

# ABRN

AUTO BODY REPAIR NETWORK

COMMITMENT TO TRAINING

30

BOOST YOUR  
PERSISTENCE QUOTIENT  
FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS



FEBRUARY 2017

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## TOYOTA COLLISION PROS

Take a look at the Toyota Collision Pros supplement, which can be found online at:  
[ABRN.com/ToyotaFall16](http://ABRN.com/ToyotaFall16)



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[ABRN.COM/BOOTHTIPS](http://ABRN.COM/BOOTHTIPS)

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Telematics can provide new ways to improve customer service, enhance customer education about their vehicles and repair options and create broader customer reach.  
[ABRN.COM/TELEMATICS](http://ABRN.COM/TELEMATICS)

### EMPLOYING THE RIGHT TRAINING

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](http://ABRN.COM/PPGWHITEPAPER)

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PHOTO: LEFLER COLLISION & GLASS

**LEFLER COLLISION & GLASS** teaches its attendees automotive maintenance at its biannual Ladies' Night Out events.

## LADIES' NIGHT EVENT SEES SUCCESS FOR TWO SHOPS

**CHELSEA FREY //**  
Senior Associate Editor

➔ Collision repair shops across the country are empowering the majority of decision makers for automotive repair: women. Two businesses in particular — Glaser's Collision Center, headquartered in Jefferson, Ken., and Lefler Collision & Glass, with four shops in the Evansville, Ind., area — have each been hosting Ladies' Night events for more than five years to give women in their communities an opportunity to learn about automotive maintenance

and collision-related information in an unintimidating environment.

Glaser's Collision Center hosted its 6<sup>th</sup> annual Ladies' Night last October, and Lefler Collision & Glass has been hosting its event for the past eight years, twice a year. Both shops have seen a significant increase in attendance as word in their communities spreads about the entertaining and informative event. Megan Williams, marketing director of Lefler Collision & Glass, explains, "Until about a year ago, we had around 100-120

>> **LADIES' NIGHT CONTINUES ON PAGE 10**

**BREAKING NEWS**

**CONSUMER SURVEY**

## AAA SURVEY: DRIVERS DON'T TRUST REPAIR SHOPS

**BRIAN ALBRIGHT //**  
Contributing Editor

➔ A survey released by AAA in December indicates that the majority of U.S. drivers don't trust repair shops because they believe they will overcharge them or recommend unnecessary service. However, 64 percent of respondents do have a favored auto repair shop that they trust.

The report is based on a telephone survey of more than 1,000 drivers. According to the data, the top reasons that drivers don't trust repair shops are:

- Recommending unnecessary services (76 percent of respondents)
- Overcharging (73 percent)
- Negative past experiences (63 percent)
- Concerns that work will not be done correctly (49 percent)

"To minimize the stress associated with vehicle repair and main-

>> **SURVEY CONTINUES ON PAGE 8**

### TRENDING

#### SPANESI AMERICAS CONTINUES MARKET EXPANSION

Spanesi Americas has added Tri-State Collision Equipment to provide distributor and customer support to North and South Dakota and other Plains states.

[ABRN.COM/TRISTATE](http://ABRN.COM/TRISTATE)

#### SHERWIN-WILLIAMS ANNOUNCES ANNUAL VISION GROUP AWARD

The AVG2 Vision Group of Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes has again won the Vision Group of the Year award with same store sales growth of 11.69 percent.

[ABRN.COM/VISIONAWARD](http://ABRN.COM/VISIONAWARD)

#### BASF COMPLETES ACQUISITION OF CHEMETALL

BASF will combine its know-how in chemistry and coatings applications with newly-acquired Chemetall's market-leading expertise in surface treatment.

[ABRN.COM/CHEMETALL](http://ABRN.COM/CHEMETALL)

#### NABC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Chuck Sulkala, founder, first president and executive director of the National Auto Body Council, announced his retirement, effective the end of 2017, after 22 years.

[ABRN.COM/SULKALA](http://ABRN.COM/SULKALA)

#### MITCHELL RELEASES Q4 INDUSTRY TRENDS REPORT

In the latest edition of Mitchell International's Industry Trends Report, experts discuss total loss trends and the state of the third-party auto claims market.

[ABRN.COM/Q4TRENDS](http://ABRN.COM/Q4TRENDS)



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## PRE-, POST-REPAIR SCANS

# CIC COMMITTEE INVITES INDUSTRY TO TACKLE PRE-, POST-SCANS

The Collision Industry Conference (CIC) Emerging Technologies Committee has invited all those interested to participate in the “Scanning & Diagnostics in Collision Repair Task Force.” Approximately 30 participants, from segments including OEMs, repairers, equipment companies, trade groups and insurers, have been working together to discuss the topic and identify issues and possible solutions.

The task force has identified its mission and put forth goals as it relates to the topic, which include the following:

- Educate & inform all interested parties
- Protect the Consumer - Enable proper repairs
- Minimize friction between all parties in the claims, customer service & repair processes

The task force formed two work groups to continue the work:


· **Definitions** — Identify the various terms used today and seek agreement from OEs and other parties involved to the various scan processes and add other terms as necessary. Chair: Chuck Olson, AirPro Diagnostics

· **When to Scan/How to Integrate OEM Info** — How to integrate OE procedures into the estimating/claims/repair pro-

cess. Identify when scanning is required. Potential integration into estimating systems. Chair: Jake Rodenroth, Collision Diagnostic Services

“The work of this group is critical to our industry,” stated Guy Bargnes of Painter’s Supply & Equipment Company and CIC Chairman. “The issues of scanning and diagnostic procedures are among the most critical facing the collision repair industry today. We must get our collective arms around this issue, and we invite all interested parties to participate.”

“I am confident we can find solutions to address all stakeholders’ concerns while ensuring a complete and safe repair for the consumer,” stated Jack Rozint, Vice President, APD Repair with Mitchell and CIC Emerging Technologies Committee Chair. “The group we have assembled represents some of the best minds in our industry and we all are committed to addressing the issues at hand.”

More information about the Committee and its current Draft Work Products are available at [ABRN.com/techcommittee](http://ABRN.com/techcommittee). Those interested in participating should contact the committee at [emergingtech@ciclink.com](mailto:emergingtech@ciclink.com). 

## >> SURVEY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

tenance, it is critical that drivers find an honest repair shop that they can trust with their vehicle,” said John Nielsen, AAA’s managing director of Automotive Engineering and Repair. “AAA found that one-third of U.S. drivers — 75 million motorists in total — have yet to find a trusted repair facility, leaving them vulnerable when trouble strikes.”

The level of trust varies by age group. Older drivers are generally more trusting than younger drivers, while Baby Boomers are twice as likely than younger car owners to fully trust auto repair facilities. One in five reported they “totally trust” the industry. Seventy-six percent of Boomers have a preferred shop, compared to 55 percent of Millennials and 56 percent of Gen-Xers.

With more connected cars on the road, drivers also want more control

over how their vehicle data is used. The survey indicates that the majority of U.S. drivers want to be able to direct their vehicle’s data to their favored repair shops.

AAA had a number of recommendations for helping consumers find a trusted repair shop, including:


**Find a repair shop** before you have car trouble. Ask around for recommendations.

**Research potential repair shops**, including how long they’ve been in business. Check with the Better Business Bureau, State Department of Consumer Affairs, or attorney general’s office to see how they handle complaints.

**Visit the shop for a minor maintenance issue** (like an oil change) in order to check out the shop’s appearance, warranties, technician credentials, and amenities.

Trust has been noted as a key factor in a number of industry studies, including research related to dealership service and body shop departments. A study earlier in 2016 by Cox Automotive found that many customers did not take their vehicles to dealerships because of costs, fears they would be overcharged, and unreasonable labor or parts charges. In fact, 34 percent of respondents said they thought the dealer would overcharge them.

Both independent shops and dealers can benefit from having full price transparency — and listing prices for basic services on their websites and posted in the shop. Posting certifications and other information can also lend credibility to service recommendations.

To download a fact sheet about the study, go to [ABRN.com/AAAAsurvey](http://ABRN.com/AAAAsurvey). 



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>> **LADIES' NIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6**  
women in attendance at our Evansville Ladies' Night Out. With the implementation of social media, radio ads and a designated effort to grow our reach for this event, our most recent Ladies' Night Out event hosted 190 women at our Evansville location and 45 women at our Henderson location."

Glaser's Collision Center's Ladies' Night event has also risen in popularity. Aaron Glaser, the chief operating officer of Glaser's, notes, "We started out with maybe 40 or so women six years ago, and since then the number of attendance rises every year — our most recent event was attended by 104 women. We focus on bringing value to them, not on selling them anything. I feel it is important for the ladies to be able to come through the doors and see the actual facility, not just the front office. The whole event, from the content, shopping, food and drinks and valet parking is all to make them feel comfortable and to give them a fun and educational evening."

The two businesses structure their Ladies' Nights similarly: The event kicks off with food and drinks and an opportunity for attendees to peruse a variety of vendors and local businesses selling jewelry, clothing, kitchen items and more. The first educational session then commences and is followed by an intermission for attendees to revisit the refreshments and vendors. The women then rejoin for the final educational session. While some attendees will leave the event with a raffle prize — anything from a gift basket to a free oil change to a flat-screen TV — no one goes home empty handed. All attendees receive goody bags filled with various items and information.

Glaser's and Lefler's educate attendees about both general care for their vehicles and collision-related information to offer them a comprehensive experience. Glaser explains, "At our most recent event we discussed general maintenance, such

as how to change a tire and how to check and change your oil. During a break, we have stations so that they can practice what we just discussed. We have plenty of our technicians on hand to answer any questions they may have during this time. After the break, we finish up with our next 45-minute seminar

where we discuss something collision-related. This year we showed the ladies what to look for when purchasing a used vehicle — tell-tale signs of if it has been in a collision or not. We also cover what to do and what to expect if you get into a collision. We feel it is important to talk them through what to do — and not do — to remain safe."

Lefler's approach is similar. Williams notes, "We discuss topics such as what different vehicle fluids look like, insurance coverage and information, what to do if you get into a wreck and tire pressure safety. We also deploy a live airbag demonstration to show the speed and sound that they deploy at. We believe that empowering women of all ages is such an important role that we can help provide to make Evansville a strong city. Women are the majority of the decision makers when it comes to vehicle repair and maintenance, so we feel that empowering them when they walk into a repair facility or just to get a routine oil change is a very important step."

Both businesses stress that their events are not about selling services but are rather about providing value and education to women in their communities. Inevitably, these memorable and engaging events help build trust and familiarity for the shops. Williams explains, "We



**ATTENDEES** at the October 2016 Ladies' Night event at Glaser's Collision Center learn about what to look for when purchasing used vehicles.

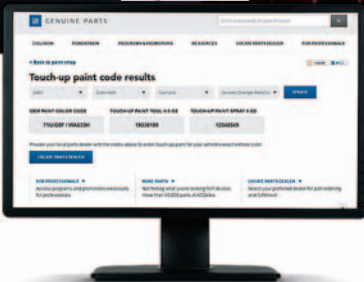
PHOTO: GLASER'S COLLISION CENTER

have had many women mention to us afterwards or on our surveys that being able to come into our shop and meet our location managers and staff has influenced them to bring their vehicle to us to be repaired. We take gaining that trust very seriously, and all ladies leave with a business card of someone to directly call in case they find themselves in a wreck or just with a general question."

For Glaser's, Ladies' Night bolsters brand recognition as well. Glaser details, "The event drums up some great publicity. Every year, we get some kind of media coverage of the event. Our Facebook page gets a great boost leading up to and following Ladies' Night. Looking at our Facebook trends, the weeks of the event have the highest engagement of the entire year for our company."

