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LEADING  
COVERAGE

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**ADAS**  
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& MAXIFLASH VCM

## 42 SENSOR SENSIBILITY

Adopt a new philosophy for repair and calibration

## 46 A LOOK AT STEERING ANGLE SENSORS

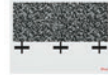
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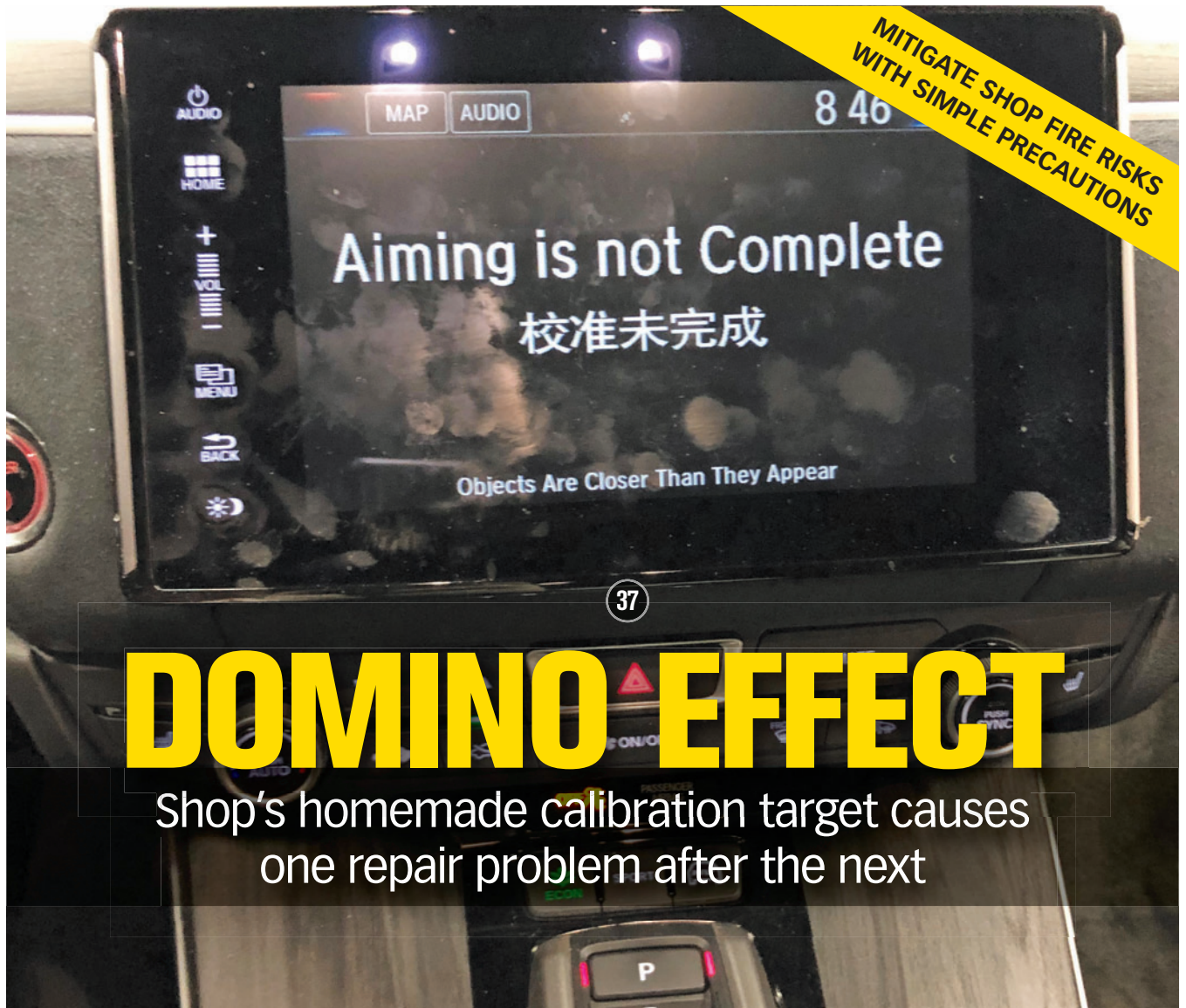
**TOPOLOGY MODULE MAP**

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## OPERATIONS

### 10 MANAGEMENT METHODS

Now is the time to invest in leadership training  
**TIM SRAMCIK** // Contributing Editor

### 15 MITIGATE SHOP FIRE RISKS WITH SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS

Housekeeping, plans for prevention, evacuation can lower risk for shops  
**JAY SIGHT** // Contributing Editor

*THE COLLISION EXECUTIVE*

### 18 GETTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Hiring correctly over time builds a culture that fosters innovation, growth  
**STEVE FELTOVICH** // Contributing Editor

### 20 BROADENING THE SCOPE OF A CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

Grow your CSR to be a one-stop service for fulfilling customer needs  
**JOHN SHOEMAKER** // Contributing Editor

*FINDING A FIX*

### 22 ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEW WORLD OF COLLISION REPAIR?

We can chart a path forward that will provide a roadmap to long-term success  
**FARZAM AFSHAR** // Contributing Editor

### 24 MAKING A SHOP IMPRESSION

What do customers see when they visit your shop?  
**JOHN BURKHAUSER** // Contributing Editor

*ASA INSIGHT*

### 26 LATEST COVID-19 STIMULUS LEGISLATION HELD UP

Small business provisions are still fluid  
**ROBERT REDDING** // Contributing Editor



10

### 28 INFRARED CURING SYSTEM IMPROVES QUALITY, PRODUCTIVITY

Shortwave equipment from GFS increases throughput by as much as 80 percent  
**JAY SIGHT** // Contributing Editor

### 32 MIDYEAR UPDATE ON THE COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY

Focus Advisors outlines the current state of the industry and what's to come  
**DAVID ROBERTS** // Contributing Editor

*SHOP PROFILE*

### 34 PROVIDING LIKE-NEW REPAIRS

Newell's again improves with addition of UniCure paint booth  
**JAMES E. GUYETTE** // Contributing Editor

*THE LAST DETAIL*

### 52 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING A JOB AND KNOWING THE JOB

Procedures change over time, and the only way to keep up is to read them  
**WILL LATUFF** // Contributing Editor

## TECHNICAL

### 37 DOMINO EFFECT

Shop's homemade calibration target causes one repair problem after the next  
**JOHN ANELLO** // Contributing Editor



42

### 42 SENSOR SENSIBILITY

Adopt a new philosophy for repair and calibration  
**TIM SRAMCIK** // Contributing Editor

### 46 A LOOK AT STEERING ANGLE SENSORS

Getting pointed in the right direction  
**DAVE BRINKLEY** // Contributing Editor

IN EVERY ISSUE



## 4 INDUSTRY NEWS

**SEMA 2020 CANCELED AMID ONGOING COVID CONCERNS**

**TAKE TIME TO PLAN FOR TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY NEEDS**

**WHY COLLISION BUYERS ARE PLENTIFUL NOW**

## 50 COLLISION PRODUCT GUIDE

## 51 AD INDEX

WEBINAR

### EXPAND YOUR SPRAY ZONE, IMPROVE SHOP PERFORMANCE

Watch the webinar, featuring Jason Garfoot of GFS, now at [ABRN.com/sprayzone](http://ABRN.com/sprayzone)

Expand Your Spray Zone, Improve Shop Performance



## WEB EXCLUSIVES // [ABRN.COM](http://ABRN.COM)

### BUILDING A SALES-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION

Helping your collision center staff to understand the need to become a sales-driven organization is key to your overall financial success. This includes understanding that the "estimate capture rate" is imperative to make this happen. Currently the average capture rate throughout the industry is 50 percent. In "Building a sales-driven organization," ATI business coach Jackie Ferrier will discuss the current obstacles standing in the way of capturing more work without losing money and how to overcome these obstacles using various selling tools. You'll take away tools to better identify the needs of your customer using buyer personas as well as how to incentivize your people in order to drive the behavior you want.

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

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# DRIVER ASSISTANCE SYSTEMS OPERATION AND CALIBRATION

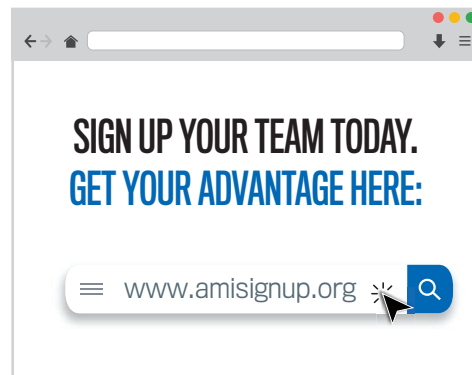
This web-based training course covers the operation and calibration of the different driver assistance systems used on Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep®, Ram and FIAT® Brand vehicles. This includes Blind Spot Monitor<sup>1</sup>, Rear Cross Path Monitor, ParkSense<sup>2</sup>, ParkView® Rear Back Up Camera<sup>3</sup>, Forward Collision Warning<sup>4</sup>, LaneSense<sup>5</sup>, rain-sensing wipers, advanced headlamp systems and adaptive cruise control.

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- ▶ Preparing the vehicle for successful driver assistance system module calibration
- ▶ Discovering what will contribute to a failed calibration
- ▶ Understanding driver assistance system operation and limitations

**There are additional beneficial courses available online, as well, all developed to help ensure your employees have the knowledge required to put your shop in the best light. Sign up today at [www.amisignup.org](http://www.amisignup.org), choose the “FCA Certified Collision Network” as your area of interest and have access to online courses.**

**For more information, contact AMI at [supportingsuccess@amionline.org](mailto:supportingsuccess@amionline.org) or call 817-514-2929.**



1. Always check visually for vehicles prior to changing lanes. 2. Always look before proceeding. An electronic drive aid is not a substitute for conscientious driving. Always be aware of your surroundings. 3. Always check entire surroundings visually before proceeding. 4. This system is solely an alert system for the front of the vehicle that does not take any actions to change vehicle dynamics to avoid a collision, not a substitute for active driver involvement. The driver must remain aware of traffic conditions and be prepared to use brakes to avoid collisions. 5. This system is a driver's convenience system, not a substitute for active driver involvement. The driver must remain aware of traffic conditions and maintain control of the vehicle. ©2020 FCA US LLC. All Rights Reserved. Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram and Mopar are registered trademarks of FCA US LLC. FIAT is a registered trademark of FCA Group Marketing S.p.A., used under license by FCA US LLC.



EVENTS

## SEMA 2020 CANCELED AMONG ONGOING COVID CONCERNS

ABRN WIRE REPORTS //

Due to COVID-19 and concerns that event facilities and services will be unavailable, the SEMA Show will not be taking place in 2020, the association announced on its website.

While both event organizers and industry members have been working tirelessly to deliver an outstanding SEMA Show in November, mounting uncertainty has rendered continuing with the event inadvisable. SEMA ex-

pects the decision will bring much needed clarity to an uncertain picture and will help exhibitors, attendees and partners plan accordingly.

Recent SEMA Show survey results indicated interest in a possible virtual tradeshow with related live elements. SEMA will be working with industry members to determine interest levels on specific alternatives.

“The SEMA Show is committed to furthering businesses in the automotive specialty equipment market, and to

>> SEMA CONTINUES ON PAGE 6

BREAKING NEWS

TECHNOLOGY

## TAKE TIME TO PLAN FOR TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

As automotive businesses have navigated the pandemic and prepared for a return to “normal” business, many have spent time improving their facilities, from painting and organizing to implementing new processes. But one area that many collision repair facilities overlook on their improvements list is their technology.

VeriFacts Automotive, which provides the highest level of collision repair business coaching, evaluation and verification services to collision repair shops across North America, notes that the advanced technology needed to run the shops isn't keeping up with the advanced technology in the cars they are repairing.

“Today, with the new ‘no-touch’ service, new data-enabled equipment and smart tools, shops need a powerful, integrated technology platform to maximize the benefits of their resources,” says Fred Iantomo, vice president of IoT for VeriFacts Automotive. “Many shops still have the

>> TECH CONTINUES ON PAGE 6

TRENDING

### MITCHELL OFFERING HYUNDAI INFORMATION

Mitchell announced the availability of Hyundai structural repair procedures and materials guidelines in their software. It provides easy access to Hyundai repair, material and labor data for safe repairs.

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

### AUTEL RELEASES PRO KEY BUNDLE

Autel US announced its new IM608Pro Key Programming Bundle is available for pre-order and is a comprehensive immobilizer that enables key learning directly through the OBDII port.

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

### SWAF, SATA ANNOUNCE CONTEST

Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes and SATA are hosting the Spray Your Way Contest, in which participants submit original, unique spray gun artwork to be featured on a special edition of spray guns.

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

### AUDI SELECTS CCC

Audi of America has entered into a multi-year agreement with CCC Information Systems and its CCC Promote system as its sole parts pricing promotion solution to support Audi dealers across the United States.

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

### I-CAR BOARD FILLS 7 OPEN SEATS

The Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair (I-CAR) elected seven individuals to fill open board seats, including three members returning for a second, three-year term.

[ABRN.COM/7ELECTED](http://ABRN.COM/7ELECTED)



## ANALYSIS

# WHY COLLISION BUYERS ARE PLENTIFUL NOW

DAVID ROBERTS // Contributing Editor

In May, both industry revenues and M&A interest were severely depressed. Operators were pausing, not knowing how far down revenues might go and how long they would stay depressed. Sellers were wondering the same things. Buyers were pausing as the tumult caused by the COVID-19 virus was creating enormous uncertainty.

Then the granting of PPP loans, additional capital obtained by the leading consolidators, interest from value-oriented private equity firms and glimmers of hope as assignments began to impact operators and acquirers alike.

At the beginning of the third quarter of this most extraordinary year, we are seeing a few deals being announced. At the same time, we are seeing considerably more interest in finding and engaging with new prospective sellers. Today we are seeing multiple bidders and attractive LOIs, a big change from just a few months ago. From our clients and from our discussions with other operators of all sizes around the U.S., the pause in acquisitions seems to be over.

For platform targets above \$25 million in revenues, new private equity bidders are competing with the established national and regional players.

We believe there are many reasons why this is the case and why now. It's too early to tell what a post-pandemic world will look like, but for collision and the automotive aftermarket, there are a number of observations and recent trends that seem to be amplifying the attractiveness and value of these businesses.

## The outlook for collision is bright (for some)

Miles driven continues to increase. Some forecast miles driven to increase

even more rapidly as people avoid community travel, driving instead of flying or commuting via public transit. As of this writing in August, miles driven in the U.S. was down just 3 percent from February levels. The vacation rental market is returning, and most forecast auto travel to be the predominant way to get there.

The ACA/AASA Auto Aftermarket sales forecast projects an increase of nearly 12 percent from this year to next, and 2 percent from 2019. If the research for that report was compiled in March or April of this year, it could be conservative.

Although most collision operators don't expect to see a return to full 2019 levels until next year, we believe the ones that successfully weather the pandemic downturn will see a market share increase as their competitors fail.

## More qualified buyers inside and outside the industry

The four big regionals have solid PE backing with a mandate to grow through acquisition: Classic Collision, Crash Champions (with Pacific Elite), Joe Hudsons, and ProCare. Meanwhile, both Gerber and Caliber have refilled their coffers with some additional debt and are continuing to acquire both market significant MSOs and fill-ins.

