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Management is responsible for ensuring these systems are followed by all

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READY TO TAKE ON BIGGER PAINT JOBS?

When you add an oversized paint booth to your facility, you open yourself to new service opportunities. Global Finishing Solutions outlines specific questions you need to ask yourself, management and your partners before you take on this addition.

ABRN.COM/BIGPAINTJOBS



GETTING THE COLOR RIGHT FROM EVERY ANGLE

When a vehicle is painted during a repair but the final product does not match quite right, no one wins. DeBeer Refinish, a Valspar Automotive brand, and ABRN see how one shop handles the frustrations of color match and how it found the solution it needed in waterborne paint.

ABRN.COM/COLORMATCH



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Millennium Place East, 25115 Country Club Blvd. // North Olmsted, OH 44070
Phone: (440) 243-8100 // Fax: (440) 891-2675

EDITORIAL

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

GROUP CONTENT DIRECTOR
michael.williams@ubm.com
(440) 891-2604

KRISTA MCNAMARA

CONTENT CHANNEL DIRECTOR
krista.mcnamara@ubm.com
(440) 891-2646

CHELSEA FREY

SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITOR
chelsea.frey@ubm.com
(440) 891-2645

STEPH JOHNSON-BENTZ

ART DIRECTOR

STALIN ANNADURAI

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

CONTRIBUTORS

BRIAN ALBRIGHT

b-albright@sbcglobal.net

STEVE FELTOVICH

sjfeltovich@gmail.com

JAMES E. GUYETTE

jimguyette2004@yahoo.com

KEITH MANICH

Kmanich@autotraining.net

MARK OLSON

mark@vecoexperts.com

PATRICK PORTER

patrickdporter@gmail.com

TIM SRAMCİK

tsramcik@yahoo.com

JOHN YOSWICK

info@crashnetwork.com

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

PAUL GAGE

PROCARE

JEFF POOLE

I-CAR

JAKE RODENROTH

COLLISION DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

BUSINESS

JIM SAVAS

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BALA VISHAL

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TSCHANEN BRANDYBERRY

SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR

JILLENE WILLIAMS

SALES COORDINATOR

DOMESTIC SALES

MIDWEST & WESTERN STATES

MICHAEL PARRA

michael.parra@ubm.com
(704) 919-1931

ILLINOIS, EASTERN & SOUTHERN STATES

PAUL ROPSKI

paul.ropski@ubm.com
(312) 566-9885
Fax: (312) 566-9884

OHIO, MICHIGAN & CALIFORNIA

LISA MEND

lisa.mend@ubm.com
(773) 866-1514

ACCOUNT EXEC./CLASSIFIED SALES

KEITH HAVEMANN

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Fax: (818) 227-4023

PRODUCTION & ADMINISTRATION

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PAINT COMPANY CATERS TO PROGRESSIVE, TRADITIONAL

KRISTA MCNAMARA //
Content Channel Director

→ CHARLOTTE, NC — Rarely does a company call both proud traditionalists and progressive adapters as their collective target client base. But Axalta has managed to straddle the line by offering high-technology products that can appease both.

Keeping a close eye on the collision repair market, Axalta has seen the trends. Big insurers are becoming more and more influential by continuing to push their direct repair programs (DRPs).

These big insurers have also continued to reward DRP members — most notably multi-shop operators (MSOs) who have perfected and standardized their repair process, said Harry Christman, Axalta's North America Cromax brand manager.

"MSOs are about streamlined productivity, getting cars through as efficiently as possible," Christman said. "And while the single-shop market may not typically have cars lined up out the door with insurer-driven traffic, they still need efficiency."

>> CONTINUES ON PAGE 7

BREAKING NEWS

STEERING

ANTI-STEERING LEGISLATION LOSES SUPPORT

→ The Indiana Senate passed a new insurance anti-steering bill in January, and it is moving forward in the state's lower chamber. However, the bill's language has changed so dramatically that the regional autobody association that originally lobbied to have it introduced has withdrawn support.

In February, the Indiana Auto Body Association (IABA) announced that a last-minute amendment added to the bill did not have their support. The new language would prohibit vehicle owners from assigning any of their rights to the repair shop, which could limit options for the shop and vehicle owner. "We were blindsided by it. We couldn't act on behalf of the vehicle owner, which would...put the vehicle owner on their own against the insurance company," said Doug Martin, president of the IABA.

TRENDING

REPORT EXAMINES OWNERSHIP LIFECYCLE

CCC's 2018 Crash Course report examines the vehicle ownership lifecycle, offering insight into how data and technology are impacting how consumers and the industry interact with today's vehicles.

ABRN.COM/2018CRASH

VECO INTRODUCES REMOTE DROP-IN

Vehicle Collision Experts (VECO Experts) is expanding its remote shop inspections — "Remote Drop-In" — to give shops a cost-efficient way to perform calibrations, audits, inspections and training.

ABRN.COM/DROPIN

YANG ACCEPTING SPEAKER APPLICATIONS

The Young Auto Care Network Group (YANG) is accepting speaker applications for its "Five for Five" rapid-fire style presentations feature of the 2018 YANG Leadership Conference, May 11-12.

ABRN.COM/5FOR5

SHORT WAVE INFRARED EXPLAINED

Learn from B-Tec Systems how wavelength — short vs. medium — impacts paint curing and get an overall better understanding of what infrared technology is and exactly how it can be put to work in your shop.

ABRN.COM/INFRARED

ASA ANNOUNCES INSTRUCTOR LINEUP

The Automotive Service Association announced its Automotive Management Institute-approved lineup of instructors for the May 3 training sessions at the 2018 Annual Business Meeting in Orlando, Fla.

ABRN.COM/ASAORLANDO

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Axalta is helping its customers achieve these goals through two paint offerings — Cromax EZ and Spies Hecker Permahyd Hi-TEC.

Axalta invited members of the trade media down to its Customer Experience Center in Charlotte, N.C. in February to try out the Cromax and Spies Hecker products.

Christman first introduced Cromax EZ — a waterborne basecoat that boasts exceptional quality and color-match capabilities with the same coat-flash application process technicians have typically perfected over years of experience. The product is a natural fit for painters who are comfortable with their process and “want to do it as they have always done.”

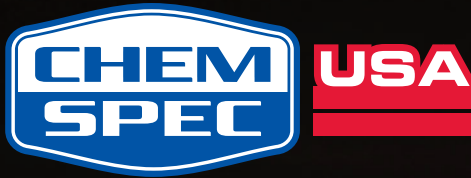
Cromax EZ is applied in the familiar wet on dry application process, similar to solventborne paints. There is no special application or blending training required, and because the toners do not need agitation, there is no need for a conventional mix machine in the shop.

But not every painter is a traditionalist. Axalta's Steffen Apollo, North America Spies Hecker brand manager, discussed the Spies Hecker Permahyd Hi-TEC line and its appeal to the industry.

“There are those who latch on to the idea of a product and efficiency steps,” Apollo said. “MSOs desire to grow and improve in every step of the process, and they cannot afford too much variability. They also want to cement their culture into all employees.”

For these customers, Axalta built a new system around its most successful basecoat. Spies Hecker Permahyd Hi-TEC is 55 percent faster than the competition and goes on in 1.5 coats with no flash between coats. It offers less consumption and higher profitability.

“It keeps less products on a shop's shelves, so not as much money is tied up in inventory. The streamlined design simplifies training and inventory control without any trade-offs in productivity, application range and quality,” Apollo said. 



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THE WOMEN'S INDUSTRY NETWORK annually names the "Most Influential Women in Collision Repair," a recognition that can get you on the radar of industry technicians and possible customers.

