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VOLUME 54 | NUMBER 12  
DECEMBER 2015



# THE CHANTILLY AUTO BODY GROUP UNBEATEN PATH





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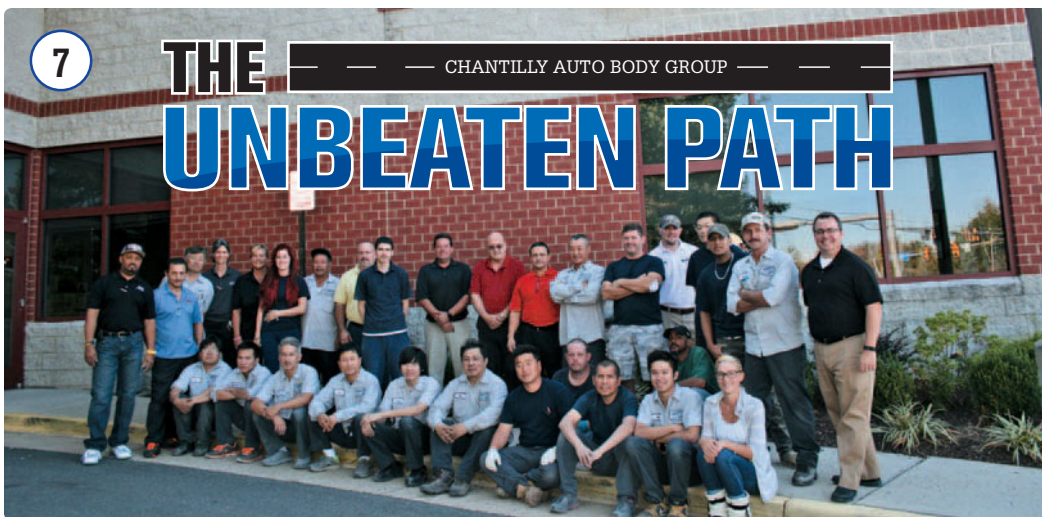
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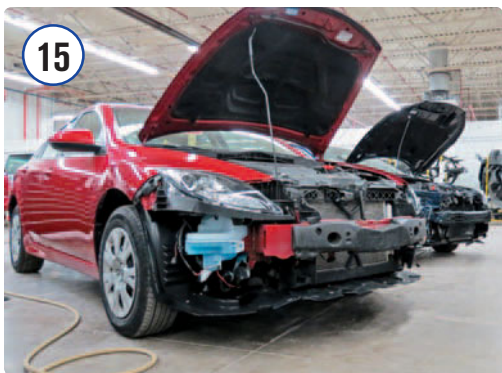


# THE UNBEATEN PATH

— — — CHANTILLY AUTO BODY GROUP — — —

BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

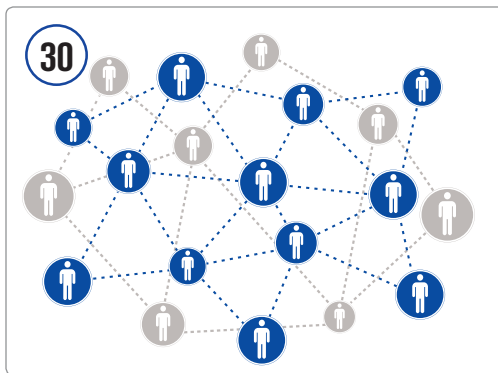
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BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

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BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Is it time your shop performed more glass work? Learn the basic steps to see if this work is a fit for your business.

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# Getting personal

How a confrontation with an unhappy customer led to a, "What are the odds?"

**A** lot of what you learn during your career comes in the early years. That's why I've been reflecting back in recent columns on my start in the industry almost 40 years ago. One of my early lessons was that, on occasion, you might need to "fire" a customer. I've personally only done it once, and it became somewhat of an epic story.

By my mid-20s I was managing a dealership body shop, and I soon came to dread any time it would rain. Almost every time it did, some owner of a Firebird with a T-top roof would pull into the shop, asking for help with a water leak.

We eventually figured out a solution that generally worked, but when we were unable to solve one, we'd have to take the car to a GM training center about 80 miles away in northern New Jersey. It was a time-consuming process, driving the vehicle there and back, so we always tried to fix the problem in-house if we could.

In one of the instances where we couldn't solve the leak, we drove the car up to GM, then went back to retrieve it a few days later after the repairs were made. We water-tested it again at the dealership, and it all seemed fine.

But in the next heavy rain, the vehicle owner drove into the shop absolutely furious. She didn't just complain about the roof still leaking. She lit into me with a string of accusations and personal attacks: "You never drove the car up there. You're a liar. You just put miles on my car joy-riding around."

She went on and on. Now, I can see someone questioning our abilities. I don't like it, but I can take that. But to question my integrity, call me a liar and accuse me of

not doing what we did after all the hoops we jumped through for her? That got to me. "Get out," I eventually told her.

She did – and drove straight from the dealership to the county courthouse, where she marched into the consumer affairs office. She began telling the woman behind the desk there – who I will call Alison – what crooks we were.

"What dealership?" Alison asked her. "And who there were you dealing with?"

"A guy named Mike LeVasseur," the woman told her. "He's a no-good liar."

At that point, Alison calmly stood up and subtly flipped down the name plate on her desk. It was a name plate that read, "Alison LeVasseur."

What are the odds that the only customer I'd ever told to "get out," in a county with 520,000 people, would go to the one consumer affairs office where my wife was one of two employees?

Alison naturally had her supervisor handle that one from there on out. And it's become one of those stories we laugh about to this day.

I've known shop owners over the years who boast about "firing a customer" nearly every week. That's just never been my style. Most customers who are unhappy about a repair are just frustrated. They just want to vent and make sure you know they've been inconvenienced. Even when I don't think they're justified, that's at least understandable, and I can deal with that.

But this woman's personal attacks on my integrity were more than I was willing to endure. Did I handle it the best way? Maybe not, but I think there are times when firing a customer may be justified. I've dealt with thousands of people in my 39-year career, so I feel pretty good she was the only one who I asked to leave my business.

The lessons from this story: Make sure you've given your team the skills, tools and latitude they need to handle the unhappy customer. If it turns into unjustified personal attacks, it's probably time to turn the situation over to someone else in the shop. Oh, and don't fire a customer in the same county where your wife works in the consumer affairs office. ☞

**"MAKE SURE YOU'VE GIVEN YOUR TEAMS THE SKILLS, TOOLS AND LATITUDE THEY NEED TO HANDLE THE UNHAPPY CUSTOMER."**

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Mike LeVasseur is the Philadelphia Market Vice President for ABRA Auto Body.





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Toyota, Lexus and  
Scion Vehicles

Fall 2015



## In Japanese "Mirai" Means Future

Toyota's Extraordinary New  
Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicle

### Alignment Equals Calibration

Cars That Have Had Their  
Alignment Adjusted Should Have  
Pre-Collision and Dynamic Radar  
Cruise Control Systems Calibrated.

### Repair Planning the Toyota Way

Learn About How to Approach  
Repairs Using Toyota Methodology.

### Introducing New CR&R Instructor Agustin Diaz

Meet Toyota's Newest Trainer.

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## A Pioneering Perspective

Change is in the air, and it isn't just the excitement of the approaching holiday season and end-of-year festivities. There is a lot to talk about at Toyota, including new repair tips and an exciting new vehicle.

In this issue, we examine a variety of repair procedures to help you in the shop. In the article on the pre-collision system and dynamic radar cruise control, you can learn about crucial calibration steps for these devices and why it's important for customer safety. At NACE, we talked "Repair Planning the Toyota Way," and we review it in this issue.

I am also excited to introduce Toyota's new hydrogen fuel cell vehicle—Mirai. This vehicle is the result of years of testing, research and innovation. It is set to revolutionize how we view cars and redefine what it means to drive an environmentally conscious car. While drivers of the Mirai will be pioneers of this new vehicle on the road, you will be pioneers in learning the new way to repair this technology through our training classes and then applying the skills you learned in your shop.

Creating a vehicle that emits only water as a byproduct of its engine seems like the stuff of science fiction—but that is exactly what Mirai does. It is the spirit of innovation, the desire to try new things and to create better solutions and products that contributes to the ground-breaking perspective at Toyota. This extends across all areas and, of course, into the realm of collision repair. So, whether you are learning a new technique or figuring out how to make your shop more efficient, you are part of the pioneering spirit.

Kathy Capozza  
Wholesale Marketing Administrator Sr.  
Toyota Sales and Marketing | Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.  
Collision Pros Magazine | [info@collisionprosmagazine.com](mailto:info@collisionprosmagazine.com)



**It is the spirit of innovation, the desire to try new things and to create better solutions and products that contributes to the ground-breaking perspective at Toyota."**

– Kathy Capozza



TELL US ABOUT YOUR PIONEERING IDEA—email us at [info@collisionprosmagazine.com](mailto:info@collisionprosmagazine.com)



# Increase Your Knowledge

THE AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE ASSOCIATION OFFERS FREE COLLISION REPAIR-RELATED RESOURCES

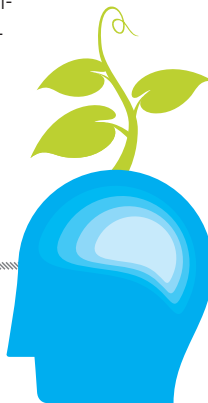
Looking for automotive industry information on collision repair and refinish-related topics? The Automotive Service Association (ASA) has many great resources available for free. Information includes suggestions on collision repair practices, industry white papers and tools to help educate your customers about automotive repair. This information can be found on ASA's website at [www.asashop.org](http://www.asashop.org).

ASA is a not-for-profit trade association that is dedicated to serving the needs of automotive service businesses, including collision repair shops. They are one of many organizations that provide useful resources to the collision repair industry and other automotive service-related professionals. To find out more, visit [www.asashop.org](http://www.asashop.org). 🌱



Organizations like the ASA provide useful resources that can help shops improve repair processes and improve relationships with customers and insurance companies. I highly recommend checking out the materials they offer for free."

– James Meyer  
Senior Collision Training Administrator  
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.



## Auto Repair Archive

The free resources available on the ASA website cover topics including:

### ASA Documented Collision Repair Operations

This document is a tool to help collision repair professionals communicate with insurance representatives about refinish procedures.

### Replacement Parts Reference Chart

This chart provides an at-a-glance view of general not-included operations that should be used when installing new replacement parts. It is designed to supplement procedure pages supplied by individual information providers.

### 10 Steps of Professional Diagnostics

Effective communication with your customers is important. This pamphlet educates your customers about the time, training and resources needed to deliver high-quality collision repairs.

### Market Versus Need for Repairers

This piece is a discussion of the market versus need dilemma that often faces members of the collision repair industry as they navigate between what is needed to completely repair a vehicle and limitations from insurers based on current market practices.

# ALIGNMENT

## Equals Calibration

CARS THAT HAVE HAD THEIR ALIGNMENT ADJUSTED SHOULD HAVE PRE-COLLISION AND DYNAMIC RADAR CRUISE CONTROL SYSTEMS CALIBRATED. This is an important step in the vehicle repair process that every technician and estimator should be aware of. If a vehicle has had to be realigned or had work done to the chassis or grille, the pre-crash system and millimeter cruise radar system need to be checked and recalibrated.

### SENSOR SENSE

**Pre-Collision System (PCS)**—The pre-collision system alerts drivers when it detects certain objects in front of the vehicle and determines that the vehicle might not be able to stop in time. The system retracts seatbelts and optimizes the brakes to help minimize collisions. Select vehicle models beginning with model year 2016 offer PCS, which incorporates a camera designed to detect certain objects in the car's path.

**Dynamic Radar Cruise Control**—This system allows the driver to set the cruise control to help maintain a pre-set following distance from the vehicle traveling directly ahead of it. It will slow down if the car ahead brakes and then resume the set speed when the traffic speeds up.

### NEED TO KNOW

For most vehicles, the sensors for the pre-collision system and dynamic radar cruise control system are located behind the grille. In 2016 models, the sensors are actually attached to the grille. The mounting place for these sensors is important. If the sensor isn't in

the exact place it thinks it should be, it won't function properly. That is why techs replacing sensors or sensor parts should ensure the sensors are positioned properly on the vehicle.

Similarly, the sensor is designed to point down the center line of where the vehicle is traveling. If the vehicle's wheel alignment is off or the chassis is not properly aligned, the sensor will not point to the correct position. When dealing with vehicles that have the pre-collision system and dynamic radar cruise control system, ensuring the vehicle is in proper alignment is crucial to the overall functioning of the car.

Once the vehicle has been repaired and the alignment checked, the sensors for these systems can be calibrated by sending the vehicle to a Toyota dealership. Knowing ahead of time that the car will need to visit the dealership for calibration means that this step can be added to the estimate at the very beginning of the repair process. This can help collision centers return the car to the customer more quickly and save shops from having to go back to the customer and tell them their car will not be ready on time. 📌





When a car is realigned, sensors should be recalibrated. If the sensors for these systems are out of alignment in any way, this can cause them to work improperly or not at all. And, it can cause customers to be unhappy with how their vehicle is functioning.”

