

The Final Issue! See Page 37 for Announcement.

Automotive
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ToolBox
Edition
Issue 5 • 2026

**Knowing When
to Crush It**

**Building High-
Performing
Sales Teams**

**Using AI to
Eliminate
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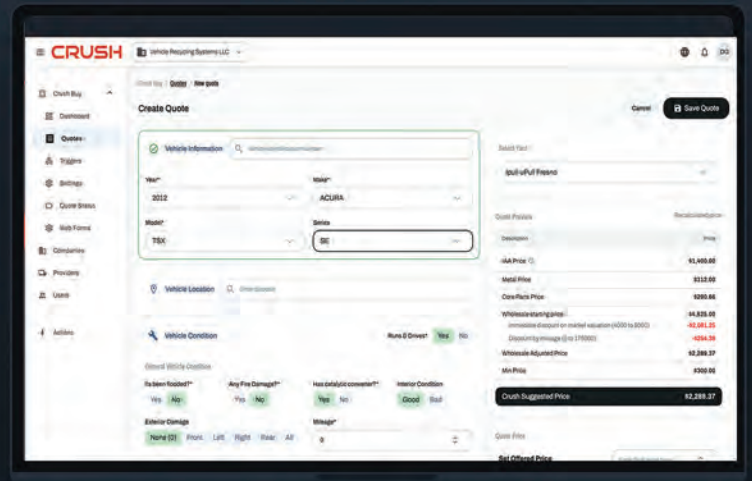
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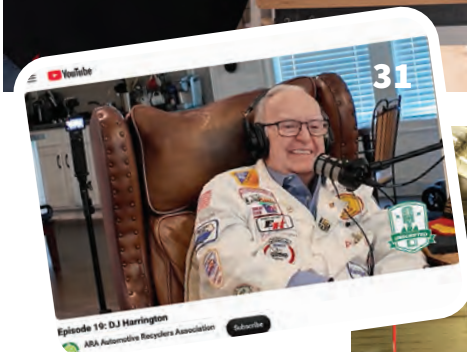
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Building High-Performing Sales Teams

Separating the PROS FROM ORDER-TAKERS

Clients often hire me to work with their sales teams to improve performance and profitability and provide guidance on best practices. I have worked with hundreds of individuals and hosted many sales training classes and seminars over the 30+ years of my career as a sales manager and consultant. Through much trial and error, I have come to realize that the success of the salesperson starts with ME (and YOU) as their coach and leader. We must always look in the mirror first before we cast blame on our team for under-performance.

With that being said, most of us in this industry have not had the benefit of formal training on “how” to coach, lead, or train our teams, and there’s a good chance that we may have been high-performing salespeople who got “promoted” into being the manager. Sound familiar? Some of us are naturally good at these things, and some of us need some help (like I did). If you are not naturally blessed with great coaching and teaching skills, I strongly suggest looking into training and coaching to help you navigate the ups and downs of leading a team as you embark on the journey of leadership/management.

Okay, on to the meat and potatoes.

Let’s start with the common term/name that we throw around when we call our teams “a bunch of overpaid order takers.” I have witnessed this “behavior” and have heard a million phone calls where the salesperson answered the phone, said, “yeah we got it,” and they got the sale with very minimal effort or “selling” happening on the call. The blessing in our industry is that we have a product people need and will buy it a certain percentage of the time regardless of how well we “sell” it. This has led to many bad habits and “order taking” from our salespeople. The question I ask is, “Who taught them that behavior?”

Training!

In general, we do a pretty decent job teaching folks how to use the tools of our trade. We spend lots of time teaching them how to navigate our YMS, the third-party bolt-on programs, and all the processes/procedures that we do in a day, so they understand “how” to physically sell a part and what to expect when they push the buttons, right? I remember my “training.” It went like this: “Here’s how you look up a part, here’s how you write an order, here’s how the phone works, now answer the phone and tell ‘em ‘WE GOT IT!’” Granted, 30+ years ago times were a little simpler, yet that training mentality still exists in many places

today. Obviously, we need to teach folks how to work with the tools. We also need to focus on the WHY we do what we do, and how our industry truly fits into the parts supply chain. That’s where WE come in as their coach.

How do we break the age-old thought process of ‘it’s my job to answer the phone, look up parts, and give prices’? 2 major things are working against us in this mindset shift: US and Our Training. The more difficult part of the equation is that our customers expect us to look up parts and provide prices. So, not only do we need to train our salespeople to be better sales pros and qualifiers, but we also must train the customer to accept that we’re going to be more than an information desk. ‘Okay Jer, how do we do it?’

Understanding!