Earning industry awards and recognition offers a way to promote your shop, reward workers

JOHN YOSWICK // Contributing Editor

Camille Eber's independent collision repair shop in Portland, Ore., some years ago received an "Integrity Award" presented by the Better Business Bureau in the Pacific Northwest. The award led to a reporter at *The (Portland) Oregonian* newspaper writing a profile article about Eber's business — an article that ran on the front page of the business section of paper on a Sunday. The result? Eber said the next morning, the phone at the shop was ringing off the hook and cars were parked several deep at the shop's

front gate even before 8 a.m. In just the coming months alone, she traced more than \$100,000 (in 1997 dollars) in new-customer sales back solely to that article.

"People years later were still coming in with copies of that article that they'd cut out and put in their 'car file' in case they ever needed a body shop," said Eber, whose shop is now a Fix Auto franchise.

There's no shortage of ways your company and its employees can earn recognition from your peers, industry or business organizations or even government entities, and as Eber's experience shows, there can be a big pay-off for your business for doing so.

And even aside from the marketing opportunities, awards and recognitions can help you attract, retain or reward key employees by honoring them for their efforts or helping them feel like they're working for a "winning" company. Doing what it takes to meet the requirements to win some awards or honors can help your business improve its professionalism and performance. And in some cases, you may well already be doing what you need to "win" — you just need to submit a nomination or application.

Yes, the process of qualifying or completing award applications can require some time and effort. But once you've

done one, much of that effort may be applicable for several different awards.

Ready to get started being recognized for a job well done? Here are some places you may want to start.

Recognizing women leaders

Eber in 2000 also was among some of the first women in the industry to be named the “Most Influential Women in Collision Repair.” That honor is presented annually by the Women’s Industry Network (WIN) to recognize women in any role within the collision repair industry who have “enriched the industry with their leadership, vision and commitment to excellence.” Three or four women are added each year to the recipient list, which now numbers close to 100.

“Being named a “Most Influential Woman” by WIN was a tremendous honor,” said Jordan Hendler, the executive director of the Washington (D.C.) Metropolitan Auto Body Association, a 2014 recipient. “Many of my mentors —almost all of them, actually — were among previous winners. It goes to show that women in this industry are in tune with helping raise others up and being there when they need assistance or advice.”

In addition to shop owners and association leaders, other “Most Influential Women” include industry consultants and those working in shop management or for industry vendors. Nominees are evaluated based on their success in their professional role, industry leadership and involvement, and previous awards or accolades. The program has recognized women both for their professional accomplishments but also for going beyond the requirements of their positions to give back to their communities.

To apply or nominate someone, visit the WIN website at thewomensindustry-network.ning.com/miw.

Going for the gold

I-CAR has seen a big jump in recent years in the number of shops earning its “Gold Class Professionals” designation, which

recognizes shops that have achieved a high level of qualified employee technical training. In 2012, just over 2,600 U.S. shops were Gold Class; by last year, that number had more than doubled to 5,500. Another 1,300 shops last year were labeled as on the “Road to Gold,” using an I-CAR program that helps shops working to achieve Gold Class status navigate the somewhat complex requirements.

Why the growth? It could be in part that a growing number of automaker shop certification programs and insurance company direct repair programs encourage or require I-CAR training or Gold Class status. But I-CAR and some Gold Class shops say it’s as much a sign that increasing vehicle complexity makes ongoing training a must.

“Technology is moving so fast,” Sharree Strausbaugh, owner of A&M Autobody, a Gold Class shop in Eugene, Ore., said. “Based on what’s happening in the collision industry, I think you will need to have that Gold Class level or better.”

Earning Gold Class requires having one or more employees in each of four roles in the shop (estimator, non-structural technician, steel structural technician and refinish technician) complete the specified level of training for that role. All other employees directly involved in the repair of vehicles must have six or more hours of relevant training each year.

In addition to potentially opening the door to more direct repair programs or automaker certification, Gold Class shops receive a kit of marketing materials to help them inform consumers of their commitment to training and professionalism. They are also listed on an online searchable database and receive discounted prices on I-CAR training.

I-CAR has published two studies that found shops that achieved Gold Class status saw improvements in sales, touch time, cycle time and customer satisfaction.

Check out the details at I-CAR’s website (i-car.com/Home/Educational-Programs/Gold-Class-Professionals-Business-Recognition/

Collision-Repair-Gold-Class).

Improving the industry’s image

As part of its effort to recognize and promote the industry’s professionalism and integrity, the National Auto Body Council (NABC) presents two annual awards.

The NABC “Award of Distinction” recognizes individuals or groups in the collision industry who selflessly give of themselves for the benefit of others through bravery, philanthropy or selfless acts.

Winners have been honored for such acts as heroically rescuing a woman and her two small children from a burning car, or for mentoring a 23-year-old man with autism during a 7-week hands-on adult internship program. In 2017, Gene Crozat of G&C Auto Body in Southern California received an “Award of Distinction posthumously for his company’s philanthropic work, which includes funding an annual all-expense paid trip to Disneyland for all of the foster children being served by a local non-profit organization.

The NABC each year also presents the “Body Shop Image Award” to recognize shops that have completed significant improvements to the appearance of the interior or exterior of their facility during the current calendar year. The judging committee looks for improvements or remodeling that exemplifies the positive impact that an attractive, well-designed facility can have on the surrounding community.

To apply or nominate someone for a NABC award, visit the Council’s website (www.nationalautobodycouncil.org/programs/award-programs/). Winners are honored at an awards ceremony that for several years has been held during SEMA in Las Vegas in November, and winners are featured on the NABC website and in its other publicity efforts.

Promoting your safe shop

Want to help cultivate a reputation as being the “employer of choice” for technicians and others in the industry? The

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a folded blue microfiber cloth. Resting on the cloth are several Mercedes-Benz spark plugs. The spark plugs have white ceramic insulators with the Mercedes-Benz logo (a three-pointed star in a circle) printed on them. The metal bases of the spark plugs are silver and show some signs of use. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue gradient.

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Safety Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) can help promote your efforts to provide a healthy and safe work environment for your employees.

ACE Auto Body of Hartselle, Ala., owned by Myron and Freda Thompson, received SHARP recognition back in 2009.

“Myron did his apprenticeship in a shop that stressed cleanliness and safety,” Freda Thompson said. “That stuck with him and we have always strived to have a nice, attractive workplace. This is something that means a lot to him.”

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) developed SHARP to recognize small businesses that maintain exemplary injury and illness prevention programs. To qualify, a shop must undergo a comprehensive consultation visit from OSHA, correct any hazards identified, implement an injury and illness prevention program, and have a lower-than-industry-average rate of employee injuries.

The idea of inviting OSHA into your facility may not sound appealing initially. But OSHA says (and shops confirm) that such consultants have no ability to issue fines unless they find serious imminent threats to worker safety. Their goal is to help you comply with regulations to reduce worker illness and injury. SHARP shop owners say they sleep better at night knowing they are in compliance. And OSHA says safe working conditions can also help businesses attract and retain employees, lower workers' compensation insurance premiums and reduce employees' days away from work.

In addition to being able to promote your business as having received SHARP recognition, the program also offers an exemption from OSHA programmed inspections for up to two years, with the potential for a three-year renewal.

Ken Perrault of Spruce Park Auto Body in Anchorage, Alaska, said his 140-employee company received SHARP recognition back in 2001 after OSHA's consultation services helped him fine-tune the company's worker safety and

health program. OSHA itself last year helped promote Spruce Park's achievement of maintaining a record of zero job-site injuries every year since 2011.

To apply for SHARP, visit www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/consult_directory.html to get contact information for the OSHA consultation program in your area.

Training scholarships

Have a shop employee or manager who is working to improve their business skills through management education? Reward that effort by nominating him or her for a NACE Automechanika scholarship through the Automotive Management Institute (AMI). Winners receive \$1,000 toward travel and registration fees to attend AMI training during NACE Automechanika, this year being held Aug. 8-10 in Atlanta, Ga.

To apply, nominees must be an owner or employee of a shop belonging to the Automotive Service Association (ASA). Having taken one or more AMI online or classroom courses can't hurt, but a shop owner's nomination vouching for an employee's interest in management education can suffice. The application can be downloaded at the AMI website (www.AMIonline.org), and the deadline is generally in June.

