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Franchise vs. Indie

**Weighing the pros
and cons of each**

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- » Essentials of summer maintenance
- » Taking apprentice training to a whole new level

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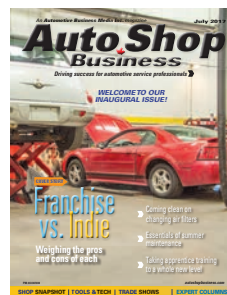


COVER STORY

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INDEPENDENT VS. FRANCHISE

Weighing the benefits and disadvantages of both kinds of shop operations



COVERPHOTO DEAN ASKIN

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Welcome to *AutoShop Business* magazine

When Marc Gadbois asked me to take on editorship of this magazine, I jumped at the opportunity. We were meeting for coffee at a local Starbucks. He caught me by surprise in the middle of swallowing a mouthful of my decaf grandé latté. That coffee break turned into a meeting that lasted almost four hours as we started fleshing out ideas for the look of the magazine, and content for the first issue.

As a writer, editor, photographer and communication specialist, I've had a passion for words and images since the seventh grade. And like Marc, I have an affinity for the automotive aftermarket. Mine developed over almost 10 years working in marketing communications for Snap-on Tools of Canada Ltd.

That was back in the day when OBD-II was just coming on the scene, and new diagnostic scan tools were touting OBD-II capability. As well, technical equipment specialists were focused on helping automotive shops gear up and get equipped to handle emissions testing as Ontario prepared to implement it. Let's just say I've been doing what I do for a long time.

I've worked in several industries over my career. It's good to be back in this one, and at the helm a new publication filling a gap — as Marc notes in his commentary — that needs filling for technicians and shop owners.

We've put a lot of thought into not only the content of *AutoShop Business*, but also the look and feel of the magazine. We haven't crammed

pages with type, as is often the case with trade magazines. White space is a good thing.

We want *AutoShop Business* to be informative while being easy to read and visually appealing. That's because we know technicians and shop owners don't have a lot of reading time. Time is money in automotive service.

When you don't have a lot of reading time, white space is good

Our expert columns such as *Profit Prophet* (page 46), *Front Desk* (page 16) and *Troubleshooting* (page 44) are a fast, to-the-point, 400-word read on their respective topics of customer service, diagnostics and business management.

Speaking of business management, for our cover story this month, New Brunswick-based writer James Risdon delved into the pros and cons of staying strictly independent versus being a franchise automotive service shop.

As he discovered, there are clear advantages to going franchise. However, which operation is right for you, it seems, depends on your mindset and your pocketbook. 🧐

Dean Askin, managing editor
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Taking the plunge to help shop owners thrive

In today's online world, it may seem crazy to launch a new print magazine. But when you identify a need for one, taking the risk just makes sense.

All of my experience tells me there's a need for a new professional magazine with a technical and business focus for automotive service technicians and shop owners.

First, one that provides information and advice to help technicians repair and service vehicles efficiently and properly, so customers leave satisfied with the service work completed.

Second, one that helps independent — and franchise — shop owners run their businesses more efficiently, effectively and profitably. Because, as shop owner Vangelis (Van) Angastiniotis notes in our first *Shop Snapshot* (page 24), "there's a lot of profit to be made" if you're doing the right things the right way all the time in your shop.

I'm excited about launching *AutoShop Business*. I know it will fill a gap in the ever-changing knowledge and information needs of both technicians and shop owners.

I've had a lifelong passion for automobiles and all facets of the industry. So it made sense for me to have a career in the automotive aftermarket sector, on the trade magazine publishing side. My career spanned more than 15 years with Business Information Group.

I'm a numbers kind of guy. So, starting in the finance department was, well, logical. It gave me a lot of insight into the finance oper-

ations of magazines that served me well when I decided to move to publishing roles. First as an associate publisher, and then publisher, of *Service Station and Garage Management*. You may be familiar with it if you've been working in or running an automotive shop for a long time. Maybe you even have some old, dog-eared copies still hanging around.

AutoShop Business will fill a gap in ever-changing knowledge needs

Being at the helm of SSGM, and its French sister publication, *L'automobile*, for more than 10 years, was both challenging and exciting in a time when radical changes were happening in both trade magazine publishing and in automotive service. When the SSGM-era came to an end, I became the founding publisher of *Canadian Auto Repair and Service* (CARS) magazine.

Now here I am once again as a founding publisher — this time of an independent magazine for independent shop owners. Pardon the pun, but there's a certain alignment in that. 🍀

Marc Gadbois, publisher
marc@autoshopbusiness.com

Automobile Solutions chooses LubeSource

Mississauga, Ont.-based **Automobile Solutions Americas Inc. (ASA)** has chosen **LubeSource** of Vaughan, Ont., as the distributor of **Veedol** lubricant products in the province.

Arun Kumar, vice-president of global business development for **Veedol International Americas Inc.**, says choosing **LubeSource** was an “easy” decision. **LubeSource** has a strong Ontario customer base and is known for “superior service to their customers,” he says.

Under the distribution agreement, **LubeSource** is promoting all **Veedol** synthetic and convention oils including the **Syntron**, **Powertron** and **Elite** lines.

ASA is the official Canadian licensee of **Veedol** brand lubricants. The company says the strategic agreement with



Larry Burns, **LubeSource** vice-president and general manager (left), and Arun Kumar, vice-president of global business development at **Veedol International Americas**, shake on the distribution deal.

LubeSource “isn’t just about supplying product.” **LubeSource** and **Veedol** will proactively work together on marketing initiatives to grow **Veedol** sales in Ontario.

New BD exec at Lemur



Jim Fish has joined **Lemur Monitors** of St. John’s as vice-president

of business development and as a strategic advisor. **Fish** will oversee the strategic direction, expansion and development of **Lemur’s** vehicle monitoring and diagnostic technology.

Lemur provides advanced diagnostic solutions through its **BlueDriver** platform. **Fish** moved to **Lemur** from **Robert Bosch North America**, where he was chief innovation officer. In 2014, **Fish** was **Bosch’s** inventor of the year. He has more than 20 patents covering vehicle diagnostics, software and connected business models. He’s also an **ASE**-certified automotive technician. **Fish** has also held executive positions at **SPX Service Solutions** and **Snap-on**, and was with **Ford** for more than 10 years.

Plunging profits for collision repair ahead

A new collision-repair report from the **KPMG U.S. Manufacturing Institute Automotive Center** warns profits are going to plunge. It predicts the rise of autonomous vehicles will shrink original equipment manufacturer (OEM) collision-repair profits 48% by 2030. Collision-parts business will also take a hit because of self-driving cars, according to the report. **KPMG**

projects OEM collision-repair revenue could drop from US\$5.6 billion in 2015 to US\$2.7 billion by 2030 and dwindle to US\$1.4 billion by 2040.

Distinguished service award winner

The **Automotive Industries Association of Canada (AIA)** has recognized **John Maslack** with the association's distinguished service award for 2017. Maslack is the founder and president of Maslack Supply in Sudbury,

Ont. He started the company in 1959 and has for more almost six decades provided a gateway to Northern Ontario for parts manufacturers to distribute automotive, collision, heavy-duty and industrial replacement parts to end users in remote parts of the province.

Today the company has 12 locations and more than 200 staff. It recently opened a state-of-the-art customer training centre in Sudbury.

Maslack is a business and community leader. He pioneered the Sudbury Memorial Hospital Foundation, and served on the hospitals



John Maslack, winner of the AIA Canada 2017 distinguished service award.

board of governors. He is also a member of Sudbury's Sports Celebrity Hall of Fame, in recognition of support for local youth teams.

AAPEX one of fastest-growing trade shows

The annual **Automotive Aftermarket Products Expo (AAPEX)** in Las Vegas has been named one of the top 25 fastest-growing shows in terms of attendance by the Trade Show News Network (TSNN).

The show earned the top-25 ranking because of its attendance growth rate between 2014 and 2016. In August, AAPEX will be officially honoured during a TSNN awards program in New Orleans.

This year about 158,000 automotive aftermarket professionals from more than 140 countries are expected to attend AAPEX. The 2017 show is being held from October 31 to November 2 at the Sands Expo. If you're planning on attending, register on line now. AAPEX



The crowded exhibit-hall floor at the 2016 AAPEX show in Las Vegas. (AAPEX photo)

is co-owned by the **Auto Care Association (ACA)** and the **Automotive Aftermarket Suppliers Association (AASA)**.

You can register on line for the 2017 show at aapecshow.com.

Skills Canada rising stars in auto service

The annual **Skills Canada** competitions give young Canadians interested in careers as automotive service technicians the chance to show just how good they are. Here's a look at some of the best who participated the 2017 provincial Skills competitions.

In the Saskatchewan provincial competition held in April, Al Gabert, executive director of Skills Canada Saskatchewan, poses with medal winners Luc Gendreau from Yorkton Regional High School (gold) and silver winner Dakota Esmond from Thom Collegiate in Regina.



