



# UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

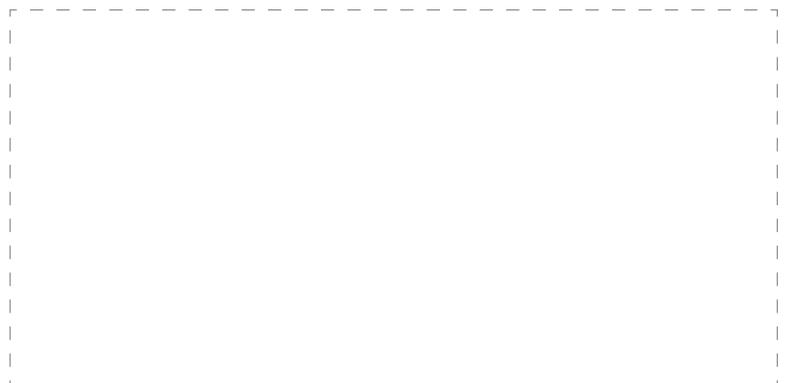
Tips for deciding the best approach to repairs

## 38 THE FIVE TRUTHS OF CERTIFICATION

Turn to these facts when making OEM program decisions

## 12 DEALING WITH INSURERS

Effective communication can increase productivity and boost your bottom line



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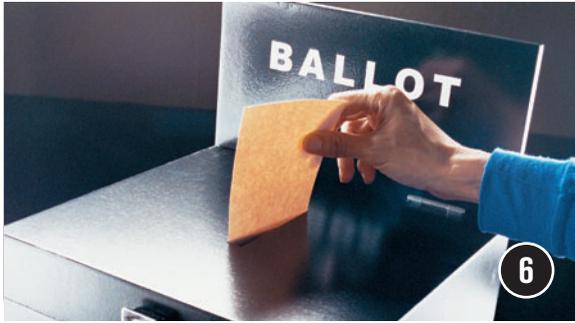
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Turn to these facts when making OEM program decisions

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INDUSTRY POLITICS

## MAINE SHOP OWNER ANNOUNCES BID FOR GOVERNOR

**BRIAN ALBRIGHT** // Contributing Editor

➔ A lifelong body shop owner has stepped into a crowded field of gubernatorial candidates in Maine. Shawn Moody, owner of the 11-store Moody's Collision Centers, announced his candidacy in late November.

Moody, 58, previously ran as an independent in 2010, when Maine's current governor, the outspoken and controver-

sial Paul LePage was elected to his first term in office. Moody has since registered as a Republican, one of five currently in the race. Of the 16 candidates currently on the ballot, he probably has the least political experience. His opponents include the current state house minority leader, state senate majority leader, the Maine Senate President and a former commissioner at the Maine De-

>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 8

### BREAKING NEWS

#### PAINT DEVELOPMENT

## AXALTA TALKS MARKET CHALLENGES, PRODUCT SOLUTIONS



Axalta Coating Systems' Harry Christman, brand manager for Cromax, North American Refinish, sat down with *ABRN* to discuss challenges facing today's collision repair shops and how their company is working to present products that help the industry address these new market developments.

**What are some of the main challenges collision repair shops are facing in the paint and refinish world?**

**Christman:** We see a few significant challenges for collision repair professionals. First is the advancement of new materials by OEMs, which require new coatings and repair procedures. Second is the progression of low-VOC regulations.

In their quest for lighter, stronger body panels, OEMs are moving to aluminum and aluminum alloys, which require special

>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 8

### TRENDING

#### APPRENTICE PROGRAM REGISTERED BY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Service King Collision Repair Centers announced its Apprentice Development Program has officially received certification from the U.S. Department of Labor.

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

#### SHOPS WILL NOW RECEIVE E-COMMERCE RISK RATINGS

A new e-Commerce risk rating system developed by a group of private investors is being evaluated as a secondary screening measure for vendors, lenders and insurers.

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

#### CREF ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPOINTMENTS

The Collision Repair Education Foundation appointed four new members to its Board of Trustees — Kevin Burnett, Don Mikrut, Jay Sharp and Karen Sullivan.

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

#### ASA SUPPORTS VEHICLE DATA ACCESS BILL

U.S. Congressman Earl Carter, R-Ga., is developing an automotive data access bill to create a Department of Transportation committee to ensure the independent repairer has a seat at the table.

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

#### MARTIN-SENOUR ANNOUNCES FIRST QUARTER TRAINING

Martin Senour Paints announced its 2018 first quarter training schedule, with curriculum designed to provide collision repair industry professionals with advanced knowledge.

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partment of Health and Human Services on the Republican side.

There are also 10 Democrats currently running, along with a half dozen or so third-party and independents. Maine will hold its party primaries on June 12, 2018.

While he is effectively an outsider, Moody does have some powerful allies in his campaign. After the 2010 election, Gov. LePage named Moody to the boards of trustees for the University of Maine and the state's community college system. His campaign includes a number of LePage associates, including Republican strategist Brent Littlefield (who ran LePage's 2010 and 2014 campaigns); LePage advisors Sean Ingram and Michael Hersey; former House Minority Leader Joe Bruno; and, notably, Lauren LePage, an attorney and the current governor's daughter.

Although he ran against him in 2010, Moody says that the current governor has "worked tirelessly and passionately to get Maine's fiscal house in order."

"I look at myself as the guy who is going to take what he's built and build upon it," Moody says. "We will continue to reduce government waste and invest the money to allow the economy to grow, which ultimately benefits everybody."

## Starting young

Moody opened his three-bay first body shop in Gorham, Maine, when he was 17 years old and still a senior in high school.

In 1988, he bought an adjacent junk yard that he quickly transformed into one of the leading auto recyclers in the country. That operation was sold to LKQ in the early 2000s. Moody worked for LKQ, helping the company transition new acquisitions, then leveraged the financial windfall from the deal to expand his collision business.

In 2008, Moody bought a small auto salvage/auction company that he later sold to Insurance Auto Auctions (IAA). Both LKQ and IAA operate under lease agreements on Moody's Gorham campus.

Now with 11 locations, Moody's has established a central resource management operation to handle background office activities, human resources, IT, payroll and other functions. "We've reduced our overhead," Moody says. "Our sales are up 17 percent this year, but overhead is up just 1 percent. We have a very lean and efficient administrative structure now."

Moody was spurred into political participation by what he saw as a denigration of tradespeople. "I'm not a political guy; I'm a tradesperson and a common-sense conservative, and that's what we need running for government," Moody

says. "I want to restore the pride and respect that comes with working with your hands and doing something tangible for a living."

Among his policy priorities will be helping small businesses, who he says have "lost their voice" in the political process. "I don't have government experience but I've been experiencing government," Moody says. "We know what regulations need to be changed and streamlined so that businesses have a fighting chance."

Moody plans to differentiate himself from the other Republicans on the ballot with his business experience and outsider status. "The difference is stark," Moody says. "I'm the outsider in Augusta, but I'm the insider of the people."

He hopes his campaign can inspire others in the collision industry to get involved both in his campaign and in politics in their own regions. "We're getting steamrolled by people who have no idea what it takes to run a business," Moody says. "You have blue collar America and white collar America, and that's where the real divide exists today. We have to restore the pride and respect that goes with building things every day."

You can learn more about Moody's campaign on his website, [www.shawnmoody.com](http://www.shawnmoody.com). 

&gt;&gt; CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

processes, and in some cases, special primers to assure durability. And as low-VOC regulations continue to progress, more shops are preparing for them by moving to waterborne basecoats.

**Axalta introduced Cromax® EZ, its latest waterborne offering for the refinish market. How is this different from other products?**

**Christman:** Cromax EZ is different by virtue of being the same. Not only does it spray almost exactly like the old solvent basecoats did, but it's very simple to mix. With Cromax EZ there is only one mixing component regardless

of temperature or humidity, and the mix ratio is always the same no matter what color is being mixed. This simplifies the painter's life and eliminates the chance for errors, application issues, and redos. We've refined the Cromax EZ color match targets and fan deck to make this system simply the best color match to date across the Axalta paint line. That's why we say that Cromax EZ is easy to mix, easy to match, easy to apply!

**Many shops still use solventborne applications. Is Cromax EZ a viable option for them?**

**Christman:** Cromax EZ is a great option for any traditional solventborne

shop looking to convert to waterborne technology. Unlike other paint suppliers, Axalta offers two distinctly different waterborne basecoats to meet the needs of different types of shops. Our highly productive waterborne, Spies Hecker® Permahyd® Hi-TEC, is designed for high-volume shops that need fast cycle times. Its 1.5 coat coverage and wet-on-wet application is designed to allow shops to speed up their painting process and complete more jobs per day.