Wondering about your odds of winning one of these scholarships? The fact that multiple people from the same collision repair business have won these scholarships over the years may indicate there aren't a lot of nominations each year.

Top-graded websites

ASA shops also have an opportunity to win recognition for their shop's website through the annual “Top 10 Websites” program overseen by the association's AutoInc. magazine. The program works to highlight shops using their website to improve productivity, enhance marketing and ultimately increase their bottom line by driving more business to the shop. Sites are evaluated in terms of being


mobile-friendly, innovative, visually appealing and consumer friendly, as well as including evidence of social media presence and a “call to action.”

Shops can apply online (www.AutoInc.org), with the annual deadline generally being in the summer. Winners are promoted within the industry through ASA's magazine. But winners also have an opportunity to tout the recognition through their own marketing, press release or social media — which in turn will likely drive some additional traffic to their website and shop.

Make the most of it

Looking for more ideas for award possibilities? Many industry vendors — including AutocheX, VeriFacts Automotive and others — have awards programs. Also watch for awards and recognition programs offered by your state or local governments; a number of shops, for example, have been honored for their recycling and environmental efforts. And check local and national business associations and publications for award possibilities.

Nearly all of these award programs choose winners from businesses of all sizes, so never assume that your company is too small to win big.

And that old adage about not “tooting your own horn” shouldn't apply when it comes to making the most about honors and recognition you, your shop or your employees earn. It's important to promote it through press releases, social media, your website and your customer waiting area. One shop owner who won one of the above awards last year says it made virtually no difference for his business — but admits that's because he did nothing to let his community know about it. 



JOHN YOSWICK is a freelance writer based in Portland, Ore., who has been writing about the automotive industry since 1988. info@crashnetwork.com

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NAVIGATING THE MODERN COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY

Despite change, safe repair needs to remain the primary goal

PATRICK PORTER // Contributing Editor

Almost every successful person begins with two beliefs: The future can be better than the present. And I have the power to make it so," said David Brooks, author, political and cultural commentator.

It's an exciting time in the collision repair industry. I truly believe that the future can be better than the present in our industry. Autonomous vehicles, advanced safety systems, advanced steering and suspension systems, heated seats — this list could keep going with all the many personal convenience items that

are on our vehicles, but I only have a limited space. The point is that we are professionals, and we need to repair the vehicles back to pre-existing condition. This may mean stepping outside our comfort zone and doing some things that we are not accustomed to doing. This can create some new challenges that we can either embrace or reject. Embracing these challenges and doing what it takes to provide value will benefit our businesses, our consumers and our industry. However, with all these changes happening, there is one primary goal that still stands. Collectively as collision repair leaders and insurers, complete and safe repairs should be our central goal.

Unfortunately, this thought process is not always the case. All too often our industry is allowing the almighty dollar to trump safety. We do not need our own greediness upstaging complete and safe repairs just because we think we know better. In this industry we need to make sure that we are providing value to our customers. But what is value when it comes to repairs?

Most people reading may think they are providing value to their customers, but if you are not following OEM specifications (notice I did not say recommendations), then you are not providing value — period. Unfortunately, too few people are taking heed right now to the



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forward thinkers and promoters of this new standard. The truth is if you don't follow OEM repair standards, then you will be holding all the liability for the job that you perform. Not to be the bearer of bad news, but this has been said repeatedly, and yet there are people in our industry who don't want to listen.

If you followed the recent court case in Texas where a collision shop did not follow a manufacturer's procedure, this should be a wake-up call to our industry. Before beginning repairs in the pre-repair stage, we need to be pulling procedures and communicating to all parties involved. It's time to make the improvements necessary to our industry culture. Maybe we could take that class that we put off taking because we felt like it was going to be a waste of time? Please don't view these learning opportunities as a waste of time; this is an investment

in your business.

Maybe we need to improve our shop processes to better serve our customers and in turn that makes for a better experience overall for everyone involved in the repair process. Look at some of the lean systems in our industry to help you improve these processes at your shop. It will truly make a difference and by embracing this change, you and your customers will reap the benefits. Scan that vehicle, because it is a necessary procedure that brings the vehicle back to its pre-existing condition. Please don't say scanning does not matter, because it does.

I hear from a lot of folks that say, "If only the insurer would pay for this..." "If only they wouldn't make us put aftermarket or used parts on this vehicle;" "If only they wouldn't require me to do this;" "If only..." Folks, we must realize that we are the professionals in this industry. This is

the reason that we need to embrace training, embrace change, and embrace complete, safe and quality repairs. We need to reject going back to the way things always have been for years. It is just not relevant anymore. It's a new era in vehicle design and how we repair these vehicles. I have always been the optimistic glass half-full type of guy, and how I view the collision repair business is no different. We have the power to make this industry even greater than it already is. Take a step with me to create the new collision repair industry. We have a lot of folks that are with me on this journey, but we need you as well. ☺



PATRICK PORTER is a 3rd generation shop owner at Porter's Body Shop in Brookhaven, Miss. He is an I-CAR instructor and has his

AMi Accredited Automotive Management and Collision Repair Estimator Certificates.

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Technical training alone is not nearly enough

Far too few shops have given estimators the tools and training they need

No matter what you call it, estimating can make or break your business. You might prefer to say your estimators are doing “blueprinting,” “damage analysis” or “repair planning.” But the term you use is meaningless to the bigger point: estimating is central to almost every metric you could use to measure your business performance. Yet I can almost bet the people doing that work within your company have not had any recent formal training.

How do I know? I began tracking it nearly 17 years ago when I first wrote and began teaching an estimating course for one of the automakers, so I can tell you with certainty that only 2 percent to 3 percent of front-line estimators and body shop managers have had any formal estimating training in the last 3-5 years.

That’s pathetic. How does anyone think they are capable of writing an estimate on a vehicle when their training is that obsolete?

I can come up with a dozen ways this is having a negative impact on your business. How about your negotiating effectiveness, for example? Without some recent training, I can assure you that your staff is no match for the masters of controlling costs at a shop’s expense — the insurers.

Industry surveys find that only 17 percent of shops are researching OEM repair procedures on every job. That’s likely because their estimators have not been trained on why it’s a vital step or how to do it. But how are the other 83 percent writing anything close to an accurate estimate if they don’t know what substrate materials are involved; what kind of welding, rivets or adhesive bonding will be involved; where sectioning can and cannot be done; and what items are one-time use or must be replaced rather than repaired or reused? They cannot possibly know that unless they have training in effectively researching the OEM procedures.

What about scheduling? Most shops have figured out some system of scheduling based on the labor hours for each job. But without current training, estimators are producing half-baked estimates. The result: it’s not uncommon for shops to have two



INDUSTRY SURVEYS FIND THAT ONLY 17 PERCENT OF SHOPS ARE RESEARCHING OEM PROCEDURES ON EVERY JOB.


weeks of work booked into a one-week timeslot because their estimates are only half-right.

Think about the impact of poor scheduling caused by poor estimating practices. You have unhappy customers because vehicle delivery days keep slipping. Employee morale and compensation are often negatively affected. I recently helped a shop in New York with its scheduling, and one of the owners called me just a few weeks later to say the shop felt like a different place. The stress everyone felt had dissipated, and production was controlled and flowing evenly. The shop was running “like a Swiss watch,” compared to how it was when they were overloading the workshop and employees.

If none of this convinces you to get some current training for your estimators, surely the impact it can have on your profitability will get your attention. When I do actual field audits of shops, I see a lot of missed work being performed but not billed. It’s not uncommon to see as much as 15 percent to 20 percent being missed on estimates.

There’s also work not being performed because it’s not on the paperwork that gets turned over to the production team. We all saw the liability impacts of a multi-million-dollar judgment against a Texas body shop last year. Avoiding that has to start with a strong estimating process that helps dictate the correct repair plan.

