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UNDERSTANDING CARBON FIBER REPAIRS

SEMA SHOW 2016:
EVENT WRAP-UP INSIDE

As this material continues to become more mainstream in future vehicle design, knowing how to properly repair it will be vital.

FOCUS ON THE FACTORY

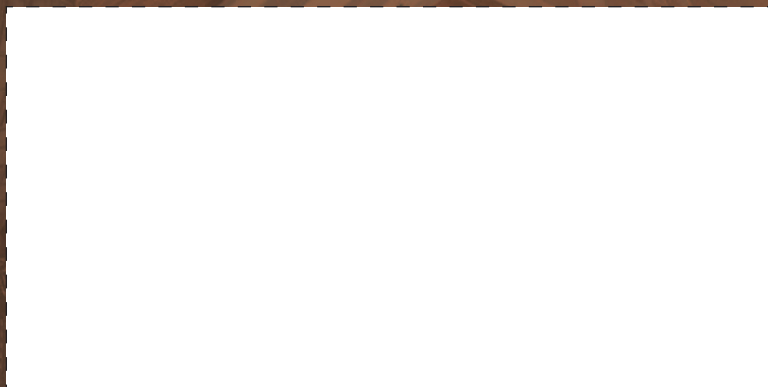
Understanding the engineering behind repair procedures can be key to better repairs.

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BE THE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

Ensure that your mentors and apprentices have a high job satisfaction perception.

20



Driving the power of color innovation

Colorvation is a unique, comprehensive, user-friendly approach to vehicle refinishing featuring the most advanced digital color technology available. Based on our innovative tools, Automatchic™ and MIXIT™, AkzoNobel's digital platform brings measurable improvements for your business – greater accuracy, greater efficiency and ultimately, greater profitability. **Are you ready to give your business the digital advantage?**

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Check out these tips to find the right training for your collision repair facility and learn better ways to care for matte or low-gloss finishes.

ABRN.COM/PPGWHITEPAPER

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Telematics can provide you new ways to improve customer service, open new avenues to educate your customers about their vehicles and repair options and create broader customer reach.

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FOCUS ON REPAIR SHOP SOPS

Creating and implementing SOPs are the best way to ensure each employee knows the proper method of performing various jobs throughout the shop.

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CUSTOM VEHICLES

WYOTECH-DESIGNED VEHICLES COMBINE STYLING, TECHNOLOGY

➔ LAS VEGAS — To mark its 50th anniversary, WyoTech unveiled two vehicles that students, graduates and instructors have customized as part of a “Chop Cut Rebuild” feature at this year’s SEMA Show. Individuals at the Blairsville, Pa., campus were responsible for designing and building the “Shagadelic Van,” a 2016 Ford Transit van that has been customized to pay tribute to the 1976 “Cruising Van” featured in an iconic 1976 Ford ad. The team also showcased a souped-up Harley Davidson Chopper.

“For more than 50 years, WyoTech has been training the technicians of the future. What better way to highlight the evolution of our organization and the industry than by showcasing the latest automotive technology in an iconic van and motorcycle,” said John Hurd, WyoTech industry relations specialist. “We’re proud to be at the forefront of preparing students to thrive in this hands-on, fast-growing career path, which continues to expand and offer employment opportunities in a variety of fields.”

>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 10

BREAKING NEWS

COLOR INNOVATION

AKZONOBEL DRIVES COLOR INNOVATION

➔ LAS VEGAS — AkzoNobel announced the next step in digital working at the SEMA Show: Colorvation, driving the power of color innovation.

The bodyshop industry is entering a new era of digital working, and AkzoNobel’s new approach to vehicle refinishes will empower bodyshops to significantly increase efficiency and color accuracy, while boosting productivity and profitability.

The car repair industry has come a long way over the past decade. With technology and industries continuing to develop, professionals are constantly being challenged to keep up with the times. AkzoNobel is focused on helping its customers take the journey towards total digital adoption, which means preparing customers to embrace a digital way of working — Colorvation and its digital tooling.

“Colorvation is taking the digital color matching process

>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 8

TRENDING

SHERWIN-WILLIAMS INTRODUCES DYNAMIC CLEARCOAT

Dynamic Clearcoat (CC200) offers superior appearance in half the time of a typical glamour clearcoat and creates a new category among premium clearcoats.

ABRN.COM/CC200

I-CAR LAUNCHES ONLINE OEM CALIBRATION SEARCH

Information resource is a vehicle-by-vehicle guide to calibration requirements for advanced driver assist systems for every 2016 make and model sold in the United States.

ABRN.COM/DASONLINE

NEW GLOBALJIG MEASURING SYSTEM PROVIDES LASER ACCURACY

The new GlobalJig Presented by Chief GlobalScan computerized measuring system integrates laser scanning with accuracy in repairs.

ABRN.COM/GLOBALSCAN

DEBEER REFINISH ANNOUNCES TONER TECHNOLOGY FOR OEM CANDY REDS

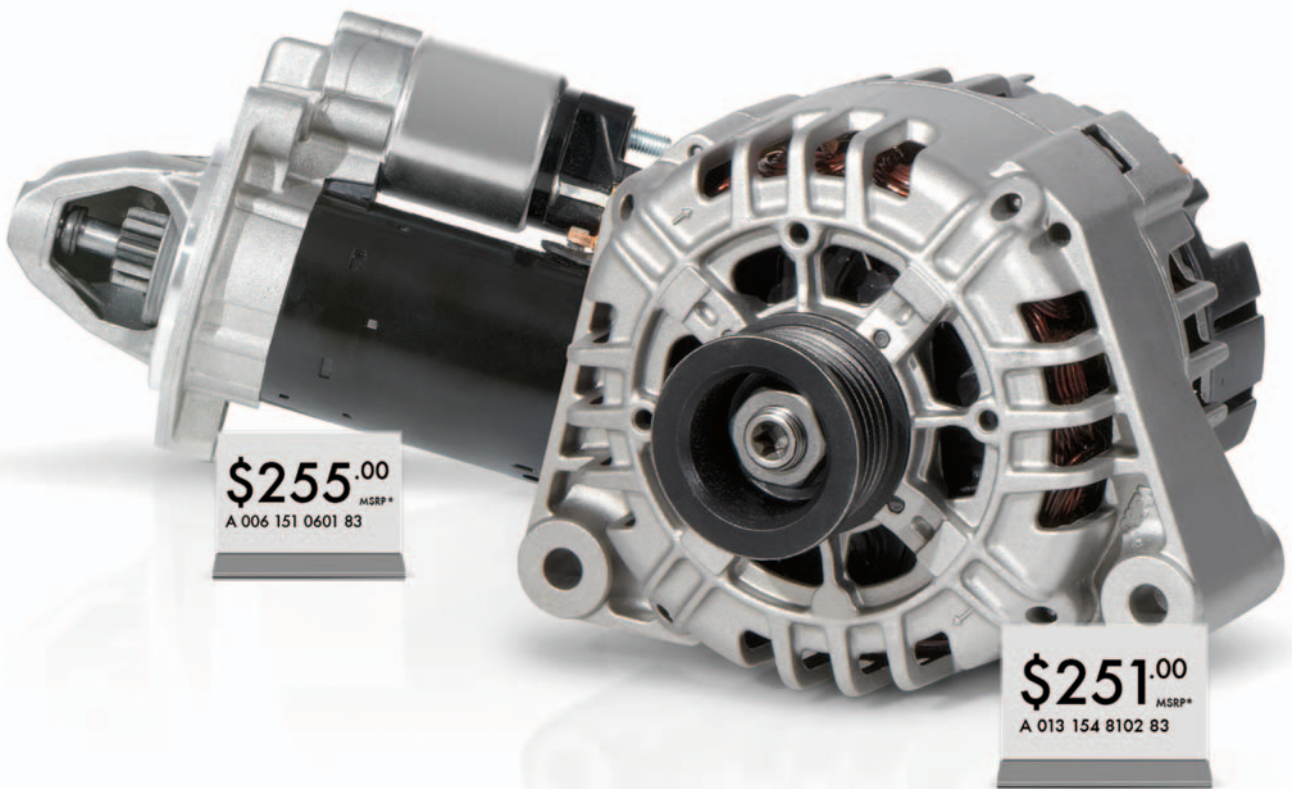
DeBeer, a Valspar brand, introduced patent-pending Metallic Bright Red toner technology, which is the first step in a three-part refinishing process.

ABRN.COM/REDTONER

ALLDATA UNVEILS NEW TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM

The newly redesigned ALLDATA Repair program features a re-engineered search functionality, faster navigation and the most complete and up-to-date information for automotive repairs.

ABRN.COM/TECHUPDATE



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INSURER RELATIONS

ADDING VALUE TO THE INSURER/REPAIR RELATIONSHIP

KRISTA MCNAMARA //
Content Channel Director

 LAS VEGAS — Insurers and repairers are seen as one entity by the consumer when an accident happens — so making the experience as positive as possible is a benefit for all involved.

A committee at the Collision Industry Conference meeting on Nov. 1 in Las Vegas, held in conjunction with the AAPEX and SEMA shows, discussed adding value to the insurer/repairer relationship.

Representatives from both the insurance and repair shop sides discussed ways to maintain positive interactions and outcomes for customers.

Something as simple as keeping the customer informed adds great value to the insurer/repairer relationship. It creates less questions, inquiry calls and helps maintain positive reputations for both the repairer and insurer.

Darrell Amberson, director of opera-

tions for LaMettry's Collision, stressed the importance of working in harmony with the insurance companies in order to reduce delays and frustration for both the customer and the repair shop.

Consistency in expectations and process, metrics and KPIs will help shops keep costs in line and communications streamlined. Insurance carriers being able to download estimates is another function that panel members thought could speed communication.

There is a lot of waste in the administrative process, and bridging the gap and fixing the process requires input and energy from both sides, said panel moderator Elaine Sachire of Square One Systems. "Persistence and consistency is key," she said.

Customer retention is also important, both for repair shops and carriers. If shops can exceed a customer's expectations during a repair, it helps a carrier to retain that customer, which is vital to the

carrier's success. So it remains a partnership at all turns between the repair shops and carriers, the panelists said.

Efficiency is also vital. "There are new ways to handle processes. We need to reduce redundancies at every turn. Not everything can be made better, but we need to keep our customers moving and make all processes operate as a win for the customer and the carrier," said Clint Marlow, auto claims director with Allstate Insurance.

Overall, there needs to be an ease of doing business. "There needs to be consistency — not a different message, different KPIs every time we deal with a repair shop. We have to make time to work together to figure out ways to remove friction," Marlow says.

The customer glues the industry together. So overall, panelists agreed both repairers and insurers need to always be looking to find a better way to serve the customer. ■

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

to the next level. Colorvation is not only unique and comprehensive, but most of all a user-friendly approach that features the most advanced digital color technology available," said Peter Tomlinson - Global Managing Director for AkzoNobel Vehicle Refinishes. "Incorporating our state-of-the-art digital tools into how our customers work has helped produce outstanding results. Moving to a digital platform removes visual subjectivity from the color selection and matching processes, and replaces it with consistent, accurate results. Digital matching means fewer errors and reduced cycle time, leading to a consequent reduction in costs, an increase in the potential number of vehicles going through the shops. Good news I would say!"

The patented Automatchic Vision and MIXIT are the two foundations of

Colorvation, an approach that increases speed and accuracy in color matching and reduces costs and complexity.

Automatchic Vision is a digital spectrophotometry system, capable of correctly matching color up to three times faster than traditional methods. These measurements are sent directly to the mixing software on the PC where they can be further assessed before mixing takes place.

Recently a new time-saving Wi-Fi functionality has been added to Automatchic Vision which enables customers to read the color at any location in the bodyshop.

Through MIXIT, an advanced go-to solution for digital formula retrieval and color matching, users have direct, immediate access to a vast database, which hosts more than two million colors and variants — with more being added every day.

"Bodyshops across many countries are already enjoying the benefits of Colorvation. In some cases, users report an average reduction of up to 20 percent in overall paint use after adopting Colorvation and its digital color tooling. From experience we know that once a customer has embraced this digital transformation, they immediately start to believe in it and they consider our Colorvation approach a real game changer," Tomlinson said. "Colorvation is exclusive to AkzoNobel. In the 1970s, we became the industry's digital color tooling front runner. Since then we have remained at the leading edge and continuously reinventing for the future. As digital color is in our DNA, we are able to commit to continuously helping our customers to drive their businesses forward by guaranteeing them the digital advantage."

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COLOR OF THE YEAR

BASF INTRODUCES COLOR OF THE YEAR, NEW PAINT COLORS

LAS VEGAS — BASF knows the importance of color, evidenced by the company's announcement at the SEMA 2016 show of 108 new colors and a new coloring matching tool set to launch in 2017.

"We are the No. 1 chemical supplier in the automotive aftermarket, and we are here to provide solutions to body shops and painters," said Marvin Gillfillan, the new vice president of Automotive Refinish Solutions for BASF.