In addition to these name brand operators, there are now seven private equity firms eager to enter the collision market, most with experienced former operators at the acquisition helm, some of which have already issued Letters of Intent and are in Due Diligence.

Several of these PE firms were in the hunt for platform deals including Joe Hudson and Crash Champions where premium valuations were expected. They issued LOIs, did their due diligence and have a much deeper understanding of the business than some of the newer PE entrants.

With a larger pool of buyers, sellers are finding interest from multiple parties, which drives valuations and increases the chances that a sale gets completed. It also leaves some bidders on the losing end of a good offer, which tends to raise their desire to not lose the next deal.

## Market impactful platforms are few, bolt-ons cheaper

Although there are 32,000 body shops in the U.S., there are by our count fewer than 9,000 shops that are considered impactful enough to buy. Even more scarce are large, quality MSOs. In our proprietary database there are only about 125 MSOs with four or more locations in the U.S. Perhaps only one third of those are important enough in their markets to allow an acquirer new to the market to begin developing a regional presence.

In many cases, these market-dominant operators already have the capital and energy to grow, with little incentive to give up equity or control. The remaining platforms are a precious few, and buyers recognize that.

Despite making initial investments at a premium, investors see an opportunity for excellent returns by growing a platform through less expensive single shop and small MSO add-ons. It's likely (and unfortunate) that the pandemic will accelerate the need for smaller operators to exit quickly and with less value.

It's also possible that the pandemic opens up more brownfield opportunities as real estate investors look for more industrial assets, shifting away from retail.

## Techs and experienced operators available from distressed businesses

A significant factor that inhibited

>> BUY CONTINUES ON PAGE 8

>> **TECH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

same server and data capacity that powered their front office. This means they can't meet the connectivity needs of handling virtual estimates, customers' wireless service, technicians' data download demands and overall information management required for every vehicle repair."

lantorno points to five key areas where collision repair facilities need to evaluate and upgrade their technology:

**Connectivity and bandwidth:** The foundation of your technology network is your internet service provider and the bandwidth they can provide. For maximum efficiency, you should determine the availability of adequate signal strength in most locations within your shop and in outside areas where you will be handling "no-touch" vehicle dropoff and delivery. This can easily be done by downloading any number of apps that you can get from the Apple store or Google Play. You should also consider how many people and devices will be used in your shop to ensure you have enough bandwidth to support everything and everyone.

**High-tech tools:** Most new shop equipment (scanners, frame measurement, welders, etc.) have internet connections. This allows the ability to upload vehicle data to shop estimat-

ing systems, download repair procedures and standards, even monitor equipment performance and repair needs.

**Inventory of internet connected equipment:** While you are checking the "Connectivity and bandwidth" above, you should record and keep an inventory of your equipment that is or can be connected to the internet. You do not need an elaborate inventory system or method — a simple spreadsheet or Word document works well.

**Data backup and recovery:** By now, everyone knows that they should have a backup mechanism for the data on their PC and on their servers. If you do not, stop right now and get a backup system or software in place. However, this is not enough. You need to periodically (at least once a year, preferably monthly) test the data recovery portion. Make a habit of recovering and restoring and you will find that if you have a data loss event, you are prepared, confident and you will recover quicker and with minimal stress.

**Data pumps:** Do you know what these are? You or someone installed these on your servers so that you could transmit and receive data. These pumps are vendor specific. Are you still using that vendor? If not, do you know if the data pump has been removed? Was it removed? If you do not immediately know the answer, then it probably is still working in the background. It is time that you remove any data pumps that you are no longer using. If you have IT personnel, get this on their work schedule to check. If you do not have IT personnel, get some outside assistance. If you aren't managing this closely, your shop data and your customers' data could be at risk for unauthorized use.

"Now is the ideal time to upgrade your shop's total technology platform and empower your productivity and efficiency for years to come," adds lantorno. "Not only will you be able to maximize the return on your investment in advanced equipment, your team members will be better able to deliver a 'no-touch' approach to vehicle repair for your customers." 📱

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>> **SEMA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

providing manufacturers and buyers with the best opportunity to connect, promote new products and discover new trends," said Chris Kersting, SEMA president and CEO. "We appreciate the spirit, hard work and innovation our industry puts into the SEMA Show each year. While we are disappointed circumstances prevent us from hosting the Show in November; we look forward to getting everyone together in 2021 for another outstanding event."

Full refunds for SEMA Show exhibitor booth deposits and attendee registration fees will be issued. 📱



USA

~ Jon Hauschild, Owner,  
Scottsbluff Body & Paint

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~ Jon Hauschild, Owner

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>> BUY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

growth last year was a scarcity of technicians and experienced operators. The pandemic has eased that constraint.

The demise of Service King, distress among local operators and less competition from Caliber are now easing the competition for technicians and operators who have experience with growth and scale. It's now feasible to develop a plan to enter the collision market and find sufficient talent. This change in the staffing dynamic opens the door to new PE entrants, and makes platforms attractive even if the owner operators wish to exit completely.

### But receiving full consideration may take 1-2 years

Current offers come with more conditions — specifically, performance hurdles.

Most buyers understand that from mid-March onward business performance has been abnormally low and not reflective of what they're likely to see in the future. A TTM (trail-

ing twelve month) purchase price isn't a fair metric of value.

To mitigate risks to the buyer the structure of deals may be different. Winning offers may value the business on 2019 results but condition full payouts on performance hurdles in 2020 and 2021. With upfront consideration based on current performance, the "earnout" portion may be paid out over the next year or two based on the business returning to those levels.

### Conclusion

We've seen enough activity and LOIs to recognize that significant activity has returned for many sellers. For attractive platforms, values are approaching those we saw a year ago. It takes six months or longer to sell a business, to prepare properly for market, run an auction, identify the right partner and close the transaction. As we see more transactions announced and complete those for our own clients, we will gain confidence that the market has truly returned. By the end of the third quarter of 2020, we will have more data and stronger convictions but the trend is clear: The market is back! 📈

## I-CAR EXTENDS FREE ACCESS TO RTS PORTAL THROUGH END OF YEAR

I-CAR<sup>®</sup> (the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair) announced that it will extend free access to its Repairability Technical Support (RTS) Portal (<https://rts.i-car.com/>) through the end of the year.

I-CAR offered complimentary access to RTS until May 31 through their COVID-19 Industry Relief Program, announced in March. The extension has been well received by the industry.

"We recognize the strong value RTS provides to the industry and have seen a large uptick in use, in particular, during April through July, aiding our decision to extend this important resource free of charge to anyone in the industry throughout the remainder of the year," said Scott VanHulle, Manager, RTS and OEM Relations.

VanHulle noted a 23 percent increase or approximately 400,000 hits in RTS engagement during July 2020,

over the same period last year, with the strong interest in all areas of the RTS's website.

Launched in 2014, RTS is designed to offer the most up-to-date collision repair technical information at the fingertips of all of those in the collision repair industry through one, easy-to-navigate hub.

RTS is a free service to current Gold Class shops/organizations, technicians with I-CAR Platinum status, Sustaining Partners, and anyone who has trained four or more times in the past 12 months.

A popular feature of RTS is "Ask I-CAR" where trained collision repair professionals can submit repair-related questions to I-CAR's team of RTS experts. I-CAR strives to answer every inquiry within two hours, and often much sooner, and recently fielded its 28,000<sup>th</sup> "Ask I-CAR" ques-

tion and answer.

"We pride ourselves on answering each technical question as quickly and as thoroughly as possible, as we understand how important having the right information is for everyone in the industry," said VanHulle.

The nature of the inquiries also provide I-CAR with invaluable real-time insights into the issues, concerns and challenges the technicians in the field today are encountering daily, he added.

"It's a complete win-win, as we then use these insights to further our ongoing work with OEMs to enhance their repair information and procedures. This information also finds its way into I-CAR training courses and helps to inform where extra focus is needed in a course."

"It's about doing the right thing for the industry during this challenging time." 📈

# ALLDATA SHOP MANAGEMENT OFFERS A SIMPLER SOLUTION FOR CUSTOMERS

ALLDATA has developed an answer for customers looking for a simpler shop management solution can now turn to ALLDATA's Shop Management system for an answer.

ALLDATA developed Shop Manager in response to customer feedback for a management solution that is easy to use, creates essential shop documents and integrates directly with ALLDATA Repair. The enhanced integration allows users to start estimates right from the parts and labor information in ALLDATA Repair or go straight from repair orders in Shop Manager to repair procedures in ALLDATA Repair. ALLDATA Shop Manager also stores customer/vehicle information, generates basic sales and tax reports and more.

ALLDATA introduced the system to the industry during a webinar on July 15. Satwinder Mangat, ALLDATA president, recognized that the market is experiencing challenging times, but opportunities, such as this virtual product presentation, also exist.

"These virtual meetings are the new normal for us," Mangat said. "I spend

sometimes an entire day looking at my screen. But it is helping make our communication across the globe better."

Communication is a main focus of ALLDATA, and one that spurred the creation of Shop Manager. "We heard from our customers that they are looking for a simpler solution. Thirty percent of our customers were handwriting orders," Mangat said.

"What I've heard is shop management systems are too complicated. Our customers were looking for something different. Thirty percent of our customers were handwriting their own orders. We built them a solution and focused on ease of use," said Robert McBride, Vice President of Product Management.

"Shop Manager syncs seamlessly with ALLDATA Repair", so shops and users can easily add industry standard parts and labor times or toggle between the manufacturer repair information and shop documents," Mangat said. "Shop Manager is also fully integrated, so our customers are one click away from the information they need and rely on."


## Three shop management solutions for day-to-day workflow needs

With the addition of Shop Manager, ALLDATA now offers three distinct solutions to give repairers the management tools needed to run their shops successfully.

1. Estimator – Ideal for shops looking for an easy way to create more professional and compliant estimates.

2. ALLDATA Shop Manager – Perfect for shops in need of enhanced shop management capabilities, including generating estimates, repair orders, invoices and more.

3. ALLDATA Manage<sup>®</sup> Online – An excellent tool shops, especially growing and multishop operators, with the ability to perform extensive business reporting, built-in customer relationship manager (CRM) and more.

See the features and functionality of ALLDATA's three shop management solutions in this comparison chart. ALLDATA Shop Manager requires a subscription to ALLDATA Repair or ALLDATA Collision. 

## OEC CONNECTION ACQUIRES NUGENIT, INC. SOFTWARE FIRM


OECConnection (OEC), the leading automotive technology provider for original equipment manufacturers' (OEM) distribution networks, has acquired NuGenIT, Inc., a software company specializing in body shop and collision industry optimization tools.

Headquartered in Kansas City, NuGenIT is an award-winning

software firm that provides information management tools for the automotive repair industry. The company provides integrated workflow applications for collision repairs, and data mining and reporting capabilities for the collision and insurance industries.

As the automotive industry's leading provider of SaaS-based solutions for original equipment parts, OEC is known for its exceptional data management, ecommerce, pricing, supply chain, cataloging, service and business

intelligence solutions, across North America, Europe and Asia Pacific. OEC is the only provider to offer solutions in each market segment, providing a suite of solutions that focus exclusively on OEMs, their dealer networks and repairers. NuGenIT will add collision repair industry expertise to augment OEC's growing collision business.

"We look forward to this partnership and are pleased to welcome NuGenIT to the OEC family," said OEC Chief Marketing Officer Ike Herman. 

# MANAGEMENT METHODS

## Now is the time to invest in leadership training

**TIM SRAMCIK //** Contributing Editor

**W**ith the nation still in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, repairers are seeing drops (sometimes significant) in business. With no end in sight and the pandemic threatening to go well into 2021 along with the economy in the midst of a downturn, repairers are once again in the type of quandary they experienced in 2007-2008 when the economy flat-lined in a steep recession. Now, like then, repairers need to take an even-closer look at their financials and decide where to cut to keep revenue healthy and their businesses afloat.

Or they could invest wisely in areas that boost profits.

Simply hunkering down in your shop and strictly limiting your spending might seem like the obvious best move for now, but lessons learned by shops 12 years ago say otherwise. "Shops have to get used to working in a number of economies, very good and very bad," says Frank Crowder, owner of Hanover Street Auto Repair in Indianapolis. "During the last downturn, we found our best response was finding new ways to work and not by limiting what we do."

At the beginning of the pandemic, *ABRN* spoke to a number of repairers (see "Business during a pandemic," May 2020) who were already suggesting repairers begin looking for ways to build business. With money tight and the future uncertain, the question is: Where



**DURING THE CURRENT ECONOMIC DOWNTURN**, two of your training goals should be increasing your closing ratios and improving customer satisfaction.

should you put investment dollars?

One of the best answers is into your own people, specifically with management training that can provide your shop leaders with the tools to make the most of the business at hand and draw in more where possible. Management training is available from a variety of sources, including formal institutes and I-CAR. This article will focus on those provided by paint vendors. Consider the options being suggested most strongly by paint companies at this time. Plan your options accordingly.

### **AkzoNobel**

Rick Fifer, central business services manager for AkzoNobel Automotive & Specialty Coatings, says when choosing management training, shops must first look at addressing reductions in sales due to COVID-19. Specifically, they need to focus on closing sales. Fifer ex-

plains, "Many shops have become complacent and have not worried about where their next meal is coming from. Whether it's a result of their stellar reputation, an effective marketing campaign, insurer programs or just because there are fewer shops than previous years, work has just 'shown up to the door' with minimal effort on the shop's part."

He recommends AkzoNobel's recently-overhauled "Increasing Closing Ratios" course that has been renamed "Collision Repair Selling Skills" and is designed to help shops capture more work using "time-proven selling skills."

When combined with the company's newly-overhauled "Estimating Consistency – Documenting Damage" course, Fifer says the duo offer a powerful one-two punch, since they capture both the repair itself and then all the parts and labor operations needed to properly repair the vehicle to OEM standards.



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**MAKE SURE YOUR MANAGERS REPORT ON** what they've learned at training and share that with the rest of your shop. Ask them to set up an implementation plan for the best ideas.

While looking to boost sales, Fifer also recommends shops use this slow time to improve their operations. "The best operators are taking advantage of this downtime to make improvements that will pay off when the market picks back up," he says, noting that COVID-19 has been an industry "equalizer" since it has affected everyone — big shops, small shops, independents, dealers, MSOs and SSOs. "The shops that make the best of this challenging situation are positioning themselves to come out of COVID stronger than ever," he says.

He recommends AkzoNobel's Cycle-time "Processing Reduction (CPR)" course, designed to help shops identify and act on opportunities to improve production flow and decrease cycle time. Another brand-new course, "Managing Parts for Continuous Flow and Cycle Time," is intended to help shops design a part process and scorecard that will support their repair process to optimize production flow.

## Axalta

Steven Trapp, North American strategic account manager, similarly says shops need to refocus on their closing sales ratio. Trapp believes many estimators have become "DRP lazy," giving most of

their attention to managing DRP work instead of refining their sales skills. Axalta has a cure for that — its "Effective Selling Skills" course.