For more traditional collision shops that don't require maximum productivity

&gt;&gt; CONTINUES ON PAGE 10



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# Standard Operating Procedure

**This SOP Saves Hours, Thousands of Dollars and helps avoid re-dos**

## Step 1

- Use **Sunmatch** handheld as soon as possible to identify color concerns prior to vehicle being in the booth.
- Painter should get color variance decks out as well as actual spray outs if color has been done in the past and check for proper color match. The painter should also be checking the “flop and side tone” at this time.
- If a variant is chosen but no actual spray out has been done, one should be done prior to the car getting in the booth to eliminate color work in the booth.
- We are not working on color when car is in the booth.



**Sunmatch**  
P/N SG-SM

## Step 2

- Use the **Multimatch** after 2-3 coats of basecoat. Painter will know best when they normally have coverage on specific colors.
- Turn off booth lights and inspect vehicle. We are looking for poor coverage as well as defects and bad blends.
- Pay special attention to coverage as you may have it and there will be no need to apply more paint. This is a crucial part of the SOP as we often overapply base coat because we have never checked in the past.
- Check your blend and entire blend area for “sand piling” of the base coat. Your blend may look good but all the color drift on the rest of the panel when cleared over will be an instant redo.
- Turn booth lights on and address areas of concern and do a final inspection with lights off and complete the job.
- When implemented as a SOP no different than a blend photo inspection should take only a minute and in the end save you hours as well as materials.



**Multimatch** P/N SG-MM

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

and prefer to stay with the solventborne application techniques they've already mastered, there's Cromax EZ. Because Cromax EZ applies and blends like they're used to, training is minimal. And because Cromax EZ is designed to use a single mixing component and mix ratio across all paint types and environmental conditions, it actually simplifies the paint process.

**How does Axalta help keep its customers up to speed and educated in the newest refinishing offerings?**

**Christman:** We always put the customer at the center of what we do. Our customers wanted more ways to access our training content, so we've made it easy for them to select the delivery method that best fits their needs. Over the past two years, we revamped our training content so that

it is now available online 24/7, at our 10 training centers across the United States and Canada, virtually via our broadcasting studio in Exton, Pa., and also directly at the shop through field-certified instructors. By diversifying our delivery methods, we've been able to reach numerous virtual participants, enabled a substantial number of eLearning completions, attracted thousands of users to our Learning Campus and completed hundreds of field certifications while increasing our instructor-led participation by 45 percent over the last two years. Moving forward, we will continue to explore ways to communicate and train our customers in ways that fit their needs.

**What is ahead for the refinish market? What are some of Axalta's current focuses for the future?**

**Christman:** There are definitely some givens. Consumer tastes are

always changing, and color trends are always changing with them. Companywide, we're always working hard to anticipate these changes. Without a doubt, the drive toward low-VOC coatings will also continue to impact the industry, and Axalta will continue to develop environmentally conscious refinish coatings. We'll continue to work on new pigments and additives that enable faster, easier and more profitable application by collision repair shops. There are other, maybe less-expected things to think about, too. While they may have sounded far-fetched just a few years ago, autonomous vehicles are definitely on the technological horizon, and they'll have their own set of coating and recoating requirements. We are looking at all of these variables and planning accordingly — all while keeping our customers' needs at the forefront. 📱

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# DEALING WITH INSURERS

Effective communication can increase productivity and boost your bottom line

**ROXANNE DOCHE** // Contributing Editor

**T**he key to having a good working relationship with insurance companies is to implement a process that achieves your shop goals and allows you to provide your customers with a relatively easy and pleasant experience.

As a management consulting company for shop owners, I hear the relationship between the shop and adjuster is almost always pleasant and efficient. While there is not always perfect agreement on the needed repair work or the price points, both the shop and insurer want to best serve their customer. The insurance company relies on the shop for information pertaining to the claim and, whether it's returning a phone call or responding to a supplemental request, the shop expects prompt service from the insurance company.

## It all starts with communication

There's a skill set involved here, which requires a fine balance of negotiation and knowledge. It is imperative that you have a good understanding of how insurance works, what the different types of coverage are and how it relates to your customers and your business. This will help you better identify what your customer needs



and allow you to educate them and give them options.

Although the purpose may be different, you and the insurer have similar goals. You want to maximize profits while completing the job quickly and accurately. The estimate impacts the profitability of the job, and you need to be able to negotiate a good repair price.

It's also not unrealistic to expect your adjuster to return your emails and phone calls, approve and pay supplements promptly, turn in completed paperwork so you have an accurate appraisal to work with and be responsive when you

need a reinspection.

The insurer's primary goal is to minimize claim costs to increase their own returns. When communicating your needs to the insurer, it's important not to lose sight of their expectations. Listen to what is needed from your shop to help aid in a smooth transaction. If you do not completely understand, speak up and ask questions. You are your customer's advisor and informant. You want the adjuster to have a positive experience. If he's thorough and helpful throughout the process, you want him to work with you again.

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In addition to advising your customer, you may often feel like an educator for the insurance company. The automotive industry is consistently changing; shops often struggle with how best to keep up with these changes, and the insurance adjuster is also trying to remain current.

Be the advocate. Communicating and sharing information can result in fewer misunderstandings, more satisfied customers and work that can be substantiated.

### Make documentation an SOP

By documenting repairs, gathering OEM

repair information and utilizing available industry resources, it is reassuring to the customer that you have their best interests in mind. Always write estimates in the format the insurer will use and write only damage you can see and can substantiate. Don't guess. If you take initial notes and photos before the vehicle is torn down, this will satisfy insurer requirements and give you a good overview of the visual damage. Then, after the tear down, finalize your estimate.

By keeping a process in place, you are automatically reducing the risk of errors. In the event that the insurer questions a repair, you have the photos, notes and details you need to provide thorough and complete answers. Not only will you need to document the repair for the insurer, but you will also need to explain the estimate to your customers. Before they leave your facility, think of every possible question that your customer could ask about what is being fixed or replaced, with what kind of part and why.

The key here is to communicate and document. Understand the whats, hows and whys of the claim and make sure your estimator understands them as well. Insurance adjusters are your friends. You both have a customer who is depending on you to resolve their repair issues as quickly as possible with little to no out-of-pocket expenses. Your loyalty is to the customer. Keep the lines of communication open and honest on all fronts and extend the same courtesy to the insurance company as you expect in return. Do you want answers quickly? If so, you should set that precedence by promptly replying to their reaches. If something is being held up on your end, ask the questions you need to resolve it. ■

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For more information on Hyundai's Consumer awareness campaign and a crash course in collision, go to [HyundaiUSA.com/ConsumerAwareness](http://HyundaiUSA.com/ConsumerAwareness).



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**ROXANNE DOCHE** is the Marketing Director for Management Success, a consulting and training company for independent

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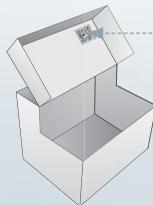
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# The aftermath of parting ways with a DRP

Institute change to prevent making the same mistakes twice

In a previous column, “Be sure you are dancing with the right partner” (January 2018), I wrote about a gut-wrenching decision I made back in 2011 to part ways with a direct repair program that just wasn’t working for us. It was one of those decisions you make without knowing the real impact it may have on your future. The program at that point accounted about half of our volume (as I said, something I won’t ever allow to happen again). But the way it was managed had led me to the point of wanting to get out not only of the DRP but out of the industry entirely.

So what happened after we dropped the program? I won’t lie — the first couple of months were very tough. Sales were down. But that’s what prompted us to make some of the changes I’ve written about in other columns, most specifically shedding a layer of management.

While we were on that DRP, I had managers on top of managers. We had production managers, office managers and a sales manager overseeing our facilities. We had a general manager in charge of everything. You would think with all these managers that I would not even need to be at work. But I was there having more meetings with managers than I could ever have imagined. That’s part of why I hated the business: All we seemed to have was meetings about problems.

So to account for the loss of that DRP, I scaled back that executive team. I didn’t need all those managers; I just needed to empower my people. A shop location doesn’t need a manager to decide when it’s appropriate to put a customer into a rental; everyone in the front office just needs to know our criteria for when that should happen, and they can make that decision themselves.

But the other thing I discovered in the process is that insurers know which shops have which DRPs. And when you decide to part ways with a program, you may become more attractive to other potential insurance partners that may not previously have been interested in having you on their program.



**WHEN YOU PART WAYS WITH A PROGRAM, YOU MAY BECOME MORE ATTRACTIVE TO OTHER POTENTIAL INSURANCE PARTNERS THAT WEREN’T PREVIOUSLY INTERESTED.**

That’s exactly what happened to us. In our case, the word was out by summer that we’d dropped the one DRP, and by snowfall that year, we’d added a couple other programs that were a better fit. By the following year, our sales were higher than they’d previously been with that large DRP, and we’ve done nothing but grow ever since.