Gillfillan announced the launch of the R-M™ Onyx HD™ and Diamont™ Zyrilliant Color Series, which is a collection of 108 colors that provide custom car builders and restoration shops with the ability to deliver bright, extreme and one-of-a-kind, uncommon shades. These formulas are easily customizable and feature a range of colors, developed without using special pigments or effect components.

The series offers 36 custom shades, as well as 12 ground colors and 60 high-chroma colors that can be combined and applied using a tri-coat process to create the maximum effect. These eye-catching shades react to direct light to deliver incredible shimmer and sparkle with color-changing effects.

"Our new Zyrilliant Color Series provides customers with an easy-to-use collection that delivers truly unique and eye-catching results," said Dan Bihlmeyer, BASF North America Marketing



Head, Automotive Refinish. "Whether you're looking for a bright, bold or exotic look, the series inspires people to experiment and create unique custom formulations."

Paul Czornij, head of design for BASF's Color Excellence Group, introduced BASF's color of the year. The color, Reflexion Nebula, was unveiled on a custom 2009 Nissan Skyline GT-R (shown above).

The 2017 "Color of the Year" transitions from blue to gray depending on the viewer's vantage point. The inspiration was based on current color trends and highlights BASF's competency as a leader in color design, coatings and chemistry for the automotive industry.

"Our design team predicts a stronger presence of blue shades that offer versatility and broad appeal in the automotive space," said Czornij. "This is apparent in Reflexion Nebula, with its dynamic and scintillating look that is both playful and sophisticated."

BASF will also be releasing a new spectrometer in 2017, which will use WIFI to help users get exact color match and color formulas, Gillfillan said.

Chip Foose was also on hand to unveil his one-of-a-kind custom '39 Cadillac Coupe restoration, named Madam X.

Throughout the show, BASF's booth also featured a variety of other restyled vehicles and autograph sessions with Chip Foose, Richard Petty and more. 📷

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Ford provided the van to WyoTech and is serving as a corporate partner for this project. WyoTech graduates and instructors outfitted the van with era-authentic elements, such as bubble side windows, swivel rear Captains Chairs, a state-of-the-art audio system and custom shag carpeting, and included a 3.5L EcoBoost twin-turbo engine, Gibson performance exhaust with custom-fabricated side pipes

and 18" booster wheels to make it a thoroughly modern ride.

"Ford Transit has sparked a van renaissance," said Tim Stoehr, Ford commercial van marketing manager. "It's only fitting that WyoTech chose Transit — America's best-selling and most flexible van — for SEMA and to pay homage to the E-Series conversion vans that have become icons of America's van culture."

In addition, WyoTech students and

staff customized a Harley Davidson chopper-style motorcycle, which was also displayed in the WyoTech booth at SEMA. Together, the Ford van rebuild and customized chopper illustrate the breadth and depth of training WyoTech students can receive.

MAVTV has documented the Ford van tear down and rebuild process with a 12-part series for "Chop Cut Rebuild," which will air following the 2016 SEMA Show. 📷

THE CONSTANT PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

Leadership, teamwork, communication and training will bring you closer to the holy grail of operational perfection.

MICHAEL GIARRIZZO // Contributing Editor

Throughout this year, I've presented a series of articles that demonstrate how adopting lean principles in your operation can greatly improve production, enhance quality, motivate your team and satisfy your customers (all of which lead to a healthier bottom line).

Those management articles have covered the five core principles of lean, which are 1) identifying the value of your product or service; 2) mapping a value stream to your operation; 3) creating a production flow based on that map; and 4) understanding how upstream efforts affect downstream production. You can look back on previous articles by visiting ABRN.com/Giarrizzo.

The fifth and final principle is no doubt the most difficult part of the lean equation: The non-stop quest for perfection throughout all levels of production.

Simply put, this principle involves constant monitoring of your production process to eliminate problems, issues and redundancies that creep up and stymie progress and addressing those issues to continually improve the way things are done throughout the shop.

Like everything else in life that withers and deteriorates over time, if you've come this far in perfecting your production process and then leave the process untouched, waste will slowly infiltrate back into the process, disorder will occur



and eventually the process as a whole will devolve.

That's why this fifth lean principle is so important. You and your team must look for continuous improvement in your process and be vigilant against the waste that will eventually manifest itself.

Defining continuous improvement

The pursuit of perfection starts with a unanimous understanding within the team of precisely what continuous improvement is. Does a continuous im-

provement idea enhance the quality of a step in the production cycle? Will it reduce steps? Is it safety-related? Will it affect overall quality and delivery performance?

The key to continuous improvement is to ensure any specific idea involving the production process impacts the system as a whole and not just one silo of production. It's common to reduce waste in one process and subsequently increase steps or create issues downstream.

So it's great that the team is embracing the thinking that there's a better way

to do a particular task, but it's important that the issue (and the solution) isn't addressing the "flavor of the week" problem, which is a very easy trap to fall into.

The solution has to be a sustainable improvement. It addresses an issue that is not a one-time event, but has been measured (or tracked) over time and

clearly defined as a systemic problem. From there the team goes to work to develop a solution to fix the issue, executes a strategy for implementing it on the shop floor and validates (through continued tracking and data collection) to gauge the impact of the solution on the entire system.

Eliminating waste and tracking the data

If the average repair job takes 16 hours to complete, why does it take eight or nine DAYS to cycle the vehicle through the repair process?

A continuous improvement program is constantly searching for the answers to that question. It employs team members who are on the lookout for every form of waste (see my waste column at ABRN.com/eliminatewaste) and share a common mission of eliminating those various forms of waste.

This starts with data collection that tracks movement, time and distance traveled. How many times are team members walking around looking for a tool, a part or a manager? How often do they have to stop their work to ask questions? How often do they struggle with a vehicle they're not familiar with? How many times are they idle waiting for work?

Tracking this data can be cumbersome, but it's well worth the effort. And it doesn't have to involve expensive tracking software. It can be as simple as monitoring a series of clipboards to track the data and identifying how many deficiencies are showing up in the repair process.

Your team is the key

A continuous improvement program will only work if everyone is on board. That begins at the top with leadership fostering a culture that advocates for perfection, providing the training and tools that team members need to identify waste and evoking change and rewarding the team for solving issues and contributing to the ongoing success of the program.

Often within shops, it's the years of industry and management experience that sometimes get in the way of looking forward. It's always hard to change mindsets and dispel the notion that there's no time to train. It's hard to break out of our comfort zone and out of the way we used to do things in our industry.

But to see progress, leadership and team members all have to believe that

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there's always a better way and continue to engage and challenge each other to identify waste and redundancies in the system and come up with ways to address those issues.

What's interesting about shop environments in our industry is that they're normally made up of team members who possess a mix of different and distinct skill sets. This makes it easy to form different task forces to develop solutions while utilizing the various skill sets within the team. And the people doing the work will always find a better way.

Communication, too, plays a huge role in this process. From lunch-and-learn sessions and regular huddle (or pitch) meetings, to multi-shop conference calls (to compare notes) and ad-hoc meetings when needed, an ongoing dialogue needs to take place so that the constant flow of ideas resonates throughout the shop.

And those ideas and solutions, if they're developed by the team, will often be much simpler (and in turn, less costly) than the practical solutions often devised by most management teams. Further, those shops that implement the solutions developed by team members will generally have the most engaged personnel. And those proud employees will stay with the shop for a very long time.

Continuous improvement begins at the top with a careful vision. If the team understands and accepts the vision, then it will be so much easier to produce a quality product, enhance

the experience within the shop, boost the quality of life for the entire team and provide that "wow" experience for the customer.

Your job as the leader

Shop owners have the most difficult role in the continuous improvement process simply because it requires the ability to objectively look at their own business and be willing to accept change. That's hard to do when you've got an inventory of vehicles on the lot, two technicians out sick and payroll to meet in a week.

But to make this process work, you must possess a degree of leadership that drives the thought process and provides the necessary coaching that puts the team on the same page and gets everyone to understand (and buy into) the goal. You have to bring the team together to discuss the areas that need improvement. Plus, you have to be the cheerleader who motivates forward thinking and recognizes the different talents and skills of your team members.


Patience is a virtue in this role. Too often team members will present an idea that only addresses the issue of the week. Instead of immediately shooting down the idea, take the time to hear them out. Talk through the ways that their solution will improve the process systematically while adhering to the principles of the shop.

By doing this, you'll quickly observe growth among your team members as they begin to understand the difference between a quick fix and a systematic solution.

Then, after they implement the systemic change and witness the difference it makes in the overall process, your role is to recognize their contributions in some form. Recognition could be anything from cash or gift cards to company-wide praise. The important thing is realizing that those team members have stepped outside of their everyday comfort zones to identify an issue within the process, and have utilized their expertise to develop a solution designed to help the entire operation. That's a huge step, from an owner's perspective, and one that truly warrants recognition.

If you can stretch their minds, they'll respond by expanding your operation.

Chasing the brass ring

So now that you've read this entire article on the quest for perfection, here's the plain truth: Since we humans are imperfect beings, our processes will be imperfect. Simply put, perfection is impossible to fully achieve; it's an ever-changing moving target. But if you and your team are committed and striving to hit the target, you'll see system-wide improvement on levels you've never seen before. 

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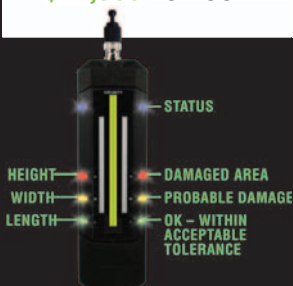
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BUILDING A DIVERSE TEAM

Four ways to master the multicultural workplace to drive performance and customer satisfaction

JOSE COSTA // Contributing Editor

America as a multicultural country has seen unprecedented advancements of late. Is your business prepared to capture the purchasing power of this dynamic audience? Are you leveraging the benefits of a multicultural society in the workplace?

Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans and all other multiculturals already make up 38 percent of the U.S. population, with Census projections showing that multicultural audiences will become a numeric majority by 2044. Already over 120 million strong and increasing by 2.3 million per year, multicultural people are the growth engine of the future in the U.S.

Historically, the collision repair industry has trailed other industries in diversification. Many still think of it as a “white guy business.” However, if you look at the future of the consumers

of auto body repair, you’ll see why we — as an entire industry — need to embrace a diverse group of corporate team members, franchise owners and store employees.

As someone who moved to America from Venezuela, learned English and became a citizen, I have a personal connection to the impact a multicultural workforce makes on a workplace. Here are four ways to create a dynamic team and franchise network.

Building diversity begins at the home office

When you are a fast-growing company or just one looking to succeed long term, you look for talented team members everywhere. When you’re hiring, consider applicants from a wide variety of backgrounds, cultures and ages. Reach out to local universities and technical schools and participate in hiring fairs. Offer intern-

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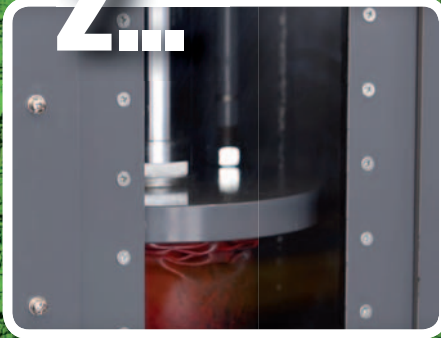
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ships to expose students to the collision repair industry. Work with local military groups to hire former military members. Consider candidates who have moved to America from other countries. A diverse team will offer broad perspective and bring new levels of experience and multicultural understanding.

Provide a mentor program

Changing the corporate culture can be daunting, but a mentorship program that pairs experienced leaders with new employees can have a tremendous impact. Look for opportunities to cross genders, ages and backgrounds, as well as different disciplines within the company to create lasting impact.

Expand your network with new leadership

Multicultural Americans are some of

the most successful entrepreneurs. According to the Kauffman Foundation, immigrants were almost twice as likely to start businesses as native-born Americans. As you are looking for potential franchisees, consider a wider audience of investors. Offer incentives for women-led or minority-led businesses, as well as military members. Many times these entrepreneurs bring experience from other franchise operations and industries that can be a great benefit to your company.

Help students start their collision repair careers

Technical schools provide a great affordable education and valuable skills to a wide variety of students. With the shortage of technicians in our industry, your local school is a great resource for staffing. Partner with your schools to create an internship program for multicultural

students. Work with your industry vendors to leverage their training programs in multiple languages to help continue these students' education.

Not only will building a diverse business drive your long-term success corporately and at the customer level, but it will create a robust, dynamic team for future leadership. We've seen the positive impact it has had at Driven Brands as we have experienced extensive growth in the past few years, managed the integration of a number of business acquisitions and found new synergies across our portfolio of brands that deliver improved efficiency and profitability. 