– Bill Zlaket  
Lexus Technical and CR&R Training Manager  
University of Toyota  
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.



## Photo Finish

Another important system that relies on sensors and cameras is the Lane Keep Assist system. This system uses a camera designed to recognize lane markings on roads and alerts the driver when the vehicle may be departing from the lane it is in. The system can also apply slight steering wheel torque to help the driver maintain the vehicle's position in the lane.

Technicians should know:

- The sensors for this system are located behind the vehicle's windshield.
- Aftermarket windshields can affect the performance of these sensors, so Genuine Toyota Parts are recommended.
- The sensors for this system must also be sent to the dealer for recalibration.

THE CAR OF THE FUTURE IS HERE, AND IT'S NOT THE FLYING CAR PORTRAYED IN *THE JETSONS* OR THE TIME TRAVELING DELOREAN OF *BACK TO THE FUTURE*—IT'S THE 2016 TOYOTA MIRAI, A VEHICLE THAT IS IN SOME WAYS EVEN MORE FANTASTICAL. THE MIRAI IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S FIRST MASS-PRODUCED HYDROGEN FUEL CELL VEHICLES. IT HAS AN EPA ESTIMATED DRIVING RANGE OF 312 MILES AND CAN BE REFUELED IN APPROXIMATELY FIVE MINUTES. AND THE BYPRODUCT OF ITS FUEL CELL ENGINE? WATER.

未来

## IN JAPANESE “MIRAI” MEANS FUTURE

With the purchase of the all-new 2016 Mirai, owners will be provided with state-of-the-art technology and a premium ownership experience. The vehicle is precision crafted with the utmost attention given to the smallest details. This four-door sedan may be powered by electricity, but it packs a big punch with performance matching that of traditional mid-size combustion engine sedans in its class. And, ownership includes three years' or a maximum of \$15,000 worth of complimentary fuel, whichever comes first, plus Safety Connect and Entune, with a hydrogen station finder app.

### WHAT COLLISION REPAIR EXPERTS NEED TO KNOW

What makes the Mirai unique from a collision repair standpoint is its hydrogen and fuel cell components. Once the hydrogen in the tanks has been manually isolated, the body of the vehicle is similar to any other new-model Toyota, and most collision repairs can be performed with current repair techniques. Vehicles will, however, need to be sent to an approved Mirai dealership to have the

hydrogen system inspected for damage and manually isolated before collision repair work can begin.

One thing that does make Mirai very different is the vehicle's two cooling systems. One cooling system is dedicated to the hybrid system and is similar to other high-voltage cooling systems used on Toyota hybrid vehicles. The second cooling system is strictly for the fuel cell system and requires a special coolant that is clear and resembles water. It is extremely important to note the fuel cell system coolant must not be contaminated and is available only through Toyota. For reference, the part number for this new coolant is 08889-08350.

Technicians working on this vehicle should also be aware that the hydrogen pipes have very high pressure gas in them—the pressure in the tubes is 10,150 psi. These pipes are marked with red insulation to indicate their contents. Do not try to disconnect this system. Instead, the vehicle should be sent to an approved dealer so that the pressurized contents of the pipes can be safely discharged.







Toyota realized in the early '90s that electrification was key to the future of the automobile. Just as the Prius introduced hybrid-electric vehicles to millions of customers nearly 20 years ago, the Mirai is now poised to usher in a new era of efficient, hydrogen transportation."

– Jim Lentz, Toyota's North American CEO



#### CURRENTLY APPROVED MIRAI DEALERS ARE:

##### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA    SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• San Francisco Toyota</li> <li>• Roseville Toyota</li> <li>• Stevens Creek Toyota</li> <li>• Toyota of Sunnyvale</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longo Toyota</li> <li>• Toyota Santa Monica</li> <li>• Toyota of Orange</li> <li>• Tustin Toyota</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

## MORE ON MIRAI

### FUEL CELL TECHNOLOGY

Mirai fuel cell technology relies on the chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen to generate the electricity that powers the vehicle. When a hydrogen molecule is supplied to the negative electrode of the fuel cell, it is activated by the catalyst causing electrons and hydrogen ions to separate. The flow of electrons released from the reaction becomes the electricity that powers the vehicle.

The fuel cell stack is composed of 370 individual fuel cells. A single fuel cell provides only a limited amount of voltage and must be stacked in series to provide enough voltage to power the vehicle. All moving parts, such as the air compressor, hydrogen pump and hydrogen injectors, are external to the fuel cell stack.

The sedan has two carbon-fiber fuel tanks that store the hydrogen that helps power the vehicle. The oxygen component is supplied by air entering through the vehicle's front intake grilles.

Extensive engineering and rigorous testing

help provide for the high level of safety in the Mirai. On-board sensors detect and stop hydrogen leakage by immediately shutting the tank valves. During a vehicle fire, the hydrogen gas in the tanks is discharged from the fusible plug valve.

Mirai's hydrogen tanks are constructed of layers of specialized material to help protect against leaking and damage. The layers consist of:

- A plastic liner that forms a tight seal designed to protect against leakage of the hydrogen gas
- A layer of carbon-fiber reinforced plastic (CFRP) that helps provide strength to the tanks
- A layer of glass-fiber reinforced plastic (GFRP) that helps protect the exterior surface of the tanks

Each tank is designed to withstand changes in shape due to expansion or contraction after refueling the high-pressure hydrogen gas. The hydrogen tanks are mounted near the rear wheels of the vehicle and away from any ignition source.

### INTERIOR FEATURES

The Mirai has many premium features designed to provide drivers with a first-class experience behind the wheel. Features include:

- Electronic push-button start system with Smart Key
- Acoustic glass used in the windshield and passenger doors for noise reduction
- 8-way power-heated SofTex® seats with power lumbar
- Heated power tilt and telescoping steering wheel with multifunction controls
- Premium audio system with Navigation, JBL and Entune App Suite
- Intelligent touch controls for climate and radio

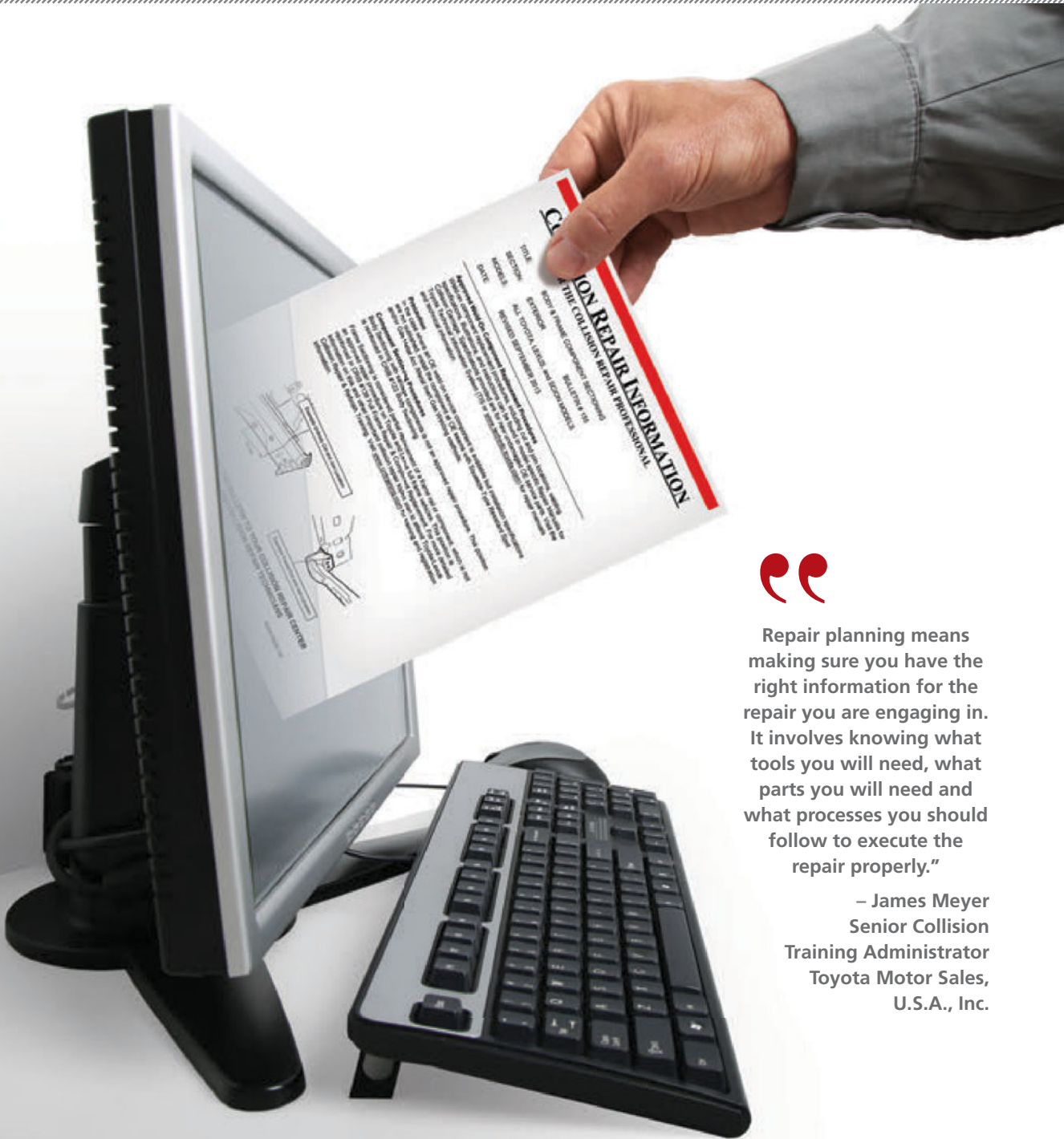
### SUSPENSION

- Front: MacPherson strut
- Rear: Torsion beam

For general information about the Mirai, visit [www.Toyota.com/Mirai](http://www.Toyota.com/Mirai). For information specific to collision repair, consult the Technical Information System (TIS) at <http://techinfo.toyota.com>. 📄

# Repair Planning

## the Toyota Way



Repair planning means making sure you have the right information for the repair you are engaging in. It involves knowing what tools you will need, what parts you will need and what processes you should follow to execute the repair properly."

– James Meyer  
Senior Collision  
Training Administrator  
Toyota Motor Sales,  
U.S.A., Inc.



STARTING A REPAIR WITHOUT A PLAN IS LIKE BUILDING A HOUSE WITHOUT BLUEPRINTS OR TRAVELING THROUGH A NEW CITY WITHOUT NAVIGATIONAL TOOLS. Without repair planning, you might not know exactly where you're going and you might not have all the tools, resources and knowledge you need to get to the desired endpoint.

"Repair planning means making sure you have the right information for the repair you are engaging in," says James Meyer, Senior Collision Training Administrator, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. "It involves knowing what tools you will need, what parts you will need and what processes you should follow to execute the repair properly. Repair planning involves knowing where to find the information you need. Researching and understanding which information is applicable to the repair you are completing is a very important part of repair planning."



### MAKE A PLAN

Repair planning isn't an extra step in the repair process, it's actually a valuable tool that can make the repair process easier and more efficient. Making a repair plan has many advantages that can help the job you are working on get done right. It helps you do things right the first time because you know all of the tools, parts and information needed. And, instead of applying general information or information from another manufacturer, by making a repair plan using Toyota references and materials, you are using OEM information specific to the vehicle you are repairing.

A repair plan helps you make the right decisions and execute the right repairs, which in turn reduces cycle time, increases profitability, and helps increase the quality of the repair and safety of the vehicle. A repair plan also helps to prevent or limit mistakes by making sure that everyone who is working on the job has the tools, parts and information they need to be successful. And the result—reduced cycle time and happier customers.

Additionally, repair planning gives you the tools to talk to all of the different stakeholders involved in a repair, from your customers to insurance companies. It allows you to clearly explain what is needed to complete a proper repair and why.



### FOR EXAMPLE

There is no template for how to create a repair plan, so how does repair planning come into play for different types of repairs? Let's look at a few examples of different types of repairs and the type of information that applies to each one.

**Front side member repair.** For a front side member repair there are a number of questions you should consider to put together your repair plan. These include:

- What type of steel is used for the damaged structural component?
- What's Toyota's policy on repairing a unibody side member?
- Are there limits that apply to straightening Toyota structural components?
- What corrosion prevention materials does Toyota recommend for the repaired area?

**Front side member partial replacement.** When considering a front side member partial replacement, lots of welding and measuring are involved. Questions you should ask when putting together the repair plan include:

- What type of and what strength steel is used at the cut-and-join location?
- What are the cut-and-join location specifications?
- What are the welding options for installing welded components such as this?
- Are there any precautions that apply to this repair procedure?
- What are Toyota's recommendations for corrosion prevention?



### GET TRAINED

The best way to implement repair planning into your shop's routine is to make sure everyone in your shop is trained. This includes estimators and managers, as well as technicians. Estimators are the front line; they interact with customers and write the estimate, so all of the information they have in advance becomes part of the estimate and the repair plan. Getting managers and estimators trained is a great way to have everyone in the shop on the same page.

