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UBM

OCTOBER 2017

VOL. 56, NO. 10 // [ABRN.COM](http://ABRN.COM)

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# ANALYZING ADAS

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**Thursday, November 2**

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COMMITMENT TO  
TRAINING

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**TOYOTA COLLISION PROS**

Take a look at the latest edition of Toyota Collision Pros, which can be found online at: [ABRN.com/TCPSummer2017](http://ABRN.com/TCPSummer2017)



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INDUSTRY TRAINING

## NACE AUTOMECHANIKA EVENT THRIVES IN CHICAGO

➔ NACE Automechanika, the largest U.S. trade show dedicated to high-end technical and management-related training for automotive collision and service repair shops, returned to

Chicago July 26-29, 2017. More than 360 leading suppliers displayed new automotive service and repair technologies, while connecting to nearly 8,000 attend-

>> **NACE CONTINUES ON PAGE 8**

### BREAKING NEWS

#### ASSOCIATIONS

## NEW ENGLAND ASA CHAPTER TO BE RUN DIFFERENTLY

➔ When the Automotive Service Association (ASA) announced a new Massachusetts/Rhode Island (ASA-MA/RI) affiliate this summer, shop owners likely recognized the name of executive director Stephen Regan — he's long been a presence in the collision repair community as the former executive director of the Massachusetts Auto Body Association (MABA) and helped spearhead the Right to Repair effort in that state.

The structure of the new affiliate will be a little less familiar, however. The chapter was not established as a non-profit but rather as a private limited liability corporation (LLC) wholly owned (and initially financed) by Regan himself.

With a new regional chapter, member shops in both states will have the benefits of a locally staffed office, better local

>> **ASA CONTINUES ON PAGE 10**

### TRENDING

#### SEMA BATTLE OF THE BUILDERS TO FEATURE TOP CUSTOMIZERS

More than 250 top vehicle builders will compete in the 4<sup>th</sup> annual SEMA Battle of the Builders competition during the 2017 SEMA Show in Las Vegas, with the winner named Nov. 3. [ABRN.COM/BUILDBATTLE](http://ABRN.COM/BUILDBATTLE)

#### CHIEF INTRODUCES NEW WELDER FOR MILD STEEL REPAIRS

Chief's new MultiMig 190 welder is an entry-level model for low-carbon steel welding. The 220-volt transformer-based welder can perform both structural and sheet metal repairs. [ABRN.COM/190WELD](http://ABRN.COM/190WELD)

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#### INDUSTRY INVITED TO SPONSOR UNIFORMS FOR COLLISION SCHOOLS

The Collision Repair Education Foundation is seeking sponsors to help provide Cintas work uniforms for students in high school and college collision repair programs. [ABRN.COM/UNIFORM](http://ABRN.COM/UNIFORM)

#### CIF RALLYING TO SUPPORT HURRICANE HARVEY VICTIMS

The Collision Industry Foundation is committed to working with all industry segments to deliver emergency relief directly to impacted collision repair professionals. [ABRN.COM/HARVEY](http://ABRN.COM/HARVEY)

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&gt;&gt; NACE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ees who took part in activities throughout Automotive Service and Collision Repair Week.

“NACE Automechanika succeeded in bringing buyers and sellers together on the show floor and in the training rooms, where we provided four days of high-quality education to automotive service and collision repair professionals,” said Jim Savas, vice president and general manager of UBM’s Automotive group. “We also had very favorable responses from attendees who enjoyed the networking opportunities associated with several co-located events, including the Collision Industry Conference, the MSO Symposium and our new Business Outlook Conference.”

The new alliance between NACE and Automechanika Chicago proved a successful one with heightened support from the collision repair industry. Several industry groups held meetings and events during the week including AMi, I-CAR, CIC, CREF, Enterprise Rental Car, CCC Information Services, Inc., Allstate Insurance Company, the OE Round Table and others.

“The industry needs and deserves a national show that is solely dedicated to advancing the collision and service repair industries. As evidenced by the tremendous support from industry associations and companies, NACE Automechanika is that source,” said Dan Risley, president and executive director, ASA.

The NACE Automechanika show floor featured opportunities for testing equipment, learning about market trends and hearing from carmakers about what the future holds for vehicle service and repairs. The OE Coliseum included advanced information from General Motors, Toyota, BMW, Nissan and Fiat/Chrysler. These sessions greatly impacted attendees by providing up-to-date and current information on the latest trends in automotive repair processes. The new Scan-A-Palooza area

## THE INDUSTRY NEEDS AND DESERVES A NATIONAL SHOW THAT IS SOLELY DEDICATED TO ADVANCING THE COLLISION AND SERVICE REPAIR INDUSTRIES. AS EVIDENCED BY SUPPORT FROM [THE] INDUSTRY, NACE AUTOMECHANIKA IS THAT SOURCE. – ASA’S RISLEY

featured diagnostic tool demonstrations and gave attendees important lessons in performing proper pre- and post-repair scans. Additional show-floor training from I-CAR gave collision repairers insight into new materials being used in vehicles and proper repair procedures.

“We go to a couple training classes a year in our town through local vendors, but we just figured this was the best way to learn from some of the top trainers in the field,” said Joshua Dykes, a technician from Indiana who attended NACE Automechanika. “The training is the reason we chose to go to NACE Automechanika Chicago. We were learning from top trainers like Bernie Thompson. We have his tools here in the shop that we use on a daily basis. It was nice to meet the guy who invented the tools we use and ask him questions about them that you don’t normally get to ask.”

At A Glance: NACE Automechanika 2017	
Exhibition space	108,000 sq. feet
Exhibitors	367
Exhibiting Countries	19
Pavilions	7
Attendees	7,700
Attendees’ Countries	43

Highlights from the show floor included a showcase of products, services and interactive demonstrations from several exhibiting companies such as NAPA,

Pro-Spot, Federal Mogul, Car-O-Liner, Tenneco and TTA Appraisal, among others. From diagnostic testing to new paint technology in the Spray Zone and welding techniques by key exhibitors, NACE Automechanika covered it all.

“We are pleased that so many leading companies chose NACE Automechanika as their platform to highlight the latest technologies and advancements in the automotive aftermarket,” said Bridget Ferris, show director. “The support both domestically and internationally reinforces our vision of being the first choice for business encounters.”

At the event this year, several organizations successfully raised money to support the automotive industry including the Collision Repair Education Foundation (CREF), which raised \$22,500 for Kennedy-King College, one of seven city colleges of Chicago. Giving back to the automotive community was also the focus of a scholarship program organized by the UBM Community Engagement Program in cooperation with the Automotive Management Institute (AMi), National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) and Technicians Service Training (TST). These groups provided roughly \$13,000 in scholarships to professionals and students attending this year’s event.

What’s next at NACE Automechanika? Following a successful event this past July, NACE Automechanika will transition to an annual format, providing even more content to the automotive collision and service repair industry. The 2018 edition of NACE Automechanika will take place August 8-10, 2018, in Atlanta, home to Porsche Cars North America and Kia Motors. 

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>> ASA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

communications, regional advocacy in the state legislatures, monthly meetings and local training seminars.

While there had been a previous Rhode Island ASA affiliate, that chapter had gone idle. Regan was approached by ASA president and executive director Dan Risley about establishing a New England-based affiliate chapter to fill that void. In 2015, the former Connecticut Collision Repair Specialists organization became the ASA Connecticut affiliate as part of the organization's push to expand in the Northeast.

While most industry associations operate as non-profits, Regan says the LLC structure simplifies management and will free up the advisory board to spend more time on industry issues rather than administrative tasks.

Regan will steer the organization with input from the advisory board, but

day-to-day management decisions will rest with him. He also has a personal stake in expanding the membership of the association. He put the initial capital to launch the association (including paying for staff and office space).

There is an existing base of roughly 200 members in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and Regan has established contacts throughout the industry as part of his work with MABA, SCRS, CIC and his efforts in lobbying for the Right to Repair legislation. There are also as many as 600 shops in the region that have belonged to ASA in the past that Regan is contacting.

"The shop owners have said it will be great to have monthly meetings and have some local focus. That camaraderie is really important – that ability to connect and network with like-minded business owners is the real value proposition," Regan says.

While Regan is well-known for his legislative efforts on behalf of the repair industry, he says his primary focus will be on training and education.

One key priority will be shop management. "They need that front-office education. Trying to find qualified technicians is also a big challenge, and we're going to focus on that as well," Regan says.

Technology education and new repair procedures and tools will also be on the agenda, as well as OE certifications. Regan will also push for more I-CAR training, which goes hand in hand with the OE certification process.

The new chapter will hold local monthly meetings featuring industry leaders discussing everything from cybersecurity, telematics, best practices, AMI and I-CAR training, OEM certification, new technologies, and business management, among other topics.

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# ADDING TO THE RULE BOOK

States continue to consider legislation related to collision repair, claims processes

**JOHN YOSWICK** // Contributing Editor

**L**awmakers in state capitols around the country this year have been busy proposing, considering and — in a few cases — enacting legislation that could have an impact on collision repairers. Even if your shop's state legislature isn't working on any such bills, keeping up with what's happening in other states may give you or your state association ideas on what type of laws to work on or watch out for while your elected representatives meet.

## Parts take center stage

Bills related to the use of non-OEM parts are common every year, and 2017 has been no exception.

A bill introduced in Massachusetts,

for example, would prohibit insurers from dictating the use of any part that "compromises the operational safety or structural integrity of the vehicle," and would prohibit insurers from mandating the use of non-OEM parts "on any vehicle still under manufacturer warranty or lease agreement."

Proponents of aftermarket parts, on the other hand, introduced legislation in several states that would have loosened limits on the use of such parts.

An Arkansas bill, for example, would have repealed that state's existing law requiring insurers to use OEM crash parts on any vehicle still under the manufacturer's warranty (unless the vehicle owner gives written consent to the use of other parts). The bill was introduced by Republican lawmaker Greg Standridge,

president of an independent insurance agency in Arkansas.

It passed the Senate on a 21-9 vote. But as the bill moved to the Arkansas House, the Automotive Service Association (ASA) was among those encouraging Arkansas shops to voice opposition to the bill. ASA's lobbyist, Bob Redding, wrote a letter to the House committee chairman, noting that "Arkansas is one of a few states that assures vehicle owners have notice as to what types of replacement crash parts are used in the repair of their vehicle and consent to the use of these parts."

That committee eventually gave a thumbs-down to the bill by a voice vote.

"In essence, the Committee upheld written consent as an important tool for consumers," ASA said in a statement.

"It's concerning that there are lobbying

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efforts to repeal transparency to the consumer," Aaron Schulenburg of the Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) said of the Arkansas bill. "Anything that reduces [consumer disclosure] should be concerning to all of us in the industry, no matter what segment you're in."

But backers of the legislation see it differently. Ray Colas of LKQ Corporation's government affairs department said the Arkansas law was targeted because it makes no sense to limit the use of non-OEM parts on vehicles still under the manufacturer's warranty given that the insurance policy, not the vehicle warranty, determines what crash parts will be used to repair the vehicle.

Colas said the proposed change won't happen this year, but it isn't dead. Supporters are asking the Arkansas Attorney General to conduct a one-year survey into any consumer complaints related to parts over the last three years.

"We know there aren't any, as it applies to accident, injury or death," Colas said.

The study results are to be reported to the legislature and governor, he said, "so that a decision can be made then by a governing body as to whether or not these

## HOW'S THAT LAW WORKING IN MONTANA?

Mark Brodie of Ron's Auto Refinishers in Missoula, Mont., likes a 2011 law in his state that prohibits an insurer from "unilaterally disregard(ing) a repair operation or cost identified by an estimating system" that the insurer and shop have agreed to use to determine the cost of repair.

"It has been beneficial to us," Brodie said.

Travis Johnston of The Wreck Room in Helena, Mont., agrees.

"For the most part, 70 or 80 percent of repairs, we get paid for all procedures required and billed for," Johnston said. "We still, unfortunately, have to deal with [some] cut-rate insurers that utilize unethical business practices. In these cases, we typically still get paid for most billed procedures; it just takes longer and

sometimes has to be moved up the food chain to upper management."

But he also said that even with such legislation, "it still comes back to education," making sure his employees understand the estimating systems and "do in-house audits."

He said he'd like the current law to be amended to also prohibit insurers from "unilaterally disregarding a repair operation recommended or required by an OEM," such as scanning and calibrations.

"It seems like we are getting a lot of kick-back from insurers on OEM-required procedures," he said. "But I think that's a fight that will continue on. If we could get all shops to start performing repairs as per OEM guidelines, we would be golden. Then again, that's probably like planning on winning the lottery."

parts should continue to be restricted."

He said a similar approach will be used in West Virginia and perhaps other states after bills related to the use of non-

OEM parts either have failed or aren't expected to move forward.

The Indiana Auto Body Association, meanwhile, hopes to take another run

## HOW'S THAT LAW WORKING IN PENNSYLVANIA AND VIRGINIA?

Regulation changes in Pennsylvania and Virginia last year now allow initial appraisals of damaged vehicles to be based on photographs or video rather than requiring a physical inspection of the vehicle.

Bob Noaker of Noaker's Auto Body in Duncannon, Pa., said he hasn't seen much of an impact from the law in his shop, perhaps because his business does a fair amount of direct repair work. That said, customers who get photos estimates sometimes "are confused why our estimate is so much higher," Noaker said, perhaps because "insurance companies write the minimum," hoping the customer just cashes out without repairing the vehicle.

Other shops in Pennsylvania and Virginia say the deficiencies they see in photo estimates are making the change in state regulations bad for their business.

"The new legislation has a negative impact on our cycle time," Charlie Bourne of B&W Auto Body in Charlottesville, Va., said. "We had one vehicle towed in here June 28 with

an insurance estimate of \$1,210. We sent a supplement in for \$2,128, for a total repair of \$3,338. We only received a supplement check (for \$1,699) three weeks later."

"Estimates written by photos are usually missing two-thirds of the damage," agreed Steve Kaminstein of Quality Collision in Dallas, Pa. "In my opinion, it should not be legal to write appraisals from photos or video."

Sandy Buerk of St. Marys Auto Body in St. Marys, Pa., called the regulation change a "disaster."

"We have not seen any of those estimates that were anywhere close to being accurate," she said. "It's causing delays in our shop while we wait for supplemental approvals. Customers are angry and confused, and rental days are being affected. Insurance companies have complained for years that shops aren't taking good enough photos to substantiate the damage listed, but now all of the sudden, an amateur can pull out their phone, snap a couple of pictures, in whatever kind of lighting, and it's all good?"