"We are big on teaching people to listen to the customer's need and selling to that need and not simply because the DRP sent them there," says Trapp. He also recommends "Effective Negotiations," taught by Mike Anderson, which is designed to create scenarios where skillful negotiations allow everyone to win — shops, customers and insurers. Trapp believes there might be an even greater interest for improved negotiating skills than better closing ratios right now.

He also encourages shops to look at the complete list of Axalta's 11 management training classes, which includes two estimating courses and four general management courses (hiring, managing people, process improvement and quality control), among others.

## BASF

Alan Lukens, global head of business solutions for BASF, recommends shops position themselves for the potentially rich period following the end of COVID-19 by maximizing the revenue generated by each repair, measuring and increasing performance KPIs and de-



**USE TRAINING TO HELP YOUR ESTIMATORS** be less DRP- and estimate-centric and focused more on selling to customer needs.

living complete customer satisfaction. He recommends three BASF courses:

### ***Estimating for Profit (VPU-002)***

This one-day interactive collision center workshop is intended to increase a shop's closing ratio by selling first, estimating second and increasing the average repair order through a thorough damage appraisal, effective use of the P-pages and professional negotiation with insurers. The course also demonstrates how to streamline the estimating and/or the repair order process and reduce cycle time by eliminating reactive supplements. Further potential benefits include creating more profitable repairs, increasing productivity, along with improving technician compensation and insurer relationships.

### ***Measuring and Improving Performance (VPU-003)***

Another one-day interactive course, this class focuses on measuring and improving a shop's performance by asking participants to utilize and develop the data streams needed for both financial and nonfinancial reporting used to calculate the 24 critical KPIs. These KPIs are then compared to benchmarks to help attendees understand what positively or negatively affects the performance.



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### **Get the Keys! - VPU-038**

This one-day interactive course provides “highly effective and powerful sales techniques” designed to increase a shop’s closing ratio and top-line sales. This course aims to realign attendees’ sights away from the estimate and on the “real target” — getting the keys.

Key points include:

- Preparing for the sale
- The importance of a company-wide sales culture
- Creating distinction to clearly separate you from your competition
- Identifying the needs of the customer
- What you really need to do when the customer first contacts you
- Creating a motivated, inspired buyer
- Choosing the right closing technique.

BASF says participants should be able to improve closing ratios by a minimum of 10 percent.

### **PPG**

Instead of focusing on a small set of management classes, Mike Gunnells, PPG senior manager of MVP Business Solutions, believes shops are best served by completing a full slate of coursework that targets specific areas of an operation, which can then be combined to raise overall performance. He recommends these PPG offerings:

- Green Belt Training
- Advanced Estimating Training
- Administrative Process Improvement Training
- Business of Parts Training
- Refinish Area Optimization Training

He also recommends managers and employees take advantage of PPG’s hour-long Virtual Learning Sessions that provide focused training on critical topics taken from these classes. Gunnells says

key skills to take away from all of PPG’s offerings are analyzation, planning, process improvement and implementation.

### **Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes**

Ted Williams, global director of business services at Sherwin-Williams Automotive Finishes, declares that success in collision repair is driven first by repair order accuracy and then the proper management of resources through the repair cycle. The industry challenges created by COVID-19 has placed additional focus on profitability. He recommends four courses he says focus on areas where shops can experience the greatest improvement and provide demonstrable performance: “Estimating Solutions for Profit,” “Damage Analysis,” “In-Process Quality Assurance,” and “Coaching for Performance.”

Currently, all are available free due to COVID-19 at [www.ecoleanuniversity.com](http://www.ecoleanuniversity.com).

Williams says the courses deliver the necessary understanding that a complete and accurate repair order begins before the vehicle enters production. From there, the courses improve labor efficiency and workshop utilization to drive cycle time performance. They also provide other benefits, he says, since “having the right process and communicating it in real-time creates a workspace that is less stressful, more focused and rewarding to all involved.”

### **Making your investment pay**

Obviously, no amount of management or other training will help a shop if the lessons learned aren’t put to work. Paint companies have become increasingly savvy when it comes to helping their instruction pay off.

For example, Trapp says Axalta has replaced its 150–200-page student guide with a much shorter implementation guide that participants use to prepare

an action plan for implementing lessons. In virtual classes, students discuss how they plan to put their new skills to work. He also suggests that shops ask returning participants to produce a “few paragraphs” on what they learned from a class and how they plan to put that knowledge to in place.

PPG recommends students disconnect from all distraction during the training, which includes phones, tablets and laptops. Gunnells stresses that participants need to keep an open mind and stay focused on “How you can” instead of “Why you can’t.”

Williams suggests a three-step plan for the best results:

**1. Commit to change.** Many shops fail to see the restraints inside the business or worst accept them.

**2. Make a plan.** As you attend the course, think though your own situation and challenges; make an action plan and hold yourself and your team accountable.

**3. Involve your team in designing the solution.** If they have an ownership interest, the likelihood of success grows.

Regardless of which company your shop does business with, any of these strategies could pay important dividends. Find one or several that work and put them in place.

The bottom line is that your bottom line will need some assistance to weather the current economic storm battering the collision industry and the rest of the nation. Whether your goal is to pump up your revenues now or prepare for brighter days, or both, the help is there if you want it. All you have to do is commit to being smarter now to make your shop stronger tomorrow. 📧



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# MITIGATE SHOP FIRE RISK WITH SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS

Housekeeping, plans for prevention, evacuation can lower risk for shops

JAY SICHT // Contributing Editor

**L**ucas Underwood, owner of L&N Performance Auto Repair, in Blowing Rock, N.C., knows how easily a fire can start in an auto repair shop. It's why he's long had a focus on procedures to prevent and fight fires, even before the June 20 fire that heavily damaged Hillman Family Automotive, the shop owned by Benjamin Hillman, his friend and fellow member of the Independent Garage Owners of North Carolina and the Automotive Shop Owners Group (ASOG) on Facebook.

Underwood said he's known of eight shops lost to fire in less than 12 months. To help other shop owners, he is working with his friend, Taylor Marsh, to plan a webinar in the near future on fire prevention to be shared with ASOG members. Marsh is fire marshal and emergency management coordinator for Watauga County, N.C., with headquarters in Boone.

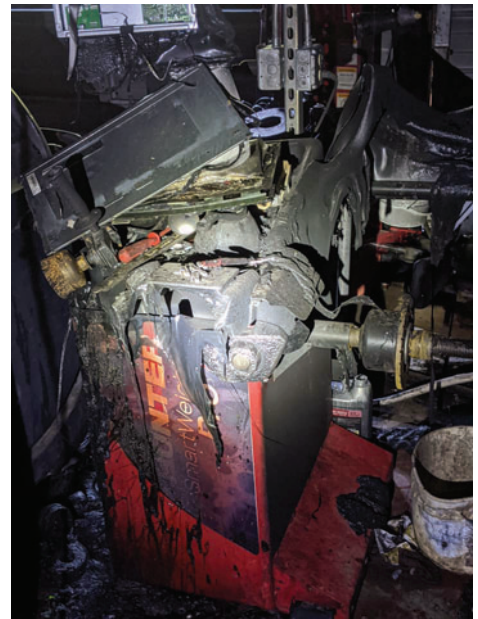
"In so many cases, repair shops are not properly prepared for some of these instances," Underwood said. "Every-

body thinks it won't ever happen to them. But we use flammable liquids and aerosols, we have rags that are flammable, and then we use torches and the like in the shop. Many of these shops don't have proper fire protection in place, they don't have evacuation plans in place, and all the things that make a safe work environment are often overlooked."

In the last six months, Underwood's shop has had three incidents that could have been serious if the shop did not have proper equipment and procedures in place, he said.

One instance, he said, was when a technician sprayed brake cleaner on an engine to clean up some residue after he'd completed the repair. Although he blew off the engine with an air hose there was still a small pool of brake cleaner in a hidden spot.

"There was a spark leak in the ignition system, and it went up just like that. We have a kind of a protocol in the shop; once a week, the technician in his bay is responsible for taking the fire extin-



guisher, checking the gauge on it, and smacking the bottom of it on the floor one time."

At first, technicians asked to perform this ritual viewed it with skepticism, thinking it was wasted time.

"I tell them, 'I want it to be muscle memory. You walk across that shop floor and pick that fire extinguisher up, and you know where it is, you know

where the pin is, and you've looked at the gauge a thousand times, so you know what to do."

Underwood said he implemented that practice after one of the shop's technicians found a new extinguisher didn't work when the trigger was depressed.

"So I called the company that installed it. They had just checked it. And he said, I'm going to take it apart and find out what happened. He said it's powder-caking. He said it happens with an extinguisher that's been sitting too long. The powder will cake in the bottom and it will not spray."

### Insurance company and fire marshal find common hazards

David Willett, value creation executive at ProSight Specialty Insurance, which provides garagekeeper's insurance, said many fire hazards in shops are preventable. Common offenders include front offices having electrical circuits overloaded by multiple appliances plugged into a power strip, or even worse, when all of the outlets are filled to capacity, yet another power strip is plugged into the first, and it, too, is filled to capacity. Shops often dispose of oily rags or tow-

els with paint thinner and other flammable material residue in a plastic trash can instead of a self-closing metal one.

(Because flammable rags will spontaneously combust, a self-closing metal can designed for such use all but eliminates that risk, as the lid will close off the source of oxygen.)

In addition to those problems, Marsh said as fire marshal, other frequent deficiencies he sees include improper storage of used motor oil, such as leaving it in an open five-gallon bucket. He's witnessed a technician pause his work to momentarily put a lit torch down on the concrete floor. Although intending to pick it back up for reuse, it starts a blaze. Although fire codes can vary across the country, in North Carolina, spare welding gas bottles are required to be chained to a wall or in a rack to reduce the chance of them tipping over and turning into a projectile, should they be damaged in the fall.

"I think at least from what I've seen, I don't think people do it intentionally, knowing it's wrong. But they get into situations where they try to save two



minutes here or there."

Collision repair shops often neglect maintenance of their booth, which can present a fire hazard if combustible paint overspray accumulates in the exhaust stack. In North Carolina, paint booths are required to be professionally maintained and inspected once a year, Marsh said.

When he shows up at a shop, Marsh noted that many owners or managers assume he's there mostly to inspect the fire extinguishers. He jokes that he didn't get into the business to make friends, and when he finds a fault, it could mean hefty fines for the shop.

"But this is in the fire code for a reason. Most of what you see in the fire code is because there has been a fire or some type of loss, and they'll go back and look at it and that is why it will be added to the codes." I appreciate Lucas' take on things. He said, 'My dad's generation was different; they would rather ask for forgiveness than permission.' His mindset is different; he wants to be at the forefront to make sure he's doing it right and there's not a chance for something to happen. I appreciate that."

### Plan for how to fight the fire and when to evacuate

Underwood is currently planning a new building to accommodate his growing

## DESPITE SKEPTICISM, SELLING SAFETY TO YOUR EMPLOYEES IS VITAL FOR ALL

As a business owner, you may be struggling with the role that safety should play in your day-to-day operations. The fact that you are reading this article is an indicator that you want to change the way you've approached this in the past, and you recognize that your biggest challenge could be getting your employees on side with the changes.

Experience tells us that safety is

often a tough sell. We should ask ourselves why. Aren't the benefits of safe work practice self-evident? For many, it seems the rewards aren't a sufficiently compelling story. We remain convinced that safety will cost us more than we gain, and thus we hesitate to disrupt the status quo. Your employees will often assume that safety only serves to slow them down. Keep reading at [ABRN.com/sellsafety](https://www.abrn.com/sellsafety).

business, and an emergency-action plan, fire-prevention plan and evacuation plan are features he is taking into consideration.

“We’re also looking at implementing a device called a DSPA 8 that could help in the types of fires shops are susceptible to. While it may not completely extinguish a large fire, it would certainly allow for evacuation and reduce overall damage.”

The aerosol-generating device from DSPA Flameguard Ltd. can be triggered electrically by a sensor to automatically extinguish the fire. Even if a shop is mandated to install a sprinkler system, Underwood pointed out, the dry chemical of the DSPA 8 is better suited to gasoline and petroleum fires.

L&N’s handbook already includes an action plan for the instance of a fire, and Underwood said he was inspired by his friends in aviation, where it’s a discipline to have a written plan and checklist for normal operations and emergencies.

“In our shop, we talk about where the fire extinguishers are,” Underwood said. “What are we going to do if there is a major fire, an explosion, something like that? The first step is to evaluate if a staff member needs help and if I can get to that staff member. If there is not something we can do to help, everybody is to meet in one place out of the building. That way we can determine, ‘Is everybody here? Is everybody OK?’

“If someone has a fire in which the car has gone up on them, everybody nearby who has a fire extinguisher will go to the aid of that person. If there is a fire that is where nobody is or we know where everybody is and it is off in its own place, if there is a chance we can do

something about a small smoldering fire with no danger of explosion, grab a fire extinguisher and see what you can do.

“If there is danger of explosion or a flashover and we don’t think we’re going to be able to handle it, the next step is for everybody to get out. We are not going

to try to fight a fire that the fire department should be fighting. We may try to slow it down if we have access and if we can do it without compromising our safety or health, but we are not going to get into a situation unless somebody’s life is on the line.” ■



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# Getting the right people to create the right environment

Hiring correctly over time builds a culture that fosters innovation, growth

In my previous column, “Creating a culture of innovation in your business,” August 2020, I highlighted some of the skills that I have seen Ohio shop owner DeLee Powell nurture in herself and capitalize on in order to build a culture of innovation at Baker’s Collision Repair.

But DeLee said the other key to developing a culture that leads to new revenue sources and business growth is smart hiring. An owner alone can’t make a business innovate and succeed. It takes just the right team.

“I knew we wanted a culture that made us the shop where people wanted to come to work,” DeLee told me. “I knew that from the day I started, even without knowing that would be the most important thing that I could possibly do to grow my business and make it strong.”

Smart hiring is key to developing culture, DeLee believes. Some of that entails just looking for those with the right personality.

“Because I’m at the business so much, I want to surround myself with really positive people,” she told me. “You can generally distinguish a positive person from a negative person during an interview. And what kind of energy do they have? Our staff is really high energy. Sometimes they are running through the building to the next department to get something accomplished, to get a car out on time. If someone comes in and they’re sluggish in the interview, I don’t think they’ll fit. I don’t want someone who thinks they’re going to make a lot of money but not work hard.”

DeLee said she looks for potential employees who “are going to build our team up, be a cheerleader for us,” rather than “a poisoned apple.”

Getting a job at Baker’s Collision also involves a series of other assessments.

“We use a company called LeadersWay to do an assessment of individuals before we hire,” DeLee said. “That really helps us determine what their motivation is, the best way for us to manage



**I KNEW WE WANTED A CULTURE THAT MADE US THE SHOP WHERE PEOPLE WANTED TO COME TO WORK. I KNEW THAT FROM THE DAY I STARTED IT.**

them, if they’re likely to be a good fit for our company, our culture.”

The company has also worked with an outside provider to develop a complete physical assessment of applicants. It includes tests that replicate what they will have to do on the job to make sure they are physically able to do it.

Baker’s Collision also has a track record of “growing its own,” hiring students through the vocational schools in the area and teaming them up with experienced technicians.

“We know that’s a four- to six-year process, and we tell them that up front, but if they have the aptitude and attitude, we can teach them the skills,” DeLee told me. “We never allow a technician to go on the floor by themselves until we know they can fix the car right.

