

Industrial Finishes' Business Solutions Benefit Dabler Auto Body



by Autobody News Staff

Dabler Auto Body has maintained its reputation as a top-tier collision center for decades. Founded in 1967 by **Chuck Dabler** inside a Volkswagen dealership, the 16,000-square-foot standalone Salem, OR, facility is now owned by Dabler's son, **Dennis**, and **Mike Brockway**.

Their high-volume shop, which turns out 100 vehicles monthly, boasts certification credentials from Subaru and the Certified Collision Group, which maintains a nationwide network of OE certifications. To further establish the business as a best-in-class body shop, the company focuses on a narrow vehicle demographic, primarily specializing in high-end German marques as well as Subarus, which are popular in the Northwest.

"We've always wanted to be an elite repair facility," said Brockway. While acknowledging it took time to shift from working on any vehicle no matter the make, model or vintage, they now only service passenger cars from 2010 or newer. "This is our niche. We had to be selective, pick a lane and go fast. We hired additional techs and invested in ADAS equipment, training and the latest tools. This is a volume game, so we have to be very efficient and streamlined to achieve the most success."

Their success is also linked to a long-standing relationship with Industrial Finishes & Systems. "Our experience with Industrial has always been amazing," said Brockway, who first worked with Industrial while employed as head painter at Dabler in the early 2000s. He later served as Industrial's BASF tech rep and business development manager during the firm's transition from distribution center to a multi-faceted resource for business services and solutions.

"Industrial excels at building relationships," he added. "They not only provide excellent service, but also excellent support and training



Founded in 1967 inside a Volkswagen dealership, the Salem, OR, collision center holds certifications from Subaru and the Certified Collision Group and generates nearly \$5 million in annual sales.

on how to use the products and make money with them. Anytime I need to know something, the response is always 'I got a guy'—they always have the solution. That's a huge part of our success."

Brockway pointed out Industrial is also a source of cutting-edge technology to help shops be more efficient and productive. "They've always been innovative and bring new products for us to beta test."

Case in point: Dabler Auto Body is currently beta testing a mobile infrared curing system, which significantly reduces cure time. The mobile system, known as Talon—a version of a fixed unit that works with paint booths—can be operated from a local terminal, computer or smartphone.

"It's cutting-edge technology and it's changing the way we look at production," said Brockway. "We use BASF's UV primer and Bondo. It's why we can paint five cars a day, 25 cars a week and 100 cars a month through one paint booth. Without the accelerated dry times and those products, we wouldn't be able to do that. It's truly innovative."

In reflecting on his decades-long career, Brockway also credited Industrial for the experience he gained as their employee. "I was

a journeyman painter and knew how to run a shop, but as business development manager I learned the nuts and bolts of running a business and how to operate profitably. It was a career-building experience."

It also served as a springboard for Brockway to join forces with Dennis Dabler as the company's CFO in 2015. "Even when I was in college, I knew I'd own a successful body shop at some point," he said.

In the years since, the duo has made significant strides. Starting with six employees, there are now 21. Annual revenues have grown dramatically year after year, from a modest \$800,000 in sales to nearly \$5 million this year.

"We are about 30% DRP and 70% non-DRP, though we still facilitate the claim through the customers' insurance, just without the contracts," he noted. "Our web presence is driving that work—our company name, our reputation and our repeat customers."

"Dennis and I complement each other well. We both do a little bit of everything, but he excels with customer service and has that human touch. I'm more of a computer and analytics guy. The most important thing for us is to preserve Chuck's name, his reputation and his legacy."

Dabler Auto Body

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Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair
Facility Employees: 21
In Business Since: 1967
Number of Locations: One
Production Space:
16,000 square feet



Having the latest equipment is essential to Dabler's success. Here, a damaged quarter panel is being replaced using a Pro Spot welder.



An investment in ADAS equipment, technician training and OE certifications enables Dabler Auto Body to exclusively service 2010 or newer vehicles equipped with ADAS. The 2020 Ford F-250 shown here is undergoing a post-repair calibration.

Industrial Finishes and Systems

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