"If you are doing collision repair as a living, then you have to continually hone your skills, and a lot of the skills are cognitive," says Meyer. "We are in the modern age of automobile repair, and training is imperative for everyone in the industry." 📖

**Find out more about Toyota Collision Repair & Refinish training at [www.crrtraining.com](http://www.crrtraining.com).**



RECENTLY, TOYOTA'S COLLISION REPAIR & REFINISH TRAINING PROGRAM welcomed a new instructor to its ranks. Agustin Diaz is the new Collision Training Administrator at Toyota's Torrance, California, campus. Diaz brings his unique training philosophy and breadth of experience to the training experience.

## INTRODUCING NEW CR&R TRAINER

# Agustin Diaz

### COLLISION REPAIR PEDIGREE

Diaz comes to the training program with over 35 years of experience as a body tech working in various shops. His specialty is heavy collision work.

"At many of the places I used to work, people would see a big job and shy away from it because they felt like it was too much work," Diaz recalls. "But if I saw a big job, I couldn't wait to get my hands on it. I love the challenge."

Diaz also taught automotive technology at Contra Costa College and taught I-CAR training for three years. In addition, he worked for VeriFacts, visiting and inspecting their facilities and repairs and then making recommendations.

All of this experience makes Diaz a valuable instructor. He understands the automotive repair industry from the viewpoint of a technician, a trainer and the insurance industry.

With a teaching credential from the University of California, Berkeley, Diaz is at home in the classroom. He knows that there are many different types of learners, and he shapes his lessons so that they have elements that reach the visual, kinetic, auditory and hands-on learners. One huge advantage of Toyota training is that half of the day is spent in a classroom setting and half of the day is spent practicing collision repair and refinish techniques in a hands-on environment.

### BODY SHOP BEGINNINGS

Diaz says that his family has been in the auto repair business for a long time. He got interested in collision repair when working in family-owned shops.

"One of my uncles owned a repair shop in Mexico when I was a little kid," explains Diaz. "My mother told him to just keep me busy in the shop and not pay me. Well, my uncle paid me for my work, and I got hooked! It's in my blood."

In his free time, Diaz is always trying to learn something new. He loves reading, and his interests range from biographies to the novels of Gabriel García Márquez. His favorite book is *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo.

There are many things that Diaz says he enjoys about being in the collision repair business, but nothing beats surprising a customer with a high-quality repair.

"It's a very powerful experience when you take a car that has damage and restore it back to a condition that is like the original," says Diaz. "When you see the smile on the customer's face and they have a sense of 'oh my baby!' it feels great." 🐾



### Professional Background

- Teaching credential from UC Berkeley
- Taught automotive technology at Contra Costa College
- ASE master technician
- Worked for VeriFacts for three years
- Taught I-CAR for three years





Gaining knowledge is a journey, not a place where you arrive; professional improvement is a journey. In this industry, you are never finished learning and there is always room for improvement.”

– Agustin Diaz, Collision Training Administrator  
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.



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- 01/21 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 02/09 200/201 Color Matching For Painters
- 02/11 250 Advanced Painting Techniques
- 02/23 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 02/25 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 03/08 300 Welding Techniques For Collision Repair
- 03/09 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 03/10 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 03/22 250 Advanced Painting Techniques
- 04/05 300 Welding Techniques For Collision Repair
- 04/06 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 04/19 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair
- 04/20 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair

### JACKSONVILLE, FL

- 01/12 301 Non-Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 01/14 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 01/19 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 01/20 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair
- 01/21 460 Structural Body Repair Techniques
- 02/08 200/201 Color Matching For Painters
- 02/10 250 Advanced Painting Techniques
- 02/16 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
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- 02/23 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
- 02/24 503 Steering & Suspension Analysis & Repair
- 03/07 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
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- 03/09 602 Advanced Hybrid Collision Repair
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- 03/17 908 Lexus IS C for Collision Repair
- 03/21 601 Hybrid Collision Repair
- 03/22 300 Welding Techniques For Collision Repair
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IMAGES: CHANTILLY AUTO BODY GROUP

# THE — — — — CHANTILLY AUTO BODY GROUP — — — — UNBEATEN PATH

Shop flourishes in areas where other repairers may be reluctant to tread

BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

One of the hallmarks of a great shop is the ability to succeed where others have faltered. Take, for example, solving the partnership puzzle.

Partnerships pose a dilemma a bit unlike any other ownership format. On one hand they offer significant financial benefits. A 2008 study from Small Business Trends determined that average revenue for partnerships have risen 157 percent since 1980, while sole proprietorships saw 51 percent declines during the same period. On the other, they tend to be more volatile than any

other ownership type and usually are the quickest to dissolve.

Yet, some partner-owned shops find ways to thrive. Such is the case with Chantilly Auto Body Group in Chantilly, Va., ABRN's 2015 Top Shops winner. The growing six-location MSO is on its second partnership.

That's not the only way Chantilly Auto Body Group stands out. The shop has paved a long, successful path by flourishing in areas where many repairers either are reluctant to tread or may be overlooking.

## Origins in the trenches

Chantilly's founding may have been the first sign the business was going to march to the beat of a different drum.

Original partners Nedal Khatib and Bob Ellison met while bidding against one another for rental company repairs. At the time, Khatib owned his own shop, and Ellison worked for a dealer shop. In 1990, after several years of getting to know one another, the pair decided to leverage their experience in the Washington, DC metro area and go into business together. They targeted Chantilly

based on the area's strong growth and leased a building. Khatib moved in equipment from his Manassas shop, and they started work (with Ellison remaining connected to the dealership).

For the next 10 years, the two gradually grew their business. Khatib says a reputation for quality repairs and personal service helped catch the attention of DRPs. After Chantilly landed its first program, other insurers caught wind of the shop's ability to meet customer expectations. Soon the business was working with multiple repair programs.

"They couldn't believe our CSI scores. We had over 98 percent at the time, which was unheard of," explains Khatib. "Sometimes the insurance company would send over a corporate audit team to validate the results."

In 2000, Chantilly had so much work Ellison and Khatib built a new 30,000-sq.-ft. building, complete with drive-in estimating and on-site vehicle rental (the first of its kind in the region). The business began transitioning work

over from the original to the new site, while keeping the first location open. Doing so set into motion one part of the process by which Chantilly would grow into an MSO, acquiring new sites for work overflows.

In 2005, Khatib and Ellison opened another shop nearby to handle the work the ultra-busy Chantilly shop couldn't schedule. Eventually, the business would open two more shops for overflow. Two additional locations would be brought on board based on their potential for growth.

Along the way, Chantilly evolved into another partnership. Ellison retired three years ago and sold his shares in the three shops he helped start back to Khatib and his stepson Ryan Roberts. Khatib and Roberts own three of the business's current six locations together.

Today, the business repairs nearly 1,000 vehicles each month, with an average \$2,100 ticket, generating \$38 million in annual revenue. They're looking to grow. Currently, Chantilly

**CHANTILLY AUTO BODY GROUP**

Name

**NEDAL KHATIB, RYAN ROBERTS**

Owners

**CHANTILLY, VA.**

Main Location

**6**

No. of Locations

**30,000/30**

Square footage/No. of bays

**160**

Total no. of employees

**\$2,100**

Average repair ticket

**\$38 MILLION**

Annual revenue

**17**

No. of DRPs

**PPG**

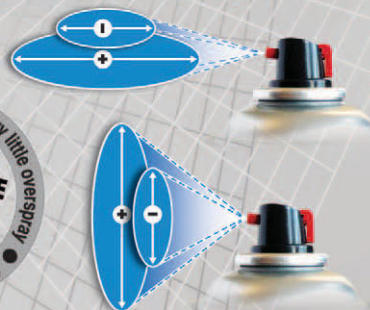
Paint supplier used

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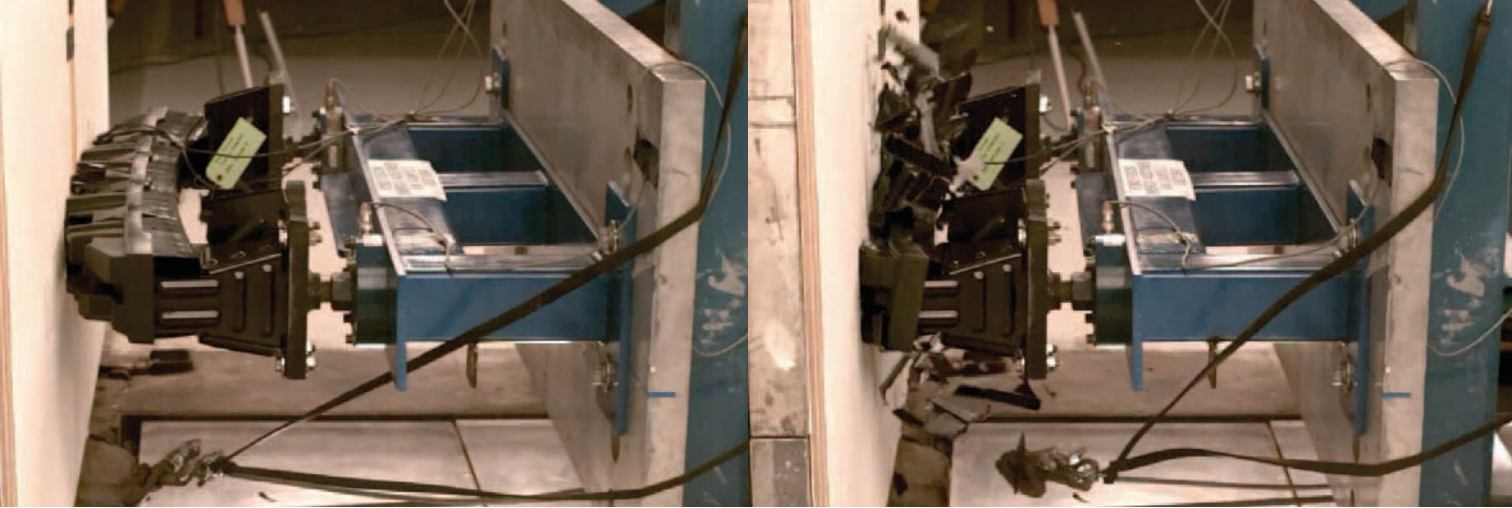
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is in discussions to purchase several more shops, with plans to consider further additions down the road.

### Taking it to the streets

As Chantilly expands, it plans to continue leveraging its reputation for quality and service coupled with long-standing aggressive efforts to pursue business.

"Our way of marketing from day one was to go out and get work," explains Rob Ellison, nephew of Bob and Chantilly's Manager of Business Development. That means continual bidding for rental repairs and fleet work, along with targeting new vehicle dealers. Since its beginning, Chantilly has approached nearby dealers who don't own shops and made arrangements to help service their customers.

Currently the business employs three staff members who work full time in the service lanes of three dealers, with two more working with multiple dealers in auto parks and another in Chantilly who makes regular visits to several nearby dealers. These employees work with dealer staffs, recommending work for customers and then scheduling it. "The dealers love it," says Ellison. "It provides a service they couldn't otherwise offer to their customers."

This formula provides the business with an additional 150-200 cars each month, or roughly 15-20 percent of its business. Beyond that, it also helps Chantilly's efforts to gain OEM certifications, which typically require a dealer



**Technician Oscar Landriel stands in front of an aluminum workstation. Chantilly is certified to work on the new Ford F-150, one of numerous OEM certifications it holds.**

sponsor. To date, Chantilly is certified to work on Volkswagen, Nissan, Infiniti, Chrysler and GM vehicles. They're also certified to perform aluminum work on the new Ford F-150.

Of particular note, Volkswagen requested the business receive their certification because Chantilly was already servicing their fleet at VW's nearby headquarters.

All these certifications don't come cheap, as they require extensive training and specific, often expensive, equipment. Ellison notes that his business invested \$125,000 in equipment just to earn VW certification, although that same investment can be used to earn

certifications through other manufacturers.

The investment also is well worth the cost since it provides Chantilly with a direct path to dealer work and immediate access to highly sought after OEM training, "where the industry is heading," says Ellison.

Chantilly is equally active searching for work in other areas. The business keeps one person on staff to concentrate on insurer relations. That employee regularly visits over 700 local insurance agents dropping off cards, brochures and sometimes gift packages to continually remind these agents the shop wants their business.

### Back to school and the information highway

Chantilly also takes aggressive business steps with marketing programs designed to attract customers through the internet and its close relationship with local schools.

Before he came on board with Chantilly, Ellison worked in information technology. One of his first steps was building and upgrading the business's web presence. Next, he started a reputation management initiative to respond to feedback on online review sites and set up social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter to connect with customers. To keep those accounts active and engaging, he brought in a specialty content firm and tied in web reviews



**Chantilly owner Nedal Khatib has formed two different partnerships to grow his business.**





to help direct more online traffic to the sites for each Chantilly shop.

The business also worked with Google to purchase ad words to drive local repair searches. "The goal is always to get customers to the websites to request an estimate," explains Ellison. "That request is a call to action we respond to by contacting the customer to schedule an estimate, whether it's at one of the shops or somewhere the customer prefers." Chantilly has grown quite adept at capturing this business. Ellison points to statistics that show 172 inquiries in the second quarter of 2013 resulting in 48 completed jobs. That 28 percent conversion rate produced \$79,939 revenue with a \$1,665 repair average.

