percent tear-down... but then I'd have to push the car... but it might rain on the car... but whoever reassembles it won't know how it goes together." My dad always used to say, "Anything after the 'but' is bulls--t." Or as my great friend Bruce King would say, "Save the drama for your mama." We have to do be doing 100 percent tear-down.

2 THOROUGH DAMAGE ANALYSIS. Use the OEM parts graphics and repair procedures to make sure you're including all the necessary parts and procedures. Get all your parts price changes upfront. Thorough tear-down doesn't do you any good if you select the wrong part in your estimating system, or miss one-time-use parts, or leave off necessary procedures.

3 THOROUGH AUDIT. Look the sheet over well to make sure you have the right production date and the right paint code. Make sure you didn't pick the left side when you meant the right side. Make sure you have good line notes and photos.

If you follow these three Ts, you will see the percentage of jobs with estimate re-dos (called "supplements") begin to drop. Remember: One tear-down, one parts order. 📞

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Mike Anderson, a former shop owner, currently operates COLLISIONADVICE.COM, a training and consulting firm.

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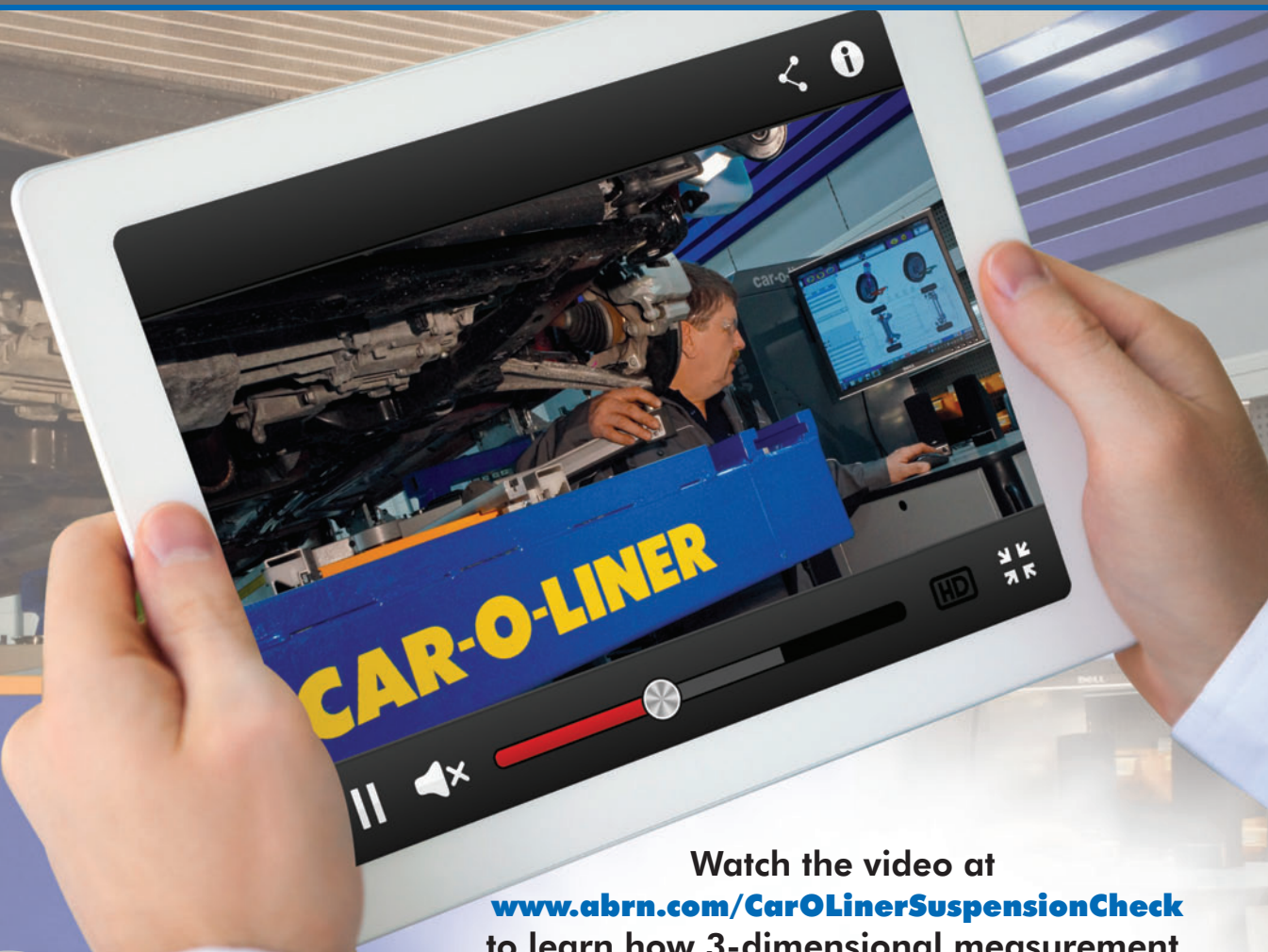
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