

SCRS Takes a Look Back at 2012

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2012 was an interesting year in the industry; a year that was filled with both new and pre-existing challenges for collision repair business owners. Business activity fluctuated from week to week causing market uncertainty, daily reports of consolidation filled the headlines of the trade press, insurance companies continued to develop ways to interject themselves into collision repair business management, and reports of technology development cast a long term question mark over the future of collision repair businesses. When concern and uncertainty occupy the marketplace, businesses often look to the collective power of community to find information, lean on support from their peers, and collaboratively innovate solutions.

As a trade association who has spent more than three decades solely dedicated to educate, inform and represent the collision repair professional in all aspects of the industry, 2012 was a remarkably busy year for the Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS). In taking stock of the past year, I am confident that the entire staff and volunteer board of directors of SCRS are proud of the work that we embarked upon in each of the three areas of our mission. While the ultimate results of those efforts may not be fully realized, the momentum from that work will serve the organization and its membership well, leading into 2013.

As a member driven organization, the success of our efforts is often best gauged by the response of our membership. For SCRS, our actions in 2012 have been met by significant levels of growth in every individual and corporate membership category. In addition to welcoming individual businesses, SCRS has proudly added new state and regional Affiliate Associations to our network with the Northern Michigan Body Shop Association, the Texas Independent Automotive Association, Idaho Autobody Craftsmen Association, Alabama Automotive Repair Industry Society of Excellence and the Utah Auto Body Association. These state groups extend the reach of SCRS' informative network, bringing our Affiliate Association relationships to more than 40 affiliated groups across North America, and strengthening the breadth of our voice as we represent the industry. It is through this growth that our organization is able to further our resolve, knowing the message points, the areas of focus, and the activities we have undertaken have spoken to those we aim to represent, spurring unsolicited growth in support and participation.

But a thriving trade association requires more than simply the ability to boast one of the broadest networks of collision repairers such as SCRS'; it requires action and activity that speak to the heart of the memberships issues. Our members give us the tone and tenor behind our voice, but it is our responsibility to make sure it that collective voice is raised at the right time, for the right reasons, and that our chorus echoes through the industry's halls. In fact, vocalizing repairer's perspectives at a national level was not just a continued responsibility for the Society in 2012, but a center piece of the association's efforts. From entering into the year with a [written response](#) to an article in USA Today that

claimed that [Auto body shops say they, not insurers, should set costs](#), to an end-of the year [announcement that SCRS would be working with other repairer groups to facilitate ongoing repairer-only forums](#) in conjunction with other industry events; 2012 has marked a year where repairers understood the need to embrace the power of community, and to stand up for their business independence. No issue became a bigger focus for SCRS, or the industry, than that of insurer mandated parts procurement programs, which first received focus due to the launch of State Farm's pilot program with PartsTrader in several markets across the U.S. in the spring.

As part of our responsibility to both inform and represent our membership and our industrial community, SCRS issued a series of informative releases on this program throughout the year; the first being issued as early as [April](#), and marking one of the industry's first glimpses into the new program at the time. This release was followed with an [interview SCRS conducted with representatives from New Zealand](#) highlighting the impact that similar insurer-mandated parts procurement models have had in that geographic market. The purpose of this information was simple; the more informed and educated collision repairers in the U.S. are about the potential impact and ramification of such programs, the more equipped they are to form a proactive individual business strategy on how to address such a mandate if their business is faced with it in the future. There was perhaps no greater industry advocate on this issue in 2012, because our membership made it clear that this issue was paramount to virtually all others. Additional releases, presentations, debates and efforts centered on this issue throughout the year, mirroring the concern and pushback expressed by the both the industry and by individual businesses alike. The end result of such communication and industry activism is yet to be seen, but the repairer's voice was certainly heard. People are paying attention, and more repair facility owners today understand what has happened in countries like New Zealand and Canada, because of information that only became available through an organized international network such as the one provided by SCRS.

Representing an industry takes the confidence and understanding to know when collaboration will generate the most substantial and beneficial results for the industry, and SCRS has been proud to continue our history of work with other associations and entities in 2012. In November of 2011, SCRS and other collision repair organizations released a monumental [joint position statement](#) officially recognizing OEM vehicle manufacturer published repair procedures as the industry's standard of repair. As continuation of that effort in 2012, SCRS hosted a face-to-face meeting in April of national repair associations, I-CAR, the OEM Roundtable and top automakers in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The meeting was a continuation of the step taken by SCRS and more than two dozen additional state, regional, national and international collision repair organizations. The initial positioning, along with the leadership provided by SCRS and others in ongoing meetings and communications have led to major OEM vehicle manufacturers responding with amazingly innovative solutions that have the potential to change the face of our industry. One such tool with potential is TOYOTA's recently announced predictive estimating technology that is under development, and a direct work product of these ongoing repairer driven discussions.

Perhaps one of the most notable areas in which we have actively embraced other groups to address critical industry wide topics include a [joint letter to the Information Providers in January of 2012](#), regarding the collection and reporting of repairer business data. The statement served as a public

request from the collision repair industry to Audatex, CCC and Mitchell, seeking removal of contractual clauses within end user license agreements which require permissive access to aggregate and collect end-user data as a point-of-sale requirement to purchase those estimating programs. This communication generated responses from CCC, Mitchell and Audatex as the year progressed, and served as an ongoing source of discussion for the Collision Industry Conference Data Privacy Committee. SCRS continued to collaborate with our colleagues at AASP and ASA in the management and oversight of the Database Enhancement Gateway; a free industry resource that was developed and funded by industry trade associations to address user-identified errors, inaccuracies or omissions in electronic estimating system data. In 2012 we proudly watched as this trade association-funded industry tool saw both its 4000th and 5000th inquiries. The DEG also made headway launching a major website overhaul to enhance the end-user experience, and adding a functionality to address the top ten user requested enhancements to estimating platforms.

