

Fountain Valley Body Works: Staying Ahead of the Curve

By Tricia D. Teague

Technology is changing the way the world works, reshaping everyone's lives and the way businesses operate. Business owners who keep their eyes and ears open are looking years ahead for pending changes. They're not only prepared for when the rules of the game change, they're also getting a leg up on their competition.

Fountain Valley Body Works is one of those companies. The business, opened in 1975 by Dave March, in Fountain Valley, California, isn't an average collision repair shop. Instead, it operates from two above average locations. "We have very large-scale facilities—our aim is to keep all repair processes under one roof so we can watch quality every step of the way," explained Michael March, son of the founder and one of its general managers. "A 10,000 square foot shop is probably about average for a body shop. Our main facility is between 50- and 60,000 square feet and has a parking structure attached. The other location is about 20,000 [square feet]."

In addition to being larger than most body shops, Fountain Valley works to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to innovation and technology in the auto repair industry. "You can't be doing the same repairs that you were doing 25 years ago. Cars have changed," said March. "You see it with every industry. There are new things that come into play. If you do things the



same way you always did, well you're always going to be the same shop that you always were. And everything around you is going to advance and change around you. One day you're going to wake up, to find that the game is different than it was before. And you're going to realize that you're at a disadvantage."

March said Fountain Valley Body Works is preparing for regulatory changes in the industry now, like the push to have cars at 50 miles per gallon by 2025. The biggest concern he has is keeping pace with the technology that's on the horizon. "There's been a ton of talk—the whole industry is talking about some of these new cars that we're going to see," March said.

One way March's business is preparing for the upcoming changes is by making an investment in newer tools and equipment for repairs. "We used to

use a tool on every make and model of car—now if we use that same tool on a newer version of the make and model, it completely ruins the car, as it shouldn't be repaired in that manner," said March. "I have a welder that's a \$40,000 piece of equipment, and I don't know of very many shops that can buy that specific welder that you have to have for repairing pretty much all the cars now."



Another way Fountain Valley is staying ahead of change in the industry is through the use of PartsTrader. The shop has implemented PartsTrader at its Fountain Valley Body Works Express location, which repairs approximately 200 cars monthly. March stated, "I've always said, 'You've got to keep your eyes open.' I wasn't totally on board in the beginning, but I took a look at it with an open mind. The way it actually moved forward did make some sense."

March said PartsTrader is working well at Fountain Valley's express location. "The way that I order parts now, I do it all through PartsTrader. Adapting to PartsTrader has made us run our business in a different way, and it is opening some doors that I don't think were ever opened before," March said. Referring to process change, "Instead of having my parts guy order the parts, now the estimator does it. At the click of a button the parts are ordered. If he wants

to look at alternative parts, he clicks a button and he has to wait a little bit—half an hour—for the quoting process. But it's nice because there's a track record for the supplier. It's all right there."

Because March always has his eyes and ears open, he foresees major changes coming in the industry. March said he's already seen it coming to fruition with OEMs that want the replaced part exchanged. "They'll sell a new part, like a bumper. And then they want the original bumper that you're removing from the car—so you get a brand new bumper in a box, pull the new bumper out, you take the old bumper put it in the box, and return it. If you don't send the part back, they charge you \$120."

March believes the competition in the parts arena is bound to become even stiffer as manufacturers start to use newer technology in cars. "There's major pressure to get parts cheaper. But because of the pressure of having to make stronger and lighter (cars), the parts aren't going to get cheaper. They're going to get more expensive. In the next five years it's going to be interesting to see how these factors come into play and how manufacturers will manage to keep making their profits. They have to, in order to stay in business. And insurance companies want to keep their policies affordable for consumers. So there's a little bit of concern of what's going to be best for the consumer."

This article courtesy of PartsTrader - www.partstrader.us.com
© PartsTrader LLC All rights reserved.