JOSE COSTA is Group President of Driven Brands' Paint & Collision Division, which includes CARSTAR, Maaco and Drive N' Style.
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BECOME THE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

Ensure that your mentors and apprentices have a high job satisfaction perception

STEVE TRAPP // Contributing Editor

In our last article, “Evaluate your technician progress,” October 2016, we discussed a method to evaluate technician progress. Today, let’s focus on becoming the employer of choice in the market and then “feeding your eagles” to ensure those training and certifying your apprentices have a high job satisfaction perception.

For the purposes of this article, the eagles in a collision center are the general manager (GM), the lead estimator/repair planner, top body technicians and paint technicians. It’s not that the other roles are insignificant, it’s just crucial that these roles are filled for the flow of your repair center.

Is this situation in your market?

Recently an aggressive competitor has been promoting on the radio that he is offering \$2,500 referral incentives to friends of the body shop staff that can bring in new recruits, along with \$5,000 signing bonuses for the journeyman technicians or lead estimators/repair planner.

The recruiting and job search website Indeed.com has more than 25 positions available for technicians or lead estimators in your market. Or, even more unscrupulous methods of poaching have occurred, such as walking into competitive shops and soliciting staff on the job.



Why does recruiting pressure seem to be greater?

Recruitment pressure is now at an all-time high for one main reason: need. Assuming a competitive repair center manager has sufficient DRP or dealer work, they need to produce the work in a timely and profitable manner. Being short staffed puts them at risk of not meeting sales targets, long cycle times, eroding quality and low Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores.

Aggressive recruiting of skilled people is not new, but six-month recruiting time, training costs, up to 3-6 years per person in development time, lost pro-

ductivity costs and management distraction for GMs often compensated month to month or quarterly make it seemingly worthwhile.

How might you protect your staff from this poaching? Consider doing what is needed to become the employer of choice in your market and “feed your eagles.”

Becoming or maintaining the position of “Employer of Choice”

Let’s take a look at the table on page 22. Here we offer you some considerations as to how to improve your standing in the key areas most employees consider important in our industry.

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Considerations	Ways to Improve	Your Position: + or -
1. Leadership	Become a transformational leader who has earned respect of the staff, sets solid location direction and encourages teamwork, has good listening skills and is genuinely interested in staff wellbeing.	
2. Staff relationships	The majority of the team gets along with one another. They help each other, share information and do things together in and out of work	
3. Sufficient work flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps an eye on scheduled work flow to ensure the staff has a steady flow of work Coordinates resources to prevent crisis situations 	
4. Physical work environment or equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The facility is clean Parts and tools are logically organized Equipment well maintained and available 	
5. Pay plan or benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compensation is competitive in the marketplace Incentives are achievable Incentives are available for individual or team accomplishments Employees are rewarded for developing an apprentice for their new role Offer competitive health, dental and prescription drug insurance Offer a 401K and company match Vacation days, level of pay for vacation days Retention bonus for staying employed with you 	

How to “feed your eagles”

The book *Feed Your Eagles* by Derek Newton was published in 1994, so the concept of hiring, facilitating (clarity of

mission, sound policies and procedures and commitment to active supervision) and rewarding top staff members is not new. The challenge is focusing on these

things as a leader to make the “eagles” realize you appreciate them.

Look at the chart on page 24 to see some ways to further reward your eagles.

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Role	How to Reward	Your Position: + or -
Body / Frame Technicians & Lead Painters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer sliding flat rate for top producers • Offer rewards for defect-free work, incentives for mentoring an apprentice to achieve defect-free work and production targets • Offer incentives for keeping liquid and allied cost per hour below a target • Continue to invest in tools, equipment and training to grow their productivity • Provide a % or flat rate in retirement for helping to hire and train their replacement 	
Top Estimators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer % of sales for hitting sales targets • Provide rewards for solid performance on DRP • Rewards for top CSI performance, low accounts receivable, and high gross profit % per job • Continue to develop their selling and leadership skills to grow them into a future manager 	
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer incentives for shop sales growth and hitting profitability targets • Reward improvement of cash flow -low inventory (WIP and physical), low pending parts credits and low accounts receivable, high employee satisfaction and low employee turnover • Continue to refine their business acumen, keeping them current on the industry and offering ongoing leadership training 	

Of course, there are many other ways to become the employer of choice and feed your eagles. Hopefully I've inspired you to reconsider your employment and management choices to protect

your current staff from recruiting by other repairers. Next, I will provide an action plan going forward. I look forward to sharing more details over the coming months. 📧



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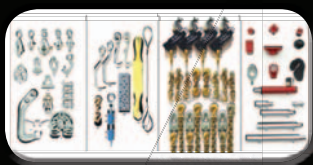
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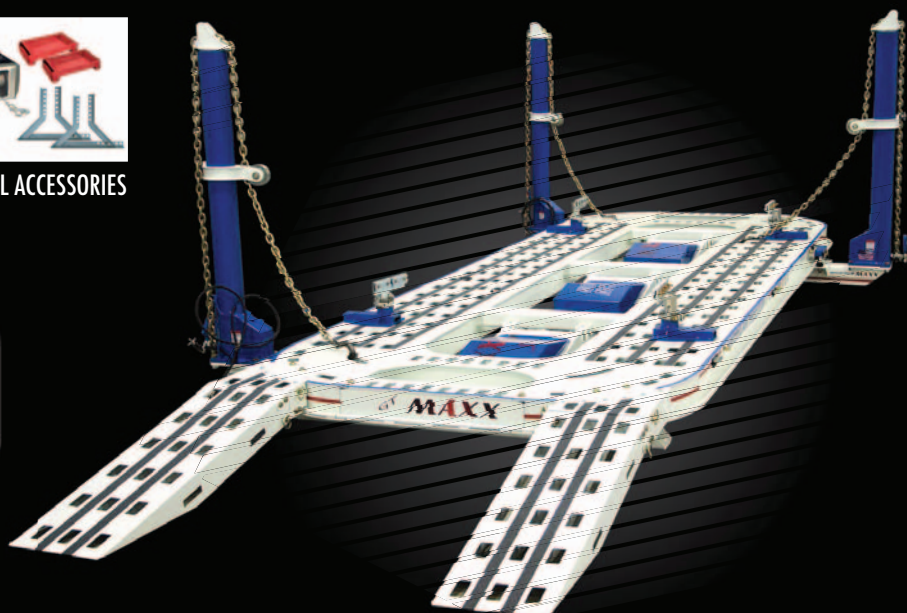
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GROWTH IN ACQUISITION

Large MSOs are growing primarily through acquisition, but also with new locations and redevelopments

BRAD MEWES // Contributing Editor

I'm writing this on my way back from Vancouver, Canada. I spent the past few days on site with a client focused on developing administrative standard operating procedures to drive consistency in financial reporting. Then I had a quick meeting with an investment bank involved in the industry. I even took a sea plane over the harbor and got my picture with the Ak-

zoNobel McLaren F1 and posed next to a Canadian Black Bear. We then wrapped it up at the Canadian Collision Industry Foundation. I was very impressed by the collegiality and diversity of the attendees. Large consolidators, regional MSOs, franchise groups, insurance companies, training and service providers with very diverse, and sometimes very opposing, agendas, all in one room operating in an environment of respect and professionalism. Truly inspiring. Which of course got

me thinking about collision merger and acquisition (M&A) trends.

In the first nine months of 2016, the largest four collision repair consolidators have collectively added 177 locations in North America, for a total of 1,486 collision repair locations. As in previous quarters and years, the vast majority of these additional locations thus far are a result of acquisitions, or the purchase of an existing business. To a lesser extent, some of the consolidators are building



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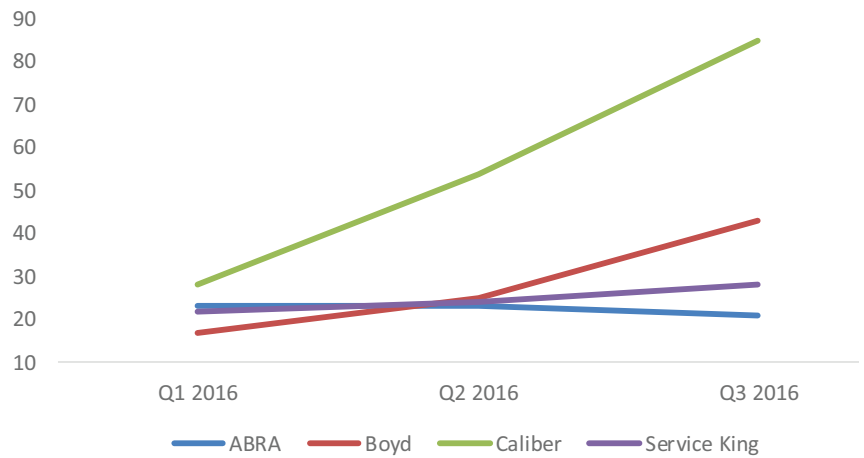
An interesting collision M&A trend has developed, however, in the past few months. Increasingly some companies have continued to grow aggressively, while others have pulled away from expansion. Interestingly as well, the way in which the leading companies are expanding is changing. Partnerships with Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) is becoming more common, both in acquisitions as well as in new location development or redevelopments.

Drilling down specifically to a company-by-company basis, a number of unique collision M&A consolidation trends emerge. First, Caliber continues its aggressive growth strategy across the U.S. In Q3, the company added 31 locations, more than any other consolidator and in any other quarter in 2016. Growth has been predominately acquisitions, but new developments and re-developments

are an increasingly important part of the company's growth strategy. Cumulatively for the year the company has added 85 locations and appears to be on target to possibly have another record year in terms of additional locations added.

Boyd, which operates as Gerber in the U.S., continues its rather measured and consistent growth. The company added 18 locations in Q3, more than in any other quarter this year. Growth has been predominately in the form

Cumulative Number of New Locations, YTD 2016



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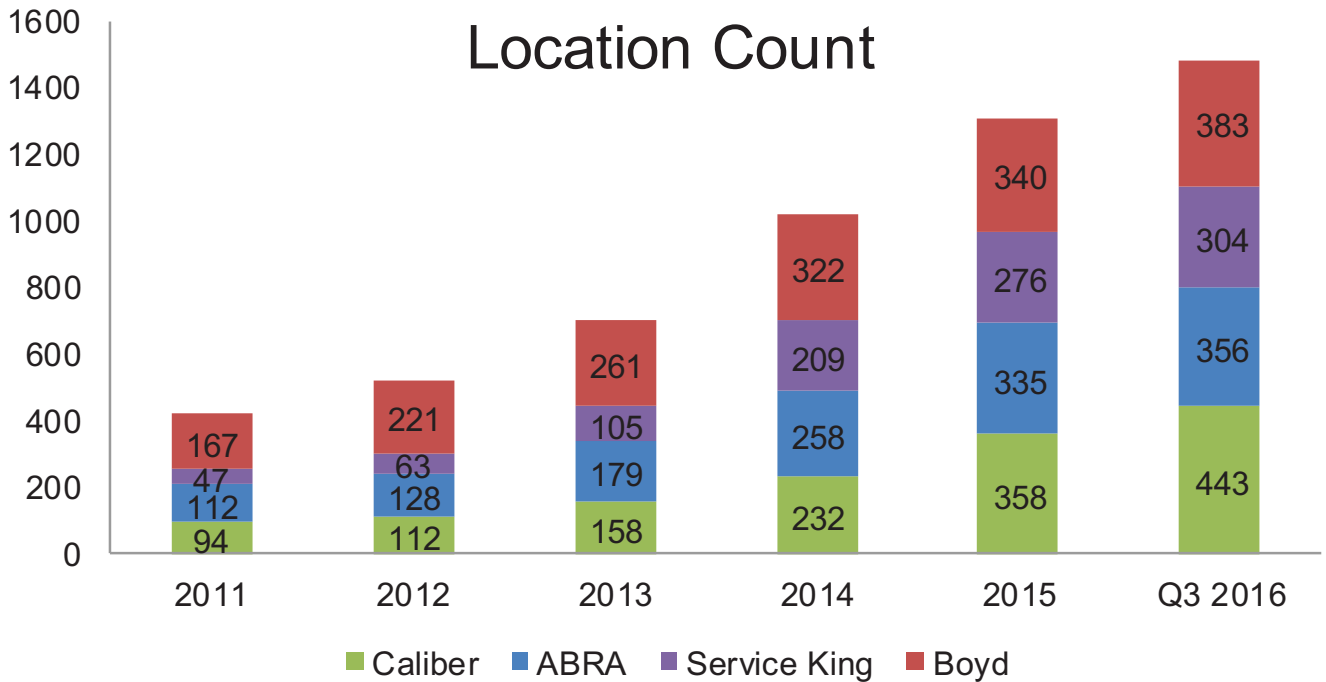
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of acquisitions; however, the company has completed some redevelopments. Management continues to reiterate they are well positioned to take advantage of additional large acquisition opportunities, and a quick review of the balance sheet shows they have the capacity to do so. Depending on what transpires in the fourth quarter, the company may be on target to have another record year, exceeding the 2014 record of adding 61 additional locations.

