

Friday, 14 July 2017 20:23

## The Best Body Shops' Tips: 5 Ways Jobbers are Adding Value to Body Shops

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**More than 20 years ago, auto body shops routinely ordered individual paint colors from a paint distributor to repair vehicles.**



Kevin Bohte (far right), sales manager for Mike & Jerry's Paint & Supply, during a nitrogen plastic welding demo for clients led by Leon Roberts, sales representative for Polyvance.

"You'd order it by the job," explained industry veteran **Joe Mattos**. "That's where the origin of the word 'jobber' comes from."

Over time and as the process evolved, jobbers placed paint mixing systems in shops where techs could mix their own colors. Today, “jobbers,” often referred to as PBE (paint, body and equipment) distributors, are taking on new roles in the collision repair industry.

“One of the key benefits of using a jobber is to have a partner to lean on who is up-to-date on industry trends and provides value-added services to help shops thrive in the competitive market,” said **Kevin Bohte**, sales manager at *Mike & Jerry’s Paint and Supply*. “With consolidation at an all-time high, it’s important for collision shops to really think about choosing a jobber who will be able to grow with them in an ever-changing industry.”

The Louisiana company is a member of Refinish Distributors Alliance (RDA), a national organization of PBE distributors.

Mattos, manager of management analytics for ComCept (a provider of distribution management software), said the PBE industry is separated into generalists, such as O’Reilly’s and NAPA, that also sell hard parts; specialists, such as FinishMaster, National Coatings & Supplies (NCS)/Single Source (which merged in 2016); and other distributors that sell only automotive paint and body shop supplies.

He said most jobbers specialize in one or two of the five major automotive refinish paint manufacturers that dominate the U.S. market: Axalta Coating Systems, AkzoNobel, BASF, PPG Industries and Sherwin-Williams.

“Since approximately 65 percent of a collision shop’s paint and material purchases are paint liquids, jobbers focus on selling and supporting specific paint lines and can usually gain the shop’s remaining business if the shop purchases paint,” said Mattos, who sold his PBE business—Pro Finishes PLUS—to NCS in 2013. “Abrasives, adhesives, masking and safety items make up most of the remaining 35 percent of purchases.”

Over the last several years, paint companies have been providing additional services, often becoming a one-stop shop for collision repair facilities.

“This has become especially prevalent over the last five years as the competition has increased significantly,” said Mattos. “A good jobber provides valuable services to its customers and can have a profound influence on a shop’s profitability.”

According to information from The Romans Group, compiled in a report by Focus Investment Banking automotive group in May 2017, jobbers are providing more value-added services to shops, including the use of technology and software, order process automation and performance metrics.

There are many important considerations when choosing a jobber to ensure it is the best fit for the body shop. Not only is it helpful to ask for referrals from other shops and interview the jobber, but Mattos also suggests checking with the paint manufacturer for recommendations.

**Paul Derdich**, western regional vice president of NCS/Single Source, said most shops choose jobbers based on relationships.

"If I were a body shop owner, I would see what the company had to offer as far as business consulting and monitoring my purchases," he said.

Once a paint distributor is determined, a shop can usually expect a long-term partnership with a jobber.

"The distributor's sales personnel then become a valuable resource for the collision shop, providing everything from equipment and accessory purchase guidance to training for the shop technicians," said **Paul Fiore**, senior director of government affairs for the Auto Care Association, as well as former shop owner and liaison to the Paint, Body and Equipment Specialists community of the Auto Care Association. "While their most basic function is to provide the actual vehicle paint used in a collision repair to the shop, that simple transaction has become much more sophisticated, reflecting the evolution of vehicle construction and paint technology. The vast majority of body shops utilize distributors to enhance their ability to run an efficient, profitable business."

"I would encourage all collision shops to seek out distributors in the marketplace who will serve them," said **Robert McKenzie**, executive director of RDA. "Seek people out who are going to be more apt to have personal, direct service in the marketplace for you."

## Value-Added Services Provided by Paint Distributors:

### Inventory Management and Delivery

Mattos said many jobbers will analyze a shop's inventory and create a stocking strategy to minimize the shop's investment in product.

For example, Derdich said NCS/Single Source offers a system that allows shops to track their inventory using bar codes.

"Not only can we track paint purchases, but we can assess how many pieces of sandpaper a body man uses," he said. "We can also do an analysis of estimates so if a shop feels like they are not profitable, we can find out what's missing."

In terms of delivery, Mattos said, “Jobbers can also make special deliveries in emergency situations so that shop production does not suffer.”

## Training/Education

Training shop personnel is an important role of many paint distributors. This might include paint systems such as waterborne systems, color matching and troubleshooting. Whether classes are held at the shop or locally off-site, jobbers often hold classes for shops to ensure techs are knowledgeable about the products they use and can best utilize them for repairs.

## Providing Information/Metrics

Jobbers can be the top source of information for the shops with which they work. They commonly collect basic data from their customers and combine it with sales data to provide materials cost analyses to shops.

“This can help a shop determine areas of improvement,” explained Mattos. Additional information, such as paint and material (P&M) profitability, refinish hours per RO benchmarks, re-repair information and actual P&M sales/hour calculations are also commonly shared.

“Monitoring of costs and how it relates to a facility’s business is something else we do as a supplier,” said Derdich. “That’s a huge value for a customer.”

## Business Consulting

Increasingly, more jobbers are taking on the role of small business consultants for some of their shops. However, in the majority of cases, Derdich said smaller distributors will often rely more on a paint company to help them with small business consulting.

Many shops are discovering several benefits of having a team of knowledgeable professionals who truly understand the business and can advise them on business decisions.

## Personal Service

It’s not uncommon for distributors to visit collision repair facilities on a regular basis, usually weekly, and provide relevant industry information.

“In our business, we like to get to know our customers on a personal level and also take the extra step to learn as much about their business so we can better service them,” said Bohte. “We believe our relationship should extend beyond our products to value-added and other services designed to help a collision center operate to its fullest potential.”

“Jobbers are rethinking their business model to deal with industry dynamics,” said Mattos. “However, the basic functions of a jobber continue to be an important link to the collision repair industry.”