Chances are you wouldn’t think of not training your technicians. But your front-line people are essentially the first people who repair the car — only on paper. If they’re not trained in order to do that well, how can you possibly expect the people in the back to make up for the deficient estimates and processes up front? That’s never going to happen.

I’ll offer some specific steps to improve your estimating in future columns. In the meantime, get some training on your estimators’ schedules. 

STEVE FELTOVICH of SJF Business Consulting, LLC, works with dealers, MSOs and independent collision repair businesses to make lasting improvements and achieve performance goals, based on his more than three decades of automotive industry experience. sjfeltovich@gmail.com



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Quality control systems fail without enforcement

Management is responsible for ensuring these systems are followed by all

In the decades that I've been working with collision repair businesses, I have seen (and in some cases, helped develop) some excellent quality control programs.

Too often, however, it isn't the lack of such a program that comes back to haunt a collision repair business. It's the failure to FOLLOW the program the shop has developed.

It's not just me who has seen this. I was speaking with someone in senior management at a large collision repair business (not one of my clients) and told him his company has a really excellent quality control system.

"Yeah," he replied, "but nobody uses it."

That's why I believe that quality in today's collision repair industry is a management problem, not a technician problem. It's not an issue of technicians failing to conduct repairs properly; it's an issue of management not using a system to enable and ensure that they do.

Almost every vehicle check-in sheet I see, for example, has a place for radio reset codes to be entered. But all too often they aren't. At a minimum, there should be an "n/a" entered to indicate the codes won't be necessary for that particular job. But I tell shops if you're not going to mandate that every box be filled on a form, don't include that box on the form. This helps teach your staff that every box requires input on every job.

I was in a shop recently where a technician was repairing a fairly new BMW. He had installed a new quarter-panel on it, and it looked beautiful. The welds were awesome. When I asked the technician if he'd had the OEM procedure, he could produce it immediately from his toolbox. All is good, right?

That is until I really read the OEM procedure and confirmed my suspicion: BMW calls for that quarter-panel to be bonded and riveted, not welded. I even noticed the technician had a package of rivets on top of his tool box for that job,



QUALITY IN TODAY'S COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY IS A MANAGEMENT PROBLEM, NOT A TECHNICIAN PROBLEM.

so clearly the estimator had pulled the OEM information for the job and had known to order the rivets.

So what caused the failure? The technician didn't fully understand some of the symbols in the OEM procedure. He'd welded the panel in the exact places shown in the diagram — only the diagram was indicating where the rivets were to be placed. He said he'd thought the rivets would be used later to secure another part to the vehicle.

The bottom line was the shop had just bought itself a BMW. The estimator had followed the shop's quality control system, but it wasn't followed from that point on, by the technician, the production manager and the paint department, all of which could have prevented the problem by following the shop's quality control system.

The lesson here is to first build a good quality control system. In terms of OEM procedures, for example, the estimator should be required to download them as they prepare the estimate, the technician should be required to sign that he or she read the procedures and will follow them, and the production manager is to sign off that those procedures were followed. That all ends up in the job file.

If a technician will be welding, he or she should first conduct test welds, destruct those test welds, photograph the destructed welds, and upload that documentation to the job file. Similarly, images of the completed welds on the vehicle should also be uploaded to the file.

That's all part of a great system. But management's job doesn't end after building such a system. It has to ensure that system is being consistently followed. ■

MARK OLSON is the founder of Vehicle Collision Experts, LLC (VECO Experts), a consulting firm that takes a holistic approach to working with shops on repair quality and business performance. mark@vecoexperts.com

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The power of three

Body shop trio skillfully serves dealership chain's varied repair needs

JAMES E. GUYETTE // Contributing Editor

 Serving 18 Woodhouse Auto Family new- and used-car dealerships throughout Nebraska and Iowa, “with a couple more on the horizon,” the three Woodhouse Collision Center locations combine a high-production output with a family-oriented atmosphere.

Not only has Woodhouse — known throughout the region for its mammoth “Truck Mountain” outdoor display area — been annually celebrated by Ford as the nation’s No. 1 seller of F-150 pickups going back to 2003, the company also markets a multitude of other models along with carrying a selection of recreational vehicles, motorcycles and boats.

When nameplates from Ford, Lincoln, Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, Dodge, Chrysler, Jeep, Ram, Mazda, Hyundai, Nissan, Porsche, Alfa Romeo and Maserati are in need of body work, they are all directed to the trio of Woodhouse Collision Center shops in Omaha and Blair, Neb.

“The only way to know it’s fixed right is to bring it to us — we jump through all the hoops” to ensure that every vehicle is precisely repaired to the respective OEM specifications, says production manager James Rodis, who is based at the 30,000-square-foot main Blair location. (The three shops are internally designated and differentiated as Blair; Omaha Lincoln, Mazda, Porsche; and Buick/GMC.)

Up-to-date training is an ongoing aspect, especially as it relates to the complexities of collision avoidance systems and other sophisticated electronics. “That’s something everyone needs to know,” Rodis reports.

“We have some amazing body technicians and painters,” says Jake Aufenkamp, Blair body shop manager. “With that said, I think our ability to stay current with the latest repair information is one of the biggest strengths.”

Aufenkamp elaborates that “we take great pride in researching and printing OEM procedures for *every* job that we do. We understand that repair procedures are not simply guidelines, but are requirements that we need to follow to repair vehicles correctly for quality and safety.”

“As a repair facility, we strive to make an invisible repair. There aren’t many shops that focus on the little things,” he says. “When replacing body panels, we not only refinish the outside of those panels, but we also refinish the inside to match the factory



WOODHOUSE COLLISION CENTER

Blair, Neb. // www.woodhouse.com

Jason Pittack;

Josh Aufenkamp;

Paul Cech

Owners

55,000

Total square footage of shops

42

No. of bays

3

No. of shops

5 days

Average cycle time

43

Years in business

Axalta

Paint supplier

7

No. of DRPs

Car-O-Liner

Frame machines

finish or e-coat tint. It’s not something everyone thinks about, but it’s an important step to restore a vehicle to pre-accident condition. We want our repairs to be virtually impossible to recognize, especially in the event of a re-inspect.”

This attention to detail is reflected in the dealership’s marketing materials, because “we want our customers to understand how important this is as well,” says Aufenkamp.

The focus has been further enhanced by the recent addition of a new Global Finishing Solutions painting system. Rodis expresses appreciation for the expertise provided by the GFS installation crew. “They helped us out a lot with the planning on



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the paint side. It takes a lot of work to set up the best production flow," he explains. "You can think that you want it like this, but they put up thousands of booths, so they know what is the best route to take."

Able to accommodate eight body technicians and five painters, the latest Blair facility upgrades were completed in May of last year. Along with the three GFS downdraft booths, "we have added an alignment rack and a two-post hoist to perform all necessary mechanical labor to help process repairs through our shop," says Aufenkamp, whose twin brother Josh is a co-owner of the dealership.

"We started with only 12 total employees processing about 100 repair orders per month to having 24 employees processing 300 to 400 repair orders per month and working with all 18 of our dealer locations throughout Eastern Nebraska," he notes.

"We do a ton of in-house training," Aufenkamp points out. "We have trained and moved two paint preppers into painter positions, one paint prepper into a body tech position and our previous wash kid now works side by side with our supplementor, tearing down vehicles

and learning how to write a thorough and accurate estimate."

Aaron Devney, who oversees the supplement process, is admired by Aufenkamp as "an amazing asset."

"Starting as an estimator, he had limited collision world experience," yet within a relatively brief timeframe Devney "has absorbed a tremendous amount of knowledge and information about the industry."

Seeking feedback

"We are different from most shops in the sense that our primary focus is our customers, not the insurance companies," says Aufenkamp. "We are here to help the insurance company understand what needs to be done to repair vehicles according to OEM standards and procedures. Sometimes we run into a snag with an insurance company, at which point we don't hesitate to get the customer involved. We strive to maintain a positive relationship with everyone, but we always have the customer's best interest in mind."