With the overwhelming success of these Ladies' Night events, both businesses are working to expand education opportunities to other populations of their communities. Glaser's is looking into an event for teen drivers, and Lefler's plans to continue offering Little Ladies Day as they are approached by local Daisy and Girl Scout Troops. Williams notes, "We hope to help a troop gain their car care badge next spring. There is a definite need for this information, and we are happy to help." ■

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# EDUCATION EXTRAS

Optimize your training schedule with vendor classes

**DON'T HAVE** a suitable training facility at your shop? No problem. Vendors typically offer a number of options in corporate locations, throughout their distribution networks or at nearby shops and technical schools.

**TIM SRAMCIK** // Contributing Editor

**H**ow much training is enough? Or too much?

Repairers must wrestle with these questions more and more as pressure grows on them to pick up OEM certifications and meet DRP requirements. Education and learning are always worthwhile, but effectively mixing them into already busy shop schedules and tight budgets can be trying.

More than ever, repairers need training options. And more than ever, vendors are stepping in to assist shops with affordable, convenient learning opportunities that can help them refocus their businesses, build employee skill sets and provide other benefits — such as earning I-CAR credits.

Take a look at some of the latest, most effective vendor training opportunities

available, along with tips to set these lessons in stone at your shop.

## Paint Companies — Axalta

A comprehensive progressive learning “Master Certification” program launched in mid-2016, running from Level 100 to 400, provides students with what Axalta calls a “learning path” to Axalta Master Certification. In 2017, Axalta will green light courses that “incorporate efficiency, profitability and productivity as it relates to each step in the repair process, beginning with Pre-paint,” according to North America Learning Content Manager Bob Pittenger.

“Our entire curriculum is revamped with shorter, à la carte offerings to enable the students to target the learning gaps rather than long classes that demand several days away from the shop for topics that the student may not need,” says Pit-

tenger. “All automotive course offerings now feature I-CAR Industry Alliance recognition with ProLevel as well as credit-hour recognition.”

Axalta is also currently piloting certification training using live virtual broadcasts with its customer locations and has plans to expand these efforts after an official rollout. Along with these efforts, the company will expand its online offerings at [axaltalearningcampus.com](http://axaltalearningcampus.com), adding at least 50 more courses by the end of the first quarter of 2017. Online training is free and provides initial and refresher classes, typically running 10-20 minutes, around the clock, seven days a week.

## BASF

Jeff Wildman, North American Key Account Manager OEM and Industry Relations at BASF, says his company’s most popular courses continue to be its Glas-



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**VENDORS KNOW** their products and industry best practices better or as well as anyone. Don't overlook opportunities to work with them. Your competitors certainly aren't.

urit and R-M certification and color-match classes, which help shops meet OEM certifications. Wildman stresses that BASF provides other resources that can help shops navigate their way through demanding, sometimes multiple, certification procedures — namely guidance from its Business Development Managers.

BASF additionally offers a number of convenient, one-day VisionPLUS courses that provide both classroom and hands-on experience, designed to help shops reset their operations. Measuring and Improving Performance teaches students to utilize and develop the data streams needed for both financial and non-financial reporting. The streams are used to calculate 24 critical key performance indicators (KPIs), which students then compare against benchmarks to understand what positively or negatively affects shop performance. Also included are sections on understanding ratios, percentages, tracking trends, goal setting and management.

BASF's Paint & Material Profitability class demonstrates the steps needed to analyze the factors that influence a shop's paint and materials profitability. Students calculate actual paint-only costs, along

with paint and material costs, per-paint hour to next explore ways to maximize profit. They also assess sales by scrutinizing damage reports for non-included items, add-ons and proper classifications and learn how to cut costs through reduced usage and proper classification of non-paint items.

### PPG

PPG will roll out an updated version of its Envirobase High Performance Waterborne Certification training. The curriculum, available in early 2017, is based on SOPs shops are already familiar with, making its lessons more accessible and easier to implement. The training adds PPG's latest Envirobase products and processes, along with a comprehensive list of how-tos for handling challenging 3- and 4-stage finishes and blending techniques.

Updated Custom Restoration and Custom Painting classes too will be available in 2017. Students will have the opportunity to learn the latest about the various substrates they might encounter and the most up-to-date ways to prepare them. Both courses provide a guide to proper selection of the most effective undercoats, creating an authentic color and choosing a clearcoat to help the vehicle

stand out from the crowd while protecting it for the long term.

### Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes

In 2017, Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes (SWAF) will begin offering a new two-day Painter Certification and Color class, the only course that will certify painters for SWAF's Limited Lifetime Guaranty program. The course instructs students on the proper application and usage of Ultra 7000 Solvent-borne and the AWX Performance Plus Waterborne System. Class objectives include:

- Accurately identifying OEM color formulations
- Describing the benefits of tinted/urethane undercoats
- Restoring corrosion protection
- Proper application and blending procedures
- Improving production and best demonstrated practices

Joining this course is a new Advanced Painter class being piloted at the beginning of 2017 that will cover stage color and process training for current and future OEM styling.



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## Valspar

Valspar Automotive also will premiere a 2017 course focused on the latest OEM styling. Its Color Theory course will examine OEM color variations and include a section on the latest in workshop safety. "Students will learn what is involved in selecting the right color and how to properly utilize the necessary tools and resources, like the spectrophotometer," says Gary Kilby, Valspar Senior Technical Manager. "They will also learn how to use Valspar Automotive's Color Focus (formula retrieval software), which aids in the color selection process and can be used to improve color accuracy, increase shop production and reduce costs."

The class includes an advanced color theory curriculum where students learn the color wheel and tinting methods for classroom and practical application. "The hands-on approach has the benefit of giving students the expanded knowledge and skill sets they need to understand the influence that equipment and the setup of the equipment has on the application process and ultimately, the color," adds Kilby.

## Welding companies and frame makers

Shops can pick up nine I-CAR credit hours by completing ProSpot International's i4 Resistance Spot Welding & MIG Steel Welding course. The class satisfies requirements for two I-CAR ProLevel 1 knowledge areas — Spot Welded Panel Replacement



PHOTO: PFG

**BE SURE TO DRIVE HOME** the lessons picked up in training with a thorough understanding of why repairs need to be performed and the importance of doing so in a specific order.

and Steel GMA. Incorporating online interactive training/testing and in-class, hands-on experience with the i4 Resistance Spot Welder, the course can be conducted in a shop's training facility or a facility the shop has access to.

Chief Automotive Technologies provides a number of classes that also offer I-CAR credits. Course options include Aluminum Damage Analysis and Repair Technology; Structural Damage Analysis; Designed Based Repair; Full Frame Analysis and Repair Planning; and Unitized Body Analysis and Repair Planning. Classes run 1-3 days and are available nationwide at technical schools, shops and other training sites.

Car-O-Liner similarly offers training at its Academy in Wixom, Mich., and throughout the rest of its distribution network. Students receive I-CAR credits for completing Bench, Measuring Systems and Pulling System Training, Basic Electronic Measuring and Basic Resistance Welder Installation courses.

## Auto manufacturers

As OEMs look for ways to better connect with collision repairers and build their certification programs, they've begun taking another look at training opportunities outside of traditional I-CAR and certification courses.

General Motors recently started a series of free nationwide InShop Clinics aimed at helping shops prepare for technologies soon to reach dealer showrooms, along with others focused on OEM-approved repair methods. As their name suggests, the clinics are held on-site at nearby dealer shops and are conducted by GM experts.

Topics include:

- Bolt-on Body Panel Adjustments
- Post Collision-Brake Inspection and Repair
- Post Collision-Power Steering Inspection and Repair
- Post Collision-Tires and Wheels
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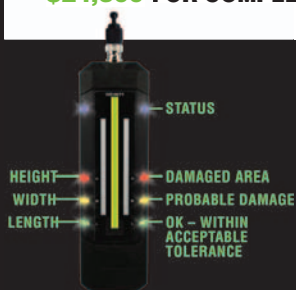
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updated course list and steps for registration.

## Costs, management and setting lessons in stone

The courses *ABRN* looked at typically ran \$250-\$400 per student. Some included meals and others worked in the cost of a hotel stay. Since travel can add significant dollars to a training budget, courses like these provide significant savings as does finding classes offered near your business. In some cases, vendors provide training opportunities free of charge.

The best way to locate all these savings is to put someone in charge of your shop's training who can not only keep you OEM, ASE and I-CAR certified, but who has the time and responsibility to spot learning opportunities. This means talking with vendors, jobbers and parts and equipment dealers. Having a go-to training coordinator is critical since some of these folks don't always tout all the benefits their companies provide.

A coordinator also can be one of the keys to ensuring lessons picked up from training are incorporated once employees return to work from class. Coordinators not only track training but can work with employees and management to see that lessons learned are also set in stone to ensure shops get the most from their educational investments.

Vendors further suggest repairers take three steps to put lessons in place.

1. Reiterate steps. Implementing lessons actually begins during training. Students not only need to learn new repair steps but the reasons behind them and why they must be performed in a specific order.

Kilby notes, "In our classes, instructors walk students through each step highlighting its importance and why it's necessary in the refinish process. If any step is skipped, students learn why it's likely they'll find themselves back in the booth repainting the vehicle."

"They ultimately learn that refinishing a vehicle is a process, and skipping any

step in the set process results in rework, loss of productivity and an increase in cost," he says.

Pittenger declares that the process of repeating steps and gaining experience also provides other, more critical benefits. "The real benefit of training is not as much the information a student would pick up and take with them, but the experience that enables them to actually change their processes to be more efficient and productive," he says. "It's not just a matter of learning, but applying what was learned to their everyday work. Changing behaviors is the key to success after training."

2. Always involve management. Even when students begin transforming their work practices, there's still a decent chance they can revert to old behaviors. People often slip back into old habits because, well, it's a habit. It's human nature.

If you want true change, you need new standards that management must be aware of and stand behind. "When management is a part of any training, it leads to everyone being on the same page and accomplishing the shop's goals," says SWAF Director of Training Rod Habel.

PPG Director of Training Randy Cremeans adds, "Technicians should discuss what they learned with their managers back at work. They can all decide on what procedures might be implemented to have the best impact on productivity and eliminating paint application problems. This might be trying a new product

or following a new application process."

3. Set SOPs that are value-based. After management examines the lessons, it needs to take additional consideration before creating new SOPs — basing their implementation on sound math. New steps must prove their worth after they're put in place.

"Tracking KPIs in the shop is a must," says Habel. "From that, a shop will be able to see the value that training all shop personnel brings to the table."

"And through regular internal audits, they can use new SOPs to gauge the shop's success in the repair process and from there make any adjustments to improve," notes Kilby.

As with any other part of your business, return on investments probably plays the largest part in your operational decisions. Training arguably provides the quickest, most consistent and significant ROI of any investment area, even more than equipment, tools and products. Training also has the potential to transform every part of your operation for the better, and it could markedly improve your business in 2017. There's no better time than now to contact your vendors and see what they have to offer. Make the call. 📞

## TRAINING CONTACTS

**AkzoNobel** – [sikkenscr.at/en/services/bodyshops-/atc-trainings](http://sikkenscr.at/en/services/bodyshops-/atc-trainings)

**BASF** – [refinish.basf.us/training\\_about](http://refinish.basf.us/training_about)

**PPG** – [us.ppgrefinish.com/PPG-Refinish/training.aspx](http://us.ppgrefinish.com/PPG-Refinish/training.aspx)

**Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes** – [sherwin-automotive.com/refinish/training-support/](http://sherwin-automotive.com/refinish/training-support/) (contact [rod.e.habel@sherwin.com](mailto:rod.e.habel@sherwin.com))

**Pro Spot** – [prospot.com/support/training/](http://prospot.com/support/training/)

**Chief** – [chiefautomotive.com/Chief-University/](http://chiefautomotive.com/Chief-University/)

**Car-O-Liner** – [car-o-liner.com/us/training/find-training-worldwide/usa-canada/courses-usa/](http://car-o-liner.com/us/training/find-training-worldwide/usa-canada/courses-usa/)

**Celette** – [celette.com/university\\_of\\_celette/](http://celette.com/university_of_celette/)



**TIM SRAMCIK** has written for *ABRN* and sister publications *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket Business World* for more than a decade. [tsramcik@yahoo.com](mailto:tsramcik@yahoo.com)



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# STATUS QUO 2017?



