Walcom Puts Body Shop Owner in a Good Mood

by Autobody News Staff

Shawn Moody, 53, was destined from an early age to own not just one body shop, but a chain of them. When he opened his first Moody’s Collision in 1977, he was a junior in high school and looking to fix cars in a little three-bay garage. When other kids were playing sports and going to school dances, Moody worked on cars and dreamed about the future.

Now his business consists of eight locations that repair approximately 12,000 vehicles annually.

The fact that Moody didn’t get a lot of parental supervision during his adolescent years actually benefitted him, he explained. “I was raised by my mother and she worked full time, so I had a lot of freedom at a very young age and I took full advantage of it,” Moody said. “I’ve always loved cars and grew up on the same street exposed to it at an early age. I started working on cars in my hometown of Gorham, ME, and began socking some money away. I borrowed $6,000 from a local bank my aunt worked for and that’s how I started my first shop. After a decade in the auto recycling business we sold toLKQ Corp. In 2001, Moody’s opened our second location and now we open a new one roughly every other year.”

One reason for Moody’s explosive growth can be credited to his company’s ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Plan). “Our co-worker owners have a strong desire to embrace new technology,” Moody said. “But, you have to stay up on it and continually integrate it into your business or you’ll get left behind. We have always strived to be leading edge, but not on the bleeding edge of technology. New things come out all the time, but being the first to buy them may not always be the smartest move. We really do our homework to make sure any new piece of equipment makes sense for us. We just don’t rush to buy it just because it’s the newest thing.”

Moody’s due diligence when researching anything new starts by polling other shops that are already using them. “We always ask the reps to give us some names of shops that are using this product or piece of equipment as references, to see how it performs out in the field.”

When Moody found out about Walcom’s Thermody Technology (TD3) system, he travelled to another state to see it in action, he said. “We went up to a shop in New Hampshire and asked to talk to their painter. I didn’t want to talk to anyone else. I know that it’s the guy who uses it every day that’s going to give me a straight answer. He said he really liked it and told us that it decreased his drying time. He said he was using less product and the clear laid out better with the Walcom TD3 Pro.”

In simple terms, the Walcom Thermody Technology system heats the paints and atomizes it more efficiently than cold compressed air does. The machine regulates the heat right at the spray gun inlet, so that there’s less static pressure at the spray gun nozzle. When painters find out that the system minimizes die back, alleviates modeling, and saves materials, they immediately prefer it over the old way of applying paint. Once they learn how to use it, they’ll realize that things they used to have to do—such as denibbing and buffing—are minimized, while consistently getting a superior finish on every vehicle.

After trying the Walcom TD3 Pro on a trial basis earlier this year and as part of his ongoing mission to incorporate cutting-edge equipment and techniques into his state-of-the-art facilities, Moody purchased seven Walcom units, all of which are paying big dividends in their locations.

Moody is seeing the results in both the bottom line and the finished product. “We’re saving at least 15% on paint and labor efficiency. Before we got these machines, we were waiting 10-12 minutes for the water-borne to flash between coats, but now the TD3 Pro cuts that down about five minutes. When we did the math, we figured we’re saving 1,000 hours on drying time by using this machine. That’s phenomenal!”

Moody is sold on the new technology and not afraid to tell other shops about the machine and its impressive capabilities, he explained. “They call it Thermody Technology, but I call it magic! We’ve only had it for a few months now and we love it. We were initially skeptical, to be honest, but now that I’ve seen it and we’re seeing the benefits of it, we’re convinced. The paint and the clears are drying so much faster that there’s less chance for dirt in the paint, which results in less buffing. Of course, the materials savings itself is significant, which is huge—because it’s not cheap.”

Moody’s painting staff is already adept at using the TD 3 Pro’s, he said. “Our painters worked with the Walcom unit for a couple days and they adapted quickly. Once they get a feel for the proper air pressure and decreased flash times there is a very shallow learning curve. If you’re interested in this equipment, I would suggest getting it in your shop for a full day and have someone there from Walcom demonstrate firsthand the labor and material savings. Seeing is believing!”