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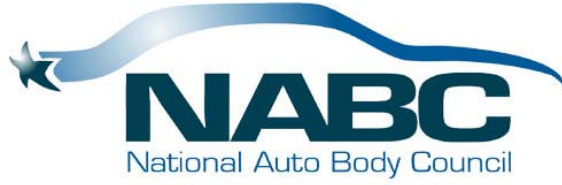
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## **HOW TO...**

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Developed By The National Auto Body Council (NABC)

# **SHARPEN YOUR SHOP'S IMAGE**



# **National Auto Body Council**

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P.O. Box 3007, Mechanicsville, VA 23116  
804-368-0242, Toll Free: 888-667-7433

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# **On Behalf Of NABC**

**Special Thanks Goes To The Following People And/Or Organizations For The Assistance:**

Jeanne Silver  
Butterfield Bodyworks CARSTAR  
1066 Campus Drive  
Mundelein, IL 60060  
847-367-1500, 847-367-1580 fax  
bbcarstar@aol.com

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## The NABC's Of Shop Image

*Everything you wanted to know about creating an amazing shop image, but were afraid to ask.*

**T**his guide was created for YOU, the automotive professional. Its specific purpose: education. An education that we felt wasn't currently available. We want to help you reach your shops full potential. And one important aspect of that is appearance. Because we all know that a great looking shop is more likely to be a successful shop. Your image not only sells your shop, but tells your customers who you are. Did you every wonder what customers look at when they enter your business, or what are the single most important factors in shop appearance? I know we at the National Auto Body Council (NABC) did. We also knew that your competitor did. As well as Bob and Jane down the street at Generic Bodyshop USA., and millions of other body shops around the country as well.

**For this reason,** we at the National Auto Body Council (NABC), wanted to help you join the growing ranks of businesses who are being welcomed into their new communities by hosting open houses. This booklet, the second in our series of HOW TO Guides, will provide you and your business with the direction necessary to ensure not only that your shop has a wonderful appearance, but how you can capitalize on it with your customers and community.

We at NABC feel it is important to not only expand NABC community outreach, but to welcome it with open arms. Strong and ethical businesses help create strong and ethical neighborhoods. We want our customers to not only see our businesses for what they are, but our behaviors as well. And through strong ethical business practices, we can help make that happen. We can make the industry better. We can help reach and strengthen our ever growing neighborhoods and communities, and show them a side of the collision industry more of them should see. A side we at NABC like to believe is our true side, our real side, our ethical side. A side dedicated to the values of fair play, honest hard work, and dependable repairs. A side that charges a fair price for a fair job and at the end of the day is an asset to their community.

Thus, we want to show you how to make your business shine. In the following sections, we will give you a brief overview of the nine major steps required when sharpening or improving your shop appearance. Good Luck...

## **Preparing Your Shop?**

One of the most overlooked items when hosting an open house is shop appearance. Poor appearance affects every aspect of your operation including customer service, customer satisfaction and bottom line profitability. Not only does a poor image ultimately affect these areas, but it is responsible for the success or failure of a modern collision repair business. Remember, image sets expectations.

### **Curb Appeal**

Curb appeal is becoming increasingly more important in the success of any business. If you cannot get them to the door, you cannot get the sale. In an increasingly competitive industry, the ones that take image seriously will be the only survivors. The next time you go to your business, approach it through the eyes of a customer. This is a valuable exercise that will help you identify problem areas and provide you an opportunity to correct them. We hope this guide will give you some insight as to why we take positive image so seriously. Customers today have very high expectations and are looking for a collision repair business whose image matches their expectations.

### **Exterior Appearance**

Parking Lot  
Landscaping  
Storage

The first impression a potential customer makes of your business occurs before they ever have a need to visit you. The importance of the exterior of a collision repair facility is too often overlooked. Your business may be located on a road with a significant daily traffic count. When a potential customer has a need for collision repair, chances are, when given a choice of collision repair facilities, they will choose the one that is most appealing to the eye.

It is important to know that up to 70% of your clients may be female. If parking is a problem, they probably will not stop in the first place. Parking should be available, convenient and well marked.

Garbage and wrecked vehicles should be stored out of sight. Landscaping is important if the business has a yard surrounding it. The building should have fresh paint or a well kept exterior. Lighting should be inspected regularly for burned out bulbs. And then, there is signage. How often does a client miss your business because your sign is too small, poorly located or poorly illuminated? More often than one would think, or is the problem that you never thought of it at all?

