

New Technologies and New Best Practices

CONTACT-FREE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

CHANGE IS NEVER EASY

The impact of the recent pandemic forced many collision repair facilities to adapt to an unfamiliar touch-free work environment quickly. More importantly, in order to ensure success, these collision repair facilities had to successfully implement new systems and learn new technologies. The outcome is that repair facilities have also developed some best practices that are proving that there is, indeed, a silver lining to challenges created by COVID-19. Here we discuss a few new best practices that successful repair facilities have implemented.

FIVE ESSENTIAL TOOLS

No matter the size of the shop, there are five essential tools that together create a seamless, touchless collision repair experience:



1. Cloud-based Phone System—Cloud-based phone systems allow shop owners and employees to work virtually while still providing responsive customer service. Some systems may include an Artificial Intelligence (AI) feature that answers calls automatically and guides the customer through the estimate and appointment process. These systems can greatly reduce administrative bottlenecks, especially if staff headcount has been reduced.



2. Online Appointment Scheduling—An online appointment scheduling system is essential to the touchless experience. Online appointment scheduling apps not only streamline the scheduling task, but also help to enhance shop workflow by automatically staggering appointments. Customers can select a time that is set aside exclusively for them, rather than arriving at the same time as other customers. This is especially critical during a time when social distancing is important to reducing viral spread.



3. Emailing System—An emailing system enables you and some of your staff to work onsite or offsite and supports quick and efficient customer communications. Some packages provide templates and scripts you can use to minimize response time.





4. Photo Estimates—Enabling photo estimates is critical to the touch-free transaction. Your process can be as simple as asking the customer to email or text pictures of the vehicle damage, or it can be as slick as using a photo estimating app or web submission portal.

No matter which platform is used, there are pitfalls to photo estimates that you can minimize. Remember: a bad photo can result in a bad estimate! Customers often submit close-up photos that miss hidden damage, which can lead to underestimating the amount of repair work required. It is important to coach the customer on how to properly photograph and document vehicle damage or utilize an application that will guide them through the process. Additionally, tell your customer that in order to provide an accurate estimate, the vehicle must be disassembled in the shop to assess the damage.

Once you've received a photo of the vehicle damage, and you have emailed the customer an estimate, be sure to take the time to explain your findings and the estimate for parts and labor. Also, offer to work with their insurance company to explain your findings.

[CLICK HERE](#) to find more information regarding photo-based estimates.



5. Paperless Transaction—A paperless transaction for customer electronic signature and payment eliminates the need to physically handle documents, checks, cash and credit cards. This enables a truly touchless transaction and can also help to streamline accounting processes.

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

According to Mike Anderson of Collision Advice, "The change to the industry was quick and necessary for survival. Repair facilities have learned a lot from this transition. And, those shops that take these lessons to heart are going to be better poised for the future."

Today's customers have what Anderson refers to as "liquid expectations." Rather than compare their collision repair experiences to other automotive facilities, they compare the experience to their most recent touchless transactions, such as ordering an Uber, shopping on Amazon or making a restaurant reservation on Open Table. Shops that modernize the customer experience earn the benefits of enhanced customer satisfaction, plus improved, sustainable shop best practices including:

- Proactive follow-up on customer estimates
- Increased use of electronic parts catalogs
- And more thorough damage analysis to help ensure accurate parts ordering and to minimize delays through more efficient online scheduling processes

PREPARING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Your Toyota dealer is committed to supporting you as you adapt to a new repair world. An important part of that commitment is providing systems and support that enhance your business success and your customers' satisfaction. When you do business with a participating Toyota dealer, you can benefit from premier services such as the OPS Technology Suite™ and Toyota Mechanical Parts Program (TMPP) powered by RepairLink®. Both of these proven systems provide powerful tools that can help you excel today and prepare for the future. 📄