There is a reason this business can be hard to teach and truly understand. Why? Every single part we sell is absolutely unique. We are not stamping out widgets on an assembly line. On top of that, every customer we speak with has a different NEED or circumstance surrounding the part they are asking us to supply. And then add the components of our B2B relationships. We are selling to a customer that has a customer, and we need to not only satisfy our customer’s needs, but also magically draw out what



Jer Banta is a seasoned auto parts industry leader with over three decades of experience, having progressed from an entry-level delivery driver to senior leadership and consulting roles. His career spans privately held companies and consolidators, with notable achievements including building and scaling a dismantling facility in Northeast Ohio and helping position a company for acquisition. Currently with PTC, Jer leverages deep operational expertise, KPI-driven insight, and a strong passion for people and culture to help recyclers improve performance and develop high-performing teams across North America and beyond.

their customer may want to buy and why they want to buy it.

This is starting to sound like a lot of work and effort ... no wonder we don't train our people on this skill. It's hard enough to understand it ourselves! We need to spend time teaching and coaching our people on WHY our customers buy parts and the differences between Retail, Mechanics, Dealerships, Collision, Rebuilders, Exporters, etc.

Luckily for you, I have made a million mistakes and tried a million different ways to sell auto parts, and a million ways to teach people to sell auto parts. I have been blessed to have worked with some great salespeople and coaches over the years who have been influential and have helped me develop a simpler way to understand and teach an improved sales process.

Process!

Here is how to create clarity and a process to help our order-takers become Sales-Pro's. The premise of what I teach is based on gathering information to provide a solution that fits the unique need of the unique customer rather than just giving information when a customer asks for a part.

It all starts with the WHO. If our customer does not introduce themselves at the beginning of the call, we must slow them down and ask BEFORE we get distracted by the part. "I'm sorry, I missed your name, and is this for your vehicle or do you have a shop?" SIMPLE, effective, and puts the salesperson back in the driver's seat because WE are asking the questions.

Then, what do they KNOW? Our customers are more informed (correctly or incorrectly) than they have ever been. The power of online searching and auto-filled estimates with prices, quality, and availability is higher than ever, and it's NOT going to stop. The next thing our folks need to ask about is "what" the customer has found so far, and do they have any point of reference on used or new parts? They can use a conversational question like, "Great, let me get you fixed up; did you find us online today, or have you gotten any other used or new



prices?" I need to know what they know. ASK and LISTEN. Now, the salesperson can plan their qualifying based on what they hear; NOT on what they assume. They need to be listening to the story: WHY the customer called and what is most important to THEM.

Determining the DETAILS. From this point, we can address and qualify for the four main reasons folks decide what part fits THEIR needs best.

- 1) The TIME/AVAILABILITY
- 2) The QUALITY
- 3) The WARRANTY
- 4) LASTLY, the PRICE.

Time, quality, and warranty determine the price. If our folks don't understand the customer's wants and needs on the first three, we cannot accurately give pricing on the product. Remember, every part we have available is unique.

Qualifying Time FIRST. I love IF questions. Assume that they want to buy your part. They called you for it; they have a problem. Let's test the water to see how serious they are right out of the box. Ask them: "IF we can find the part you are looking for that fits your needs, HOW SOON are you looking to get this done?" OR "IF we still have the part you found online, are you ready to order it today?" OR "IF we have the part available, will you need this delivered, or would you like to pick it up at our location?" OR "IF we have what you need, how soon are you bringing the vehicle in the shop?"

ASK AND LISTEN! The customer will likely tell you, one way or another, that they are just gathering pricing and

availability (quoting only) or that they are ready and have it sold (a sale) if you can come up with the solution that fits THEIR needs.

Present Quality as a question, not a statement. Many of our customers tell us right away what they are expecting from a quality standpoint ... miles, condition, color, etc. If they come out and say what they want, ask for the sale (before pricing). "If we can get one under 120K, is your customer ready to schedule the job?" If they don't know and want to "see what you have", give them a "this or that" option (when available). "We have one available with 79K or one with 127K, which one sounds better to you?" OR "We have an insurance-quality door available or a nice door that needs a little repair that we can offer repair time on; which one fits your needs?" When we ask them to agree or disagree, THEY are picking what is important to them. Quality helps determine value and price.

Assume they want extended warranty and labor protection (If you offer it).

Start with your best warranty with a suggestive question. "You want the pricing with our two-year parts and labor coverage, right?" (It's important to note that the salesperson should not have given any "base" pricing at this point in the conversation). I only want to talk about my base warranty IF they object to extended coverage or labor protection. When I start with the best warranty, I have lots of wiggle room to adjust the price down by taking away coverage, only if they object to the price.