Since the first quarter of 2016, Service King has been relatively quiet on the expansion front. The company announced four additional locations in Q3 — two separate acquisitions in Texas, an acquisition in Atlanta, and a 70,000 square-foot greenfield development in the San Francisco Bay area in the second quarter. The company only added two locations in Q1. While growth in total locations continues to be dominated by acquisitions, new developments continue to play an important role in the company's growth strategy.

Throughout Q2 and Q3, ABRA has not made a single acquisition. In fact, for the first time in recent memory, one

of the large consolidators decreased in size over the quarter. At the end of Q3, ABRA operated 356 locations, two locations fewer than the previous two quarters. ABRA has grown aggressively over the past three years and it appears that the company has temporarily slowed its growth plans. Even with the recent slow down, ABRA increased the number of locations by an impressive compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 27.6 percent over the past 19 quarters.

Where do we go from here?

A few key collision M&A consolidation trends continue to catch my attention. First, some companies have slowed down on growth. Whether this is a strategic pause after years of aggressive growth, or something else is yet to be determined. Regardless of the reason, it is an important consideration for the owner of a collision repair business contemplating a sale of their business. Generally speaking, the greater the number of willing and able buyers, the better the outcomes for the seller. Competition is good, especially when selling a business. If buyers exit the market this can have a

negative impact on valuations.

The second key trend to catch my attention is the continued use of brownfield and greenfield developments (i.e. redevelopment or new developments). Of the three companies that increased the number of locations in Q3, all of them have opened locations as a result of a new development or redevelopment in the last 12 months. Again, from an M&A standpoint, this is an important consideration as brownfield and greenfields can often have a negative impact on valuations (these developments act as substitutes for acquisitions — why pay a premium to acquire a business when you can build one from scratch?).

While we have passed the go-go days of 2014, valuations are still attractive for the right companies in the right geographies with the right representation. 📧



BRAD MEWES is a management consultant, strategist and author of the blog Supplement! Financial Insight for the Collision Repair

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Information drives performance

Whatever is on the shared scorecard is what becomes important to employees

I have previously written about the importance and value of not just knowing your numbers but *sharing* your numbers with the people who can influence your business' performance — your employees.

That's why every day I send a scorecard to all of our employees with real-time data on how we're doing, right up to and including the previous work day.

How did I decide what numbers to share? Well, numbers are tricky. Sharing too many can just be overwhelming. It's important to choose the numbers that are important to them — and numbers that they have an ability to influence.

Take current "total sales" figures, for example. It's a number some of your staff — estimators and blueprinters, for example — will care about and can influence. But it's not really something a body tech or painter has the same level of power to change.

My approach to sharing numbers is to start by thinking about what our insurance partners are measuring about us. We might not be measuring and sharing those exact numbers, but we are measuring and sharing the numbers that influence those numbers.

So what does our daily scorecard look like? First, it includes only about eight numbers. And while everyone has access to all eight of those numbers every day, what they actually get sent in their daily email scorecard is only some of those eight numbers — the ones most important to them, the ones over which they have some control.

For technicians, for example, that means touch time and how many total hours and hours per day each of our teams has racked up. And that scorecard starts fresh each two-week pay period. Technicians generally don't care what we did for a quarter or even last month. They can't influence data from the past. We want them focused on the current pay period, and the scorecard always tells them how many days are left in that pay period, just as an athlete can see how much time is left on the clock.

If you've been a tech — or watched your own — you're probably familiar with the paycheck often being the first indication



EVERY DAY I SEND A SCORECARD TO ALL OF OUR EMPLOYEES WITH REAL-TIME DATA ON HOW WE'RE DOING RIGHT UP TO AND INCLUDING THE PREVIOUS WORK DAY.

to some of how they did the last pay period. It's almost like a lottery scratch-off ticket, with the dollar amount seemingly a complete surprise. Our goal is that a paycheck is never a surprise because they've known the score all along, while they've had the power to change it.

Our administrative team gets different numbers — again, the ones they can best influence. They see our sales for the month and what our current daily goal is based on our goal for the pay period. They see a rolling 30-days CSI number. They see our average days to repair. They see the total dollar amount of repair orders for which vehicles have been delivered but for which the files have not been closed.

And we've adjusted scorecards as needed. We've added color coding — green or red based on how performance compares to goals — for the visual thinkers. We've sometimes added measurements employees have asked for, even if just temporarily. We had a period in the past when re-dos in the paint department were an issue. So we added to the scorecard the number of days we've gone without a paint re-do.

I recently had yet another example of the power of sharing our numbers through this daily scorecard. We'd had some struggles with CSI for a brief period when we'd gotten too busy. But as I walked through the office first thing one morning, one of the women on our staff looked at me and said, "It's back above 95 percent." This was an employee who a couple years ago probably would have had no clue what our CSI was nor might not have cared that much even if she did. Yet she could tell me where we were in terms of CSI as of that morning even before I'd sent out that day's scorecard.

Once you communicate that something is important to the organization — by tracking and reporting it — it generally becomes important to the individuals on your team, too. 📧

RYAN CROPPER owns Able Body Shops, with two locations in Anchorage, Alaska, as well as Total Truck Accessory Center. rcropper@ablebodyshop.com

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Growing the talent pool

Hiring based on attitude and heart is lifeblood of Kentucky shop

JAMES E. GUYETTE // Contributing Editor

➔ In addition to selecting top-notch people with little or no body shop experience and training them to meet their desired performance and customer service levels, leveraging the technological, management and educational expertise provided by key suppliers is an important asset for driving profitability at Glaser's Collision Center.

With three shops in the region around Louisville, Ky., "Our vendor relationships haven't proven to be very beneficial for our continued success. We strive to create partnerships that benefit both parties, and we have built relationships with several of our vendors to include more than just buying parts. Partners like 3M have provided Glaser's with more than just materials," says COO Aaron Glaser.

Numerous in-house training classes have been conducted by 3M to bolster the skills of the body and paint personnel, and paint vendor Gipe Automotive — a family-owned business based in Owensville, Ky. dating back to 1931 — facilitates a monthly 3M-produced Performance Analysis Tool prepared for all three of the Glaser locations.

"This tool gives us great detail of our materials usage, something that we had a hard time accurately tracking before partnering with 3M," according to Aaron. "It is great to have a vendor report to us exactly what our materials profitability is and what categories we need to work on."

Zero body shop experience

Training is an elemental Glaser attribute. "Our people are our greatest asset and our biggest competitive advantage. Our No. 1 focus is our people. We hire off of attitude and heart instead of technical experience. We have hired many people who have zero body shop experience and trained them from the ground-up because we believe they are good people who have ambition and heart," Aaron reports.

"The managers of two of our locations had never stepped foot in a body shop six years ago. Both these people were hired based off their attitude and character. Of these two shops, there are nine administrative staff in the shops and only two of them had body shop experience prior to working for Glaser's. Almost the entire administrative staff were hired and trained by us so that we can teach them the top-notch customer service that we expect.



GLASER'S COLLISION CENTER

Jeffersontown, Ky. // www.glaserscollision.com



Gene & Sue Glaser
Owners

48
No. of employees

\$2,291
Average repair order

33,500
Total square
footage of shops

68
Average weekly
volume

3
No. of shops

9
No. of DRPs

PPG
Paint supplier

30
Years in business

3.1 days
Average cycle time

CCC One
Estimating system

Aaron goes on to point out that "we have some of the best-trained, well-educated technicians in town." The shops are I-CAR Gold Class, and all of the painters are PPG certified in waterborne basecoat.

"We focus on staying on top of the latest OEM technology. We were the first in Louisville to purchase the asTech2 scan tool to perform OEM completion scans on repaired vehicles. We are active in the CIC Insurer/Shop Relations Committee, and as far as dealing with advanced materials, our body departments are trained in aluminum repairs — including the new F-150 — and our Shepherdsville shop has a composite department that specializes in carbon fiber repairs."



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Established 30 years ago, the operation is owned by Aaron's parents, Gene and Susan Glaser. "Gene Glaser has always been a gearhead," Aaron recounts. "He was a construction worker by trade but spent all his time and money tinkering with cars. When he was starting his family he worked construction to pay his bills, but worked nights in the garage to make extra money for his drag racing habit."

It was a construction-trade layoff in 1986 that finally put Gene on the path toward founding his own auto repair business.

"He decided to start Glaser's Automotive. He rented a 900-square-foot building and started fixing cars. Gene did anything from mechanical work to body work," says Aaron. "Susan was not one to sit and watch. She took classes at the local community college on upholstery and bought an industrial sewing machine, and she did automotive interiors at the shop while also running the office and accounting at the shop."

Expansion came quickly as Craig Davis became the first employee. He has since moved up to manage the Jeffersontown location. "Craig's years of hard work and dedication have been integral to the success of the company," according to Aaron.

Two years later, the company was again in expansion mode, culminating in construction of the 7,000-square-foot Jeffersontown shop. Four years hence, "business was doing great," and a 10,000-square-foot addition was added to the building.

Another opportunity arose in 1998. A competitor shop was going out of business, so Team Glaser's decided it was time to expand. Glaser's Collision Center of Audubon Park was born.

"Our second location actually came about because of how we treated a parts delivery driver who was actually a landlord for a building that was being used as a body shop. That shop ran into trouble with the IRS and was shut down," he says. "The delivery driver came to Gene and told him that he owned the building and respected Glaser's for the way that we treated him every time that he came to bring us parts, so he asked if we would like to take over the rent and run a shop out of there," Aaron explains.

In 2008 a new structure was constructed at the site. "The new building gave us the opportunity to upgrade equipment and give the location a face lift."

A new paint booth and prep decks from Global were installed along with air conditioning throughout the entire facility. In addition, two Car-O-Liner frame racks with full measuring equipment, Pro-Spot aluminum dent repair equipment, a silicone bronze smart welder and a Car-O-Liner resistance spot welder were also added.

In 2009, it was time to add a third shop. Citing the facility's "humble beginnings," Aaron describes his entry into the industry at age six: "Being a start-up business, my parents worked around the clock to make sure their business was a success, so naturally I was there by default. The paint shop always intrigued me. As a kid, I started taking bicycles and painting them. I had a little side



business taking old bikes and painting them and reselling them for a profit. My uncle owned an antique shop. Once he saw what I was doing, he would buy antique bicycles, have me restore them and he would sell them in his antique store.

"As I got older," Aaron continues, "the bicycles were traded for race cars. Growing up in a drag racing family, I started painting my own junior dragsters at age 14. It didn't take long for my friends and competitors to start having me paint their cars. Over the next 10 years we grew a custom painting business, painting some high-end custom jobs and winning numerous car shows.

"In my mid 20s, it was time to decide whether to pursue my custom business or work full-time for the family business. Dad was at the point that if he did not have a predecessor, he was going to start working on his exit plan," Aaron reports.

"I enjoyed the freedom of the custom painting, but my heart was always at the body shop," he says. "I grew up watching my parents put their heart and soul into building a great business, and I had always wanted to carry that forward. So I decided to shut down the custom business and go back to my roots in the body shop."

Aaron's custom enterprise was thus converted into a third body shop in 2009.

"When we opened it as a collision center, I was the sole employee. I wrote the estimate and sold the job, then went in the back and did the repair, painted it and delivered it back to the customer," he recalls. "It didn't take long to outgrow that and start hiring people. The first person that we hired to help in the office was Nathan Ashbaugh. He was a bright-eyed young kid who knew nothing of body repairs, but had an outstanding positive attitude. After years of coaching and training, Nate is now the store manager and is doing a phenomenal job of running that location. I have handed daily operations off to Nate so that I can split my time between the two shops."

Improvements wherever necessary

The business thrives by stressing "communication, communication, communication," says Aaron, especially when dealing with insurers. "Our relationships with insurance providers are just like any other relationship – they live or die on communication. If we understand what is important to them, we can work to provide them the results that they are look-

ing for. We like to meet quarterly with our DRP (direct repair program) partners to discuss our performance and what we can do to improve," he notes.

"We strive to keep the communication open so that if either of us has an issue we can discuss it and work it out before

it becomes a problem."

The company also "takes our scorecards very seriously. Any scorecard information shared from our insurance partners is reviewed with the shop as a team and discussed so that we can make improvements wherever necessary." ❏



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JAMES E. GUYETTE is a long-time contributing editor to *ABRN*, *Aftermarket Business* *World* and *Motor Age* magazines.

jimguyette2004@yahoo.com

ASK



Putting smaller repairs on the fast track

USE EXPRESS SERVICE TO BOOST CYCLE TIME NUMBERS IN YOUR SHOP

BOB KEITH // Contributing Editor

Express service is not that complicated of a concept — it is really about improving cycle time numbers on smaller jobs. The convenience of a customer waiting for a minor repair or being able to drop it off in the morning and pick it up in the evening can also significantly drive up customer service indexes.