Addressing estimating data has long been a part of SCRS' history, and in addition to the collaborative work with other trade associations, SCRS has provided other resources that aim to provide collision repairers with the most effective tools in their toolbox. In 2011 SCRS provided the industry with the SCRS Guide to Complete Repair Planning; an exhaustive list of legitimate operations and services our technicians provide that often go unrecognized in the estimate development and final billing processes. It had been initially developed by the late March Taylor, who was a former board member of SCRS and owner of Auto Body Hawaii, who worked tirelessly to find ways to standardize the blueprinting process within his own repair facility. The purpose of the Guide was to aid repair facility personnel in formulating the most accurate repair plan in the estimate preparation process, to minimize the need or expense of a supplement. Taylor worked with other SCRS board members looking at commonly overlooked or forgotten non-included operations, building a list that would help benefit a more comprehensive blueprint. After his passing, SCRS sought to compile his work into a resource that would benefit all in the industry by releasing the guide. In 2012 SCRS saw tremendous growth in the use of the free resource, being featured in estimating education programs offered by every major refinish company, incorporated into 3M training programs in addition to many others. Early in the year, SCRS announced that the data from the association-crafted estimating tool would be featured in the free online estimate review tool www.estimatescrubber.com.

The year also brought about a renewed focus in the development of SCRS member benefit programs, featuring discounted services from companies such as Alldata, AutoWatch, AdminConcepts, Summit Software & Mobile Solution, Siriani & Associates, Total Merchant Services and as of 2012, GRC-Pirk. The GreenSweep program with GRC-Pirk launched an [energy and pollution performance program](#), online tracking tools and [free sustainability education](#) programs to educate the industry on the benefits to environmental responsibility. But SCRS' education agenda wasn't only focused on the environmental issues; the Education Committee continued its efforts throughout the year, bringing eye opening topics to SCRS open board meetings around the country. As part of the association's emphasis to inform and educate repair businesses, the Society started working with CollisionHub to record and produce free copies of those presentations during 2012, making discussions such as [safety considerations in glass](#)

[replacement](#), [squeeze-type resistance spot welders](#), and [blueprinting tools for collision estimating](#) available for all collision repairers on the [SCRS website](#).

But when it comes to education, no other industry venue provides more opportunity, possibility and inspiration than SCRS' involvement at [the SEMA Show](#), which prominently features [SCRS' Repairer Driven Education](#) series. In looking back on the week at SEMA, and the events that took place during it, you can't help but feel reminded about how important a strong sense of community is to professional betterment and personal enrichment. A sense of community provides grounding, balance and camaraderie when faced with challenges. This is exactly what organizations such as SCRS are here to do; provide our members with a community network that offers them the opportunity to strengthen their relationships and their connection to the industry.

At the SEMA Show, that sense of community was noticeably heightened this year. SCRS has been very proud to work with the wonderful show organizers, and to lead the development of the collision repair industry footprint within the show over the past several years. It was hard not to notice that this section of the Las Vegas Convention Center - a complex housing an astonishing one million square feet of booth space, and hosting over 135,000 attendees – had a noticeable spark of positive energy flowing through the halls inspiring those seeking new business ideas. The traffic in the aisles was dense with individuals searching for collision repair business solutions, and the classrooms were alive with impassioned subject matter experts leading idea exchanges with over a thousand repair professionals from around the globe looking to soak in information offered by SCRS. These classes are directly designed to help attendees bring tangible results home to their businesses. This year's lineup delivered tremendous information that supported interests in all areas of business development, while bolstering that sense of community. We saw personal, inspiring and occasionally humorous discussions between U.S. entrepreneurs, well known for their innovative approach to business development; riveting elaboration of how forthcoming technical development in other areas of the automotive industry is going to have cross-over effects on our work capacity over the next 40-plus years; and information exchanges from global representatives from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, demonstrating the impact of insurer-driven parts procurement initiatives in international markets.

This is what community is about. It is about sharing our best attributes, whether it is a product, a service or an idea, and showing our peers how to use it to their advantage. It is the recognition that while collision repairers have clearly and definitively decided that the SEMA Show is THE national venue for collision repair business solutions in the United States, that it has become a melting pot of collision repair attendees from dozens of countries. It is a place to run into old friends, and to meet new ones. It was a place that the attendees and exhibitors have both grown to realize the importance of the show and its content directly offering solutions specific to our niche industry, but understanding (and benefiting from the fact) that we are really an integral part of the broader automotive industry.

It is that sense of community that will support the success of collision repair businesses around the globe. Connecting with our peers, through our associations; learning the basic foundations of successful business management, to the cutting edge of products and technologies; making friendships that span a

globe and last a lifetime; these are the things that make SCRS proud to be a part of the SEMA Show, and the things that really define the work of a trade association.

The end of the year provides the opportunity to reflect, to look back at accomplishments and shortcomings from the past year, in an effort to better yourself in the coming one. As we look back over the past 12 months, the actions, activities, and the engagement from our members highlights an exemplary period where our organization can proudly say, we have been the voice our membership expects from us. We have advocated on the issues that resonate with those who support us; and we have been an organization that provides our members with leadership, but allows our ideals to be led by our membership. As an organization, we are proud to be Repairer Driven, and we believe the work speaks for itself. 2012 was a difficult year, but it was a year where collision repairers came together, and learned the value of community. We look forward to the opportunity that creates going into 2013, and we are proud to be the Society which collision repairers can call home.