In the second quarter of 2015, 144 inquiries produced 63 completed jobs—a 44 percent conversion rate generating \$88,704 revenue and a \$1,408 average repair. "Our conversion rates have improved a great deal over the two-year span," says Ellison. "Now we need to put more emphasis on increasing the



Technicians like C.J. Kim all carry I-CAR platinum status.

number of inquiries."

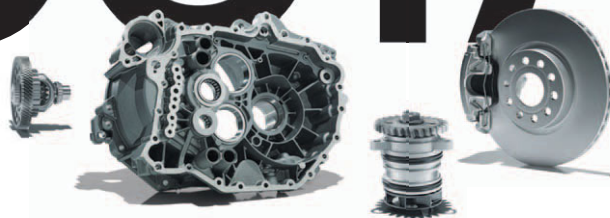
"Doing so should increase revenue and average repair numbers," he adds.

As effective as its web initiatives have been, Chantilly's outreach to local schools has produced an arguably more impressive boon. Like most small busi-

nesses, Chantilly donated funds whenever it was contacted by nearby schools. "After years of them coming to us, we started going to them," says Ellison.

He began approaching all schools near Chantilly locations offering sponsorships for sports, arts and music

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programs. The shop also donated signage featuring its name to hang on every possible sports venue and created electronic banners on school program websites.

The sponsorships aren't year-to-year propositions. Chantilly negotiates five-year contracts that benefit both school and business significantly. Chantilly keeps its name in the community and the schools receive a long-term, much needed financial commitment.

This close relationship is helping spawn one more mutual benefit: a body shop apprenticeship program. "Like everyone in the industry discovers, it's hard to find good, young employees," says Ellison. Young people interested in collision work aren't always presented with a direct path from school to the repair business. The apprenticeship program addresses both issues.

The program is in its beginning stages as Chantilly conducts talks with three vocational tech schools, two of which have applied for Collision Repair Education Foundation makeover grants. Chantilly is formulating ways to direct additional funds into these schools to build a training program.

In addition, Ellison sits on a school advisory committee and is arranging a Chantilly shop tour to allow students to see what a high production shop looks like. He's hoping engagements like these will allow Chantilly to better identify students interested in being an apprentice.

### Setting the stage for the next decade

With an infusion of youthful talent and more sites on the horizon, Chantilly seems well poised to continue building on a successful model. However, as it looks outward, the business is taking a renewed examination of its



When the new Chantilly site was opened in 2000 it was the first of its kind in the DC region, with 30,000 sq. ft. of space and drive-in estimating.



**A full lot of work waits for repairs. Chantilly has frequently grown by adding new shops that handle overflow from existing locations.**

inner workings and expectations. While celebrating its 25th anniversary, Chantilly is putting together a development plan to cover the next 10 years and beyond.

Ellison says one goal in that plan will involve creating more uniform operations across sites while upgrading repair processes. Chantilly shops share the same management and paint systems and most vendors. But each shop is a bit unique, especially in management styles, since some locations maintained their existing managers and employees after they were brought into the Chantilly fold.

Procedures too can vary slightly from one location to another. Khatib reports Chantilly has started moving toward more homogeneous procedures, but notes there is still plenty of work to do. That might include working in a mix of lean procedures.

Ten years after much of the industry has embraced lean, Chantilly may seem a bit behind the times (especially for a Top Shop), but Khatib is quick to point out that shops in the DC region have been more reluctant to go lean. Some, he notes, adopted lean programs then returned to their previous procedures when they didn't get the results they wanted.

"Lean is fine, but you still have to have great quality and customer service," says Khatib. Chantilly is working with its paint vendor and other consultants to determine the best course for it to take.

Moving forward, Chantilly is also looking at bringing all of its locations under a single brand name. Currently, each site has its own identity. The five other location names are: Centreville

Collision Center, Fairfax Collision Center, Metro Collision Center, Quantico Collision Center and Rick's Auto Body.

Chantilly took this route, in the case of new shops, to create shared identity for shops and their communities and to build on the familiarity of pre-existing businesses. "It also drives internet searches to these shops since customers tend to search by location," says Ellison.

He says this could all change as Chantilly grows larger (10 locations or more) when a single brand could offer other benefits. This factor might become particularly important in the future as Chantilly goes head-to-head with much larger MSOs.

Ellison says part of the 10-year plan will involve surviving in that environment. While Chantilly competes with these large entities, Ellison says it also will look to emulate them. "We'll talk about getting investors of our own," he says.

Even if Chantilly decides to grow this large, don't expect them to be a mirror image of other MSOs. Being different is in their blood. They became a Top Shop by taking a road less traveled, and they're not looking to step off. ☞



**TIM SRAMCIK**  
CONTRIBUTING  
EDITOR

Tim Sramcik has written for *ABRN*, *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket 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.

E-mail Tim at [TSramcik@yahoo.com](mailto:TSramcik@yahoo.com)



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# RETHINKING RECRUITMENT

During the first stage of D&S's apprenticeship program, students learn to perform damage analysis and vehicle tear downs.

## SOURCE AND PROMOTE EMPLOYEES USING THE EXAMPLES SET BY THE NATION'S TOP SHOPS

BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**RECENTLY** ABRN spoke with top shops across the country to discuss where and how they're sourcing their next great employee. As usually happens with industry employment issues, the discussion turned to a central question: Why is there a shortage of body shop workers?

Theories abound, but there's no one explanation or single sufficient answer. Owners point to the sometimes challenging, physical nature of collision work. Others say many potential workers have no real idea what goes on in shops and thus dismiss them as employers. Some repairers point to the negative

experiences employees suffer at shops that don't focus on worker satisfaction. This, in particular, they say has helped create a population of "gypsy" workers who move from one shop to another only to wrestle again with the same issues. Some simply abandon the industry. Most undoubtedly share their stories of frustration with family and friends, painting an unfriendly portrait of the industry workplace.

Repairers bump into these disparate issues as they try to form hiring plans. While challenging, some shops have been able to put together recruitment programs that are working. They have shared their experiences with

us, and this can help form the framework of a larger response accessible to the entire industry and appropriate for most any shop.

### The art of the apprenticeship

Chantilly Auto Body, the ABRN 2015 Top Shop, has a long history of sponsorship and support of local schools. They're on the verge of taking these relationships one step further when they institute an apprenticeship program. Business Development Manager Rob Ellison is currently working with three vocational schools to determine how his business will model this program.

On paper, this would seem to be easy. Many vocational schools graduate an average 15-20 collision repair students each year. Chantilly should be looking at a minimum of 45 potentially interested graduates, correct? Actually, the real number is much smaller.

Ellison explains that many, some-

Photo: D&S Automotive





times most, graduates leave these programs with no interest in a collision repair career. Some discover they just don't like the work. Others find engine repair more interesting and move over to mechanical service. For others, time in a body repair program was simply a way of padding out their time in school.

Ellison says the key is finding those students who are talented and would consider becoming a repairer and giv-

ing them a path into the industry. Since many of these students have little if any idea what actually goes on in a modern repair shop, Ellison is arranging a field trip for students to visit a Chantilly location to witness how a high-production shop operates. He's looking at setting up stations where students can get up close and personal with technology that they don't see in the classroom.

"A lot of these kids are interested

in high tech, but their schools can't afford to buy high-end equipment," he explains. "I'd like to let them have a hand seeing how a laser measuring device works."

Beyond shop visits, Ellison is eyeing a program that fully engages apprentices, one that allows them to contribute and get a real taste of the work-a-day collision repair world. Dave Callister, general manager of Mentor, Ohio-based D&S Automotive Collision and Restyling, says that's significant since shops sometimes stumble at this stage.

"They don't formulate an effective program that benefits the apprentice and the shop." Some have kids washing cars for months and little else," he explains. Schools can balk at support if they see little value for their students. "You need referrals from the teacher, so you don't want to lose their confidence," Callister says.

Callister's business runs a successful apprenticeship program that already has placed two new employees. A D&S apprenticeship covers roughly 20 weeks and provides students with in-depth, hands-on instructions on each stage of its lean operations.

During the first four weeks, students learn damage analysis and perform tear downs. The next four weeks are dedicated to light structure repair with students learning how to use filler and install parts while meeting all the recommended gaps. Students then spend a month concentrating on heavy structures. They work on a frame rack, practice MIG and resistance welding and study vehicle structures.

The final six weeks are dedicated to paint work. Students identify a proper repair, learn the value of a clean booth, spray primers and apply base coats and clear finishes. D&S also instructs them on applying waterborne finishes.

Callister says the program provides a low-cost gateway for young people wanting a good-paying career. "By the time they're 30, they could be making \$70,000 a year," he says. "And they're not saddled with thousands of dollars of student loan debt [from a post secondary institution]."

#### Outsider invasion

The success of apprenticeship programs demonstrates how shops can develop employees with basic or no automotive background. Indeed, some shops



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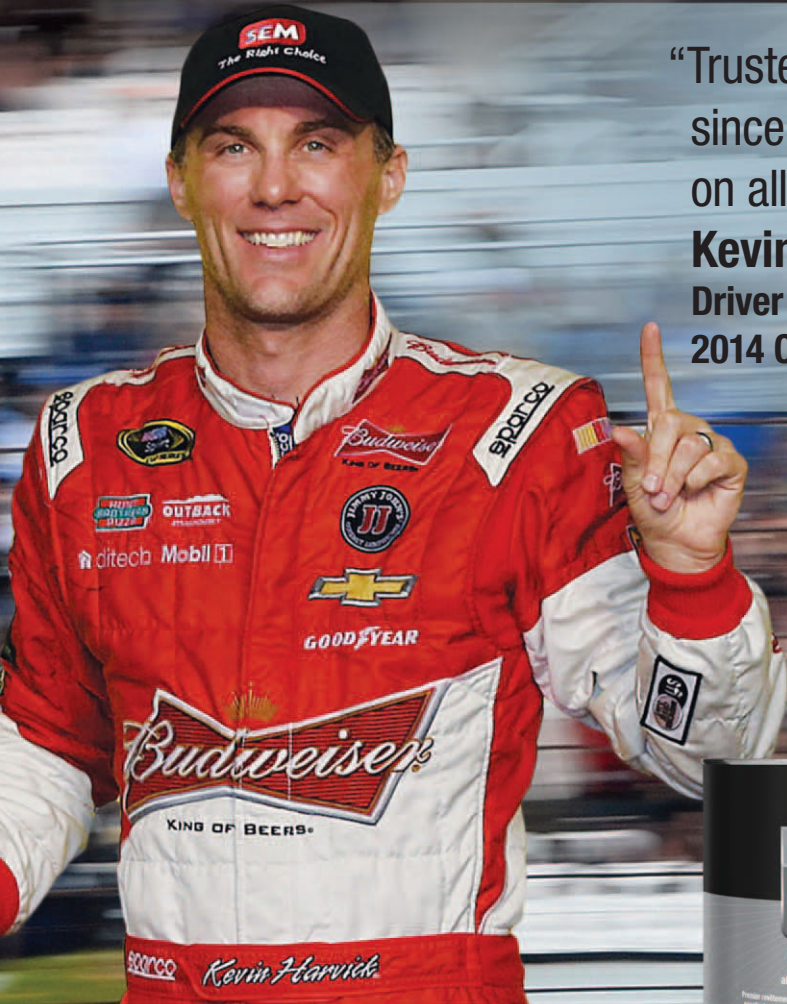
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have built their businesses around processes so they can develop their own employees.

Classic Accident Repair Center in Mentor, Ohio, invites workers from all backgrounds to apply. Much of their training is conducted in-house, allowing them to continuously develop their own employees. Classic also pays for any external training through I-CAR, vendors and OEMs and stocks their own tools.

G&C Auto Body in Santa Rosa, Calif., does much the same. They train their own estimators, techs and painters and pay for tools. "That's a big savings of \$30,000 in schooling and tools for anyone looking to start work in this industry," says Chief Operations Officer Shawn Crozat.

Both shops have had steady success with these setups. Classic has few problems bringing in new workers. Crozat says some of his best employees arrive with no previous automotive background.

"One of our best writers was working in a sporting goods store two years ago," he says. "Today he's making \$90,000 a year."

Crozat also touts his system for training technicians and other workers better than they could anywhere else. This hiring/training process is a core part of G&C's long-term survival strategy. "We're always looking for a competitive advantage," says Crozat. "Where there isn't one, we'll create it for ourselves."

That advantage lies in building an available labor pool instead of dipping into the small, possibly shrinking one that most of the industry competes over. Taking the latter route can prove dangerously costly, says Crozat. Needy shops can find themselves in expensive bidding wars to pry techs away from their current employer. They risk raising labor costs beyond what insurers are willing to cover, a risky propo-

sition for shops and employees alike.

"We don't want to over- or under-pay anyone," Crozat says. "We always want to pay employees what they're worth and take care of the business."

### Traditional recruiting routes

Certainly, not every experienced hire is looking for a substantial pay hike. Many want a change of scenery or a better opportunity. Successful shops reach these recruits by many conventional means, such as job ads in newspapers, Craigslist and other online employment sites, and their own web pages. Classic visits tech schools and invites students to apply.