Across the country in St. John's the provincial gold medallist this spring was Gavin Butt, a student at College of the North Atlantic – Prince Phillip Campus in St. John's. He's a fourth-year apprentice. Instructor Charlie Truken presents Gavin with the gold medal.



What kind of engine service to expect ahead

When you make your living servicing vehicles with internal combustion engines (ICEs), it's good to know they're still going to be around a long time despite emerging powertrain technologies.

According to KPMG's *Global Auto Executive Survey for 2017*, 76% of executives interviewed believe ICEs are going to be a lot more important than electric powertrains for a long time still.

The survey report says "revolutionary electric



Gasoline-powered vehicles will be around a long time yet.

drivetrains still need time

for implementation and cannot be easily integrated" into current vehicle platforms.

The share of alternative power is expected to increase by only 3%, from 4% in 2016 to 7% in 2023.

Meanwhile, you'll be seeing fewer diesel-powered cars coming into your shop. According to the survey, more than every second executive believes diesel will be the first traditional powertrain to be dropped by auto makers.

Quebec facility gets major facelift



Wakefield's Laval, Que., distribution centre

Wakefield Canada — which manufactures Castrol lubricants in this country — has made a major investment in its Laval, Que., distribution centre.

Wakefield has upgraded its bulk-oil pumping system “for maximum efficiency for the movement of bulk as well as packaged goods” through the facility, the company said in a news release. It has also done a workplace ergonomic redesign for employees at the Laval centre. As well, it has gone “green,” installing energy saving lighting and heating systems.

The 15,000-square-foot facility is the distribution and customer service centre for Quebec and The Maritimes.

The overhaul reflects Wakefield's commitment to maintaining “a significant Quebec-based presence,” the company says, because Quebec is a key market for Wakefield. Castrol's provincial market share is highest in that province, according to a 2016 aftermarket study by Ipsos.

Higher vehicle repair costs in U.S.

In the U.S., the **Auto Care Association** (ACA) is warning vehicle owners face a “significant” increase of about US\$160 per year in repair and maintenance costs if a proposed Border Adjustment Tax (BAT) under the Trump administration, goes through.

“The Border Adjustment Tax will drive up auto repair costs to about US\$1,100 per year for car owners,” says Bill Harvey, the ACA's president and CEO. He adds, it's a “highly regressive tax” that will hit middle- and lower-income families the hardest because they tend to drive older vehicles

that need more repairs and maintenance. According to the ACA, the average age of a vehicle on American roads is 11.6 years.

The association says the BAT will drive up repair and maintenance costs because it would impose a new 20% tax on imported goods and services. It would mean a US\$20-billion per year tax increase on automotive parts. That increase would be passed on to customers by repair shops.

The ACA says this proposed tax is “ill-conceived” and would hurt auto service businesses and their customers alike.

B-Line gets a lift

B-Line Tire and Auto Supply of St. Albert, Alta., is marking a couple of milestones: It's celebrating 30 years in business, and it recently became an authorized distributor of Rotary lifts.

“B-Line and Rotary have aligned corporate cultures focused on quality, integrity and customer satisfaction,” the company said in a news release on its website.

Franchise vs. Indie

» TEXT BY **JAMES RISDON**

FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY BY
**DEAN ASKIN AND JOEL
UPSHALL**

Both models have their advantages and disadvantages — you be the judge

Technician and entrepreneur Rick Vandenbrink's current garage on Ingersoll Road in Woodstock is roughly twice the size at four bays of his first shop.

It's also an independent automotive repair shop.

That puts Rick's Automotive in the biggest category of an industry that includes 16,683 general automotive maintenance locations with an estimated 107,032 service bays in Canada, according to a survey conducted in 2015 by DesRosiers Automotive Consultants.

Vandenbrink, who prides himself on being straight with customers and offering them quality service at a good price, won't touch automotive repair shop franchises.

He says he can't afford them.

FRANCHISE COSTS

The up-front costs of franchises — including franchise and royalty fees and spending on advertising — can be enough to make an entrepreneur think twice.

On its www.lookforafranchise.ca website,

the Canadian Franchise Association's directory shows each Budget Brake & Muffler location needs to cough up a franchise fee of \$25,000. That's half the \$50,000 Mr. Lube charges its franchisees. Several automotive repair chains charge franchise fees in the \$30,000 to \$35,000 range, including Speedy Auto Service, The Master Mechanic, Midas and Meineke.

In 2015, Midas was ranked number-one in its franchise category by *Entrepreneur* magazine. Last year, Meineke earned that *Entrepreneur* spot.

Becoming a Midas (or a Speedy Auto Service) franchisee takes big bucks — \$75,000 and \$250,000 in net worth. The start-up costs for a brand-new Midas franchise shop are between \$184,130 and \$433,097.

A Meineke franchise requires a total initial investment between US\$123,121 and US\$572,411, according to available company information.

Franchisors' royalty fees are a consideration. Active Green & Ross, for example,

charges 6% on gross retail sales (3% on tire sales), plus 2.5% of retail sales for advertising. Speedy charges 5% for its business support services, and 1% of retail sales for advertising.

Ross Coates, Meineke's master franchisee and the owner of four of these auto repair shops in Newfoundland, says it's well worth it.

"There's a lot of value in a brand name," Coates said in an interview. "You get a lot more support and training. We have our dealer meetings and you can pick each other's brains. It's a friendly rivalry." The owner of what used to be the Ross' Irving in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, Coates went ahead and converted that two-bay gas station and repair shop into a Meineke in 2000. Since then, he's expanded

take a back seat, says Watt.

"The big difference between [franchised and independent automotive shops] has to do with the day-to-day management of the garage," he says. "The franchise brings a structure and a process ... That's what brings success to the franchise shops."

While many independent auto repair shop owners think the key to success is getting more customers, that's not necessarily the case, Watt says. It's more important in the long run for an auto shop to do a thorough job of inspecting each vehicle for other repairs it might need and to then communicate that to the customer and increase the billable hours per work order.

"If [an auto repair shop owner] sells only one hour per work order ... he is in trouble because what the vehicles need is 2.5 hours per work order and so he's left a lot of work on the table," says Watt.

FRANCHISE SUPPORT

A good franchise model can help an entrepreneur with the training to ensure vehicle inspections are done properly and the additional repair work is communicated well to the customer. Watt says that doing this boosts customer loyalty.



Automotive consultant John Watt: Many independent shop owners lack business management skills and support that franchises can provide.

Photo courtesy John Watt

Daily shop management is the big difference between indie and franchise shops.

with Meinekes in Mount Pearl, St. John's, and Gander.

INDEPENDENTS WEAK ON BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Certainly, at least some independent auto shops are struggling.

"A lot of these guys are just on the cusp of existence," says automotive industry consultant John Watt. "Their pockets aren't empty. But they could be doing so much better."

Many independent garage owners also put in time as mechanics and are so tied up with day-to-day operations that business management considerations

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



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“When you validly find work that a vehicle needs to have done and point that out, those people like you more,” he said.

The business management support provided by franchisors also helps entrepreneurs with their customer service at the counter and increases the likelihood that they’ll make the best use of their the best use of their human resources. Many independent auto shop owners will not hire front counter staff, preferring to do it themselves.

Watt says that’s often a mistake.

“At some point, if (the owner) needs to go away, he’ll probably get one the technicians from the back to handle the counter and the productivity for that week [will drop] because you’re taking one guy away from the back, away from working on the cars, and you have someone at the front counter who doesn’t have the skills.”

There are probably about three times as many independent auto repair shop owners who are in serious need of business management expertise as there are those who are doing it right and maximizing the returns on their business, estimates Watt.

Franchise networks also provide a ready pool of expertise for their franchisees.

“Most franchisors have a national advisory council and they’ll meet two to three times a year and bring to the table comments and recommendations on what should be the normal management practices,” said Watt.

BIG DRAW OF FRANCHISES

Franchisees are often appreciative of the price breaks they get on parts or supplies negotiated by the bigger buying power of their chains but this is much more of a perk than a major benefit, said Watt. The negotiated price breaks are usually only on the order of one or two percentage points.

A franchisor’s business expertise and proven system for making money are the big draws for entrepreneurs looking to set up an auto shops. Midas provides three to four



Independent general auto service shops face fierce competition for business in many markets. Profitability can be elusive. Conversely, with specialized franchises such as Mister Transmission that have a unique market segment, there’s not a lot of competition but there is a lot of referral business from several customer segments. That’s a powerful combination for long-term success. This Mister Transmission in Niagara Falls, Ont., is the top transmission shop in the city. Manager/technician Paul Fryer has worked with his father Frank, the franchise owner, at the shop for 24 years. Frank has definitely had long-term success — he has owned the franchise for 42 years.