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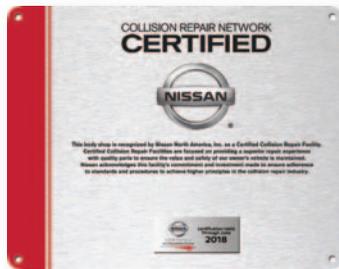
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next year to enact a bill — similar to one that died in committee earlier this year — to give third-party claimants the same right “to approve the type of body parts used to repair a motor vehicle” currently spelled out in state law for first-party insureds.

### Efforts to curb steering

Regulations designed to ensure a consumer’s choice in terms of where to have a vehicle repaired — like one passed last year in New York — have also been on the table in a number of states this year.

A Massachusetts bill (H 2168) would add a provision to state law to require insurers to notify insureds reporting a claim that state law gives them “the right to choose a registered repair shop of your choice,” and that “all registered repair shops must guarantee their repairs.”

But most anti-steering bills intro-

duced this year didn’t make it through the legislative process. A short-lived bill in Iowa, for example, would have prohibited insurers from recommending a repair shop without also informing the insured or claimant that they are not required to use the recommended shop. That bill also would have prohibited insurers from requiring a shop to use a specific parts vendor or procurement process, and placed new limits on the use of non-OEM parts.

Maine’s Republican Gov. Paul LePage this past summer vetoed a bill passed by lawmakers there that would have required insurers to inform consumers of their right to choose a collision repair facility. The Democrat-controlled Maine House of Representatives voted to overturn the Governor’s veto, but there were too few votes to do likewise in the Republican-controlled state Senate.

Texas shops were also unsuccessful this year in getting lawmakers there to pass a bill that would have strengthened anti-steering regulations.

### Rates, materials and more

A number of bills tackling other shop-related issues are still pending in other state legislatures.

A bill in Massachusetts, for example, would allow shops to demand arbitration in the event an agreement cannot be reached as to the amount of a loss; current law requires that such a request come from the insured.

Other proposed legislation in Massachusetts, similar to bills introduced in previous years, would require that a minimum labor rate be established by the Massachusetts Insurance Commissioner based on the average rates paid by insurers in surrounding states (Connecti-

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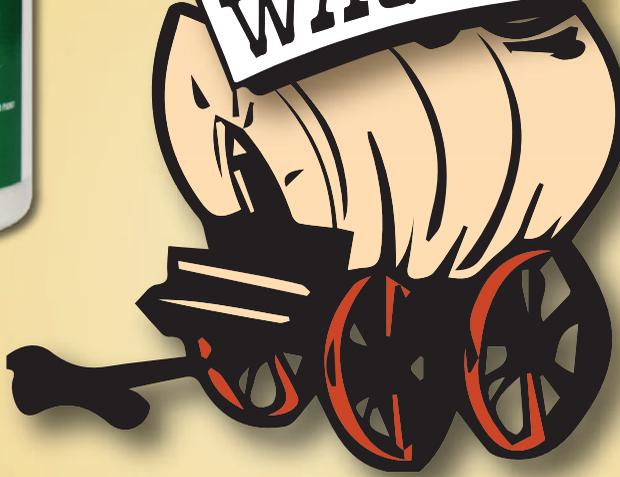
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A bill in New York would limit the sale of automotive refinish materials labeled “for professional use only” to only those with a valid state tax and federal EPA identification number, and who meet all local ordinances for the application of

such materials.

And insurers in California are backing legislation there to overhaul new Department of Insurance regulations related to shop labor rate surveys that went into effect earlier this year. The new regulation doesn’t mandate that insurers use a particular survey method, but does lay

out one method that regulators will consider as “fair and equitable.” That method requires, for example, that only labor rate data collected within the past 16 months be included (older data must be adjusted upward based on inflation). All registered shops must be included in the survey, and surveys are to be based on non-discounted, posted rates. And prevailing rates for a particular shop should be based primarily on the six closest shops geographically.

But California lawmakers are considering a bill that would instead only require that insurers using a survey report the findings to state regulators every 24 months. The bill would allow an insurer to include labor rates from its direct repair shops in determining prevailing labor rates. The bill would water down newly-enacted anti-steering regulations as well.

### Making it happen

If there’s legislation you’d like to see enacted in your state, Scott Weiser says, there’s one way your can increase the odds that it becomes a reality: Consider a run for a seat in your state’s legislature.

“Having a person inside is the best thing you can possibly do,” Weiser, the lobbyist for the Iowa Collision Repair Association, said. “If there’s someone in there who really knows what you do and how you’re challenged, it matters. The other legislators count on that person for advice on legislation.”

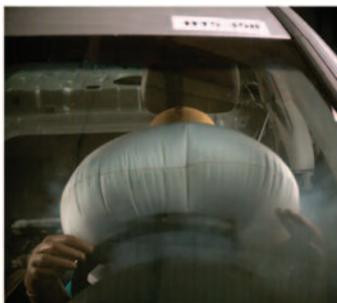
He said aside from that, it’s important for shop owners to answer the call if a state association asks them to meet with lawmakers in the state capitol.

“Those guys see me every day, as part of my job,” Weiser told Iowa shops. “They don’t see you. When you put a face on the effort, it really matters.”

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# CAFE STANDARDS IN THE CROSSHAIRS

## How will a shifting legislative landscape affect lightweighting and materials innovations?

**BRIAN ALBRIGHT** // Contributing Editor

In the U.S. and elsewhere, automakers have been transitioning to new lighter weight materials in order to reach increasingly stringent fuel efficiency standards. The Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) fuel efficiency standards in the U.S. require vehicles to achieve a 54.5 mpg fleet average by 2025. While CAFE standards are a significant factor that contribute to lightweighting efforts, individual state requirements and

global demands have made it increasingly complex to design vehicles for a range of markets. For example, Europe's target reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions require a 40 percent decrease for fleets from 2007 to 2021, and have also driven adoption of new materials.

In response, automakers are re-designing vehicles to include a variety of new materials, including advanced high-strength steels, aluminum and composites.

"Automakers and OEMs are working more closely than ever with the

composites industry to produce lighter, more efficient vehicles to meet the new requirements," says Tom Dobbins, president of the American Composites Manufacturers Association. "According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) a 10 percent reduction in vehicle weight can improve fuel efficiency by 6 to 8 percent or increase the range of a battery-electric vehicle by up to 10 percent. Compared with steel, composites can offer a mass reduction ranging of 25 to 30 percent for glass fiber systems and 60 to 70 percent

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for carbon fiber systems.”

There have also been significant increases in the use of advanced high-strength steel and aluminum.

With the recent change in leadership in Washington, D.C., to a decidedly more anti-regulation regime in both the White House and Congress, the state of fuel efficiency standards and other environmental regulations that affect the auto industry are now in flux.

Exactly how the new administration's policies might affect auto regulations is still uncertain. Presently, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has no chief. President Trump has begun rolling back the previous administration's environmental efforts, and has vowed to re-evaluate Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFÉ) standards, but it remains unclear exactly what that means.

Even if the administration wants to

roll back CAFE requirements, California, which has an outsize influence on these efforts, has independent authority over emissions standards under the Clean Air Act. In addition, more than a dozen other states have adopted California's standards, which until recently have outpaced federal guidelines.

And automakers are already invested heavily in light-weighting and efficiency initiatives that would be difficult to back away from, even if the requirements are eased.

“My estimation is that things are going to continue as planned for most of these developments,” says Brian Daugherty, CTO of the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association (MEMA). “Under the Obama administration, fuel economy standards were changed significantly, so if you look at the scope of the curve we are entering for what is already a regulation, it's pretty steep. There will still be a need for fuel economy technologies in

the marketplace going forward. Even if there is a slowdown in regulation, that need will still be there.”

“The trend is to look for lighter, stronger materials,” says Bob Redding, Washington representative for the Automotive Service Association (ASA). “There are the European standards that manufacturers have to contend with, and what's happening in California. With the technology being developed, the automakers are not going to pull back on that based on a change in one country's standards.”

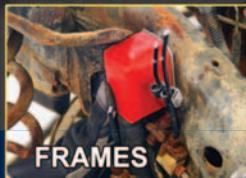
### Environmental regs drive materials mix

Automakers' lightweighting efforts have already significantly transformed the mix of materials used in modern automobiles. A Ducker Worldwide study forecasts that aluminum content in cars will increase by as much as 30 percent in the next 10 years, reaching nearly 200 kg per vehicle.

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The Center for Automotive Research (CAR) projects that by 2040, only 12 percent of the average vehicle will be mild- to high-strength steel. Another 42 percent will be advanced high-strength steel or ultra-high-strength and boron/martensite steel. Twenty-six percent of the car will be aluminum, 5 percent magnesium, and 15 percent will be carbon fiber/composites.

Composites also show a lot of promise. In 2015, composites represented roughly 1 percent of all materials used in light vehicle production by mass (at nearly 4 billion pounds). According to Dobbins, the composites industry is working diligently to capitalize on the opportunities presented by legislatively-driven lightweighting.

Dobbins says that the ACMA is educating engineers and executives at OEMs about the benefits of composites. BMW, for one, is basing a number of its models

around composite structures, such as the i3, i8 and 7 Series. Other OEMs like Ford have even taken steps to use carbon fiber reinforced polymer (CFRP) in wheels to reduce weight in certain vehicles, such as the Shelby GT350R Mustang. Honda uses composites in the truck bed of its 2017 Ridgeline.

According to Industrial Market Insight, current forecasts predict annual growth rates of 6 to 9 percent for automotive composites over the next several years, primarily because of the ability of carbon fiber composites to help manufacturers meet increasing fuel economy and safety regulations. "However, these growth forecasts are predicated on the industry's ability to successfully meet challenges related to cost, cycle time and end-of-life concerns, which will require breakthroughs in materials and process technologies," Dobbins says.

### Lightweighting to continue, regardless of emissions changes

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers has encouraged the EPA to revisit emissions standards, noting that current standards force automakers to produce smaller, higher-mileage vehicles that American buyers simply aren't interested in buying.

In a letter to EPA chief Scott Pruitt, the group asked for the agency to withdraw from the "final Determination" that current emissions targets remain in place. The Alliance also claims that standards will drive up vehicle costs and reduce sales. According to Alliance President and CEO Mitch Bainwol, the standards "threaten to depress an industry that can ill afford spiraling regulatory costs. If left unchanged, those standards could cause up to 1.1 million Americans to lose jobs due to lost vehicle sales."

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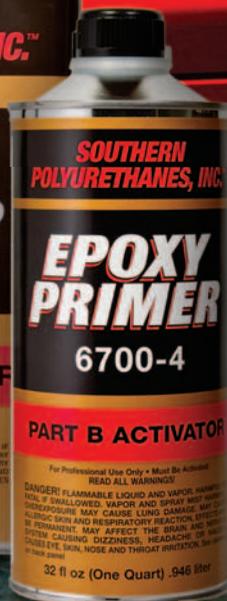
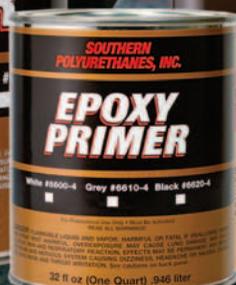
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If the EPA conducts the mid-term review that automakers are calling for, it might not have much effect on the OEMs' lightweighting efforts. In the U.S., any alteration of the CAFE requirements will likely help automakers adjust their fleet mix to reflect market demand for larger trucks and SUVs. Even in those segments, consumer demand for better fuel economy will encourage the use of lighter, stronger materials.

Most of the industry organizations contacted for this story don't see emissions standards changing the general direction of technology development in the automotive sector. That is reflected in their lobbying priorities. According to Redding, the ASA is primarily focused on protecting the federal insurance office and monitoring proposed requirements for vehicle-to-vehicle and connected car technologies, as well as autonomous vehicle legislation.

"As for the CAFE standards, we don't perceive anything happening in the short term," Redding says. "They really need to complete the nomination and confirmation processes for some of these agency heads before there's any movement. Those kinds of changes have to have somebody in place for those decisions to be made, and someone has to sign off on it."

Redding adds that given other high-profile legislative priorities in Congress, and the current environment in Washington, D.C., there are unlikely to be any major regulatory changes that will impact automakers' environmental programs.

"Until we have a NHTSA administrator and other agency heads in place, we won't see a lot of movement on things they've been working on in the Department of Transportation," Redding says. "I don't see them releasing any dramatic new regulations until they have those

senior people in place."

The automakers also operate in a global marketplace and will still have to invest R&D into fuel efficiency if they want to sell in Europe, Asia and other regions.

"Over the long term, there is no real alternative to lightweighting to achieve the combination of performance, features, safety and fuel economy demanded by both regulations and consumers," Dobbins says. "Lightweighting will stay near the top of the list of options to meet the complex mix of requirements in various regions around the world." ■



#### BRIAN ALBRIGHT

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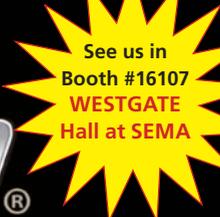
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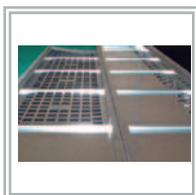
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# A NEW EDUCATION MODEL FOR TODAY'S DEMANDS

The complexity of today's vehicles demand a culture change in automotive training and education — and one North Carolina school is making it happen.

**PAUL GAGE** // Contributing Editor

**A** few years ago I did a study comparing the construction materials of a space shuttle to the construction materials of a late-model vehicle, and I found amazing similarities. Both vehicles used high-strength and ultra-high-strength steels, aluminum, magnesium, reinforced plastics, computer-controlled systems, safety restraint systems, navigation systems, communication systems, vehicle wellness monitoring systems, even hybrid propulsion systems. The re-

sults of that study led me to the following question: "If I wrecked my space shuttle, who would I want to fix it?"

My first thought was NASA, of course. I want people who were trained by the engineers who built my space shuttle working on my space shuttle, and I want them to follow the written procedures to the letter when completing the repairs. Yet it never fails that when I picture the vehicle being repaired in my head, I still see Jeff Spicoli from the movie *Fast Times at Ridgmont High* saying he can fix it because his dad has the "ultimate set of tools" (for the millennials reading this

who don't know who Jeff Spicoli is, I recommend doing your own research). The difference that stands out to me is that I have never heard one of my engineer friends say, "My dad has the ultimate set of tools," nor have I heard them say "I've been doing this for 20 years; I don't need to read the procedures."

I have told all of my students that when a customer puts the keys to their car in your hand for you to repair, they have already come to the conclusion that you are going to repair their vehicle correctly. In fact, as customers, there is only one person and one place we visit with

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the expectation they will get it wrong — our local meteorologist and the drive-thru at McDonalds (and we still go back to both). When we are talking about our vehicles, however, we would never intentionally take it to someone we knew might not repair it correctly or, worse yet, did not have the training or education to repair it at all.

