

Why Consistency Matters

Consistency in your business will bring you the support you did not realize was right in front of you all along. Whether it comes from that stubborn technician, the irritable insurance adjuster or the disappointed customer, you can build champions in your business just by being consistent.

What do I mean by being consistent? Ask yourself if the people around you know what to expect from you as you manage your business day to day. I talked about this in my September 2018 article, [“Implementing Non-Negotiables Can Help Set Standards For Your Shop”](#) where I discussed sending the same signal about your business to those around you.

I recently spoke with a dealership general manager about some concerns he was having with his collision center. His main concern was that insurance companies would not talk to him about their programs. He said he did not understand why; he had a well-equipped shop on a major highway and was repairing customers' cars insured by the people he was trying to talk with, but he was not gaining any traction in their negotiations. I explained to him that even though he had a great facility, the insurers' main concern is customer satisfaction and they need to make sure the shops they get involved with will provide their customers with quality care. Looking at the shop history I could see that over the last five years there were several manager changes. Relaying that to him as an issue was a bit difficult, but insurance companies look for consistency in every business they work with. Sadly, multiple manager changes in recent years does not illustrate consistency. While I realize management changes occur, the resulting inconsistency can hurt business and should be evaluated when considering a change.

You have heard me time and time again discuss the need to be consistent in your damage documentation. Inconsistency in damage documentation affects your technicians, customer satisfaction and insurance relationships. Realizing there is only one way to repair a vehicle should help build consistency but that is not always the case. Recently I was at a shop waiting to talk to the manager when I overheard a conversation between an insurance adjuster and his supervisor. The insurance adjuster was telling his supervisor that he generally doesn't have this problem with “Joe,” but he was on vacation, so “Mike” wrote this particular appraisal. My first thought was, why are Mike's appraisals different than Joes? It's the same shop, so shouldn't the damage appraisers be consistent with each other? When I met with the manager, I told him what I had heard while I was waiting. This also piqued his interest, so we looked at a couple of Joe's appraisals and compared them to how Mike was documenting damage.

What we found was that Mike was very thorough, documenting everything with good line notes and accounting for many associated products (seam sealers, corrosion protection products and adhesives) within the body of the appraisal in the required area of the repair. He also specified quantities and necessary labor to apply these products.

Joe, on the other hand, put everything at the bottom of the appraisal where it looked more like a wish list than required items and operations. We also noted that in most cases there was not any labor allowed and Joe was using low-ball generic pricing.

As we continued to discuss the damage appraisals, I explained how that affects technicians as well as his parts people. He replied, “You know, I get more complaints from the techs about the appraisals Joe writes than the ones Mike completes.” I shared that the techs are getting the information they need to complete the repair from Mike as well as the right associated items and they are getting paid to apply them. I also shared that on the appraisals they get from Joe, there are a lot of unanswered questions. For example, which “corrosion protection” are they supposed to use and where does it go? I’m sure most technicians know what to use but do you want to leave the decision up to them? Do you want them wandering around the shop looking for the right product? Consistency in damage documentation will bring harmony to the shop as well as improved performance.

Consistency in your business will also pay huge dividends in customer satisfaction. If you have better relationships with those connected to a repair, you will increase productivity which in turn means less downtime for your customer. When customers get their vehicle back quickly, it is proven that they are happier. Happy customers share their experiences in the form of referrals. Reducing downtime equates to more capacity for your business to handle those referrals, making consistency the centerpiece of a successful, profitable future for the long term.