

Case Study: Cutting Time and Saving Money by Embracing Mitchell's RepairCenter

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By Ed Attanasio

By integrating Mitchell RepairCenter™ into his two locations, Mike Garland, owner of Watsonville Auto Body, has been able to save 160 hours every month, the equivalent of four full-time employees. His shops are just as busy as ever, but now he's working smarter rather than harder thanks to Mitchell International, he explained.

"I am trying to find more duties for my parts manager and some of my estimators, because Mitchell RepairCenter™ is allowing me to cut my labor force while still fixing the same number of vehicles. Their software has made us lean and it's been great. People always talk about lean production with paint departments, but now we're doing it in every aspect of our business, thanks to RepairCenter™."

Mitchell RepairCenter™ offers a wide range of tools that allows body shops to take control of repairs, customer service, accounting, analytics, scheduling, job costing, labor management, production management and estimating, just to name a few. With two locations in Watsonville and Salinas, Calif., Garland values this leading-edge solution. And in just a short time, he can already see increased profitability while simplifying his day-to-day operations.

Garland, 38, knows the collision industry from top-to-bottom, as a former painter that worked for his father's shop for many years, he said. "I started at age 18 as a painter, and I still love to paint cars. If I'm having a bad day, for whatever reason, I tell my painter to get out of that booth and I jump in there. It provides some relief from my busy day and I can de-compress in there."

In 2003, Garland purchased his first body shop in Watsonville, California and then just three months ago he bought another in Salinas. Between the two locations, Garland is fixing more than 200 cars, but now with more time to pursue other DRPs and new business, his numbers are soaring every month, he said.

"We've gone from running around like a bunch of chickens to feeling like we're not working at all. Our profits are up 20% since we started using Mitchell RepairCenter™. We love the multi-shop feature, which allows me to see what's coming and going all the time at both of my shops. The system does everything automatically and makes us all more effective. From my parts guy, my techs, my estimators—we all love Mitchell RepairCenter™, because they make our lives easier."

Garland worked with another management system for many years, but it wasn't a good experience and he started looking to change. "They told me it would do a lot of things, but it really didn't do any of it well. I tried it for two years and eventually I lost control of my business. I couldn't track my jobs and had to enter all of the information manually. Things weren't matching in their estimating platform and sometimes it would take 10-12 point-and-clicks to achieve just one thing. It would take six hours to do payroll and you know how long it takes me to do it now with the Mitchell RepairCenter™? Fifteen minutes! My fiancée is our bookkeeper and she loves it!"

By switching over to Mitchell RepairCenter™ Premier, Garland's shops are using almost all of the company's add-ons, including FastPhoto Manager. By automatically sorting, sizing, organizing, loading and linking photos to repair orders and estimates, FastPhoto Manager is saving Watsonville Auto Body money and time by visually capturing more damage information to include in claims documentation, Garland explained.

According to Mitchell's highly informational website (www.mitchell.com) FastPhoto Manager is the only repair photo management system that uses barcode technology to automatically organize estimates and repair order photos. The easy-to-use digital camera links photo documentation to a specific R.O. within RepairCenter™ then stores the data on a secured server. Photos are transferred wirelessly and easily shared with customers and carriers.

"We pay our technicians flat rate, so it's their responsibility to take photos," Garland said. "In the past, it became a problem, because they forgot to do it and we were always asking, did you take them or not? Now, we're not wasting a ton of time hunting down photos. These cameras from Mitchell are an excellent investment. We have two in each shop for the techs to use; each of our estimators has one camera and we even have one in our paint department. Now, they all take their own photos and post them immediately, so there's no middle person and it gets done."

Garland is enamored with his new management system, but he also cites Mitchell's support and follow-through in making it a wonderful and beneficial experience for him and his 24 employees.

"They've come through in every way," Garland said. "From my sales guy John Martin to Steve Reading, our account service manager and especially, Temple Liebmann, Manager of Mitchell's Installation Team—they've been incredible. Temple was really helpful in getting this place under control overnight. She really knew what we needed and how to implement it quickly. All of the headaches we had before are now gone. Most salespeople will tell you whatever they think you want to hear to sell you something and I'm usually tough on sales people, because I've been burned in the past. But, the people at Mitchell have delivered everything they said, so we couldn't be more pleased with them and their products."

Sidebar:

Company At a Glance:

Watsonville Auto Body

312 East Market Street

Freedom, California 93901

831.724.1500

www.wabcc.com

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 24

In business since: 2003

DRP Programs: 11



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