Creating those future “NASA engineers” for the collision repair industry is not an easy task, but it is incredibly rewarding when we can get it right. It just takes time, which is, unfortunately, something our industry has run out of in regard to well-trained technicians. Let me clarify — if I want someone who can fix plastic, tear down and rebuild a vehicle, or fix a dent, I can create that very quickly. If, however, I want someone who can do all those things but also understands the collision repair industry, knows how to read and apply OEM repair procedures, knows how to deal with insurance companies and customers alike, and will ultimately be the person who will continue to help our industry grow and develop in the future, that takes time.

Not only does it take time to train those individuals, but there are a myriad of road blocks we must navigate in order to be successful. Some of these roadblocks are as formidable as the perception the collision repair industry has among the parents of the young men and women who might otherwise consider a career in automotive. We have to contend with the high school counselors pushing students toward four-year colleges and the way our society looks down on men and women who work in the trades (regardless of how much money they make). We also have to understand that the passion for working on cars has been lost on many young people today because vehicles are too complicated to work on in your own garage.

If we can get past those roadblocks and actually get young men and women into the trade schools, we then have the obligation to train them correctly and

completely. This presents an entirely new set of roadblocks because training these individuals takes vast resources and instructors who are ahead of the technological curve. Public trade schools such as community colleges struggle with funding and individual programs have to compete with each other for every dollar. For-profit trade schools are able to focus on one trade, but are expensive and have to spend time training in areas that will draw students in, such as custom painting and building street rods, in addition to basic collision repair skills, which can seem lack luster in comparison. In short, everyone wants to be the next Chip Foose but no one wants to be the next Scott Kaboos (one of the most talented people working in the collision repair industry today). I am a huge fan of Chip Foose and have a tremendous amount of respect for his talent and the attention he brings to the automotive industry; however, for every one Chip Foose in our industry, we need 10,000 technicians like Scott Kaboos.

When facing these roadblocks, the challenge of recruiting, training and placing new people in our industry seems daunting, if not impossible, particularly in an educational system that seems to be broken. Unfortunately, the system is not broken — it is simply worn out. What’s the difference you ask? When something is broken, it can be fixed; but when something is worn out, it must be replaced. We need to build an entirely new educational culture when it comes to automotive training in the United States.

It is that exact type of culture change that we are starting to see take place in collision repair education in the state of North Carolina. It started with the creation of the CollisionU program at Fayetteville Technical Community College, which was a strategic partnership between college administrators and the collision repair industry. A culture was created where students were taught using a curriculum that led to the same I-CAR certifications required in the in-

dustry, and were held accountable to OEM repair procedures, quality standards and professionalism. In short, it’s a culture that created an employable graduate. From there, we engaged the state high schools through a partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to align the high school curriculum with the CollisionU curriculum. CollisionU took on the technical training responsibilities for all the high school instructors in the state to make sure that they were well versed on technology and understood how to most effectively utilize the I-CAR curriculum they were teaching. The end goal was providing students with a direct pathway from high school to post-secondary technical education, which would lead to gainful employment immediately upon graduation. The best part? It is working.

I compare this cultural change to the first step of a child; it is small but significant, and it can be repeated, but only if we are committed. That child is going to fall; he is going to bump into things and occasionally he is going to get bruised, but as the child grows, he learns new ways to navigate his environment so as to avoid the bumps and bruises. We are just starting to learn to navigate our educational environment under the umbrella of this new culture, but only persistence and innovation will generate continued success.

Imagine a world where technical education was compensated solely on the number and quality of the technicians it placed in the industry. Imagine a system where technical educators were required to maintain industry and manufacturer certifications and were required to spend one month a year working in the industry they support. Imagine an educational program where students were held to the highest standards of quality and professionalism, where showing up on time every day was just part of the culture. Imagine a world where you could take your damaged space shuttle for repairs and know that it was repaired correctly because it was worked on by well-trained



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and educated technicians whose only concern was your safety attained through correctness of repairs. Imagine an industry where the older, experienced technicians support those new technicians instead of trying to run them off because they are threatened.

As an industry, we must insist that au-

tomotive trade schools stop using gimmicks like custom painting, restorations, building race cars and custom fabrication as the motivator to get butts in the seats. We must use careers as the motivator because the promise of a career attracts and motivates a different type of person; the type of person we want working in

our industry. Our industry needs to insist that the educators teaching the next generation of techs are both qualified to teach advanced technical topics and understand the technology they are teaching. We should have fewer automotive trade schools in the country so we can focus our limited resources on schools that are producing quality professionals. Regardless of how it is viewed, education is a free market enterprise that produces human resource as a product subject to the laws of supply and demand. Educators must understand that the human resource they are producing must be of the highest quality in order for them to be successful, and the industry as the customer must understand that it takes time and resources to produce that person.

So there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it's not the front of an oncoming train, or at least it doesn't have to be. It will, however, not be quick or easy, and it will take our industry pulling together for the benefit of our industry, instead of individuals. It will take the insurance companies understanding how a well-trained technician in the shop leads to better customer service and retention scores. It will take the shop owners understanding that well-trained and educated insurance adjusters will help with correctness of repairs through a clearer understanding of what it really takes to fix a vehicle today. It will take technicians who are willing to embrace and mentor this new generation instead of seeing them as a threat, and it will take educators engaging with the industry to ensure they are teaching students what they really need to know to be a collision repair professional and holding those students to a standard. 🏁

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**PAUL GAGE** is director of training with ProCare, a 15-location MSO in Texas. He is a former auto body instructor with Fayetteville Technical Community College in

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# DEALERS TARGET COLLISION REPAIR

More complex vehicle repairs, materials may encourage dealerships to open body shops

**BRIAN ALBRIGHT** // Contributing Editor

**F**ranchised auto dealerships have spent the past several years beefing up their fixed-operations departments in an effort to boost profits. When auto sales plummeted during the most recent recession and margins were cut to the bone in an effort to win back customers, the service department became a critical source of revenue.

But even though service has gotten more attention from dealerships, the majority of them still don't operate body shops. That is steadily changing, however, as repairs become more complex thanks to the introduction of new materials and new technologies.

As collision repair becomes more nameplate and material specific, it's difficult for generalist body shops to keep up with the training and equipment investment. Dealerships see an opportunity to gain a foothold in a profitable business that can help keep customers in the service fold after their warranties expire.

The number of dealerships that operate body shops has not fluctuated much over the past eight years, but it is slowly trending upward. After falling from 38 percent in 2010 to 35.9 percent in 2014, that figure rose again to 38.6 percent in 2015, then dipped slightly to 37.4 percent in 2016, according to data from the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA).

"Body shop decisions are based on dealers' discretion," says Patrick Manzi, se-

nior economist at NADA. "If they see that there is enough business coming in and can operate it profitably, they will do so."

While dealership presence in the market is still marginal, there are indications that some OEMs and large dealer groups are going to expand their collision repair footprint moving forward.

AutoNation, for example, is adding new locations to its existing 70 collision centers as part of a nationwide restructuring and revamping of its service operations that will include the company releasing its own branded line of repair parts. AutoNation is also renovating its collision shops based on a new, standard corporate design. According to the company, this will expand its collision production potential by as much as 40 percent.

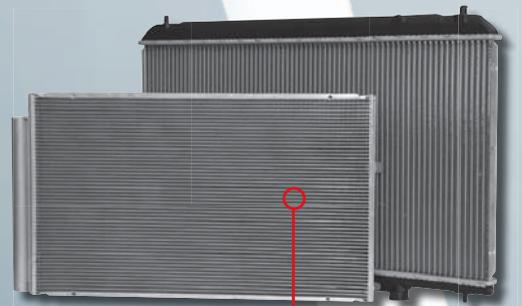
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The Cochran dealership group in western Pennsylvania is also expanding its collision operations. Electric vehicle maker Tesla is also opening its own body shops, according to an announcement the company made earlier this year. Tesla already has a network of certified collision shops.

According to a shareholder announcement from Tesla: “To significantly improve the customer experience with out-of-warranty body repairs, we intend to open the first Tesla-owned body repair shops later this year and expand the existing network of third-party Tesla certified body shops.”

For an industry that often has to absorb wild swings in demand, fixed-ops and collision repair represent a stable, steady source of profits.

Brad Mewes, principal at Supplement, an Irvine, Calif.-based consulting firm, believes there are two primary trends that indicate the industry will see more dealer-owned body shops. One is technology — dealer groups are in a better position to invest in the technology and equipment needed to make more complex repairs. “For a larger, more well-capitalized group like AutoNation to invest a few million dollars into equipment and training is a drop in the bucket related to their total spending,” Mewes says.

Those groups can also spread the fixed cost of that training across multiple facilities. “They can have one centrally located body shop that services five dealerships, for example,” Mewes says. “That makes the business case much more compelling.”

Sonic Automotive in Charlotte, N.C., for example, operates 18 collision repair shops as part of a hub-and-spoke-like network to increase efficiency. Each shop serves multiple dealerships.

The second trend that Mewes thinks is important is profitability. Dealers see profit potential in collision repair, which is a relatively high-margin business compared to auto sales. (The outlier here would be Tesla, which owns its own dealerships and actually loses money on its

service operations.)

Still, opening a body shop presents some risk for dealers who may lack experienced technicians and who generally don’t have a lot of experience dealing with the insurance industry. In some instances, dealerships are partnering with independent shops, large chains or consolidators to run their collision repair businesses, or setting up shops outside of their own dealer campus, sometimes with different branding.

“In some cases they want to avoid the headache,” Manzi says. “That may drive their decision to outsource or partner with another firm. It’s purely a business decision.”

“Dealer groups realize that they don’t have as much experience in the collision business, but they are very comfortable with the franchise model,” Mewes says. “Those partnerships can help them leverage purchasing on the cost side. For a smaller dealer group that may not represent every brand of parts they work on, there are lots of benefits to that model.”

Several dealers and dealer groups have partnered with CARSTAR, for example. “They may not have focused on the collision space as a core competency, so when they see a customer opportunity they may contact us,” says Michael Macaluso, president of CARSTAR North America. “CARSTAR can also assist in bringing more insurance DRP exposure to the table.”

Fred Beans Auto Group in Doylestown, Pa., for instance, partnered with CARSTAR on its own collision centers. ABRA has similar relationships with more than 40 dealerships in the US.

In the case of CARSTAR, the dealer may have the company operate a franchise location within the dealership or establish the body shop off-site. “Having the shop off campus enables more opportunities for branding and additional growth,” Macaluso says. “We can also work within the restrictions that the OEM may put on the franchise dealer if the shop is on-site.”

According to Macaluso, CARSTAR benefits from these relationships as well. “In some cases they have information they can share with us,” he says. “Not trade secrets, but additional information or strategies that we can share with our network as a whole to improve the repair process. The beauty of dealer groups is their familiarity with the franchise model, and the two-way communication where they can provide us with insight, and we can provide them solutions across the board.”

There are still some good reasons dealers would stay out of collision repair, including the cost of building or running the facility. Space can also be a factor if the collision business eats into bays that would be better utilized for mechanical service.

“While collision repair is profitable, retail service is still more profitable than collision,” Mewes says. “If they have to make a choice, the dealer is going to keep those bays for retail service.”

Repair complexity will push more drivers to take their vehicles to dealerships for both mechanical and collision repair. As OEMs include a wider variety of new metals and composites in their vehicles, dealer shops may be well positioned to gain additional collision business because of their access to equipment and training.

“Fixed-ops sales continue to rise each year,” Manzi says. “A lot of customers choose to go with the dealership because they employ technicians who have been trained on the new technologies that are appearing in these cars. As things get more complex, I see no reason why that increase in business wouldn’t continue.”



#### BRIAN ALBRIGHT

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# MAINTAINING SHOP FLOW

Ensure your shop flows as a controlled river for the most efficient production process

BOB KEITH // Contributing Editor

**W**hen thinking about a concept like “flow,” I like to look up the definition of the word. Webster defines “flow” as “to move in a continuous and smooth way.” How does flow relate to body shop operations? My next research step was to look up the “Lean definition” of flow: “Flow means to move along in a steady, continuous stream. The ability to visualize and manage flow is essential to achieving faster and more consistent delivery. It allows you to understand your capacity, easily identify problems and improve that flow.”

I am an old technician. For me to understand these concepts I have to be able to visualize the process. Several years ago I attended a NACE seminar on the subject. The instructor described flow as a river that ran through the shop carrying the customer and the vehicle through the repair process. That image gave me the visual that I needed to understand the concept, and it really made sense to me.

When we look at rivers there are two types: controlled and uncontrolled. Uncontrolled rivers have rapids, snags, sandbars, fast flow, slow flow and natural dams where flow stops.

The controlled river flows consistently in as straight a line as possible. Rapids have been channeled around. Sandbars are marked or dredged. Snags have been removed. Dams are in place, but they have locks so that travel is not impeded.

Now let’s picture your current shop river from front to back. How do the customers and vehicles flow through the process? Do you have a controlled or uncontrolled river? Where are your sandbars? Can you eliminate them or at least identify and mark them? Where are your dams? Do they have locks so that

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you can move the vehicles and customers through the repair process with the least delay?

Sand bars and dams are the easiest to identify and eliminate or control. The tough ones are snags, as they can pop up anywhere and tear the bottom out of your process. If you have good systems and processes in place, then snags can be identified quickly and removed.

There are a couple of key areas where lakes and sandbars form. If there aren't good processes in place, they will take over your production river.

The first lake is scheduling. By not having a good, consistent scheduling process you will have an uncontrolled lake full of customer vehicles.

Scheduling affects all aspects of the business. Without good best practices in this area, sandbars will form, and the customer and vehicle stops moving.

If estimates aren't scheduled, then the customer can get hung up on the waiting room sandbar. This negative customer experience will affect your CSI. By not scheduling drop offs, the customer can get stuck on the waiting room sandbar or the waiting for a rental car sandbar. Unscheduled drop offs also affect the CSR and appraisers' capacity to check in the customer and follow all check-in procedures correctly. If scheduling procedures aren't followed, then a snag could come up later, negatively affecting the downstream flow. Scheduling drops also control flow into the next lake, which is the disassembly or blueprinting lake.

The disassembly or blueprinting lake is critical to maintaining flow, as there has to be a place for the vehicle to wait after blueprinting is complete. All parts need to be ordered and received, and insurance approvals need to be documented before the vehicle can leave the blueprint lake. The blueprint lake has to be highly controlled on input and output. If it isn't, then the blueprint lake will be empty or will overflow.

All vehicles need to be disassembled until the damage stops. This also means blend panels and assemblies. Every nut, bolt and clip that is broken and damaged needs to be identified, ordered and placed in the reassembly kit. All fluids and accessories also need to be in the kit. All departments involved in the repair process also need to review the blueprint to make sure all of the questions have been asked and answered. Once this is complete, then the vehicle can leave the blueprint lake and move downstream. The blueprinting process is critical to downstream flow once the vehicle leaves the lake.