With all the assorted automaker nameplates being sold through the Woodhouse showrooms and sales lots,

"we have it pretty easy" when obtaining OEM parts due to the dealership's large distribution center located about 15 miles away from the Blair shop.

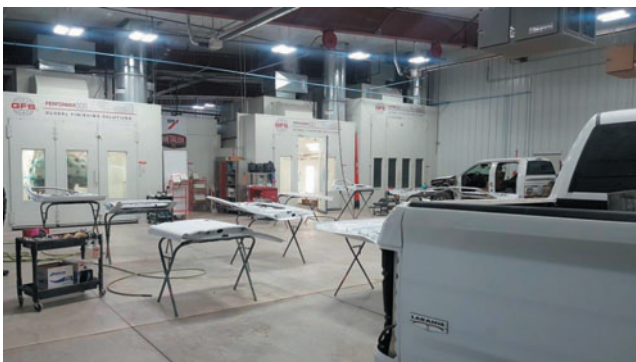
"Also, our paint supplier — Redshaw Paint Supply — is great to deal with. If we need something that they don't have, they're great about finding a way to get it for us," Aufenkamp says.

In business since 1953, the Omaha-based Redshaw has four outlets in Nebraska.

Because the three Woodhouse collision facilities rely mostly on referrals through its vast network of vehicle sales operations, "Our body shops are not really marketed to the general public," Aufenkamp says. "We are very fortunate to be a part of a great dealership that the general public trusts to handle all phases of purchasing and owning a vehicle.

"Our sales department is amazing and so is our relationship with them. We both realize that our customers are their customers and vice-versa. Our dealership is very customer-orientated, so together we make the entire process very easy."

Out on the shop floor, much of the management strategy revolves around



maintaining a collaborative environment. "We believe in letting our technicians' voices be heard," he says. "If we make changes to a process or policy, we ask for feedback. We try to keep a light atmosphere, but still make sure we are getting the job done right."

Recruiting competent new hires is frequently accomplished via an active presence on a series of advisory boards at several area technical schools.

Aufenkamp obtained valuable repair knowledge by spending several years in the dealership's parts service department prior to joining the collision repair side of the business. Rodis, the production manager, has been in the body shop industry for more than 30 years, and has been with Woodhouse for a decade.

"Although our shops are dealer-owned, we have worked very hard to get where we are now," Aufenkamp recounts.

"A lot of our success is because of the hard work and dedication of James Rodis, not only in our facility in Blair, but also what James does outside of the organization that I feel is helping the community. James is very unique because he does not just accept any answer as the final answer. James is very determined to educate everyone who comes to our facility in Blair that has a different opinion other than his."

Rodis' ability to convey "logical and educated" insights is a valuable asset to the company, according to Aufenkamp, which means that "when an adjuster or customer walks away from the conversation, they have the information necessary to make an educated decision and a *safe* decision based on the information that they were given."



He adds that "there have been many like James in our industry, but our team in Blair is very lucky to have someone like him in our organization who cares to the extent that he does to ensure that the vehicles leave here in the safe, reliable condition that they do. It is because of James Rodis that our shop is successful." ■



JAMES E. GUYETTE is a long-time contributing editor to *ABRN*, *Aftermarket Business World* and *Motor Age* magazines. jimguyette2004@yahoo.com

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Marketing your shop in the age of social media

NEW RULES THAT CAN HELP DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS SUCCESS

BOB COOPER // Contributing Editor

Over the past 100-plus years, marketing strategies and the brands that were built were developed by two entities: the client and the ad agency. The client would tell the agency how they envisioned their brand, and the agency would develop the advertising campaigns that would create that very same image in the minds of the targeted consumers. The tobacco companies wanted to create brands that would cause a consumer to feel good when they used their products, and the ad agencies did a great job of achieving this objective. Volvo wanted to create a brand that reflected safety, and as we all know, just about every Volvo ad sends that very same message. After 100-plus years, that systematic method of brand creation is now dead. Not just for companies like the above, but for auto body repair shops just like yours. Let me explain what has happened.

The ability to create a brand is no longer under the control of a product or service provider, nor the ad agencies. In today's world, brands are now created by one entity more than any other, and that entity is social media. The way your shop is going to be perceived in your community is based on what is being said about you, your company and your employ-

ees on social media and review websites. You may believe that you provide a great service, and that your technicians are second to none. You may also invest a lot of your hard-earned money into advertising programs to try to get that message (brand) into the minds of your targeted customers. But in reality, if the chatter in social media says that you overcharge, or that you don't live up to promised completion times, then whether you like it or not, that will become your brand.


So here are my recommendations. First of all, accept the fact that social media is here to stay, and it is where your brand is going to be built. Secondly, you should create a plan that will have a positive impact on what is being said about you and your shop on social media sites.

Obviously there are a number of things you can do, but nothing will ever trump extraordinary service. The reason companies like Nordstrom, Zappos and Starbucks have such extraordinary reputations (brands) is because they deliver extraordinary service. I would strongly encourage you to review every customer touch point from fielding that first call through your customer follow-up calls, looking for ways to improve the entire customer experience.

Lastly, I am going to suggest you do

something that your competitors would never dream of doing, and that is invest 20 percent of your ad budget into the customer experience. This means investing in the customer waiting area, your shuttle service, refreshments, extended warranties, customer follow-up and the plan you have in place for dealing with disgruntled customers.

The Marriott Corporation discovered that they were getting higher CSI scores from customers they dropped the ball with, yet the customer was pleased with the resolution, than from those who had flawless stays at the Marriott. The lesson they learned? When a mistake is made, people typically don't expect a resolution that will make them smile, so when they are completely satisfied, they are pleasantly surprised. This is why the Marriott immediately allocated a good percentage of their training resources to dealing with customers who had a bad experience. Without question, you should do the same.

In closing, brands are no longer built on Wall Street, but in today's world they are being built each and every day on the web. I can only hope we all agree that social media is here to stay, so you need to invest in making the customer experience incredibly positive, because if you do, your customers will do what agencies used to do — create an extraordinary brand for you. 

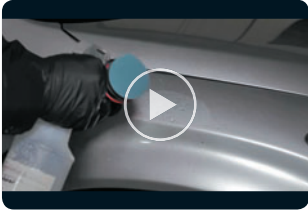
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BMW HEADLIGHT COOLING FAN IS INOPERATIVE

VEHICLE: 2016 BMW M5 (F10), V8-4.4L, Turbo (S63T), Automatic Transmission

MILEAGE: 14,800

PROBLEM: Left headlight inoperative, but scan tool shows a front right outer fan "message." No DTCs.

DETAILS: The vehicle came into the shop because the left headlight was not working. The MIL was not on. When the tech tried to pull diagnostic trouble codes from the headlight control module, there were none, but he did retrieve an issue description – "Front right outer fan."

This model BMW is equipped with a cooling fan designed to cool down the headlamp igniter module and headlamp control module. If the cooling fan does not work, the control module turns off the headlamp to prevent damage to other components.

CONFIRMED REPAIR: The tech removed

the bumper and opened the headlamp assembly to have a clear view of the headlamp cooling fan. He tried to activate it with a scan tool, but it was not working. Next, the tech swapped the left and right fans and tried to activate it with the scan tool. The fan operated normally. He replaced the right headlamp cooling fan, and the problem was repaired.