**Checklist:**

- √ Landscaping well kept, no windblown trash in shrubs or on lawn
- √ Dumpsters, garbage, scrap out of sight
- √ Fresh paint or well kept building exterior
- √ Doors, windows uncluttered of decals
- √ Gated fenced in storage
- √ Customer parking marked and located near the front door
- √ Parking lot pavement in good shape
- √ Designated smoking area hidden from the front door
- √ Signage visible from the road, well lit

## **Interior Appearance**

Customer Service Area

Rest Rooms

Building Tour

Walk in the front door, stop and look around, put yourself in the customer's place. The customer service area is probably the most important room in your business. First impressions are made here and establish expectations with respect to the quality and remainder of the repair experience. A cluttered, unkempt customer service area immediately gives the expectation of a similar type of repair. Parts should never be visible nor present in this room. The room should be clean and free of shop or paint odors. Magazines should be current and arranged neatly or placed in a wall rack. Employee training certificates should be displayed on a wall. Another wall may display awards, newspaper articles, community activities, testimonials or employee photographs. Interior signage is important, the more a customer sees your name, the more it will be remembered.

You may consider storing customer repair files in another room out of sight of the consumer. Comfortable furniture, plants and other wall decorations provide a warm feeling. If possible, a refreshment bar serving coffee and snacks is a nice addition. The room should be well lit and visible work areas neat and uncluttered. Toys and a

child's play area make a lasting impression on a mother with accompanying children.

Rest rooms are very important to insurers as well as customers. Make it a priority to have a designated "customer only" restroom that is clean, well lit and free of shop smells and dirt.

Every room in the administrative area of the building should be clean and uncluttered. In other words, throw away the junk. You never know when a customer may ask to take a tour of your business.

### **Checklist:**

- √ Glass doors, windows clean and uncluttered of decals
- √ Floors, carpets, rugs clean and vacuumed
- √ Magazines recent and arranged neatly
- √ No parts visible, room odor free
- √ Interior signage, visible and not overdone
- √ Wall displays training certificates
- √ Wall displays awards, news articles, community events, testimonials, photographs
- √ Wall displays artwork
- √ Comfortable furniture
- √ Plants, refreshment bar
- √ Children's play area with toys
- √ Clean, separate customer restroom(s)
- √ Desk and other rooms neat and clutter free

## **Staff Appearance**

Appearance

Attitude

Think of your staff as your ambassadors. Every employee is a member of your sales team. Any employee who comes into contact with a potential customer plays a part in closing the sale. This may be your detailer dropping keys off at the reception desk. This certainly is your customer service associate. Your estimator may be the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> person a customer sees. Who has made a positive impression on him before that meeting? The only way to ensure a positive answer to that question is to maintain a set of standards with respect to dress, language and attitude.

The first impression may be made on the telephone. Increasingly, we are seeing a consumer's frustration with auto answering. You may want to reconsider this as an option and have a person answer the phone. The greeting and tone of voice are so often remarked upon, it is amazing what an important first impression they make. A

courteous greeting and a smiling voice can attract a customer to your business. Script your greeting and train anyone who might answer the phone. It will surprise you how many of your employees do not know how to give simple directions to your business.

Positive attitude and tone of voice is critical. If an employee is rude on the telephone, the customer may feel intimidated. Would you risk losing a customer over a phone call? A customer service associate with a bad attitude will always pose a risk to be discourteous to a customer. You may have to replace this employee. If possible, place them in another position where their contact with customers is limited and establish a standard of courteous behavior for all members of your staff.

Personal appearance is important as well. All employees should be well groomed and wear clean clothing each day. If you have them, company logo shirts always provide a uniform and professional appearance. They also remind your customer of the name of your business. The more a customer sees that name, the more they are likely to remember it in the future, when reusing your services or recommending you to a friend. Shop employees should be dressed in clean uniforms as well. A logo tee shirt in the summer is acceptable and logo sweatshirts are nice for the winter. Shirts should be tucked in.