## Prediction: The year ahead will follow in the footsteps of 2016.

**BRAD MEWES** // Contributing Editor

It is right around this time of year when everyone makes predictions for what's to come. So I'll join in. My prediction for 2017: nothing will change.

Last year I made three predictions for 2016: Consolidation would continue. Technology will continue to impact the industry. Interest rates will rise.

My predictions for 2017? Consolidation

would continue. Technology will create winners and losers. Interest rates will rise.

### **Consolidation continues strong**

Fast forward one year and consolidation continues. In 2016, Caliber added 111 locations; Service King, 35 locations; Boyd, 55 locations; and ABRA, 21 locations. Boyd continues to reiterate that they are well positioned for a major acquisition. Rumors continue to swirl of a large deal in the works. Major consolidators raised

large amounts of capital in 2016 and will put it to work aggressively in 2017.

Consolidation continues in the paint jobber market as well. FinishMaster's parent company Uni-Select now operates 250 locations and 14 WD locations across the US and Canada. NCS and Single Source merged. A number of smaller acquisitions were announced across the U.S. and Canada.

Consolidation continues in parts distribution as well. LKQ leads the



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charge here, increasing sales to an estimated \$9.5 billion in 2016, up over 30 percent from the end of 2015. LKQ has consistently focused on using M&A to drive growth and diversifying away

from collision revenue and diversifying into Europe.

Outside investors and entrepreneurs will continue to enter the industry, driving additional consolidation

and taking advantage of the fragmentation in the industry. Big deals and sellers that know how to articulate their value will still make headlines and command premium prices (they

## GETTING BY IN 2017 — INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR BUSINESS

The foundation of my business is to increase the value of your business. It is the reason I write a weekly note about using strategy and finance to increase the value of your business, the reason I speak at so many industry events and the reason I spend time helping you understand finance as a driver to increase the value of your business.

An important part of increasing the value of your business is growth. Whether that growth comes organically through increased revenues or increased efficiencies or inorganically through acquisitions or new location developments, a history of growth is an important part of increasing the value of your business.

But growth for the sake of growing can destroy companies. Business owners across many industries found this out the hard way when the company imploded under the weight of rapid growth. In fact, according to many studies, inorganic growth, or growth through acquisitions, has been a losing bet for buyers (but a winning bet for sellers).

It is estimated that more than \$200 billion of wealth has been destroyed through bad acquisitions in the past 20 years. Yet when done right, acquisitions are a very effective way to create substantial shareholder value. These are four proven ways to develop a successful M&A campaign.

### Create an acquisition strategy

Not all businesses that make acquisitions have a strategy, and not all businesses that have strategies stick with them. But historically, firms with written acquisition strategies outperform those that engage in ad-hoc and infrequent acquisitions. Specific target criteria minimize the chances of pursuing value-destroying acquisitions. Before setting out on an acquisition binge, spend some time critically assessing what your ideal target looks like — financially, operationally and geographically.

### Target smaller companies

A very successful acquisition strategy employed by private equity firms, as well as industry consolidators, is to target smaller companies in “roll up” strategies. Targeting smaller companies allows a consolidator to diversify risk

among multiple targets and lessen the relative impact of a miscalculated acquisition. Existing research shows that large deals tend to destroy more value than small deals, and companies that acquire small firms consistently outperform companies that acquire large firms.

### Focus on operational/cost synergies

There are three main types of synergies in an acquisition: revenue, cost and financial. In other words, acquisitions make sense when a buyer can increase sales, decrease costs or lower the cost of capital. Before the deal closes, the sky can appear to be the limit. To keep expectations (and pricing) realistic, focus on cost synergies. Cost synergies are traditionally the easiest to model and have the greatest likelihood of being delivered as management can realize them directly through their own post-merger integration efforts. Conversely, revenue and financial synergies are more difficult to realize, as they are outside of management’s direct control.

### Know the price, pay for value and be prepared to walk away

Warren Buffett once said, “I’d rather buy a great company at a good price than a good company at a great price”. The best acquisitions are not necessarily the cheapest acquisitions. A great management team may be worth a premium. Excess capacity may be an opportunity to increase sales. Outdated equipment may be an opportunity to increase efficiencies. Identifying, and delivering on, all the potential upsides of a deal can often turn an “expensive” acquisition at close to an affordable acquisition post-close. But ultimately, the deal has to work for all parties involved.

Are you are planning on growing in 2017? Shoot me an email at [bradmewes@gmail.com](mailto:bradmewes@gmail.com) and let me know your plans. I want to help you increase the value of your business. If you think an acquisitions-based growth strategy is appropriate for you, let’s talk about ways we can work together. And if acquisitions aren’t right for you, that is OK — I still want to talk with you. I enjoy speaking with people in an industry I’m passionate about.

always do), and smaller deals will continue to be made. But prices will not be what they were in 2014 and 2016, especially for smaller operators. Brownfields and greenfields will continue to become an important growth tool for companies with the resources.

### Technology creates winners and losers

Technology continues to impact the automotive aftermarket; OEMs continue to increase the amount of advanced materials in a vehicle. The issue of pre- and post-repair scanning has hit the industry by storm. Autonomous driving could mean the death of an entire industry.

Telemetry and telematics will have a major impact on the automotive aftermarket in 2017. Vehicles are already highly computerized. The ability to remotely diagnose, evaluate and control a vehicle will create a tidal wave of new applications and opportunities for firms positioned at the intersection of automotive and technology. The winners will be companies embracing this technology. But this same technology will present existential risks for some companies — some businesses will fail. On the other hand, new companies will be created. The automotive aftermarket will be different because of technology.

### Interest rates will rise

The Fed has taken a very slow and cautious approach to raising rates in 2016, increasing rates only once in December 2016 to 0.75 percent from 0.50 percent. But the Fed projects three more increases in 2017 as the economy continues to expand, potentially doubling the federal funds rate in the next 12 months.

At present there is still a large amount of capital available — “crushing amounts” as one private equity partner confided to me recently. Interest rates are still at record lows. However, when interest rates rise, asset values tend to

fall in response. Highly levered entities may find debt loads difficult to sustain. As companies prepare for the inevitability of raising rates, some will pull away, aggressively pursuing deals at a breakneck pace.

In sum, my projection is that 2017 will be a continuation of 2016. Premium platform targets will continue to command a price premium, but prices for smaller businesses have passed the peak. A big deal, merger, acquisition or recapitalization will likely be announced. New investors will continue to enter the market, especially as seller pricing expectations become more rational compared to the past few years. Technology will continue to cause major shifts in industry dynamics. Those at the forefront of the technology curve will be best

positioned to adapt to this change, and perhaps even drive the change. The wildcard is still the economy and federal reserve policy under a new presidential administration.

At present, it is very much a “Goldilocks” economy to buy or sell a business. Not too hot, not too cold, but just about right. But a Goldilocks environment rarely lasts long. In the children’s tale, the three bears eventually come home and Goldilocks, surprised by the obvious, goes running. 🐾



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

Professional. He has a Masters in business administration in finance.

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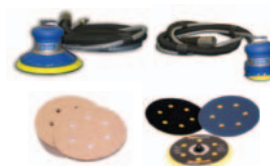
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# Adjusting to market changes with OEM certifications

OEMs will continue to become more involved in the repair process.

**A**s of two years ago, there were maybe only one or two members of my 20 group who had much interest in OEM shop certifications, but that's changed significantly this last year. I believe now that every one of the companies in the group — all of which are multi-shop operations — is now working toward OEM certifications.

Our belief — based on what the automakers themselves are saying at industry events — is that the OEMs are going to take a much stronger role in how and where their vehicles get repaired after an accident.

Several of the members in my 20 group have gone for the really high-end vehicle certifications: Tesla, Audi and Porsche. We've chosen to pursue certification for the most common vehicles we repair: Chevrolet, Ford, Chrysler and Toyota. My goal is that by the end of this first quarter of 2017, we'll have all those certifications.

A big step for us has been earning the I-CAR Gold Class designation. I'll talk about that specifically in an upcoming column. But we see that and the OEM certifications as going hand in hand. As I tell my staff, the automotive industry is going through exponential change. At one conference it was noted that cars have changed more in the last five years than they did in all the prior decades since the first car was built. And that's not going to stop. We have to be ready for a crazy amount of change.

The I-CAR training and OEM training, certification and information are now critical to make sure we are as up to date as we can be. That's why it has become a key focus for us.

I'm aware of the concerns within the industry about some aspects of the OEM certification programs. There's the issue of having to buy what seems like duplicative tools and equipment. We bought an \$8,000 rivet gun for one of the programs, for example, that has sat in the unopened box for at least five months. I had to buy another resistance spot welder just because the one we had wasn't "on the list." That is frustrating.



**SHOPS HAVE TO DO THEIR PART TO MAKE OEM CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS SUCCESSFUL. IT HAS TO BE A TEAM EFFORT.**


But when the time comes to fix a car that requires that equipment, we know we will have what the automaker wants us to use on that vehicle. I like to remind myself that many shops don't even know that Honda requires use of a specific welding wire. Do I really want to be a shop that's not using what the automaker knows works best for their vehicles?

There's also the concern about whether there will be an adequate return on a collision repairer's investment in OEM certification. I've heard some shops grumble that they fixed no more Brand X cars in the year after they got certified by Brand X than they did the year prior to getting certified.

What I'd ask those shops is this: What are you doing to market yourself as being certified by Brand X? If I go to your website, are you promoting it there? How about in your social media efforts? If I visit your lobby, will I barely be able to find the plaque or anything that talks about your certification?

Maybe my opinion will change after we've been certified for a year. But I think it's the shop's responsibility to use the tools the automakers provide. When some shops in my 20 group who were unhappy with an automaker certification were really honest with themselves, they acknowledged that they hadn't done their part to make it successful. It has to be a team effort.

That said, I think you're also going to see a bigger push in the next couple of years by the OEMs to get work into their certified shops. One of my technicians came to me recently with an email his wife received. She drives a Nissan, and the email told her that if she's in an accident, she should take her car to this particular shop because it's Nissan certified. He was shocked.

It was a good opportunity to tell that technician that's why I've been bombarding them with training lately. The automakers are more concerned than ever that their cars are fixed the right way. We're positioning ourselves, I told him, for that type of certification from other automakers. 

**RYAN CROPPER** owns Able Body Shops, with two locations in Anchorage, Alaska, as well as Total Truck Accessory Center. [rcropper@ablebodyshop.com](mailto:rcropper@ablebodyshop.com)



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# Paint a car, make a friend

Shop motto attracts return business for Virginia shop

**JAMES E. GUYETTE** // Contributing Editor

**➔** First to arrive and the last to leave, Katie Inge is on the job taking care of business at 7 o'clock in the morning.

At the age of 23, Katie is a full ownership partner with her father AJ Inge at Maaco Collision Repair and Auto Painting of Chesapeake, located in Virginia's third-most populous city with more than 230,000 residents amid rapidly growing commercial and industrial development that continues to deliver increasing car counts.

"I grew up in the shop and fell in love with it," Katie says. "That's all I've ever wanted to do. 'I've been working in the shop since I was 15 years old. Once I got out of high school, I started working here full time. The majority of my knowledge was obtained through my father, and also hands-on work. I also love cars, so my experience is passion-driven."

Upon assuming official ownership status in 2015, she underwent additional training to master the details of back-end functions through the Charlotte Support Team at Maaco's corporate headquarters.

Totally immersed in the operation, "I can sand a car, I can paint a car, I can do estimating — I can do it all," says Katie. And she's not bragging — just stating the facts.

She has been honored throughout North America with Maaco's prestigious Syl Young Award, which salutes newer owners who display "the same tenacity, high energy and enthusiasm for success" as Syl Young, who was among the first franchisees when Maaco was established in 1981.