Several years ago, I was fortunate to participate in a 3M Six-Sigma project focused on improving on-time delivery. We defined job sizes and were surprised that the biggest problem was not the large or heavy job; the small job of 10 hours or less created the biggest cycle-time issues for most shops. Shops taking three days for an average bumper job are killing their cycle time. The ultimate goal for the small job is to have a same-day delivery as drop off. This creates a “zero” cycle time data point. This zero score helps your cycle time when that medium or heavy job runs over.

There are three different models in the express service world. The first is a stand-alone facility designed specifically for this type of repair. The second is a dedicated

space and team within the full-service repair facility. The last model injects the express repair into the daily repair stream.

Stand-alone facility

This is obviously the costliest model, as brick and mortar are involved along with additional labor and equipment. If you are considering a second or third location, a stand-alone express location might be an option, as it would be a considerably cheaper alternative than another full-service shop. You certainly would want to do a lot of business analysis before jumping into this model. If no painting were to be done at this location, then you would have access to high-traffic locations with fewer zoning restrictions. But that would also restrict the type of work that you did at that location. The facility would also need to have a nicely appointed waiting area for your customers with comfortable seating, refreshments, TV and Wi-Fi.

Services that could be performed at a stand-alone location are:

- Bumper replacements — painted at the main shop — would require part of the old bumper and great images for color matching and masking and a thor-

ough damage analysis to make sure there are no surprises.

- Glass repair/replacement
- Non-painted/pre-painted parts replacement
- PDR
- Full detail
- Estimating and drop/delivery station for the main production facility
- Drive-in estimating for DRP providers
- Accessories sales/installation

Depending on the size of the facility and services provided, staffing and equipment needs could be minimal. This could be a great way to expand into multiple locations at lower costs with fewer zoning restrictions.

Dedicated internal fast lane

This model allows more flexibility in what repairs can be completed, as you would have onsite refinish capabilities. It would probably work best with two paint booths — one dedicated to express repairs in the first half of the day and one to two bays would need to be dedicated to express, depending on volume. Equipment needs would be a vehicle lift, basic hand tools,

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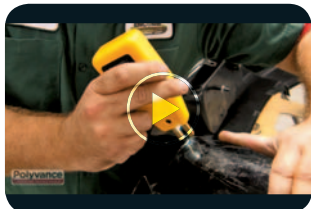
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“There’s diversity in the classes, so everyone can get something out of them.” —DAVID CROSBY, OWNER, CROSBY AUTOMOTIVE, ELKHORN, WIS.; AUTOMECHANIKA CHICAGO LIVE — TRAINING ATTENDEE

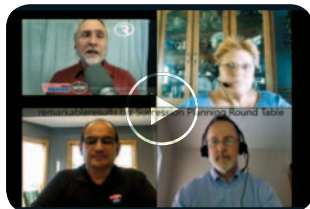


WATCH + LEARN



Repairing a long tear on a bumper cover

ABRN.COM/BumperTear



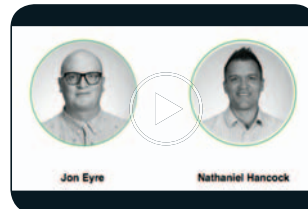
Succession planning: a business requirement

ABRN.COM/Succession



Seam sealer matching made easy

ABRN.COM/Seamless



Take control of your reputation

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SOCIAL INSIGHTS



POLICE YOUR PROCEDURES

Post-repair inspection shops have the tools to spot any shortcuts taken in the original job and identify sub-standard material and equipment that could potentially render the vehicle unsafe to drive. One might think that the duty of a post-repair inspection service is a noble one. But many collision repair shops fear the process because it's designed to catch their mistakes, judge the quality of their work or, in some cases, rat out rogue operations.

ABRN.com/police

MAKING GOOD ON A BAD REPAIR

Almost all collision repair professionals have experienced a poorly repaired vehicle in their shop, at least once. In some cases, they were horrified by what was done; in many cases, they were unsure of what to do about it or who is going to pay for it.

ABRN.com/makegood

THE BENEFITS OF SILICON BRONZE

The practice of MIG brazing has been in use for a long time. Developed in the late 1960s, it immediately found applications in the automotive industry, primarily cosmetic at first. With this long history, why is there so much discussion about it now? Like aluminum, the renewed

interest is due to new applications and increased usage.

ABRN.com/siliconbronze

HOW TO RIVET BOND ALUMINUM

By now, many technicians should not only be seeing damaged aluminum panels on vehicles, but some structural components also, such as strut towers and inner reinforcements on steel vehicles. In the repair field we are really left with only four choices: MIG weld, bond, rivet or rivet bond. While rivet bonding is a relatively simple procedure, it is important for the repair technician to understand how to use a rivet gun, which rivet must be used for the application and the required adhesive(s) to perform a correct repair.

ABRN.com/rivetbond

CASHING IN ON THE MSO MOVEMENT

As 2016 closes out, two industry trends promise to continue making a significant impact on most repair businesses well into next year. One is the uptick in the number of U.S. shops (effectively ending a 20-year decline), and the other is the continuing growth of MSOs. No doubt the latter trend is a major driver of the first. The near-explosive expansion of the largest consolidators is an especially critical factor.

ABRN.com/cashin

TRAINING EVENTS

JANUARY 11

Aluminum Exterior Panel Repair and Replacement; I-CAR

Lester Glenn Collision Center; Toms River, New Jersey

JANUARY 12

Collision Industry Conference; Palm Springs Hilton

Palm Springs, California

JANUARY 24

Documentation and Digital Photography; I-CAR

Fred Martin Collision Center; Norton, Ohio

JANUARY 25-27

Color Adjustment and Blending; Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes

Atlanta, Georgia

JANUARY 27

Blueprinting Process and Damage Discover; I-CAR

Hertz; Santa Cruz, California

APRIL 19-20

Collision Industry Conference; Sheraton Station Square

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

JULY 26-29

NACE Automechanika Chicago; McCormick Place West

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*"YOU DON'T JUST GAIN KNOWLEDGE
- YOU ACQUIRE APPLICABLE SKILLS"*



>> CONTINUES FROM PAGE 38

a plastic welder for light bumper repairs, drying lamps, etc. You would also want to work with your materials providers to get the fastest drying/curing products.

Staffing would require 1-2 B/C non-structural techs and a dedicated refinish tech. If the volume demanded, then a dedicated appraiser/production manager may be added. Obviously space requirements, staffing numbers and equipment would depend on the volume of repairs to be completed in this category. Intake scheduling throughout the day will also be critical to the success of the program. Any repairs needing refinish work would need to be scheduled at the beginning of the day. Color matching at the time of the estimate and pre-painting of parts before drop off is another important step in the

process. Estimate inspections need to be extremely thorough and may require partial removal of components to insure that there is no hidden damage. Also, detailed imaging is critical, as you will need to mirror match parts with the image.

Blended express service

This program would be the same as the dedicated program without having the dedicated space and technicians. This model would depend heavily on proper input scheduling and in-process scheduling to be successful.

There are many things to consider and analyze before offering this type of service.

1. Do several months of historical analysis to determine if you have the volume in the small repair category to make this type of commitment success-

ful (especially with a dedicated program).

2. Take a look at your reception waiting area. Is it large enough to handle additional clients waiting in the lobby for repairs to be completed? Do you have comfortable seating? Are there refreshments available? Do you have a TV, WiFi and appropriate reading materials available?

3. Make sure that you have a solid scheduling process in place for ALL repairs. This type of program won't work in the typical Monday-to-Friday scheduling world.

4. When using the blended model, the "express" cars need to have daily priority.

5. All pre-ordered parts have to be mirror matched to detailed images.

To continue reading, go to ABRN.com/express.

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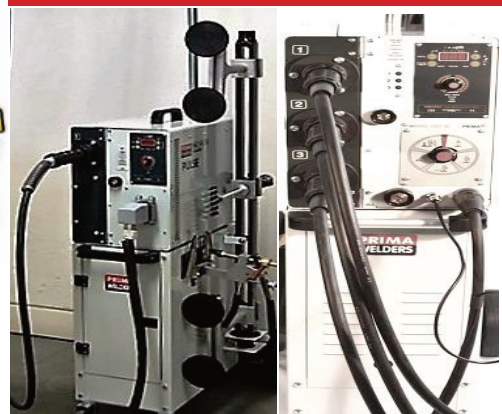
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NEW BUMPER REPAIR TECHNIQUES

REPAIRING JEEP WRANGLER BLOW-MOLDED PLASTIC BUMPERS

JOHN WILBURN // Contributing Editor

In 2007 Jeep and its supplier, ABC Group, were recognized by the Society of Plastic Engineers for incorporating blow-molded textured plastic bumpers on the JK-series Jeep Wrangler. These blow-molded bumpers replaced Jeep's long-running rolled formed steel bumpers. Replacing the steel bumper with a blow-molded plastic bumper offered a 12 percent reduction on piece cost and assembly cost, as well as a 9 percent weight reduction, compared to the previous steel bumper.

Blow-molded parts are nothing new to the automotive industry. However,

using this blow-mold process to make a plastic bumper is new. And it might seem somewhat challenging to repair and remove a dent from a bumper like this, since you can't push a dent from the backside. Luckily these bumpers are hollow, and depending on how severe the damage is, it's actually not that difficult if you have the right tools and equipment.

Before repairing any part, clean the bumper. Washing molded-in-color textured plastic bumpers is more important than normal because they are made of raw TPO plastic, and people often use silicone-based products to restore the shine. It is important to wash with soap and water two or three times, allow to

dry, and clean again with a solvent-based plastic cleaner to ensure the bumper is free of any contaminants.

The key to removing a dent in a blow-molded bumper is to cut an access hole on the backside. The removed panel will be welded back in to seal the bumper after the dent is pushed out. Depending on where the dent is on the bumper, it may be difficult to access from the backside where the bumper mounts, for example. Before you decide to attempt the repair, make sure you have clear access to the back of the dent in the area you plan to cut the access hole.

If you want to attempt the repair, cut the access hole on the backside large enough to give you complete access to the back of the dent. Mark where you will cut the hole on the back of the bumper with a marker, then carefully cut it out with either a jigsaw or a sharp utility knife. Reserve the removed access panel for reattachment later on. After you cut the hole, reach in with your pushing tool to make sure you can access all angles before heating the part. Cut the hole bigger if needed.

Start heating the dent with a heat gun. Be patient and let the heat sink into the plastic. Heat from the frontside only until the plastic on the backside is too hot to touch. Be sure to heat at least four inches around the outer ring of the dent to ensure all the tension is released when you push the dent out.



THIS JEEP WRANGLER blow-molded bumper has suffered a deep dent in the corner. To push the dent out, an access hole will have to be cut on the backside.

As you heat the bumper, push up on the dent frequently to make sure you don't over- or under-heat the plastic. These bumpers are made from fairly thick TPO plastic, so the reshaping and manipulating of the plastic is a little easier than thinner bumpers.

When working dents out of bumpers, the general rule is to keep pushing the low spots up from the backside until the profile feels about right. Push any high spots down as needed to get the profile perfected. Let the plastic cool completely; then sand the dented area with 80 grit in a DA sander. Sanding the area will immediately reveal the remaining low spots. Try to sand it to the correct profile, but it's most likely you'll have to heat the bumper again and push out the low spots and push down on the high spots again. Often you'll have to repeat this pushing and sanding process three or four times until you get the correct profile.

Most often some filler will need to be applied to perfect the bumper's profile. Follow your filler manufacturer's instructions as to the need for adhesion promoter and surface preparation. Most often, an adhesion promoter will have to be applied to the TPO plastic prior to the application of any coating — either filler or primer. Allow the filler to cure completely, then sand and feather with 80 and 180 grit sandpaper.

Before proceeding with the refinishing and retexturing process, weld the access panel back into the hole you made on the backside of the bumper. First, use a rotary tool to grind a bevel all the way around the edge of the hole and around the edge of the panel. This will create a v-groove for the welding rod to go into. Once the panel is prepped, apply some aluminum tape inside the bumper at the corners of the hole with the sticky side facing up; these will prevent the access panel from falling through the hole. Before finishing the v-groove around the panel's perimeter, tack weld the panel's corners to keep it from popping out if the



CUT A HOLE on the backside to allow access to push the dent out from the back.



HEAT THE BUMPER carefully with a heat gun to soften the plastic.



PUSH THE DENT out with a blunt tool. Push up on the low spots and shrink the high spots while the plastic is hot.

rotary tool snags an edge. You may also use a hot airless welder tip to melt the v-groove in.

Use a polypropylene or TPO plastic welding rod with a nitrogen plastic welder to weld the access panel back into the bumper around the perimeter of the panel. If the groove was deep enough, the weld can be finished smooth with an airless plastic welder, which will minimize any finish work that needs to be done on the backside.