Photo by Dean Askin

weeks of training to its franchisees. Meineke offers 2.5 weeks of training and Budget Brake & Muffler two weeks.

That, though, doesn’t appeal to everyone

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

What's in store at AAPEX and SEMA shows this year

Seeing everything at concurrent shows could be time challenging

If you're planning on hitting Las Vegas for industry trade shows this year, it'll take a juggling act to get the most from them. The two biggest trade shows in the automotive aftermarket world are running at the same time this fall.

The **2017 Automotive Aftermarket Products Expo** (AAPEX) runs Oct. 31 to Nov.

2 at the Sands Expo. Meanwhile, this year's **Specialty Equipment Market Association** (SEMA) show runs concurrently at the Las Vegas Convention Center. It's on from Oct. 31 to Nov. 3. Add to that the **Global Tire Expo**, which is part of the SEMA show.

SEMA is the premier automotive products specialty show in the world. The 2016 event drew more than 70,000 visitors. One of the highlights of the show is the new-products showcase, where new products from first-time exhibitors are highlighted in a separate section. Almost 3,000 new products were showcased last year.

This year's exhibitors at SEMA include Fidanza, Thermo-Tec, Kleinn and Quebec-based Plombco. Fidanza will officially launch its new line of lightweight steel flywheels at SEMA (see *Tools & tech*, pg. 33). For Plombco, SEMA 2017 marks the official launch of its new adhesive wheel weights


(see *Tools & tech*, pg. 34).

Over at the Sands Expo, more than 158,000 people are expected to attend this year's AAPEX show. It's owned by the U.S. Auto Care Association (ACA) and the Automotive Aftermarket Suppliers Association. Exhibitors will be showcasing new products in 46 categories. They include:

- batteries
- power tools
- ignition and exhaust systems
- sealants and compounds
- shop equipment and supplies
- suspension

Valvoline, ACDelco, Denso and KYB Americas were just a few of the major players that exhibited at the AAPEX show last year.

Both trade shows include educational seminars. If you're a shop owner and focused on managing your business, retail expert Tom Shay talks at SEMA on Oct. 30 about financial operations with an aptly titled *Finance and Operations: What your accountant is not telling you* seminar.

Register online for both shows, at semashow.com and aapecshow.com. 

AAPEX photo

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Keeping your customers loyal starts with you

I've worked in this industry for 30 years — but I'm not a technician. My interest lies in what it takes to bring a customer through the door the first time and to keep them coming back. What it takes to turn a *customer* into a *client for life*.

No question, getting a new prospective client through the door the first time is hard. Once you do, it's up to you to wow him with incredible customer service. Hopefully you have the best technicians, tools and equipment to do the job right the first time; the best warranty program; and a follow-up program to stay in touch with your clients every month. You need to stay in touch with your clients *18 times a year* to be the first shop they think of for auto service.

WHY SHOPS LOSE BUSINESS

Most shops lose clients for these reasons:

- 3% of clients move away, stop driving or die
- 5% are referred elsewhere by family or friends
- 10% are contacted by a competitor
- 14% are dissatisfied with the service
- a whopping 68% feel the company is indifferent to them

THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Practice the attitude of gratitude. Make sure customers know you appreciate their business.

You need to:

- be in contact with customers every month; preferably twice a month
- build and nurture a strong relationship with

customers

- get out from behind the counter and shake their hands
- increase the time you spend getting to know them

Everything you do should be a very personal thank-you

You can:

- stay in contact and build a strong relationship every month with a newsletter
- collect clients' email addresses and send them a Tip of The Month
- send clients a thank-you card after they've been in for service. Even better, phone and thank them for their business. I've found this often leads to other work on another vehicle.
- give a small appreciation gift when clients are paying their bill —clients love this!
- send them a birthday card

Nothing you do should look or sound corporate. It's essential to make everything a very personal thank-you from you to them. 🧡

Rita Kause is co-owner of Mewassin Automotive Ltd. in Duffield, Alta., and a past president of The Canadian Independent Automotive Association. She's really big on customer service. Contact Rita at mewassinrita@canadasurfs.net.



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- Application Guide available on request or visit our website, www.nlsproducts.ca.

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Summer maintenance

A roundup of essentials for keeping customers' vehicles safe and performing well in summer

» TEXT BY **ROBERT STARR**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DEAN ASKIN**

Summer's when the wear-and-tear on all the components of the vehicles you service shows up after the long winter season. Of course the weather plays a huge role in how you attack a summer maintenance program and it's not all about the heat. The Farmer's Almanac predicts showers and thunderstorms, gusty winds and lots of rain for June and July. That means you'll need to be up on what's needed to keep your customer's windshield wipers working well when the summer skies open up.

THREE WIPER BLADE TYPES

There's a push on to develop a generic blade that works well in both winter and summer conditions. But there are still basically three types to select from according to Paul Smith, the product manager for Bosch Canada, North American Division. He says there's a clear choice that works best when it's hot and wet outside.

"Your standard metal structure conventional blades are ideal for summer conditions," he says. These are a fairly inexpensive option that also has the added benefit of being able to fit most of the cars you'll need to work on.

Smith explains another advantage: "The rubber compound that's used to produce these wipers is more flexible under warmer conditions."

THE WIPER WEATHER FACTOR

Beam blades offer a more flexible option since the rubber used performs well in either cold or warmer conditions. These are great for customers who don't want to go to the bother of changing blades to meet seasonal weather shifts. They're also tailor made for a wet summer.

"There's also a coating that gets used on the rubber that prevents dust, dirt and salt buildup," Smith says, adding, these flat blades don't have a lot of moving parts so there's less chance of build-up over the dog days of summer.

"The third type is a hybrid," Smith says. "This is a recent trend with a lot of European cars like Mercedes and BMWs having these as original parts."

Basically this is a conventional blade with a piece of plastic covering the moving parts. It's a little more expensive than the other options here in Canada.

Kevin O'Dowd, vice-president of marketing with Crowne Group (wiper blades manufacturer TRICO was bought by Crowne), has some other helpful hints for shop owners putting together a summer maintenance package.

"Summer sun and heat can accelerate the degradation of a blade," he says. "Wipers sitting idle while in the sun over time can

CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

How Do You Find An Environmentally Friendly Auto Magazine?





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to receive your **FREE** Digital Edition
of **AutoShop Business magazine!**

Getting finicky about filters

» STORY AND PHOTOS BY
DENNIS FURLAN

Smaller details can lead to bigger sales and better customer service

Many images come to mind when you think of exciting projects in an automotive service shop. From engine refits and major body work to transmission jobs and electrical systems repairs, there's no shortage of big-ticket items that bring in customers and keeps shops busy.

However, as many auto service professionals well know, it's often the smaller jobs that can be just as crucial to addressing customers' needs. That's where filters come into play. Whether it's the oil filter that gets changed every time an oil change gets done; the air filter that protects the engine from foreign materials; the cabin filter that safeguards the air we breathe inside the car; or the fuel filter that screens out dirt and rust, when filters generally go wrong, so can the entire performance and functioning of any vehicle.

Yet, as simple as this concept seems, as is often the case in auto maintenance and repair, theoretical common sense often doesn't square with the real world. When it comes to filters, it means awareness and maintenance are sometimes overlooked.

This certainly isn't the case for the service technicians that work at CRS Automotive,

which has two Ontario shops — one in Hamilton, and the other in Oakville. According to owner Ahmad Liaqat, "Our guys make sure that filters are checked whenever possible. It's the customer that sometimes doesn't know about the importance of filters. But we always ask our customers about filters and keep them informed about maintenance and repair options."

DON'T OVERLOOK FILTERS

In fact, Liaqat says technicians at his shops always try to check the filters, but that it's not always possible.

"With some cabin filters, it can take up to 40 minutes just to access them. In those cases, we ask the customer when was the last time it was serviced. If it's been a while, then we might have to take a look and make a change."



In some cases, what they find isn't so pretty. Says Liaqat, "There's mold, mildew, leaves and all kind of debris. The cabin filter is the most overlooked filter

tomers in Canada right now. Canadian Tire sells more cabin filters than any other place. They always make sure to ask the customer when it's last been changed. They

filters.

"We've found birds in them, dead rats — all kinds of stuff. But that's what happens when you haven't changed a cabin filter in five years. People change their home furnace filters frequently. There should be the exact same mindset for vehicle cabin filters too."

Ironically, Buckley believes that too many repair shops across North America are focusing on the wrong kind of filter repair and maintenance.

"You see so many sales on oil changes. It's how they try to bring customers into the shop. But, because they're

Filters should be changed once a year — every shop needs to stay on top of this

in a vehicle. When people have problems with allergies and breathing, they often don't realize it's the cabin filter that's the culprit. So we always recommend it be changed at least once a year."

should be changed at least once a year. All shops should stay on top of that. It's not only good for the customer, it's good for business too."