Even more importantly, it was a big changing point in my life. Under that program, I’d become a bitter body shop owner thinking this industry is horrible — and going downhill — and that no one can make any money in it. But after dropping that DRP, I realized I just had to make better choices. I had to be smarter. I had to choose partners better, those with the same values as I have. Whether it’s an employee or a DRP, I learned not be scared if the fit isn’t right and I need to make a change. That was all part of a really huge transition I made that year that got me to where I am today.

I share that story with anyone who asks me about getting on direct repair programs. Anyone can do that. But not every program is right for every shop. They are very different.

And it’s critical to be careful what percentage of your workload is accounted for by any one DRP. The programs will come and go. They just will. Local management can change. You can’t presume a program that works for your business today will do so a year from now.

But similarly, if you are making changes to your mix of DRPs, do it very carefully. A program that’s killing you right now may change. So part ways without burning bridges. You’re still likely to be conducting repairs paid for by that insurer, so you don’t want a hostile environment. Be professional and just say, “At this time, this is not the right fit for us.” We’ve ended up back on some programs when 10 years ago we would have said that would never happen. 

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



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# RESOURCE REJUVENATION

### ALWAYS PROVIDE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

and guidance to employees to help them understand how to succeed in your workplace.

## Salvage careers and build business by reengaging with employees

**TIM SRAMCIK** // Contributing Editor

**T**here's a lot you can tell by looking into the eyes of your staff. If you're lucky, you'll see enthusiasm, dedication and energy. What you don't want to see is weariness, boredom and apathy. Couple the latter with work habits that demonstrate loss of interest (tardiness, mistakes, carelessness, etc.), and you have a serious problem on your hands. An equally grim scenario is having staff members who haven't demonstrated they're losing interest, but who have begun looking outside your doors for their next career move.

Employee engagement is a significant issue in every workplace. Some human

resource studies indicate that an average of 15 percent of employees in most businesses have disengaged from their employers. They no longer feel that they're a part of a business and have little interest in growing it since they see no future there themselves. Considering the average shop has 15-20 workers, that's 2-3 employees looking to move on, which translates into an enormous problem in an industry already struggling to replace an aging workforce.

Fortunately, with some big problems sometimes come proven solutions. That's the case with reengaging employees. What follows are steps contributed from human resource professionals to reenergize your employees, along with real-

world examples from shops benefitting from policies intended to keep the light in their employees' eyes from burning out.

### Setting the stage

Before using any of the following in your shop, keep in mind that quick fixes don't work when it comes to helping workers get their groove back. The goal here is to implement steps that transform your business culture into one that continually connects with employees, reminding them of their significance and giving them opportunities to grow within your operation.

#### 1. Listen more

Communicate more! You've all heard that suggestion many times before. Because owners/managers are so used to

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giving direction, they often misinterpret this to mean talk more — which is good if you're giving employees information and guidance they want. But you also have to listen more — much more. This means keeping your mouth temporarily shut and allowing workers the time to speak what's on their minds. It also means delving into what an employee is saying by asking questions and making sure you communicate that (1) you're genuinely interested in what's being said and (2) are taking it into consideration.

It's all too easy for employees to lose interest in a workplace where one's voice isn't being heard. Counter this by developing your listening skills — encourage feedback, take notes, if necessary, and always follow up. Just as important, when possible, put this feedback into action. Shops thrive on new ideas. Employees can be your best resource for the latest industry trends or for workplace changes that make your operation run smoother.

When you listen, you're continuously building important relationships with employees and potentially building your business — two things that go a long way in keeping a staff engaged.

## 2. Set clear expectations

"I really don't know what they want from me." Such is the refrain of employees who feel either lost or isolated in the workplace. Flying solo works only for a minority of workers. Most require and want crystal-clear goals.

Performing collision repairs, like any other job, involves much more than simply handling the task at hand. Employees need additional guidance on what the expectations are both for their role and their place in the business. Above all, they need to know what you consider to be success.

This will vary from one workplace to another, but success-oriented expectations can include setting standards for how many labor hours you expect during each work day, number of estimates written, business opportunities captured or parts painted. Along with this can be baselines for CSI scores, revenue

and cycle times. The point is giving employees a way to grade themselves in the workplace so they know how they fit in.

From there, regularly show employees how they fit into your business's plans. Provide a de-

tailed, big-picture description of your business and the direction you wish to take it. Describe how each employee will contribute to this vision and how in turn each will benefit. "Keep in mind that most employees want more than just a paycheck," says Kathy Beckworth, owner of Great Mornings HR Solutions. "They want to feel needed and significant. Providing clear expectations helps them understand that they have a place in the business's driver's seat."

## 3. Set goals together

One of the best ways to help employees meet expectations and take their turn at the wheel is working with them on goals. Engaged employees are empowered employees. To empower yours, ask for their suggestions on how they should reach annual (or mid-year) goals. For example, if you're looking to raise shop-wide baselines on labor hours, ask your techs for input on what would help them increase output.

"When we were looking for ways to help our shop turn the corner, we turned to our employees to help with planning. The best way to approach that was in the first quarter when we sat down with each to go over personal goals," explains Ray Anthony, owner of Beachcraft Collision in Los Angeles. "We found that by asking each of our guys what he wanted to do to help the shop and himself, we could work out a solution that benefitted everyone."

Anthony adds, "When you give employees a chance to set their own course,



**MAKE A POINT OF SPEAKING** with customers and repeat their feedback to workers. Doing so reminds employees that their work is important and makes a difference in the lives of others.

they begin owning their work. It becomes more meaningful because it's what they want. It really changes attitudes."

Beckworth recommends asking employees to set one personal goal outside their normal work responsibilities. This can be anything from training or reading books on personal improvement. "If you want to appeal to your employees, engage with the person. Help them build skills and qualities they can benefit from at work and at home."

## 4. Use KPIs the right way

KPIs provide terrific insight into where shops can improve and where individual employees are succeeding or falling short. Plenty of shops rave about the positive impact KPIs can have when it comes to setting employee benchmarks and goals and creating healthy competition among workers (when scores are publically posted). This practice can have a downside.

"You risk alienating people," says Beckworth. "KPIs can have tremendous value for an organization, but you have to tread lightly and watch that you don't turn performance into a numbers game. There's nothing wrong with setting standards, but you need to communicate to employees their worth is more than just a series of measurements."

Other critics warn that too much focus on KPIs can further isolate employees as they look to outdo one another rather than working together as colleagues. Engagement and personal growth suffer at the expense of hitting



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and passing numerical targets. The result can be a contentious, unfriendly environment that workers will want to flee.

Beckworth says shops need to find a healthy medium where KPIs are involved but aren't the sole or overriding measurement. "Use your KPIs to improve specific skills," she says. "Work with employees to turn weaknesses into strengths. Let them know you're using these numbers to help them, so they'll see them as a valuable resource for self-improvement."

"Studies show that doing so boosts KPIs. In fact, the best way to grow scores is by cultivating personal investment in the work," Beckworth adds.

### 5. Embrace opportunity

Think about the jobs where you were most unhappy. Odds are they were dead-end positions (not necessarily low-paying) that wouldn't have led to more fulfilling roles. You weren't happy because you weren't satisfied or, perhaps more specifically, you didn't have the opportunity to show off talents and skills that you found fulfilling. That's the case for many disengaged employees.

They may be fine with performing their current tasks for a while, but at some point they need to be challenged with new opportunities. These opportunities can be anything from switching roles — for example, from tech to estimator, detailer to painter, or customer service associate to marketing guru — or moving up through the managerial ranks. The best way to facilitate career opportunities is by building a culture of opportunity where you encourage employees to take their next career step.

One of the keystones of this culture is cross training. Often, employees allow themselves to get stuck in unfulfilling careers because they aren't entirely sure of what else they'd like to do. Giving them the chance to add skills and experience also provides them with the opportunity to discover new roles they'd like to pursue. Some shops have built their success on this notion.

Warrensburg Collision in Warrens-

burg, Mo., provides workers with position functionality so they can fill a variety of roles. Manager Casey Lund also has asked all employees to learn how to use the shop's management system. This system contributed to Warrensburg tripling its revenue in just three years.

Also keep in mind that providing career opportunities doesn't necessarily mean putting employees in different positions. Sometimes all you have to do is offer new tasks. Techs and painters with a flair for the artistic could be drawn to custom work. Employees who enjoy writing can contribute to your website and social media content with postings, new ideas and blogs. Any number of your workers might be excited to pick up technology skills related to diagnosing and calibrating sensors.

### 6. Add the human element

While you're inviting employees to gain a wider perspective of collision operations, boost their interest in work even more by providing one additional perspective — the customer's. Doing this goes well beyond announcing CSI scores.