The final step of the process is to re-finish the textured bumper. To achieve a uniform appearance overall, it is easier to retexture the entire bumper instead of trying to blend the texture. The first step in retexturing is to sand the entire bumper with 180 grit paper in a DA to smooth the texture. It's not necessary to completely remove the texture; you just want to take the tops off the texture.


Once the plastic is sanded overall and blown dust-free, apply an adhesion promoter overall and allow to flash per manufacturer instructions. Then apply one coat of high-build primer surfacer and allow to dry. Sand the primer with 320 grit paper and try to achieve a uni-



AFTER THE PLASTIC COOLS, sand overall with 80 grit paper to reveal remaining low spots. Keep pushing and shaping the plastic until the correct profile is attained.

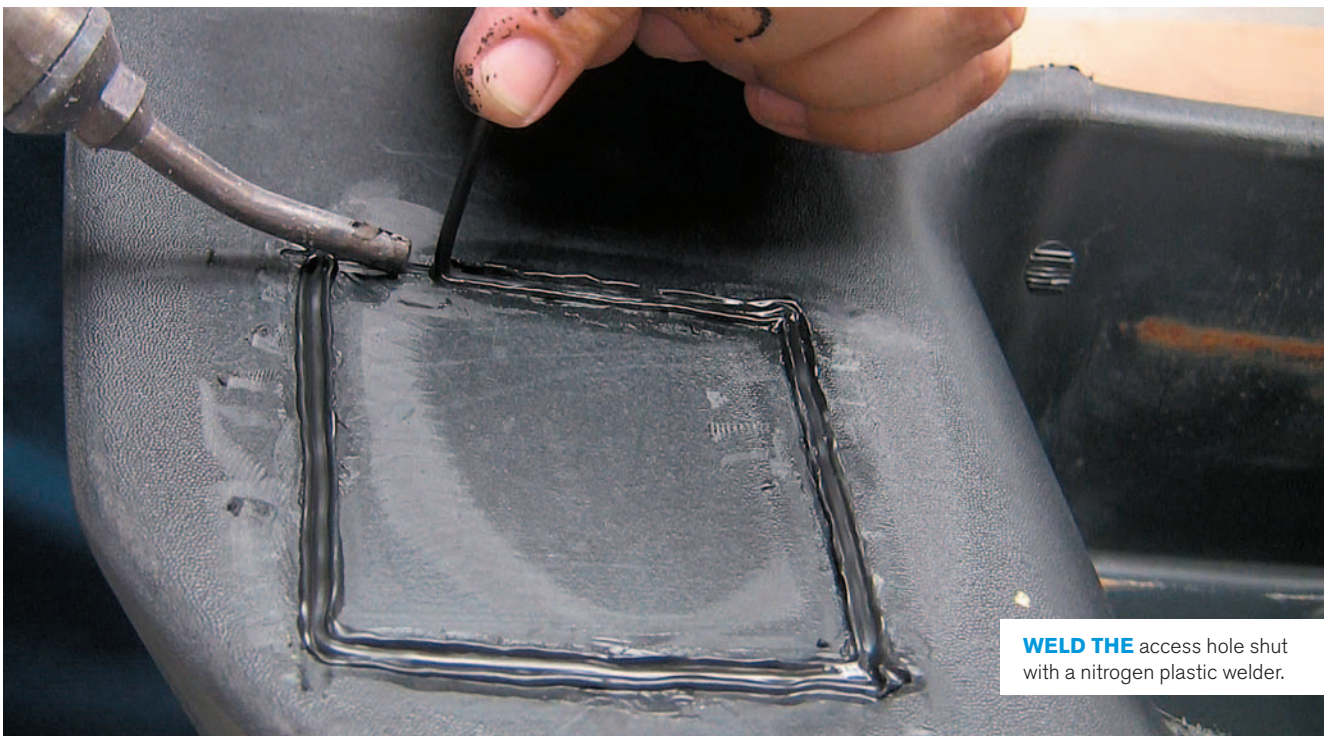
form appearance between the dented area and the undamaged bumper. Fill any minor imperfections with spot putty and apply additional primer coats if needed to achieve a uniform smoothness over the entire bumper.

Several manufacturers make texture sprays for refinishing textured bumpers and trim. Use the manufacturer's instructions to adjust grain size to match the original as closely as possible. Usually texture coatings are applied in thin "splatter" coats by increasing the distance

to the work and the speed of the pass to prevent the paint from flowing out. Several light coats are applied to achieve the desired appearance. Finally, once the grain looks acceptable, color coat if necessary to match the original color. 



JOHN WILBURN is the manager of Urethane Supply Company's Encore Bumpers. He has more than 15 years of bumper repair experience. john@encorebumpers.com



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UNDERSTANDING CARBON FIBER REPAIRS

LARRY MONTANEZ // Technical Advisor

Carbon fiber material for car design is becoming more and more popular with OEMs because of its superior strength and light weight. Everything in life is a trade-off and although Carbon Fiber Reinforced Polymer (CFRP), or carbon-fiber laminates, is costlier than steel, aluminum or traditional composite materials, carbon laminate is the next-generation material for making cars lighter, more fuel efficient and safer. Carbon laminate is extremely strong and stiff because of its woven layers of nearly pure carbon fibers bonded together by a hardened plastic, such as epoxy resin. CFRP is a combination of thin carbon filaments bonded together with a plastic polymer resin to form a composite material. Because the fibers are entirely carbon, their density is only about 1.6 grams per cubic centimeter (g/cc), comparable to the density of table sugar, resulting in carbon laminates with densities of around 1.3 to 1.5 g/cc.

However, the carbon laminate manufacturing process is complex and requires either manual labor or expensive robotic machines, both of which result in high costs for the finished part. And, the most commonly used polymer (epoxy resin) requires 24 to 50 hours to solidify after it's infused into the carbon fiber, further increasing costs. In contrast, the density of steel is about 7.8 g/cc. Carbon fibers are slightly stiffer than steel, but have one fifth the weight. Carbon laminate density is so low, it even beats the lightest structural metal, magnesium,



PHOTO: ALFA ROMEO

ALFA Romeo Spider 4C body-in-white

which has a density of 1.8 g/cc.

Visually, CFRP has a woven or weaved design look that is exposed; you have probably seen it many times on vehicle components, such as roof panels, fenders and hoods. Most likely what you saw was wraps of “carbon fiber look” material on a fiberglass or composite panel on inexpensive vehicles. CFRP components are very expensive and very light weight. Generally, you will see CFRP components on high-end luxury vehicles, high-end muscle cars and sports cars and super cars. Now keep in mind some OEMs will refinish CFRP components used for exterior and/or interior components. Manufacturing vehicles like the McLaren 570S or SLR with an entirely composite structure is a massive undertaking. In 1981 the world was introduced to the first For-

mula 1 carbon-laminate car. As the years passed, the technology transitioned to only a select few low-production high-end models. Despite intense research and development efforts over the past 35 years, we are just starting to see carbon fiber laminate in vehicles under \$50,000. Some of the most complex challenges are producing carbon laminates in complex shapes, ensuring uniform penetration of the epoxy throughout the parts, taking into account the differing strength properties when the material is struck from different angles (strength is better in the direction of the fibers) and ensuring quality control. Overcoming these challenges is expensive, so carbon-laminate composites are only used extensively in models that are entirely performance-oriented, including the Alfa Romeo 4C, the new Ford GT

and the hybrid Porsche 918. But BMW changed all that in 2013 when they introduced the i3 and i8 CFRP electric vehicles. Then BMW redesigned the 2016 7 Series, from the F01/02 to the new G12 platform, which features what they call a “carbon core” that blends carbon fiber, aluminum and high-strength steel components together. Carbon fiber is the key part to providing additional rigidity to the unibody structure. The systematic placement of the CFRP compliments the aluminum components and in other areas is actually a standalone structural member. On the BMW 7 Series, CFRP is found in key areas for added strength, the B- and C-Pillar reinforcements, roof bows, the upper sides of the center tunnel, the package tray, rocker panel reinforcement, upper quarter panel brace and the upper outer roof rail reinforcement (A-Pillar/Windshield Post to Quarter Panel Sail Panel). Aluminum extrusions and castings are utilized for critical suspension and engine mounting points and aluminum stampings make up the exterior body sheet metal. Steel stampings make up the remaining structure of the vehicle.

The more complicated production techniques and molding requirements for manufacturing carbon fiber parts keep the costs high, but as more and more OEMs choose to use CFRP components, there should be some advances in manufacturing technology, which will hopefully bring down the costs of using carbon fiber. As the price for manufacturing goes down, we will see the material usage gain wider acceptance in more mainstream vehicles.

According to many reports, carbon-fiber reinforced plastics (FRP) will be



PHOTOS: BMW

2016 BMW 7 SERIES (G12) body-in-white CFRP, aluminum and HSS and AHSS

poised to gain widespread adoption for automotive light weighting by 2025, as the CAFÉ rules will force OEMs to make drastic changes to meet the gas mileage requirements. Helping move CFRP is the drive to produce the material cheaper and there has been faster-than-expected pace of technology development.

Cosmetic vs. Structural repairs to CFRP

Although the repairs to CFRP is similar to repairs to Fiber Reinforced Plastic (FRP) and Sheet Molding Compound (SMC), it is important to understand the difference between a cosmetic and a structural repair when it involves CFRP. Most of the repairs you will be performing will be structural repairs to the cosmetic CFRP panels — for example, mending a breach (hole) in a carbon-fiber panel. Although the cosmetic carbon-fiber panels add some strength to the car, they are not

structural to the integrity of the whole vehicle. The majority of the carbon-fiber panels in use now are mechanically fastened to the car, although there are some panels, such as on the Tesla and BMW i3/i8, that are bonded to the base structure.

As for choosing the proper adhesive for making a repair, only follow what the OEM says to use in their repair procedures and only repair what they say can be repaired. Never listen to a sales representative. Generally, bonding will be done with a urethane adhesive or epoxy adhesive, while, to my research, repair work is always done with an epoxy. The reason for epoxies being the choice for repair is that epoxies are not flexible and will form a solid attachment, whereas urethanes are too flexible for most repairs. A repair is classified as cosmetic when the carbon fibers are not damaged or have been breached, such as when the surface of the panel is scratched or some minor



2016 BMW 7 SERIES (G12) center tunnel upper reinforcement CFRP



2016 BMW 7 SERIES (G12) inner quarter reinforcement CFRP



2016 BMW 7 SERIES (G12) inner quarter reinforcement CFRP full

pitting is visible. This basic type of repair involves hiding the imperfection and painting the repaired portion. An epoxy filler can be used to make this repair, since it is as rigid as the panel. When more significant damage has directly impacted or penetrated through the carbon fibers, such as a hole, the damaged fiber must be replaced with a suitable repair fiber and an epoxy adhesive.

Carbon fiber repairs

When a carbon-fiber-intensive vehicle sustains damage to the structural components, the repair procedures and protocols take more skill and technique, and the OEM will have specific materials and products for the repair. Carbon fiber material for automobiles is made up of multiple layers and the amount of layers will be a contributing factor in the repair vs. replace decisions, joining methods, adhesive material type, the type of carbon fiber repair cloth and the direction of the orientation utilized for the required repairs. Keep in mind carbon fiber cloth has a directional weave (think like directional tires). According to some repair procedures I have reviewed,



2016 BMW 7 SERIES (G12) inner quarter reinforcement CFRP full



2016 BMW 7 SERIES (G12) upper roof rail, front header and inner B-pillar reinforcements CFRP

repair procedures may require the various layers of carbon fiber cloth used for the repairs to be rotated — 30 degrees, 45 degrees, 90 degrees. The reason for this is the cloth has more strength in one direction than another direction. Additionally, the procedures may call for 12 to 14 layers or more of CFRP.

Understanding the difference between plastic bumper repair, SMC, FRP and CFRP is to consider that to make a repair to CFRP, you perform a process they call “scarfing.” In this process, the repair technician uses a tool to dress the area (grind) outwards to expose each layer of cloth (think a SMC pyramid repair process) and then begins to build the repair from the low center outward. Now the hard part is that each layer of repair carbon fiber cloth must be oriented to match the original structure. The crucial question that has to be answered when deciding to repair or replace a carbon fiber part is the same question we have asked ourselves with steel and aluminum:

- What does the OEM say about the repair?
- Will the repair adversely affect occupant safety, airbag deployment timing or collision pulse management?
- But for CFRP, will the repair be strong enough to survive the life of the vehicle?

Some basic and general recommendations are as follows:

- If a damaged carbon fiber part has a hole in its center, that repair will be strong since it is surrounded by support.
- If a carbon fiber part is missing a corner piece, such as a corner broken off of a hood, can that part be repaired or does a new hood have to be ordered? Or if the edge of a fender panel is cracked, can it be repaired? Because the repair area is hanging off the edge of the hood panel or the edge of the fender panel, the repair may not be strong enough for the lifetime of the vehicle, due to the applied stress.