But it’s a great success story to take that young person and mold them into a great technician.”

She said her company is one of just two shops involved in the state-approved apprenticeship program, which means she has a waiting list of applicants wanting to come to learn

and work at the shop.

DeLee said that despite the care she takes in hiring, she doesn’t have a perfect track record of getting it right. A period when business slows down, however, can be a chance to part ways with an employee who might be a good technician but isn’t right for the culture. “I want no prima donnas in my shop,” she said. “I just won’t tolerate it.”

I’ve watched DeLee foster an amazing culture at Baker’s Collision, in turn leading the company to approach the \$6-million-a-year in revenue mark. Next month, I’ll share more about the innovations and new revenue sources that have fed that growth.

---

**STEVE FELTOVICH** of SJF Business Consulting, LLC, works with dealers, MSOs and independent collision repair businesses to make improvements and achieve performance goals.  
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# BROADENING THE SCOPE OF A CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

Grow your CSR to be a one-stop service for fulfilling customer needs

**JOHN SHOEMAKER //** Contributing Editor

**T**wo years ago, *ABRN* published my article, “Is your customer service representative empowered?” June 2018, where

I talked about getting your Customer Service Representative (CSR) more involved in the inner workings of the business. Things have changed in our industry over the last two years and it affects how we handle our customers, making

it even more important to broaden the scope of your CSR.

One of the key points is to separate customer service from vehicle repair. There will be a time when the CSR will transfer the customer to a damage ap-





praiser or repair planner, hopefully after capturing the keys. Your CSR should be the customer focal point rather than a message taker, providing one-stop service for fulfilling customer needs by having all communication going through them. Being able to repair a vehicle is a given, but how well you take care of the customer is what sets you apart from your competition.

## YOUR CSR SHOULD BE THE CUSTOMER FOCAL POINT, PROVIDING ONE-STOP SERVICE FOR FULFILLING CUSTOMER NEEDS BY HAVING ALL COMMUNICATION GO THROUGH THEM.

Think about a doctor's office for a minute. They have a front office receptionist, a nurse and then the doctor. Most communication is handled by the front desk. You might get to talk with a nurse, but very seldom do you talk with the doctor when calling the office. We can compare this to a collision center. They have a front desk, and instead of the nurse there is a damage appraiser, and the doctor would be the manager or owner. If you routed all communication to the customer through your CSR, you could eliminate interruptions to the damage appraiser and manager allowing them to be more productive.

Helping your CSR develop in this way requires additional training. In my June 2018 article I mentioned the training offered through I-CAR to help groom CSRs. The Automotive Management Institute (AMi) saw the need for enhanced training for front office personnel and created a Collision Repair Customer Service training program. Understanding that the CSR in a collision center is a key role in the business's

success, their 30-credit hour course covers 18 core competencies with over 200 elective courses available, as well. Without sounding like an AMi commercial, I would like to point out some training elements they provide that will help develop your CSR.

If you took the advice from my June 2018 article, your CSR has already completed the I-CAR courses and is ready to be more involved in customer care. Two of the competencies I feel work the best are "Selling Skills" and "Estimating Basics." These two courses will help your CSR streamline and improve the process of capturing the keys from customers. We all know customers just want their cars fixed and don't want to make multiple trips to your business to orchestrate the repairs. How valuable would it be to you if your CSR could sell repairs over the phone and schedule the repair appointment without involving your damage appraiser? Using the selling skills and estimating basics learned through AMi, they would be able to determine damage through discussion or photos and schedule the proper repair slot for the customer.

Additional competencies like Effective Communications, Marketing Basics, Customer Relations and Phone Skills would sharpen the CSR's skillset where they would be capable of handling the majority of customer needs and concerns. Couple that with Negotiation Skills and Conflict Resolution and your CSR would easily be able to meet the demands of a modern collision repair facility.

A CSR with enhanced skills would provide the balance needed in a collision center to keep the repair separate from customer service. There would no longer be the need to transfer a customer to talk with a damage appraiser or production manager to gain vehicle status. They would be versed in production management and be able to provide

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This article is worth .25 credit hours toward Automotive Management Institute (AMi) designation programs. To receive credit, log in or set up a free "myAMi" account at [ami.knowledgeanywhere.com](http://ami.knowledgeanywhere.com). Then search for "Broadening the scope of a customer service representative."

those updates by reviewing the repair plan in your management system.

I think we have learned that damage appraisers are more skilled in documenting damage rather than properly keeping a customer updated. A trained CSR would be proactive in communication to ensure the customer was updated on a regular basis, preventing angry customer comments that result from not being kept informed. This would also be true for rental cars and other updates a collision repair center struggles to keep current.

I believe that you will find that broadening the scope of your CSR has multiple benefits to your business. Putting this practice into place would not be hard with courses being available online and self-paced. Reach out to your management system provider to see what tutorials they have available, as well as the I-CAR and AMi training I discussed in this and my June 2018 *ABRN* article, and enjoy the immediate improvements you will see in your customer base and CSR team. 📧



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# Are you ready for the new world of collision repair?

We can chart a path forward that will provide a roadmap to long-term success

If you thought collision repair changed with the advent of ADAS over the past few years, that is nothing compared to the changes in our industry over the last six months.

Never have we seen such rapid reinvention of how we do business, serve customers and repair vehicles. Never have we had to completely rethink our entire approach. With that, we have an opportunity to recraft how we deliver safe, high-quality, and cost-effective collision repairs for consumers.

When you look at the collision repair shops around North America, you see some that are navigating the current climate and rebuilding for the future. Others are retrenching and working just to survive. Some may decide to exit the business or sell to a consolidator. If you are considering the first two options, now is the ideal time to make the changes needed to prepare for the next decade. Those who will succeed are working hard today to leverage their resources and experience to improve their businesses and embrace a new way of life.

We must chart a path forward that will not only address the needs created by the current pandemic, but also will provide us a roadmap to long-term success. There are three critical elements on this path — process, people and profitability.

First — the process. We’ve all learned what “no-touch” vehicle drop-off and delivery means, how to sanitize vehicles and create safe work environments with proper PPE. This trend will only continue, and it’s up to shop owners and managers to look at how to deliver services virtually and more efficiently.

Now is the time to evaluate process improvements, from the layout of the shop to the efficiency of moving vehicles through the repair process to how parts and supplies are inventoried and stored. Creating a new inventory system can help better track the parts needed for each job and reduce cycle time. Revamping the flow of vehicles through the facility can reduce the amount of time spent moving vehicles versus prepping and repairing them. It’s also an ideal time to evaluate major equipment purchases,



**WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECRRAFT HOW WE DELIVER SAFE, HIGH-QUALITY AND COST-EFFECTIVE COLLISION REPAIRS FOR CONSUMERS.**

such as paint booths and clean sanding systems.

Consider whether you have the technology and tools to provide virtual estimates, manage customer communication digitally and allow some team members to work remotely yet still be effective. This technology platform is also critical when you consider advanced “smart” equipment in the shop that can communicate virtually with thousands of databases to diagnose repair needs, prescribe proper repair procedures and confirm vehicles are correctly repaired.

Second is the people. Some shop owners may have had to let team members go during the pandemic, and some of those employees are choosing to not return to the industry. Now is the opportunity to strengthen your core team of retained employees with training and certifications in OEM repair standards. And, it’s a great time to recruit new team members who may bring other valuable skill sets from manufacturing, technology and operations positions.

The final is profitability. With process improvement comes the potential for profitability growth.

A strategic evaluation of your business — the kinds of repairs you are doing, the types of vehicles you see and the amount of insurance work versus self-pay work can all guide your future planning. Also, understanding where there are opportunities, like fleet services, electric vehicle repairs, truck and specialty repairs, can create new profit centers.

As we look to focus on planning for the year ahead, there has never been a more perfect time to cast a critical eye on the collision repair industry. We have an opportunity now to create a new world of repair, one that is more efficient, aligns the needs of the shops, insurance carriers and OEMs, and ultimately delivers a safer repair for the consumer.

**FARZAM AFSHAR** has been Chief Executive Officer of VeriFacts Automotive since he co-founded the company in 2002. He has more than 27 years of shop ownership and executive management experience.

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# MAKING A SHOP IMPRESSION

## What do customers see when they visit your shop?

**JOHN BURKHAUSER //**

Contributing Editor

**E**very day you come into your shop, unlock the doors, turn on the lights and compressors and start your day. You never think about it. You just do it. You have become “shop blind.” The only time you take notice of anything is when you notice a change or that something unusual has happened.

Don't worry — this happens to the best of us. It is human nature to become familiar with our surroundings and only become aware of the things that need our attention.

It is totally different for your customers, though. Especially the new ones. This environment is not one that they are in daily, so their senses are taking in everything that they are not used to. They are seeing your shop in a whole different light than you do. For many customers, this may be their first impression of your business. It is an impression that will frame the rest of your relationship with them if it even goes beyond the first visit. Because that first impression may make it their last visit to your shop.

With my 35-plus years of automotive experience and the traveling that I do for my current company BOLT ON Technology, I have learned to make accurate assumptions (yes, assumptions, because that is exactly what they are)



of what I am going to find inside of the building based on what I see from the parking lot.

Very basically, if the outside property is not well kept, the inside of the building will usually be the same. Additionally, the attitude and pride of those working there will also reflect a similar condition that the property is found in.

And though the way people find your shop has changed with social media and the disappearance of phone books, how your shop looks to people driving by is still a way to get customers in — or worse yet, repel them.

It is important that you take a new look at your shop and property to see where you are with the upkeep. The problem is that you are still “shop blind,” and this may be difficult for you to do. Thus, I suggest getting someone else to do a look for you.

Someone who isn't at the shop regularly.

Over the years, and in different situations, I have found that giving a new hire this job was beneficial. It didn't matter what they were hired for, on or about their first day, they were given a pen and tablet and told to walk around the property and note what they found. I tried not to give them hints of what I was looking for. They were told just to note what they saw. This even included how the staff worked. How the service process flowed.

This achieved several things for the shop and the new hire.

1. They became familiar with how things at the shop ran.
2. Sometimes they would come up with new ways of doing the service process.
3. I'd get a report on items around the property and in the building that

needed to be addressed.

4. The new person would get to know the other staff.

If you don't want to go this way, I suggest that you take a stroll about the property with your pen and tablet and take a real good look at what you may have been missing all along.

Start on the parking lot out by the street and look inward on your domain. Is there grass or other places that plants can grow? What do they look like? Are weeds and trash what you see? Note it. Change it.

The parking lot itself needs to be in good shape not only for looks but also for the safety of your customers and employees. Weeds growing through cracks in the asphalt and by the base of the shop walls need to go. Seal those cracks.

Parking is always a challenge on every busy shop's parking lot, so get those parking lines redone. Those project vehicles that have been sitting for ages need to go. If there are customer vehicles that have been pretty much abandoned, start legal action so you can remove them.

Walk all the way around the building noting what you find. Look especially around your trash area. I have noticed this is one of the most overlooked parts of the property when it comes to being clean. Remember that you have those waiting and bored customers that walk around your building. What would they think when they see how you handle your trash?

Get out on the parking lot at night and check on your lighting. Does it all work? I've seen shops where most of the outside lighting is not functional or is in horrible condition and they don't even realize it. They are blind to it.

Your write up and waiting areas need to be spotless and comfortable. The bathrooms need to be clean and bright. Also be aware of how much the shop intrudes into this area. How much noise and odor from the shop make it into the waiting area? This is a place where shop blind-

ness affects us the most. We are used to the noise and smell, so we never notice it, while many of our customers can be overwhelmed by it.

Have a seat in the waiting area. Do you feel like you are sitting on the ground or in a hole? Torn or well-worn furniture needs to be repaired or replaced. If you offer coffee, drinks or snacks to your customers, you need to be sure that the coffee maker area is clean and presentable.

Look at the service desk. How much clutter is on it? Many shops get carried away putting too many advertisements and other items up there. Make sure the desk is clean and free from grease. There is nothing worse than a customer getting grease on their work clothes while on the way to work in the morning.

Walk into the shop and stop. Look up towards the ceiling and down the walls and see how many years of dust has accumulated. Look around the shop. If you have any parts or tools sitting throughout the shop and they have been there for years, get rid of them. One of the things that make shops look bad is the clutter that builds up over time. It seems to build up so slowly that we don't see it even though it is taking up precious space that we can be using for repairs.

Check out the lifts and other large pieces of equipment. Have they ever been wiped down since they were installed? Underneath all that grease and dust, I can bet you will find that the equipment is still shiny. This would also be a good time to inspect the lifts and other equipment for any safety issues.

The floor in most shops is forgotten but is really one of those places that should be maintained and cleaned the most — for both safety's sake and making your shop look good. If you are still using kitty litter for spill cleanup, I suggest getting away from it. It makes even more mess than it cleans up.

Putting in place a regular system for cleaning the floors will be to your advan-

tage. It will help eliminate slip hazards and limit getting customer vehicle rugs greasy. And it will make your shop look so much more professional.

One thing to consider here is that taking the time to go over your property and your shop and seeing what needs to be addressed is pretty much free. Better yet, most everything that I have suggested here involves cleaning, which in of itself is not that costly, if at all.

I have been in some shops where the buildings are incredibly old, and the inside almost looks as if they were caves hewn out of stone. Many of these places are usually very dark and dingy. Yet, I found a few of them to be inviting because of how clean and bright they are.

The next step I will recommend after cleaning, and if you want to take your shop's appearance to a higher level, is to invest in new lighting. I know that it can be a costly proposition; therefore, I put it last. Replacing your old dirty florescent lamps with new brighter LED lights will make a world of a difference in how the shop looks. Additionally, it makes it easier for the techs to see and do their job, and over the long term, you will see a savings in electrical use because they are LEDs.

The bottom line is to stop being "shop blind." Get someone to help you see your shop as your customers do so that you can make it more inviting for them to come and get their vehicles serviced. Make your shop shine so they come back another time. Remember, it is these customers that make us a success. All you need to do is to see it, too. 📷



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# Latest COVID-19 stimulus legislation held up

Small business provisions are still fluid

**A**lthough the U.S. House of Representatives has passed the HEROES Act, the latest COVID-19 economic stimulus legislation, the Senate does not plan to consider the HEROES Act, but is negotiating with the Administration and the House on what will be the fifth COVID-19 economic stimulus package. This legislation will likely be the final economic stimulus legislation in 2020. The automotive repair sector participated in both the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) programs housed at the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The HEROES Act contained key small business provisions important for many automotive repair shops:

- Extension of the covered period from June 30 to December 31;
- Eligibility to nonprofits of all sizes;
- Clarifies that loan terms extend through the end of the covered period;
- A minimum maturity on PPP loans of 5 years, which lowers monthly payments;
- Clarifies that PPP loans cannot be calculated on a compound basis, saving borrowers money over the long-term;
- Modifications to PPP funds, including a carve out of 25% of the existing funds to be used for businesses with 10 or fewer employees;
- Harmonizes the use of proceeds with forgiveness;
- Mandates forgiveness data collection and reporting;
- Creates a safe harbor for borrowers who cannot rehire in the prescribed timeframe;
- Eliminates the 75/25 rule on use of loan proceeds;
- Ensures the principal and interest loan assistance is not treated as taxable income to small business borrowers.