Beckworth says one of the most overlooked aspects of employee satisfaction is how their work affects the lives of others. Plenty of repairers declare that the collision industry is a "people business" or that they're "in the business of repairing people, not just cars," but many shop workers frequently are removed from the very customers they're servicing. They don't get the fulfillment of helping another human being.

Remedy this by communicating some of the details of each job when applicable — for example, you're getting a single mom back on the road, helping a family resume its normal routine or returning a much-loved vehicle to a retiree. Ask



PHOTO: MAYFIELD COLLISION CENTERS

**REGULARLY COMMUNICATING THE STATE** of your business to staff members and how you envision their future there builds a connection to your shop. It also lets employees know you have their interests in mind.

your customers for feedback. Share positive comments, or at the very minimum, regularly remind employees how much their service means to customers so you can put a face on every job.

Indeed, human resource professionals note the strong link between employee engagement and the knowledge of how staff contributions resonate well beyond shop doors.

### It's your move

Taking steps like these involves a serious commitment from you and your shop's management. That involves time, no small commodity in the world of collision repairs. But that shouldn't be a deal breaker. Think of it this way — you can either invest time and interest to keep your staff engaged and reap the benefits of dedicated, enthusiastic employees or spend even more time and resources seeking replacements while hoping they stay around long enough to help you maintain your current pace. Thrive or survive? Revitalize or subsist?

The better choice seems pretty obvious. 📌



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

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# Sometimes we just need to raise the white flag

**SURRENDER TO ONLY YOURSELF NOT IN WEAKNESS, BUT IN GIVING IN TO CHANGE**

**MIKE JONES** // Contributing Editor

**T**here comes a time in every one of our lives when we need to throw up the proverbial white flag. Most people see that as weak or as an indication of giving up. I submit there is a difference between giving up and giving in.

At Discover Leadership Training, we conduct a four-day fully immersive, experiential leadership program, the Master Graduate Leadership Program (MGLP). The program is focused on helping individuals create a better version of themselves.

Every weekend we conduct the MGLP, at least three types of people show up for the program. First we have the "Hostage." Hostages are individuals who do not expect to learn anything. They are generally in the program because they felt it is a condition of employment. Hostages would rather be doing anything for those four days other than attend the MGLP and most of them feel they have forgotten more about leadership than we could ever teach them.

The second group of people that show up for the program are "Vacationers." Vacationers, much like hostages, do

not expect to learn anything; however, they are happy to be there because it allows them to get out of the office and away from home for four days.

The third group, I refer to as "Game Changers in Training." They are looking for different ways to be a better person and develop higher performing teams.

During one of our Master Graduate Leadership Programs, there was a student that admitted he was a "hostage." He said he did not want to be in the program, that he was closed-minded and didn't expect to learn anything over the four days.

This gentleman was in his early 50s and had experienced what he referred to as significant success in both his professional and personal life. He further stated he was content with where he was and did not see that there was anything wrong or that anything needed to be fixed in his life.

I said to him as I do to you, it is unfortunate most people wait for something to go wrong or break in their relationships before they work on the relationship. We spend a lot of money and time in therapy focused on fixing broken relationships. There is an opportunity for us to deliberately work on taking the relationship to another level before it is broken. The

relationship that I am speaking of in this present moment is the relationship you have with yourself.

When you improve the relationship you have with yourself, every relationship you are in will also improve.

Most people spend their time attempting to "fix" other people in an effort to improve their relationships. I submit the only person in whom you are capable of creating an authentic, sustainable change is yourself. Others are waiting for someone else to change in order for them to be happy or fulfilled.

Surrender to the fact that you do not need to make others wrong for you to be right, that your truth about what is right or wrong, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate is not the truth — it is just your truth. Once you surrender to the fact that your perceptions and interpretations are just your perspective of what is happening in that situation, everything has the potential of changing. If you don't like the way something looks, change the way you are looking at it and it will change.

When you surrender, you are not being weak. Throwing up the white flag in this context is not giving up; it is giving in. You must understand that everything that you fight against weakens you.

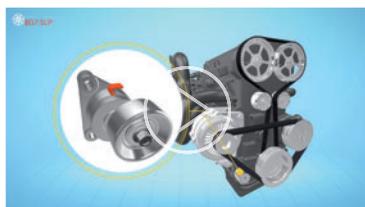
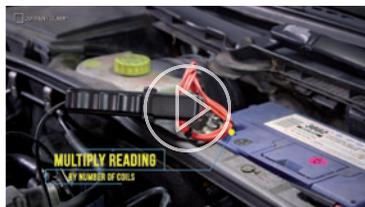
So why not surrender and fight for a better version of yourself? Once the gentleman in our MGLP surrendered and allowed himself to trust the people who gave him an opportunity to have the experience, he became aware that allowing himself to be vulnerable produced a posi-

>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 28

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**MILEAGE:** 169,995

**PROBLEM:** The engine stays running with the key off. The malfunction indicator light is on with 38 DTCs present: U0002, U0100, U0103, U110B, U0114, U0121, U140A, U140B, U140C, U140D, U140F, U0141, U150A, U0155, U0164, U0401, U0404, U0414, U0415, U0423, U0424, U0431, U1118, U1119, U1400, U1401, U1402, U1404, U1405, U1406, U1407, U1408, U1409, U1410, U1505, U1507, U1508, U1509

**DETAILS:** After retrieving the DTCs, the technician checked power to the ignition fuses. He found that there was battery voltage on many of them, even with the ignition switch turned off. Next, he pulled one fuse at a time to determine if there was a "short-to-power" issue coming from another circuit. When he pulled the #8 or

#24 fuse, the other fuses lost power.

After reviewing the schematic, he found that the only thing the two fuses had in common was connector C103, located next to the PCM. He inspected the connector and found both sides of the connector to be corroded and melted.

**CONFIRMED REPAIR:** After replacing connector C103, the engine could then be shut down when the key was turned off. All DTCs were cleared and did not come back. Problem fixed!

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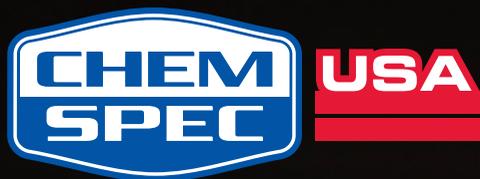


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>> CONTINUES FROM PAGE 24

tive result for him. He became aware that allowing himself to be vulnerable allowed him to learn things about himself that he did not know. By wiping the smoke off the mirror he was able to redefine for himself what he thought was his 100 percent.

Many of you think that if you are discontent with your life, that means you are dissatisfied, unhappy or that something is wrong or broken.

I encourage you to create discontent for yourself today in every area of your life. Creating discontent will allow you to create a better version of yourself with the awareness that we all occupy the largest room in the house and that is the room for improvement.

It is okay to be perfectly happy and satisfied with your life and understand there is an opportunity to make it even better. I do not need to wait for something to be broken and then focus on getting it back to where it was. There doesn't need to be a frown on your face before you move; you do not need to be running from something to move from where you are; and you don't need to be told that you are dying before you choose to LIVE.

When you surrender, you will become aware there is even MORE to life than you have experienced and that you are worthy of an even happier, more fulfilled life. However, you must be aware that the same mind that got you to where you are today will not get you to the next level. You will need to surrender to get there.

I encourage you to throw up the white flag today and surrender to create a better version of yourself. 🏳️



**MIKE JONES** is the founder and president of Discover Leadership Training, a next-level leadership development solutions company in

Houston, Texas. He encourages others to create a better version of themselves by realizing their untapped potential.