Carbon fiber education

As we mentioned before, as carbon fiber



2016 BMW 7 SERIES (G12) upper roof rail reinforcement CFRP

becomes more and more mainstream as a manufacturing material (“cheaper to produce”), it will be used in more areas of car design. Since carbon fiber is extremely strong and lightweight, we will eventually see OEMs using CFRP as reinforcement in A or B pillars, rocker panels, roof rails and on closure panels on higher-production, more affordable vehicles, instead of just super cars. As SMC and FRP was an alternative to fiberglass in the 1990s, carbon fiber is being used as an alternative to SMC or FRP. Training will become paramount for the collision repair industry, but not to worry — most of the procedures for repair to CFRP is similar to those for SMC. Additionally, several training programs are available, such as Abaris Training, I-CAR training programs and Alliance courses for those interested in learning more about carbon fiber repairs.

Many OEMs such as BMW, Audi, McLaren and Alfa Romeo to name a few, have courses that their Certified Collision Repair Facility (CCRF) Program shops are required to attend, along with required specific equipment purchases. The industry is changing rapidly and shop owners must invest in training and equipment purchases in order to be ready for these changes. 📧



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FOCUS ON THE FACTORY



UNDERSTANDING THE ENGINEERING BEHIND REPAIR PROCEDURES CAN BE THE KEY TO PERFORMING THE BEST REPAIR POSSIBLE

GM PREFERS full replacement on vehicle door panels but allows panel sectioning on the doors of its full-sized trucks because of factory processes that can't be duplicated in shops.

TIM SRAMCIK // Contributing Editor

Who would build a car this way?

That lament has a special place in the history of collision repairs. Up to the 1980s, repairers relied mainly on experience and training picked up on the job to perform body work. All that changed when several engineering trends began driving vehicle design over the course of the new-wave decade.

First, unibody structures became the industry standard as a way to meet ris-

ing safety and fuel efficiency standards. Also, the number of electronic and power conveniences significantly increased and became mainstays on popular vehicles. Finally, Detroit automakers, fighting for their existence in brutal competition with Asian imports, began turning to ever more revolutionary (and sometimes poorly thought out) designs to appeal to new car buyers.

Repairers were left howling in frustration at engineering that grew increasingly sophisticated and rarely seemed to take reparability into account. In time, their voices and those from insurers and

motorists began driving home the notion that the same cars sold today would need fixed tomorrow. Automakers responded with designs more palatable to repairers and more detailed repair instructions that made what happened at the factory more of an afterthought than an issue.

Still, shops can benefit by increasing their understanding of how manufacturing practices influence repair decisions. Here's a look, using repair steps and information supplied by GM, at how factory engineering and processing creates some unexpected repair courses.



UNDERSTANDING the processes used to design and build vehicles can provide valuable insights into the rationale behind certain repairs.

Door dilemmas

GM's position on outer door panel replacement is a departure from most of the auto industry. The industry standard is a partial panel or belt-cut replacement. GM instead recommends complete door panel replacement for door damage, except on its full-size pickups and SUVs, where this kind of sectioning is preferred.

Why? It all goes back to factory production techniques. The outer door panels on these GM vehicles are hemmed around the door glass opening. Only factory hemming tools, which aren't true options for shops, can be used for full replacements (there's no room to sneak in a dolly behind the inner panel during a shop repair).

In these instances, you'll need the following repair steps, along with other applicable GM repair guidelines and instructions:

1. Disconnect the negative battery cable and disable the SIR system.
2. Remove all related panels and components. Repair any damage.
3. Remove the door assembly.
4. Cut the door panel where sectioning is to be performed.
5. Inspect the door guard beam for damage. If any damage is found, the door must instead be replaced. (Failure to do so can compromise the structural integrity of the vehicle and cause personal injury if the vehicle is

involved in a collision.) If there is no damage, proceed with this repair.

6. Grind the edges of the outer door panel to separate the outer panel from the door shell.
7. Remove the outer door panel.
8. Remove the anti-corrosion materials and sealers from the repair area, as necessary.
9. Straighten the edges of the door shell.
10. Cut the replacement panel in corresponding locations to overlap the remaining original panel by approximately 1 in. (25 mm) at each joint.
11. Use a grinding disk to grind the surface of the door shell mating flanges to bare steel.
12. Scuff the opposing mating surfaces of the door outer panel to remove the gloss of the E-Coat.
13. Clean the mating surfaces. Note: Do not allow the door to completely cure off the vehicle since doing so will make proper alignment of the door outer panel to the door shell difficult.
14. Apply a 1/8–1/4 in. (3–6 mm) bead of door panel bonding adhesive to both of the mating surfaces.
15. Use a small acid brush to spread a coat of adhesive covering all the bare metal surfaces. This will supply corrosion protection.
16. Apply a 3/8–1/2 in. (9–13 mm) bead of door panel bonding adhesive to the mating surfaces of the service panel. Note: Be careful not to pull the pan-



MANUFACTURERS stipulate detailed, exacting instructions for the replacement of SIR impact sensors to ensure the continuing operation of safety systems and to prevent repair accidents.

els apart after being joined together. Instead, slide the panels against each other to realign the panels.

17. Install the outer panel to the door shell, and clamp it into position.
18. Use a hammer to re-hem the hem flanges around the door shell. Hammer in stages along the hem flanges.
19. Remove any excess adhesive from the panel area with a lacquer thinner.
20. Install the door by first examining the outer panel to ensure proper alignment. Adjust if necessary.
21. Weld the outer panel into place.
22. Clean and prepare all welded surfaces for application of foam.
23. Apply a GM-approved flexible foam in a continuous bead between the inner safety beam and outer door panel. Fill any gaps by taking multiple passes behind the side impact sensor portion of the beam.
24. Reinstall all related panels and components.
25. Enable the SIR system and connect the negative battery cable.

Sensor sensitivities

The previous door sectioning steps included instructions to disable/enable the Supplemental Inflatable Restraint (SIR) system, which need to be performed with detailed GM instructions. That fact and the relationship between the SIR and vehicle design makes this area another where factory knowledge can be signifi-

cant. Perhaps the most important bit of this knowledge is that simply disabling/enabling the SIR system requires detailed steps because this sensitive system is engineered to work under catastrophic circumstances — essentially as the vehicle is being destroyed in a collision. Ignoring the factory repair procedures can prove disastrous as well since doing so can result in violent air bag deployment while the vehicle is being serviced or a system failure during a future collision.

When disabling/enabling the SIR system in GM vehicles, always follow these steps:

Disabling Procedure – Air Bag Fuse

1. Turn the steering wheel so the vehicle wheels point straight ahead.
2. Turn the ignition to the OFF position.

Caution: The sensing diagnostic module (SDM) may have more than one fused power input. To prevent an accidental SIR deployment, remove all fuses supplying power to the SDM. Note that with the SDM fuses removed and the ignition switch in the ON position, the air bag warning indicator still illuminates. This is normal operation and doesn't indicate a SIR system malfunction.

3. Locate and remove the fuse(s) supplying power to the Inflatable Restraint Sensing and Diagnostic Module. (Refer to SIR Schematics or Electrical Center Identification Views in the GM Service Information.)
4. Wait two minutes before working on the system. This is necessary to drain the reserve power supply and prevent the air bags from deploying.

Enabling Procedure – Air Bag Fuse

1. Turn the ignition to the OFF position.
2. Install the fuse(s) supplying power to the Inflatable Restraint Sensing and Diagnostic Module. (Again, refer to SIR Schematics or Electrical Center Identification Views in the GM Service Information.)
3. Turn the ignition switch to the ON position. The air bag indicator will flash or illuminate.
4. Turn the ignition to the OFF position.

5. If the air bag warning indicator doesn't respond as described, perform the Diagnostic System Check – Vehicle. Refer to Diagnostic System Check - Vehicle in the GM Service Information.

Disabling Procedure – Negative Battery Cable

1. Turn the steering wheel so the vehicle wheels point straight ahead.
2. Turn the ignition to the OFF position.
3. Disconnect the negative battery cable from the battery.
4. Wait two minutes before working on system.

Enabling Procedure – Negative Battery Cable

1. Turn the ignition to the OFF position.
2. Reconnect the negative battery cable to the battery.
3. Turn the ignition to the ON position. The air bag indicator will flash or illuminate.
4. Turn the ignition to the OFF position.
5. If the air bag warning indicator doesn't respond as described, perform the Diagnostic System Check — Vehicle. (Refer to Diagnostic System Check - Vehicle in the GM Service Information.)

Repairers need to be just as careful when dealing with potentially damaged impact sensors.

Shops can locate malfunctioning impact sensors by performing a diagnostic trouble code (DTC) procedure. But not all sensors will show immediate problems, and damage such as cuts in the wire insulation and slight bending of the mounting brackets might not be visible. These sensors can still fail following a repair, placing motorists in dire situations in the event of another collision.

For this reason, GM mandates the replacement of all impact sensors in the “accident damage area.” This area is defined as the portion of a vehicle that has been crushed, bent or otherwise damaged in an accident. An “otherwise damaged” portion can be, in the case of a front-end collision for example, the area forward of the radiator where an impact sensor is mounted.

GM also sets the following stipula-




MANUFACTURERS have invested heavily in state-of-the-art safety systems that must operate correctly in microseconds. Shops can only restore these systems to factory specifications by using approved repairs.

tions for impact sensor replacement:

- Replacement is necessary whether or not the sensors appear damaged or the air bags have deployed.
- Always verify the correct replacement part number.
- Never substitute sensors with components from a different vehicle.
- Never use salvaged parts for SIR system repairs.

Building understanding

If repairers wanted to, they could spend the better part of their time researching design and repairs. Of course, they'd soon go out of business. That isn't the point here.

Shops already have their hands full keeping up with training demands. Taking a look, when time permits, at the engineering processes behind repairs is too beneficial to ignore. Building this kind of understanding of collision repair work only adds to the level of expertise and excellence shops can bring to their services. This ongoing quest is one journey all shops can take. 



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INVENTORY OPTIMIZATION

RIGHT-SIZE YOUR PAINT DEPARTMENT SUPPLIES WITH THESE EXPERT TIPS

TIM SRAMCIK // Contributing Editor

A notion that sometimes gets tossed around the collision repair market is that successful shops can afford to waste money. While it is true that revenue-rich shops are better set to take chances with new ideas, that shouldn't

be confused with waste. Taking calculated risks for the future is a part of what makes shops successful. So too is funding their day-to-day operational investments wisely and carefully.

Nowhere is this truer than the paint department. Shops must carefully consider

how much inventory they maintain. Stock too little paint and prep supplies and repairers risk running out of critical products, which has a negative cascading effect on cycle times through a shop. When they stock too much, shops tie up funds that could be gaining substantial interest in



AS PART OF ITS Lean Stock Inventory System, Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes organizes supplies on special carts where they are bar coded for easy ordering.

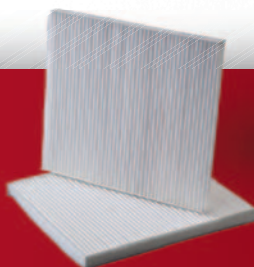
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a bank or financial fund. (Consider how much money even hot-running MSOs or standalone businesses stand to lose when they overstock.) Excess inventory is also an invitation to employees to work inefficiently and waste supplies.

Great shops handle this challenge by implementing systems and SOPs that allow them to maintain optimum levels of stock. Fortunately, many of these systems are available to shops of any size and anywhere.

Paint companies offer a variety of programs and help that aid shops in getting the most out of their products. That includes helping repairers use paint supplies more efficiently. Here's a look at those programs with suggestions from professionals on managing inventories for maximum profits.

AkzoNobel

AkzoNobel offers a variety of inventory tools, including specialized training that concentrates on measuring product use. A monthly paint material management program known as IMPACT — an acronym for Individual Material Profit Analysis Coaching Tool — is designed to help shops examine KPIs such as material cost as a percentage of total sales. Ryan Ross, AkzoNobel's Eastern Market Services Manager, says rethinking these numbers in terms of goals shops should be hitting can help shops identify inventory problem spots.

Aiding in stock ordering is the Paint Materials Management Seminar. It utilizes the ORDER acronym to outline best practices:

- O: One person responsible
- R: Repeat standard weekly stock ordered by the vendor
- D: Determine target stock levels by comparing on-hand levels to weekly order
- E: Electronic ordering to record purchases and provide control
- R: Review the projected cost of the order

Ross says shops can also help themselves by focusing on several inventory



PHOTO: PPG

PAINT VENDORS have begun combining paint match and mixing technology with features that allow them, as well as repairers, to better track inventories.

areas that have long been industry trouble spots. For example, clearcoats and hardeners often are under-stocked due to potential high costs. Some bodyshops may choose not to order either until absolutely necessary to save money, thereby setting the stage later for work-stopping shortages.