Trey Perdue, general manager of CSI Collision Specialist in Houston, reaches out to current employees and vendors for referrals. He also tries to promote from within. Looking throughout an organization for employees interested in new careers paths can pay off.

Callister raves about the success his company has had developing employees from entry-level positions. "We've had more promotions from the washing bay than anywhere else," he says.

G&C draws painters from its prep workers who complete the transition by hitting 12 successive goals:

1. Mask vehicle for refinish and sand panels.
2. Take EPA 6H training.
3. Prime and block repair work.
4. Polish.
5. Spray all jambed parts and interior parts of car (for example, rear body panel and radiator support).
6. Spray sealer on exterior panels.
7. Spray clear on exterior panels.
8. Spray base on exterior panels.
9. Attend paint vendor school for color matching.
10. Mix clear and sealer for Lead Refinish Technician.
11. Mix base for Lead Refinish Technician.
12. Tint color.

Each task must be mastered before the prepper can train on the next one. G&C manages the career transition by mandating that the shop's schedule not be interrupted. Preppers must perform all regular duties and clean their work stalls before receiving additional training.

### Constant qualities

Before an employee can be considered for such a promotion, or an outside work-



Effective apprenticeship and mentoring programs can have new hires performing repairs even on high performance vehicles in little time — even employees with little automotive experience.

Photo: Chantilly Auto Body



Estimating and administrative duties offer career paths for new outside hires not interested in repair work.

Photo: Chantilly Auto Body

er brought in, shops need to take steps to determine they've identified the right person for the opportunity. In the case of the latter, shops like Classic run thorough background checks. They also look for a stable work history and a willingness to buy into a new system, adapt and commit to long-range employment.

When evaluating current employees, some shops place a premium on attitude over experience. They'd rather hitch their wagon to employees with mechanical or other aptitude and an interest in learning versus a 25-year industry veteran who is unwilling to grow. D&S Vice President CJ Paterniti prizes a strong work ethic coupled with enthusiasm: "That person who finds a way to stay busy, who will empty waste baskets and do whatever it takes to help," he says.

Other shops search for skills that can be utilized in shop areas outside of repairs and painting. For example, organizational skills can be put to use in a parts department. Ellison notes that focusing on these under-appreciated skill sets also opens the door to valuable outside work pools shops could be ignoring.

For example, former military mem-



Looking for a great future tech, painter or estimator? Detailers have skills and talents that can be molded into other shop careers.

Photo: D&S Automotive



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bers often have organizational and leadership abilities that can be molded into a number of shop positions. Ellison's business already has discussed ways to bring in these workers. (ABRN's May 2015 edition features a full list of resources to help shops hire members of the armed forces.)

Chantilly also has taken note of technology skills possessed by many entry-level employees that can be put to work. Ellison says during the summer a senior employee began bringing in his son, a recent high school graduate, to help at the shop. To further his understanding of the work, the young man sat with his father and studied I-CAR courses online. The father reported that not only was his son able to more easily navigate the course, he also outperformed him.

"If this young guy is interested in pursuing a career, we'd be interested in investing in him," says Ellison. "We'd love to have him be our expert on something like our high tech measuring systems."

### Retention: the final piece of the hiring puzzle

The one downside of bringing on new employees and developing current ones is the risk shops take if these same folks decide to take their now-honed talents and experience elsewhere. Any organization is going to see some attrition. Repairers wince at the prospect of losing personnel investments.

Interestingly, very successful shops don't share these concerns — at least not to the same degree. Some say employee turnover is rare or practically nonexistent. The reason: these shops continue actively making the case for workers to stay long after a hire or promotion. They provide great working conditions and the opportunity for further advancement.

"Someone else might pay more, but there are other important things that employees value," explains Paterniti. "The culture is important, as is letting them pursue their personal goals."

"If we give them multiple areas to grow, they won't go anywhere else,"

he adds. The same proactive policies that bring employees into a business can convince them to remain. Developing long-term employees is a cornerstone of any successful recruitment plan.

Doing so helps eliminate the need for rash hiring decisions. It also puts in place veteran workers who can enlist and mold the next generation of employees. With that done, shops no longer need to bemoan the state of hiring in the industry. They've done their part in repairing it. 📧



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Tim Sramcik has written for *ABRN*, *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket 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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# EDUCATION OVERHAUL

Training programs can be designed not simply just to add skills, but to bring in additional employees and boost revenue.

## SHOPS TO WATCH PUT THEIR OWN SPIN ON TRAINING

BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**THE NEXT** time you're pondering ways to upgrade your business, consider Starbucks. The coffee giant generates more than \$16 billion annually selling a product that not long ago Americans would brew themselves for far less. Starbucks's secret? There is none.

Volumes of experts have explored how this coffee stop succeeded so spectacularly where others fell short. Many fall back on Starbucks finding a new way to promote a traditional product. Chairman Howard Schultz disagrees. His response: "People think we are a great marketing company, but in fact we spend more money on training our people."

That includes training, both classroom and hands on, at every level, from shift managers who greet you at the door

to district managers and farther up. At the store level, baristas are schooled on dozens of different drink combinations, along with every area of customer service. The goal is consistently providing customers with a quality product paired with a gold standard experience.

Of course, repairing vehicles is far more complex than making coffee and therefore requires at least an equal devotion to training. Shops usually have access to a wide range of learning resources, from formal classrooms to online modules and hands-on, in-house instruction. With these choices come tough decisions of where shops would do best to put their training dollars and time. One terrific guide is following in the path of your successful peers. We talk to busi-





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nesses who climbed to the top of the industry using the resources available to most repairers combined with their own unique spin.

### Traditional route: I-CAR

I-CAR sits at the center of the collision industry's training efforts and for good reason. It offers proven courses often not available anywhere else. Insurers have come to demand I-CAR training as part of DRP requirements. OEM certification programs, says Doug Trulock, owner of South Broadway Collision Center in Lexington, Ky., often require I-CAR gold classification and additional training. For example, he notes that Audi certification also involves attending special I-CAR classes, along with OEM training. That's critical for a successful shop that works extensively with dealers.

Some shops incorporate I-CAR even further. D&S Automotive Collision and Restyling in Mentor, Ohio constructed its corporate headquarters with classrooms dedicated for I-CAR training. Vice President C.J. Paterniti says the setup keeps training accessible and convenient. "Since the headquarters is near all our shops, employees can come over right after work, and be home by 10 o'clock," he says.

Other shops have present or former I-CAR trainers on staff. Jim Caron, manager of ACME Auto Body in Leominster, Maine, previously taught welding and steps in at his own shop to provide instruction.

Jim Guthrie, owner of Car Crafters in Albuquerque, NM, and a shop recognized multiple times through the ABRN Top Shops Contest, also taught welding for I-CAR. Car Crafters staff

member Carl Peet is a current I-CAR instructor and teaches classes at the shop. Being this close to I-CAR has aided Car Crafters in making training decisions that have helped it add its fifth location in the past two years.

### Trade, training shows

Industry trade and training shows across the country also offer great opportunities for education. The inaugural Automechanika Chicago took place in April and trained 2,000 collision and service repair technicians during its three-day training course offerings that covered both technical and shop management topics.

During SEMA, the Society for Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) again hosted its Repairer Driven Education Series, which included OEM Collision Repair Technology Summit sessions. Events like these not only offer education for the shop owners and technicians, but also feature a trade show component that allows access to exhibitors who can help boost, streamline or improve a shop's business.

Those elements add up to an education opportunity second to none, says Aaron Schulenburg, Executive Director for SCRS. "I can't think of a better venue to train in," he says. "You're already excited and inspired, and you're in a class surrounded by likeminded people who are more receptive to the information and likely to implement it when they get back home."

Schulenburg notes other benefit. Repairers have access to many of the most respected subject matter experts in the industry. They also have access to an extensive and comprehensive course list, all available in one place. There are cost savings as well. All inclusive passes allow repairers to attend every program they want.

NACE, of course, provides its own extensive series of cutting edge courses from I-CAR, the Automotive Management Institute and manufacturers. A host of forums and symposiums give repairers additional insight on areas where they need to prepare their businesses. Among the numerous offerings at NACE 2015 were advanced steering and suspension systems damage analysis, aluminum repair, technology in the sales process and carbon fiber repair. An MSO symposium exam-



Employee break rooms can be transformed into classroom for vendor training and video tutorials.

Photo: Car Crafters

ined issues like hiring, financing and the future of DRPs.

### Vendors and consultants

Another popular training resource typically has been vendors, along with independent consultants. In the case of the former, South Broadway regularly receives painter training from its vendor, bringing in trainers for four-day sessions covering safety, changing environmental laws, mixing and application. For the latter, Total Auto Body in Grafton, Wis., makes use of its lunchroom to screen videos by renowned consultants like Mike Anderson.

Total owner Bob Gibson and Paterniti have also attended Greenbelt lean courses from their paint vendors and taken those lessons back to their businesses.

Today, all D&S employees take the one-day Whitebelt lean course. Along with explaining the operational benefits of lean processing, the course was critical in helping nervous employees understand how transitioning to team-based pay plans would increase their income. The move paid off quickly. In just one year, the shop increased throughput by 17 percent, boosting tech paychecks and reducing the hours D&S locations needed to stay open.

At Warrensburg Collision in Warrensburg, Mo., manager Casey Lund used lean classes from his paint vendor, with lessons taken from business classes and books, to reinvent his shop. Lund's father started the business in 2001 and pushed his sons to finish their education and move on to other businesses. While finishing his MBA and working in fundraising and development, Lund learned his father was ill and decided to take the shop reins.



Estimators looking to work at G&C Auto Body must first pass a rigorous training course with assistance from a mentor.

Photo: G&C Auto Body

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For the first several years, he struggled mightily, but in 2012 he put his MBA and lean training to work. Most of his staff has now taken Greenbelt training, and the shop held a number of Kaizen events. Lund also instituted daily improvement sessions.

Every day, from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., the shop fixes processes. Employees identify one area where they can cut waste and create a new work standard. The change must offer improvements in one of four ways — making a task faster, safer, simpler or producing better quality — without diminishing any of the other three.

The entire staff also reviews the day's production plan, continues talks on spotting waste and discusses a "topic of the day," which can be anything from lean production and management to finding ways to inspire others.

"Our goal is to help them work on the business and make their own decisions," explains Lund. "We're teaching them to self-manage —" as employees become better able to make their own decisions, processes become more efficient, with far fewer problems, he says.

Since he's put these changes in place, Lund says employees are happier and more engaged with the business, allowing them to take better care of customers. Those changes also have translated into a much healthier bottom line. During the past three years, Warrensburg has tripled its revenue.

### OEM certification rush

The most popular growing trend in training is gaining OEM certifications. Some owners declare that repairers eventually will need this training to stay in business. Over half of the 2015 Top Shops entries that rose to the top



Lean training from paint vendors can be carried into shops to teach vehicle tear downs and introduce other ideas such as team-based pay structures.

Photo: D&S Automotive

possessed multiple certifications and are pursuing more.

Certification isn't without its drawbacks, especially its often prohibitive costs. Paterniti points to the expense of adding arguably the most common certified work, Ford aluminum repairs. "It's a \$100,000 capital expense that a lot of shops can't afford to entertain," he says. His shop did make the investment and to date has had three new Ford F-150s pass through its doors, none of them needing structural repairs.

In time, that investment very well could pay off, but some shops are content to wait until certifications become a necessity. G&C Auto Body, a Santa Rosa, Calif.-based multiple ABRN Top Shops winner, has no current plans to pursue OEM certifications. "It's not what our business model is right now," says Chief operations Officer Shawn Crozat.

### In-house bonanza

A far more affordable training option is in-house learning, which is proving its worth in a range of implementation formats. Some shops have turned to internal training as part of MSO expansion. After Car Crafters recently acquired Hoffman Body Shop, it began cross training the business's new 50 employees at its other locations. In some cases the business sent established employees to Hoffman to conduct training there.

Other shops pair up new hires with veteran workers. At CSI Collision Center in Houston, senior employees take new techs under their wing to teach them the business's standard procedures. New estimators work directly with General Manager Trey Purdue until they're ready to fly on their own.

Classic Accident Repair Center in Mentor, Ohio puts most of its training focus on in-house development. The business utilizes DCR Systems' lean repair model, which has training modules covering every aspect of the shop's operations that can be viewed at any time.

New employees kick off their Classic careers by viewing these online learning sessions. Next, they work with a senior staff member who teaches them the business's unique multi-stage repair process that Store Leader Marty Roberts describes as a fundamental de-



Certification programs involve significant capital expenditures such as investments in clean rooms for aluminum repair. Shops need to be aware of the time it can take to recover these investments.

Photo: Car Crafters

parture from traditional collision work. For example, eight different techs typically work on each vehicle at clearly defined operational points before a repair is "validated." Tools are provided for particular operation and stored only in specific areas.

Classic does require its employees to go through I-CAR training, scheduled through an on-staff I-CAR instructor. It also carries OEM certifications (Classic services a 17 dealer network) and provides vendor training, all of this overseen by a national training support manager and a store leader who match employees with learning opportunities.