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Westminster, Colorado

MAY 7-9

Women's Industry Network Educational Conference
Hyatt Regency Indianapolis
Indianapolis, Indiana

MAY 16-18

Paint, Body and Equipment (PBES) Conference
Fairmont Austin
Austin, Texas

JUNE 11-13

IBIS 2018
Hilton Munich Park Hotel
Munich, Germany

AUGUST 7-8

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Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, Georgia

AUGUST 8-10

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Collision Industry Conference
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OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 2

SEMA 2018
Las Vegas Convention Center
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THE FUTURE OF LIGHTWEIGHTING

STEEL AND AUTO COLLABORATION AND WHAT'S TO COME USING 3RD GENERATION AHSS

JOHN CATTERALL //
Contributing Editor

Recently within the repair industry, there has been conversation about all of the innovations regarding material applications for lightweighting new vehicles. With an increased use of mixed materials, the repair industry faces the challenge of establishing robust repair procedures for a wide range of body materials. One material that has gained a lot of attention and interest is advanced high-strength steel (AHSS). AHSS is the fastest growing material in automotive applications, according to a 2015 report by Ducker Worldwide. Over the past five years, the amount of AHSS used each year in automotive applications has been 10 percent higher than forecasted.

Steel's evolution

Today there are more than 200 steel

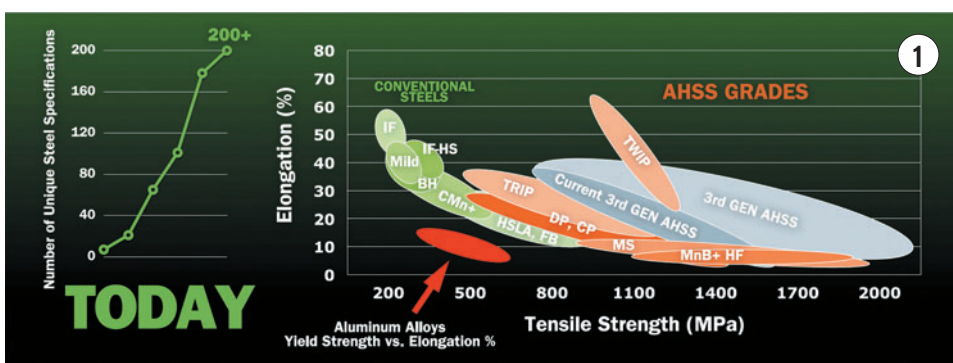
grades available (Figure 1), allowing automakers to use the right grade for the right application. This is a result of the collaborative efforts between the steel and automotive industries working together to develop innovative technology. Compared to a decade ago, today's steel grades are as much as six times stronger. The added strength of AHSS allows automakers to deliver performance and safety benefits with lightweight products using their existing manufacturing infrastructure, eliminating major manufacturing costs associated with the introduction of alternative materials.

A significant portion of steel innovation is in AHSS. Several categories of AHSS grades are possible through small changes in alloying elements combined with thermal-mechanical processing to deliver various microstructures and properties. These distinct generations and classifications include:

- First-generation AHSS, which includes dual phase (DP), ferritic-bainitic (FB), complex phase (CP), martensitic (MS), transformation-induced plasticity (TRIP) and hot-formed (HF). They offer significantly higher strengths as compared to conventional steels and some have improved formability as well.
- Second-generation AHSS have mainly austenitic microstructures and include austenitic stainless steel and twinning-induced plasticity (TWIP). They are extremely strong and formable and can be used to provide extraordinary mass reduction for difficult-to-form parts.
- Third-generation AHSS (3rd Gen AHSS) are currently being introduced commercially. These grades will mainly be multi-phased (MP) steels with high strength and increased formability compared to first-generation AHSS.

3rd Gen AHSS

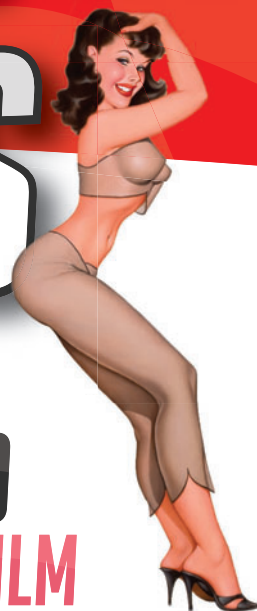
To bridge the properties gap between the already developed first-generation AHSS and second-generation AHSS, as show in Figure 1, 3rd Gen AHSS are being developed to provide automakers a high-value steel solution. This new generation of steel shares the high-strength properties of AHSS, while also having a higher total elongation similar to high-strength steels. This also



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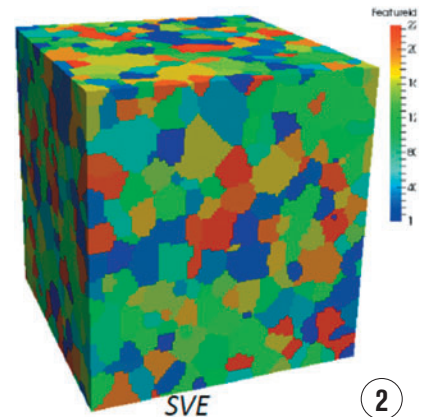
There are many opportunities for 3rd Gen AHSS applications in vehicles, including: lightweighting through direct material substitution and thickness reduction, improved energy absorption through enhanced strength/elongation, and optimized geometries and part consolidation enabled by enhanced formability. Potential applications identified for maximum performance and weight reduction benefit include a- and b-pillars, roof rails, roof bows and underbody reinforcements, to name a few.

As with first- and second-generation AHSS, 3rd Gen AHSS applications will require different repair techniques. The automotive and steel industries are fully committed to working with

the repair industry to inform these professionals on where AHSS are being applied within vehicles and the best ways to work with those steels based on their properties. Partnering with repair professionals will continue as 3rd Gen AHSS becomes more prominent in vehicle design.

Integrated Computational Materials Engineering (ICME) Project

A testament to the industry's interest in 3rd Gen AHSS, the United States Automotive Materials Partnership LLC (USAMP), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the U.S. Council for Automotive Research LLC representing FCA US LLC, Ford Motor Company and General Motors, completed a four-year project in 2017. This project worked to develop an Integrated Computational Materials



Engineering (ICME) model for 3rd Gen AHSS, shown in Figure 2.

The project, managed in collaboration with the Auto/Steel Partnership, was funded in part by a competitively solicited \$6 million award from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in 2012. The project's goal was to create an ICME computer model to aid the steel

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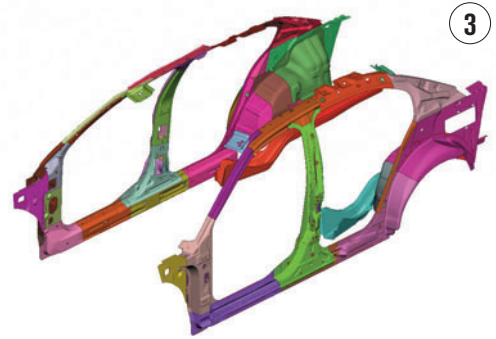
industry in developing 3rd Gen AHSS used in manufacturing lightweight steel components to meet automotive mass savings, performance and safety requirements. The project was supported by five universities, three steel companies, two engineering firms, three automotive OEMs and one national laboratory.

To validate the ICME model, the team successfully produced small volume heats of two 3rd Gen AHSS alloys with mechanical properties meeting those targeted by the DOE for an exceptional-strength, high-ductility 3rd Gen AHSS and a high-strength, exceptional-ductility 3rd Gen AHSS. The team produced sufficient quantities of the two 3rd Gen AHSS alloys for testing, model calibration and model validation.

