

# Rear View Mirror



## Q&A

**Marcy Tieger**

Principal, Symphony Advisors LLC

**Q What role does Symphony Advisors play in the industry?**

Symphony is a consulting firm that works with collision shops and all segments of the automobile aftermarket parts and services supply chain, as well as automobile insurance physical damage claims organizations. We provide strategic, operational and financial advisory services.

**Q Your background is in law and insurance matters. What drew you to collision?**

I was first introduced to the industry through my work as an insurance adjuster, followed by 20 years as a lawyer handling insurance, business and employment matters. I gained more of an “insider’s” view of the industry when I met my husband and current business partner, Matthew Ohrnstein, nearly 14 years ago. At the time, he was the president and CEO of Caliber Collision Centers.

I have always been interested in the study of organizational behavior since completing a Masters Degree in Sociology in 1982. Being able to combine the two—my love of the industry, and writing and speaking about the characteristics of the best companies and leaders and how to effect change—has been incredibly satisfying.

**Q You’re in contact with a lot of shops in the industry and active in the Women’s Industry Network. How are women doing in this business?**

Women have always played a prominent role in the industry. At the heart of so many shops is a family, sometimes the second or third generation of the family who started the business. And frequently, a wife, daughter or sister serves as the key decision maker on management and financial matters. Unfortunately, the family dynamic in some settings still keeps these women in the shadows.

Even amongst those shops where women play a more visible role in the

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management of the business, many women still tell stories about vendors or sales people who ask to talk to a man instead.

The lucky women have the best punch line: Their husband or brother or father or male coworker looks at the salesperson and says, “You want to do business with us? Then you’ll need to talk to the person in charge,” and points to the lady.

Regrettably, women are still underrepresented in technical positions. This is unfortunate given the shortage of technicians in the industry. I have met many technical school instructors who praise the skills, attitude and work ethic of their female students. We know they’re out there. The real issue is whether shop owners and managers will give them a chance.

**Q If there were more women in automotive repair, how might that change the business landscape?**

The first thing that comes to mind is customer service.

Customer service is and will be the ultimate differentiator of shops, all other factors—cycle time, repair quality—being equal. Customer service often boils down to interpersonal skills like empathy, compassion and kindness, which tend to be encouraged and, therefore, more developed in women. Many successful men, of course, have these qualities, too. And these qualities, whether influencing customers or coworkers, are a critical counterbalance to the inherent pressures of today’s business environment.

**Q What will it take to attract more women to the business?**

Create more role models by hiring more women who can go into their communities and to middle schools and high schools and tell girls that they love their job ... and that they’re treated like gold.