### **Checklist:**

- √ Train your employees to sell, every one of them
- √ Script dialogue to use with customers
- √ Telephone etiquette
- √ Telephone script and directions
- √ Logo shirts
- √ Uniform appearance
- √ Clean, neat clothing
- √ Shirts tucked in
- √ Personal hygiene

## **Overall Shop Appearance**

### **Cleanliness**

### **Quality**

The appearance of your shop gives a perception of the quality of your work. A dirty, cluttered shop may lead your customer to believe that their vehicle is being repaired in the same manner. Take a good look at your shop. Garbage cans should be emptied as they fill up. Floors should be swept each day. Shop materials should be organized in cabinets. Put daily supplies on carts. Teach your technicians not to leave materials on the floor. Not only is it

unsightly, it accounts for a loss of inventory and increases material costs overall.

Your employees should be dressed in clean uniforms, free of tears and stains with shirts tucked in. No “girlie” calendars or offensive pictures should be anywhere in the shop. No swearing or inappropriate language should be spoken and technicians should not shout to one another across the shop. Music should be kept at a low volume if permitted in the shop.

Look at the walls. Hoses and electric cords should be wound and hung. Damaged parts should be collected on a rack or holding area outside of the technician’s stall or disposed of altogether. Fire regulations require circuit breaker boxes and sprinkler controls to be free of parts and debris. These should be taped off and access kept clear.

Bright lighting is needed in the shop. It not only helps the technician perform better, it brightens their mood and gives the shop an energetic feel.

The paint department should be kept clean. A customer could argue for a dirty paint job if dirt is evident in the prep, booth or mixing areas.

### **Checklist:**

- √ Get rid of clutter
- √ Throw away old unneeded parts
- √ Store materials in cabinets
- √ Empty garbage cans
- √ Put daily materials on carts
- √ Keep dust and dirt at a minimum
- √ Clean stalls daily
- √ Wind up and hang hoses and cords
- √ Holding area for damaged/new parts
- √ Circuit breaker boxes and sprinkler control areas taped off and clear for access
- √ Bright lighting
- √ Paint area dust and dirt free

## **Administrative Office Appearance**

Paper work

Customer Satisfaction

Take a good look at your paperwork. It is so important to gather information and document a repair neatly from start to finish. Again, it gives the impression that you are using the same care in repairing vehicles. Proper and neatly organized paperwork is one of the ways you can show insurers that you are adhering to their administrative

guidelines. The less they need to look for supportive documentation, the better they are going to feel about their association with business professionals. Paperwork should be organized in a folder from the beginning of a repair to the end. A recap sheet should document original estimate amount, supplements, customer pay items and insurance covered items. Copies of invoices should be stapled together and kept behind this information and technician paperwork behind these. Finally, copies of any warranties should be behind the technician papers.

The front of the folder should be marked with the customer's name, year and make of the car and appropriate dates for documentation of cycle time. The insurance company's name should be on the folder with adjuster's name and phone number noted. The back of the folder should list notes about communications with the customer and adjuster. You may want to consider color coding folders to designate whether the repair is for a direct repair (green) or for field inspection (red). This gives your estimators a quick look at which vehicles must be re-inspected before continuing on with the repair.

Good customer service is going to make the difference between a mediocre business and a true professional. Document the things you promise and by all means, follow through. Take the initiative to offer something extra in the way of good customer service, such as offering a ride or making a rental reservation. Offer use of a phone, a comfortable chair, coffee or a soft drink. Always ask if the customer is uninjured after an accident and show that you care. Take the time to explain the estimate to your customer at the vehicle so they can see what will be repaired. Never treat anyone as if they are ignorant. Read your customers' moods and try to reassure them that the worst part of their ordeal is over.

### **Checklist:**

- √ Use folders for repair orders
- √ Organize paperwork neatly and in the same order for every repair order
- √ Clearly mark folders on the outside with important information
- √ Color code folders
- √ Follow up on promises made to customers
- √ Offer to help out with the claims process
- √ Offer an extra service to make their visit more comfortable
- √ Care about your customer's well being
- √ Explain repairs visually
- √ Never treat anyone as if they are ignorant
- √ Be part of the solution and do not add worry to their ordeal
- √ Be proactive and prevent a problem before it occurs

**How Well Do We Look?**

**Did We Accomplish Our Goal?**

**Suggested Future Changes?**

# Appendix

## National Auto Body Council

National Auto Body Council

P.O. Box 3007

Mechanicsville, VA 23116

Phone: 888-667-7433

Fax: 804-368-0242

Email: [info@autobodycouncil.org](mailto:info@autobodycouncil.org)

Website: <http://www.autobodycouncil.org>

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