Classic incorporates all these resources under an umbrella operation aimed at predictable, problem-free, speedy processes. This setup permits Classic to regularly bring new hires with a variety of work backgrounds and place them throughout the business to handle increasing workloads.

G&C uses a comparable home grown, in-house process that develops new hires and boosts sales. New estimators pair up with veteran writers and are marched through G&C boot camp, a rigorous months-long course where trainees work on multiple management systems. Crozat calls the training "fairly brutal," noting that only 50 percent of participants make it through. Those who fail usually do so, he says, because they are either unable to master the work or give up after facing the difficulties associated with a front-line shop position.

The attrition is necessary to weed out less-than-stellar performers. "We only want our best people writing," says Crozat.

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Training lasts 5-11 months depending upon how long it takes a graduate to meet the program's requirements. Those that do can earn \$90,000 their first year. Mentors receive incentives in the form of a \$2,500 bonus for each graduate they help make the cut.

New techs likewise work with an experienced body tech who spends several months conducting training (techs and other employees additionally receive I-CAR instruction). Mentors here also earn incentives to turn out capable workers. G&C initially pays the new employee for the first three months. After that, they're on the "tech's dime," explains Crozat. By helping the senior tech be more productive, both workers bump their pay.

Crozat notes that a freshly trained tech can help a mentor make an additional \$18,000 annually. "I tell them they can use that to max out their 401(k) and in 20 years have millions of dollars for retirement," he says.

This system ensures G&C maintains a talented workforce capable of

sustaining its business trajectory. It's working out quite well as the family-run MSO prepares to open its 10th location with more growth in sight.

### Maintaining the investment

Considering the rising costs of training, especially instruction provided by OEMs, shops are under increasing pressure to ensure that education remains under their own roofs. Some have responded by asking employees to sign contracts agreeing to stay with the business for a set period of time or reimburse the shop for the costs. Results for this practice have been mixed, owners say.

Some employees are more inclined to stay. Others believe they still can walk away from the deal with little fear of repercussions. "If someone does break the contract, you have to ask yourself if you're really going to go to the expense of enforcing it," says Perdue.

A better solution could lie in, appropriately enough, training. Training isn't simply about adding or honing techni-

cal skills. Owners and employees also have the opportunity to pick up new business ideas for reshaping a shop. Those changes can make a business a more inviting workplace that keeps employees around. That includes transforming it into an ever evolving environment where employees can test the limits of their potential. With that in place, there's little reason to take those hard-won skills elsewhere.

This article offers you a host of different things to think about over your next cup of coffee. ☞



**TIM SRAMCIK**  
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Tim Sramcik has written for *ABRN*, *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket 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.

E-mail Tim at [TSramcik@yahoo.com](mailto:TSramcik@yahoo.com)

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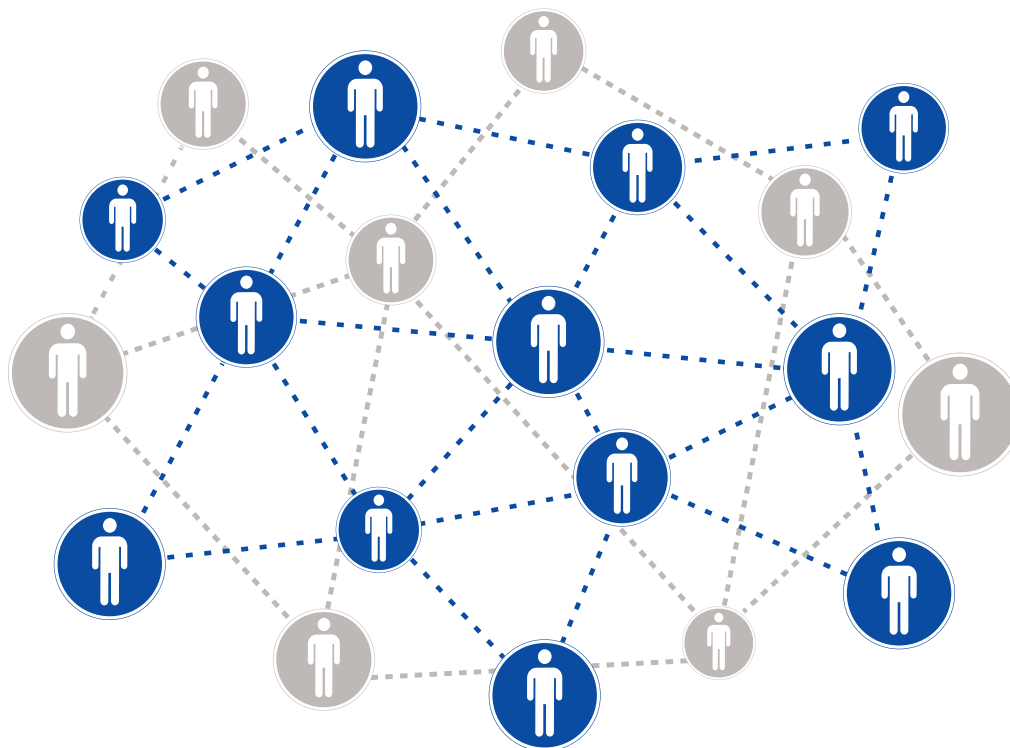
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## MINDING YOUR BUSINESS



## FORMING CONNECTIONS

**ABRN'S TOP SHOPS ARE USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO  
CONNECT TO CUSTOMERS AND THE INDUSTRY AT LARGE**BY **CHELSEA FREY** | SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**MAINTAINING** a presence on social media is essential for gaining and retaining customers, and you can't attend the social media party as a wallflower. Actively forming connections with coworkers, your community and the industry at large and then showcasing these connections through social media posts functions as indirect marketing for your business and benefits everyone involved.

First we'll take a look at how to approach your social media management in order to have an effective presence — what to post and why — and then we'll see how some of *ABRN's* 2015 Top Shops are using their social media sites to engage customers and connect to various communities.

**What to post**

So-so social media won't cut it. Social media users only see about 10 percent of

your content, so you have to make sure all of your posts are attention worthy. Many marketing companies (Vizoop, 5 Stones Media, for example) advocate the 50/30/20 rule for social media posting.

**50 percent: entertaining content**

People do not follow businesses, brands, and shops on social media because they want to be sold products or services. They want to be acknowledged, entertained and educated as human beings,



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not as pocketbooks. Thus, you have to provide interesting and engaging posts that differentiate your shop from the others and keep your fans coming back. While all of your social media content should engage your audience, 50 percent of your posts should be dedicated to fun, entertaining content. Share memes, videos, pictures and blogs — industry related or otherwise — that will cultivate interactions.

The purpose of this kind of posting is to create activity: likes, shares, favorites and comments. If your social media sites are void of interactions, new potential followers (customers) visiting your pages will likely dismiss what your shop has to offer because others are not responding to your posts and information.

These posts need to be representative of the kind of shop you run — friendly, modern, knowledgeable, courteous, etc. Think critically about how the content you post will affect your image and your followers — a couple of spelling mistakes or a series of slanted political posts can turn people away.

### 30 percent: tips and news

More and more people are relying on Facebook and Twitter to get their daily news. According to a study by the Media Insight Project, 47 percent of millennials say that getting news is a main motivation for logging on to their Facebook account, and 88 percent of them regularly get news from the site.

This statistic does not mean you should feel responsible for providing your fans and followers with every bit of news under the sun. Just as the goal of your shop is to provide quality and value, you need to provide quality and value for your social media audience. Important car-related posts, whether it's industry news or automotive tips, are helpful to your followers. You can also post news and information concerning community events. Sharing information about industry influencers and your surrounding community builds your reputation and your customers' trust. While providing useful content, you are also showing that you are connected with the world outside of your shop and that you care about being current and in the know.

If you are wondering how you're going to be able to accrue a slew of news articles, remember that you can follow other shops, industry associa-

## HOW NOT TO DO YOUTUBE VIDEOS

BY DAVID ROGERS

*Videos are the next big trend in social media, but before you dive in and start posting videos for your shop, make sure you DON'T make these rookie mistakes:*

### 1 – DON'T make fun of your customers.

*Customers may not know as much about their cars as you do, but that doesn't give you permission to talk down to them, especially behind their backs in a public video. NEVER badmouth your customers or their cars. It embarrasses your customer and offends them.*

### 2 – DON'T put your customers at risk.

*If you're recording videos at your shop, don't forget to look around before you press record. Leaving identifying information in the shot, like visible license plates, car color/make/model, or personal belongings can leave your customers vulnerable. Just like you wouldn't film an actual customer without permission, you shouldn't include belongings or information that can be tied back to them in your video.*

*When you want to feature a customer's*

*car, you have two options: (1) get their permission or (2) remove any trace that can link them back to their car — this includes the small things, like pendants hanging from the rear view mirror. Better yet, do both!*

### 3 – DON'T forget who's watching.

*Don't post a video for the sake of posting a video. The videos you create and share must serve a purpose — for you and for the people watching the video. Like any marketing, your YouTube videos should have a goal and an effective message.*

*The same rules that guide your behavior behind the counter should guide your video content. Educate, never sell. Speak in a language they can understand. Provide value with useful content.*

*Before you get out the camera and start rolling, make sure you create videos that will work for your business — and avoid these mistakes!*

David Rogers is chief operating officer of Keller Bros. Inc., and president of Auto Profit Masters. Reach David via email at [contact@autoprofitmasters.com](mailto:contact@autoprofitmasters.com) or online at [www.AutoProfitMasters.com](http://www.AutoProfitMasters.com).

tions and news sources on your social media sites. As you logging in to your page every day to make posts, you can see what other groups are talking about and share those links.

### 20 percent: shop services

20 percent of your social media posts should be for selling your shop's services. However, you have to do so in a creative, not-so-obvious way — your selling posts should blend in with your entertaining and informative social media content. For example, during the autumn months you could create posts that alert your followers to the damage leaves can cause to a vehicle's paint while advertising your paint services. This post is both generally helpful to your followers and keeps your shop top of mind when your fans look over their cars for paint damage.

### Putting it to practice

Balancing this three-pronged approach to social media may seem overwhelming, especially since a certain level of forethought and creativity is needed. You don't have to follow the 50/30/20 ratio to an exact science; just keep the

rule in mind as you are evaluating and planning your social media posts. Keep a notebook or make a note in your smartphone dedicated to post ideas. Remember that variety is the spice of life — have a mix of videos, images, text, memes and links across the three categories.

But most importantly, you can't take a break from social media! The process of gaining and retaining followers is a continuous cycle — you need a constant flow of valuable and engaging posts (ideally three to five posts daily) to have an effective social media presence.

### The faces behind the name

Braxton Automotive in Atlanta, Ga., comments, "We don't use our social media for business necessarily, but to build relationships and let our followers know that we're people too."

As the 50/30/20 rule reveals, 80 percent of posts should be helpful and entertaining. If 80 percent of your posts were ads, your social media sites would come off as spam. This rule expresses the notion that customers want to know that there is more to a shop than just its services. They want to know the people behind the repairs.



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However, with social media there is no such thing as a separation between the shop and its operators. Social media is incredibly valuable in that it creates transparency between the two — they become one in the same. You can market the quality of your services by showcasing your employees, personality, that you're involved in the community and industry, committed to training, etc.

Here are some examples of how shops across the country are connecting with their customers, community and the industry on social media and bolstering their business at the same time.

**Customer service**

ACME Body Shop & Collision in South Portland, Maine, made a post on their Facebook page, including pictures, about rescuing a customer's ring that was stuck in the center console of her vehicle. This light-hearted post showed a unique side of ACME's customer service. Simple gestures and posts like these let your followers see that helping customers is the top priority. Of course, always ask for your customers' permis-

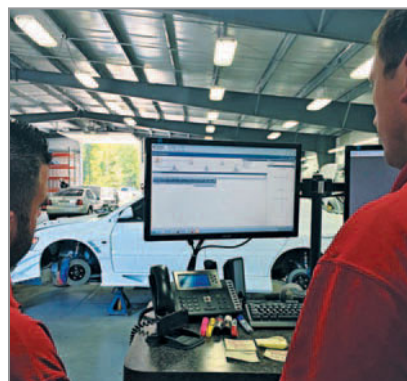


ACME Body Shop & Collision made a post about rescuing a customer's ring from the center console.

sion if you can use their picture, name, and/or information in a post.

**Community**

Your shop occupies a physical space in your community — show how you fit in! G&C Auto Body, which as 10 locations in California, writes, "This year we created a Facebook page that highlights events that are happening in our company, comprising mostly of charity events



County Line Auto Body shared a photo on their Facebook page of their technicians taking an online training course.

we host or participate in. With so many employees, we are able to pool our collective resources to be a serious presence in our community support efforts."

G&C won the Corporate Champion first place award for the funds they raised for the Sonoma County Human Race. The Facebook post G&C made about the accomplishment engaged multiple interactions with followers via likes, comments and shares. G&C also shared

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their support for Breast Cancer Awareness by creating a “Road to the Cure” fundraising page benefiting the Breast Cancer Research Foundation and sponsoring a “Strike Out Cancer” bowling event in their community. Using their Facebook page, G&C shared information and created contests for the events to raise awareness for the cause.

