



Family-Owned Collision Repair Shop Realizes Substantial Gains in Productivity and Estimating Accuracy with Audatex

Fridley Auto Body

Fridley Auto Body has been a fixture in the same location in Fridley, Minn. for more than 42 years. Backed by top-notch technicians who produce outstanding work, the shop relies upon the Audatex AudaStation™, an advanced “plug-and-play” estimating system, to speed cycles, reduce costs and enhance customer service.

Industry

Collision Repair Facilities

Products

AudaStation, Audatex Estimating™
Audatex Shoplink®



Fridley Auto Body

Challenge

Like most collision repair centers today, producing quality results is essential to business growth at Fridley Auto Body. At the same time, the ability to get repaired vehicles back on the road as quickly as possible is of utmost importance to customers. According to shop owner Yolanda Newman, achieving both of these goals while still keeping costs down is the biggest challenge of the collision repair business.

When she bought Fridley Auto Body from the previous owners in early 2009, Newman faced this challenge head-on. For years, the shop had been relying on the voluminous manuals as reference tools for creating estimates. While these well-worn books have served the collision repair industry adequately for decades, they represent the antithesis of the 21st century auto body shop for today's new generation of owners like Newman. "Using those books would be like going back to the typewriter. Instead, shops need to automate their businesses—to move forward in ways that will speed cycles like never before," she says.

That opportunity was first presented to Fridley Auto Body when two key partners, State Farm Insurance and American Family Insurance, transitioned their direct repair programs (DRPs) to Audatex. Participation in these DRPs resulted in a fair amount of business for Fridley.

"Friendly Fridley." It's a nickname that has been associated with the Twin Cities suburb of Fridley, Minn. for decades. Borne out of a radio jingle produced by a local car dealership, the catchy moniker still rings true today, particularly at Fridley Auto Body, where owner Yolanda Newman treats clients like family. Despite the longevity of her business—Fridley Auto Body has been a fixture in the same location for more than 42 years—Newman is not content to be complacent. "In the end, our friendly and helpful nature is not what keeps customers coming back to us," Newman states. "It's our top-notch technicians who produce unbelievable work, and our focus on returning everything, from the frame on up, to good-as-new condition."

They started out with the Audatex Shoplink system. Then, when Newman took over the business, she went for the gold, selecting the Audatex AudaStation, a "plug-and-play" estimating system that represents the automotive industry's first software and hardware alternative for writing and processing estimates. AudaStation features a dedicated "estimatics" server that runs only Audatex Estimating software and complementary Audatex products. This innovative design ensures reliable and consistent operation, allowing shops to avoid the hassles of network server outages and other issues that can compromise productivity. For small businesses such as Fridley, the AudaStation approach translates into a powerful selling point: even a few

minutes of computer down time can impact an entire day's worth of work.

Installation of the AudaStation at Fridley—conducted without the aid of an Audatex technician—was a breeze. Two standard connections (network and power) are all that's needed to get the system up and running. It was a process that took Newman and her team only minutes. Since then, the staff has participated in Audatex online training, and they have sought on occasion the advice of the Audatex technical support team, which Newman says is quite responsive by phone.

Audatex Solution

The choice of an advanced “all-in-one” software-hardware system such as the AudaStation is not surprising, given the sophisticated computing environment that Fridley has built from the ground up. The shop not only maintains a Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telecommunications system, but also makes use of remote management capabilities to facilitate access to important data from outside the office. In addition to Audatex, Newman relies heavily on QuickBooks financial software and Summit Software Solutions’ shop management software. She has set up the AudaStation so that data flows outward—first to Summit and then to QuickBooks®—so that she can keep every aspect of the business in synch.

Being able to share that data with Fridley’s valued insurance partners is also paramount to the success of the system. The Audatex integrated communication tools allow Newman and her team to distribute estimates and other information to insurers and even independent appraisers with a few simple mouse clicks.

And although the Audatex system boasts many powerful features, Newman has been pleased with its simple, intuitive design. With built-in, interactive graphics and easy navigation from page to page, the software allows for quick processing and a greater understanding of the job at hand.

Results

Audatex is perhaps best known in the collision repair market for its comprehensive database, which integrates seamlessly with Audatex Estimating software to deliver highly accurate part prices, labor and refinish information. This massive collection of intelligence—encompassing some 4 million parts—is the driving force behind Fridley’s ability to generate accurate and thorough estimates. Because the database is updated on an ongoing basis, estimators can operate with the confidence that they are working with the most current information available. This results in fewer estimate supplements, which means that both time and money are saved, for the customer as well as the insurance company.

Newman says the company has seen, with absolute certainty, faster cycle times and faster turn-around times on delivering vehicles back to customers through the use of AudaStation.

Says Newman, “If I could sum it up, I’d say that our experience with Audatex has been excellent. I can’t imagine running our business without it. It frees me up to spend more time with family and friends.”

And in “Friendly Fridley,” that’s what life’s all about.



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