If the blueprint disassembly process is not followed 100 percent of the time, then snags will appear downstream in other departments and the vehicle will get hung up. Don't stress when this happens. Identify where the process broke down and repair it with the help of the whole team.

Here are some key items to remember about shop rivers:

1) Shop rivers don't flow backwards. If your vehicles are going backwards in the process, then you have problems in the blueprint process. Identify them and fix them ASAP.

2) Interdependency is critical. If a vehicle is slowing the river, then you need to shift staff to make sure that vehicle moves forward. All departments have to work together!

3) First in-first out. Once the vehicle enters the shop river, it must keep moving. Another reason 100 percent disassembly in the blueprint lake is critical!

4) Pass no defects. In-process quality control is critical and internal rework is a huge snag in the shop river.

Catastrophe events will definitely stress your stream. However, if you have a healthy, controlled river built on solid processes and best practices, then it will be much easier to get control of your stream.

Production flow also affects another

key area of the business, and that is cash flow. Vehicles stuck on sandbars or snags can't be delivered on time. If they are not delivered on time, then payment can't be collected in a timely fashion. If they are sitting in an uncontrolled lake and there are costs accruing, then cash flow once again is affected.

How do you get control of your shop river? First you need to understand what it looks like. The best way to do that is to map it out. Tape some masking paper on your break room wall or anywhere else that you have room. Work together to map out your current river. Cook some burgers or bring in pizza and have an all-shop meeting. Be as detailed as possible, but don't try to start fixing it. Understanding your current state is critical to getting to your desired state. It may take a couple of meetings to get a good picture in mind. It's also good to allow some time for thought and allow staff to add to the map over some time. Once you have your current river mapped out, start identifying the undesirable lakes, sandbars and snags and determine new processes or edit current processes to remove them.

If this seems like a daunting task, then there are people who can help. Contact your jobber to see if they can help. Most of the material and paint manufacturers have staff trained in this process and can help you improve your shop flow.

One key item to remember — as with any improvement process — this is not something you set up and then forget about. As you get control of your river in one area, it will dam up or break out the main channel elsewhere. That is why it is called continuous improvement! 📌



**BOB KEITH** is the Senior Director of Compliance and Education for Assured Performance Network. He currently owns two CARSTAR franchises in both Nebraska and Kansas.

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# MANAGING YOUR HIGH ACHIEVERS

Enhance their skill set while encouraging continued growth

**CHRIS CHESNEY** // Contributing Editor

**T**here are many things to consider when growing a team that will ensure your customers receive exceptional care each and every day — process, investment and onboarding and growing your team's skill set, among others.

But what about those high achievers? These are the guys and gals that just “get it” and set your vision into action on every job. How do you continue to grow their skill set while encouraging continued growth as valued members of your team? Or maybe we should first consider this: Where do you find high achievers?

It's important to understand what a high achiever looks like so you can recognize the value of having them on your team and the benefit that comes from retaining them. It's very common to have had several high achievers on your team in the past, as many didn't recognize their traits and behaviors as being those of someone you want on your team until



it was too late.

If you research the characteristics of high achievers, you will find a lot of information on their distinct behavior, such as a competitive nature, persistence and innovative thinking. High achievers are never satisfied for long and are able to see and buy into the bigger picture. High achievers can implement new ideas and skills quickly and are very convincing and persuasive. They see problems as opportunity, and they love to win. Do these traits describe anyone on your team?

It's easy to be narrow minded when

looking for that high achiever among your team by only considering your A-Tech or your longest-tenured employee. Most of the time, if you do have a high achiever on the team, he or she will be a different individual.

High achievers are likely to be found among the greener employees or as someone who is passionate about learning. They are the teammates that attempt to put what they've learned into action the day after a class or after reading about a new way of doing things. More often than not, they are the teammate that just

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If you have a high achiever on your team, it's important to recognize and ensure they are allowed to shine within your company. However, if you don't find the above traits in members of your team, you should consider if your business model and management standards are establishing a culture that attracts these crucial teammates.

Let's assume you have a high achiever on your team. How do you feed them in a way that benefits their growth and your success? If you keep the traits and behaviors listed above in mind as you interact with them, you'll find success.

It's also important to acknowledge the

## 5 WAYS TO FIND THE TECHS YOU WANT

**BOB COOPER** // Contributing Editor

One of the challenges that shop owners have faced for years is finding and hiring qualified technicians. Here are 5 of the most successful techniques that I used to find the superstars when I was still operating shops.

1. Make an offer that is hard to refuse.
2. Ask every applicant for leads.
3. Sponsor a tool raffle.
4. Go to where the techs in your community go.
5. Turn your employees into recruiters.

Superstars are out there. All that you need to do is connect with them and provide them with what every superstar is looking for: An opportunity to grow with an amazing shop, and help a lot of people along the way.

Get the details on these tips at [ABRN.com/5ways](http://ABRN.com/5ways).

risks inherent with housing high achievers. If you don't have a process in place to guide their natural desire to win at almost any cost, you will see your profits erode. We know that high achievers want to win, rarely give up and consider it counterintuitive to fail. For that reason, don't just put them on the line and expect them to fix all the tough jobs. Eventually they'll find that job that will kick them, and they won't quit before it's too late to make a profit or to best serve your customer. Remember they can see the big picture, too.

High achievers can also become idealist, and if not properly managed, they can forget that it's okay to live to fight another day. The best way to manage them? Let them lead!

Because they are able to grasp new ideas (training) and apply them quickly and because they see the big picture (your goals and plan), they become a great asset when asked to lead a team in implementing new ideas.

For example, we've discussed creating a career path including training for your team. Because the high achiever is able to bring the knowledge learned from a training event back to the shop and implement it quickly, a great way to leverage the high achiever is to empower them to guide your team through the implementation of new skills and training knowledge.

After a training class, the high achiever should gather the technicians together and discuss what was learned. They can then answer questions the group has and demonstrate the new skill, helping it to become an element of your shop's process. Give them responsibility of owning these new elements and you'll find they will bring them to life.

Give the high achiever the freedom to test new methods with the team. This not only stretches the skills of the team, but feeds the need of the high achiever to find new ways to apply him or herself.

High achievers can be very persuasive when attempting to influence others,

which if not moderated appropriately can cause some risk. The high achiever needs to be on the same page as you or they could lead your team down their path, which may not be the right path for your business. Include high achievers in your strategic planning on a regular basis to ensure they are not formulating a different path for the shop.

High achievers are also driven by achievement and think success is dependent on them. They will take the opportunity to grow their understanding and skills, attending every training event, with your support or even on their own dime. But don't let them go alone. I often see the high achiever in a shop as the only attendee in a training class using the excuse that he will take the training back to the others. All this does is turn your high achiever into a trainer, not a person who can implement positive change in your team.

Your high achiever should be given the opportunity to lead your training plan to success. Have the entire team attend the class so they can all discuss how to best implement what they have all learned. This will ensure successful growth in your team's skills while making sure you and the high achiever work together to create the learning plan for the entire team. This gives the high achiever ownership and will help ensure you get a high return on investment.

Finally, as you begin recognizing who your high achievers are, pause for a moment and take a look in the mirror and determine if you are one yourself. Honestly evaluate your traits and see if they match those discussed above. If you discover you are a high achiever, you've taken the best first step towards future success. 📌



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# Developing an admin pay plan based on shop sales

You may be able to pay your office staff more if they will “ride the wave” with you

I know my market here in Alaska is not the only one that goes through seasonal highs and lows in the volume of business. For us, the summers are slow. For many years, I would make money eight months of the year, and lose a ton of money in each of the summer months. It was frustrating to watch those losses, knowing we were going to have to make that up in the winter.

But that really changed once I implemented a team system for all my company’s administrative staff. (I wrote about the structure of that in a previous column, “Implement structure in your administrative team,” August 2017.) Administration costs are a gigantic expense in our industry, but the team pay plan I’ve implemented keeps it relative to our sales and thus very predictable throughout the year. That has allowed me to protect training budgets and things like that. Best of all, it has allowed me to pay my administrative staff more because they will ride the wave with me rather than if I have to pay them based on a worst-case scenario.

When I created the system, I basically told them: “Look, you will end up making more money at the end of the year, if/when it slows down in July, we all fight through it together. Your pay will be lower in July, but in January, you’ll essentially be getting a double paycheck.”

To help them with those fluctuations, we’ve offered some money-management counseling for them. But just as I promised, my average mid-level staff got a 22 percent pay increase, and the company was more profitable at the end of the year. I’m able to pay them more, knowing if things get bad, they’re taking the hit along with me. I can pay them based on what we can actually afford, not a reduced amount based on the possibility that there will be a slow-down or we’ll lose an agreement with an insurer, etc.

One other side benefit to this: In Alaska, the economy takes a hit when oil prices are low — as they have been recently. When that happens, bankers get a little nervous. So they like seeing that



**IF YOU TRY TO GET CREATIVE WITH SOMETHING LIKE PAY PLANS IN YOUR SHOP WITHOUT HAVING TRUST AND THE RIGHT CULTURE, YOU ARE GOING TO FAIL.**

I have a system that makes my expenses — and thus my profit — much more predictable.

Having written this column for a couple of years now, I can predict some of you will email me asking for the spreadsheet I use for the admin pay plan. Those who have done that will tell you I’m happy to talk to other shops, but those conversations don’t start with a spreadsheet. I couldn’t have implemented the change I did within my company if I hadn’t developed the right culture, if my employees didn’t trust me, long before we made changes like this.

After reading one of my previous columns, a shop owner in Colorado called me, asking for the spreadsheet I use for a pay plan I’d written about. The first thing I asked him was, “Do your people trust you?”

“Well, I think they do,” he said.

I told him that he can’t just think they do. He has to know they do. Because if you try to get creative with something like pay plans without having trust and the right culture, you’re going to fail. Your employees won’t believe you’re getting creative for

the good of the company, your employees and your customers. They will just presume you’re getting creative for your own personal best interests, and that’s it.

That conversation is often as far as it goes with some of the shop owners who contact me, if they’re just looking for a spreadsheet for a quick business fix. I’ll suggest they give me a call to talk though some things they need to work on first, and that never happens.

But the shop owner in Colorado and I have talked for hours. He was going to work on some things I suggested. I could tell from talking to him that he’s one who wants to do things right, making changes in a way that doesn’t end up with him losing his good staff. I hope that happens and I can write about it in a future column. 📧

**RYAN CROPPER** owns Able Body Shops, with two locations in Anchorage, Alaska, as well as Total Truck Accessory Center.  
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# Working for the customer

High-end customer-centric enterprise embraces non-stop training classes

JAMES E. GUYETTE // Contributing Editor

For Amber Alley, general manager at Barsotti's Body & Fender, the road to achieving standout collision repair results has been made much smoother through her association with associations.

"There are a lot of amazing people in this industry; I wish everyone would get involved," says Alley, the recently elected treasurer of the Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS).

"It's so positive for the industry. The networking and resources are beyond words," according to Alley, who also belongs to the California Autobody Association (CAA). "It puts a new perspective on things" that can be applied to your business operations.

"Everyone should get involved, even if it's just on the local level in your own communities," she says. Staying on top of regulatory concerns can be especially useful. "Some people fall asleep when you talk about legislation, but it's important," she says. "There are a lot of people out there doing a lot of training. There's really a place for everyone" depending on your particular interests, challenges and goals.

In conjunction with the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA), Alley has been chairing the SCRS Career Center Committee as it unveils an additional online feature for the membership. "It's like a job board," she explains, matching owners with new hires and employees with new opportunities.

"We're going to be rolling out some other new innovations," says Alley, such as career fairs and other events. "People need to know it's there for this to work."

## Working for the customer

Based in San Rafael, Calif. — boasting a robust annual family median income of \$96,660 compared to the nationwide level of \$65,443 — Barsotti's has been serving Marin County and the San Francisco Bay Area since 1947. The original name has been retained throughout several ownership changes. "At one point we were a dealer body shop, and now we're independently owned," she says, referring to a corporate structure headed by President Tom Price.

Two direct repair program (DRP) affiliations are maintained with a pair of smaller insurance carriers; additional DRPs are not being sought because of the shop's policy of exclusively utilizing OEM parts. "The DRP model doesn't fit into our business model,"



## BARSOTTI'S BODY AND FENDER SERVICE

San Rafael, Calif. // [www.barsottis.com](http://www.barsottis.com)

**Tom Price**  
President

**50**  
No. of bays

**1**  
No. of shops

**Celette**  
Frame machine used

**70**  
Years in business

**Spies Hecker**  
Paint supplier

**45**  
No. of employees

**CCC, Mitchell,  
Audatex**  
Estimating systems used

**30,000**  
Total square footage  
of shops

**\$8 million**  
Annual gross revenue

says Alley. A focus on high-end vehicles tends to resist rapid cycle times and price-based parts purchasing. "A lot of the cars we repair are European, and parts sometimes take time to arrive," she said.

"Over here, experience is our most valuable asset. Combined with intensive and regular training, a state-of-the-art facility and the latest technology available, we provide the highest quality repair available."

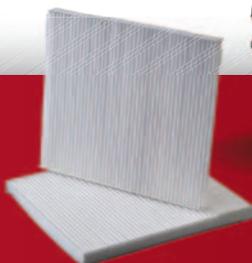
Customers "just want the same" components affixed to their prized vehicles, placing aftermarket parts outside of the desired standards. "That's always been a key part of the business. We're very quality-oriented," Alley says. "We work for the customer, and that's very clear here."

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Besides, she continues, “we’re starting to see more insurance companies going to ‘open shops,’” especially when you consider that Barsotti’s is the go-to collision repair destination for numerous dealerships throughout the region. Word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied customers are frequent.

“We get a lot of referral business. We have a very good reputation and we have a lot of attention to detail,” Alley said.

Jaguar, Land Rover, Tesla, McLaren, Aston Martin, Volvo, Infiniti, Nissan, Volkswagen, Audi, Porsche, Toyota and Honda are among the officially approved nameplates repaired at the high-volume shop. “For us, the certification is like building brand loyalty,” says Alley, emphasizing the importance of ongoing workforce education and a commitment to executing exquisitely flawless repair results.

“I don’t send technicians all over the country for training to have them come back and not want to do it right,” Alley insists, “and the customer feels that.”

A willingness to pursue continuous training is a prerequisite for the entire staff, particularly new hires. “The first couple of years are grueling for them — lots of travel and lots of training. They can spend a lot of time out of the shop,” she said.

Less-experienced staffers are paired with veteran personnel to ensure that all OEM-certification-based repair procedures are in full compliance. “We have a good mentoring program here,” says Alley. Assignments for additional education are based upon deciding that “this is the next person who’s ready for that step. We have in mind who that next person is going to be,” says Alley.