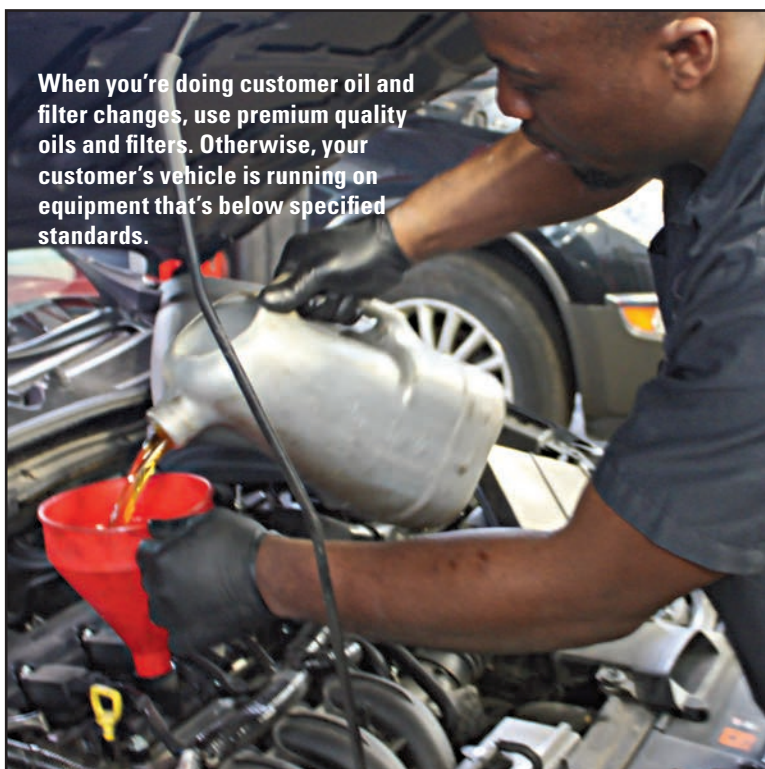
Buckley also has his share of stories about what people find in neglected cabin

CONTINUED ON P. 25

Jay Buckley, director of technical training for FRAM, is in complete agreement when it comes to cabin filters, health and maintenance. He says, "It's a hugely undersold market. There are millions and millions of cars sold with cabin filters, and the sales of aftermarket cabin filters don't reflect that. Many times people aren't changing them because they don't even know their cars are equipped with one."

Buckley continues, "I'm going to plug one of my cus-

When you're doing customer oil and filter changes, use premium quality oils and filters. Otherwise, your customer's vehicle is running on equipment that's below specified standards.



Doing things Right-Tech

» DEAN ASKIN
TEXT AND PHOTOS

Right-Tech owner Van Angastiniotis designed a workflow process that has increased shop efficiency and customer satisfaction, and doubled business. It keeps things running smoothly in the shop every day.

You can see the passion for his business in his eyes, and hear it in his voice. Even in an industry that he calls “a very tough business” to be in today, Vangelis (Van) Angastiniotis wouldn’t want to be doing anything other than running his own shop. It was his childhood dream.

“There’s a lot of profit to be made,” says Angastiniotis. But he’s quick to add, you can’t do that without being passionate about the business; without having the right mindset; without having the right staff; without constantly investing in training, technology and equipment; without having business processes that help you run a shop efficiently; and perhaps most of all, without having the constant thirst for knowledge when today’s vehicles are so sophisticated and ever advancing.

Some shop owners think of themselves only as self-employed technicians, not business owners. That’s the wrong mindset, affirms Angastiniotis. Right-Tech oozes professionalism and best

practices, from clean service bays to the weekly Monday morning staff meetings at which jobs scheduled for the week are reviewed, and post-mortems on completed jobs are discussed. With processes in place, everything runs smoothly. “The workflow and our weekly meetings help us know what we’ve done right, and what we didn’t do right this week,” says Angastiniotis.

There’s a strong focus on nurturing long-term customer relationships at Right-Tech. Angastiniotis knows what’s happening in his customers’ families. They know what’s happening in his. Getting personal is important. “When they come in you can’t just write the service order,” he says.

And the customer focus shows. Some Right-Tech customers are third-generation from the same family. Some clients live or work in the area. Others travel to Right-Tech for service on a referral. One, whom Angastiniotis met through networking, brings his vehicles for service from Buffalo, N.Y. There are even a couple of high-profile federal politicians and drummers “from

RIGHT-TECH AUTO REPAIR AND SERVICE

SNAPSHOT

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» Angastiniotis always wanted to have his own automotive service business — cars were a passion from the age of five. He started in 1998 with three rented service bays in a Sunoco Station. Eventually he bought property and designed his own four-bay facility.



» Services everything from mini-vans to McLarens and Ferraris. Angastiniotis constantly invests in tools and technology needed to service any vehicle that's brought in. He does whatever he needs to do. That includes ordering Ferrari manuals online from the U.K.



» When he started, Right-Tech was a one-man operation but eventually Angastiniotis realized he'd never grow the business trying to do everything himself. Today, Right-Tech has four technicians and two service advisors.



» In 2013, Angastiniotis implemented a formal work-flow process for service orders that he spent 18 months designing himself. Honed over three years, the process has increased shop efficiency and customer satisfaction, and seen business double.



» The shop struggled for two years from 2013 to 2015 during road construction when crews constantly blocked both entrances with equipment and concrete barriers. "The community made sure we got through it," says Angastiniotis. Right-Tech has received the Consumer's Choice GTA West Award for 2016 and 2017.

1970s bands" on his client list. "We've got a lot of different demographics," says Angastiniotis. 🤖

Know a shop that should be featured? We're always interested in top-notch shops across Canada to profile in *Shop SnapShot*. Contact the editor at editorial.dean@gmail.com.

filters CONTINUED FROM P. 23

charging so little, they're sometimes putting in lower-quality oil and filters, which means that the car is running on equipment that is below specified standards. That's not an ideal situation."

OEM VS. AFTERMARKET

Which brings up an issue of some interest in the filter industry: the value of equipment made by original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). Specifically, filters made by the auto manufacturers or their branded parts providers, versus the range of filters made by aftermarket manufacturers.

It seems the aftermarket options hold up quite well.

According to Liaqat, "In our shops, we only sell the aftermarket filters to our customers. In our opinion, they're built to the same specifications as the OEMs, if not better, and they offer various levels of products, which gives us a good range of choices."

Unsurprisingly, Buckley from Fram concurs with this assessment of the quality of aftermarket filters that companies like his provide. He says, "Even our least expensive filters exceed the OEM specifications, and they're usually about a dollar less than the OEM version at the retail level."

NOT ALL FILTERS ARE ALIKE

Then, of course, there's the debate surrounding what even constitutes an OEM filter. First, there's the difference between an OEM and OES (original equipment supplier) filter. New cars will be supplied with an OEM filter from the manufacturer, while a replacement OES

CONTINUED ON P. 29



The quickest way to get new customers: SEM

Back in your father's day, shop marketing was easy: you'd put a sign in front of your shop, and an ad in the yellow pages, and wait for customers to walk in. It was a hit-or-miss business and it took a long time to grow a steady flow of customers.

Today, shop marketing is much more sophisticated. It requires more knowledge and tools. Online marketing, for example, includes: website design, search engine marketing and optimization, email marketing, mobile advertising, social media and more.

You can't become an overnight online marketing expert any more than you can become an overnight master technician. There's a lot to learn. So instead of trying to do everything at once, focus on one marketing activity at a time.

WHERE TO START

Search engine marketing (SEM) is the most impactful place to start. SEM is basically advertising on search engines. Done in-house or with outside help, a creative SEM campaign can quickly generate measurable results for your shop. The sooner you get started, the sooner you can start bringing in new customers.

Launch your online SEM campaign in the morning, and you could start getting calls that afternoon.

SEM is basically buying ads on one of two major search engines: Google and Bing. According to Internet research firm comScore, Google controls 65% of search use; Bing has 33% share.

When you do a Google search the first few listings are paid ads. That's how search engines make most of their income. For a shop in a major market like Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver, SEM can be expensive if you want to be the number one spot. But you don't have to be the number one for every keyword.



SEM is measurable — you know what's working, and not

TRACKING RESULTS

Unlike print ads, with SEM you pay only for results — for click-throughs to your website or your phone number. You set a pre-determined bid on chosen keywords ("auto repair Toronto", for example).

SEM is measurable — you know what's working, what's not and the exact cost of every click. If you do a good job of tracking new customers in-house, you can even calculate the sales your ads are generating and your cost per new customer. But knowledge is empty unless you act on it.