ASSUME THAT THEY WANT TO BUY YOUR PART. LET'S SEE HOW SERIOUS THEY ARE RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX. "IF we can find the part you are looking for that fits your needs, HOW SOON are you looking to get this done?"

THE PRICE. Finally, we are ready to deliver what this unique part and solution is going to cost. We know WHO we are talking to, we've asked what they know, we've asked WHEN they need it, we've qualified for the quality they WANT to buy, and we have offered and asked to quote our best warranty solution for their NEED.

Get Specific!

REPEAT all the cool stuff we just talked about back to the customer, present the price, and MOST IMPORTANTLY, ASK FOR THE SALE OR OBJECTION.

"We have the 102k engine, with the two-year part warranty and \$1,500 of

labor protection, delivered to your door for ONLY \$2,500 plus the core, HOW DOES THAT SOUND?" They must shut up and LISTEN at this point. I want to hear, "Yeah, that sounds perfect!" OR "Oh, shoot, I didn't think it would be that much." EITHER is OK, and now I can either focus on closing the sale OR re-asking questions to overcome the objection.

"Okay, I understand that's a lot of money. What were you thinking?" OR "If that doesn't work, what's most important to you: the miles, the time, the warranty, or the price?" Then, LISTEN. We can now update the details to meet their needs. Sometimes they

want better quality, need the part faster, or want a longer warranty. How can I pull the levers to make it happen?

All these things have costs that can go UP or DOWN ... be flexible and accommodating. If you didn't hit all the needs the first time, go back and fix it, adjusting as necessary based on what they say.

Sales is an Interview

To sum this up, and if we want to build better sales pros, WE need to help them understand and teach them the importance of asking questions to find the proper solution for the unique problem our customer has. Building high performers requires investing significant time and effort to help them hone their skills and offering outside training opportunities when appropriate, such as when you don't have the time or skill to provide it. **TB**



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You've Got to Know When to Hold 'Em ... **Know When to CRUSH 'EM**

“The Gambler” by Kenny Rogers may not be in my top 10 songs on my Crushing Cars Playlist, but it is pretty well known. I will go out on a limb and say it is a good song, given the grassroots of the automotive industry. Kenny’s ballad harmonizes the reasons and tactics a gambling man learns and

bestows upon the narrator about the game of poker and, subsequently, life itself. However, if you really listen to the lyrics, the parallels one can draw from the principles in the song and the logistics of car crushing are uncanny. Yet what drives us to crush cars, the how and the when, is based on a few principles that every operator seeks to define within their own scale and operation. So really in this case,

as the song sings, “You got to know when to hold them, know when you fold them, know when to walk away, and know when to run.”

How do we know when it is time to crush cars and when it is not?

For some, this is a no-brainer. When the scrap market is up, we begin to think about crushing; when it is down, we “walk away” or deprioritize this side of the business.



PHOTO: CARYN SMITH. CARDS: ISTOCKPHOTO/SGURSOZLU



Brian Bachand is a second generation auto recycler, who helps own and operate Westover Auto Salvage in Belchertown, MA. He is on the Board of Directors for the Auto Recyclers Association of MA and a proud ARA Member. Brian has a Bachelor’s Degree in Accounting and paired with almost 25 years of auto recycling experience, will continue to implement ARA Advocacy for being a leader in the auto industry.

When prices are really up, we begin to “run,” crushing above previous numbers so that we are capitalizing on this favorable market swing. These scenarios are major drivers that influence when to crush. However, there is more to the decision besides Net Ton Price that determines our crushing endeavors. Depending on who you sell your crushed cars to, this commodity is usually quite a liquid asset. We send out flats, and we are usually paid for the load within two weeks at most; sometimes the same or next day.

Barring any deductions, freight, fuel surcharge, or environmental or handling fees, what you send out is what you are paid for. Unless you are in noncompliance, loads are accepted, and we are onto the next load. This transaction is unlike our ROE™ quality used parts sales, where there is always the risk of return, warranty, or a buyer changing their mind. These benefits alone of crushing cars for some operations are enough to fast-track this process right to the top of our priorities list. If you need quick capital, this is an excellent revenue stream to tap into. So what else motivates us to send out servings of these proverbial pancakes?

How many operations out there have unlimited space or have operations that are so efficient in the life cycle of their end-of-life vehicles that the demand for parts exceeds the demand for continuous reinvestment? I know we want to sell every part, and if we could, we would have one of everything and more in stock at all times. This perception, however, is regrettably flawed. As Profit Team Consultant Rob Rainwater has continued to impress on the industry, “Do not fall in love with the box.”