U.S. Senate Small Business Committee Chairman Marco Rubio (R-FL) has been supportive of additional small business assistance provisions in any new stimulus legislation consid-



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ered in the Senate. Rubio and Senate Appropriations Committee member Susan Collins (R-ME) have proposed PPP amendments that should enhance the popular program. Provisions include:

- Payment for any software, cloud computing, and other human resources and accounting needs.
- Costs related to property damage due to public disturbances that occurred during 2020 that are not covered by insurance.
- Expenditures to a supplier for goods prior to Feb. 15, 2020 that are essential to the recipient's current operations.
- Personal protective equipment and adaptive investments to help a loan recipient comply with federal health and safety guidelines related to COVID-19 during the period between March 1, 2020, and Dec. 31, 2020.
- Allows the borrower to elect a covered period ending at the point of the borrower's choosing between 8 weeks after origination and December 31, 2020.
- Simplified application

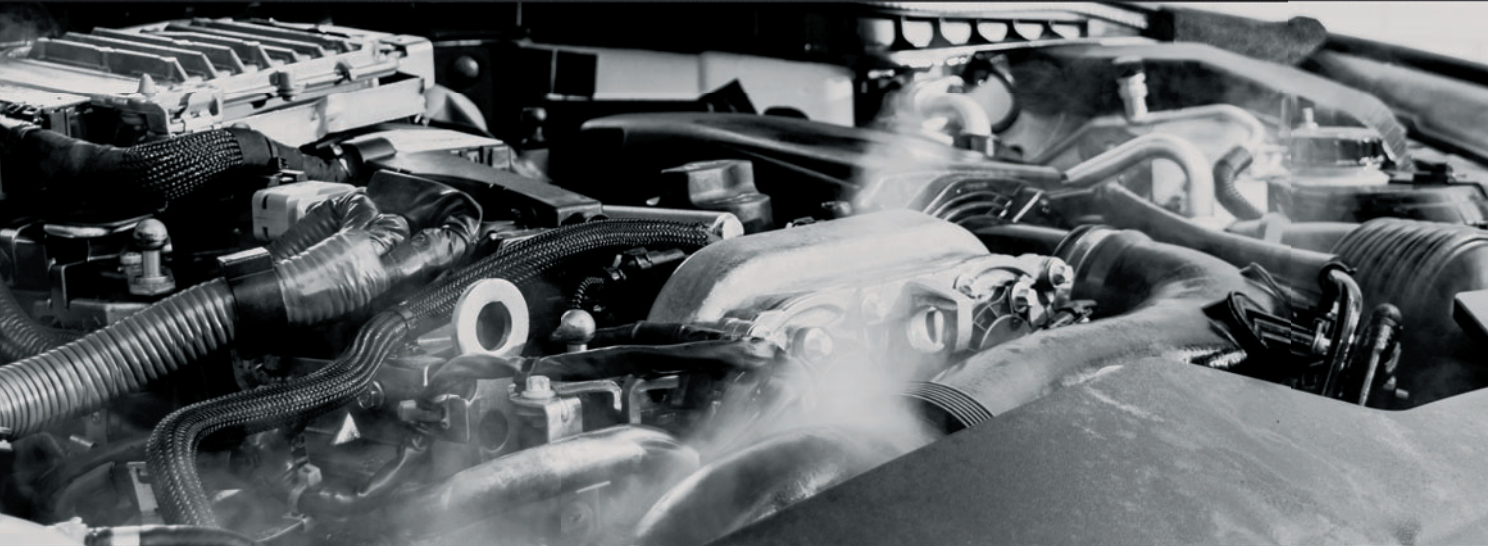
- Paycheck Protection Program Second Draw Loan.
- 501 (c) (6) Organizations Eligible.

Rubio's proposed second PPP program will be popular with many automotive repair shops. House, Senate and Administration officials continue to dialogue about what the fifth economic stimulus legislation will contain.

The Automotive Service Association (ASA) is encouraging members of Congress to move forward with the fifth stimulus legislation before heading home in October. In addition, ASA supports establishing a second, revised PPP program for shops to participate. 📧

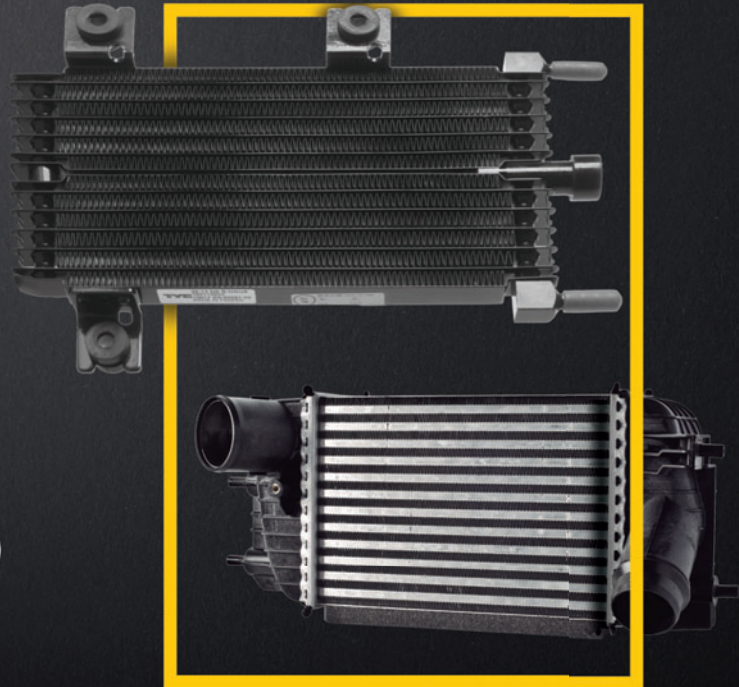
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# INFRARED CURING SYSTEM IMPROVES QUALITY, PRODUCTIVITY

Shortwave equipment from GFS increases throughput by as much as 80 percent

JAY SICHT // Contributing Editor

**C**ollision repair shop owners and managers looking to increase their shops' throughput may already know that shortwave infrared curing can be used to speed cure times of repair and refinish materials, from body filler through clearcoat. But what shop owners and managers don't always consider is the quality improvement that comes from a complete, "what you see is what you get" cure, said Andrea Iacucci, product manager of REVO accelerated curing systems at Global Finishing Solutions (GFS).

Traditionally, he pointed out, problems can arise when pushing the limits of repair material cure times to rush a vehicle through production. If solvents have not completely evaporated, body filler or primer surfacer can continue to shrink. If those products are then sanded too soon in the repair process and painted, that can be manifested in problems such as dieback, sand scratches, or edge-mapping of repaired areas. Those defects may not show until it's time to reassemble the vehicle, or they may even show long after the vehicle has been delivered.



"With REVO, we fully evaporate all the solvents from the filler to the primer," Iacucci said. "We instantly age the filler and the primer. So when the prepper sands and levels the product, we can basically guarantee the product will never shrink again."

## REVO lineup can improve efficiency without overhauling shop space

There are multiple REVO infrared models in the product line to suit various needs, from a handheld unit that plugs

into any 110V outlet, to the flagship of the line, an automated semi-arch unit that can be mounted on rails in the paint booth or prep station.

Each model cures with a mixture of short-wave and medium-wave infrared. Short-wave, which is about 80 percent of the bulbs' output, penetrates multiple layers to cure from the inside (substrate) out, while medium-wave infrared, the remaining 20 percent, helps cure the outer layer.

There are no adjustments needed for the refinishing materials used, how they are mixed, or how they are applied,





Iacucci said. The only consideration is to not use accelerators or faster/lower temperature reducers and hardeners. Additionally, the paint manufacturer's technical data sheet will usually list recommended curing times for using its products with short-wave infrared curing.

### Multiple models suit varying budgets, footprints

The 110-volt REVO Handheld is intended primarily to be used as a body repair tool, Iacucci said. It is capable of not only curing body filler but is useful for tasks such as removing emblems, vinyl graphics, and moldings, and for quickly heating large dents in bumper covers. It can also be useful for spot repairs of basecoat and clearcoat. This model does not include any equipment to prevent overheating, so it is best used with a handheld non-contact infrared thermometer to ensure the substrate is not overheated.

All units except for the Handheld include programs to automatically control the cure temperature and time for body filler, primer surfacer, and basecoats and clearcoats (including dehydrating waterborne basecoats), including if the distance to the panel is a little too close or far away. (For the Rapid and Speed, specialty programs, such as for chip-guard coatings, can also be set up with GFS' assistance.)

The single-phase 220V Spot has a single head, or "cassette," that can be

moved up and down on the lightweight cart.

The cassette also adds an infrared thermometer, a feature that is also included on the other larger units, to automatically maintain the temperature set by the user, regardless of the distance to the panel or the substrate. The Spot is intended to cure body filler or primer surfacer on a single panel in only six to eight minutes, instead of the typical two to four hours it would take to air-dry. It is mounted on a rolling cart, so it can be moved between the prep station and paint booth.

With an articulating arm and two heads similar to those of the Spot's, the three-phase 220-volt or 480-volt Rapid can reach any part of the vehicle. The two cassettes can be individually positioned to cure one or two panels at once, including at a corner. Each cassette has its own sensor and is individually controlled. That allows two adjacent substrates, such as a plastic bumper cover and a steel fender, to be cured simultaneously at the correct temperature. The Rapid can be mounted either on an overhead rail system or on wheels, and GFS says it is ideal for prep areas or closed-top, open-front (CTOF) booths.

The REVO Speed is the flagship of the lineup. It moves on an overhead rail installed in a prep station or paint booth to cure up to four panels, and it can be

installed in either a new GFS booth or prep station or retrofitted to most other brands and models. For even more productivity, a track-and-dolly system can be installed to move prepped vehicles between two or three prep bays into the side-load booth, which has a fabric Roll-Seal automated door. The REVO Speed or Rapid can then be moved between bays along the rails for increased efficiency of all curing steps.

"With proper ventilation and by using roll-up doors, we can heat the paint and cure it without using a burner," Iacucci said. "What the REVO Speed is really good at is helping your shop do those two-to-three-panel repairs that can be done very quickly. Quite a few shops today are doing those repairs in the prep bay and then keeping the spray booth for large refinishing operations."

The Speed includes three rows of lights arranged in a semi-arch that successively pass over the vehicle's panels to completely cure the coatings: the first preheats the panel and will warm up the coating to start the evaporation and cross-linking process. The second brings the substrate to the desired temperature, and the third row of lights completely cures the product.

The REVO Speed completely cures in one pass, and at a rate of about one to



two feet per minute, Iacucci said.

“When you dry clearcoat with REVO, you can reassemble in only 10 to 15 minutes after the part has been out of the booth,” he said. “And with some clears, you can actually buff it right away. So all that waiting time outside the spray booth is dramatically reduced.”

### How short-wave electric infrared differs from gas-catalytic

Medium-wave infrared, as found in gas-catalytic or older-technology electric infrared curing equipment, cures from the outside, and gas-catalytic requires multiple passes, Iacucci said.

“By having more penetration power — basically a more pure power — we can correctly dry a thicker layer of products. That means that with our technology, you apply two or three coats of primer and dry them at the end with one pass. Gas-catalytic units usually require multiple passes over a surface, even on basecoat, which is usually only a 140-degree cure temperature. When [gas-catalytic users] apply primer, to achieve proper results, they need to apply one layer, have the unit go over it, then apply a second layer, have the unit go over it, and then apply a third layer and have the unit go over it.”

In multiple tests with paint manufacturers, GFS showed how a single panel can be repaired in as little as 48 minutes from filler to clearcoat (this time does not include any R&I time, of course.)

And because short-wave infrared is not limited to line-of-sight, the REVO light will cure even on areas where it does not directly shine, he said.

“It’s because we’re heating the substrate, so heat will travel through it, not just directly under the light.”

All of the electric infrared’s heat energy is transferred directly to the substrate to be used for curing, whereas gas-catalytic systems lose some of the heat to the airspace. So, electric infrared is more energy-efficient, Iacucci said. Additionally, gas-catalytic equipment requires the gas to be preheated to 200 degrees to start the chemical reaction that generates heat. Since the preheating takes about 10 minutes, collision repair shops commonly keep the unit preheated all day, wasting energy. They still take about a minute to get up to drying temperature, while electric units take just a fraction of a second, he said.

### Power requirements vary by model

The REVO handheld needs only standard 110-volt power, while the Spot unit will use a standard 220-volt outlet. The

other units require either three-phase 220-volt or 480-volt power.

“That’s one of the challenges we face with the bigger units, because sometimes shops don’t have three-phase available,” he said. “So some shops buy two of the smaller units so they can move them around and position them.”

That can also make in-shop demonstrations a challenge, although seeing even the Handheld or Spot units makes many technicians and managers believers in the technology.

“If we leave a unit there for two or three days to play with it a little bit, we get a very high sales-closing rate out of the demo.”



**JAY SIGHT** has worked in a number of roles in the automotive aftermarket for more than 25 years.

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# MIDYEAR UPDATE ON THE COLLISION REPAIR INDUSTRY

Focus Advisors outlines the current state of the industry and what's to come

DAVID ROBERTS // Contributing Editor

**W**e are more than half-way through a most extraordinary year; what follows is our midyear update.

## Operations

Average shop revenues are down 25 percent to 30 percent across the country, although it varies by region and the intensity of regional COVID cases. Most shops are slowly returning to higher volumes. The best news — many operators have figured out how to maintain close to normal margins on dramatically reduced revenues. The recession of 2009 taught operators how to both survive and then improve operations while under financial duress. Lessons learned then are helping the best operators weather this downturn.

PPP loans have had a positive impact for those operators who were successful in their applications. Most loans are expected to be largely forgiven.

## M&A activity

The current level of mergers and acquisition activity keeps surprising us. Not surprisingly, the top two national consolidators continue to make offers and acquire independent shops and MSOs. But private equity firms have



really stepped up their interest and investments. Five super regional MSOs are also in acquisition mode. Add to these numbers several dozen sub-regional MSOs that are continuing to make acquisitions largely using internal capital sources. Finally, Driven Brands now owns a 9-shop MSO and is pursuing more acquisitions.

## Private equity interest is driving activity

Industry buyers have changed dramatically. Five years ago, the most active buyers included the four big consolidators — ABRA, Caliber, Service King and Gerber — plus seven regional MSOs (Pacific Elite, Kadels, Cooks, Craftsman, Joe

Hudson, Classic Collision and Car Care) and one PE firm, Carousel Capital, which owned Driven Brands.

In the years since, almost all of those firms have disappeared into larger firms.

- ABRA bought Cooks Collision then sold to Caliber
- ABRA bought Kadels
- Pacific Elite was bought by PE backed Crash Champions
- Car Care was bought by Service King
- Joe Hudson was bought by TSG Consumer private equity
- Carousel owned Driven Brands, which was then sold to Roark Capital
- Classic Collision was acquired by New Mountain Capital

We attribute the activity and the

values to the number of new entrants into the collision space, mostly private equity firms — the highest we've seen in 20 years. New PE entrants have come flocking back to the market looking for opportunities that will benefit from increasing consolidation. Most see the stability and non-cyclical nature of collision repair as effective cash generators with modest risk. Some are looking to buy and then sell out to someone larger. And some are probably looking to coat-tail Caliber and Driven, if and when they have IPOs.