"Syl coupled tremendous energy with a mechanical engineer's problem-solving

abilities to be one of the most celebrated operators in the early years of the chain," Katie explains. "The award is given to those whose early achievements indicate they'll be a major force in the chain for years to come."

Having become a Maaco franchisee in 1983, AJ Inge is also among the early achievers. "It's a good, reputable company, and it's been a part of our family for a long time." An Inge cousin owns a franchise in Richmond, Va.

"My dad has a lot of experience; he's my go-to guy. We have different ideas on some things, but we have the same goals," says Katie. "I think the biggest thing is that he knows there's someone who will carry on his legacy. He can relax. He is always there if I need him, but I'm sure he's relieved to have someone he knows will run the centers well."

In September, AJ and Katie opened an adjacent Maaco of Chesapeake Fleet Solutions Center with tall overhead doors and an oversized paint booth to accommodate campers and every imaginable variety of object or vehicle, such as tractor-trailers, box trucks, buses, construction equipment, farm implements and mammoth industrial machinery.

The shop routinely refurbishes unique non-automotive components, covering amusement park rides, boats, cranes and whatever else is in need of fresh paint or a logo/color retrofit to match a commercial customer's branding scheme.

AJ spearheaded the design and construction of the fleet-specific expansion structure, and the four added staff members are in the process of obtaining I-CAR Gold status.



## MAACO COLLISION REPAIR AND AUTO PAINTING OF CHESAPEAKE

Chesapeake, Va. // [www.maaco-chesapeake.com](http://www.maaco-chesapeake.com)

**AJ and Katie Inge**  
Owners

**2**  
No. of shops (main shop and fleet center)

**33**  
Years in business

**17**  
No. of employees

**13,000**  
Total square footage of shops

**8**  
No. of bays

**60**  
No. of customer vehicles per week

**Axalta**  
Paint supplier

**Chief**  
Frame machines used

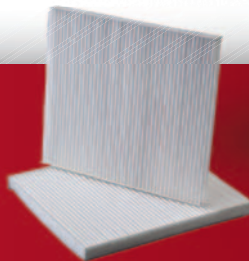
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"We've been getting slammed with work all the time," Katie reports. "I had to expand. I was getting tired of working until midnight. We couldn't get everything done in an 8-hour workday. The decision to build another facility allowed us to segment consumer vs. fleet vehicles and better service each type of customer."



### Hitting the concrete

Collision repairs account for half of the jobs; the remaining 50 percent involves cosmetic and custom refinishing, which Katie calls "retail work." "A lot of this is first cars for teenagers — parents will fix it up for them or people will have a car that they love and they want to make it look like new again."

Currently the shop participates in no direct repair programs (DRPs), and Katie is in the process of recruiting insurers to assist in increasing the amount of collision repairs. "I never want to turn down business — that's for sure," she says, "but the retail paint jobs are where our bread and butter is."

A large part of the business comes via word-of-mouth referrals. "Beyond that, I'd like to think that our work speaks for itself. We're heavily involved in our community, too, so we sponsor local sports



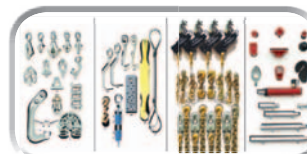
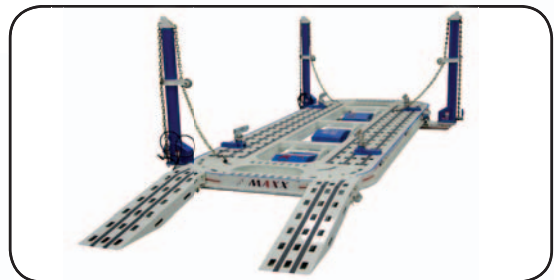
teams and advertise locally in addition to the national advertising generated by the Maaco Support Center. I think the recipe is working! We've been in business so long my Dad and I are now working on the vehicles of people's children and grandchildren — there's no better advertising than that!"

Having a prominent social media presence is another element, and "I go out hitting the concrete looking for work," visiting potential accounts and distribut-

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ing fliers touting the shop's ability to deliver excellent eye-catching results.

"I love seeing the smiles on the customers' faces. The car is ugly when they come in and then they're smiling when they get it back," she says.

"It starts at the front with customer service — greeting the customers and making them feel welcome. Our motto is 'paint a car, make a friend.' We're able to execute the same top-notch, quality work that any dealership can do, but at

half the price. And we have a hands-on approach to sales, so education is a large part of what we do. We explain needed repairs to customers and even take them to the floor to show them exactly what's needed for their vehicle."

Adhering to Maaco's established system-wide standards and ways-of-doing-things drives an efficient production flow, as the methodology is clearly communicated to the crews in the bays.

"They have to 'turn and burn' those cars," says Katie, noting that "I'm definitely a stickler with the steps and going through the procedures. What we sell upfront is the same as what is delivered — every person in the shop sticks to that. Quality is our biggest thing here."

Supplies are provided through Maaco. Katie keeps a checklist to ensure that the shop is always fully stocked. Orders are placed on Monday per the comprehen-



sive list, "we pay our bills on time," and "materials are always locked up." She adds that "our distributor is right across the street, so if I need anything I can walk right over there." ❧



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

[jimguyette2004@yahoo.com](mailto:jimguyette2004@yahoo.com)

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# Boost your persistence quotient to ensure long-term success

PERSEVERANCE, DETERMINATION WILL SOLVE MOST PROBLEMS IN THE END

MIKE JONES // Contributing Editor

**H**ave you ever failed so badly at an outcome you set as a boss, employee, parent, significant other or a friend that the thought of doing it again made you feel sick?

I personally had that experience several times in my life, and I have had the opportunity to coach many others who also experienced such failures.

Many of these failures had nothing to do with knowledge or preparation. Many failures were outside of the control of the people experiencing the failure. Here is one thing I have learned on my journey: there are a lot of pessimistic, smart people who have not had much success in their lives, and it has nothing to do with their IQ. In fact, there was a story shared with me about a 55-year-old gentleman who had an IQ of 120. When asked why he didn't start the business he dreamed about and often shared with others or why he never got married, he cited the statistics of ALL the failed businesses and marriages that he read about during his research.

My question to you is how high is your PQ? I don't mean your pessimistic quotient. I mean your Persistence or

Persistence Quotient.

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not — nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not — unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not — the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On!' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race," said Calvin Coolidge

The conventional definition of persistence/perseverance is refusing to give up on your outcome in spite of difficulty or opposition.

In a study conducted in New York, researchers found that 95 percent of the people who set clear, specific outcomes and had a High "PQ" were successful in reaching their outcomes.

Consider Beethoven, who composed most of his beloved works after losing his hearing; Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder, who produced incredible music while being blind; Helen Keller, who was deaf and blind from the age of 19 months, yet wrote 12 books and was the first blind person to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree; and Terry Fox who was a runner in spite of being a double amputee from


cancer. Persistence/perseverance is what sets them apart from those with the same abilities, but little drive.

I have been asked many times, "How do you increase your PQ?" The answer is simple; however, it is not easy.

- Set specific outcomes that you are 100 percent committed to accomplish.
- Identify benefits you will receive once you have reached the outcome.
- Take the first step.
- Now comes the toughest, yet most important ingredient to ultimate success: be in the moment.

There is NO way to prepare for some of the things that might get thrown at you; however, if you are truly committed, you will just do whatever it takes in those moments to keep moving forward. You will never know the true character of a person when the sun is shining. It is in the moments when the storm is raging, those moments of adversity, that you get to see what you, and others, are really made of.

So how high is your PQ? The opportunity to raise it begins with an outcome. Let's get started right now because we all occupy the largest room in the house, and that is the room for improvement.

How will you create a better version of yourself in 2017? 

## SUPPORTERS

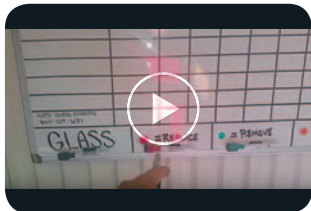




“The classes were hands on, which is what I loved. I came because I have to get better at what I do.”

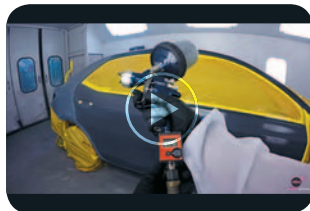
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## WATCH + LEARN



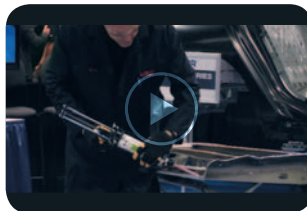
Organizing sublet glass repairs

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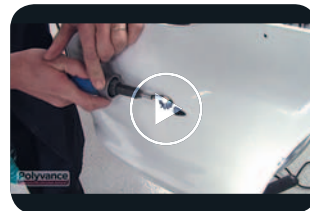
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Repairing large holes in bumper covers

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## SOCIAL INSIGHTS



### COLLISION INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS SHARE 17 PREDICTIONS FOR 2017

Americans seem intent on contemplating what change lies ahead in the coming year. *ABRN* asked industry participants from a variety of perspectives — collision repairers, insurers, vendors and consultants — to take a shot at what they foresee happening in our segment of the U.S. economy. Here are their 17 predictions for 2017:

[ABRN.com/17trends](http://ABRN.com/17trends)

### KEEPING YOUR CURRENT CUSTOMERS HELPS BUILD CREDIBILITY, REFERRALS AND COST SAVINGS

It may seem reasonable to think that you can simply replace your departing customers with new ones, but the truth is it is better to stop the flow of customers out the door. Keeping your current customer base is actually more cost effective than acquiring new customers, and it helps build credibility and new referrals. Here are some strategies to help you turn the tide and inspire more allegiance from your current customers.

[ABRN.com/keepcustomers](http://ABRN.com/keepcustomers)

### CREATING A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CULTURE

Continuous improvement. Another buzz

word? Worthless Lean terminology? I don't think so. Yes, the term has been used now for a couple decades by Lean gurus and companies like Toyota, but I want to ask you to think of continuous improvement from a real-world, practical and much-needed perspective. Forget about Lean thinking for now; let's just think of continuous improvement as “common sense.” Let's think of it as Business 101, the basics of proper business management.

[ABRN.com/improvenow](http://ABRN.com/improvenow)

### MANAGING MIXED MATERIALS AND MODERN VEHICLES

We've seen more change in vehicle structure technologies over the past 10 years than we have ever seen before. The growth of Advanced High Strength Steel (AHSS), the number of aluminum-intensive vehicles and the expanded use of carbon fiber and other composites are significant factors in how we repair today's vehicles. Historically, we've been focusing on either a “steel vehicle” or an “aluminum-intensive vehicle” — that is going to change significantly over the next several years. The landscape of collision repair will continue to change rapidly, and we must keep pace to ensure complete, safe and quality vehicle repairs.

[ABRN.com/mixedmaterial](http://ABRN.com/mixedmaterial)

## TRAINING EVENTS

**FEBRUARY 22-23**

**4th Lightweight Vehicle Manufacturing Summit 2017;**  
*Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center*  
Detroit, Michigan

**MARCH 15**

**Aluminum Exterior Panel Repair and Replacement; I-CAR**  
*Warren Technical Center*  
Lakewood, Colorado

**MARCH 28**

**Structural Straightening Steel; I-CAR**  
*Walker's Collision*  
Knoxville, Tennessee

**APRIL 19**

**Collision Industry Conference;**  
*Sheraton Station Square*  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**JULY 25**

**Collision Industry Conference;**  
*Hotel Hyatt Regency McCormick Place*  
Chicago, Illinois

**JULY 26-29**

**NACE Automechanika Chicago;**  
*McCormick Place West*  
Chicago, Illinois

**AUGUST 23-26**

**CARSTAR North America Conference**  
Charlotte, North Carolina

**OCTOBER 31-NOVEMBER 3**

**SEMA Show 2017;**  
*Las Vegas Convention Center*  
Las Vegas, Nevada

**WHEN CHOOSING A DISTRIBUTOR,** look for a company that will form a partnership with you and can provide service, training and business advice.