Every open space for an inventoried vehicle in your yard or spot on your shelf or rack for an inventoried part is rented real estate. This space is valuable, and the longer we rent it out instead of selling and replacing it in the prompt and proper time frame, the more money it costs us. Vehicle and parts turnover is crucial to keeping our inventory up to date, preserved, and relevant. We are not running museums; we are facilitators that gate keep where and when our

parts, cores, and vehicles go. To prevent overcrowding or compromising our inventory, storage, and operations, it is essential to maintain a crushing schedule that supports your logistics and your bottom line.

So as we navigate ‘when to hold ‘em and when to flatten ‘em,’ what does the prep and process look like for crushing? Before we can answer that, I think it is important to ask a few qualifying questions and understand some common limitations. First, do you own your own crusher? If you do, well then, hypothetically, you are the decider of your own fate. If you do not, then who do you contact to crush? How long before Crusher Bob shows up, and what goes into the preparation of the crusher’s arrival and into the ramifications of its aftermath?

And to the big question, what is the total cost to source the actual crushing job?

These are moving and variable factors that play significant roles in when and how you crush. When this process has to be sourced out, the importance of preparation, planning, and time management

to keep this holding, storing, and crushing area or areas as clean as possible.

Embrace the CAR Certification and embody it through these environmentally compliant and safe practices. Ones that will put money in your pockets as well. But we will touch on that in a little bit. The key here is optimizing your space so that workflow and operations are not hindered or unhinged through this process. The life cycle wheel needs to keep turning, and that is in all aspects of our operations.

So the next big question to be asked is what vehicles are you crushing?

Do you follow the reports and see what vehicles have done what, for revenue in the first 30 days, 1-3, 3-6, and 6-9 months? Are you simply pulling the oldest from inventory, or is it a hybrid mix? If you have ever loaded a trailer of flats, it is not as simple as pulling out 15-24 vehicles, crushing them, and expecting them all to fit on the trailer. Especially the way in which you might have envisioned they would. There is a science to this; it is adult Tetris, and when done right, it is an art form.

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is essential to cashing in on market swings and accomplishing the independent goals we all may have. When the control is within your walls, there are fewer variables and the process can be quicker and potentially more proficient. This further allows you to decide how to implement and what you want to get out of your crushing program.

When we determine that the time is right to get a load together to crush, what goes into the culling of the vehicles destined for the press? We all do the same thing, just differently. So these parameters that influence your decision may not have a one-size-fits-all directive. Maybe you have space for a designated “crush area” where you can move vehicles to. Perhaps you make a spot when it is time to crush. Either way, the best practice is to continue

The sight of a full trailer with 20-plus crushed vehicles on it, right to the top and jammed full, is a great feeling. Maybe not as nice as seeing the check for it when the market is high, but still a success. However, unless you are buying from the same flats buyer or hauling your own flats, we are still subject to different trailer sizes and dimensions. Not to mention different haulers are rated for different weights and may only take what they are willing to take. So sometimes we crush X amount of vehicles yet only send out what they are willing to take.

That means we have to sit on material, and unless the market is rising (which lately is not the case), then this may not be the most beneficial leftover material to be sitting on.

You have condemned the vehicles destined to become pancakes and have pulled them aside, so now what?

Are these vehicles dismantled during your process period, meaning you are harvesting viable and valuable parts to be stored and coring out the commodities at the intake time? Or are you sending help out there to penny-pinch the rest of the vehicle? What I mean by this is: are you spending time prepping the vehicle before it is crushed, or have you made this step a part of your earlier process in the vehicle's life cycle within your operations? A lot of these questions you have to ask yourself to see if the juice is worth the squeeze. Do you have room on your shelves to save parts from these vehicles?

In contrast, if they have not sold by now, why is that, and why would we continue to hold on to it? Do you have the workforce to employ a team member or crew to strip these vehicles of any commodities you want to be paid separately for? Are you pulling the drivetrain before they are flattened or leaving it for weight? And do the extra cores and metal not add up to the time and money you would have to spend to get them off? There is no way to count cards on this one; whenever you see your resources optimized and your time best spent is how you should proceed. Yet keep in mind, there are additional revenue streams if you adjust your expectations and operations depending on whether that is the hand you want to play.