In my next column, I'll walk you through the nitty-gritty of creating a good campaign. 🗣️

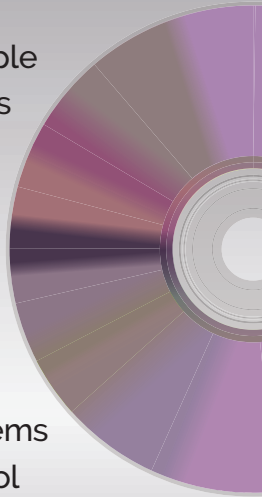
Phil Sasso is president of Sasso Marketing, Inc., a technical marketing agency focused on services for tool and equipment makers. Contact Phil at 847-250-7445.

Learn More And You'll Earn More.

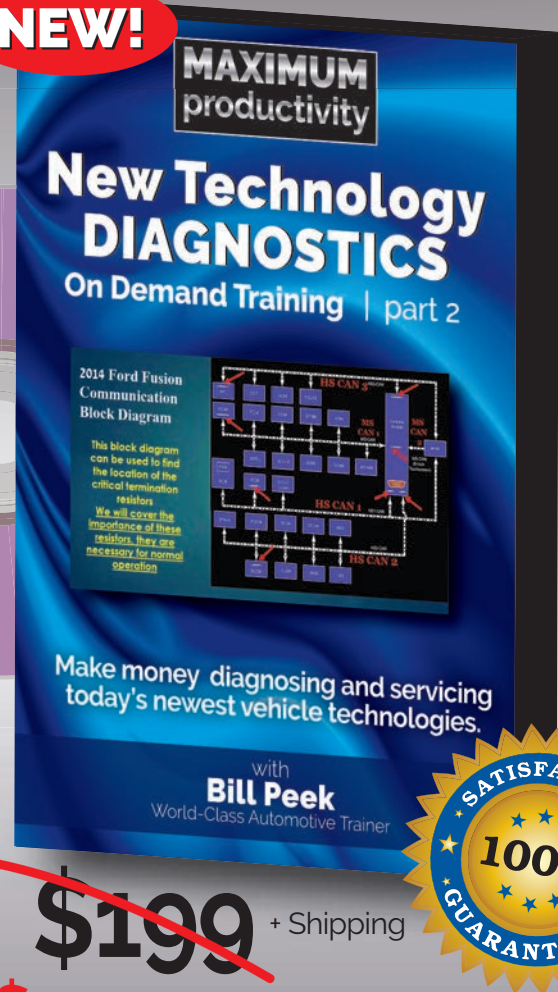
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franchise vs. indie CONTINUED FROM P. 13

and many independent auto shop owners do manage to do it all themselves without the structure of a franchise network.

At Rick's Automotive, Vandenbrink says the money he saves on franchise fees and royalties allows him to offer a more competitive labour rate than both the dealerships or franchised auto shops.

"I'm about \$20 less [per hour] than the

ware car dealerships have. In an industry that's short on skilled labour — on good, qualified mechanics — that perk of more equipment and information at the car dealerships can make it more of a struggle for an independent to attract and retain good mechanics.

"A lot more like to work at the dealerships because they have all the tooling," says Vandenbrink. "The franchised shops have it a bit better than us [in terms of attracting mechanics] but not a lot."

Although he does not do extensive mail outs, Vandenbrink does undertake customer surveys and has made it a practice to ask customers about their level of satisfaction.

"I ask to come back and check what was done and see if they're happy," he says. "Sometimes it takes a few days to see if the problem resurfaces."

Rick's Automotive has a website and ranks well on Google but Vandenbrink says the best advertising is still word-of-mouth.

"Honesty and integrity with a customer, showing them so they know what's broken, is very important," he said. "It's about developing a relationship with your customers." 🧠

Meineke master franchisee Ross Coates believes there's a lot of value in a brand name. Photo by Joel Upshall



Woodstock, Ont., shop owner Rick Vandenbrink believes he has more flexibility as an independent. Photo courtesy Rick's Automotive

The profitability factor

How much can you earn? Here's just a taste of franchise revenue potential.

AVERAGE ANNUAL REVENUES* #1 FRANCHISES

Meineke	(Ranked #1 in category 2016 by <i>Entrepreneur</i> magazine)	\$692,042
Midas	(Ranked #1 in category 2015 by <i>Entrepreneur</i> magazine)	\$708,093

*Based on statistics available on franchisors' websites. Franchisors do not specify whether these revenue earnings are in U.S. or Canadian dollar amounts. Not all franchisors publish average franchisee revenue information on their websites.

dealers," he says. "The Meinekes and Midases, they're in between the dealers and me."

SOLO SHOP FLEXIBILITY

Vandenbrink says the flexibility he has as an independent allows him to source parts more cheaply and offer a broader range of services at all price points.

"If the customer wants a cheap brake job because that's all they can afford, then I will do that as long as it's safe," he says.

Vandenbrink admits he doesn't get to benefit from all the information and soft-



filters CONTINUED FROM P. 25

most of the filter protection should come within the first 5,000 miles driven anyhow.”

In addition, there’s also the reality that some OEM filters are actually made by the aftermarket filter manufacturers. Buckley points out that FRAM is the OEM filter manufacturer for Honda and Subaru.

Some shops may not be aware of this. Some are.

“The aftermarket filter manufacturers even make some of the OEM versions, which is why we’re confident in the aftermarket quality and offerings,” Liaqat says.



If you don’t stay on top of filters, it can cost your customers big

OEM (and OES) filters do have their merits and advantages. Mopar is the parts provider for Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA). In an email statement to *AutoShop Business* magazine, the company says, “Mopar filters, as with all Mopar products, are unique in that they are engineered with the same teams that create factory-authorized vehicle specifications for all FCA US LLC vehicles — a direct connection that no other aftermarket parts company can provide. Mopar products are also validated and tested for quality and durability, according to strict, factory-specific guidelines not available to the aftermarket.”

STAYING ON TOP OF THINGS

When asked about technological develop-

ments they’ve observed recently regarding filters, both Buckley and Liaqat are quick to answer.

Says Buckley, “Because the interval between oil changes is becoming longer, all oil-filter companies are upping their game too. For example, our base-model oil filter has a 10,000-mile capacity, but the valves only 6,000 miles. But that’s changing too, and all the filter companies are upgrading these capacities.”

For Liaqat, one of the biggest changes he has seen is in fuel filters. He says, “With more and more cars you’re seeing permanent-type, non-serviceable fuel filters, versus those that we could previously service and replace quite easily. So, if there’s a problem with these non-serviceable filters, we usually have to replace the fuel pump, which can range anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000.”

It’s not the kind of money value you’d normally associate with vehicle filter issues. But these are the kinds of costs that customers can accrue if filter maintenance and repair aren’t properly addressed by your shop when customers are relying on you for their vehicle service and the customer care involved.

CRS Automotive
owner Ahmad
Liaqat is confident
in the quality of
aftermarket-made
filters.



CREEPER

Supplier: Lisle Corporation
lislecorp.com

Now in lime green! An addition to Lisle Corporation's popular line of plastic low-profile creepers. Body-hugging, comfortable and strong. Urethane rollers in steel bushings molded into creeper body. Low-profile, 7/8" floor clearance. Easy to clean. Molded surface is solvent and fuel resistant.



IMPACT WRENCH

Supplier: Mac Tools
mactools.com

Mac Tools new 20V MAX 3/8" brushless impact wrench. Ergonomic over-molded grip. Compact, 5.69" long. Provides 275 ft-lbs. breakaway torque. Three speed settings, variable speed trigger (0-1,700, -1,950, -2,800 RPM). Electronic trigger brake.



PRO+ LINE

Supplier: Gray Tools
graytools.com



New from Gray Tools, the Pro+ line of tool storage units. Seventeen products, including top chests and roll cabs in 28" and 42" widths. 100-lb. capacity drawer slides. Premium 5"x2" casters. 14% more capacity.



APPLICATION CHART

Supplier: Plombco
plombco.com

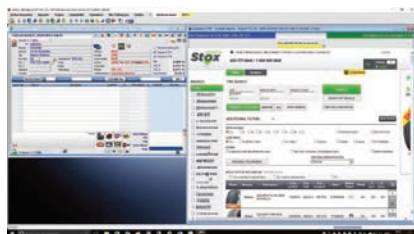
Also new from Plombco, its 2017 wheel weight application guide. Charts offered in two different sizes — booklet format and wall chart. Both feature updated 2017 vehicle year, make and model information for easy, accurate reference when doing tire-service work. Application guides available in the downloads area of Plombco website.

A/C SERVICE

Supplier: Robinair
robinair.com

Next-gen A/C service equipment from Robinair. New 34788NI and 34788NI-H machines. Feature industry-leading 98.5% recovery efficiency for both gasoline-powered and hybrid vehicles. New design with larger graphical display. Automatic leak testing, refrigerant fill and oil drain/inject. USB data sharing, wireless module for wi-fi or Bluetooth connectivity. Also accommodates a printer.





