

FenderTrender

David Schultz and his business partner take management software into their own hands.

SIX YEARS AGO, TEMPE, ARIZONA'S Elite Auto Repair moved from a small rented location to a new 33,000 square-foot facility. Keeping track of all the jobs moving through the shop overwhelmed the manual processes the shop had used earlier.

"Once we moved into the larger facility, we realized that we needed a management system to track the larger volume we were doing at that point," says Elite's David Schultz.

Not satisfied with the management systems on the market, Schultz and his partner Brent VanderPol decided to build their own. "Most of the programs didn't fit what we were looking for," Schultz explains. "We

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wanted a strong production module and a tool that the user could interact with to help him organize not only his day, but everybody's in the shop. There wasn't anything on the market that would let us do that."

A BETTER MOUSETRAP

Walk into most body shop operations and it's likely you will find a white board filled with job numbers, due dates and other pertinent information. Schultz and VanderPol took this familiar tool and then set out to automate it.

They first itemized the processes they wanted included in the system, and then hired a software development team to bring the vision to life. Called the Crash Management System, the program helps Elite's body shop managers track every step of the repair process. "The Action List tool takes the place of the traditional morning meeting," Schultz explains. "Using a simple utility, you click on what you want to accomplish with every job, and it creates to-do lists for the service writer, manager, body technicians, painters and even the delivery guys."

Other system modules include parts ordering, Web site integration, accounting and marketing.

SPREADING THE WORD

Satisfied with the performance of the system, Schultz believed that other shops might be interested in the

program as well.

Schultz has promoted Crash at NACE and sends out brochures and video demonstrations to interested shop owners. The Crash system is offered for a monthly subscription fee. Subscriptions include training and unlimited support. During the nearly two years it's been on the market, customers have provided positive feedback about Crash.

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Attention to the smallest detail is part of the program. The "Clip, Fastener and Material Cost Recovery" part of the system, for example, displays small parts, materials and other inventory items that have been scanned in by the technician or parts manager. Touch screen and bar code scanner technology makes inventory control easy to manage.

Managing a new and fast-growing software company takes time and attention, but Schultz doesn't neglect the collision repair business. The fact that he manages the day-to-day shop operations gives Crash customers a sense of comfort. "I get a pretty positive response from people," he points out, "because they know we are on their side." ⚙️



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Lou Dzierzak is a full-time freelance writer and automotive enthusiast.

He co-authored the book, "Mustang, Four Decades of Muscle Car Power."