# MAXIMIZE RELATIONSHIPS WITH DISTRIBUTORS

**FIND A PARTNER WHO IS WILLING TO PROVIDE SERVICE, TRAINING AND BUSINESS ADVICE**

**GREG ZEIGLER AND JOE RODRIGUEZ //** Contributing Editors

**A**s auto part distribution companies consolidate, the effects resonate throughout the industry, including the collision repair segment. Mid- to large-size distributors are buying smaller companies or competitive distributors to expand their presence where they

did not previously have business operations. While these acquisitions are seen as growth opportunities, it lessens the choice of distributors for auto body shops.

According to the Auto Care Association, an organization dedicated to the auto care industry, the industry directly employs 2.5 million people in the manufacturing,

wholesaling, retailing, and installation of automotive care market parts and accessories. Industry sales in 2014 totaled \$328 billion, a 3.5-percent increase over the previous year. The 500,000 businesses in the auto care industry are comprised of both small and large manufacturers, distributors, repair shops, marketers, and retailers.



Auto part distributors sell “allied products” — all the consumables used in vehicle collision repair — along with paints and coatings. Distributor organizations can range from as few as three to five locations up to “mega-size” operations with hundreds of locations.

It is extremely difficult in the current business climate for “start-up” distributors to find a niche in the market, and many smaller distributorships find themselves pushed out of the market by the larger companies. Over the past 10 years, most of the growth in the distributor market has been through mergers and acquisitions.

### Making the best choice

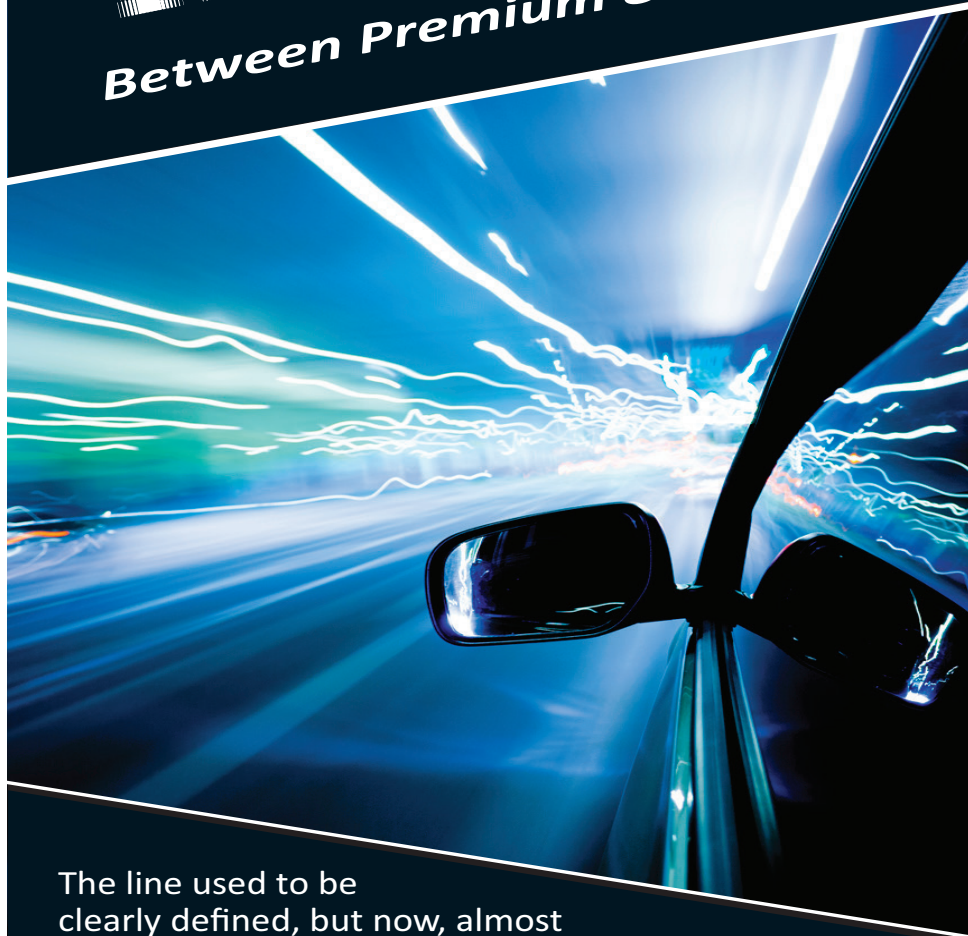
So, how can a collision repair shop owner maximize the benefits of the distributor relationship in this environment? A shop should select a distributor that offers the best, OEM-recommended products from manufacturers and suppliers. Service is another important aspect that should not be overlooked. Be wary of a distributor that is just interested in “selling products.” Look for a distributor that is interested in forming a partnership with you, providing service, training and business advice.

Especially beneficial to auto repair shops are distributors who are associated with the I-CAR Industry Training Alliance. I-CAR (the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair) is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing the information, knowledge and skills required to perform complete, safe and quality repairs. Many manufacturers offer programs through the I-CAR Training Alliance that allow attendees to earn credit hours towards certificate designation. Check with your distributor for details.

“One-stop” shopping is another ideal objective to consider. The distributor you choose should be able to provide all of the products you will need for effective, cost-efficient vehicle repair. These products can include seam sealers, adhesives,

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coatings, abrasives, tapes, plastic sheeting, compounds and polishes, refinish paints, application equipment, and in some cases, replacement parts and body panels.

Of course, competitive pricing is always a consideration when buying products from a distributor. Be cautious of a distributor who sells products at the “most inexpensive” price. Are they selling at minimal prices while offering less or no service? There are some distributors that have scaled back on service levels because they are “locked-in” by low-margin contracts with product suppliers. For the repair shop, just getting the cheapest product price might not bring the best level of service with the deal.

### Business partners

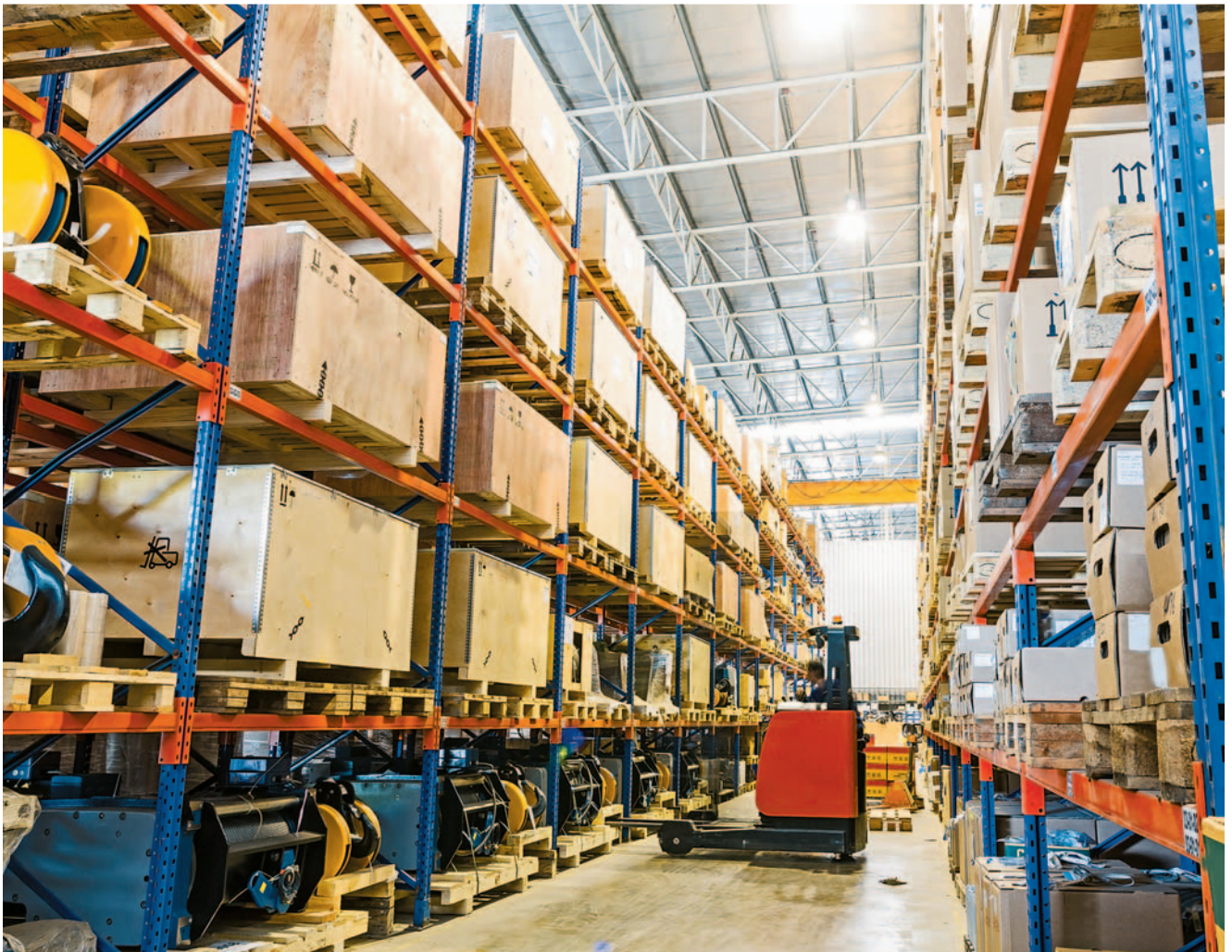
One distributorship that acknowledges the benefits of a working a partnership with collision repair shops is API Autobody Products, headquartered in Butler, Penn. The company has been in business for nearly 50 years and has more than 20 locations in Pennsylvania and Ohio. API offers its customers automotive refinish products, fleet and commercial finishes, industrial coatings and equipment.

“As a distributor, we feel it is necessary to have as much knowledge about a collision repair shop as they do about their own business,” said Ian Palermo, purchasing agent for API Autobody Products. “We need to be a lot more than a company that just invoices and sells products.” Palermo

believes that both the distributor and the shop owner should have a clear vision of what is expected from the distributor/shop owner relationship.

“Our business is more of a consultative-type of venture,” Palermo said. “We have to understand the corporate and work structure in a shop so that we can help them choose the best products.” API Autobody also offers training and consultation programs to augment the supplies they sell.

Of particular benefit to API Autobody’s customers is API’s performance tracking tool. With this tool, a shop can enter all the numbers and parameters of its products and repairs to show the profitability of repairs and the perform-



**A DISTRIBUTOR SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE** all of the products you need for effective, cost-efficient vehicle repair.

ance of workers. It helps shop owners gauge where they are making or losing money in repairs or labor and where they might be missing opportunities for added income.

"A shop should not have to worry about obtaining inventory," noted Palermo. "All the products and supplies should be readily available on their shelves. They should not have to wait for back orders or for an order to arrive; everything should be delivered in a timely manner."

From Palermo's viewpoint, the cost to repair a vehicle should be the absolute last problem for a shop owner. A shop owner should partner with a distributor who knows what products the shop owners need and have the products in stock for quick delivery. As Palermo said, "Shop owners have so much else to worry about, such as labor and management. Product availability should not be another concern."

### Business success

Sometimes a collision repair shop outgrows its distributor and needs to look elsewhere for a company that can provide the products and upgraded services to meet a growing business. A forward-thinking distributor should be keeping up with the latest advances in collision repair products and imparting that knowledge to the shop owner. Larger distributors can often offer continued education training, hands-on in-shop demonstrations, certification classes, streamlined purchasing options and a number of other cost-saving features that would be a competitive disadvantage for smaller distributors.

Similar sentiments are voiced by Ronald D. Piscione, vice president of Rick's Auto Body in Warwick, Rhode Island. The company is a third-generation, family-owned auto collision repair and insurance collision center founded over 50 years ago. Piscione agrees that the "new generation" of distributorships is essentially working under a different business model.

"Years ago, the distributor theory was to just sell, sell, sell and make more money," said Piscione. "The new generation of distributors realizes that the distributor/body-shop connection is more of a business partnership. If a body shop is successful and experiences business growth, the distributor business will grow as well."