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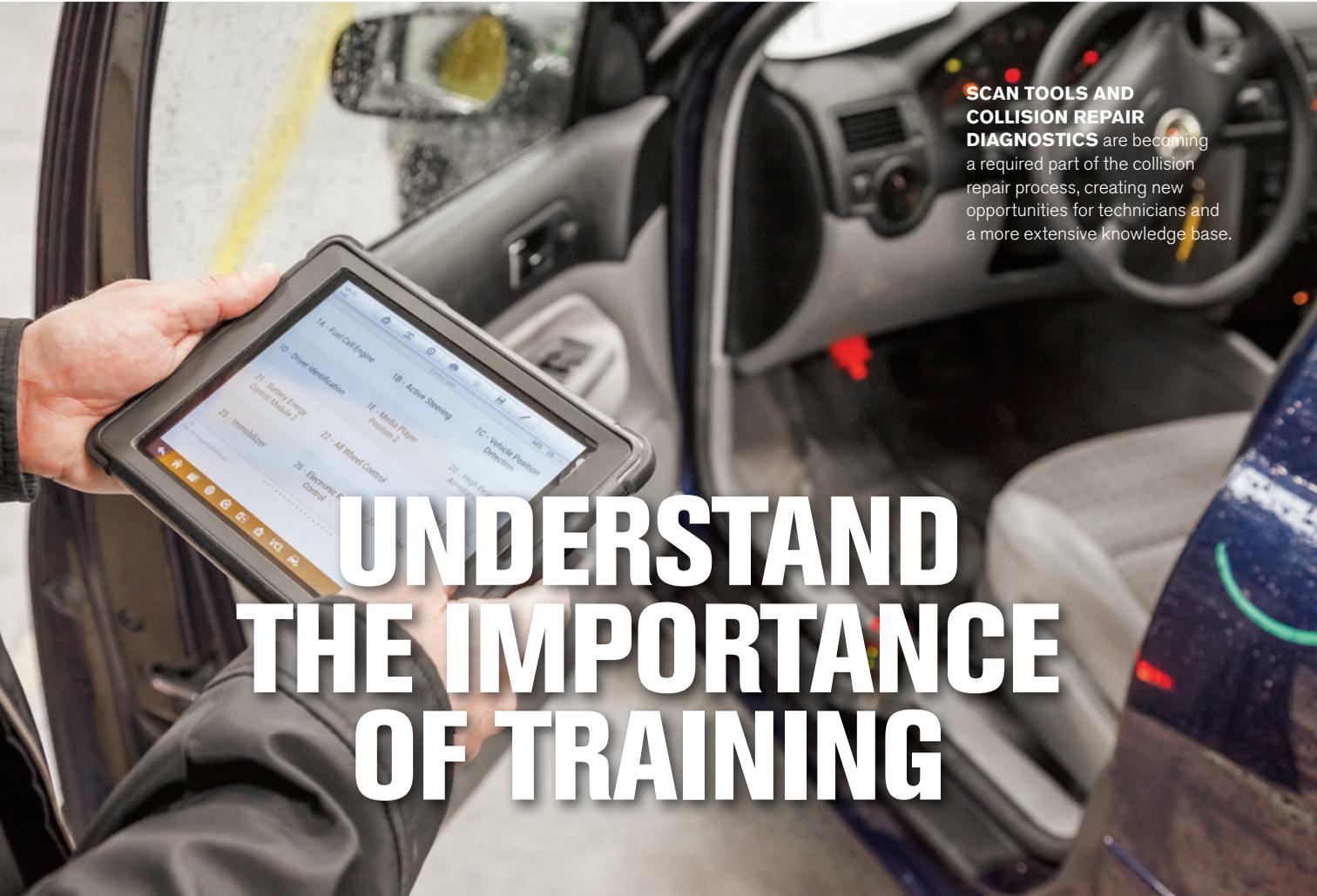
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**SCAN TOOLS AND COLLISION REPAIR DIAGNOSTICS** are becoming a required part of the collision repair process, creating new opportunities for technicians and a more extensive knowledge base.

# UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

**RAPID ADVANCEMENT IN VEHICLE TECHNOLOGIES MEANS TECHNICIANS NEED TO KNOW HOW TO PERFORM PROPER REPAIRS AND WHERE TO FIND THIS INFORMATION**

**TINA GRADY BARBACCIA //**  
Contributing Editor

**M**aking better collision repair decisions benefits both your business and customers by restoring the vehicle to its pre-accident condition and helping to ensure its safety as designed by the manufacturer.

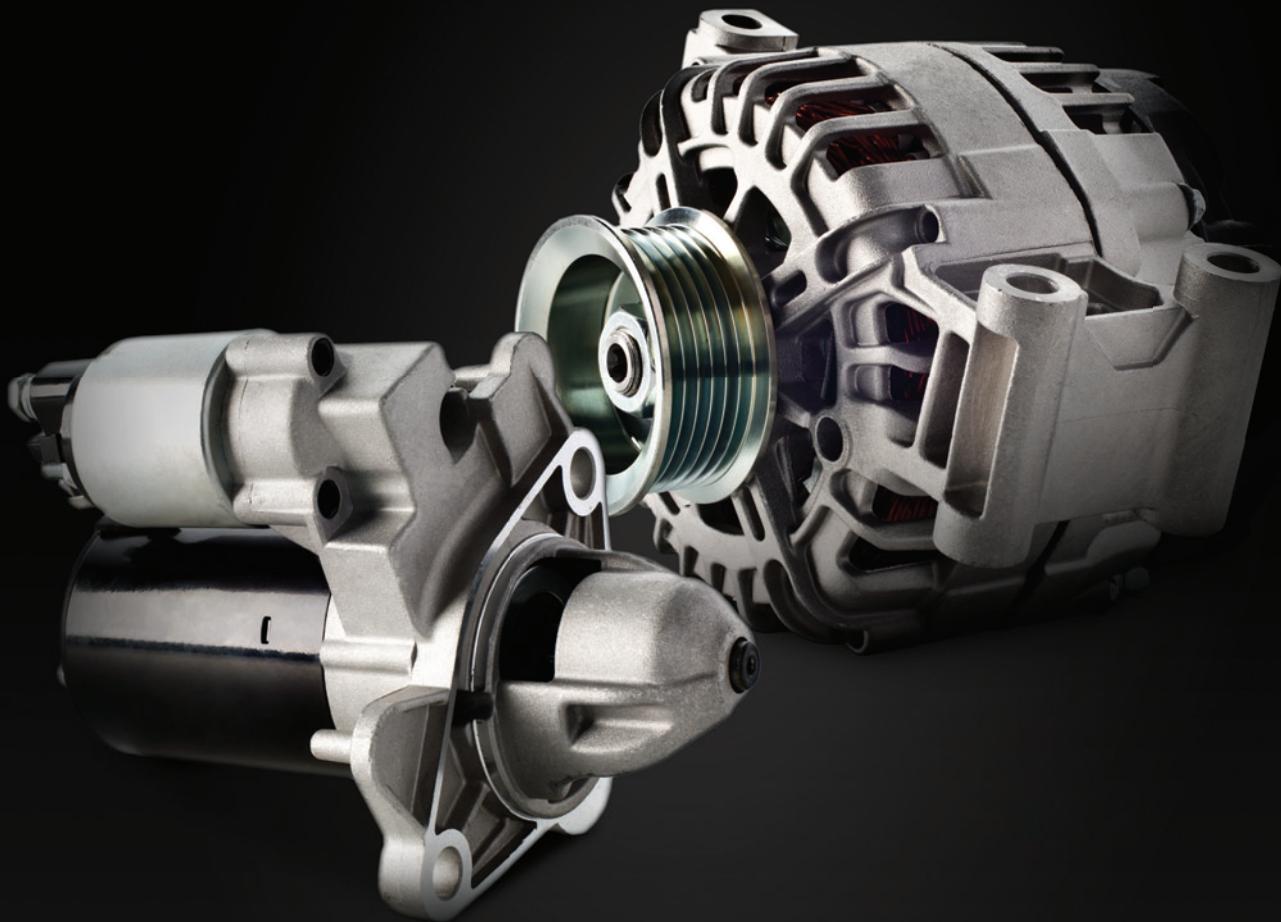
However, this becomes increasingly challenging as the technology in vehicles

and materials used to manufacture them change at what seems like lightning speed.

For many years, vehicles' structures regularly changed, but it wasn't overly significant to the collision repair industry. Starting in the 1990s and since, collision repairers have had to begin dealing with repairing vehicles built with unique structural elements such as hydroforms along with different materials such as high-strength steel (HSS), ultra-high-strength steel (UHSS), some composites

and other mixed materials.

Now, the vehicles technicians are charged with repairing are vastly different than just a few years ago. The Inter-Industry Council on Auto Repair (more commonly known as simply I-CAR) calls it the "Technical Tsunami," which refers to the current and continued rapid evolution of vehicle technologies — i.e. advanced safety systems — and materials like aluminum, magnesium, carbon fiber and advanced HSS.



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"This means a rapidly accelerating repair complexity and the need for new levels of information, knowledge, and skills," says Jason Bartanen, director of industry technical relations for I-CAR Technical Center based in Appleton, Wis. "All the advanced driver-assistance systems such as collision mitigation, adaptive cruise control, and blind-spot monitoring add another layer of intricacy to the collision repair process. Many of the sensors for these are in areas on the exterior of a vehicle that are prone to being damaged in a collision."

If a vehicle mirror is ripped off or damaged in a collision, technicians need to be familiar with the technology to identify which parts of the system needs to be replaced and



Jason Bartanen

how to recalibrate it, Bartanen explains.

### New (potentially lucrative) opportunities for collision repair technicians

With this growing number of advanced safety systems on vehicles, collision repairers need to know more than just how to physically replace their components but also the interworkings of how they operate.

All the sophisticated electronics of which these systems are composed are creating the opportunity for a specialized type of technician that will be in high demand, says I-CAR's Bartanen.

