



AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING INTERNATIONAL

Who Will End the Insanity?

By: Jim Shaw

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".
Albert Einstein

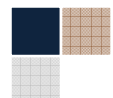
Here and now, I say it's time we take back control of the Collision Repair Industry? Who knows how to run it better than we do?

How many years have we wasted crying in our milk, blaming insurance companies for everything that's wrong with the Collision Repair industry? Are they really the villain, or are they just the scapegoat for our own weakness? Listen carefully, as soon as we accept the idea that there's nothing we can do, we give ourselves "permission" to stop trying, to roll over, to just go along because after all, "there's nothing we can do".

Well I'm here to tell you, if you want to know who's to blame for our ever declining profit margins, and, more and more demands from our "partners", we need only look in the mirror. After all, we're the ones who've made deal after deal, given concession after concession, cutting our own throats in the process.

Don't get me wrong, I'm no fan of insurance company's or their direct referral programs, but can we really blame them for asking for one discount after another when we never say "NO"? We don't think anything of asking our local paint vendor for a discount, or to "throw in" a cabinet or a painting stand, do we? So, if an insurance adjuster comes in your front door tomorrow and says he only pays \$39.95 for alignments and you say "Okay", does that make him a bad guy? In the words of Michael Corleone, "It's just business".

So, lecture aside, what do we do now? We've dug quite a hole! Maybe it's time we developed our own sources for business. Maybe (gulp) it's time we got together as an industry and promoted ourselves, to drive our own customers to our front doors so we don't have to sell our souls. Are you active in the community? Do you belong to any civic associations? How about direct mail to potential customers in your immediate area? The truth is we're only limited by our imaginations.





In the mean time, do we maximize the traffic that does come through our front doors today? Do our Estimators really know how to sell? Remember, we don't start *selling* until someone says "No", until then we're just taking orders. Let's try thinking outside the box a little here; maybe you can get some pointers on selling from one of you store's better salespeople. Remember, selling is selling; identify the objection and then overcome it. While we're on the subject of Estimators, do we really know how to write a good estimate, or have we been "trained" to write "insurance style" estimates? I was in a dealership recently, and the manager absolutely beamed as he told me "the insurance companies take our estimates without changing a thing". Since this wasn't the first time I had encountered such pride, I asked him a simple question; "If I ran an ad in the local newspaper to sell my boat for \$7500.00, and the first person to look at it said "I'll take it" without even trying to get a better price, what just happened?" Needless to say, it didn't take long for that glow to fade. *What just happened was*, I left money on the table! Now don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating that you put 5 hours on a 4 hour dent, but don't let your people put 3 hours on it so the adjuster won't question it. Write it correctly and sell it! It's pretty simple, if you're not being challenged by an insurance adjuster, you're giving it away.

I realize that I've asked more questions than I've provided answers, but we've got a lot to think about and, talk about. My intention is to provoke you to thought, to awaken the 800 pound gorilla in you that caused you to strike out on your own to begin with. As I said up front, it's time to take back the industry that we ourselves built.



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