While you’re a part of a town community, you also have a community

within your shop. Share posts about employees’ work anniversaries and accomplishments or record a short video introducing your crew. County Line Auto Body in Howell, NJ, shared a picture on Facebook of two employees completing online training for new software. Posts like these are a great way to show that your employees and shop are dedicated to training and quality repairs.

Everyone knows that a well-oiled

machine performs best. When followers get a behind-the-scenes view of employees working together — whether it’s to repair a vehicle or to celebrate a co-worker’s achievement — it builds their trust and confidence in your services.

**The industry at large**

Social media is a vital part of marketing, but it’s also a great way to connect with the broader industry and to foster solidarity. Warrensburg Collision in Warrensburg, Mo., created a video series called “Warrensburg Collision Lean” on their YouTube channel. These brief, helpful videos are usually improvements geared towards fellow shops to better organize their shop and office. Some of the videos cover topics such as organizing PPS cups, organizing with magnets and tool shadows and desk improvement for the office. The desk improvement video features a fellow repair shop, Bob Sight Collision. Sharing helpful information and tips with other repair shops benefits the industry as a whole.

**Staying connected**

D&S Automotive Collision and Restyling in Mentor, Ohio, sums up social media marketing the best. They explain, “Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram allow us to show customers the exceptional body work and aftermarket accessory projects we complete. Social media also allows us to communicate professionally, and frequently, with customers and community connections.”

Cars allow us the freedom to connect to others, but social media gives us the opportunity to interact with thousands of people across a town, state, country and the globe within a single post. Embrace the magnificence of social media and reach out to your colleagues, staff, customers, community, fellow shops and the industry at large. As these shops have shown, sharing your experiences and knowledge online can only help your business grow.



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**PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS**

# Developing, maintaining standard operating procedures: part three

Build your SOPs to be consistent and repeatable

BY **KEITH MANICH** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**W**hen building your workplace SOPs, always keep focus on the fact that your procedures should reduce waste, increase workplace efficiencies and streamline work processes. Reviewing the two previous SOP installments, we looked at how this attention to detail in the management of your production processes addressed these three essential business elements.

It is important to also mention that during the SOP building process, you will want to look around your store and see if there are unnecessary or unwanted items or “clutter” that can be removed. This is considered waste. In future installments we will discuss the relationship between maximizing production efficiencies and the cleanliness of the workplace.

So let’s do a quick review of the key areas of developing the SOP before we begin.

1. Clearly identify what needs to be done.
2. Notify those responsible for a particular work product what their tasks are.
3. Provide information relative to the proper completion of the tasks.
4. What are the documentation requirements?
5. Identify proper tools and equipment.
6. Identify and establish quality control requirements.
7. Identify inspection requirements before release to the next repair technician.

Each operation within the business has a “best practice” performance standard. In other words, there is a right way to do the job so that it is done exactly as intended, reducing any margin for error and ensuring that the job or tasks can be performed consistently and repeatedly. Why? We want to build predictability into the work processes, which allows for a standard of time to be assigned to the task. This enables us both to measure proficiency in the task and to develop an efficiency measurement

that validates clocked versus billed hour rates. These are used to determine the productivity and the financial value placed on the activity.

Anything that can be eliminated from the task list that is identified as unnecessary or waste should be removed. This determination is made by examining the process, identifying essential process elements and removing unproductive tasks. It may include combining several tasks to achieve the same net result while eliminating a step. As long as productivity increases and quality improves, the decision will be supported by the result.

This process should be followed whenever a task list is developed. The task list is the precursor to the SOP. The tasks will be identified; then the order in which they are required to be performed will be your procedural steps. Added to that will be necessary tools, equipment and environmental and human needs, all of which will be included in the SOP development. But not all of our daily activities are centered on traditional production steps. We may need to prepare for production. That means preparing the employees for the steps they will encounter in preparing to begin production. That will involve meeting to discuss expectations, cover production SOPs, and establish production indicators such as signs or other visual aids. To begin, we will look at the production meeting and some of the required steps in providing detailed information.

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**Planning and execution of a production meeting**

1	<b>Pre-meeting</b>	Print and review vehicle status, vehicle promise date, ordered parts, and back-ordered parts reports.
2	<b>Meeting and schedule times</b>	Meeting to be conducted daily by production manager. Shop owner conducts if production manager absent. Begin morning meeting at 7:45 a.m. And midday meeting at 12:30 p.m. Meeting to be completed within 15 minutes.
3	<b>Daily staffing</b>	Determine staffing for the day. Reassign staff, if required.
4	<b>Scheduled delivery</b>	Review status of all vehicles scheduled for delivery. Identify known obstacles on all vehicles. Identify initial solutions to obstacles.
5	<b>Vehicle status</b>	Record status of all vehicles. Determine if there are known obstacles on all vehicles. Identify initial solutions to each known obstacle.
6	<b>Vehicles arrived</b>	Review status of each vehicle that has arrived. Assign staff to prepare estimate/repair plan. Identify any timeframes required for estimate/repair plan preparation.
7	<b>Vehicle pick up and delivery</b>	Identify any vehicles that need to be picked up or delivered. Assign staff as required.
8	<b>Post-meeting</b>	Update management system status report on all vehicles. Solve known obstacles on all vehicles. Update vehicle owners on vehicle status.

This is an example of a completed SOP developed for a daily meeting in a collision repair store. It provides all the detail required for conducting a meeting that will provide all the necessary information used on the production floor. We will dissect it so that it will be easier to see who, what, why, where and how the process of developing the SOP culminates in a completed process. It begins with preparation.

**1. Pre-meeting**

Tasks included in the “pre-meeting” include:

- Printing and reviewing:
- Vehicle status reports

- Promise dates
- Parts ordering
- Back ordered parts reports

These tasks are completed so that the person who will be conducting the meeting has all the discussion topics clearly identified, eliminating the chance of “scope creep” or movement away from the pre-identified topics. This will keep meetings shorter in length and provide information necessary to improve production. The goal is to reduce waste, so begin well prepared for the meeting.

**2. Meeting schedule and time**

Meetings should be conducted at the same time, in the same place and preferably by the same person each time they are held. This brings a consistency to the process and removes any possibility of having multiple approaches determined by multiple managers, undermining the process. It is extremely important for the manager to begin and end meetings each time, on time. Be sure that the topics are thoroughly covered but “get to the point.” This is production time so limit the time away from work.

**3. Daily staffing**

When there is a need for a change in work assignments, identification of particular areas of damage, potential repair concerns, vehicle repair sequencing or other aspects of production, it is vital to production efficiencies that it/they are identified early in the process and communicated clearly during the meeting. If the discussion involves a particular vehicle or operation, the reassigned tech will have all the necessary change information. This includes disassembly and repair planning processes. It may be necessary to bring a newly delivered vehicle in prior to inventory to meet hourly schedules. That should be decided pre-production.

**4. Scheduled delivery**

The manager should walk through each vehicle’s status to identify any barriers to completion and any supplemental needs, and to establish if the vehicle is in fact on target for completion. If any obstacles are identified, solutions or corrective action should be immediately identified and put into place once the meeting concludes. If this involves a change in delivery date, customer notification should be completed as soon as the meeting concludes. This should include any file documentation that will need to be made to justify the delay for future reference.

**5. Vehicle status**

The manager will document the meeting worksheet to record the status of each vehicle as they are reviewed. If an obstacle to completion has been identified, the manager should identify the corrective action and assign that to the person responsible for it. For example, if it is a part issue, provide specific instructions including timeframes for the part to be ordered, mirror matched and provided to the repairing technician. With a solution identified, the time-frame should be adjusted and preparation for the next meeting should include follow-up on the concern, the solution and noting a successful conclusion. For newly arrived vehicles, this may include supplement identification prior to or

during disassembly. Vehicle status will be the most discussed but not the only topic covered at these meetings. Use these as opportunities to communicate any changes that may go on in the store as well as updates on materials and procedures.

## 6. Vehicles arrived

As part of the meeting planning and preparation, the manager will include the vehicles that are in line next for production. It is important to note that planning, scheduling and bringing the vehicle in should be done in a specific order. The disassembly process, who will be responsible for it and who will complete the repair plan are all part of this process. That creates an environment where everyone who is involved in the production process has a clear understanding of the expectations for production prior to the conclusion of the meeting. If a concern is identified, it can be handled during the meeting, keeping the possibility of production stoppage minimized.

## 7. Vehicle pick up and delivery

During the meeting when vehicles are identified as soon to be completed during the status review, assignments for the vehicles to go to clean up and delivery are identified. The manager should take all completed or nearly completed information and move that information to their deliver status board for the clean-up department to be able to identify the next vehicle in their production line and any special needs, and to make sure that the final step — quality control — has been completed by the reassembly staff.

## 8. Post-meeting

Meetings always end with the documentation of the management system, if the shop is so equipped, or an entry into the manager's workbook. This ensures that any situations that were identified during the meeting process are cataloged for use at a later date whether it be for employee growth and opportunity or for tracking obstacles so they don't occur in the future. The importance of the meeting is to improve productivity, limit or eliminate waste, identify any obstacles to production and keep the employees, and more importantly the customer, informed during the repair process.

The seven key areas for development of SOPs have been followed in this example. Most production situations are similar and use many of the same steps. Additionally, slightly varied approaches could have been used here in both development and execution. These become apparent as new SOPs are identified. The important factors are identification, communication and documentation. If these are used throughout SOP or work standard development, the two important factors — consistency and repeatability — will always be met. This provides the employees with the knowledge that work factors and work product requirements will always remain consistent. A continuous improvement process will always be used and management will always work with them to eliminate obstacles when encountered. The communication will be open and meetings held to reinforce the SOP objectives. ☛

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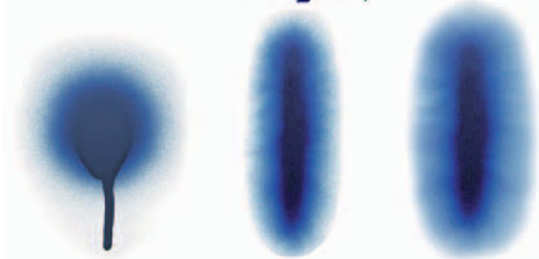
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# GLASS REVIEW

IS IT TIME YOUR SHOP PERFORMED MORE GLASS WORK?

With the proper licensing, training and tools (all readily available) nearly every shop can begin performing all of its own glass work.

BY **TIM SRAMCIK** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Nearly 15 years ago, the automotive glass installation market was going through the kind of turmoil similar to what collision repairers also were experiencing. Independent glass shops were having to close their doors because they could no longer compete with large franchise operations. They simply didn't have access to the cost structures the franchises enjoyed. They often paid significantly more for the same supplies used by franchisees, causing their customers to go elsewhere for lower prices.

During that same time, body shops were also contending powerful market forces, namely insurers who were able to largely dictate labor costs and repair procedures. Shops able to contend with these business parameters were able to survive. Many others, just like many independent glass shops, shuttered their operations for good.

Today, both markets are remarkably stable, with collision repairers actually thriving. The two industries also have diverged in one crucial area:

repair complexity. For the most part, as vehicles have become more complex, collision work has become more sophisticated. Glass repair and replacement, thanks to greatly improved tools and products, has become more accessible.

Most shops continue to send the majority of their glass work, especially windshield replacement, to outside businesses. Maybe it's time your shop reconsidered and moved these repairs in-house. Refer to the following basic





glass replacement steps (supplied by 3M) to help you decide if this work is right for your shop.

### Windshield replacement

Step 1. Glass removal. Apply protection to the interior surface area. This is necessary to prevent damage to the area and the buildup of debris when the urethane is cut and the glass removed. If the glass is already damaged and could break upon removal, you'll need additional protection.

Remove both the wiper blades and the cowl panel. Next, remove the window molding. With the appropriate tool, cut the urethane bond. Note: New electric cutting tools can help cutting times and make this step more efficient and potentially less damaging to the repair area. Remove the glass.

Step 2. Prepare the area. Clean the pinchweld area of all loose pieces of urethane.

Dry fit the new glass, using masking tape to mark the proper alignment. Cut the masking tape and remove the glass.

Step 3. Pinchweld inspection and preparation. Close-cut the old urethane down to a thickness of 1 – 2mm. Clean the area with water and a clean cloth. If necessary, apply primer to any bare metal scratches and allow to dry for 5 – 10 minutes.

Step 4. Clean and prepare the replacement glass. Clean glass with glass cleaner and a clean, lint-free cloth.

Step 5. Apply primer. First check the expiration date on the primer. Shake the primer can well. Apply a continuous layer of primer to the new windshield. Allow 5 – 10 minutes for the primer to dry fully.

Step 6. Apply urethane and install the windshield. Check the expiration date on the urethane to ensure it is still usable. Apply a bead of new urethane to the old urethane on the pinchweld. Apply at a 90 degree angle. Paddle all of the joints/gaps in one direction.

Step 7. Reinstall the moldings and panels, and reconnect any electronics. Clean off any excess urethane. Keep the vehicle out of service until the urethane builds strength, according to manufacturer recommendations.

thane builds strength, according to manufacturer recommendations.