PE firms come in lots of sizes and varieties. The new participants range from \$350 million in assets to more than \$16 billion. Some are inexperienced in the industry but anxious to learn. Some have hired CEOs who are highly skilled executives. Others have already found their platforms and are aggressively expanding. Ten are still looking for their first platform! All of them are looking for high quality large MSOs in major metro areas.

### National consolidators just keep on buying

Assisted by an additional capital raise in the second quarter, Gerber has acquired more than two dozen shops in 2020, including nine in Southern California. Caliber Collision added more debt capital and continues its growth even as its revenues have slowed. In late July, it acquired one of the premier MSOs in the Southeast when it closed on Professional Collision of Mobile, Ala.

### Multi-regional MSOs are growing most rapidly

Illinois-based Crash Champions, led by Matt Ebert, acquired 14-shop MSO Pacific Elite early this year using both equity and debt capital. In February, Crash added three shops in Ohio and is on the hunt for more.

Former ABRA senior executives with the backing of a highly credible sponsor,

New Mountain Capital, are deploying millions of new equity capital following their takeover of Classic Collision in Atlanta last year. Led by CEO Toan Nguyen, Classic expects to challenge Joe Hudson's position as the fourth largest operator in the U.S. Classic now has eight of its 37 locations in south Florida, including the acquisition of the former Carolina Auto Body. (Full Disclosure: Focus Advisors represented Carolina Auto Body.)

Joe Hudson's continues to beef up its management ranks and consider additional acquisitions across its Sunbelt markets. Texas-based ProCare acquired six-shop Houston operator, Hodges Collision, to bring its total to 41 shops.

### Regional MSOs are preparing for growth

Chilton Auto Body, a 12-shop MSO in the San Francisco Bay Area, recently hired Chris Abraham, former CEO of Service King, and a team of acquisition professionals with expectations of growing substantially. Oklahoma-based Collision Works added eight shops with a large acquisition last year and now operates 33 locations in Oklahoma and Kansas. The Collision Works team is sized to add more capital and acquisitions.

### Franchise and affiliation opportunities accelerate

Franchisors and banner networks are finding increasing success as operators seek multiple ways to increase partnerships and revenues.

Driven Brands portfolio of franchisors — CARSTAR, ABRA, MAACO and FIX USA — is continuing to add franchisees as well as expand its portfolio of other automotive industry participants. Driven's April acquisition of FIX USA and its largest franchisee, Auto Center Auto Body, reinforced its hold on most of the "waterfront" franchise opportunities. (Full disclosure: Focus Advisors represented FIX USA.)

Two banner groups, CCG and 1 Collision are growing as well. 1 Collision, which has now merged with Canada-based CSN is expecting to rapidly add new affiliates to its current U.S. network of 50 shops. Together the combined companies have more than 280 shops.

California-based Certified Collision Group now claims more than 450 shops with \$2 billion in gross revenues across the US. With some of the country's largest independent MSOs in the fold, CCG is focused on helping them gain additional DRP and vendor relationships.

### Our expectations

Our best estimate is that 2020 will end with revenues annualizing at 80 percent of 2019 revenues. A realistic expectation for 2021 is that shop revenues will return to 2019 revenues. Miles driven will continue to be negatively impacted by a slowly returning economy but positively impacted by peoples' willingness and need to travel more securely without exposure to potential infections. With many more vacation and business trips being taken, miles driven should be positively impacted.

The Federal Reserve has been cautioning that damage to the entire economy is profound and expected to impact us all for years ahead. So, while we are inclined to be optimistic, we believe caution is more realistic. When there is a widely available and distributed COVID-19 vaccine, revenues will accelerate rapidly as confidence in normal economic activity returns and overall economic growth begins to accelerate.

What is the net result for the collision repair industry? Continued uncertainty but not widespread disaster. ■



**DAVID ROBERTS** is the co-founder of Caliber Collision and head of Focus Advisors' Automotive Services Group.

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# Providing like-new repairs

Newell's again improves with addition of new UniCure paint booth

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

While it's not unusual for a body shop to contend that its completed cars come out looking like new, Newell's Auto Body incorporates the concept into its marketing campaign and overall day-to-day operations.

Punning on the family's name and legacy as a community mainstay in Decatur, Ill. for 62 years, the second-generation family business enthusiastically emphasizes its embrace of the latest repair strategies and most up-to-date equipment. "We keep it new at Newell's Auto Body," is the shop's slogan — further demonstrated by the recent purchase of a new painting system from UniCure.

In 1998, two UniCure 24-foot side draft booths were installed. "And now just last fall it was time to redo our paint department. After much discussion with other major booth companies, we felt UniCure was the best fit for us once again," said Todd Newell, the shop's president and CEO. "So in two different phases they installed two 28-foot full downdraft drive-thru paint booths with a connecting mixing room and vestibule."

They are equipped with air movers to accommodate waterborne paint, and all the components cycle through the main control panel.

"The increased size of the spray zone has been very effective at eliminating dirt and other debris. Buffing has been reduced significantly in our detail department and has had a positive impact on reducing paint material costs as well as labor costs," says Newell.

"The drive-thru feature is nice also, as our shop WIP numbers (tracking and managing Work In Progress) increase. It is so much more efficient to drive the cured vehicle out and around the back of the building to the staging area for reassembly," he reports. "This allows the detail techs to have new prepped vehicles ready to enter the booth without moving them."

Newell is exceptionally pleased with the entire purchasing and operational process, complimenting and recommending the performance of the company's personnel. "Their sales staff, installers and technical support was — and has been — outstanding. Over the years any downtime that we have experienced has been handled quickly over the phone, or they have rushed sup-



**NEWELL'S AUTO BODY INC.**  
Decatur, Ill. // [www.newellsautobody.com](http://www.newellsautobody.com)

**Todd Newell**  
Owner

**7 days**  
Average cycle time

**1**  
No. of shops

**\$2,894**  
Average repair order

**62**  
Years in business

**\$85,000**  
Average weekly volume

**25**  
No. of employees

**PPG-Keystone**  
Paint supplier

**7**  
No. of DRPs

**Chief**  
Frame machines used

**27,000**  
Total square footage of shop

**CCC One, Audatex**  
Estimating systems used

**30**  
No. of bays

**\$4.3 million**  
Annual gross revenue

port help to us from Nashville the following day," he says.

Based in Nashville and established by the now-retired Ken Jenkins in 1980, UniCure and parent-firm Interstate Marketing Corp. (IMC) is a second-generation family business currently helmed by son Allen Jenkins, the company's president, who has a mechanical engineering degree.

Newell has much admiration for what the Jenkins family has accomplished and how well their system has aided his shop.

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“The paint finish is the most scrutinized part of the repair as the consumer does their initial inspection of your repair,” he points out “Why wouldn’t you want to have the best painting environment while using the best chemicals?”

### Streamlined repairs

Newell’s fixation on effectively and efficiently fixing each vehicle to perfection is a driving factor throughout the facility, which is situated among three different buildings. Attention to detail is solidified by extensive training and an ongoing commitment to continuing education.

“Our team process is what separates us from other shops. By putting our techs in a situation where they have a specific role on each repair, we are putting them in a position to succeed. Our commitment to a team atmosphere not only helps us streamline our repairs, but the techs are more focused and trained on the specific tasks they are asked to perform,” he explains.

With each repair “the technicians become more familiar with repetitiveness and exposure to the different models. If you are a body tech versus a reassembly tech, our training focus is specific to the tasks required in that department,” says Newell, “so we can tailor our training regimens to the specific positions.”

“We have spent significant hours and real dollars to get organized and train each employee on our process. The facility is very clean and everything is labeled accordingly,” Newell says. Advanced repair processes and high quality standards to improve the customer repair experience are applied. “As a result, we are able to repair vehicles in less than half the amount of the industry average repair time.”

Formulating a repair plan speeds things along. “In the old traditional model of a body shop repair, the shop would provide a written sheet with what the estimator thought would be neces-

sary to fix the car and a good faith cost estimate. The vehicle would come in for repairs and the work would stop each time the technician came across an additional needed part, then the insurance company would be called to gain approval. This cycle could repeat itself several times on the same repair. The stop-and-start nature of working from an estimate results and more time required to repair your vehicle.”

Newell’s does it differently. “We create a complete repair plan that expedites your vehicle through the repair process. A repair plan is an exact, step-by-step process that includes all necessary parts, repair operations and approvals required to correctly repair your vehicle.”

The repair plan is implemented upon the vehicle’s arrival. The damaged area is completely disassembled by the repair planning team. “All parts and operations needed to repair your vehicle are identified at this time. Parts are ordered and approvals gained now instead of throughout the repair. Simply stated, once repairs begin, they continue without interruption, saving time and money” for the customer and insurance carrier, says Newell.

“And, because of our unique repair planning process, you will know exactly what to expect — a first-class repair completed on time,” he says.

“We are an I-CAR Gold Shop for the seventh straight year,” Newell notes. “We offer two continuing education classes a year for insurance agents, and we participate in several community events. We have two country clubs in our town, and I have been a member of both clubs; these members all have nice vehicles and even fleet vehicles” in need of collision repairs. Sponsoring golf outings is another method for connecting with customers, as is the shop’s support of the town’s festive Decatur Celebration.

In keeping with the community-mindedness endeavors, dealing with

insurance providers follows a similar client-centric philosophy. “We stand up for the customer and their rights,” Newell says, although the situation can create challenges. “It’s tough because they change personnel and procedures so frequently, but we treat them with respect — and we need their cooperation to satisfy our customer.”

### Return to Decatur

It was in 1958 when Mike Newell, Todd’s father, began repairing vehicles in a two-bay garage off of Jasper Street. “He quickly developed a reputation for being a pioneer in custom repairs and refinishing. Everyone in town wanted him to fix or restore their car.”

In 1959 Mike Newell completed a sheet metal repair program at the General Motors training center in St. Louis, and in 1963 he built a small, three-bay shop on West Harrison, where Newell’s Auto Body still resides today. At that time he had only three employees.

Newell’s completed construction of a 12,000 sq.-ft. state-of-the-art building in 1998, with the staff having grown to encompass 25 employees.

“I grew up around the shop and then left to go to college and study business,” Todd recalls. “After that, I was vice president of operations at a wholesale crash parts supplier for 10 years. At that point it was implementing a merger with a bigger firm, “and my father wanted help growing the family business,” spurring Newell’s 1996 return to Decatur.

“We had steady growth the first 30 years, and then I started courting the insurance industry and we grew faster,” says Todd. “Basically our volume speaks for itself.”



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

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# DOMINO EFFECT

SHOP'S HOMEMADE CALIBRATION TARGET CAUSES ONE REPAIR PROBLEM AFTER THE NEXT

JOHN ANELLO // Contributing Editor

I was recently called to a body shop for assistance to calibrate a new blind spot camera on a 2018 Honda Clarity that was involved in a passenger side hit. The vehicle had work performed on the passenger side and the side view mirror assembly was replaced. The shop did not realize that the mirror had a camera incorporated into it for aiding in passenger side viewing. This feature is automatically engaged when the signal switch is applied for a right turn or if the driver simply pushes the button on the end of the signal switch assembly. The body shop discovered this when the signal switch was applied and an error message for "Aiming Not Complete" (Figure 1) appeared on the center dash to warn the shop that the blind spot camera needed to be calibrated.

The shop did some quick research and saw that a target was needed, so they winged it and made their own target out of cardboard (Figure 2). The size they chose was way too large from the factory specification shown beside it. It was a true domino effect of great proportions. The contrast alone was wrong because the black circles were supposed to be on a white pattern background. Camera systems are designed to look at black and white images during their calibration process. These images must be the proper size, proper configuration and placed in a specific location near the vehicle. Lighting is also a key factor,



so you must make sure there is proper lighting in the bay you are using without having direct lighting on the image itself. There should be sufficient room around the vehicle with no obstructions in the way. The calibration procedure will require you to follow certain guidelines to

achieve the area to place a valid target. If these guidelines are not followed and you succeed in aiming the camera, the images may no longer reflect the distance of objects located near the vehicle.

The set up on this vehicle required specific set points to be marked out on



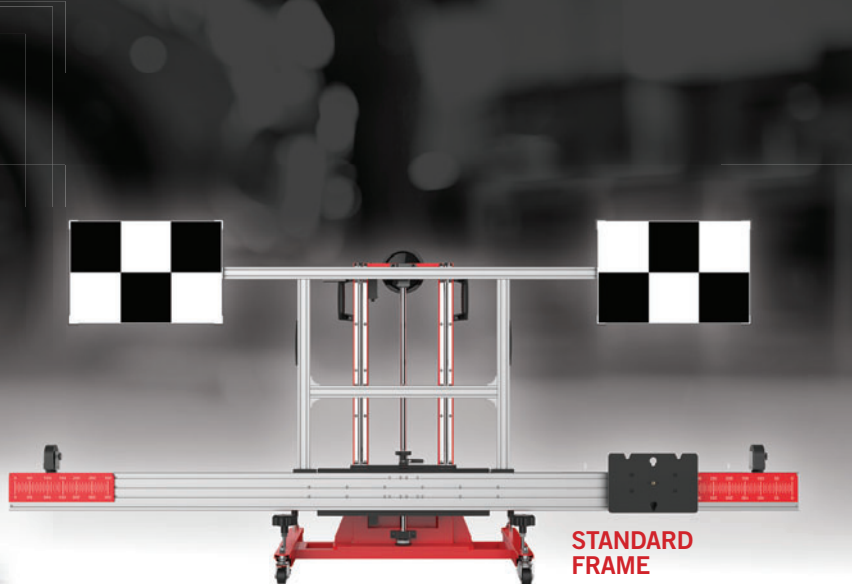
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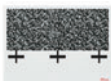
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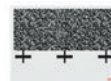
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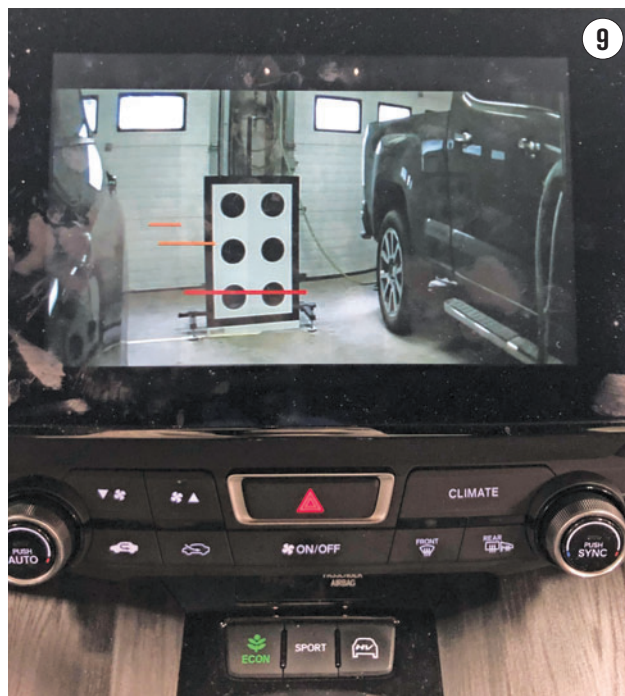


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1300 mm out from the rear centerline of the vehicle (**Figure 7**). This final intersect set point is where the edge of my target board would start from. The target board itself has to be parallel with the vehicle following the laser line, and the black pattern border of the camera target needs to be 2 inches off the ground (**Figure 8**). The stand holding the target must be level vertically



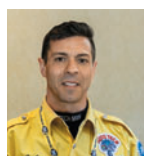
and horizontally. Once this is all done, then you're ready to command the camera to aim at the target.