“We have a couple of techs who have been through most of the programs,” and they fulfill leadership roles on the shop floor for apprentices who are still on an upward training track. “A lot of our employees are cross-trained on different vehicles, so there is never a total breakdown if someone’s on vacation or someone leaves,” she notes. Opportunities for advancement are a constant within the

company’s culture. “We have lots of employees who started here driving customers or cleaning the shop.”

When bringing new people on board, “it’s really about the person. In the interview process I look for ‘attitude,’” which entails a genuinely friendly and helpful demeanor along with a desire to learn. Key takeaways from the questioning include: Are you a nice person? Can you work on our team?

“In our area every shop has their own way of doing things,” thus “experience” is less of a desired trait. A candidate who hints that he or she is all-knowing of repair procedures or set in their ways won’t make the cut. “You want someone who is humble and is willing to be a part of the team. The industry has changed so much and so fast that a lot of people have not adapted to it — but a lot of them have, and those are the ones we want,” Alley said.

When negotiating with insurers, “If you’re about serving the customer, you have to find a balance, and we navigate that quite well. They demand things from us, and we demand things from them. Our friends on the insurance side don’t want to pay for unneeded things, either.”

Subpar parts don’t make the grade, nor does an insurer’s insistence on quickness versus quality. Adhering to certification standards is sacrosanct. Regarding particular models, for example, frequently “we’re the only ones who can purchase the paint, and it comes from Europe,” said Alley.

### Solidifying connections

“We work very well with the dealerships (for parts procurement), and our paint jobber is excellent,” says Alley, referring to Dunaway Paint Supply/Dunaway Auto Parts in Petaluma, Calif., in business since 1952. “They’ve been with us for over 15 years,” says Alley. “We pay our bills, and they want to give us good service.”

Very little advertising is booked with mainstream media outlets; an attractive website and steady social media postings are paired with brochures, plus direct-to-



dealer ads are placed to solidify referral connections.

With a motto of being “environmentally conscious for the future,” the shop has a rigorous pro-nature plan that includes comprehensive water conservation efforts and a recycling program involving aluminum, metal, urethane bumpers, cardboard, filler dust, batteries, tires, oil, coolant, brake fluid, lacquer thinner, paint byproducts, toners and office paper. The detailing department embraces a complete line of biodegradable washes and cleaners.

Alley has been with Barsotti’s since 2003. Her accountant mother had a client who owned a collision repair business, and fresh out of high school at age 18 “I went to college at night and worked at that shop during the day. I learned a lot there and really enjoyed the industry — and I still do!”

Her then-employer operated “more of a DRP shop” than a high-end customer-centric enterprise, and Alley was eager to assume an enhanced management role. Meanwhile, as the Barsotti family was selling its business to Peter Sonnen, who opened an Audi/Volkswagen/Porsche repair facility, “I ended up choosing to come here” as a job opening beckoned.

Sonnen subsequently sold Barsotti’s to Tom Price, who actively sought a variety of intriguing high-end certifications — and he still does. “We’re actually working on a new certification right now,” Alley reports. ☞



**JAMES E. GUYETTE** is a long-time contributing editor to *ABRN*, *Aftermarket Business World* and *Motor Age* magazines. [JimGuyette2004@yahoo.com](mailto:JimGuyette2004@yahoo.com)



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# 7 tips to delivering extraordinary service to your customers

KEEP YOUR CURRENT CUSTOMERS COMING BACK AND GET NEW ONES IN THE DOOR

**BOB COOPER** // Contributing Editor

**M**ost shop owners will start pumping more money into their marketing campaigns when they are looking to increase their car counts. This can help bring new customers into your shop, which is certainly important, but the value of your new customers diminishes if you're unable to keep them coming back to you. There will be no greater key to your success in the coming years than your ability to create a memorable customer experience that shows your customers you genuinely care about them, so here are 7 tips that will help you deliver extraordinary service, and keep your customers coming back to your shop for years to come.

#1. Always under promise and over deliver. If you apply this principle to your business, you can often exceed your customers' expectations. For example, when your competitors are asked how long it will take to complete a repair, they will typically tell the customer something like, "It will be done in a week." Unfortunately, they have now set an expectation in the customer's mind. It's no different when you put together an estimate. If there is any way that you can come in even a few dollars under your original estimate, your customers will be thrilled when they come in to pick up their vehicles! Always under promise, and then look for every opportunity to over deliver.

#2. Make sure that all of your employees follow the Marriott Rule. This

rule states that any time a customer comes within 20 feet of any employee, the employee should smile and make eye contact. If the customer comes within 10 feet of an employee, Marriott employees are asked to smile and give a salutation like, "Good morning!" I would strongly encourage you to ask your employees to not only smile and give a salutation, but to also ask the customer, "Have you been helped yet?" Discuss this at your next employee meeting and watch employee morale and customer satisfaction go straight up!

#3. Empower your service advisors so they can put out small fires before they turn into more serious issues. All that you need to do is implement a policy similar to the one used at the Ritz Carlton. At the Ritz, they empower all of their employees with a predetermined budget that they can use for customer satisfaction. You should do the same. Set aside a small budget that your service advisors can use to resolve customer complaints on the spot, and long before you have to get involved. To reward your employees who provide exemplary customer service and do not need to exhaust this budget, you can give them a portion of the unused money!

#4. Be very careful with using the word "free." Most people view something that's free as being of little or no value. What you should do is tell your customers that the service is "no charge." This will send a strong message that there's a value to the service, but you are setting the cost aside for them.

#5. Make a habit of always asking

your customers, "Is there anything else that I can help you with?" If you ask this question when you're writing up the customer it can obviously lead to additional sales, but beyond that, it's a question you should ask throughout the entire customer experience. You should ask the very same question after your customers have authorized your recommended repairs; at car delivery; and when you have completed your customer follow-up calls. The value in asking this particular question is that it shows your customers that you genuinely care about them, and that you embrace every opportunity to help them in any way possible.

#6. Always follow through on what you say you are going to do. If you give a customer an estimate, then we all understand it to be just that: An estimate. On the other hand, if you tell a customer that the repair won't run over \$500, and you find out later on that it does, then you should pick up the difference. Not only is it the ethical thing to do, but that customer will sing your song for years to come, because people always enjoy dealing with people who make promises... and then deliver.

#7. Never forget: It's what you do after the sale that counts. Follow-up thank you calls that are genuine and from your heart are priceless. 📧



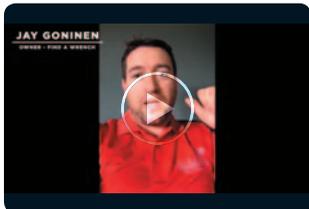
**BOB COOPER** is the president of Elite, a company that offers coaching and training from the industry's top shop owners.  
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## MECHANICAL MOMENT

SERVICE REPAIR PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS THAT JUST MIGHT BENEFIT YOUR SHOP TECHNICIANS

### FORD E-450 MISFIRES — BUT NOT UNDER A LOAD UNDER THE LOAD, THE MISFIRE COUNTS WENT TO ZERO OR WERE VERY MINIMAL — THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT

**VEHICLE:** 2011 Ford E-450, V10-6.8L, Automatic Transmission

**MILEAGE:** 54,006

**PROBLEM:** The engine in this van had been replaced by another shop and the MIL was on. They had replaced the spark plugs and installed new coils but the misfires continued.

**DETAILS:** When the customer brought it to the new shop, the tech retrieved DTCs P0300, P0301 and P0307. A static compression test revealed no mechanical problems.

With a scan tool connected, the tech checked the misfire counts and noticed that the misfire counts increased between 1500-2000 rpm in Park or Neutral and in 4th and 5th gear between 1500-2000 rpm. Under load, the misfire counts went to zero or were very minimal — the opposite of what you would expect.

**CONFIRMED REPAIR:** The technician performed a Misfire Monitor Neutral Profile Correction Relearn procedure and the problem was cured.

**SYSTEM STRATEGY:** For the misfire

detection system to function correctly, any mechanical inaccuracies in the crankshaft position (CKP) sensor must be learned by the PCM. Neutral profile correction learning should be accomplished using a scan tool any time the PCM, CKP sensor or the crankshaft pulse wheel is replaced, or when major engine repairs have been completed.

To determine if the neutral profile learning has been completed, check the MP\_LRN parameter identification (PID) using the scan tool. The PID should read YES if the neutral profile learning has been completed. If the PID reads NO, complete the neutral profile learning prior to diagnosing any misfire DTCs.

*This tech tip and others come from ALL-DATA Tech-Assist, a diagnostic hotline of ASE-Certified Master Technicians. Whatever technicians need — from creating alternative diagnostic strategies to providing step-by-step repair assistance — the Tech-Assist Team can deliver. Learn more at [ALLDATA.com](http://ALLDATA.com).*

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*Nu-Look Collision - Henrietta*  
West Henrietta, New York

**OCTOBER 30**

**I-CAR: Structural Straightening Steel**  
*Galloway Collision Center*  
Fort Myers, Florida

**OCTOBER 31**

**Collision Industry Conference**  
*Renaissance Hotel*  
Las Vegas, Nevada

**OCTOBER 31-NOVEMBER 3**

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

**NOVEMBER 2**

**SCRS OEM Collision Repair Technology Summit**  
*Las Vegas Convention Center*  
Las Vegas, Nevada

**NOVEMBER 16**

**I-CAR: Adhesive Bonding**  
*I-CAR Training Support Center*  
Hoffman Estates, Illinois

**DECEMBER 4-8**

**Advanced Selling Skills**  
*Automotive Management Institute*  
Cincinnati, Ohio

**JANUARY 17-18, 2018**

**Collision Industry Conference**  
*Hilton Palm Springs*  
Palm Springs, California



# CURBING COMPLAINTS

**PERFORMING A FULL BODY DETAILING** on a vehicle receiving new parts can be the key to assuring the customer the new paint matches the factory finish.

## TIPS FOR HEADING OFF OR RESOLVING THE FIVE MOST COMMON CUSTOMER ISSUES

**TIM SRAMCIK** // Contributing Editor

**N**ewsflash: The customer isn't always right.

In many service industries a proclamation like that would knock members out of their chairs and have them spitting out their morning coffee. The collision repair industry, however, is just a bit different.

In most cases, customers have very little idea of what they're paying for — so they have little idea of what value they're

receiving. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the collision industry, customers often have very little face time with shops. Often, they report a claim to an insurer who takes over and arranges transport to a shop that does the job and only sees the customer when he or she arrives to pick up the vehicle.

It's difficult to offer valid criticism of a purchase if you have little idea of what you've bought. (That doesn't mean that shops don't make mistakes or offer sub-par services. There are still too many re-

pairers who don't keep their training up to date or use the most effective tools, products and procedures. Those shops already face a host of issues. This article is aimed at the rest of you who have mastered operations and now want to refocus on customer satisfaction.)

That doesn't mean you can dismiss criticism. Indeed, shops lose valuable work time chasing down the source of complaints or providing resolutions. Your best strategy here is to either head off customer issues with proven strategies or have a set of resolutions in your back pocket you can provide should a problem arise.