Piscione's distributor also offers a cost-tracking system for body shops, and he highly recommends working with a distributor that can provide this service. "Our distributor prepares a chart for us detailing how much product usage we are experiencing" Piscione said. "This step helps us to understand if there is product waste on the shop floor or if we are not using a product properly."

When Piscione and the distributor review the product-usage chart, he compares it to having a "third-party observer" on his shop floor. Cost tracking can help a body shop to streamline its production approach and workflow, eliminating waste in product usage and labor time.

"Years ago, distributors did not care about product waste," commented Piscione. "They just let shops buy more and more products, because it meant more sales. Now, distributors understand that if a shop can be more successful by managing costs, then the distributor will succeed, too."

Additionally, Piscione likes the tips he gets from his distributor on how to better manage his shop. Since a distributor works with many body shops, it is in touch with the latest trends in body-shop organization and production flow. Piscione mentioned an especially useful tip he got about shop organization. His distributor mentioned how some shops have storage cabinets dedicated to each employee, allowing the employee to organize the products they use for vehicle repair.

A good distributor will also offer training programs, either from product suppliers, their own programs or in conjunction with organizations such as I-CAR. These

are valuable "extras" that go beyond just product "selling and buying." Piscione recommends seeking out a distributor that offers a "full-service" package to augment product purchases.

"The cost of an average repair – materials, paint, etc. – should not be more than 10 percent of your costs," noted Piscione. "Most of the costs in a shop should be payroll, taxes and parts." He suggests keeping product costs down as much as possible, since they are more controllable compared to other costs. Working in a partnership with your distributor is an excellent way to control costs and manage a successful business.

### Best business practices

Alan Campi, general manager of the paint, body and equipment division of Carolinas Auto Supply House, Charlotte, North Carolina, understands the importance of the partnership between a distributor and a body shop, but he also believes in the benefits of a good working relationship with product suppliers. The family-owned company has been in business for more than 100 years, and offers a full range of parts, collision-repair products, and accessories.

"In order to provide the best services to our customers, we look for strong support from our suppliers in areas such as sales and training," said Campi. "Product demos and samples are especially helpful for getting products into the end users' hands." The company also offers training either in the body shop or at local technical colleges, along with I-CAR certification training through certain vendors.

Campi also suggests that body shop owners develop an ordering plan with their distributor to guarantee a well-stocked shop. "Many body shops make the mistake of relying on 'last-minute' ordering and then are frustrated when their distributor cannot deliver a product," Campi said. "Shops should understand that not all products can be available all the time on a moment's notice."

Having a product ordering system makes better business sense and allows the distributor to anticipate and understand a body shop's product requirements. Working together, a distributor can help a body shop keep necessary products in-stock and eliminate the hassle of "last-minute" ordering.

Keeping up with government regulations is another area where cooperation between a distributor and a body shop can be beneficial. "There is a constant flow of product regulations arriving from OSHA and the EPA," Campi noted. "Distributors must sell products that meet these regulations, and we have to keep and maintain technical and safety data sheets."

All of this information has to be made available with the product sale, and each product number has its own

trail of regulation papers. "We have to make sure that this information is disseminated to the body shops," commented Campi. "And the body shops must also keep all these regulations and papers on file in their shops. It is particularly important to keep safety data sheets updated and easy-to-reach in case of a shop emergency."

### Business solutions

Keeping up to date with other changes in the vehicle industry is also crucial for a body shop, and here again, a distributor can be helpful. Tony Greene, body shop manager at Tindol Ford Subaru ROUSH, Gastonia, North Carolina, also relies on a strong partnership with his distributor. Tindol has been in business for over 40 years and offers complete auto body repair restoration.

"Good service from a distributor is absolutely crucial to running a successful body shop," said Greene. "But technical representation is even more important to me. If I have a problem or a question about how to do a repair or how to use a product, having a distributor who knows the answers can make the difference in the outcome of a repair."

Greene finds a knowledgeable distributor to be even more helpful when it comes to understanding the complexities of the different substrates used in vehicle design. "There are many more substrates that have to be repaired and newer ones that are coming into the market, such as magnesium and aluminum," Greene noted. "I need to work with a distributor who can give us a hand and help us out with repair techniques and recommend the right products."

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### It's a partnership

Consolidation in the distributor industry has made it more difficult for the smaller, independent distributors to offer competitive prices. However, consolidation has also lessened the distributorship choices available to a body shop. It is therefore even more important to choose a distributorship that offers good product availability, along with other services such as product and cost tracking and training programs. Developing a true working partnership between a distributor and a body shop offers success advantages for both. ☺



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# AUTOMOTIVE CANDID CAMERA

## PROPERLY TACKLE REPAIR OF CAMERA SYSTEMS ON TODAY'S VEHICLES

JOHN ANELLO // Contributing Editor

I was called to a shop for a complaint of a camera issue on a 2016 Honda Accord (Fig. 1). The vehicle was recently involved in an accident and sustained damage to the front of the vehicle. The air bags and seat belts were deployed due to the impact. The shop had done all the final repairs to the vehicle but noticed that the rear camera grid was not in the proper location when the vehicle tires and steering wheel were straight (Fig.2).

This vehicle is built with a rear camera system that turns on when the vehicle is placed in reverse. It is designed to give the driver a better view to what is behind them when attempting to back up. Most of these cameras are usually located near the license plate and are centrally placed in a spot to provide a full panoramic view of the rear of the vehicle. Most manufacturers will place a grid on the screen that can be turned on or off. The grid may work in conjunction with the steering angle sensor and provide a curved view of the grid as the steering wheel is turned. Some manufacturers may even place a color code within the grid to determine the distance the vehicle is away from an object. Green would be 20 feet, yellow 10 feet and red 5 feet.

By simply turning the steering wheel 180 degrees clockwise, I was able to get the grid to be straight on the rear image of the vehicle (Fig. 3). This was an in-

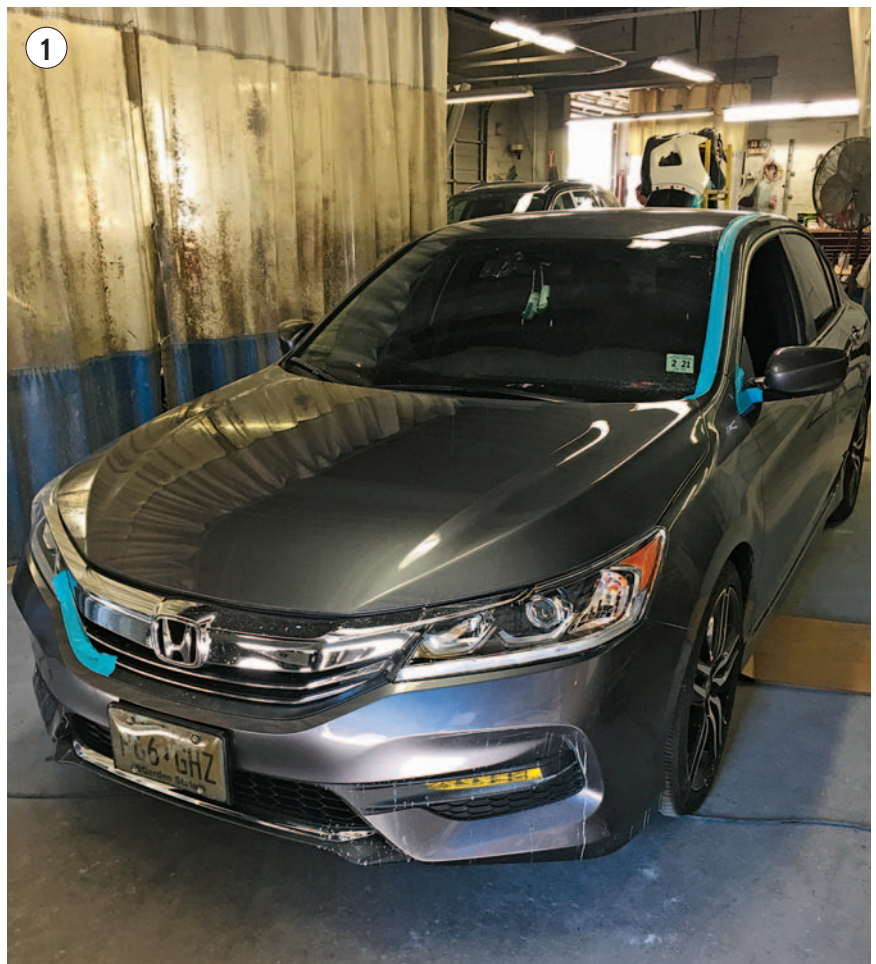
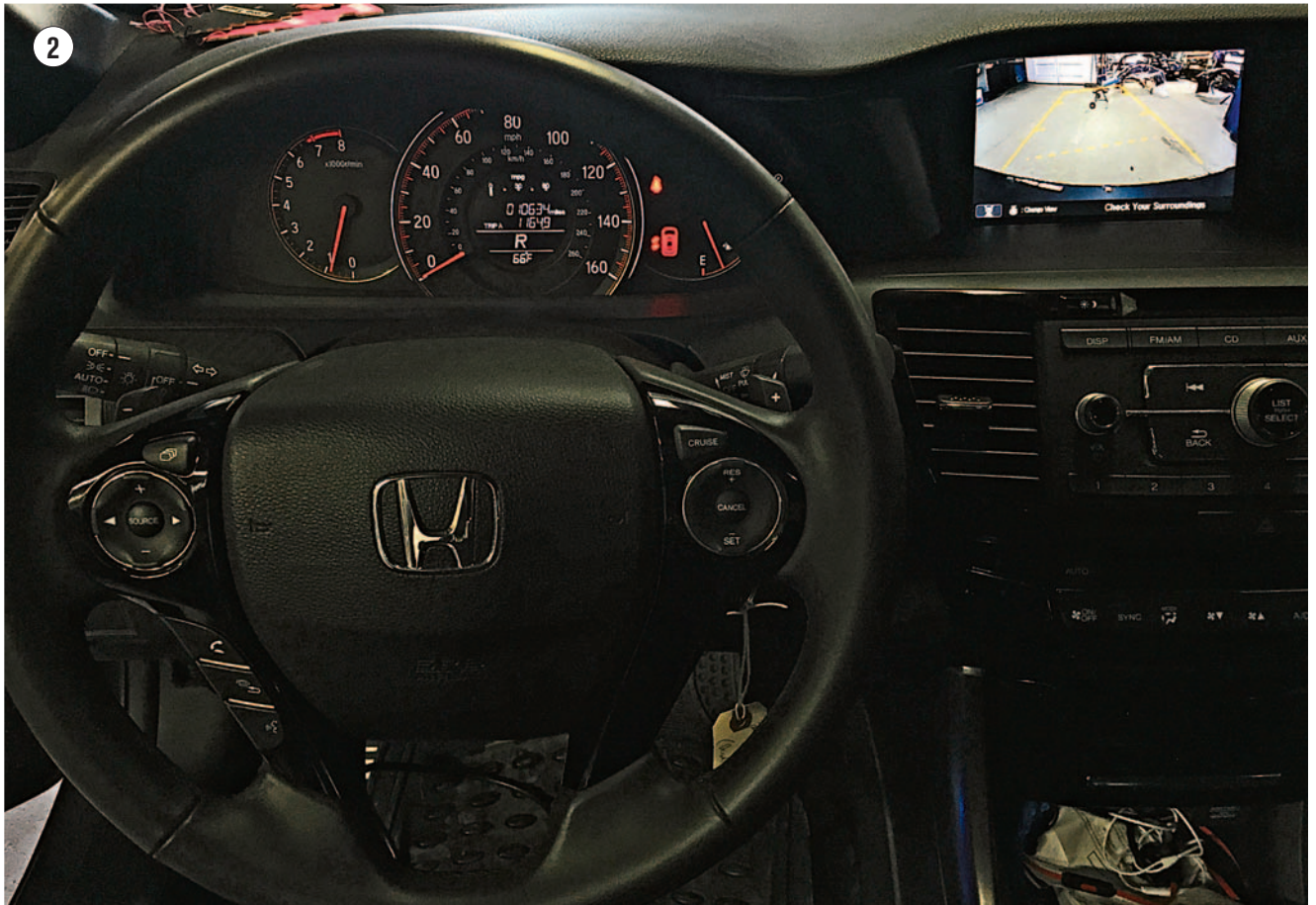


