

PROFIT MOTIVE: YOUR COMPASS TO FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Following cues from fast food

Implement the systems used in restaurant chains to ensure consistency

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If you go to your favorite fast food restaurant in Los Angeles, Chicago, or any other city, the store appearance and food is pretty consistent. Well, operating a successful collision repair facility today is very similar to flipping burgers, dunking French fries and making milkshakes.

It's not hamburgers. It's systems. Fast food restaurants have developed phenomenal systems that result in a consistent, reliable and efficient product.

Unsuccessful fast food restaurants — whether unsuccessful from the customer's point of view (poor quality, slow service, dirty restaurant); the employees' point of view (drama, bickering, lack of teamwork); or the owner-operator's point of view (unprofitable) — can become successful by implementing and following the established systems and procedures.

Just like a fast food restaurant, to be successful in today's collision repair industry, you must focus on your processes, both in the front office and in the shop. Your goal should be to attract and retain quality employees, provide a quality and consistent repair and deliver outstanding customer service (to both the vehicle owner and the insurance company).

Staff engagement

As a business owner, your expectations of how you want things done are your best practices. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) ensure that your expectations are consistently met or exceeded; managers must be willing to do what it takes to fol-

low procedures and implement policies to ensure that employees heed the systems. The key to SOPs is to develop them with the involvement of your staff.

SOP benefits

There are many benefits to implementing SOPs. For example, they can:

1. Create a positive customer experience.
2. Develop a culture in your business around customer satisfaction, quality, efficiency and continuous improvement.
3. Provide consistency in the entire repair process.
4. Establish clear expectations and accountability at all levels of your organization.
5. Serve as a tool for performing internal audits. You want to be able to quickly walk through the office and shop and see if a process is not being followed properly.

Where to start

The number of processes used during a collision repair can make developing SOPs seem overwhelming. To get started:

1. Determine the goal you want to achieve.
2. Choose a "Project Champion" who will be directly impacted by the SOP.

3. Identify and document the steps in the process.
4. Reference supporting documents, when applicable.
5. Consider developing a current state and future state process map (flow chart showing each step in the process). Keep this simple.
6. Because different people have different learning styles, once you have written the procedure, consider enhancing it with photos, videos or audio clips.
7. Determine how you are going to measure and audit the process.
8. Have some objective way of measuring the success of the SOP.
9. Determine how you will implement it. You will need to explain not just what the SOP is, but why it's important to use and follow the SOP.
10. Communicate and celebrate the results to your staff during your staff meetings. If you show improvements for the customer, business and staff, your team will support the efforts you make.

Get started

The most important key to success with SOPs is just getting started. Set a goal for completion such as completing one per month or three per quarter. Chances are that a year from now, both your front office and your shop will run more smoothly and efficiently in the areas in which you have SOPs.

We have performed a lot of research in this area, so please keep up with our discoveries! We have created a great tool to help you get started developing the SOPs you need to have in the office and the shop! Try it free for a limited time by going to www.ationlinetraining.com/abrn1406.

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