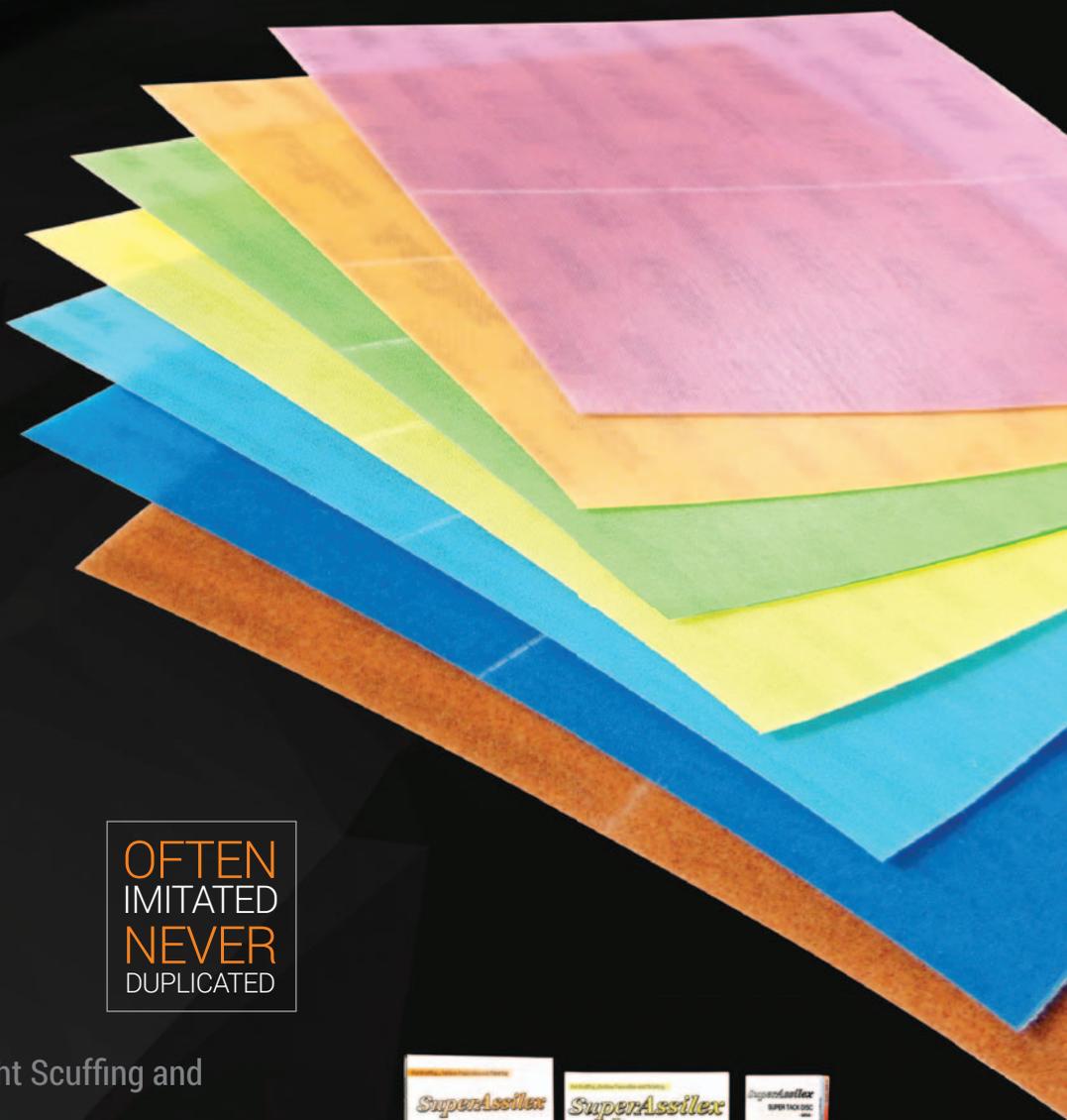
Here's a look at the five most common

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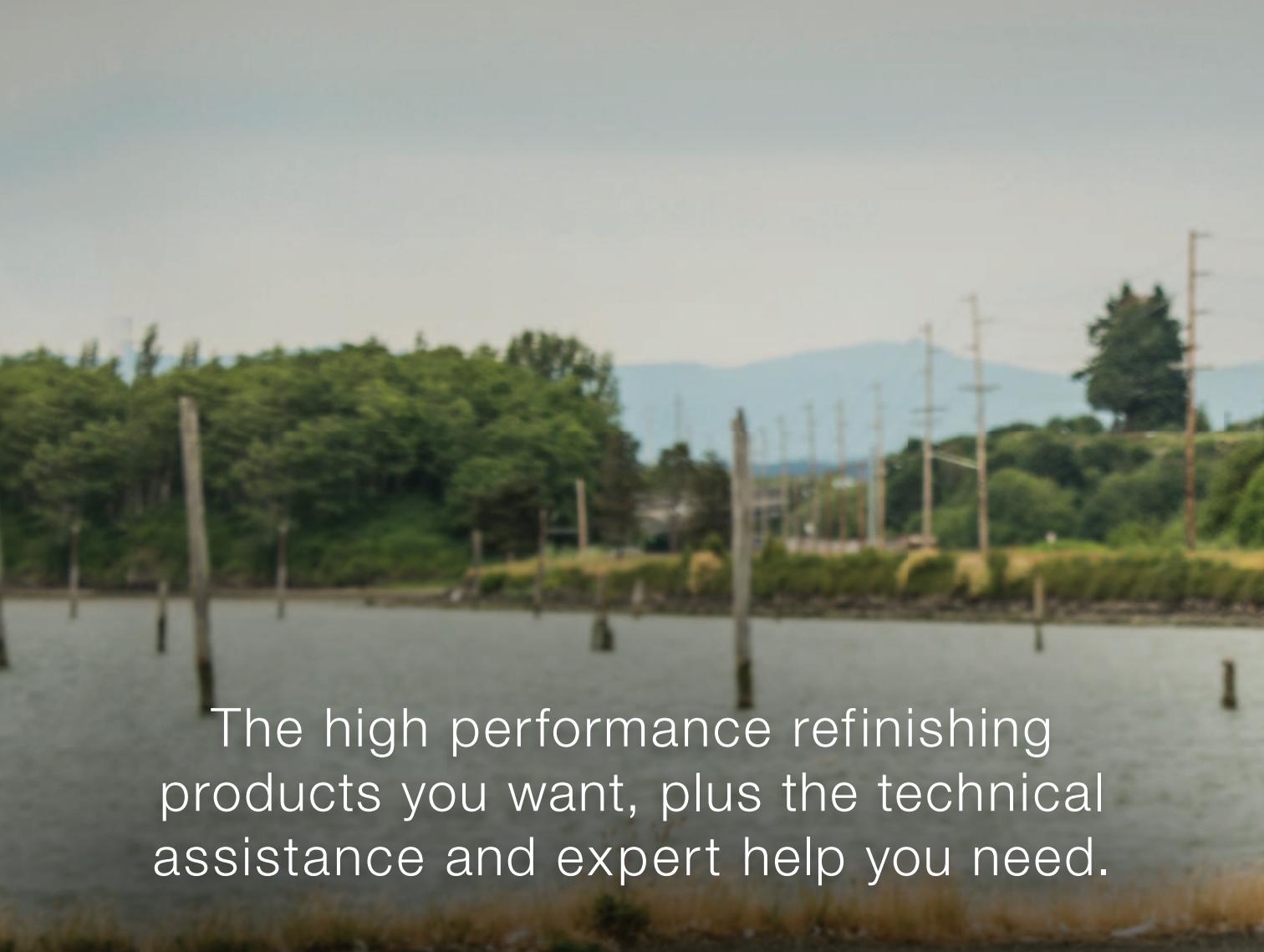
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customer complaints and the steps you can take to address them.

### Complaint #1: Paint match misses

Some of you have seen this one before. The young, accomplished software engineer or marketing expert decides to pay less into a hefty student loan bill in order to close the deal on a coupe or sedan with a high-performance engine and specialty paints and other features. A year or two later a minor fender bender or relatively mild hit sends the vehicle to a shop needing a new fender, quarter panel or something similar.

The shop performs a grade A job, but the customer is highly unsatisfied with a paint job that makes the repair area stand out from the rest of the vehicle. So striking is the difference that the customer is certain the paint doesn't match. Gabe Jimenez, owner of G and Sons Auto Collision in Los Angeles has seen his fair share of this phenomenon. Jimenez has a several-part solution depending on the circumstances.

First off, he's learned to set expectations by telling customers that the repaired area may stand out a bit at first from the rest of the vehicle.

"Modern clearcoats, protectants and sealants provide amazing protection, but harsh sunlight and pollution can do a real

job on finishes," says Jimenez. "Anything new will stand out."

In these cases, Jimenez informs the customer of these factors and suggests an investment in a full-body detailing job. "It honestly makes all the difference in the world," says Jimenez. "Buffing out and adding new wax and other products can bring a relatively new paint job back to life."

If the customer still isn't satisfied, which he says is rare, he goes over the paperwork from the paint department, demonstrates how an accurate paint mix was performed and then shows off the certificates his painters have received for training. Often, he says, simply showing a customer how the shop has put money back into education to help guarantee it can do the best possible job will convince even the most aggrieved customer that a proper repair was performed.

On a side note, Jimenez says his job has quietly added a nice side revenue repairing subpar work from other shops. "Considering the complexity of modern finishes, you really have to have a staff of experts to handle what's coming from manufacturers today," he explains. "Other shops haven't realized this. We're doing good business fixing their problems and making some customers pretty happy."

### Complaint #2: Tales of the unexpected delays

If your shop provides a rental car kiosk, do yourself a favor and spend some time observing the interactions between customers and rental agents. What you'll typically notice is customers who really aren't happy about having to temporarily trade a 7-year-old ride for a brand-new rental with 5,000 miles on it. Customers es-

entially are trading up for a comparable new vehicle but won't be happy until they get old reliable back in the driveway.

That's just how important it is for customers to get their vehicles back in a timely matter. Imagine their frustration then when they've been told a car will be ready on Friday, but receive a call late Thursday afternoon that "something has come up" and the vehicle won't be ready until Monday or Tuesday.

The optimal solution here is providing a repair operation that features a thorough damage analysis (teardown and blue-printing) where any problems that might result in a supplement or delay are spotted and handled right away. Even the best shop can run into issues that cost time — for example, if an insurer demands the use of a recycled part that is difficult to locate or can't be delivered immediately or if the vehicle has to be sublet to another service provider who is having timing issues.

The best solutions here are (1) immediately notifying customers of any potential delays and (2) having a system already in place that regularly notifies customers of the status of their vehicle. Some shops provide regular or daily calls or email updates. Others provide customers with a live "look" over the internet at their vehicles as they're being repaired. Such updates have become a popular, growing trend, with many shops saying the investment is well worth the cost — even when part of that "cost" is negative feedback from the small percentage of customers who prefer not to be regularly contacted. Yes, sometimes implementing systems designed to head off complaints results in complaints, but again these tend to be small in number and well worth the tradeoff.

### Complaint #3: Playing the disorganized blues

Building off Complaint #2 is a related issue — customers not getting the answers they want in a timely manner. Put yourself in the customer's place during this phone exchange:



**MORNING PRODUCTION MEETINGS** are a terrific way to share vehicle information and updates that can be relayed quickly to customers.



**ALWAYS PREPARE CUSTOMERS WELL IN ADVANCE** if you suspect there may be a delay in a repair. Should a delay arise, contact them immediately.

Customer: "Hi. This is Jane Thomas. I'm returning a call from your shop about a problem with a part for my Dodge Durango."

Joe's Collision: "What's the name again and vehicle?"

Customer: "Jane Thomas. I have a red 2013 Dodge Durango."

Joe's Collision: "OK. I have your account up. And what's the problem again?"

Customer: "I don't know. I'm returning a call from someone at the shop about a problem with my SUV."

Joe's Collision: "Who was it from?"

Customer: "I couldn't hear the name. But he asked me to call back as soon as I could."

Joe's Collision: "Hmmm. Let me put you on hold for a minute. (Music plays for a minute.) OK. You need to speak with Heath, but he's out for the rest of the day. I'll follow up with the manager and he'll find out what's going on. We'll give you a call back later today."

Customer: "I'm in meetings all afternoon. I really don't have time for this. Can you just get my vehicle fixed?"

Joe's Collision: "Umm. I'll have the manager call you. We'll see what we can do."

Customer: "Well. OK. Whatever. I just want my vehicle."

Sense the frustration? Bottom line: If your shop appears to be disorganized to customers, it probably is. The best response here is implementing a more organized system that, for one, provides customers with an immediate response to any questions they may have.

Some shops have addressed this matter by putting an estimator, customer service rep or other dedicated staff member in charge of tracking each vehicle and providing immediate customer responses. Some even back up this system with "back-ups" to these employees who can provide answers when they aren't quickly available. Still other shops hold morning production meetings where the status and daily plan for each vehicle is discussed so all employees are aware of updated vehicle information they can relay to customers.

While these efforts may seem a bit much, they really aren't. Successful shop owners point out that good employees (the only kind you should be employing) take an interest in the business

as a whole. Together, they can provide the best possible customer experience through proper, dedicated organization.

#### Complaint #4: Pre-existing damage dilemmas

There are few situations in collision repair more uncomfortable than being placed between an insurance company and a customer claiming that damage — which was probably pre-existing — actually occurred as a result of a collision and therefore should be repaired as part of the claim.

These complaints typically are the product of two different types of customers. The first is someone who honestly hasn't realized a vehicle problem has existed long before an accident. "People don't always pay a lot of attention to their vehicles until an accident occurs," says Shawn Crozat, CEO and part owner of Santa Rosa, Calif.-based G&C Auto Body. "Now they're actually looking so they're going to notice things they ignored before."

The second type is the customer looking to get some "free" work performed. Yes, this is fraud and you certainly want no part of it. There are two courses you can take to handle both of these customer types.

The first is accepting that you are the repair expert and will know if damage is collision related. Repairers *ABRN* spoke with say that a little experience goes a long way in helping shops recognize what damage actually is related to an accident. Point out to customers that they may just be noticing pre-accident damage for the first time. If they persist in pursuing the matter, Crozat says his shop will fix the problem — at the customer's expense.

The second strategy you can employ here is stepping out of the way and having the customer work out the dispute directly with the insurance company (since they are the disputing parties). Bruce Halcro, owner of Capital Collision Center in Helena, Mont., and a board member of the Society of Collision Repairers



**SHOULD CUSTOMERS RAISE ISSUES** over damage they say is collision related but you believe to be pre-existing, keep in mind that you're the expert. You can offer to repair these damages at customer expense or help facilitate a meeting between the customer and insurer so they can work out a resolution.

(SCRS) says his business will help arrange meetings or phone conferences between customers and insurers and help prepare the customer beforehand to know what to expect.

From there, those two parties resolve the issue. If customers walk away without getting the resolution they wanted, you don't get the blame.

Using either Crozat or Halcro's policies provides customers with solutions. It isn't always what they want, but they're solutions nonetheless and all you can be expected to provide in these circumstances.

### Complaint #5: Post service blues

Label this one — SBD, silent but deadly. The costliest complaints customers make often are the ones you never hear. They arise after the vehicle has been repaired and delivered when customers have time

to dwell on your services, discuss their experience with other repair customers (not necessarily your customers) and make a decision on your work that may or may not have a factual basis.

What does that mean? Consider again the fact that customers often have very little personal interaction with shops and have little idea of what happened during the repair. How can they make an honest assessment of your shop with such little information? In fact, the less information they have, the more likely they are to produce complaints where no complaint is justified.

The best course to follow here is getting out in front of these issues by educating customers before and after the repair.

Before the repair, schedule time to sit down with customers, explain the work, talk about expectations, allow them to tour your shop and ask questions. This

is also the time to build their confidence by going over your qualifications — shop experience, history, training, success stories, etc. If a customer can't actually come in for the pre-repair discussion, arrange one over the phone. Even if customers don't appear interested, take the time to set expectations.

Following the repair, schedule the delivery and time to review the work. Casey Lund, manager of Warrensburg Collision in Warrensburg, Mo., says scheduling a delivery is just as important as scheduling the repair. His shop sets aside a specific time for each customer and preps them on what to expect. When the customer arrives, a service rep reviews all the work and handles any questions.

"We make sure they know exactly what we did and describe how the work is high quality," explains Lund, who says this strategy reduces any complaints or misunderstandings a customer might later have.

Also, it provides a significant final contact with the customer that is both positive and stress free, two vital ingredients in the kind of positive customer experience that eliminates potential residual issues.

### Worth the time

All of these solutions do require the investment of shop time, something that's usually in short supply. The good news is that they can be made part of larger operational strategies that help shops run more efficiently so shops (and customers) receive multiple benefits from the same efforts.

Sometimes, perhaps even quite often, the customer is right. Their feedback, no matter how negative, can help you build a better business — one where you and your customers can both be right nearly all of the time. ■

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**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)



# ANALYZING ADAS

**THESE MATS** are required by Ford for aiming vehicles equipped with a 360° camera feature.

## PERFORMING DAMAGE ANALYSIS FOR ADVANCED DRIVER ASSISTANCE SYSTEMS (ADAS) AND DRIVER CONVENIENCE SYSTEMS

**JASON BARTANEN** // Contributing Editor

**A**s collision repair diagnostics and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) continue to take center stage in the collision repair industry, there has been a lot of conversation around OEM position statements, pre-repair and post-repair scanning. We are also, finally, starting to hear conversations around post-repair calibration and aiming. One topic we're not hearing nearly as much about is how to determine if a vehicle is equipped with ADAS and the damage analysis process for identifying if there is damage to one, or more, of these systems.

### Terms to know

Each OEM has different names for the

various ADAS on today's vehicles. To address this, I-CAR published a Vehicle System Definitions page on its Repairability Technical Support (RTS) website ([ABRN.com/VSD](http://ABRN.com/VSD)). On this page, I-CAR identified each system by an industry-accepted name and broke down the basic operation of each system. Understanding these terms is critical to understanding how a particular system is supposed to be functioning, which will help with the entire repair process.

Driver convenience systems also go by many names: auto up and down windows, automatic liftgates, automatic climate controls, navigation and automatic sunroof, to name a few. These systems also require an awareness of how the system is supposed to function to ensure that it is in the proper working order after repairs.