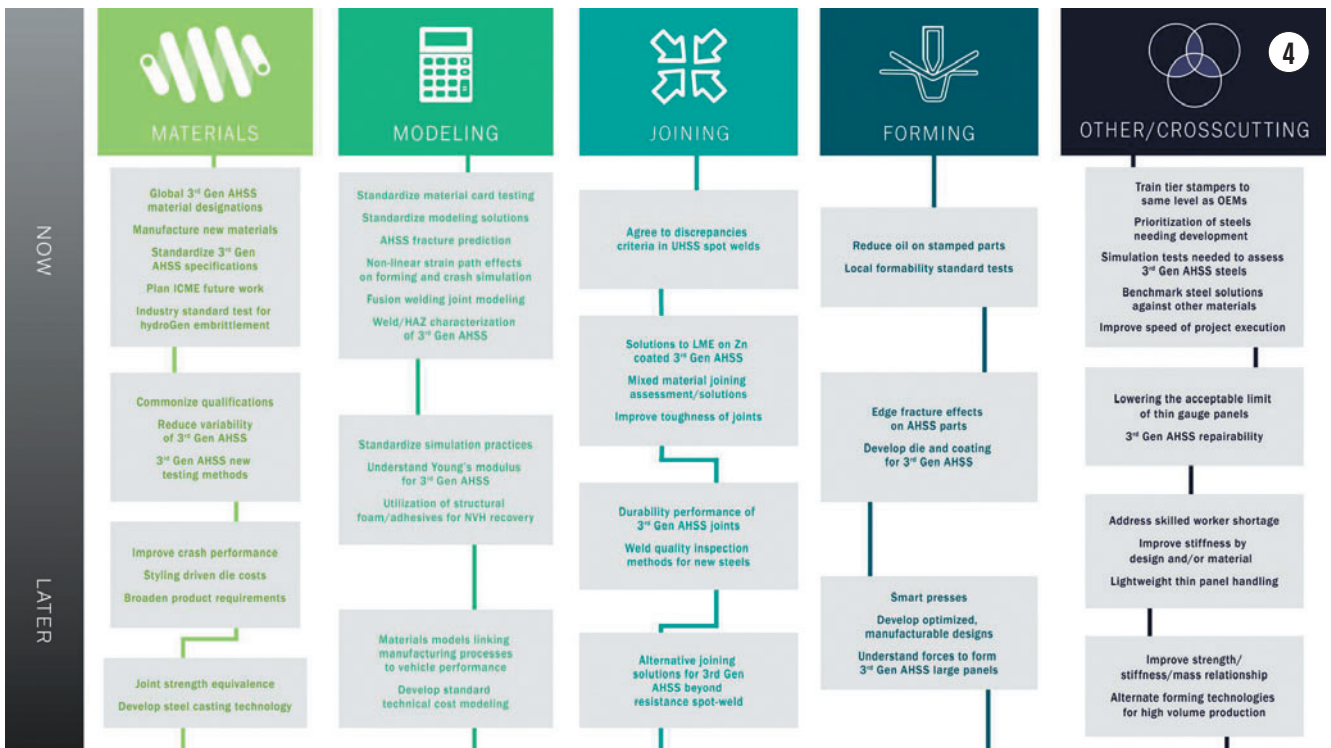
The first, a medium manganese (10 weight percent) 3rd Gen AHSS alloy, achieved 1,200 megapascal (MPa) ultimate tensile strength and 37 percent tensile elongation, which exceeded DOE targets for a high-strength/exceptional-ductility steel. The second

3rd Gen AHSS alloy of a 3 percent manganese steel achieved 1,538 MPa tensile strength and 19 percent tensile elongation, which exceeded the strength target and was within the ductility target range for the DOE's exceptional-strength/high-ductility steel.

The project simulated the application of both 3rd Gen AHSS into a baseline automotive side structure, shown in Figure 3. The side structure design was optimized to take advantage of the better mechanical properties of the 3rd Gen AHSS, which resulted in a final design that achieved a 30 percent mass savings while still achieving vehicle crash (pole intrusion, side impact, rear impact, roof crush) and stiffness (torsional and bending) requirements. This is especially significant considering the steel gauges for the components that made up the side structure ranged from 0.5 to 2 mm. Even with this reduced gauge, the optimized final side structure design showed improved crash performance versus the baseline design.



As demonstrated by this project, these 3rd Gen AHSS both provide higher strength and enhanced formability, offering the automotive designer an additional suite of grades to help reduce mass and continue to keep steel a preferred material in future vehicles. This project reinforces why the steel and automotive industries must continue to work together, as further development and availability of 3rd Gen AHSS will provide an excellent economical path forward in meeting 2025 Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards and greenhouse gas regulations. While this project focused on material, design and forming, one of



the next steps in this work includes modeling and validating joining technologies, which would provide valuable input to the reparability of these grades.


Auto/Steel partnership

A/SP is a 30-year collaboration of auto companies and steel makers that leverages the intellectual and technical resources of the automotive, steel and related industries and organizations to develop pre-competitive lightweight steel solutions to meet the current and future needs of automakers. The consortium has proven to be a long-time leader in delivering mass-efficient, high-performing and cost-effective solutions for body and chassis applications as evident by numerous applications on the road today.

The partnership is committed to addressing fundamental technolo-

gies to speed up the implementation of 3rd Gen AHSS. As a result, A/SP projects have been expanded to evaluate the formability, optimized tooling solutions, corrosion, weldability and reparability of 3rd Gen AHSS. This work is evident in the A/SP's Technology Roadmap, shown in Figure 4, which details technical areas of research and new development project opportunities for the automotive and steel industries over the course of the next four years. The opportunities presented in the roadmap illustrate how the steel and automotive industries will continue to work hand-in-hand to overcome challenges and to advance the global automotive industry while driving innovation.

As the automotive industry works to meet increasingly stringent fuel economy and safety regulations, the steel

industry continues to collaborate with automakers to innovate and implement 3rd Gen AHSS into new vehicle designs. This next generation of steel opens automakers' doors to the ability to continue to lightweight their vehicles with steel. It will provide higher strength and formability choices, increasing the value of steel as a weight reduction solution. It's safe to say steel will remain a strong material of choice in the automobile for years to come, especially as 3rd Gen AHSS is implemented into more and more vehicles. 



JOHN CATTERALL is the executive director of the Auto/Steel Partnership. He maintains and enhances the partnership between auto and steel investors and executes strategic projects to develop lightweight steel solutions to meet the current and future needs of automakers.

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FIVE TIPS TO FORM STRONGER VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS

TIM SRAMCIK // Contributing Editor

Industry veteran Donald Harrison likes to tell the following story about how he learned one of the most important lessons of his career just several years before retiring.

Early one morning he was waiting to check in a special customer — a long-time friend and the head of the local chamber of commerce. The man didn't show at the appointed time. Instead, an hour later Harrison fielded an irate call from the now-enraged customer who said he had gotten into a verbal altercation with one of his workers. The incident was so ugly he chose to drive away rather than to speak directly to Harrison because he need time to cool down.

Harrison apologized profusely and

began performing an investigation. It turned out his staff wasn't at fault. The customer had encountered an employee from a company that supplied uniforms, shop rags and other materials. Harrison contacted the company only to be told by a disinterested service rep the matter would be "looked into." Further investigating showed the company had a reputation for bad behavior and had been blacklisted by other local businesses. Eventually, employees came forward to report their dislike for the vendor. They hadn't said anything sooner because they didn't believe it mattered.

Harrison took two important actions. He replaced the company with a competitor. Then he sat down with shop

ownership and staff and performed a thorough review of all the shop's vendors. They re-examined contracts, re-engaged with existing suppliers and rethought their entire approach to this part of their business. Next, they went through a process where they re-envisioned the shop as an all-new business and focused on partnering only with those companies who shared their values.

The results were significant. Service levels increased, costs fell, and the shop had access to benefits it previously overlooked. Perhaps most important, "We discovered that who you do business with is just as important as how you do business," says Harrison.

Could your shop use a similar boost?

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It might be time to re-examine vendor relations to ensure your business receives the maximum benefits. Use the following five tips.

Tip 1: Seek service excellence

If shops had to make a list of the most important features they want from their vendors, service and cost would both finish near the top. Bruce Halcro, secretary of the SCRS and owner of Capital Collision in Helena, Mont., says service is most important. "We work in a rural area, so a lot of our vendors are hours away," he explains. "We rely upon people doing the job we're asking. For example, if we're supposed to get a part in on a certain day, we can't have a vendor make a mistake and not deliver what's promised because it really hurts our cycle time."