E-COMMERCE & SMS MODULES

Supplier: VL Communications
vlcom.com

VL Communications has added text messaging and e-commerce to its AB Magic shop management software. New SMS module lets you notify customers in seconds that their vehicle is ready. New e-commerce link to STOX Tire Distribution website in Quebec. Fast, accurate ordering of tires. Both features free in version 2017.011 of AB Magic. Can be downloaded from vlcom.com.

VOLTAGE TESTER

Supplier: Klein Tools
kleintools.com

Ideal for tracing vehicle electrical system problems. New battery-less ET60 electronic AC/DC voltage tester from Klein tools. Tester is powered by applied voltage. Measures voltage up to 600 V. Uses standard replaceable test leads. Water and dust resistant.



AIR LINE COUPLER

Supplier: Jet Tools
surewerx.com



A new air line tool from Jet. L-type coupler. 1/4" body x 1/4" NPT male thread. Zinc-plated steel prevents rust and corrosion. Deep knurled socket sleeve. Has 4-ball "positive locking" mechanism. Working pressure 150 psi. Air flow 35 SCFM at 100 psig inlet with 10 psig pressure drop.

BRAKE LATHE

Supplier: B-Line
bline.ca

Now available from B-Line Tire and Auto Supply Ltd. — Pro-Cut's A10 Warthog on-car brake lathe. Handles vehicles from compacts to heavy-duty pickups. Designed for heavy use, high-volume brake service. Speed-lock cutting head. 6-adaptor package included. Rotor thickness 0.2" to 1.75". Handles rotors up to 17.6"



ORANGE BRAKE LUBE

Supplier: Permatex
permatex.ca

New from Permatex — orange silicone ceramic brake lubricant. Puts an end to brake squeal and chatter. High-temp formulation with ceramic solids in it. Works in temperature range -46 C to 1649 C. Perfect for every critical brake part including caliper pins and bushings. Won't harm plastic and rubber components. Corrosion-, contaminant- and water-resistant.



IMPACT WRENCH

Supplier: Jet Tools
surewerx.com

New Jet 1" drive, ultra lightweight impact wrench. Ideal for heavy-duty truck tire and wheel service. Weighs just 17.9 lbs. Generates 2,000 ft/lb torque. Twin-hammer mechanism. Powerful, smooth, balanced blows with reduced vibration. Forward/reverse valve has four-position throttle settings. Pin-hole/spring clip socket retainer on anvil. 90 psi.



CONTINUITY TESTER

Supplier: Klein Tools
kleintools.com

Another new tester from Klein Tools. ET250 Digital AC/DC voltage and continuity tester. Measures voltage up to 600 V. Standard replaceable leads. Ideal for working in vehicle areas where it's hard to see when you're tracing electrical system problems. Tester has a built-in flashlight, and backlit display.



TUBE LIGHTS

Supplier: ATD Tools
atdtools.com



New Saber tube work lights from Alltrade. 300 (ATD-80473), 500 (ATD-80475) and 700 (ATD-80477) lumens. Constant current design for consistent light, 3.7V 3350 mAh Li-ion rechargeable battery, auto shut-off and overcharge protection. 9.75" (ATD-80473), 11.75" (ATD-80475), 13.75" (ATD-80477) long. Run time 2.5 hours (high), 5 hours (low). 300-lumens model runs 3 hours (high), 6 (low).

FLOOD LIGHT

Supplier: ATD Tools
atdtools.com

Also from Alltrade, new Saber 1300 lumen LED rechargeable Li-ion flood light. Features ultra-thin design. Integrated stand rotates 180°. High and low settings give you variable brightness and running time (2.5 to 5 hours). 3.7V, 4400mAh Li-ion battery. Light has built-in power bank for USB charging of smartphones and tablets.



DUST COLLECTOR

Supplier: Fein Tools
fein.com

Keep your shop floor clean with new Turbo X wet/dry dust extractor from Fein Tools. Push handle for easy mobility. 13' suction hose (1-3/8" dia.), non-woven, premium filter bag. PES flat-pleated filter and electronic shutdown. Powerful, easy wet-vacuuming performance. 25' power cable. Accommodates many different accessory tools (sold separately).





HEAD GUARD

Supplier: Mohawk Lifts
mohawklifts.com

From Mohawk Lifts, the 2-post lift swing arm safety head guard. Simple rubber guard that can prevent on-the-job injuries, and associated lost time. Universal rubber attachment fits swing arm sliders on all lift brands. Affixes easily to arm ends with peel-and-stick application.

WHEEL BALANCER

Supplier: Hofmann/Snap-on
hofmann-equipment.com

New Hofmann Geodyna 9000P wheel balancer from Snap-on® Equipment. Features advanced non-contact 3D imaging technology. Automatically scans rim and tire profile with 5 high-resolution laser cameras. Also scans wheel to within 0.1 mm accuracy. Easy to use on all cars and light trucks.



SNAP-RING SET

Supplier: ATD Tools
atdtools.com



New from ATD. 6-piece combination internal/external snap-ring pliers set. 3 straight tips, 3 90° tips. Sizes 0.38" to 0.70". Comes in molded plastic case.

BENCH GRINDER

Supplier: King Canada
kingcanada.com

New King Canada 8" low-speed bench grinder with light. Low-speed feature reduces heat build-up. ½-HP, 1,750 RPM motor is powerful. Diamond wheel dressing tool, tool rests, eye shields and two 8"x1" white aluminum oxide grinding wheels (one 60-grit, one fine 120-grit) all included. Plastic eye shields are shatter resistant. One regular, one magnified.



STEEL FLYWHEELS

Supplier: Fidanza
fidanza.com

Fidanza's new, lightweight steel flywheels. One-piece design made from 1045 steel. Designed to reduce weight and inertia for better engine response. Ring gear teeth are milled into the flywheel. For specific years and models of Ford, Toyota, Pontiac, Lotus, Saab and Subaru vehicles. Being officially launched at the 2017 SEMA show in Las Vegas.



TORQUE SCREWDRIVER SET

Supplier: Unitool
unitool.com

New Unitool UT6022 torque-limiting screwdriver set. 23-piece set. 1/4" drive screwdriver works with 1/4" hex bits or 1/4" drive sockets. Torque range 10–50 in/lbs. Kit includes assortment of 20 popular bits. Comes in blow-molded plastic case.



WHEEL WEIGHTS

Supplier: Plombco
plombco.com

Plombco has launched its new line of StickPro 1 oz. steel segment adhesive weight rolls. Available with standard white tape, or cold-weather grey tape. New adhesive weight rolls will be featured at 2017 SEMA show in Las Vegas.



DEEP IMPACTS

Supplier: ITC
surewerx.com



New from ITC, 1/2" drive 13-piece deep metric impact socket set. Torque-Drive® sockets prevent fastener rounding by applying torque to fastener corners. Socket sizes 10–24 mm. Heat-treated chrome molybdenum sockets with black phosphate finish. Corrosion resistant, finish won't peel. Large, easy-to-read size markings.

PRESSURE WASHER

Supplier: Campbell Hausfeld
campbellhausfeld.com

Great for keeping the shop floor clean and safe. New 4200-psi, commercial gas-powered pressure washer from Campbell Hausfeld. High-end, tri-plex piston pump and Kohler CH440 engine for top performance. Washer gun has trigger-lock mechanism to prevent accidental trigger pull, and for safety. 12" pneumatic wheels, 50' hose, 5 quick-change nozzles.



CARBIDE SCRAPER

Supplier: Matco Tools
matcotools.com

Ideal Matco tool for brake service and manifold work. Removes gasket residue, carbon build-up, rust. Can also be used for cleaning disc brake caliper slides. Tungsten carbide tip brazed to steel blade. Tip is precision ground and always stays sharp. 5/8" blade, tool length 6-1/2".





BRAKE CALIPERS

Supplier: Raybestos
raybestos.com

Raybestos's new Opti-Cal line of brake calipers. All-new caliper body, brackets and components including pistons, lubricated guide pins and pad mounting hardware. Rust-inhibiting zinc finish for all-weather performance and protection. Calipers feature no core return. Faster, trouble-free installation.

ALIGNER CONSOLE

Supplier: Hunter
hunter.com

Hunter has introduced its next generation of WinAlign consoles for its wheel aligners. WA500 and WA600. Both feature Hunter's new HWC2 PC. Runs on Windows 10 and WinAlign v15.1. Consoles designed for HawkEye Elite aligner.



THERMAL IMAGER

Supplier: Mastercool
mastercool.com

New from Mastercool. 52300 Thermal Imaging Camera. Can measure from -20 C to 350 C. Has 0.1 C thermal sensitivity. Fully automatic, focus free with Micro SD card storage. Ideal for tire wear, brake and engine system, fuel injector, wheel bearing diagnostics, and more. 2.8" LCD colour screen. Runs on 2 AA batteries. 6-hour battery run time.