### Damage analysis process

Once you have an understanding of the ADAS terms, the next step is the actual damage analysis process and understanding which systems are on the vehicle being analyzed. Your first stop should be the OEM Calibration Requirements Search tool ([ABRN.com/oemsearch](http://ABRN.com/oemsearch)). This search tool will allow you to identify which system(s) a particular make/model might be equipped with. More information on this tool will be covered later in this article.

To create the best practice around identifying and analyzing potential damage to ADAS, I-CAR and subject matter experts from vehicle makers, collision repairers, insurers and tool and equipment makers have been meeting to develop, update and publish a best practice

on Damage Analysis for ADAS Identification and Calibration Requirements (ABRN.com/ADASbestpractice).

Once you've identified which options the vehicle might be equipped with, you'll need to determine which, if any, of those systems the vehicle you're analyzing has. There are several ways to approach this step, including looking for visual indicators that can be used to identify ADAS-equipped vehicles (Figure 2). Look inside the vehicle for enable/disable switches for many of these systems. With some time and experience, you'll soon be able to quickly identify if a vehicle is equipped with lane keep assist, adaptive cruise control or other ADAS.

Another way to identify the presence of ADAS is to use a factory scan tool. Oftentimes, an OEM scan tool will help identify all of the ADAS modules and build data for the vehicle you're analyzing. A benefit of an OEM tool that will become useful following and sometimes during collision repairs is that they can perform all program/scan/calibration/initializations. (*NOTE: Aiming targets and driving the vehicle may still be required, in addition to the scan tool.*) OEM scan tools will also have the most current model year information.

Another way to identify if the vehicle is equipped with ADAS is to use an aftermarket scan tool. Many of today's aftermarket tools identify most modules on ADAS-equipped vehicles. However, they may not have coverage for the most current model year and sometimes will not be able to identify/communicate with all modules. A factor to consider if you're actively involved with, or are interested in joining, an OEM repair network is that the OEMs don't often test or approve aftermarket scan tools, and they may not be approved for a network program, if a scan tool is required. Several of the aftermarket scan tools can perform many program/scan/calibration/initialization procedures, but not all of them offer targets for the procedures (Figure



**THESE ENABLE/DISABLE SWITCHES** are indicators that this vehicle is equipped with lane keep assist and adaptive parking systems.

1). Unlike many of the aftermarket scan tools, a code reader will not have the capabilities to perform any program/scan/calibration/initializations.

Another possible way to identify which ADAS is on a vehicle is by using OEM repair information and VIN build data. Oftentimes build data will be available in the vehicle maker service information by inputting the VIN (Figure 3). Be aware that not all OEMs have build data in non-dealership information and that not all OEM build data terms mirror repair information terms. Instead, some will have a sales designation for an ADAS that does not match the name in the repair information. As an example, we researched the build data and found that on a Ford F-150 equipped with adaptive cruise control, the service information refers to the system as "adaptive cruise control," and it is controlled by the cruise control module, frequently noted as "CCM" in the service information. However, when reviewing the build data, it's listed as "ADP SPD CNT" and it's grouped with "COLL MIT & FWD SNS" (collision mitigation and forward sensing). If you're scanning the build data for "adaptive cruise control," "CCM," or

"ACC," you're prone to miss it. Conversely if you search for the build data terms in the service information (Ford's keyword search works excellent), you won't likely find what you're looking for.

Once you've identified the system(s) the vehicle is equipped with, a visual inspection of the sensors, cameras and/or wiring harnesses will help identify if there is likely damage with the system. If the vehicle has power, you may also want to check the dash for Malfunction Indicator Lamps (MILs). If there is an MIL illuminated, it's an indication that there is likely some type of damage with the system. However, the lack of an MIL is NOT an indicator that there isn't a system issue. Many of these systems do not illuminate an MIL. Also keep in mind that a message may appear on the infotainment screen indicating that a system is unavailable.

Following visual inspection, the next step in the process would be to perform a pre-repair scan to determine if there are any diagnostic trouble codes (DTCs) related to any of the ADAS. A pre-repair scan is defined as "a step in the damage analysis/blueprinting process used to identify errors, faults and/or damage related, and unrelated, to the collision. Pre-

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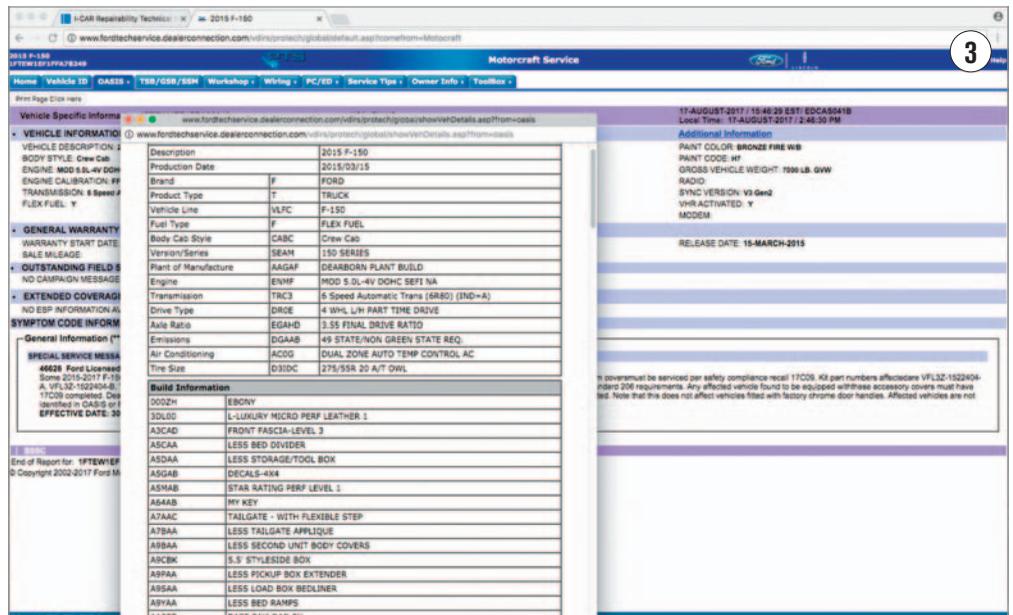
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repair scanning is also done to capture DTCs. A pre-scan is not possible if the 12-volt electrical system and vehicle communication networks are disabled or cannot be maintained throughout the scan. If a pre-scan is not possible because of vehicle damage, it should be done as soon as repair progress allows it to be done safely.”

DTCs do not identify which part needs to be replaced; rather, DTCs are a piece of the diagnostic process that will lead a trained and qualified technician to the correct test to accurately diagnose the damage.

Ensure that you have proper battery support when scanning. Although this process was developed to cover ADAS, the process can be applied to other electronic systems, such as restraints, adaptive lighting and other systems that may require calibration and/or aiming.



**BY INPUTTING THE VIN,** Ford offers vehicle build data on their service information website.

Following the pre-repair scan, the DTCs can be used, along with flow charts and part location diagrams, to determine if there is damage to one of these systems. The DTCs, along with the “collision advantage” and a customer consultation can be used to identify which DTCs are likely col-

lision-related and which DTCs are likely not related to the collision. Identifying likely and unlikely related DTCs can be a significant benefit for all parties involved in the process. Unrelated DTCs can be an upsell opportunity for the collision repair facility, while benefiting the insurer when the DTC isn’t part of the claim.

Once any damage is identified to one of these systems, you’ll want to determine if there will be any calibration or aiming required following repairs. Identifying calibration/aiming requirements during the damage analysis/blueprinting process is important to develop a solid repair plan. Some of the calibration/aiming procedures will require a scan tool, a test drive, and/or special tools and equipment. Proactively planning for these procedures can minimize delays in returning the vehicle to the customer. This will help with cycle time, customer satisfaction and may reduce rental car days. One noteworthy item here: even if the system isn’t damaged, it may have to be aimed/calibrated following repairs if adjacent parts are removed or replaced.

To help identify when calibration or aiming is required, I-CAR invested thousands of hours to develop the in-



**THE I-CAR REPAIRABILITY TECHNICAL SUPPORT PORTAL** offers a wealth of technical information, including the industry’s first, and only, OEM Calibration Requirements Search tool.

dustry's first OEM Calibration Requirements Search tool. This search tool can be accessed from the I-CAR Repairability Technical Support (RTS) portal at ABRN.com/rts (Figure 4). This tool identifies ADAS options on many of today's late-model vehicles. The tool also lets users know which cameras and/or sensors provide input to the system, where they are located and whether DTCs or MILs will be present if there is a problem with the system. The search tool also lets users know which conditions necessitate a calibration or aiming procedure, if a scan tool is required, if other special tools are required, and whether a DTC or MIL will be set if the procedure isn't completed, or if it is completed improperly. As an example, on the aforementioned F-150, adaptive cruise control has a sensor located behind the front bumper that requires calibration if the sensor is

removed (even if undamaged). The procedure for the sensor calibration/aiming also requires a scan tool and at least one special tool for the procedure.

The OEM Calibration Requirements Search tool does not include the actual procedures for the calibration/aiming. Access to OEM information is mandatory to perform post-repair calibration. A proper scan tool, special tools, and/or a test drive following OEM established parameters might also be required.

In addition to the ADAS, pay close attention to many of the other driver convenience systems during the damage analysis process. Many of these systems also have calibration procedures that are required following repairs. Many of these systems will also have to be reset/initialized/programed if the battery has been disconnected or a part of the system has been disconnected or replaced.

**Conclusion**

As vehicle makers continue to expand the use of ADAS and driver convenience systems, the collision repair industry must adapt its approach to repairing these vehicles. The damage analysis and repair planning processes are the first step towards complete, safe and quality repairs. An effective approach to these processes will also help improve cycle time and ensure that your customer's vehicle is returned to the road with properly functioning systems. 📡



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## EIGHT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE ALUMINUM-INTENSIVE 2017 AUDI Q7 AND R8 AND HOW THEY WILL AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS

**TIM SRAMCIK** // Contributing Editor

**F**ans of the *Jurassic Park* franchise are all too familiar with the movies' message about scientific innovation moving too fast. To quote one character wagging his finger at the park founder, "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should."

That's the stuff of movies, but it could also describe a section of the collision repair industry that wonders why automakers seem to work so much harder imagining new designs than figuring out affordable ways to fix them. Judging by a recent I-CAR study showing more than 66 percent of shops not engaging in ongoing training programs, an even larger

part of the repair industry isn't overly concerned with how it will repair these vehicles — for now anyways.

All that needs to change and quickly as the collision repair industry is about to undergo a revolution where tomorrow's designs will forever change how all repairers do business. Enter the 2017 Audi Q7 and A8, two redesigned aluminum-intensive luxury vehicles whose hybrid material engineering is helping to lay the groundwork for how vehicles will be repaired in the decades to come.

Skeptical? *ABRN* breaks down the eight realities Audi's latest creations will be bringing to your doors.

### Hybrid happenings

Not all that long ago, repairers were forced to pause and take a renewed look at their

work when automakers began mixing traditional steels and UHSS. Identifying advanced steels and performing recommended repairs proved to be a challenging task for shops until manufacturers provided more up-to-date guidance on handling these cutting-edge materials. The Q7 and A8 considerably raise the stakes in the materials game by using a combination of four different steels and three aluminums in their body structures alone:

- Soft steel
- High strength steel
- Advanced high strength steel
- UHSS (hot formed)
- Aluminum casting
- Aluminum profile, and
- Sheet aluminum

The Q7 uses a mix of 51 percent steel and 49 percent aluminum in its body, out

acing similar hybrid mixes in the industry and arguably planting a new standard for other automakers to look to.

## Aluminum assimilation

Finishing out its form, the Q7 also includes a full aluminum hood, roof doors and hatch. The four aluminum doors each lost nearly 52 pounds. Together with the advanced steels, aluminum helped the new Q7 shed 716 pounds from the previous generation. The previous Q7 weighed 5,000 pounds, so it effectively cut 14 percent of its mass. The A8 further ups the aluminum ante even higher with a body structure that's nearly 58 percent aluminum.

## Alternative answers

The A8 also makes extensive use of other materials, most notably magnesium and carbon fiber (which finds a home in the Q7's seat dividers, along with nearby areas). Audi says the A8's front front-brace linking and strut towers are magnesium while the largest portion of the passenger cage is a carbon-fiber rear panel. Not only do the two materials cut weight (with magnesium usage alone providing a 28 percent weight saving in place of traditional materials), they also produce greater rigidity for a more comfortable ride, improved handling and better acoustics. Audi says carbon fiber provides 33 percent of the torsional rigidity for the entire vehicle.

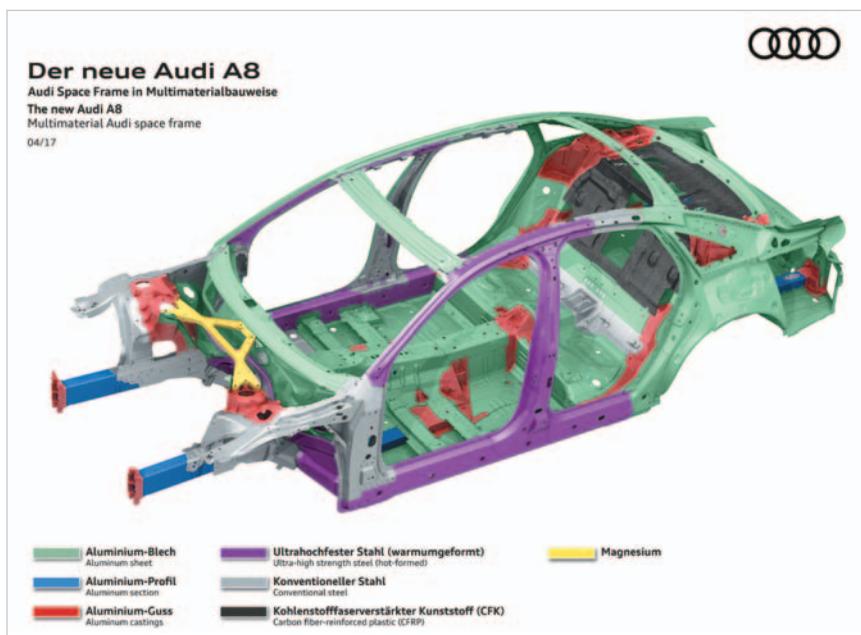
## Bonding breakthroughs

The use of hybrid parts required Audi to increase the number of different bonding solutions that could join different materials. The Q7 features 11 different joining types, including:

- Resistance spot welding for steel-to-steel and aluminum-to-aluminum bonds
- MIG welding
- MAG (metal active gas) welding
- Structural adhesives
- Friction element welding (A rotating friction element penetrates the upper aluminum layer and then produces a frictional joint with the basic material — UHSS hot-shaped steel — through the application of frictional heat and high axial pressure.)
  - Clinching
  - Roller hemming
  - Punch Riveting (using a hollow rivet to connect UHSS hot-formed parts), and
  - Friction element welding

The A8 adds three more bonding types to its mix, including laser and MAG welds and grip-punch rivets.

