

PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

# Do you own your community?

Focused branding and marketing efforts can boost profitability

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In the old days, cars just arrived at the shop and it didn't take much effort to keep the shop full. Today, if you are in the office waiting for cars to come to you, it may not be long before you look around your shop and discover you don't have any work.

You can no longer just expect vehicles to arrive at the shop. You have to devote time and effort to building your brand.

Today, the average consumer has a collision every seven to 10 years. With the increased availability of vehicle technology such as collision avoidance, stability control and lane departure warning systems, as well as changes in teen driving laws and other influences that change driving habits and reduce the number of miles driven, the frequency of a consumer being involved in a collision may continue to decrease in the future. As the interval between collisions increases, your shop's interaction with consumers becomes even more limited.

Always remember that no one wants to have their vehicle damaged, and few consumers know what to expect in the insurance claim and collision repair processes. However, when they are involved in a collision, they come to this experience the same way they come to any other experience — with expectations. These expectations may be that you will help guide them through the process, that you will fulfill your commitments to them, that you will properly repair their vehicle in a timely manner, and that you will create an overall positive experience.

For collision repair businesses, the challenge is to take the infrequent and unexpected negative experience of a collision and have the consumer immediately think of your shop as the place to go. If you want your shop to be perceived as the best shop in your area, you have to differentiate yourself from your competition and keep your name and brand in front of your customers and future prospects.

We see logos and slogans everyday that we easily relate to specific brands. Most of you can easily name a soda, fast food, smart phone or clothing brand either by their logo or a slogan. In most cases, we also think of these as quality products. For a collision repair business, we don't have the marketing budget to create the same level of familiarity, nor do you need national brand recognition. You do need to create a brand in your local community that your neighbors recognize and perceive as quality.

While important, your brand isn't limited to the sign on your building or what is on your business card. Your brand is everything that your business does, its appearance and your values.

The way your employees appear and conduct themselves is also a part of your overall brand: the uniforms they wear,

whether or not they look professional. Are they polite, courteous and helpful? A consumer will make a decision in seconds about whether they approve of the individual they are conducting business with. Brand and culture intertwine. You can't fake it. Your team must believe and display your brand at all times. It is very important that your employees live the brand and are not trying to be something they are not.

Today, collision repair business owners need to think like consumers. Very few use a phone book — today they use smart phones and tablets. It is critical to have a strong Internet presence that makes it easy for consumers to find you when using search engines such as Google. And when they find you, your site must display properly on the device they are using. In addition, look at how your business utilizes text messaging, email, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other media outlets.

Effective use of technology not only enables shops to meet consumer expectations, but can also increase the frequency that they see your brand and can deliver a personalized experience that exceeds your customer's expectations.

While it is not a short-term project and not always easy to measure the results, successful collision repair businesses take an active role in their communities. There are many different ways to create opportunities for keeping your brand in front of your neighbors and community. You can visit [www.ationlinetraining.com/abrn1308](http://www.ationlinetraining.com/abrn1308) to get a list of effective ways for a collision repair business to support their community. Your goal should be to have your brand own your local community! ☛

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