CALIPER LUBE

Supplier: Permatex
permatex.ca



New from Permatex. Ultra Slick™ Disc Brake Caliper Lube. 100% synthetic, high-temperature formula prevents seizing or sticking. Won't cause swelling of rubber sleeves. Waterproof, anti-corrosion. Temperature operating range -40 C to 204 C. Comes in four sizes: 5 g packet, 80 ml tube, 170 ml tube, 236 ml brush-top bottle.

SCANNER

Supplier: Matco Tools
matcotools.com

New Maxme Tablet Scan Tool from Matco. Expandable, wireless. Android-based tool covers domestic, Asian, European vehicles. Ultra-fast graphing, displays 8 graphs simultaneously. OBD-II coverage 1996 to current model years. 8" IPS capacitive touchscreen. 2 high-resolution, still/video cameras. Bluetooth 2.1 connectivity, one-click wi-fi updating. Supports Identifix.



Taking apprentice training to a whole new level

Porsche is setting a benchmark example for everyone else — from independents to franchise shops to dealerships — to aspire to

Taking on an apprentice in your shop is a big commitment to the future — both his or hers, and yours.

As Uwe Hück, chair of the Porsche AG company

works council in Stuttgart, Germany, puts it, “It’s perfectly clear that the challenges of the labour market are getting tougher. The topics of digital technology and Industry 4.0 will have a long-term impact on the working world and change it for good. Our new training centre offers our apprentices and students the best conditions so they can

meet the challenges of the modern working world.”

That means your apprentices need to be doing a lot more than just turning wrenches or changing tires. If you’re going to take on an apprentice, your shop needs to be totally up to date with the latest automotive service tools, technology and equipment. As well, you need to invest in technical training courses not only for your certified technicians, but also for your apprentices.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Basically, you’ve got to think like Porsche, especially when it’s well known that in the Canadian automotive service industry, there are a lot of baby-boomer, aging technicians and there’s a lack of young people coming into the industry.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



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POWER. IT ALL STARTS WITH DELPHI.

Porsche training centre CONTINUED FROM P. 36

You've got to do what Porsche AG is doing — albeit on a smaller scale by necessity: create the best possible conditions “to prepare the next generation of young professionals for the rapidly rising challenges in the automotive industry.”

Having well-trained apprentices you can roll over to permanent staff once they become certified technicians, can be a major factor in

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

What it boils down to is this: providing a training ground in your shop that's as high-end and as sophisticated as your operating budget permits, is good for business, the industry and the economy.

“Professional training is a key factor for the competitiveness of the economy in Baden-Wurttemberg and the automotive

industry. With the new training centre, Porsche has invested in innovative, professional training and in the future of young people,” explains Nils Schmid, minister of financial and economic affairs for the German state.

Porsche believes in training as many



Service bays in Porsche AG's ultra-modern training centre in Stuttgart, Germany. *Porsche AG photo*

keeping your shop profitable and successful down the road.

And that's why Porsche AG, with its 14,000-square-metre training centre in the Zuffenhausen district of Stuttgart, is the example to follow. The training centre opened in the fall of 2015. The facility boasts everything from lifts and equipment needed to service the manufacturer's high-end sports cars as well as three learning and media rooms; a complete paint shop; and logistics training workshops. Porsche works with Baden-Wurttemberg Cooperative State University, training 102 students at the training centre yearly.

Taking apprentice training to the next level involves mindset

apprentices every year as they can. And the luxury sports-car maker promises all apprentices and students a guaranteed permanent job upon completion of their training.

It's all in your mindset. Shop owner Vangelis (Van) Angastiniotis (featured in this issue's *Shop SnapShot*, page 24), for example, has two apprentices in his Mississauga, Ont., facility. He believes having both older technicians and younger apprentices is a good thing. “They learn from each other,” he says. 🧠





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summer maintenance CONTINUED FROM P. 19

experience ‘permanent set.’ The blade element no longer moves freely to wipe the glass properly. Drivers end up with blade chatter and streaking.

The solution is blades that feature special coatings on the rubber element. TRI-CO NeoForm has DuPont Teflon coating to help maintain a flexible and smooth contact between the wiper and glass,” O’Dowd says, adding wipers should be changed seasonally and their condition can be deceptive.

“The smarter shop owner may actually throw some water on the windscreen and run the wipers to reveal possible streaking, chatter, etc.”



UNDER-HOOD MAINTENANCE

A good summer maintenance program goes under the hood, too. Making sure customers are getting the most from their oil and additives as the weather

gets hot is important. Viscosity is one of the critical words to pay attention to for making sure you’ve got summer maintenance covered.

“You need to remember that the oil lubricates and cools the engine so that it doesn’t overheat,” says Jeampy Keto, who’s with the Shell Lubricant Technical Help-Desk Canada, Resource Lab Shell Technology Center in Houston, Texas.

It may seem like a no-brainer. But remember, where viscosity is concerned, the availability of multi-grade motor oils means they’ve been modified to suit different temperatures. For example, 10W30 has winter cold-start capabilities, with the thickness necessary for that time of year.

Keto supplies a tip about synthetic oil and the additives used so your customers can get the right mileage between oil changes. “Synthetic oil is made with natural gas,” he says. “People think they can go between oil changes for 10,000 miles because there’s a detergent that cleans the engine as they drive as well.”

BEWARE OF RESIDUE

The problem here starts with residue that goes to the oil pan. Putting off an oil change for as much as 10,000 kilometres can actually cause recirculation of debris from the pan. So, regardless of the oil and additives your clients use, an oil change after the winter

Viscosity is one of the most critical words to pay attention to in summer maintenance

months is best.

Keto also suggests, slightly thicker oils are better for summer because the engine doesn’t need to work as hard to start. “In the summer you can use that kind of oil because everything is already hot,” he says.

Some customers could be bringing in their vintage autos after a long winter under cover or in a garage. Keto cautions against using synthetic oil in some of these older muscle cars.

“We advise people to use Rotella for those cars because it has a lot of zinc. Back in the day they used a metal that’s different than what’s being used right now. If you put synthetic oil in a 1957 Chevy, you’re going to mess the engine up.”

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

summer maintenance CONTINUED FROM P. 41

GREASES, ADDITIVES, TIRES AND BRAKES

He has another tip for summer maintenance: stay away from mixing greases of different thicknesses when you're working on items like wheel bearings. Keeping the viscosity the same prevents overheating. Keto suggests synthetic shop grease as one of the better options.

A note of caution about additives such as detergent and older vehicles. There are still a few older cars on the road that don't take synthetic oil with additives at all. Once again, the metal used in the engines is the reason.

Mike Lopers owns Tomlin Knight Auto Service in Oshawa, Ont. He says the old standbys like tires and brakes are some of the most important areas that go into a good summer maintenance checklist.

"Making sure they're going to get good traction in the heavy rain is important after a winter dealing with road salt," he says. He prefers Michelin tires for their overall performance.

There's lots of choice when it comes to brake pads that need to be carefully sorted through. The industry has started using a coating on the rotors that helps to keep rust down. Any summer maintenance involving brake replacement should include parts with this feature according to Lopers. It's a galvanized coating that helps protect the brakes during what's promising to be another warm season of heavy rains.

KEEPING IT COOL

Cooling systems need to be looked at before the warmer weather starts. Lopers shies away from what he calls "band-aid solu-



Brake service is one of the most important elements of a good summer maintenance checklist. *Photo by Dean Askin*

tions" when something needs to be fixed.

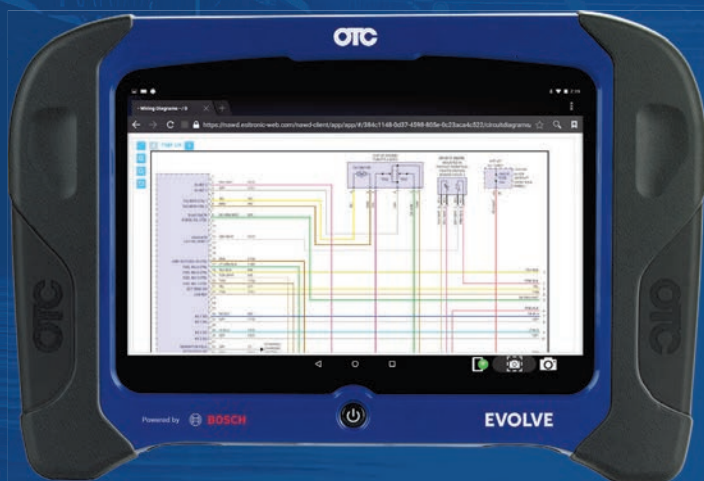
"I don't like using sealers," he says. He prefers replacing the entire part so the fix is permanent. Lopers points out, using the defrost option during the other, colder seasons can bring on different heat and expansion rates that can actually cause the air-conditioning system to lose some of its charge in the summer.

"The air conditioning still works when it's in defrost but you're looking for it to dry the air rather than cool it."