Each system needs to be diagnosed and then, oftentimes, recalibrated after repair, he says, which creates the need for someone savvy with computers but also familiar with autobody repair. Technicians are essentially repairing "computer systems on wheels."

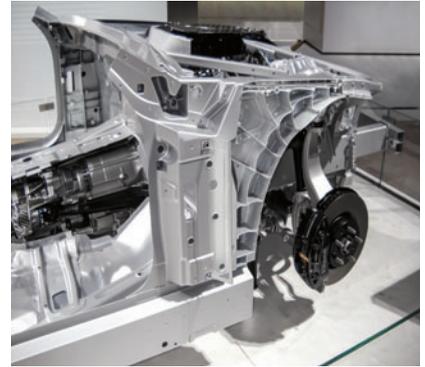


PHOTO: I-CAR

**THE COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY** will likely deal with more mixed-material vehicles in the future, such as this Cadillac CT6, making it more important than ever to adhere to vehicle manufacturer specifications.

"If you're a young technician, get trained in collision repair diagnostics," Bartanen says. "This is a huge opportunity for young adults who like cars but also like computers and blending them together."

It's an ideal position for someone interested in automotive service but

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doesn't want to just do tire and oil changes while waiting to move into a higher role. "We can hire them and build them right into our business process," Bartanen points out.

Schools need to incorporate collision repair diagnostics into their programs because a well-trained student in this specialty who is able to perform these repairs can be a successful technician from day one in a well-paying job, he says.

These types of hybrid technician jobs give the collision repair industry the chance to reach a different population and create in-demand jobs. This is important, especially as the collision repair industry continues to have an aging workforce and a shortage of qualified technicians, Bartanen says.

He uses the example of his 15-year-old nephew who loves both cars and video games. "I've been trying to show him how he can blend both interests to-

gether for what could be a fairly lucrative career," he says.

A career in the automotive repair industry is no longer what was often considered a choice for students who struggled with academics. "When I was growing up, they sent you to the other end of the building to shop class because academics wasn't your strength," Bartanen recalls. "You'd be directed to welding or automotive classes. We need good technicians — they are in demand — and the collision repair industry now is so much more than just welding parts together."

### The importance of following OEM guidelines

It is critical for technicians to understand where to obtain proper repair information and product instructions before starting a new collision repair job. Without doing so, it can affect the final outcome and integrity of the vehicle,

says Douglas Craig, structural adhesives applications engineering manager and collision repair industry liaison for LORD Corporation.

"When the collision repair industry as a whole decided about five years ago that the repair standard for any particular car would be



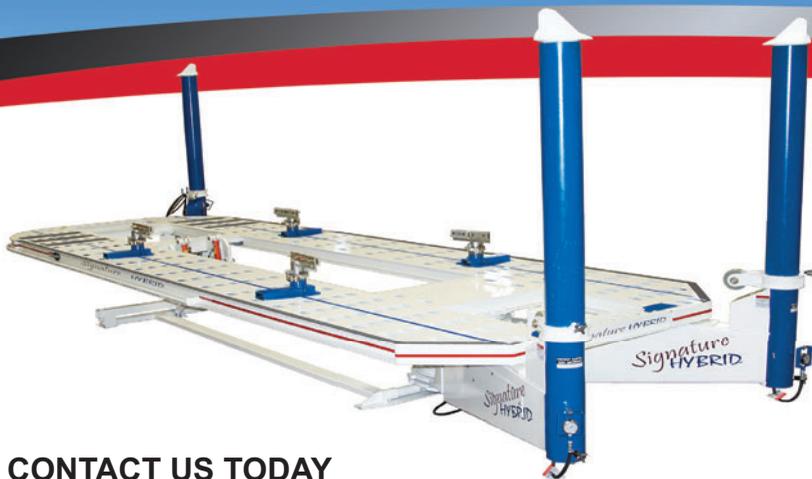
Douglas Craig

the information provided by the vehicle manufacturer," Craig notes, "it put them on the hook for providing all the necessary repair information when not all of them may have been on board with doing so."

To that end, Craig says it also makes the assumption that a repair technician is able to understand — and even find — the information. Any shop techni-

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cian who is going to make a repair really needs to understand what it means to truly fix the vehicle. At the root of this are the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) guidelines and repair standards.

These procedures from the vehicle makers are service specifications, not just “recommendations,” Craig notes.

There has been much discussion in the collision repair industry surrounding the semantics/terminology of OEM repair procedures and best practices — so much in fact that several organizations developed a “Collision Repairer Joint Position Statement on Official Collision Repair Standards.”

This joint statement officially recognizes that published repair procedures as the “repair standards” for collision repair to be used as the baseline for establishing training, testing, repair practices and documentation. It also recognizes that further development of procedures is necessary for areas not covered by published procedures. This includes gaps in existing OEM repair procedures and developing processes to close them, vetting industry-proposed alternatives, modifications and additions to OEM repair procedures.

“Regardless of the verbiage, strictly adhering to OEM guidelines/procedures should be an autobody shop’s golden rule when it comes to collision repair, but it’s not always as simple as it sounds,” Craig says. “When a repaired vehicle goes back into service, you need to make sure the owner is getting it back with the same structural integrity and advanced safety systems functionality. The way to do that is following OEM guidelines. However, sometimes figuring out how to access the information itself can be difficult.”

### Access to information issues

Each OEM has its service information in a different format, which creates a challenge. Some OEMs also make information readily available, easily indexed and affordable to access, while others make it much more challenging to find or costly to access the repair information.

Craig puts it in this perspective: “Each manufacturer creates the repair information and puts it into their own proprietary dealer information database. Each database is different. Even though you can purchase a subscription, if you go into one service information database and get everything you need after being in there for an hour, it is completely different if you then go into another OEM database. You are having to re-educate yourself on how to find the information.”

Searching for the proper repair information doesn’t end there, though. There may have been updates to the repair procedures released via service bulletin

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that would not be included in the vehicle repair manual.

“That means the information the technician just spent time looking for may not be 100 percent correct — it may be dated,” Craig says. “You then may not be repairing the vehicle correctly, after all.”

Each vehicle needs time and resources allotted for comprehensive research to check for any service bulletins and new repair information, he says, using this example: The OEM for a light-duty truck makes 10 changes on the best standard operating procedure (SOP) to repair the truck’s quarter panel because it determined there was a better way to do so. “This updated process could be very different from what had been printed two years ago in the repair manual,” Craig notes. “Now the technician needs to re-research how to repair the vehicle. It can get very time-consuming beyond the actual repair.”

Repairers, of course, need to be com-



PHOTO: I-CAR

**I-CAR’S BOB JANSEN INSPECTS** a MIG-brazed joint during a hands-on skills development course.

pensated for this extra time spent. So who foots the bill? “It should be included as part of the repair job,” Craig suggests. “A research fee and an information fee should become line items on the estimate.”

This solution also comes with its own issues. Craig says the insurance companies will push back because these line items would be considered a profit center, which puts the industry at a “pivotal

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point” for change.

“We know OEM information is not always easy to get, depending on the manufacturer, so what we need is for everyone to buy into standardization,” Craig recommends. “The OEM data should be standardized so all the OEM data is in a format that can then be brought down to a manageable process. This would be like rewriting all the rules, though. It’s a whole new game, but the endgame in all of this is a proper repair for consumers.”

### Closing the collision repair gap

Toyota Motor North America is one of the OEMs that recognizes the need to ensure that technicians have readily available access to repair information.

Toyota Lexus Collision and Refinish Training ([www.crrtraining.com](http://www.crrtraining.com)) offers refinish, collision repair, hybrid vehicle system, and welding training courses, to name a few, that are available to dealerships and independent repair shops who are sponsored by a dealership where attendees can get step-by-step procedures.

“The advancements of all the technology is changing so fast,” says Joseph P. DiDonato, senior collision training administrator, Toyota Motor North America, U.S.A., Inc. and automotive collision technology instructor at Cypress College, part of the North Orange County Community College District in Cypress, Calif. “It is a catch-up game. We want to ensure that anyone who puts their hands on our vehicles has the proper repair information.”

Toyota has expanded to four training centers throughout the United States, with the newest in Plano, Texas, where the OEM relocated its headquarters. The



PHOTO: I-CAR

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PHOTO: LORD CORPORATION

original training center at the former Toyota headquarters in Torrance, Calif., and training centers in New Jersey and Florida educate between 800 and 1,200 collision repair professionals each year.

“We are starting to see an increase in shops interested in getting the correct repair information so we want to make sure it’s available,” DiDonato says. Toyota is also one of a handful of OEMs which offers hands-on training, offering 50 percent lecture and 50 percent lab, with the aim to reach a wide range of all the stakeholders responsible for a collision repair.