Many allied products are often overstocked due to shops failing to accurately measure their use. Ross says repairers need to look at abrasive consumption “a sheet at a time” instead of box orders. Further complicating this issue is the fact that employees throughout multiple departments use these products. This makes tracking their use difficult, with shops often ordering too much in order to compensate for perceived high demand.

Ross suggests shops get a better handle on these issues and others by again refocusing on their numbers. He suggests the following:

- Meeting with paint distributors and running purchase reports to evaluate purchases over time.
- Using these reports to build MIN/MAX inventory levels for each product. The goal here is having enough material to sustain the collision center while allowing the distributor to touch the customer less from a delivery standpoint. The ideal scenario requires

only one delivery per week.

- Setting standard work instructions for each step in the paint process. This ensures the proper amount of material is mixed and material waste is reduced as much as possible.

- Instituting 5S methodology to improve organization and continually cut waste. Ross says, for example, when there is a place for everything and everything is in its place, there's less of a tendency for employees to simply go get another box of sandpaper or roll of tape because they can't locate the one in use.

Axalta

Axalta offers three different inventory control options, each offering a different level of ordering and inventory management sophistication based on shop need.

LeanTec uses specialized cabinets with plan-o-grammed inventory storage. Technicians employ an iPod scanner to open the cabinets and scan items as they're removed. Once a day, the jobber downloads a list of items consumed and creates an order. (A “receive all-like” feature is designed to make updating inventory easy.) The system then generates a report based on consumption.

The Label Shelf and Order Form requires technicians to log consumption and then either fax in the order or enter

it online to the jobber-replenishment shopping cart system. The jobber works with the shop to put items in their proper place once received so visual inventory levels reflect what is on site.

OrderNet (part of ColorNet) works similarly to the LeanTec system, but requires a bit more management interaction to take and receive orders. Regardless of which system a customer uses, Axalta recommends five steps to ensure shops get the most from their inventory management efforts.

Step 1. Start by establishing a standard product list based on work standards or standard operating procedures.

Step 2. Build a standard inventory list and establish a minimum and maximum stock level based on historical consumption.

Step 3. Go “cold turkey” and commit to the system to place orders. Then commit to keeping replenishment on the system as well.

Step 4. Use the data collected in the system to demonstrate to staff the benefits of using a system. Note how costs are reduced while inventory levels are sufficient to ensure flow does not slow down.

Step 5. Periodically meet with jobbers to discuss any inventory level adjustments.

BASF

BASF's SmartTrak paint management program provides an inventory and stock management system alongside its paint estimate and job costing functions. The company is quick to note that these options only provide benefits when repairers take the time to use them.

“Typically a shop will see a shortage in clears and primers simply if they are not tracking all the mixing,” says eBusiness Product Manager Eric Heisler. “For example, a painter may run short on either of these products and instead of going back to SmartTRAK to mix, they will mix it off the scale and send their inventory into disarray.”

Heisler makes four other recommen-



PHOTO: SHERWIN-WILLIAMS AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES

NOTE THE BOXES of abrasives and other supplies. Vendors are encouraging shops to track stocks like these one product at a time rather than by box to keep more accurate supply counts that can aid in preventing expensive overstocks.

dations to help repairers right-size their paint inventories.

1. Organize all shop supplies properly. Put business stocks in one location, associated products in another and paint products in yet another. Neatly organize and label inventory locations, making sure that your fastest moving inventory items are quick and easy to retrieve when needed

2. Take accurate counts. Count everything you may need to replenish. This is a good time to start thinking about how many of each item you actually have versus how many you actually need to keep on hand.

3. Consider purchasing software to help you track all your inventory activities. This includes generating orders, fully reporting consumption, handling transfers between inventory locations and replenishing stock as it arrives from the supplier. All of these activities can be tracked by a manual process, but are best handled with a computer system. Using software helps ensure all transactions are recorded consistently and reduces errors. At the same time, the software can prompt you at the appropriate times to handle the manual aspects of maintaining your inventory.

4. Implement inventory rules and

stick to them. Set clear mandates on using your inventory process. If someone removes something from an inventory location, that employee must log it into the system. Nothing can doom an electronic process quicker than not using it and not logging all necessary activity, which then produces inaccuracies that in turn create doubts about the system that lead a shop to returning to manual inventory counts and handling.

Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes

Sherwin-Williams goes full in with its customers with its Lean Stock Inventory System aimed at instituting a lean process throughout a shop's stock (even those outside the paint department). The process is engineered to streamline inventory management throughout the supply chain using the principles of Kanban, a Japanese term meaning “signal.”

A signal is used to communicate when stock needs to be reordered. Properly implemented and used, the system allows shops to order products in quantities to meet production demands rather than stocking up on “unnecessary” inventory. Departing from systems that set minimum/maximum levels, Lean Stock is built

directly on demand to keep stocks as low as possible without risking shortages.

Putting the system in place requires a full commitment from interested shops, who must set aside time for a business evaluation, process implementation and training. Sherwin-Williams reps go into individual shops and perform a walk-through to discover how employees are using and managing supplies. Next, reps put together a plan to organize and barcode all supplies. Specialized stock carts are assembled. Sherwin-Williams then instructs employees how to implement a reusable order sheet (Kanban trigger) at each stocking location to let inventory managers know what product(s) need replenished. The inventory manager scans the barcodes on the order sheets to place the replenishment order through the Sherwin-Automotive.com website. Orders are then delivered, verified by the inventory manager and restocked.

Sherwin-Williams says the system does more than just cut inventory costs and waste — other benefits include improved productivity, since employees spend more time processing vehicles and less time chasing down stocks; reinforcement of SOPs; reduction in repair variations and more consistent repair results.

Valspar

Valspar Automotive provides a mix of electronic, training and hands-on help. Its Color Focus color retrieval software system utilizes a Kanban inventory-control feature that allows shops to set minimum and maximum stock levels. Charlie Whitaker, Quality First Technical Manager for Valspar Automotive North America, recommends shops determine these levels based on a 10-day supply estimate with a 10 to 15 percent buffer.

“This formula traditionally allows for lead times on products and significantly reduces the amount of orders placed,” he explains. “With it in place and fully utilized, a shop can effectively reduce paint inventory costs by as much as 30 percent or more.”



PHOTO: LEFLER COLLISION AND GLASS

HELPING WORKERS locate stocks more easily and in an orderly fashion gives them more time to focus on value-added tasks, reinforces SOPs and improves work quality consistency.

Valspar assists shops with the software's set up to make sure the system automatically deducts products from inventory. Once a product hits the minimum quantity, the system places a reorder that does not exceed the maximum quantity allowed.

Valspar also helps shops audit inventories, identify waste and create SOPs with its Quality First Program. As with programs offered by other paint companies, a chief goal is collecting data and providing accurate operational measurements that can be used towards process improvement.

Whitaker notes that one area where many shops can stand to improve is better managing their toner stocks, which frequently run overloaded or short. “Ultimately, the culprit is the shop either doesn't truly understand its paint system or how much it's using overall,” says Whitaker. “Most shops operate with one backup for every toner used, which is a problem. Another contributing factor is that a representative of the shop or their local jobber store is manually shaking the can to determine volume, and making the assumption on how much is left based on what they ‘think’ is in the can.”

Whitaker suggests shops reconsider how they stock high- and low-use toners by maintaining more of the former and fewer low-use versions since these

products have a limited shelf life.

Best course for all parties

Considering that paint companies could boost their revenues by allowing many shops to continue pursuing a course where they overstock, waste or otherwise mishandle inventories, some repairers may wonder why these same companies are more intent on helping shops build supply efficiencies.

The answer is quite simple. It's good business and the ethical choice.

The paint vendors *ABRN* spoke with noted that productive, efficient shops repair more vehicles, which means more paint orders. These same shops also churn out better work, and that translates into satisfied customers who will recommend the business to others and return again should they need repair services. That too turns into sales.

An old saying states that good business is where you find it. But oftentimes, good business turns up where you make it. Proper inventories are a great place to start. 📌



TIM SRANCIK has written for *ABRN* and sister publications *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket Business World* for more than a decade.
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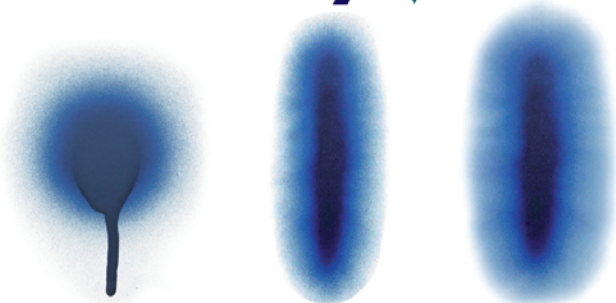
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COLOR-MATCH TECHNOLOGY

BASF announces the new SmartSCAN spectrophotometer — a revolution in color-match technology, allowing for a fast, flawless color identification. This new tool includes 12 geometries to cover every angle of the vehicle, white and blue LED light sources to capture the best color match and temperature warnings for a precise measurement. A color camera with intuitive touchscreen and video preview combined with the WiFi connectivity to the world's largest color database allows the SmartSCAN 12/6 to achieve a high hit-rate.



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K Tool International (KTI) introduces a new heavy-duty aluminum air blow gun featuring an exclusive Venturi mechanism that combines ambient air with compressed air boosting output by 15%. KTI is offering this gun with different tips, in 4- and 8-piece kits and has a high-flow safety edition.



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Great expectations

How are you being judged by your customers?

We are all well aware that the most valuable asset in our business is the customer. Unfortunately for us, the customer is normally engaging our services under the duress of a negative or even traumatic event that has occurred in their life. Like the dentist's office, they're normally not too happy about having to pay a visit to the collision repair shop, and are really in no mood for any hassles or surprises throughout the course of the repair job.

Customers have their own set of expectations when their vehicle enters your parking lot, and the level at which you address these expectations will either make or break your relationship with that customer.

Let's take a look at those expectations which, if met, could turn a distraught customer into a life-long ambassador for your business.

Customer expectations (in their own words)

I expect you to show empathy over my situation. Since I'm stepping into a stereotypically tough and intimidating environment when I enter your shop, all I'm looking for is a friendly smile, a clean and organized lobby, and a helpful person at the front desk who treats me as if I'm the most important person in the shop. If you can provide that, you'll have me at "hello."

I expect you to listen to me. When my vehicle is brought into your shop, I've got so many things on my mind that I'm not sure what information you need to properly do your job. Should I tell you all the details about the accident, including what I hit, if anything spilled inside the car at impact and other minutiae that will help you in planning the repair? Please guide me through this process and assure me that I'm in good hands.

I expect you to ease my pain. I need to know that you'll take care of me — that you're truly working on my behalf, and that you're not in cahoots with the insurance company to overcharge me and under-deliver. I need you to speak in plain terms to me about the technical stuff so that I can fully understand what you have to do to repair and restore my beloved vehicle to its former self.

I expect to get my vehicle back very soon. I know that's so often an unrealistic expectation, but when you tell me it will take a few days to repair, and I don't hear anything from you after a week, I start to get very worried.



CUSTOMERS HAVE THEIR OWN SET OF EXPECTATIONS WHEN THEIR VEHICLE ENTERS YOUR PARKING LOT.

I expect you to return my call. All I need is a progress update, but when you don't call me back I start to think the worst. Then I get frustrated and angry because I don't think you care about me enough to return my call.

I expect consistency between your shop and my insurance rep. Why are you telling me the cost is so much higher than my insurance guy estimated? I'm not well-versed in a visual inspection versus a detailed disassembly inspection, so I can't understand the disparity in your numbers. Are you and my insurance company communicating properly and working together on my behalf?

I expect you to utilize every resource available to repair my vehicle. From proper training and instruction to utilizing the technical support required to properly and accurately repair my vehicle, I assume that your staff is fully capable of expert work.

I expect a quality repair. A repair that helps to maintain the value of my vehicle after it's been repaired and doesn't diminish the value because of cheap replacement parts or shoddy workmanship.

I expect competitive pricing. I'm intently hoping that your charges aren't so high that they unnecessarily inflate my insurance premiums in the future.

I expect this process to go smoothly. Please don't make this experience something that adds to my already traumatic situation.

I expect a flawless vehicle at delivery. No scratches, no dents, no funny noises and no questionable quirks. And if you wash and detail my vehicle, you'll surpass my expectation.

I DON'T expect a follow-up call after delivery. But if you contact me to ask how my vehicle is running and what my take is on the entire experience, I'll be up front and honest with you so that your next customer's experience is even more positive than mine.

As this is my final piece as "The Last Detail" columnist, I would like to extend my gratitude to ABRN's editorial staff for allowing me to occupy this space over the past 12 months and hope that the content and information shared has been both enlightening and beneficial to you, the reader. 📧

MICHAEL GIARRIZZO, JR. is founder and president of DCR Systems (www.DCRsystems.net) and a pioneer in the utilization of lean production principles on the shop floor. mgiarrizzo@dcrsystems.net

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