In the end, what goes on outside your shop affects what you need to be doing inside when it comes to summer maintenance. The weather's changing. Staying on top of what this does to your customers' cars means implementing a summer maintenance program that keeps clients safe through the hotter weather. 🌡️

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Troubleshooting starts with talking

We as technicians are all troubleshooters. So why do we all cringe when we're asked to troubleshoot a customer's concern?

The basis of all troubleshooting comes from one thing — communication. This is key to successfully repairing any vehicle problem.

But too often, this crucial step is missed. It leaves us as technicians lost, with no solid beginning point to do an effective repair.

Every repair job starts with a work order written by a service advisor. It's *their interpretation* of the customer's concern.

GET FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE

To be a good troubleshooter you need first-hand knowledge. You need to communicate with the customer yourself.

We've all had to try to diagnose a noise concern. That work order says, "rattle noise in rear over bumps." So you drive the vehicle and all you hear is the luggage, bottles, or whatever in the trunk. You shift everything and secure it in the trunk or back seat. And drive the vehicle again. No more noise.

But the customer picks up the vehicle and comes back 20 minutes later saying it's still the same — and he or she isn't happy. As well, your boss is visibly upset with you. You drive it again and cannot hear anything. What to do now?

Go for another test drive — this time, with the customer.

He takes the worst road in town; he's a two-foot driver who hits the brake with every bump. Now the customer says, "Do you hear that?"

Yes you do. No matter *what else* you hear, you have heard what the customer is concerned with. You have done 50% of an effective repair. Because you now know *how that customer drives and where*. It's much easier to start to troubleshooting that rattle.

I always road-test the vehicle with the customer. That's how I've made some of my most successful repairs. While it's not always possible, you can also call the customer yourself. Ask them to describe the noise: a boing, tap, wump, crack, squeak. Or to describe the exact place, time, temperature, moisture.



Communication is the best tool for diagnosis and repair

To be effective — to be good troubleshooters who minimize comebacks and frustration, we need knowledge. Not just from service information sites or manuals; from co-workers with sixty-plus years of experience turning wrenches; or from our own experiences.

We need it from communication with our customers — that's our best tool for an effective diagnosis and repair. 🧰

Scott Rhynold is a diagnostician and technician who specializes in electrical and fuel system work. He runs The Gas Tank Doctor, an independent automotive service business in Barrie, Ont. Contact Scott at gastdoc@live.ca.



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Key to profitability is selling the labour

Labour is the most profitable element of the services you offer. If your cost of a technician is \$35 per hour (including benefits) and your mechanical door rate is \$105 an hour, then every hour you sell nets you \$70.

A 2015 industry study — the 2015 *Canadian Benchmark Study (The View from Here)* by the Automotive Industries Association of Canada (AIA) showed that the top 33% of general mechanic shops sell, on average, 2.5 hours per repair order.

These are the results of the study of a best-

sold per work order.

1 Take your labour sales for a period — for example, one week equals \$13,260

2 Divide this by your hourly mechanical door rate (let's say that's \$120 an hour) and you get 110.5 hours sold

3 Now divide this by the number of vehicles you serviced in the week. Let's say that comes to 65. So, your average hours sold per work order is **1.7**. This means you've

AVERAGE LABOUR SOLD PER WORK ORDER (60 vehicles/week)	0.9 hrs	1.2 hrs	1.5 hrs	1.8 hrs	2.1 hrs	2.4 hrs
Labour revenue missed @ \$80/hr	\$7,680	\$6,240	\$4,800	\$3,360	\$1,920	\$480
Labour revenue missed @ \$100/hr	\$9,600	\$7,800	\$6,000	\$4,200	\$2,400	\$600
Labour revenue missed @ \$120/hr	\$11,520	\$9,360	\$7,200	\$5,040	\$2,880	\$720
Labour revenue missed @ \$140/hr	\$13,440	\$10,920	\$8,400	\$5,880	\$3,360	\$800

in-class group of 132 shops that serviced vehicles more than 250,000 times.


MISSING OUT ON LABOUR REVENUE

What do you, as a shop owner, miss in labour revenues if your team doesn't find — and sell — what services vehicles need based on 60 vehicles (remember, with an average of 2.5 hours per work order) in a week? A lot, as the table above shows.

With so much revenue at risk, it's pretty important to know what your average labour sale per work order is. Calculating it isn't difficult. Here's how you calculate your average hours

missed out on \$6,240 in needed labour sales for one week.

If you consistently do this over a whole year, you'll be missing **\$324,480** (\$6,240 x 52 weeks) in revenue your shop needs. That's a lot of revenue to not be bringing in. Can you afford that?

In my next column, I'll look at daily work order control and show you how many vehicles a technician should see in a day. 

John Watt worked 37 years in the petroleum industry including 18 overseeing Petro-Canada's award winning CERTIGARD automotive service franchises. Retired since 2011, he's now a consultant and speaker to the automotive aftermarket.

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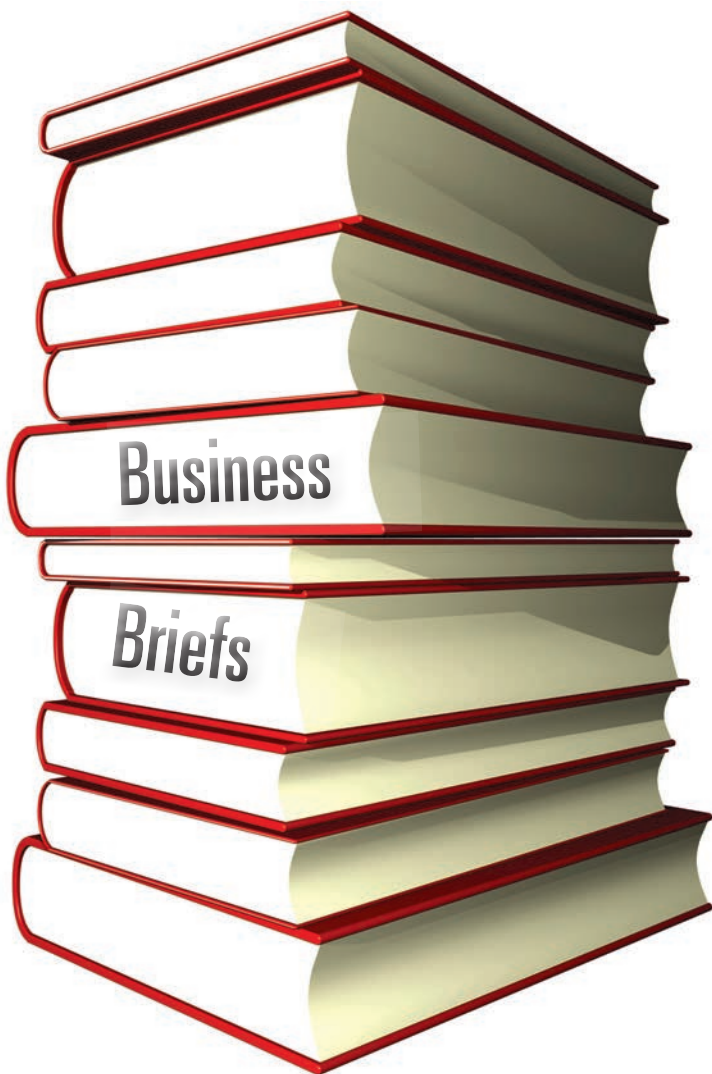
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Is your shop as environmentally friendly as it can be? A new report released this spring says most Canadian small-business owners have implemented practices such as expanding recycling, reducing electricity usage and using more “green” products in their businesses. Owners are motivated by their personal views on protecting the environment for future generations, the report says. Half of small-business owners say cost savings

from getting “greener” in their practices is also a factor in going greener.

—*Canadian Federation of Independent Business*



Automotive apprentices make an average of \$34,273 per year in Canada.

That's \$1,483 more than the Canadian

median wage of \$32,790. Apprentice salaries range from \$24,000 (entry level) to \$48,000 for the most experienced apprentices. The average salary for technician apprentices is \$38,025.

—*neuvoo.ca*



Almost 20 years after the last major revisions to Canada's environmental protection law were made, the Ca-

nadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) is going to be updated. A new parliamentary report released in June concluded that CEPA is outdated and needs strengthening. The report made 87 recommendations. They include a requirement for chemical producers to prove “chemicals of high concern” are safe before they're used in product manufacturing. Environmental and health groups are applauding the report and its recommendations.

—*Environmental Defence*



Albertans earn the highest average hourly wages in Canada. Last year,

six of Alberta's seven economic re-

gions were among the top 10 in Canada for the highest average hourly wage. The highest is \$36.50 per hour (Wood Buffalo-Cold Lake, Alta.). The lowest average hourly wages are in the Maritimes and Quebec. In the Maritimes, the lowest average hourly wage is \$19.40, in the Edmunston-Woodstock, N.B., economic region.

— *Statistics Canada*

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