“We get a pretty broad mix,” DiDonato explains, pointing out that training attendees range from technicians, autobody shops managers, estimators, people who work in the collision repair industry, distributors, vendors, public educators, insurance

companies and people who perform re-inspections. “The more people who have our information, the more we can ensure that customer vehicles are being repaired correctly

while maintaining the safety that was built into the vehicle.”

Toyota makes its Technical Information System (TIS) available to everyone ([www.techinfo.toyota.com](http://www.techinfo.toyota.com)) at what it considers a modest cost to ensure repair facilities of all sizes are able to afford the information. Knowing that in California alone Toyota vehicles accounted for 15 to 20 percent of the market at one point recently — about every sixth vehicle — DiDonato says that people need to have access to repair information so customers don’t suffer. This includes not just what to do and how to do it but also what not to do.

“You need to know what we approve and don’t approve,” DiDonato says. “If OEMs don’t make parts and repair procedures accessible, the consumer ends up suffering.”

Reiterating what others have noted, he stresses that with each vehicle make and model materials and technologies change. “Every year something is different,” DiDonato says. “Things change, especially as vehicle makers work to lighten up vehicles and make them stronger with different steels, alumi-

num and plastic. It's even hard for me to keep up with all the changes that are being introduced."

Continued training in OEM repair procedures — and seeking out any potential updates — is a must for this reason. DiDonato advises that a manufacturer's repair manual provides the basic tools, but the training expands on that additional information and allows students to have hands-on practice.

"When you come to training, we can teach you the correct methods and let you practice those methods," DiDonato points out. "When students return to their facilities from training, they have experience and should be ready to apply what they learned in training."

Repair options seem to vary, depending who is being asked, when a vehicle is damaged in a collision. It's necessary in most cases to write a repair estimate based on visible damage, but it may not include the details of a proper repair plan.

"Repair plans are typically formulated from on-task experience and knowledge, but even a seasoned technician could end up guessing the wrong way to go about a repair without proper training and manufacturer-specific technical information," DiDonato cautions. "This uncertainty likely accounts for the difference in opinion from collision repair professionals."

Taking advantage of training and technical resources, he says, is the best way for collision repair professionals to attain the knowledge necessary to make better repair decisions and to ensure the customers' satisfaction.

### The bottom line: OEM is the vehicle expert

The bottom line is that repairers need to look at what the OEM wants first and then make a repair decision, adds LORD Corporation's Craig. It's critical, he says, to reinforce this mindset for both veteran repairers and those who are new to the industry, and this requires proper training.

"At the end of the day, the repair procedure or product specified isn't our call, and OEM specifications must be respected," Craig reinforces. "The OEM is the expert, and we must follow their guidelines and continue educating and training on their recommended procedures and products for a successful collision repair."

Look for "Tailored training" in the March 2018 issue of ABRN to learn more about this topic, including new ways and methods of training, why technicians may become niche repairers, why "soft" training is so important, as well as creating an overall culture of training, among other issues. 



**TINA GRADY BARBACCIA** is a writer for Advancing Organizational Excellence (AOE). She has written and served as an editor for trade publications, blogs and developed social media and public relations for multiple industries since 1998 and is a former editor for ABRN. [info@theoeteam.com](mailto:info@theoeteam.com)

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# THE FIVE TRUTHS OF CERTIFICATION

TURN TO THESE FACTS WHEN MAKING OEM PROGRAM DECISIONS

**CERTIFICATION IS NEVER CHEAP.** Along with tools and equipment, you may need to update your facility, and, in some cases, add new features such as an aluminum repair room.

**TIM SRAMCIK** // Contributing Editor

**H**ow much should I spend on certification? In today's collision repair industry, that's the \$64,000 question. Or maybe it's a \$40,000 question. Or perhaps somewhere between \$20,000-\$100,000 or possibly much more. Whatever the case may be, certification doesn't come cheap. It's also an investment many shops might have to make to continue competing in the industry over the long term.

Getting a firm handle on beginning costs is just one step shops must take as they begin their certification journeys. They also need to look at ongoing investments, ROI and a host of other issues, such as ever-changing requirements. Unfortunately, even though OEM repair programs have been around for some time now and continue to grow in number, plenty of misconceptions cloud shops' understanding of them. These misunderstandings can prove costly as shops struggle to make the best certification

decisions for their futures.

It's time for some clarity. Here are five bits of business information you should keep in mind while you consider making the plunge into manufacturer repair programs.

## **Truth 1: You'll need to get some help.**

Presently, there are nearly two dozen OEM repair programs, with more on the way (for example, Cadillac recently introduced an aluminum repair program for a single model, the CT6 sedan). Reviewing the requirements for each takes a significant amount of time, as does deciding which ones will provide the necessary ROI for your business. As you work through this process, be sure to reach out to your local shop association or national organizations like the Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) for help. Ask to speak with shop owners and managers who have experience with repair programs. Also reach out to the manufacturers for more information or go to your

vendors. Information providers and paint companies often have classes or experts that can provide valuable advice.

Another resource is Assured Performance Collision Care, a non-profit consumer advocacy organization based in Laguna Hills, Calif. Assured Performance offers a program to help shops become certified in multiple OEM repair programs at the same time through its partnership with Ford, FCA, Nissan, Infiniti, Hyundai and GM.

One of the aims of the program is to reduce certification redundancy. "When a shop enrolls for any one of the automakers that are part of our joint-efforts approach, they have the opportunity to become certified-recognized by all of the other automakers that are participating with us," explains CEO Scott Biggs. "The interested shop can literally become certified by several automakers for one set base price, saving them tens of thousands of dollars and reducing the complexity of certification significantly."

Assured Performance utilizes a busi-



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ness formula wherein shops complete a five-step validation process. Shops document how they meet the program requirements (for example, achieving I-CAR Gold Status and obtaining the necessary tools, equipment and training), provide electronic visual proof online, then pass an on-site inspection, followed by an internal audit and then finally an OEM review and approval. Biggs says his program has resulted in thousands of shops becoming certified.

### Truth 2: You'll need multiple certifications.

Being certified in at least several programs is an absolute necessity for most shops. "It's the only way to get back your investment," says Barry Dorn, owner of Dorn's Body and Paint in Richmond, Va. Dorn's business has 21 certifications, everything from Ford and GM to Tesla

and Maserati. Most shops won't need that many programs, but because of the significant investment costs required for certification, they'll need to cover multiple vehicle models to assure their costs are not only reclaimed, but provide an additional boost in shop revenue.

**What lines** should your shop choose? Kye Yeung, SCRS Chairman and owner of European Motor Car Works Inc. in Costa Mesa, Calif., says shops should start with the obvious. Take a close look at repair records to determine which models they



PHOTO: CHANTILLY AUTOBODY

**ALREADY WORK ON A STEADY STREAM** of vehicles like the Corvettes? If you're prepared to invest in training and equipment, certification could be your ticket to more business.

see most often. Yeung's business, for example, holds certifications for Aston Martin, Jaguar, Land Rover, Lotus, Tesla, Rolls Royce Ghost and Corvette since it specializes in European and higher-end vehicles.

## KIA JOINS THE CERTIFICATION COMMUNITY

Add one more certification to the list of available manufacturer repair programs. Kia has started up its own certification and will partner with Assured Performance Collision Care. As such, it shares the same minimum requirements Assured Performance sets for multiple-OEM repair programs. A brief look at some of these reveals the potentially high cost of certification, along with some of the savings that can be realized when a shop can utilize some of the same training, tools and equipment across OEM programs.

### Kia's requirements include:

- Meet I-CAR Gold Class or equivalent with proof of ongoing technical training (assessment required).
- Subscribe to current OEM repair procedures and have the ability to provide documented proof of compliance.
- Utilize a frame rack or dedicated/

universal fixture bench, with appropriate vehicle anchoring and pulling capabilities.

- Utilize an electronic three-dimensional vehicle measuring system.
- Maintain a current data subscription for the measuring system being utilized.
- Provide proof of technical training to operate the measuring system being utilized.
- Utilize an R134a refrigerant recovery/recycling system or proof of a qualified sublet provider.
- Have the ability to conduct and verify four-wheel alignment either in-house or through a sublet provider.
- Have a 220 Volt, 3-Phase Inverter-Type (or functionally equivalent Hybrid)-Squeeze-Type Resistance Spot Welder (STRSW) capable of producing a minimum of 600 lbf (270 daN) of clamping force

and 10,000 amps of current at the electrodes.

- Have a 220 Volt MIG/MAG welder for steel fusion.
- Have a dent removal/pulling system for steel panels that contains a stud welder, stud pins and washers, wiggle wire and pulling attachments.
- Completed I-CAR WCS03
- Steel GMA (MIG) Welding Certification.
- Have a MIG welder with silicon-bronze MIG brazing capabilities.
- Have proof of training in Silicon Bronze MIG brazing or completed I-CAR BRZ02 - MIG brazing course.