This factor is equally important to shops operating in more urban areas where they have more vendors to chose

from and shorter supply times. Reliable service still matters. While having access to multiple vendors for the same products can be beneficial, it also can add some complications. The more vendors a shop works with, the more relationships it must maintain. There also can be pricing and other differences that must be worked back into a repair order. You're far better off working with one vendor who offers top-of-the-line, reliable service versus juggling multiple businesses you haven't formed a tight bond with.

Tip 2: Contain costs

That world-class vendor you select also should be offering competitive pricing, including discounts for the products you use most often. Kye Yeung, SCRS Chair-



PHOTO: SHERWIN WILLIAMS

VENDORS HELP YOU and themselves best when they keep you properly supplied and serviced. Keep an eye out for any overstocking issues.

man and president of European Motor Car Works in Costa Mesa, Calif., recommends looking for vendors who offer discounts or incentives on bulk orders, returns and one key area — shipping. "You don't want to pay \$5 for something like washers and then find out the shipping costs \$15," says Yeung, adding, "Any savings, even small ones, count."

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This tip may seem like a no-brainer, but what shops need to keep in mind is that they can continually negotiate with vendors for the best deals. Yeung says a better bottom line on costs is even more important than extras such as training. He isn't diminishing the value of training — far from it. Paint vendors and information providers already provide significant learning opportunities covering a number of service areas.

If other vendors offer training on their products, that's a true benefit, but Yeung says it shouldn't give one vendor an advantage over another.

Tip 3: Track trouble

How often do you evaluate your vendors? Some shops audit their business partners annually or every six months. Whether you perform formal evaluations, you, your management staff and employees should establish a system to evaluate your vendors.

Halcro says his managers keep an eye out for service lapses and other problems. "If we start to see a pattern, we let the vendor know that we're not happy and they need to fix the situation," he says. Those problems tend to be rare for the most part, but Halcro says shops should look for other issues where the vendor is looking out more for itself than the shop. Such is the case with overstocking. "Everyone needs to make a living, but good vendors know their job is to help make a shop successful," notes Yeung. "When we do better, they sell more stock. That's how this is supposed to work."

Tip 4: Loyalty matters

Good vendors will understand how they can best help you. As you evaluate your relationships, keep in mind that you shouldn't necessarily be looking to continually swap out one vendor for another. Your actual goal is forming long-term partnerships.

Yeung notes that he has worked so

long with so many of his vendors that the thought of replacing them rarely is raised. He notes, "We try to stay for years. We've only ended relationships if the vendor goes out of business or the product is no longer made."

Yeung points out that jumping from one vendor to another can carry steep challenges due to the learning curve for new products. For example, moving from one paint vendor to another is a huge step.

This doesn't mean shops always should disregard new vendors. Rather, they need to do some homework on the move that involves asking for references or a portfolio and following up by contacting other customers. A background check may be necessary. Always arrange a meeting where you can sit down with a rep to both get a firm picture of what the company offers and to get a hint of the type of people you'd be doing business with. "You don't want someone who's pushy or doing a hard sell or acting in a way that makes you uncomfortable," says Yeung. "They should respect your time. Respect matters — that's what relationships are built on."

Tip 5: Make it personal

There are business matters, and there are personal matters. And the two should never meet — or so says an old business axiom. That axiom may not be correct, say repairers like Yeung. He believes the best business relationships blossom into something personal: "You want to be able to get to know your vendors closely and have them do the same with you. I want to work with people who are going to ask about family or where I'm going on vacation."

Yeung says that personal relationships are especially important in collision repair because the industry is so small. He notes that the same "faces" turn up again and again as sales reps move from one company to another. (This is also why it's important for shops



MEET PERIODICALLY with your staff to discuss vendor issues or benefits.

to treat their vendors well since they'll probably see the same sales reps at other companies.)

Personal closeness is a byproduct of the trust that grows between a shop and vendor. "You know they're taking care of you and have your best interests in mind and vice versa," says Yeung. "It's a joy to order paint from our vendor because we know he has our back."

Paying it forward

With everything else shops must pay attention to, receiving help from their vendors is a welcome benefit. More than that, it's a critical part to being successful in collision repair.

Even before Harrison discovered he had a serious issue with one vendor, his business was already fighting to stay above water. Working out all its vendor relations helped right the business's ship and allowed Harrison to turn his attention elsewhere.

This is the great lesson gained by heeding his example or following the lead of Halcro and Yeung. Every part of your business supports multiple other areas, as they feed into your operation as a whole. Getting the most out of the people who supply your parts, paint and other products means getting the best out of your business. That's the key to keeping your doors open year after year. 📧



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

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Do your team members know they can ask for help?

When you ask for support, you allow others to use their skills and expertise

For years I spent my life doing everything I could to never ask for help. I saw myself as less than the leader if I voiced a need for help. I did not apply that same standard to others who asked for help, but rather viewed us as a team using each of our gifts to make us all successful. Yet, what I learned several years ago in my professional and personal journey is that asking for help empowers me and others.

Recently, we had a team member grow into a management role. We had a plan to set him up for success through coaching and development. However, the coaching plan was not working. What surprised us was what he communicated: he hated the new role but did not want to let us down nor did he want to ask for help. In his eyes, he never saw leadership asking for help. We explained all the different avenues where we reach out for help as business owners. We are part of a national 20 group; we bring in consultants to help us with different facets of our business; and we rely on mentors to help us along the way. I was reminded of the importance of transparency and communicating this truth with our team.

When you ask for support, you create opportunities for others to use their skills and expertise. You empower others to grow and allow them to experience the fulfillment that comes from giving and being an effective resource. There are several key factors in developing a love to ask for help:

Change in perspective — Asking for help demonstrates strength and courage, not weakness. This must start with leadership and be communicated through words, but more importantly through actions.

Personal responsibility — Acknowledge your strengths and with the same confidence do not shy away from where you need help. Don't make excuses, looking to place blame. Take personal responsibility of what gifts and talents you bring to the table and be transparent and authentic about where you need help.

Leverage strengths — Studies show the most engaged employees are the ones who use their strengths the most. Think



ASKING FOR HELP DEMONSTRATES STRENGTH AND COURAGE, NOT WEAKNESS.

about your reality — are you more engaged and fulfilled when doing things you are good at and like to do or things you struggle to accomplish well?

Innovation — Be willing to ask for feedback and be willing to receive feedback. Are you struggling with cycle time and nothing you do seems to improve the continual delays and frustrated customers? Ask your team for feedback on where they see roadblocks to achieve a specific goal and their innovative ideas to incorporate to reach the desired outcome. Being a part of the change is empowering and fulfilling for everyone involved.

Difficult conversations — Be brave and have the difficult conversations. It is in these conversations where real growth happens. For leaders, quit sitting in meetings avoiding the hard conversations until the person is no longer in the room.

Vice versa to the team member, stop walking out the door without conversing with leadership about feedback only to walk out and have that conversation with someone who has no influence over the matter.

Authenticity and transparency — Eliminate manipulation, playing games and be transparent and authentic. I need to know when I lay my weaknesses on the table that it is not going to be used to my demise or thrown in my face.

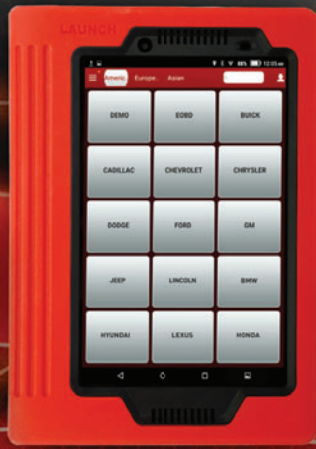
Trust — There must be trust. Trust to the point that I know everyone on my team wants the best for me and the team. Simon Sinek references how we lead our teams and treat our team members. Do we lead our teams like we lead our children? We will move heaven and earth for them to succeed. What if we did the same thing for our team? What level of trust would exist then?

There is a saying "It takes a village to raise a child." I know that to be true in my life. It also takes a village to run a successful business. For us, it takes our team members, peers from our 20 group, consultants and many more. 🏡

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



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