Unfortunately, these cameras can only be commanded to aim by using the onboard vehicle controls rather than a scan tool. The calibration access on the center dash panel requires holding three different buttons at the same time for a few seconds. It gets tricky because you cannot do this with the ignition on but only in the first touch of the ignition switch 1 position. You also need to know which three buttons to use, because every Year Make Model procedure is different. It's also different if a vehicle has Navigation or not. This was always an issue for me in the early days when these systems came out, because the procedures were not easily found in the aftermarket service information I had on hand. It is as if Honda kept changing the button selections to throw the aftermarket Tech for a loop to hide their proprietary dash access. On this vehicle it was the Power, Menu and Display buttons.

Once these buttons were held together for a few seconds, you now entered the onboard proprietary diagnostics of the vehicle with many dealer setups to be performed on the vehicle. This access was not meant for vehicle owners but only for Honda dealerships when the car was in for service. By navigating through different menus, you will finally access the menu

for the side view camera. Once this is selected you will see a calibration screen set that will require you to hit the camera button on the end of the signal switch lever to start the calibration process. If all is well and your target is set up properly, then the calibration process will finish and you will get a side view of the vehicle with three lines placed on your target board in the screen view (**Figure 9**).

The process to calibrate the camera was only a few seconds, but it is the set-up time that is an involved process. It is up to you to follow the guidelines to properly set up your target, because if the camera is not aimed properly then the view that is seen on the screen may not be true and accurate to the driver. This could set up a liability issue with you and the owner of the vehicle, so make sure you always document your work procedures as proof that you followed the manufacturer's specifications. The first calibration you do will always be the hardest, but once you have done one it then often repeats itself on others you do, and it only becomes easier. It has become a changing world in our automotive industry, but it is up to you techs out there to keep driving forward and remain eager to learn. I hope this article has given you some good insight on what is going on out there in our new ADAS world. 📡



**JOHN ANELLO** owns Auto Tech on Wheels in northern New Jersey, which is a mobile diagnostic service for 1,700 shops, providing technical assistance and remote programming. He is also a nationally known trainer.  
[atowscopeit@aol.com](mailto:atowscopeit@aol.com)

# SENSOR SENSIBILITY

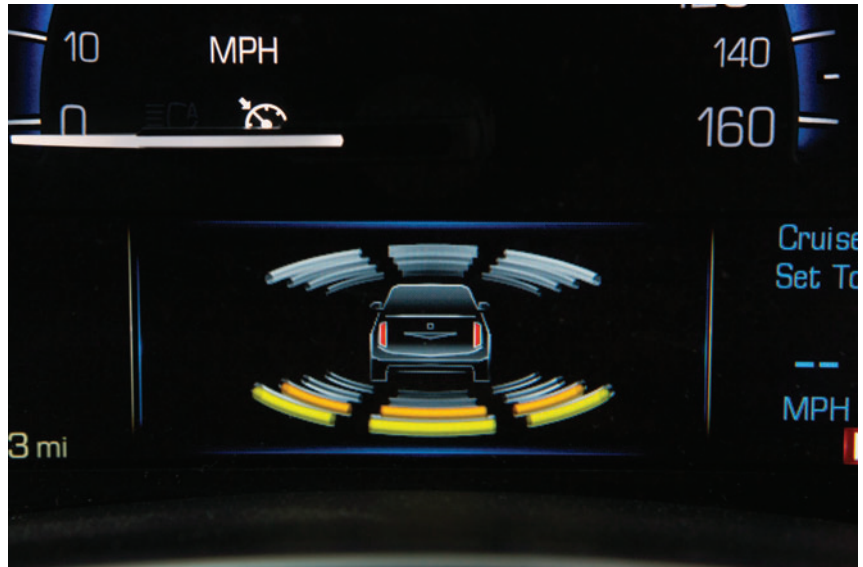
ADOPT A NEW PHILOSOPHY FOR REPAIR AND CALIBRATION

**TIM SRAMCIK //** Contributing Editor

**T**wo years ago, repairers received an arguably must-needed jolt when industry news broke about a Canadian glass shop that replaced the windshield on a 2016 Acura MDX only to have the owner report that the vehicle tried to steer itself into oncoming traffic. Only by taking immediate control of the SUV was the driver able to avoid catastrophe. The shop had failed to calibrate the forward-facing collision avoidance camera. After discovering the misstep, the business's corporate owner took steps to ensure proper calibration equipment always would be used after windshield replacements.

At the beginning of this year, collision repairers received another wake-up call about the importance of repairing/calibrating sensors when *Consumer Reports*, which many of you probably stock in your waiting areas, ran a detailed article ("The rising cost of car safety features") on the rising costs of repairs due to sensors. One shop declared in the article that its average repair ticket had jumped from \$1,600 to \$4,000. The story also listed the rise in costs of frequently damaged parts such as bumpers, side mirrors and front and rear lights. While costs were the focus of the article, it also praised the ability of advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) to prevent accidents.

The two stories, though aimed at different audiences, share an intersection that shops need to consider as



**COMPLEX DRIVER SAFETY SYSTEMS** are front and center on the minds of your customers. Make sure your approach to handling sensor work guarantees it's performed thoroughly and accurately.

they handle sensor work. On one hand, incomplete or flawed work has demonstrated its potential to produce disas-

trous consequences that can ruin lives and businesses. There are no excuses for anything short of excellent service.

On the other, consumers are now well-informed on sensors and will be more energized than ever to examine — and obsess over — their repaired vehicles for any issues related to ADAS or other areas utilizing sensors.

Meeting professional and customer expectations for repairs involving sensors is thus more challenging than ever. You need a repair approach that ensures your shop does top-notch work every time. Use the following insights from experts, along with up-to-date repair and calibration steps available from GM to build your new plan targeting sensors.

### Take the simple path

Start by considering two questions:

1. What are the most difficult sensor issues to locate and diagnose?
2. What are the most common mistakes made when calibrating sensors?

You may have quick responses to both, but focusing heavily on your biggest sensor challenges isn't the most productive path to take for formulating an overall plan, at least according to former shop owner and current consultant Scott Baumgardner. He says shops can be blindsided if they get caught up focusing too much on their hardest problems instead of creating a more holistic approach.

"It's good to learn from experience where your trickiest diagnostic puzzles are going to be since you can use that knowledge later," Baumgardner explains, "But the way vehicle design is constantly evolving, you're always going to be handing something different each year, which can get exhausting." Also, taking such an approach can be problematic since the experience of each repairer is going to be different based on the most common makes and models each services, making it difficult for trainers and consultants to help.

Instead, Baumgardner recommends creating a more basic, manageable path

of first determining where sensors are located (and for what purpose) for the brands a shop sees most often, and then drilling down into the details with the OEM repair procedures. Not only does taking this path work best for those models, says Baumgardner, it provides a framework for working on something different that rolls through a shop's doors.

While that might seem much easier said than done, Baumgardner says GM has taken an important step in helping that he and others hope more OEMs will adopt. In May, GM released its Drivers Assistance Systems document, a three-part guide that describes (1) each assistance system, (2) the location of each and (3) whether a component needs calibration. In short, it provides a framework for the basics of sensors that can then be dealt with through the specific steps and points in the OEM repair procedures.

With the ADAS sensors addressed, Baumgardner says shops can more easily deal with other vehicle systems that have been impacted by a collision, most notably convenience features that customers are more likely to take immediate note of following the return of a vehicle.

For brands that don't yet provide the kind of help GM provides, Baumgardner suggests a two-step repair philosophy:

1. Quit multitasking.
2. Break down the work.

Multitasking elsewhere in your operation makes sense since it's one of the best ways to make you more efficient. Baumgardner believes multitasking makes complicated work even more difficult, opening the door to any number of quality issues. When dealing with sensors, he says techs (and shops) should focus completely on the task at hand and not couple work on any single sensor with any other task(s).

From there, break the work down into parts, with each part comprising



# ADAS CALIBRATION

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the steps that all contribute to a single purpose. Baumgardner notes that procedures typically are organized in just such a way, but too often techs approach the work as a continuous list of instructions. “When they do that, there’s a better chance that details are lost. Since they’re focused so much on mechanical steps, they lose sight of the intent of the repair,” he says.

Baumgardner explains, “They need to realize how the instructions can be broken down into blocks of procedures, usually beginning with notes and considerations followed by the repair steps and completed by quality checks or troubleshooting checks.” When shops take that approach, he says, the work becomes clearer and therefore more manageable.”

## Putting your plan to work

The following steps describe repairs to the long-range radar sensor module for a 2020 Chevrolet Silverado, a common and vital repair area for a popular vehicle most shops will see. The procedure is divided into three blocks. Note how simply performing this small extra step adds significant clarity.

### Repair notes and considerations

*Note: An ADAPTIVE CRUISE TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE message may be displayed on the driver information center if this calibration procedure is required. The B233B Radar Sensor Module - Long Range may have become misaligned.*

After replacing and programming the B233B Forward Range Radar Sensor - Long Range, it is necessary to perform a calibration procedure to align the radar. This is indicated by DTC U3000 54 being set as current. Calibration is performed while driving the vehicle with the scan tool connected. Calibration is initialized using a scan tool, and the scan tool must remain connected until calibration is complete. During this time, the



**THE 2020 CHEVY SILVERADO** might be the image of brute force toughness, but it relies on a series of complex sensors to keep it out of harm’s way and its occupants comfortable and connected to their electronic devices.

SERVICE DRIVER ASSIST message will be displayed on the driver information center. Once the procedure is complete, the message will turn off and normal operation will resume.

Calibration is not required if the existing B233B Forward Range Radar Sensor - Long Range was only programmed. Calibration needs to be conducted if the B233B Forward Range Radar Sensor - Long Range was replaced or removed and re-secured.

If calibration is not successful, it could be due to improper driving environment, radar and bracket assembly bent out of position or incorrect radar mounting. A typical driving environment is usually sufficient to calibrate the module within 10–30 minutes. Visually inspect for damaged, bent or broken B233B Radar Sensor Module - Long Range bracket. Brackets out of level more than 2 degrees will not calibrate or self-learn. Discuss with the customer about vehicle history and possible past accident. Replace bracket if damaged.

### Repair steps

1. Verify no other DTCs, except for DTC B101E 4B, are set.

- If other DTCs are set, diagnose any other DTCs first. Refer to Diagnostic Trouble Code (DTC) List - Vehicle.

- If no other DTCs are set

2. Prior to driving the vehicle make sure the surface in front of the B233B Forward Range Radar Sensor - Long Range is clean. Also, verify the mounting area is not damaged and allows the B233B Forward Range Radar Sensor - Long Range to face the intended direction.

3. Prepare the scan tool to be mobile for Long Range Radar Calibration driving phase. The scan tool needs to stay connected during the driving phase of the calibration.

4. Engine running.

*Note: Once calibration has begun, do not back out of screen or press any other buttons on the scan tool until the calibration is complete.*

5. Select Long Range Radar Sensor Module Learn on the scan tool and follow any on-screen instructions. The driver information center will display the SERVICE DRIVER ASSIST message during calibration.



6. Drive the vehicle within the following conditions for 10–30 minutes or until calibration is complete. The SERVICE DRIVER ASSIST message will turn off when calibration is complete.

- Drive at speeds greater than 56 km/h (35 mph)
- Minimize tight curves
- Avoid extreme acceleration or deceleration
- Follow one or multiple vehicles. Typical vehicle traffic is sufficient, but vehicles 30–50 m (100–165 ft) away are most effective at decreasing the calibration time.
- Drive in an environment that has stationary objects on the side of the road (street signs, guard rails, mail boxes, fences, etc.)

7. Verify proper calibration by observing that the SERVICE DRIVER ASSIST message turns off within 10–30 min of normal driving.

- If the SERVICE DRIVER ASSIST message fails to turn off, refer to If Slow to Calibrate below and repeat the calibration procedure following recommended operating conditions.
- If the SERVICE DRIVER ASSIST message turns off

8. Drive at speeds greater than 40 km/h (25 mph) and verify engagement of adaptive cruise control.

- If adaptive cruise control will not engage, check vehicle for DTCs and correct as required.
- If adaptive cruise control engages

9. All OK.

### Quality checks and troubleshooting

#### *If Slow to Calibrate*

The ideal calibration condition is driving on a freeway or two-lane road with medium traffic. One or more of the following conditions may increase the length of time required to complete the self-calibration procedure:

- Visually inspect for damaged, bent, or broken Long Range Radar



**RECALIBRATING CAMERAS** is just one challenging sensor calibration chore. Modern vehicles provide a growing number of sensor challenges that are best handled by some patience and an effort to simplify repair tasks.

bracket. Brackets out of level more than 2 degrees will not calibrate or self-learn. Discuss with the customer about vehicle history and possible past accident. Replace bracket if damaged.

- Heavy traffic – following too close behind vehicles for long periods (more than 40 min)
- Stop and go or very slow traffic
- Mountain roads
- Constant sharp curves in roadway
- No traffic — if no traffic is available, you may need to add vehicle ahead to support calibration
- Limited or no stationary structures on side of the road — need structures such as street signs, guard rails, mail boxes, parked cars, etc.
- Driving in tunnel.

Simply recognizing how OEM repair instructions are organized might seem obvious or intuitive. Repairer Mike Conley, owner of Conley's Auto Collision in Cincinnati, Ohio, says shops shouldn't make that assumption. Rather, they need to realize that their techs are basically "drowning" in repair information,

leaving many to take short cuts or operate like automatons who simply perform a long series of steps without fully grasping how or why a repair works.

"In either case, you're risking quality and efficiency since you're bound to miss something," he says.

