

TORONTO NORTH EDITION

Profiles of **SUCCESS** *in Business*

A man with short, graying hair, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, stands smiling in front of a building. The building has large windows and a sign that is partially visible, reading "BAYVIEW & ST..." in a stylized font. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the man.

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A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO AUTO COLLISION REPAIR

By Heather Navarra, The Write Type



Making a difference: The latest technology, the right equipment and strong team effort are key components to success in the collision repair industry.

Early in 1979, Manuel Der Haroutiounian had an idea for developing a new business to provide automobile collision repair. His vision involved an approach that was different from other businesses operating then, and focused on providing a much higher standard of quality in repairs. Manuel felt that a business that was operated honestly and provided true excellence would be successful in capturing market share, because most consumers value these qualities in any business they deal with. Bayview & Steeles Auto Collision Ltd. was established that year and, over its 28 years in business, has developed into a market leader.

With customers coming from a wide geographical area that includes downtown Toronto and as far away as Aurora and Maple, this bold and experienced innovator has been successful in his goals. Striving to be the best on every level has brought industry recognition and an increasing number of customers. Indeed, 75 percent of business now comes from repeat and referred customers, a strong indicator that Bayview & Steeles Auto Collision provides quality workmanship.

It's clear that Manuel's mindset has been a key factor in the success of this company. He is open-minded and ready to evaluate new options and embrace innovative techniques that can improve the workplace for his employees and the results they achieve. He is constantly implementing new technical advancements to ensure Bayview & Steeles Auto Collision continues as a leader in the industry. A Member of

the Collision Solutions Network (CSN) and the North American-wide Coyote Vision Group, Manuel's participation in these organizations helps increase buying power, improve efficiency and advance the industry as a whole, finding solutions for problems faced by industry participants.

"New vehicles are a changing breed," shares Manuel. "As new technology is added, they become more complicated to fix. Our company is proactive about staying informed, understanding those changes, and improving our processes. This approach ensures the company will continue to be ahead in the industry."

Manuel has recently led the industry by converting to a new environmentally-friendly waterborne paint now being used in the shop. Recognizing the value both to his employees and to the environment, he was the first in the GTA and York Region to switch. "Today's modern factory finishes incorporate multiple layers of highly specialized paints," says Manuel. "We have made a major investment in the finest paint system available and we constantly upgrade technology and equipment. We take special pride in our ability to match factory finishes as the final step in the restoration process. The quality of the finished product is exactly the same as with chemical-based paints, and longevity tests since its development in 1992 have indicated no issues," shares Manuel. The company's focus will continue to be on moving towards other green products.

Customers value this company's innovation along with the genuine care and support provided. "We want each customer's visit to be a positive experience

and will work diligently towards that goal," says Manuel. "When customers come into our office, they are often frustrated, unhappy and sometimes in pain or in shock after an accident. The aspect I enjoy most is helping the customer and seeing the transition from frustrated victims to satisfied and happy customers." Manuel says there is nothing that can't be fixed. At



Manuel with his wife Vickie: From the beginning, Bayview & Steeles Auto Collision has been a family-run operation and continues to be to this day.

pickup, the bill is reviewed and the client drives away in a car that has been restored to its pre-accident condition – or better!

Bayview & Steeles Auto Collision has a professionally designed website that walks customers through the entire repair process, including a review of each step: estimating, insurance appraisals, disassembly, ordering parts, structural repair, body repair, painting, reassembly and detailing. Care is given to keeping the

client fully informed at all times, as often there is hidden damage that cannot be seen until after the vehicle is disassembled. The company generally orders parts at the time that the estimate is provided, scheduling drop-off a couple of days later to reduce the amount of time customers are without their vehicle. Where the vehicle is unsafe to drive, they help arrange for a rental vehicle.

Information about dealing with insurance companies is also shared, helping clients by explaining about deductibles and at-fault situations. "A car is a total loss only when the price of repairs exceeds the insurance company's determined value of the vehicle," says Manuel. "Nowadays, most cars are built using unibody (frame and body as one) construction. Our highly skilled technicians, with the aid of our state-of-the-art computer measuring system, can return vehicles to their original factory specifications. If it is determined that the frame section is bent beyond repair, that section can simply be replaced."

The company has built a strong reputation with insurance companies in the community that value a relationship with a reliable body shop where clients receive service without experiencing complaints and problems. They choose Bayview & Steeles Auto Collision because of

their focus on training to keep abreast of the industry, as well as improvements to services. "I want the insurance companies to understand that we care about their clients; we care about them spending their insurance dollars on behalf of their clients, and we are cautious on their behalf. We are continually working to shrink costs so that we can turn that over as a savings to insurance agencies."

The business has grown from a two-

man operation in a 4,000-square-foot facility in 1979 to their current location providing 16,000 square feet of space at 7 Guardsman Road in Thornhill, a clean and healthy environment for employees that helps promote excellent productivity. With 13 employees, the company is able to provide collision repair on all makes and models, specializing in Toyota and BMW vehicles.

A comprehensive marketing campaign connects with the community. Bus advertisements, local hockey team sponsorship, ads at community centres, radio spots that also reach out to other nationalities and cultures all supplement valuable word-of-mouth and insurance referrals. The company also supports community cultural activities and events.

Dedicated employees are a key factor in the success of this business, with a willingness to improve their skills and a true commitment to quality. Employees participate in the 'I Car Gold' industry training certificate program. "Gold' is the highest level for a shop," says Manuel, "indicating that all employees are trained and the shop can fix any type of vehicle." The company also enjoys positive relationships with suppliers.

Customer satisfaction is measured monthly through an outside firm that completes about 40 surveys. Results show that 97.7 percent of customers are satisfied. With the average across North America about 92 percent, this is a valuable barometer of success that results from loyalty to customers, teamwork, ongoing training, quality workmanship, state-of-

the-art equipment and facilities, and the company's commitment to excellence. The company won the 'VP Marketing CSI Complete' recognition award designating excellent customer service, provided for consistently exceeding industry averages.

Another demonstration of commitment to customers is through the company's lifetime guarantee. "I stand behind the quality of the work," says Manuel. "I assure clients that we care about their vehicle. If there is a problem, we correct it. We work until the client is satisfied." The company provides shuttle services within the area and, when a vehicle leaves, it is cleaned inside and out at no charge to the customer. Other servicing can also be incorporated with repairs.

With expanding sales goals each year, Manuel is personally committed to ongoing improvement, staying one step ahead of the competition, and always continuing to serve the community with the highest quality. Future goals also include converting to handle aluminium repairs, a totally different procedure that is complicated, requires a high level of training, and involves a different environment for repair.

"Accidents are never a pleasant experience, but the repair process can be," says Manuel. With their team of collision experts, customers are headed for a brighter road – one that leads to customer satisfaction through providing quality repairs with industry-competitive pricing and maintaining excellent customer relations.



Manuel with Matt Kunkel from BASF Canada: Working together for a greener future with a new waterborne 90-line paint solution that reduces harmful emissions.

Manuel Der Haroutiounian

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