### Stationary side glass replacement

Step 1. Remove the glass. Remove the necessary interior trim pieces and carefully disconnect any electronics. Next, remove the molding. With the appropriate tool, cut the urethane bond. Note: Again, new electric cutting tools can help cutting times and make this step more efficient and potentially less damaging to the repair area. Remove the glass.

Step 2. Prepare the damaged pinchweld. Remove all of the old urethane only from the damaged area. For the undamaged pinchweld, leave the urethane intact for the time being.

Step 3. Add additional surface protection to the repair area, if needed. Doing so will save time and additional costs in the end.

Step 4. Prepare the new pinchweld. Scuff the pinchweld area with a general purpose scuffing pad. Next, ap-

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ply a two-part epoxy primer. Finish by masking off the pinchweld for top coating.

Step 5. Dry fit the glass, using masking tape to mark proper alignment. Cut the masking tape and remove the glass.

Step 6. Clean and prepare the glass. Clean the existing glass with clean water and a lint-free cloth. For new glass, clean glass with glass cleaner and a clean cloth. Close cut the urethane if it is in good condition to a thickness of 1–2 mm. Clean with water and a clean cloth.

Step 7. Prepare the undamaged pinchweld. Close-cut the old urethane down to a thickness of 1–2mm. Clean the pinchweld area with water and a clean cloth.

Step 8. If necessary, apply primer to the pinchweld. Again, check the expiration date on the primer, and shake the primer well.

For the undamaged pinchweld area, apply the primer to any bare metal scratches (if necessary).

For the damaged pinchweld area that has been repaired, apply a continuous layer of primer to the newly abraded and cleaned epoxy primer. Allow 5-10 minutes of dry time for the primer.

Step 9. Apply the urethane and install the glass. Check the expiration date on the urethane. In most cases, you'll need to cut the application nozzle to the desired width and shape, and then install the flex pack into the applicator gun.

Apply urethane to either the close-cut urethane on the undamaged pinchweld area and/or the prepped epoxy primed area of the new pinchweld. Paddle all gaps in the urethane in one direction and install the glass.

Step 10. Reinstall the moldings and panels. As necessary, reinstall the moldings and interior panels and reconnect any electronics.

Also, remove excess urethane and keep the vehicle out of service until the urethane builds strength, according to manufacturer recommendations.

### Replacing moveable glass

Replacing movable glass is the one type of glass repair shops engage in most frequently. Movable windows are often damaged in collisions and replacing them doesn't involve adhesives or safety issues that can convince repairers to send this work elsewhere.



**New, quick-drying adhesives make glass replacement more convenient than ever.**

Photo: Intermountain Auto Glass



**Replacing most movable glass involves sticking to detailed repair steps and making use of gloves and other protective wear to avoid injury to the technician.**

Photo: Auto Glass Cheyenne

The greatest challenge with this work typically involves the sometimes complex steps needed to disassemble/reassemble the door and the mechanism that raises and lowers the window. Of course, you'll want to stick to the OEM repair instructions, but replacing movable glass involves eight basic steps.

Step 1. Disassemble the door panel. This usually includes removing the panel, along with the armrests, door handles and other attachments.

Step 2. Set window-height-regulator mechanism to its service position. This is the point where the screws or bolts

holding the glass to the regulator align with access holes stamped in the steel. If necessary, disconnect the electric connections.

Step 3. Remove the old glass. Be sure to use gloves, especially if the window is broken or cracked. Pick out any remaining glass and thoroughly vacuum the area.

Step 4. Install the guide. Many vehicles require a plastic piece to be inserted into a small hole on the rear edge of the replacement window. The plastic guide keeps the window in the track. On some vehicle models, the guide can





be inserted after the glass is placed into the window track.

Step 5. Place the glass into the track. Most windows should slide easily into the track. If yours doesn't, try dropping the "short" end of the glass first, at a 90 degree angle. Rotate the short side until the glass fits into the track.

Step 6. Reconnect the electric connections. Test the operation of the window to ensure it moves up and down smoothly.




Note the broken glass surrounding the repair area. All of this glass will need to be removed, and the area will require surface protection during the repair.


Photo: Auto Glass Cheyenne

Step 7. Reassemble the door. Replace the door panel from the top down. Reconnect any items that were disconnected from the door panel when it was removed.

**Final thoughts**


Along with obtaining some new tools, shops interested in joining the glass market will need to make some other investments. Training is necessary, as is certification and licensing for windshield repair and replacement. Shops also must decide who it will train for this new work and how it will be incorporated into finely tuned operational schedules. From there, they need to determine if the investment will produce significant rewards.

In some cases, it may not. Because many glass repairers offer mobile services, these shops can continue having this work performed on site, though the profits will go into someone else's pockets. Repairers need to decide if this extra revenue would fit much better into theirs. 



**TIM SRAMCIK**  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Tim Sramcik has written for *ABRN*, *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket 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.

 E-mail Tim at [TSramcik@yahoo.com](mailto:TSramcik@yahoo.com)

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# STAY ON TOP OF REFINISH TRAINING

IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR KEEPING  
PAGE WITH THE TIMES

BY **RANDY CREMEANS** | CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**GIVEN** the ever-present focus on getting customer vehicles out the door, it's never easy for collision shop owners and managers to keep pace with technology and compete in a constantly evolving business climate. This especially applies to training and the challenge of ensuring your technicians are up-to-date with the latest products, information and skills required to perform their roles. We all know proper training is key to a profitable, productive business, yet it can be difficult for busy shop owners and managers to prioritize technician training.

### The need never ends

The growing complexity of vehicles and sophisticated new OEM finishes, combined with new products, tools and methodologies, give credence to the fact that even your most skilled technicians can never have enough training. Many paint suppliers introduce new products every year. Providing your technicians with hands-on experience and instruction with these products is critical.

### Recertification is essential

One excellent way to ensure your technicians are up-to-speed and familiar with the advantages of new products and their proper application is through the recertification classes offered by the paint suppliers at their training facilities. Generally, refinish painters are required to be recertified every two years in order to maintain the collision center's certification and continue to offer a manufacturer-backed paint guarantee. Yet not every shop takes advantage of the painter recertification opportunity. Some may feel it's unnecessary, while other shop managers resist taking an employee out from a busy workflow. Still others simply overlook the need.

The benefits of recertification are definitely worth the investment — not only for the overall performance improvement it can bring to the paint operation within a shop, but also to the employee's continued growth and sense of professionalism.

### On-site versus off-site training

There's a preference among many shop

owners and managers that refinish training be conducted on-site, which is understandable. It can provide an evaluation of product performance under real-world shop conditions, while keeping technicians on the job, earning their paycheck. However, there's a better case for taking advantage of off-site training whenever possible.

Simply put, you can expect a much higher level of retention when training is conducted at a professional training facility. Training "on the fly," on-site, can be disruptive, and often does not command the full attention of the technicians placed in a multi-tasking situation. On the other hand, taking technicians out of their normal work environment and placing them in a professional learning setting enables them to give their full, undivided attention to the subject matter at hand while learning from experienced, specialized trainers. The setting is correct, and the curriculum is correct. Plus, there's plenty of opportunity for questions as well as networking with other technicians for an exchange of ideas and tips.





Off-site training is especially essential whenever a collision center is transitioning to a completely new refinishing system.

**Elevate color-matching prowess**

All major refinish manufacturers offer a variety of specialized courses that enable painters to up their game. Taking advantage of one course subject

in particular can immediately make a significant difference in paint operation productivity—and that’s the advanced instruction available for color-matching OEM finishes. Getting a color match right the first time is important for paint booth productivity, so it makes sense to ensure your painters have the latest knowledge and skills for matching difficult colors. The in-depth color

courses offered by paint manufacturers drill down using classroom teaching and hands-on exercises.

**Expand your customer base**

In the competitive industry of collision repair, it’s vital that owners and managers continue to look for ways to expand their source of work. One area to explore for new business is the refinishing of commercial vehicles, such as Class 8 trucks and trailers. There’s a wealth of beginner and advanced commercial refinishing training available from paint manufacturers to assist shops wanting entry into this potentially lucrative business.

**Combating the technician shortage**

If you were to ask body shop owners or managers what issue keeps them up at night, most likely the No. 1 answer would be the decrease in skilled technicians, including experienced painters. It’s a fact that despite the decrease in the number of collision repair cen-



Photo: D&S Automotive

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ters, our industry has not been able to keep up with the demand for technicians. It is estimated that more than 180,000 repair-related positions will need to be filled in the next few years.

Paint manufacturers and other industry suppliers also share this concern, and, as a result, have been increasing their support of vocational programs across the country, both at the secondary and collegiate level. As your shop continues its technician recruitment efforts, look forward to expanding vocational education programs and increased support of paint suppliers and other industry partners.

**Grow your own**

Given the shortage of skilled paint technicians, consider implementing a refinish training initiative for your shop's less skilled workers. After a year of painting experience, send trainees to attend your paint manufacturer's initial certification course.

These hands-on courses for the paint system your shop uses will cover everything from sanding, surface preparation, spray gun application techniques, overall refinishing, spot repair and blending procedures. By taking this step, the trainee builds a good foundation to become a valuable asset for your company.

**Standing still is moving backward**

In today's demanding business climate, where constantly improving customer satisfaction and improved cycle times are necessary to gain work, it's sufficient to say that staying on top of your shop's refinish training needs is essential to quality work and maintaining a competitive advantage. 📧




**RANDY CREMEANS**  
CONTRIBUTING  
EDITOR

Randy has an established career working in the automotive paint industry in a number of key areas. He has been actively involved over the years in areas such as product branding, development and distribution for PPG Refinish. In his latest role, he oversees key training initiatives for PPG distributors and body shops.

✉ E-mail Randy at [rcremeans@ppg.com](mailto:rcremeans@ppg.com)



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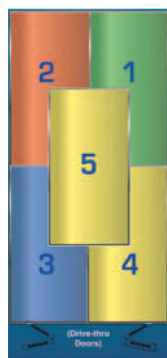
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T H E L A S T D E T A I L 

I've said that part of what I believe shops will need to thrive and not just survive in the future are what I call the Three Cs: CSI, closing ratio and cycle time. These are all terms we've all heard for years, but they've come to involve some different things than they had in the past. I explained about the new role of CSI in a previous column; now let's

turn to closing ratio.

What we've tracked for a long time in terms of closing ratio is the percentage of estimates converted into sold jobs. If you write 10 estimates and get six of those jobs, you have a closing ratio of 60 percent.

That traditional definition of closing ratio is still important if you want to thrive. Sales training for your front-office staff is a must. I also think one of the keys is simple: follow up with customers after you write the estimate. I recently worked with one MSO on a follow-up program for estimates, and we actually captured 20 percent of their lost jobs.

But we all know it's too easy for that follow up to fall through the cracks. That's why I believe you need to have a standard operating procedure in place, and one or more people responsible for that follow up.

I recommend that if you write an estimate for a customer who doesn't immediately schedule repairs, follow up with that customer in 24 hours. If you can't get them to commit then, follow up with them again in three days and then again five days after the estimate. If you've made three attempts with no luck, turn your attention elsewhere.

But moving forward, if you want to thrive and not just survive, I think you will need to think about closing ratio more broadly than how we have in the past. It's not just about capturing jobs; timing can be equally important.

Those involved in direct repair programs know insurers are very much interested in how long it takes your shop to get an estimate started after you receive an assignment. The reason for this is interesting — the insurance industry has found there's a direct correlation between how long it takes to get the claim handled and how much they pay out in bodily injury claims. If I wreck my car and contact my insurance company, who in turn sends you an assignment, but it takes you three or four days to get in touch with me, that's time when my back or neck might

## IT'S ALL ABOUT FOLLOW UP

### Closing ratio takes on new meaning for shops looking to thrive, not just survive


start hurting. Reducing the time before my vehicle repair is in process and done helps contribute to quick claims settlement, which generally reduces overall claims costs.

So just as you need a good standard operating procedure for estimate follow up, you need a similar plan in place to ensure assignments quickly lead to customer contact and getting that estimate under way. Non-DRP shops that receive insurer assignments through one of the estimating system programs that allow that should focus on this as well.

I can tell you that best-in-class collision repairers are contacting customers within 15 minutes of receiving an assignment; they have an assignment-received to estimate-state-date average of just 1.4 days. So if you're one of the shops (and I've seen many of them) that is taking four, six or even 10 days to start an estimate after getting an assignment, you need to step up your game if you want to thrive moving forward.

(Don't know your average? At least one of the estimating systems can provide you with the data for your shop and show how it compares to the market average.)

How can you hit those kind of numbers? First, make sure you have a standard operating procedure in place and a designated person to make that initial customer contact when an assignment arrives. This is why MSOs are turning to call centers. It's not just for calling customers with vehicle status reports. Those call centers are also jumping on assignments and getting those customers scheduled in for estimates.

This is why you also see more shops offering mobile estimating. If an assignment arrives and the customer can't get in for an estimate, the shop can go to the customer's home or office to get that estimate underway quickly. 

“I recently worked with one MSO on a follow-up program for estimates, and we actually captured 20 percent of their lost jobs.”

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