This means shops wanting to repair the two Audis will need to



be trained in these areas—at least the ones that are accessible to collision repairers. According to Audi Collision Repair Program Manager Mark Allen, some of the joining methods can only be performed by advanced, extremely expensive machining equipment at Audi manufacturing facilities. Should these bonds need

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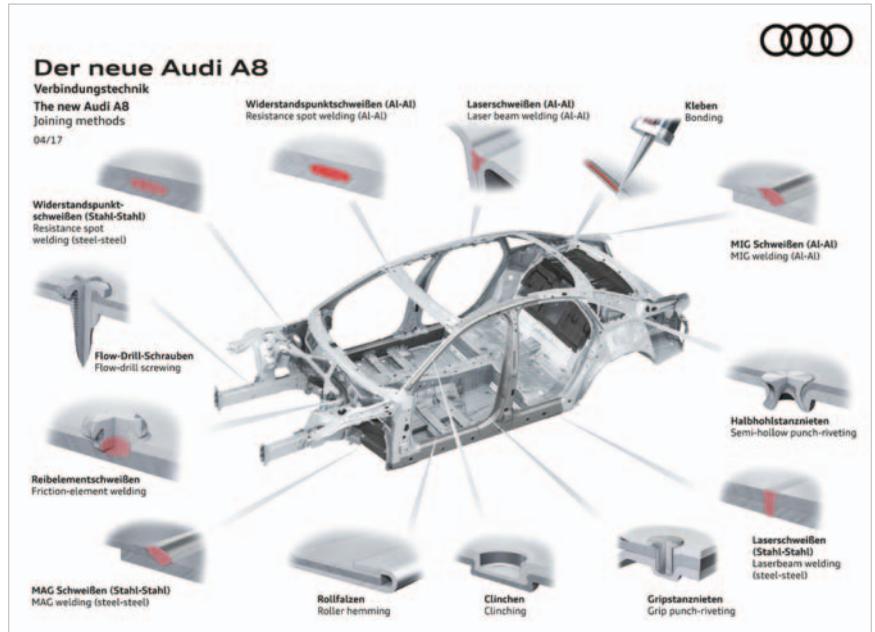
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to be recreated during a collision repair, shops must follow Audi guidelines to build a suitable replacement bond, which in many cases will involve utilizing a rivet to attach UHSS to aluminum.

## Exponential investments

Typically, the only shops needing the training to do this work would be part of an Audi certification program since only those shops can order structural parts. Being part of these programs remains expensive. Allen places the cost of a clean room and Audi-approved tools for aluminum repair around \$90,000. The industry is finding such an investment more acceptable since it can be utilized as part of multiple certification programs.

The extensive use of carbon fiber — or more specifically, carbon-fiber reinforced polymer (CFRP) — in the A8, however, requires repairers to pick up additional costs, including a specialized filtration system and a sonogram camera. “The woodpecker method of uncovering damage won’t work here,” explains Allen, who says only a sonogram camera can provide the cross-dimensional image necessary to determine if the part has been damaged.



**BECAUSE OF THE USE OF MULTIPLE MATERIALS**, both Audis used a variety of joining types.

If that’s the case, he says, the part must be replaced since it cannot be repaired (as with advanced structural parts, only Audi-certified shops can order carbon fiber pieces). Replacement means cutting away the old part and using special adhesives to bond the new part. Off-gassing from this process produces dangerous

fumes that can only be safely removed using a particulate and charcoal filtering unit to protect shop workers. With the sonogram camera — which usually runs near \$40,000 — the total investment for performing carbon fiber repairs runs an additional \$100,000.

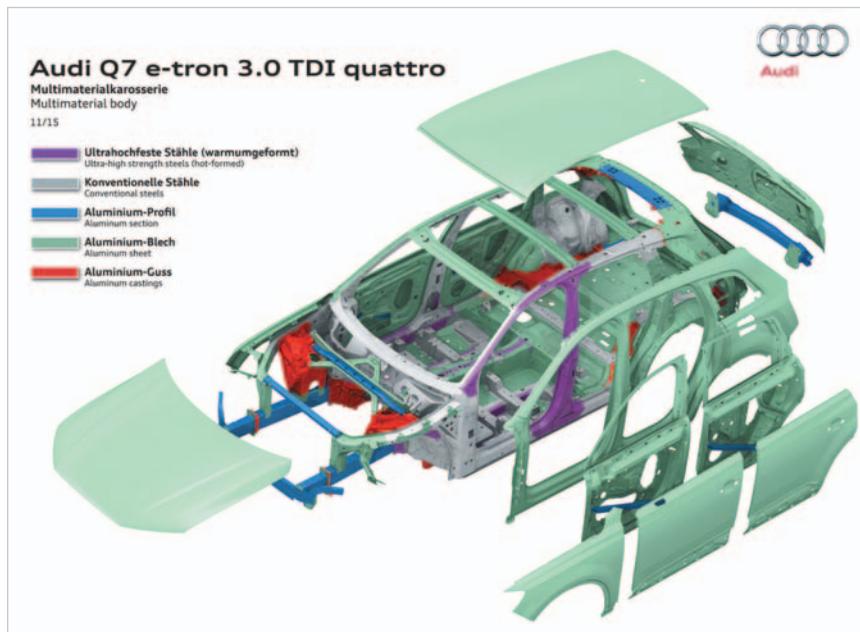
## Big-time buy in

Allen says these costs haven’t scared off shops wanting to perform Audi certified work. When changes to Audi’s certification program were announced, 163 of 170 shops agreed to remain. “They realize that’s the business and understand this is how shops must operate if they’re going to remain in business,” Allen said.

## Industry evolution

The rest of the repair industry might soon need to be adopting the same attitude since Allen is convinced that the kind of design revolution Audi is undergoing will be shared by most auto manufacturers. Allen says repairers shouldn’t discount the effect of Audi’s latest designs simply because they’re featured on high-end vehicles with relatively modest production numbers.

The A8 sold just over 4,100 models last



**THE 2017 AUDI Q7 AND A8** benefit from significant reductions in weight and increased structural rigidity thanks to extensive use of advanced steels and aluminum. The Q7 shed 716 pounds from the previous model.



**THE UPDATED AUDI DESIGNS** have repair implications well beyond those that Audi certified shops will see. Industry experts see wide-spread use of advanced mixed material structures throughout the auto manufacturing world over the next five years.

year while 30,563 Q7 models hit American streets. However, their designs represent the kind of change Allen says manufacturers everywhere will need to adopt for a variety of reasons. Not only does the use of advanced and hybrid material parts cut emissions and improve engine efficiency (to meet demands of numerous countries), the technology Audi has developed to build them into automobiles offers other significant financial advantages.

Audi reports its laser welding technology provides exact positioning that “considerably” reduces the risk of hot cracking during production, which creates damage and waste. Moreover, Audi says the process saves 95 percent on recurring costs in series production since it “eliminates the necessity of expensive process controls.”

Also notable here is the fact the Audi worked with Porsche (both are owned by Volkswagen) to create this technology. Though Audi says each brand will remain distinct, they will share vehicle strategy for architectures, modules and components to shape mobility up to 2025, according to Audi. Industry analysts say there is little doubt the technology will see its way into Volkswagens as well, translating into multiple brands and models sporting the same advanced designs with all requiring special tooling and training to repair.

This revolution looks to build steam across the automotive industry as competing OEMs ramp up their efforts to build mixed-material products. “In three to five years, this kind of design will be common in most mass-produced vehicles,” Allen predicts.

### Closing the generation gap

Repairers still needing some convincing on just how rapidly these changes are going to overtake the collision industry might want to consider how quickly they developed at Audi. The first generation of the Q7 (produced 2005-2015) was designed to compete in the hot-selling luxury crossover SUV category by offering top tier performance and safety technology. The Gen 1 featured soft, advanced and high-strength steels, along with some aluminum (making just 8 percent of its mass) in a distinctive body concept with no aluminum or hot-formed steels in the

structure. This same setup that was part of the luxury market is today common in most vehicles, although the steels have in many cases been updated.

The second generation includes all the materials already listed here, along with a design with no horizontal/vertical separation between aluminum and steel. In roughly a decade, the Q7 underwent a transition from using a form that was cutting edge, then became part of the industry norm before suiting back up with an all-new cutting-edge design. It did so in an industry where all auto manufacturers are under pressure to produce the same kinds of innovations in shorter spans of time. Expecting the same kinds of innovations across OEM brands and models in just over the next five years is a pretty safe bet.

Considering the repair industry is playing a kind of “game” predicting whether, where and when they need to invest in training and tools to handle such changes, the Q7 and A8 provide some pretty sound evidence that the time is now to begin addressing hybrid material designs. These vehicles may not be at most shop doors tomorrow, but they have counterparts on the way who may be knocking at doors everywhere by 2020. 📡



**TIM SRAMCIK** has written for *ABRN* and sister publications *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket Business World* for more than a decade.

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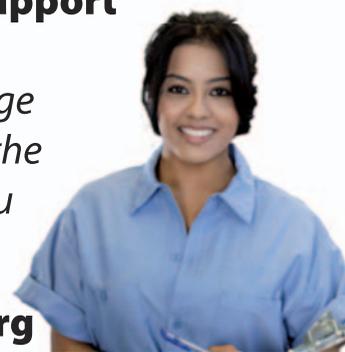
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# COLLISION PRODUCT GUIDE

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

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[WWW.BASREFINISH.COM/GLASURIT\\_923230](http://WWW.BASREFINISH.COM/GLASURIT_923230)

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[DE-BEER.COM](http://DE-BEER.COM)

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

# COLLISION PRODUCT GUIDE

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[BASFREFINISH.COM/RM](http://BASFREFINISH.COM/RM)

## COLOR MATCHING TECHNOLOGY

The new Acquire™ Quantum EFX spectrophotometer is the next generation in color matching technology from Axalta Coating Systems. Its compact size makes for comfortable, one-handed operation that delivers faster, more accurate results. And, it integrates seamlessly with the Axalta ColorNet software platform to provide a full color matching solution.



[WWW.AXALTA.US/QUANTUM](http://WWW.AXALTA.US/QUANTUM)

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

## MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

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[WWW.CCCIS.COM/DIRECT](http://WWW.CCCIS.COM/DIRECT)

## RIVET REMOVAL DIES

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

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

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[WWW.WANDAREFINISH.US](http://WWW.WANDAREFINISH.US)

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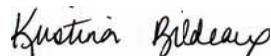
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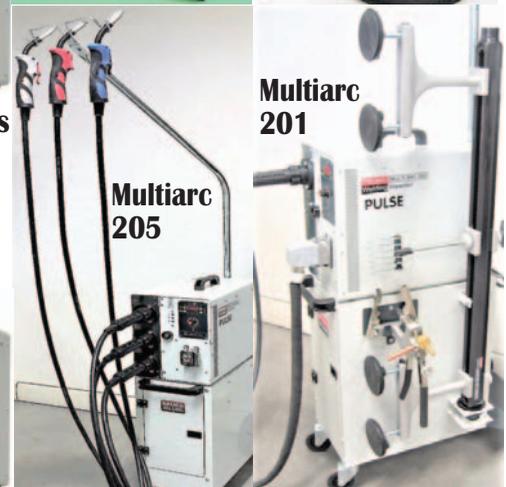
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# Leading the way

If you want to see change in your organization, the change must start with you

**B**elieve we are all called to be leaders, no matter our title. We should all operate with a mindset to influence others in a positive way. What we do not want to do is continue putting out fires each day, resolving needless conflict, living in constant negativity and getting the same mediocre results. We want more! Whatever it is you want to accomplish, it starts with you, the leader.

## Cast vision

Cast a clear, concise vision. Explain the reason your business exists. Bottom line — people will not follow you if you cannot tell them where you want to go and why.

## Coach

I recently attended our annual Business Council Symposium and had the opportunity to listen to Ray Evernham share about his successes in NASCAR, life, business and family. He spoke about his winning team and said, “Champions are not born; they are made.” You may not feel you have a team of champions right now, but it is up to you to develop this team.

## Communication

As a leader, you are a coach, mentor and cheerleader. If your team is not getting the results you want, start with you. Are you setting clear expectations? Does everyone on the team know what the goal is for your shop? Do you share results? The first 10 minutes of our morning release meeting each week is dedicated to KPI review. We give a presentation to all team members outlining sales goals, actual sales, cycle time goals, actual cycle time and several other KPIs that are important to our business. Find ways to communicate your vision and goals consistently.

Once you have communicated the goal, ask questions and listen intently to ensure everyone heard what you intended to communicate. Simply because you said something does not mean you communicated effectively. In every one of our relationships, whether it is professional or personal, there have been times when we communicated something and the other person heard something completely different than what we intended to communicate.

As Mike Jones, president of Discover Leadership, says, “Be



**LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO UNDERSTAND. IT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO LISTEN INTENTLY AS IT IS TO SPEAK.**

in the moment.” When communicating, stop everything else. Do not check text messages on your phone; do not attempt to multi-task. Listen with the intent to understand. It is just as important, if not more important, for you to listen intently than speak.

## Stop the blame game

Author and Pastor Craig Groeschel says, “A great leader always takes responsibility.” Instead of casting blame, cast vision. When things go wrong, it is so easy for us to point the finger to other people. Ultimately, as a leader in your organization, it is up to you to take responsibility.

Here is an example of how to make the shift:

- Are vehicles getting delivered to customers without proper documentation in the files of insurance approval on supplements?
- Show them why it matters. Why does it matter to your business to have documentation on file before the vehicle is delivered to the customer?

• Show them the process and ask questions that will help you understand if there is a process problem that is hindering this from happening. Maybe the process problem is not consistent 100 percent disassembly, which is causing supplements late in the repair process and making it difficult to obtain the insurance supplement before the vehicle is ready to be delivered.

• Tell them again, and again and again. Constantly reinforce the idea but not in a negative or nagging way. Keep it consistently in the conversation; therefore, everyone on the team understands the importance.

• Celebrate forward progress. Make a big deal when people get it right. Make sure the only time they hear from you is not when something is going wrong.

• Tell stories about someone who gets it right. Praise team members publicly. This could be in the morning release meeting, internal training meetings, simply standing around as a group talking, internal newsletter or an email to all team members highlighting a specific win. 📣

---

**SHERYL DRIGGERS** is the owner of Universal Collision Center in Tallahassee, Fla. Through her career, she has gained specialized experience in marketing, management, public speaking, teaching and fiscal oversight. [sheryld@universalcollision.com](mailto:sheryld@universalcollision.com)



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