PHOTO: JOHN ANELLO

dication that the steering angle sensor was either electronically out of calibration or mechanically out of alignment. I hooked up the factory Honda HDS scan tool to verify my findings, and I could see with the steering wheel straight that the

Steering Angle sensor PID was reading 181 degrees negative. The fix for most manufactures is to go into the Functional Procedures of the scan tool and calibrate the steering angle sensor back to 0 degrees. I tried to calibrate the sensor mul-



multiple times, but it still read 180 degrees out of specification. Some of the steering angle sensors used in the industry can be repositioned in any spot during assembly while other designs would need to be indexed back to center. This sensor was

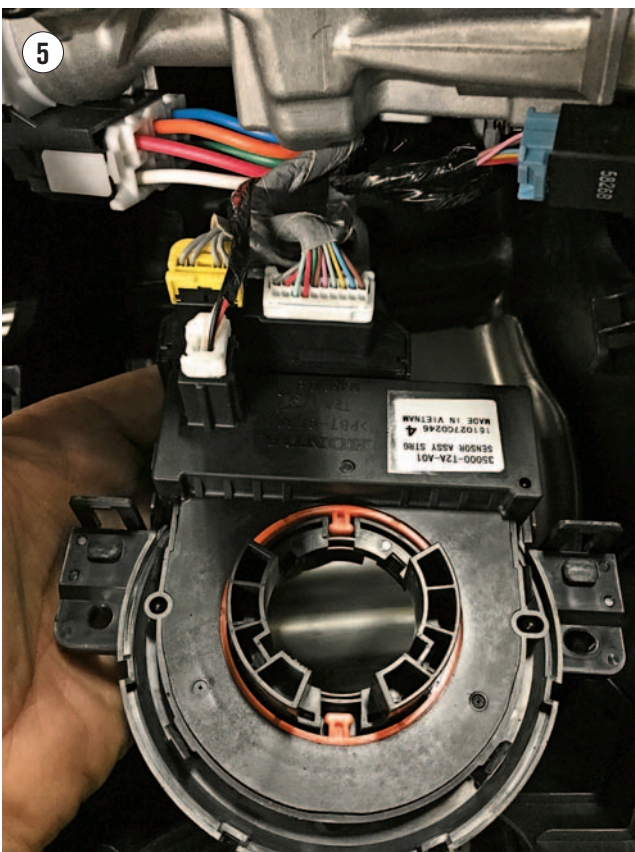
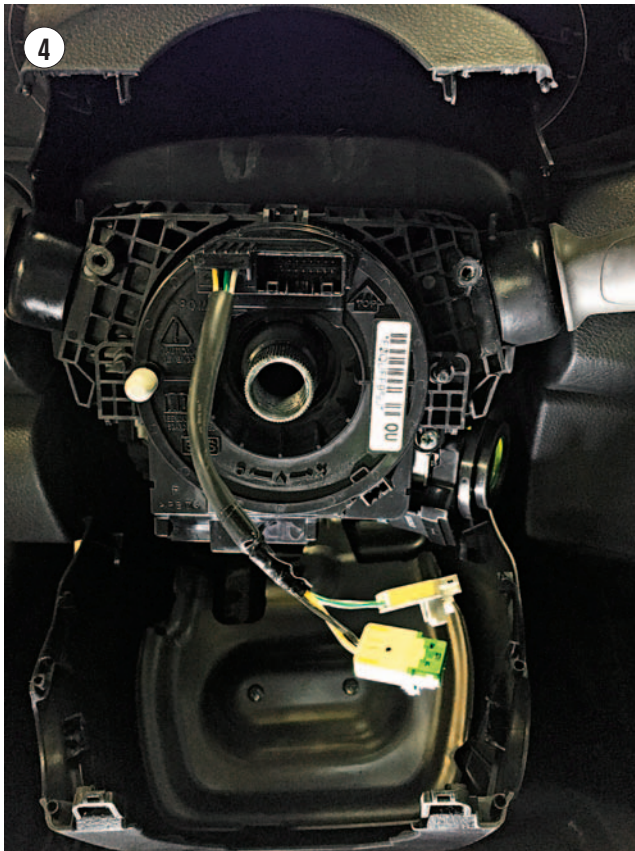
not self-indexing so there was no other choice but to pull the steering wheel to inspect the steering angle sensor.

Prior to removing the air bag, I made sure that the key was in the off position as a safety precaution. I then aligned the

front tires in a straight-ahead position, making sure the steering wheel was properly centered. I then removed the air bag and marked the orientation of the steering wheel to the steering shaft with a punch so that the steering wheel would be aligned to the same position during reassembly. With the steering wheel and upper shroud removed, you can see the front of the clockspring (Fig. 4). At this point you need to be careful not to allow the clockspring to spin out of centered position because this could lead to damage to the coilspring if it is not returned to its proper position.

I next removed the clockspring and positioned it forward to expose the steering angle sensor located on its backside (Fig. 5). The two orange lugs of the steering angle sensor are secured to the clockspring and spin with it when the steering wheel is turned. I removed the steering angle sensor from the clockspring and





reindexed it 180 degrees counter clockwise (Fig. 6). I secured it back into place and reassembled everything in reverse order. Now with the steering wheel straight, the steering angle sensor read 0 degrees, and the grid was properly centered.

The garage most likely misaligned the steering angle sensor by not indexing it properly during the clockspring replacement. This is a common error I have seen in the field. It is so important to mark the orientation of components during disassembly to make sure they go back to their original position. These back-up cameras are a common feature that is showing up on many newer makes and models. Some of these cameras are plug and play while others may require an initialization and calibration process.

Cameras may be used for side view as well as front view. There are some manufacturers, such as BMW or Infiniti, that will use four cameras on board to give the vehicle a “bird’s eye view.” The most common places to find these cameras would be in the front grill, side-view mirrors and the rear license plate. These systems will usually require calibration processes if these cameras have been disturbed or replaced and will require the use of specific target boards that you will have to purchase from the manufacturers. I actually made my own target board using a foam board and easel stand and then had a printing

## New MAGNA-CUTTER

## MOTOR GUARD



Motor Guard has developed a resin-bonded abrasive cut-off wheel specifically designed for cutting automotive aluminum body panels and structural components. Available in 3" (JMC300AL) and 4" (JMC400AL) diameters, these Type 1 wheels are made in the U.S.A. of the highest quality abrasives and materials.

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- The **Magna-Cutter** contains **No Ferrous Materials** and **Prevents Cross-Contamination** in the aluminum repair area
- The **Magna-Cutter** is a **Unique, Hi-Quality, Long Life, Cut-Off Wheel** that is **Essential** for aluminum body repair

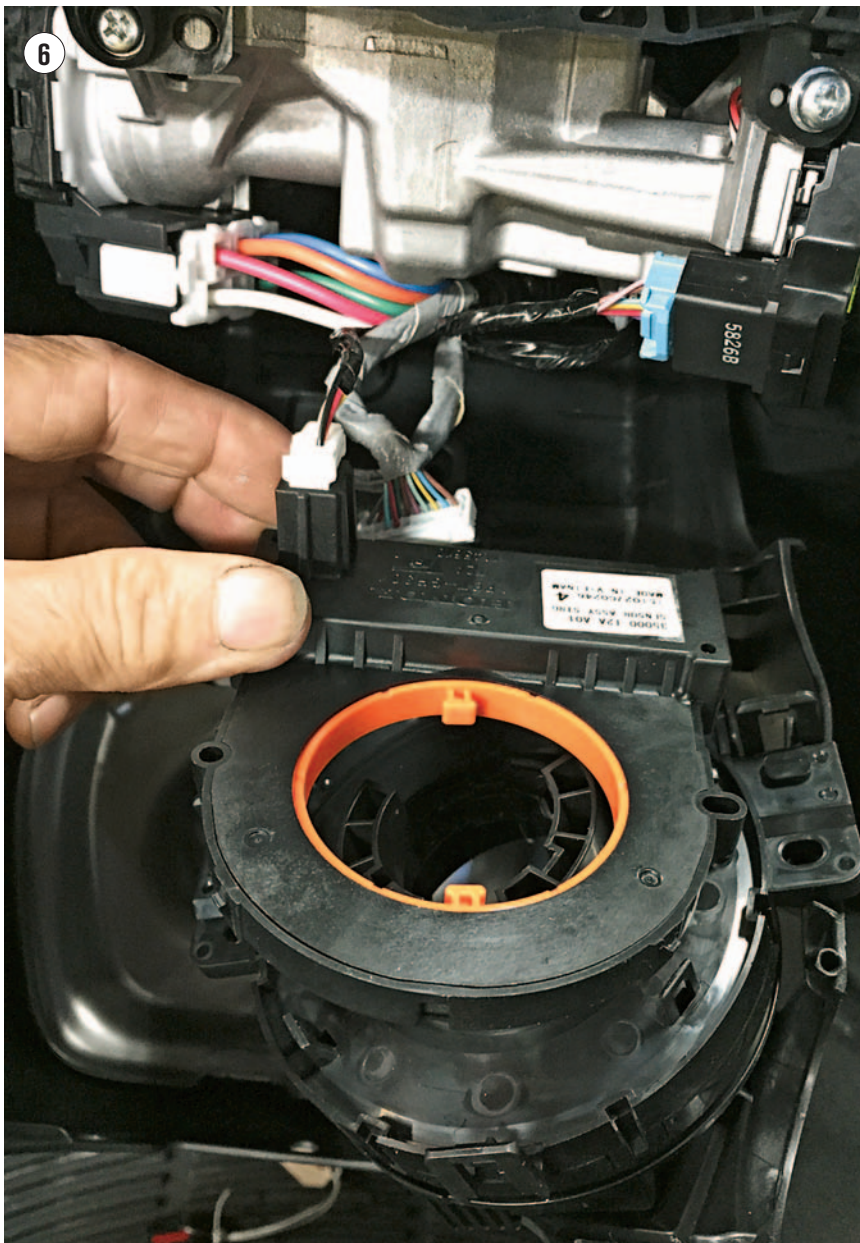
company print a required image on the board and laminated it for protection (Fig. 7). There are so many targets that different manufacturers use, and it can get very costly. I'm trying to test my own skills to make that universal one to keep operating costs down. These target boards may require different positioning for each make and model, so it is vital to find factory-specific information to direct you where to place them. The other key thing to know is that many aftermarket scan tools may

not support the camera adjustment procedures, so you may have to invest in a factory scan tool to perform the task. Camera calibration is not yet a high priority on the scan tool functionality spectrum, so you may only see support for codes or limited data and not necessarily functional procedures such as the many procedures Infiniti provides using their Consult 3+ factory scan tool.

If a camera is replaced due to damage from an accident, they are usually

not a plug and play item. The internal identification of the camera will have to be initialized into the camera control module. If this is not done, most manufacturers — such as Infiniti — will bring it to your attention by making the camera inoperative and placing an X on the screen (Fig. 8). There are other manufacturers, such as BMW, that will go as far as flipping the image upside down (Fig. 9). This could be confusing, especially if the shop owner is questioning his worker and wondering if there was a possibility that the camera was installed upside down.

There are front-facing cameras mounted inside at the top center of the windshield, and they are combined with the rear-view mirror. These cameras may not provide any image at all but are solely used for Lane Keep Assist systems that will read the white markers on the road to determine if the vehicle is staying within its lane of traffic. These camera systems do not use a target board for a calibration procedure, but rather an extensive drive procedure to learn the white lines in the road using a laptop. Once a windshield is replaced from an accident and the front-facing camera is disturbed, there may be a need to recalibrate the camera for liability issues or for a camera fault icon appearing on the dash.