Assured Performance reports that just one in 10 shops will meet or exceed the requirements for certification. If you think your shop is ready, be prepared for a journey where commitment is the key.

Chantilly Autobody, headquartered in Chantilly, Va., built much of its business performing dealer work, so some of its certifications come from programs requiring a dealer sponsor such as BMW and Infiniti. Always on the lookout to pick up more certifications, it's a part of repair programs for Volkswagen, Ferrari, Maserati, Toyota, Honda, Ford and Chevrolet, as well.

More traditional shops that see mainly mass-produced vehicles should look at GM, Ford, Honda and similar programs.

**Truth 3: You'll need a significant investment.**

There's no such thing as low-cost certification. OEM programs demand expensive investments for tools and equipment alone (with facility upgrades another costly hurdle shops may need to leap). Even if you've made significant investments relatively recently, there's a great chance you'll be putting out money again, often for the same kinds of purchases. "These programs demand the latest tools that are required to fix modern cars," says Dorn. "You could have spent \$20,000 on a new welder seven or eight years ago, but you'll need a newer one if you're going to be certified today."

Dorn further notes that even in cases where shops save money by leveraging programs that incorporate similar requirements, repairers still should expect additional costs due to program variances. "For example, we can use the same type of bench for several vehicle lines, but each OEM program is going to require a different set of jigs," he explains. "All the programs have different specs so you have to account for those."

Mindful of these expenses, manufacturers have taken steps to cut costs where possible. Yeung notes that OEMs are trying to encourage interest in their programs by lowering costs in some areas. "A number of them have opened up the number of choices for tools. Years ago, they may have required a very specific tool model, but today shops are given

several options," he says.

As OEMs continue to look for ways to certify more shops, they very well may create other savings. Still, repairers must count on outlaying a significant investment for certification.

**Truth 4: You'll have to keep spending more money to maintain your certifications.**

OEMs regularly update repair program requirements. With each new model year, and with the addition of all-new models, newer repair resources are necessary to bring vehicles fully back to specification — which, of course, is the goal of manufacturer programs.

"You're probably going to need to order new equipment each year," says Dorn. "For some of these programs, sometimes it just arrives."

How much these costs add up to can vary widely based on the OEM program. This is another area you'll want to thoroughly research as you decide which certifications will provide your business with the best ROI.

**Truth 5: You can do business without certifications and still thrive, but your shop might be missing out.**

Thousands of shops possess OEM repair certifications. Many thousands more do not, including a number of successful, growing MSOs. Dorn notes that shops don't necessarily need certifications to survive, though these shops stand to lose out on a number of benefits.

For starters, certification can be one of the best steps shops can take to protect the health of both their business and

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their employees. "Vehicles grow in complexity all the time. You need to have all the best training and tools and other things that come with certification to ensure you're repairing them correctly," Dorn explains. "The shop has the liability if the vehicle isn't repaired right. Why risk your business?"

Dorn continues, "Your employees can be seriously injured if they're not repairing the right way."

Biggs similarly notes that certification makes good economic and business sense. "First and foremost, certification increases the value of the business itself," he notes. "Then there are numerous ways in which shops can leverage certification to make more profits and gain higher customer satisfaction."

When it comes to costs, Biggs points to the investments repairers already must make to compete. "Shops need to have the tools, equipment, training and facilities to safely and properly repair the car anyway. Why wouldn't they gain the official credentials by becoming certified as one small last step?" he says. "Anything else would just be illogical and could have devastating effects on a business in the future, even if an uncertified shop is the dominant competitor in its market area."

Echoing this notion, Yeung notes that certification is growing in importance to both insurers and vehicle owners. "They want their vehicles repaired by the best qualified shop," he says. "Even if you've done work for a customer before, they're going to start



PHOTO: CHANTILLY AUTOBODY

**SHOPS CAN SAVE A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY** by investing in certification programs with the same baseline requirements. Keep in mind that these same programs utilize different repair specs that can require additional investments.

taking their business to another nearby shop because that one has the certification."

### Reading the tea leaves

Indeed, taking that trend a bit further, forces in the collision industry could be aligning to make certification not just highly desirable but potentially a mandatory element for shop success. Yeung says auto manufacturers are producing so many different models, including all-new ones, that it's increasingly difficult for repairers to repair everything the market offers. "Even now we see new models with similar technology to what we're familiar with, but we're truly unfamiliar with the vehicle," he says.

Throw in ever-growing vehicle complexity, and the result is an industry where shops are going to struggle to repair every possible vehicle or even a large number of models. Yeung envisions a scenario in the not-too-far-off future where many shops would specialize in a limited number of brands/models and be certified to repair those.

This view is shared by a number of other industry leaders and prognosticators. It just makes sense. Automakers want high-quality, certified repairs to ensure their vehicles, even those being sold as used, retain their value to protect the vehicle brand. Insurers and owners desire the same repair quality, which would necessitate a thriving repair market with plenty of available options to keep cycle times optimal. Repairers require a path forward to help them succeed in this environment.

While this scenario may not play out next week or next year, plenty of other industry leaders and prognosticators believe it's on the way. Maybe that's the best reason of all to keep certification on your radar and be formulating a plan to make it happen at your shop. ☑



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# Opportunities in the new year, created in the past

Do something different this year to make a change for the better

**A**s the new year is under way, it is time to reflect on lessons learned in the previous year and the opportunities they present now. In 2017, technology became a focal point, OEMs began asserting their presence and intentions on the industry, and the country learned the importance of following OEM repair procedures. I want to share three opportunities for the new year and encourage everyone to do something different this year, to make a difference, to make a change for the better, making 2018 the best year yet to be in the collision repair industry.

2017 was a remarkable year for the word “recommend.” The meaning of this word was redefined by the John Eagle case in Texas. The case set the precedence for shops to follow the OEMs’ use of the word “recommend” as a directive, not a suggestion. A SEMA presentation further clarified why OEMs publish a position statement using a soft word like “recommend” instead of more firm words like “must” or “always.” As OEMs are based all over the world, some cultures may find it inappropriate or rude to use firm words when giving orders. Instead, the word “recommend” is used as a professional politeness. When OEMs publish documents with “recommend” instead of a more blatant directive, it may be a mere case of cultural differences, not a direct translation meaning “optional.” Moving forward into this new year provides the opportunity to embrace the directive of “recommend” and to utilize it to perform safer and proper repairs.

The same issue that reinvented the meaning of “recommend” is also creating other opportunities for collision repairers in 2018. The importance of OEM position statements and repair procedures was highlighted during 2017. Their importance is paramount to all stakeholders. Going forward, the industry will need to do a much better and much more thorough job of accessing, researching and utilizing OEM repair information. The act of accessing and researching OEM repair information is a technical and time-consuming task, even for seemingly simple repairs. Collision repairers are often required to write estimates for free as a service; however, 2018 stands to be different. Shops



**WHEN OEMS USE THE WORD “RECOMMEND” INSTEAD OF A MORE BLATANT DIRECTIVE, IT MAY MERELY BE A CASE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES.**

will spend increasingly more time and resources accessing, researching and documenting OEM repair information in order to provide a safe and proper repair. When free estimates began in this industry, repair research was basically nonexistent. The complexity of vehicle design and changing repair procedures will create the need for a new job position in the industry — collision repair researcher. Compensation for access fees and time invested in repair research is critical to moving the industry forward. In addition, thorough research may lead to lower overall repair costs due to decreased breakage, shorter cycle times and less warranty expense.

The final opportunity for the new year is the idea of proving that a vehicle system has no damage. It is no longer acceptable to assume that a part or system is undamaged; it must be proven undamaged and crashworthy. For example, if a vehicle is brought in due to a moderate frontal impact, some of the systems that must be proven undamaged before returning the vehicle to the customer are the vehicle structure, restraints, seats and ADAS systems. Each of these systems requires different inspections, measurements, and tools to verify the condition of the system. Most OEMs have procedures for checking these systems. The act of measuring, testing, scanning or inspecting a system or component is not an included operation and is deserving of a line item on a repair order. The sense of sight and touch must be married with technical knowledge and advanced methods of measuring, inspection and verification to prove that the vehicle is ready for delivery to the customer.

2018 stands to be a great year for the collision industry. New opportunities and success are available for those who make the commitment this year to do something different for the benefit of all. 📧

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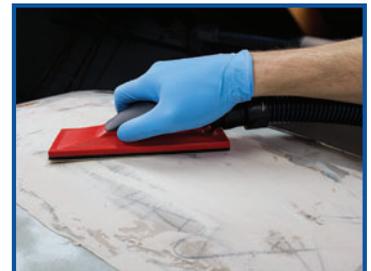
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