### Moving forward

Feeling like you're a bit better prepared to handle sensor repair and calibration? This work, like most tasks in collision repair, promises only to become more challenging as OEMs add to an ever-growing array of electronic functions for both driver safety and convenience. The irony here is that handling this sophisticated work doesn't necessarily mean your systems have to become more complicated. A simple, logical approach can more easily deliver the results you, your customers and business partners expect — one that will keep your good name out of the news. 📡



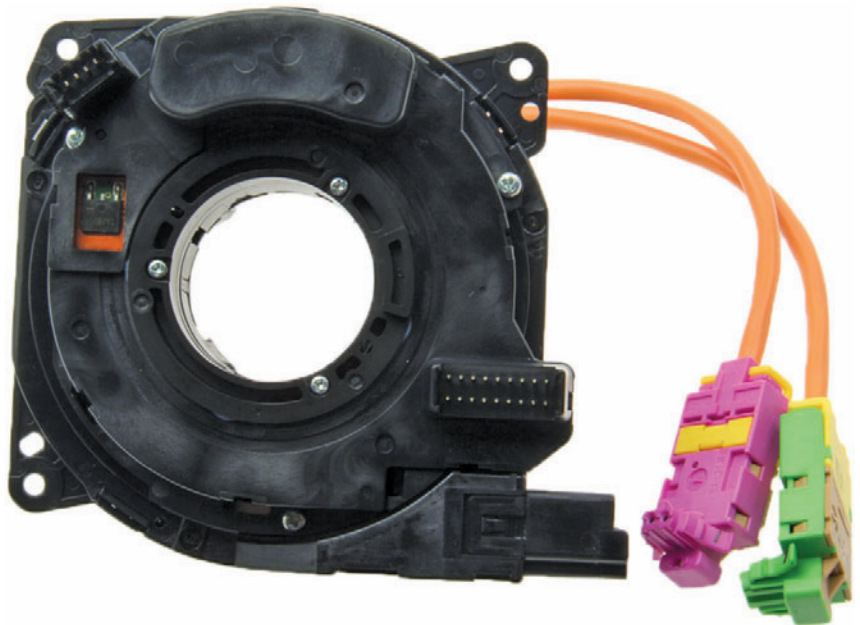
**TIM SRANCIK** has written for *ABRN* and sister publications *Motor Age* and *Aftermarket Business World* for more than a decade. [tsrancik@yahoo.com](mailto:tsrancik@yahoo.com)

# A LOOK AT STEERING ANGLE SENSORS

## GETTING POINTED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

**DAVE BRINKLEY //** Contributing Editor

I, at times, envy someone just entering our field. Whether they know it or not, it may be beneficial to have all of this technology we currently experience presented to them from day one. Those of us, on the other hand, who have been at it for some time find ourselves learning or relearning what we don't or thought we knew. Today's electronic safety-related systems make it a better world for all. Like most everything else automotive, it has been a bit of an evolution to get to this point. I don't regret not having them in the mid-80s learning to drive in muscle cars that were 20-plus years old back then. I'm proud to say power brakes were an exciting upgrade to have! I'm pretty sure our style of driving on the back roads of rural Kentucky would have confused sensors to the point of quitting and walking away from the cars if they were able. You can think of real-life "Dukes of Hazzard" if you need a visual reference. I suppose it was divine intervention that allowed me to be here today. Young and old today benefit from the systems in place currently, and there is no doubt that countless lives have been saved. That notion goes to the importance of these systems and one, in particular, we will dig deeper into. Before we do, I need to set the stage as to why we must know



more than just the basics of a component or system.

I'm the first to admit there is no one that I have met who is an expert on all subjects related to automotive collision repair. It's critically important in today's evolution of vehicles to swallow the "pill of humility" and broaden our thought process. Myself included. It's one of the best ways to stay current. Once you realize that you don't know everything, learning becomes a lot easier. It's even more enjoyable when you conclude that it's an ongoing process for us in this field. It's not to say all of our years of experience are irrelevant; they most

certainly are not. It's just that we need to keep learning new things about what we may already "know." There are times when we know a little about a subject and that amount of knowledge will suffice. Steering angle sensors may be just one of those topics for most. I'm going to go further in-depth on what they are and what function they perform. It's always useful to have as much understanding of various systems as you are able. I hope you will use this subject in particular to reinforce the need for an open mind and continuing education. I'm going to climb down from my "continuing education" soapbox and prove

why it's important to learn more about a topic than just the basics.

It may be that you're familiar with steering angle sensors, or SAS as they are commonly referred to, in that you know they must be calibrated in certain scenarios. SAS are just one of many components that exist in an ESC (electronic stability control) system. Keep in mind ESC was mandated some years back, so it's a system that is no longer optional but required. That means that before too long virtually every vehicle in your shop will be equipped with it. Now that we know it is here to stay, let's look at what the SAS does and how it relates to other systems, as well.

The function of the sensor is to measure the steering wheel position angle and the rate of turn. More simply put, it may determine where the front wheels are pointed. They are typically located in the steering column and work in conjunction with the ADAS systems on today's vehicles. It may affect lane keep assist, blind-spot detection and possibly more. It may be that the system has more than one sensor in the cluster located in the column. The reason for more than one sensor may be related to redundancy within the system and/or to confirm data. The ESC module may require two separate signals to confirm the data.

Different types of sensors may send data through low voltage outputs as the steering wheel is turned or they may be a digital type using LED light with a shutter/optic sensor measuring the amount of light emitted in relation to the position of the steering wheel. Locations and types vary by manufacturer. One example of location may be near the clockspring, which is sometimes called the spiral cable assembly. This different nomenclature and location support the need to keep an open mind when it comes to the particular manufacturer and model of vehicle you're working on. What it was called and where it was lo-

cated last week could be wholly different this week depending on the vehicle.

The most common way a shop will encounter steering angle sensors is related to an operation that requires the SAS to be calibrated. It may be necessary due to changing or removing certain parts that can affect its operation. Typically, they will need to be calibrated due to a wheel alignment, as well. More on "when" it's necessary will be covered later.

So now that we understand calibrations to this system are common, as the frequency of these systems has increased in the vehicles we have in the shop and will continue to grow as time passes, it's as important to know why we are calibrating more often. If any of the systems within the ADAS family are not calibrated or if they are incorrectly calibrated, they may not perform correctly.

It's critically important to be mindful of what operations are being performed during the repair process so that all necessary calibrations will be performed at the end of the process. Technicians and estimators/repair planners must strive to include all related operations in the initial phase. You must ask yourself "if I do this, does that mean I will need to do that as well?" This, once again, goes to the open mind thought process.

The next logical question is when should an SAS need to be calibrated or relearned as it's sometimes referred to? We would assume the most common occurrence would be during a wheel alignment, but there may be other instances, as well. Some of the conditions may be when a battery has been disconnected, the SAS connector has been unplugged, such as when a steering column has been removed to be measured for the proper length following a collision, or other reasons called out by the vehicle manufacturer. There is also the possibility that the system may not be able to be calibrated or relearned if an associated system is not

functioning properly. It is here where we need to broaden our scope when thinking about calibrations of all types. It is important to remember that most often, several systems work in conjunction with each other and there may be several reasons that contribute to calibration needs. SAS may work with the yaw, wheel speed and accelerometer sensors, just to name a few. All of the in-

## WHAT EVERY TECH NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT ADAS — FROM A MOBILE GUY'S PERSPECTIVE

ADAS technology is here – and you can't totally avoid dealing with it even if you want to. In this special Motor Age/TST webinar, we welcome guest presenter John Anello, founder and president of Auto Tech On Wheels, to share his experiences and first-hand knowledge of how these systems function.

The webinar is presented by G. Jerry Truglia, who has extensive experience in the automotive field as a technician, service manager, shop owner and technical writer. He is a senior curriculum developer who provides training programs for automotive and truck inspection and repair programs. He has provided on-board diagnostic system, OBDII and automotive training all over the country. He is the owner, curriculum developer and instructor for Automotive Technician Training Services (ATTS) in Mahopac, N.Y. Visit [ABRN.com/ADASmobile](http://ABRN.com/ADASmobile).

formation gathered from these systems may combine to alert the SAS of the intentions of the driver or monitor what is going on currently with the vehicle as it is being driven. It may be that this information is assessed to give the ABS a “guideline” to act if needed. I hope this paints a picture of how important these systems are when it’s related to safety.

Now that we understand steering angle sensors are a big part of an even bigger system, we can go over the possible ways calibrations may take place. Just as there are several different reasons an SAS may need to be calibrated, there may also be several ways in which that calibration will be performed. Scan tools are commonly used for many functions in today’s collision repair facilities and may very well be a part of the calibration process. The vehicle manufacturer may have a static, dynamic or a combination of both processes. As always, it is paramount to follow the OEM guidelines when performing these procedures. The process of calibrating the sensor may also calibrate other sensors at the same time. This goes to the earlier point of different systems working in concert with each other. Calibration with a scan tool may require the vehicle to driven a short distance during the process or there may be other steps that take place in conjunction with the communication phase. It may be there is a calibration process that does not require the use of a scan tool.

In conclusion, we can see that there is a lot more than meets the eye when it comes to steering angle sensors. The most important aspect to remember is that it’s one part of a larger system and there may be several reasons that require a calibration beyond the typical wheel alignment. As always, follow the OEM guidelines for that particular vehicle including make, model and year. For additional information, I-CAR offers a one-hour online course titled “Steering

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like variable assist power steering and electronic ride control. Get a better understanding on how to properly diagnose and repair steering systems using different diagnostic tools. Dave also covers airbag safety tips for steering wheel removal, ride control scanner PIDS and alignment rack do’s and don’ts. This training course also comes with the A4 Suspension & Steering Study Guide that contains dozens of useful illustrations. Whether you want to pass the A4 ASE certification test, or you work with steering and suspension systems in your shop, you won’t want to miss this training program. Go to [ABRN.com/steeringguide](http://ABRN.com/steeringguide).

Angle Sensor Overview and Diagnostics;” the description is as follows:

*Steering Angle Sensor Overview and Diagnostics course begins with an explanation of what steering angle and steering angle sensors are and how they affect the drivability of the vehicle. Next the course will cover the related parts and systems related to steering angle. Common problems that can face steering angle sensors will also be discussed along with proper damage analysis. The course wraps up with requirements for steering angle sensor reset and calibration. After completing this course, you will be able to:*

- Explain steering angle
- Describe the function of the steering angle sensor
- List the parts and systems related to the steering angle sensor
- Describe the problems that can affect the steering angle sensor

- Explain how to diagnose a steering angle sensor
- How to reset and calibrate a steering angle sensor

With all that has been presented, my hope is that you will see more of a “big picture” scenario as the systems in today’s vehicles are, more than ever, interrelated. That is a trend that is here to stay and will only be more pronounced in the future. Make all necessary calibrations and leave the envelope-pushing to Bo and Luke! 📡



**DAVE BRINKLEY** works for I-CAR as an In-Shop Knowledge Assessor and Instructor. He has worked in the collision repair

industry for more than 35 years, working as a technician, manager and insurance appraiser. He’s the founder of CR Tools LLC, a development and consulting company for collision repair tools. [brinkley3@outlook.com](mailto:brinkley3@outlook.com)

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(RTS) Portal through the end of the year. I-CAR offered complimentary access to RTS until May 31 through their COVID-19 Industry Relief Program, announced in March. The extension has been well received by the industry.

[HTTPS://RTS.I-CAR.COM/](https://rts.i-car.com/)

## AUTEL EXPANDS ADAS COVERAGE

Autel US released three calibration packages for use with its two ADAS calibration systems. The MA600CAL3 contains the MA600 Mounting Plate to expand radar/night vision calibrations on vehicles equipped with ACC, BSM, FCW, NV; the MA600LDW3 that contains LDW targets for the MA600 Frame, and the LDWTARGET3 package, which contains additional LDW targets for the Autel Standard Frame. Autel MaxiSYS ADAS calibration software is required for use.



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## AD INDEX

ADVERTISER	PAGE #
AUTEL US INC.....AD COVER, 39, 43	
AUTOMOTIVE MGMT INSTITUTE.....	51
AUTONATION.....	13
BLOWTHERM USA.....	7
INDUCTION INNOVATION INC.....	6
INNOVATIVE TOOLS & TECH.....	23
INSTA FINISH.....	19
LAUNCH TECH (USA) INC.....	11
MOPAR.....	3
MOTOR GUARD CORP.....	51
DEC/COLLISIONLINK.....	17
PPG INDUSTRIES.....	CV2
PRO SPOT INTL INC.....	CV3

ADVERTISER	PAGE #
SHERWIN-WILLIAMS AUTOMOTIVE FINISHES.....	CV4
SPANESI.....	31
TYC GENERA.....	27, 35

## PRODUCTS

AUTEL US INC.....	50
CAR-O-LINER.....	50
I-CAR.....	50
KENT AUTOMOTIVE.....	50
LAUNCH TECH (USA) INC.....	50
MITCHELL INTERNATIONAL.....	50
MOTOR GUARD CORP.....	50
OPUS IVS.....	50

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# The difference between knowing a job and the job

Procedures change over time, and the only way to keep up is to read them

**T**he brain is amazing and can remember phone numbers, life events, faces, passwords, names and tasks. The brain can recall amazing things in great detail. This is why doctors and nurses study so hard in medical school. It is to teach their minds all the pertinent facts and procedural steps to help another human in need. The capability of medical professionals speaks volumes to the capacity of the human brain.

Estimators and technicians are akin to medical professionals. They are highly trained professionals who practice their trade day in and day out. With this training and experience comes knowledge and the ability to recall and remember certain things from past repairs' successes and failures. This, however, is where the differences emerge between collision and medical professionals. Let's be clear, there is a huge difference between knowing how to do A job and knowing how to do THE job. There is a common misconception that having the skills to repair a vehicle equals having the knowledge of the specifications to fix the vehicle. It is expected that a technician knows and has the proper skills to repair plastics, bump metal, and cut, weld and grind. These are job skills that can be applied to any repair. Knowing how to do the job requires acute knowledge of the required procedures and specifications from the OEM. Repair research is an absolute necessary part of any repair. Simply removing or replacing a bumper cover, headlight or mirror can necessitate the calibration or aiming of an ADAS system. But the friction between shops and insurers goes much deeper than ADAS. The knowledge of the OEM procedures is temporary. Procedures change over time, and the only way to know they have changed is to continuously read them.

Skills for a profession can be taught in schools, gleaned from webinars and learned directly through hands-on experience. Estimating is a skill taught in schools, learned through trial and error and assisted by on-the-job mentoring. Collision technicians learn skills in many of the same ways. But it doesn't mean that they know how to do the job when the next car rolls into



**REPAIR RESEARCH IS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSARY PART OF ANY REPAIR.**

the shop. This is why receiving compensation for repair research is becoming more prevalent.

There are 206 bones in the human body, compared to the average car, which has 30,000 pieces. OEM procedures are critical to safe, complete and efficient repairs that meet the customer's needs and preserve automaker brand loyalty. It would be unrealistic to believe that anyone could memorize an entire OEM's structural, suspension, ADAS and restraint system procedures. It wouldn't even be reasonable to believe that a person could successfully memorize all the procedures for even one model within an OEM's line up. There is simply too much information and too much variability. Repair procedures are updated over time; therefore, relying on memory

is a recipe for failure.

I-CAR and OEMs teach that repair procedures must be researched and documented for each repair. Estimating systems acknowledge this step as a not-included operation. Research has too many variables to be included into any parts replacement labor time. OEMs write procedures differently. Within OEM procedures there are often references to other procedures that are required. Even a small repair can require 70+ pages of procedures to be documented and repaired correctly. This poses a challenge. During the repair cycle the estimator, body, paint, mechanical and ADAS technicians must access and review procedures to ensure the vehicle is repaired to specification. This takes time. Time is money. Technicians are worth money. Liability costs money. Lives are beyond money.

Our industry is full of highly trained and skilled people seeking to do what is right. Just as reading an OEM procedure provides clarity to a technician, understanding the difference between knowing how to do a job and knowing the specifications to do the job provides value. And that is something worth reading about.

---

**WILL LATUFF** is a manager of Latuff Brothers Auto Body in St. Paul, Minn. He is an active member of AASP-MN, participating on the board of directors as well as serving as AASP-MN Collision Division director. [wlatuff@latuffbrothers.com](mailto:wlatuff@latuffbrothers.com)





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