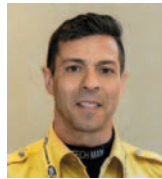






So as you can see, the vehicles of today have added such sophistication to our need to keep up on technology and constantly upgrade our equipment. I learn to just embrace it all as it comes my way and find the time to crash course each system. I have even toyed around with the aftermarket systems by completely removing my radio from my service truck and installing an iPad mini in its place. Then I wired all my speakers to a Bluetooth amplifier that I also installed onboard so I can port music, phone calls and navigation directions to my speakers from my iPad or iPhone.

As an added feature, I purchased a Wi-Fi camera for the back of my vehicle that will work with my iPad. This camera system works with an app on my iPad and gives me an option to take still pictures or video clips if needed. It's just so mind-boggling how the integration of technology and the motor vehicle has advanced, and this is only the beginning of what is to come. 📶



**JOHN ANELLO** owns Auto Tech on Wheels in northern New Jersey, which is a mobile diagnostic service for 1,700 shops, providing technical assistance and remote programming. He is also a nationally known trainer.

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# COLLISION PRODUCT GUIDE

## PNEUMATIC TOOLS

3M Automotive Aftermarket Division announces an innovative line of pneumatic tools for cutting and grinding designed with the bodyman in mind. The 3M™ Power Tools for Body Repair were designed to complement the 3M™ Cubitron™ II line of cutting and grinding abrasives portfolio. The offering of five new 3M power tools includes the 3M™ File Belt Sander (18"), 3M™ Mini File Belt Sander (13"), 3M™ Cut-Off Wheel Tools (3" & 4") and 3M™ Pistol Grip Sander. [WWW.3MCOLLISION.COM/PRODUCTS/TOOLS](http://WWW.3MCOLLISION.COM/PRODUCTS/TOOLS)



## REFINISH TECHNOLOGY

The DeBeer 900+ WaterBase Series features a compact, easy-to-use true waterbase system that meets low-VOC regulations globally and is OEM approved. It offers high-opacity mixing colors for quick creation of all solid, metallic, xirallic and pearl colors for that perfect color match. The new OEM approvals for DeBeer 900+ WaterBase Series showcases Valspar's continued focus on bringing customers the best technology. [WWW.DE-BEER.COM](http://WWW.DE-BEER.COM)



## COMPRESSED AIR SYSTEM FILTRATION

LA-MAN® Corporation's patented series of Extractor/Dryers® are designed as a point of use, two-stage filter that efficiently removes moisture and contaminants to improve and extend the life cycle of tools and equipment. With flow ranges of 15 SCFM to 2000 SCFM and pressure ratings of up to 250 PSI, the Extractor/Dryer is an ideal solution for an extensive array of applications including air-powered tools, surface preparation, paint spraying, powder coating and pneumatic-operated equipment. [WWW.LA-MAN.COM](http://WWW.LA-MAN.COM)



## TIRE SHINE

The new Diamond Tire Wet by Black Magic is in a class of its own when it comes to shine. The motion-enhanced formula works by reflecting light at different angles as the tire rotates, creating a brilliant radiant shine. It's easy to use, lasts up to four weeks and is combined with superior silicones and hydrophobic polymers to deliver the most extreme shine. [WWW.BLACKMAGICSHINE.COM](http://WWW.BLACKMAGICSHINE.COM)



## CUT-OFF WHEEL

Motor Guard has developed a resin-bonded abrasive cut-off wheel specifically designed for cutting automotive aluminum body panels and structural components. Available in 3" (JMC300AL) and 4" (JMC400AL) diameters, these Type 1 wheels are made in the U.S.A. of the highest quality abrasives and materials. An additional feature of Motor Guard's new cut-off wheels is that they contain no ferrous materials, ensuring contaminant-free cutting of aluminum body panels and structural components. [WWW.MOTORGUARD.COM](http://WWW.MOTORGUARD.COM)



## SPOT WELDER

Car-O-Liner's CTR12000 resistance spot welder determines material type and thickness then sets parameters automatically. It monitors and adjusts the weld process while providing clear feedback. Comparable welders set power and time but use static tip pressure or don't check weld parameters. Why stop halfway — "Just Pull the Trigger & Weld." [WWW.CAR-O-LINER.COM](http://WWW.CAR-O-LINER.COM)



## PAINT BOOTHS

Renowned since 1999, GFS Ultra paint booths offer unrivaled quality and performance. Unlike any other paint booths in the marketplace, Ultra booths include advanced features such as a full-ceiling plenum, GFS' exclusive Controlled Airflow Ceiling, floor track leveling and intuitive controls for superior airflow, lighting and energy efficiency. Available in four booth models with multiple options, you're sure to find an Ultra booth to meet your shop's budget and production needs. [WWW.GLOBALFINISHING.COM](http://WWW.GLOBALFINISHING.COM)



## FILTRATION SYSTEM

Walmec North America introduces the .01 Micron SuperStar Filter, which is designed to provide clean, dry, compressed air resulting in the removal of any vapors and contaminants down to .01 micron. The .01 Micron SuperStar Filter is a four-stage filtration system that has a .01 micron rating, with flow ranges of 50 SCFM, 75 SCFM, or 100 SCFM, and can handle pressure ratings of up to 250 PSI. [WWW.WALMECNA.COM](http://WWW.WALMECNA.COM)



# COLLISION PRODUCT GUIDE

## EXTENDED PERFORMANCE CLEARCOAT

Developed specifically for AQUABASE® Plus waterborne basecoat, P190-6950 is engineered for ultimate gloss on multi-panel repairs or overall paint jobs, with superior flow and leveling characteristics. This new premium clear utilizes the same hardeners and thinners as P190-6930 Performance Clearcoat and is ideal for use in hot weather conditions. With its 2.1 VOC rating, it is compliant for use nationwide.

[WWW.PPGREFINISH.COM](http://WWW.PPGREFINISH.COM)



## ADHESIVE PENETRANT

The new Chief Vulcan ADU is the first product designed to efficiently and economically break the bond of the structural adhesives increasingly used in automotive manufacturing. Infrared radiation technology heats the component surface, cleanly releasing the layer of glue underneath, in as little as 20 seconds. Tight temperature control allows the Chief Vulcan ADU to be used on any surface — aluminum, carbon fiber and all steels.

[WWW.CHIEFAUTOMOTIVE.COM](http://WWW.CHIEFAUTOMOTIVE.COM)



## RUST REMOVER

CRP Automotive offers its new FERTAN Rust Remover as a quick and cost-effective solution for rust on all types of metals. FERTAN Rust Remover is a water-based, non-toxic and non-flammable rust treatment that quickly dissolves rust from all types of metals and leaves a clean metal surface that is ready for a protective coating application. It is ideal for rustproofing and maintenance on any material that is susceptible to rust.

[WWW.FERTAN.COM](http://WWW.FERTAN.COM)



## 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.

[WWW.BASREFINISH.COM](http://WWW.BASREFINISH.COM)



## LARGE GRAPPLE

The Large Grapple, developed and patented by Wesch Tools, gives the body shop an opportunity to provide high quality repairs in an effective manner. Specifically, the clamp is designed to pull depressed body panel surfaces to their original contour with minimal surface disruption. Simply drill a 3/4-inch diameter hole at the desired location, insert and expand the three prongs of the clamp and pull until the panel is in its original shape.

[WWW.WESCHTOOLS.COM](http://WWW.WESCHTOOLS.COM)



## NITROGEN PLASTIC WELDER

Polyvance is now releasing its fifth-generation nitrogen plastic welder, the 6085-C Nitro Fuzer Welding System. The new Nitro Fuzer system incorporates all of the advances of the previous generation, including the automatic air-nitrogen switch, the low-pressure safety switch and the analog flow meter, and adds to these features a more precise digital temperature control system. The digital control allows for more precise and repeatable control of the nitrogen temperature.

[WWW.POLYVANCE.COM](http://WWW.POLYVANCE.COM)



## COMPOSITE ANGLE GRINDERS

Rodcraft launches three new pneumatic angle grinders for auto body shop applications. The new RC717X series is a powerful composite angle grinder range, ideal for body panel cutting, surface preparation, weld seam removal and frame grinding. The compact and lightweight body of the RC717x series, 245 mm long and only 1.5 kg, gives easy maneuverability and handling to operators working in narrow spaces.

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### OUR PARTNERS



# Only the prepared will survive

Consolidation is not so bad if you are ready for the transition

**A**s many of us are aware, over the past several years our industry has been marked by consolidation. We have seen countless MSOs being sold to private equity groups, franchise companies buying other franchise companies and single-shop operators looking to expand. Sadly, many have not been successful. For some, however, this rapid pace of consolidation is just what they have been dreaming of.

Consolidation is not a bad thing if you prepare. Successful business owners who have worked hard on building up their businesses in the hopes of one day selling are not as far-fetched as one might think. Let's face the fact: years ago, profit margins were much more appealing than they are right now. This trend has led some owners to start drawing a solid succession plan, and there are others beginning to look forward to the future and how they are going to survive. There are options, however, to help guide you in either direction. As mentioned prior, if you are happy and content and ready to sell, then now would be the best time.

If you decided to sell to a consolidator, there is always the possibility that you may move into the management of that location. This "move" would help the buyer keep the business that you built familiar to your repeat customers as well as keep you in the day-to-day scope of what you've built, and of course limiting the financial burden. The other option, should you just not be ready to turn over your business or perhaps you simply feel that you haven't accomplished what you started out to do, would be to consider franchising. I understand that many owners will ask, "Why would I buy into a franchise and give up control of the ways I have been doing things that have built my business?" I get it — trust me.

Allow me a moment, and consider this: Joining a franchise or an MSO model is not all that bad! There are many advantages for a shop joining a network. For example, a shop might be too small to accomplish big things on their own. This wouldn't mean that you are completely giving up your culture. It's a mere task of "tweaking" things a bit to keep up with this ever-changing industry. And brand power is huge. Think of what a network of stores can attain on a marketing aspect compared to what an



**THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS TO CONSOLIDATION, INCLUDING EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AN INCREASE IN INSURANCE WORK.**

individual store might afford. Speaking of branding, studies show that people on average are involved in an accident every six years and coincidentally, people also tend to relocate in that same time frame. Wouldn't it be great to have a consumer following to a national brand?

There are many benefits to consolidation, including greater purchasing power with vendors and suppliers, marketing, education and training and of course, an increase in insurance work (DRPs). Another advantage of an MSO is the ability to measure KPIs. Everything in collision repair today is driven by KPIs. Insurance companies with DRP programs in place constantly watch a shop's performance based on KPIs, whether it is length of rental time or cycle time, and the result is customer satisfaction.

When working with insurance companies, MSOs offer a single point of contact, brand recognition, KPIs and warranty their work. This can help to build a customer sense of well-being and less worry for the insurance company.

It's getting increasingly harder to survive as an independent. With a declining, aging work force, it is becoming more and more difficult to find good help and keep them. In addition, with all the newer vehicles having advanced technology, you must continuously purchase the newest necessary equipment. Vehicles are becoming increasingly more complex. Blind-spot awareness, back-up cameras, automated parking and heads-up displays are just a few common issues to deal with in all this crazy technology. On top of that, in this rapidly changing industry, training is essential for your technicians.

There is a tremendous pool of resources available through being a part of an MSO — training, education and advice, just to name a few. You can also brainstorm an idea or problem with many others of expertise. To be able to have access to these resources in varying fields, such as collision repair, finance, marketing, etc. is a great asset!

In the end, you as an owner have to decide. It is clear the industry is changing, and we as owners have to be able to change with it or face the sad realization that we will be left behind. 📶

**KYLE WHARFF** is owner of CARSTAR Ace Sullins in Miramar, Florida. Questions or comments can be sent to Kyle at [kyle@acesullins.com](mailto:kyle@acesullins.com)

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