Throughout the industry, recyclers are constantly looking for new and additional revenue streams. Penny-pinching vehicles is a realistic avenue to generate previously missed revenue from your vehicles. Clean raw material copper is averaging over \$6.25 a pound. Supply constraints and increased demand have the scrap copper market on the rise. Bottom line, it would be wise to start harvesting wire from your crushed vehicles before they are flat. Piling harnesses and cables in a Gaylord box adds up quickly, and there are no worries about it coming back. Same with alloy wheels. You may be leaving steel wheels on the vehicle, but when core alloy wheels have an average value of \$20 per, generally speaking, then it should be a no-brainer to pull these off.

If you use the vehicle as storage or the car is partially dismantled, it may be smart to grab what is off in the car or easy to harvest. Core accessories like Alternators, Starters, A/C compressors, etc. add up whether they are good enough to be rebuilt or scrap. Same goes for loose or easy-to-access #1 steel or aluminum, such as axle shafts, drive shafts, aluminum intake manifolds, and rebars. It is up to you to decide how to leverage what is left of these crush cars. As Rogers sings, "The secret to survivin' is knowin' what to throw away and knowin' what to keep."

Lastly, there are a few more ways to add value to your crush cars.

One of those is tires. Certain buyers will take four or five tires in total on and inside each of these vehicles. You can choose to capitalize on this by strategically placing the accepted amount in each vehicle and saving the expense of paying to get rid of them. If time allows, steel wheels are #1 steel that can be cashed in or made into stands for your inventoried vehicles. You can take those off and separate them accordingly, and place the tires back into the vehicle. Another idea is to start thinking again about the auto shredder residue (ASR).

At some point in the near future, our industry in the United States will transition to do more automotive plastics recycling. California Bill SB811 looks to tighten regulations on the shredder and, subsequently, the crushing processes by appointing the DTSC (Department of Toxic Substances Control) as the head regulatory party.

Currently, ASR is not considered hazardous waste, and given this classification, recyclers can leverage this until automotive plastics recycling logistics and infrastructure are mapped. This has the potential for us to use crushed vehicles as stuffers. You can open the roof on a vehicle as a tin can top, or however you see fit to prep it and proceed to clean your yard of loose and scrap automotive parts and debris. Just be aware of what you can and cannot put in a crushed vehicle, and always make sure that fluids, vehicle batteries (especially all high-voltage batteries), and any hazardous materials are removed during your prep process.

Crushing cars is an integral part of what we do as auto recyclers.

Optimizing this process is just as important as inventorying, depolluting, and dismantling the vehicle. We want to make sure we are compliant and implementing environmentally friendly processes, but also cost- and time-efficient in our pursuit to squeeze the remaining profit from these end-of-life vehicles. More than ever, we are focused on margins. Making a plan and getting the most out of your flats before transport is a sure bet to make up for some of our losses or returns. By optimizing transport logistics and strategically timing commodity cycles to secure peak pricing, you can minimize overhead while maximizing the yield on the final stage of your end-of-life vehicles. The direct result of this coordinated approach is a highly efficient operation and a healthier bottom line.

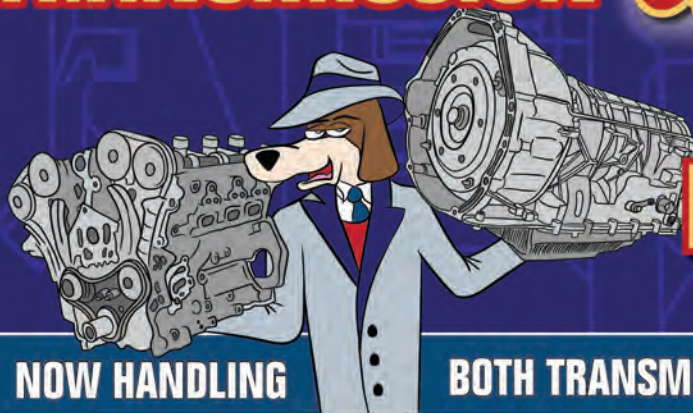
With the right mix of time, yard space, and resources, you can strategically leverage your surplus inventory for maximum downstream profit. For some, it makes sense from time to time to sit on material, like stockpiling catalytic converters, to store flats or have leftover crusher bait on hand and then cash in when the commodity market peaks. For others, the immediate liquidity of crushing is the smarter play, securing the near-term cash flow needed for reinvestment.

Whichever path you choose, your crushing program is a critical spoke in the operational wheel; it requires consistent management to keep the entire business rolling. While your logistical goals will always be unique to your yard, there are universal principles that can make any crushing program more efficient and profitable. Don't hesitate to connect with fellow recyclers, ARA members, and staff to trade best management practices or exchange advice on how to maintain compliance and keep evolving.

So make a game plan and a good playlist and make it happen! Whether he's on that playlist or not, as you now know, Kenny Rogers will tell ya, "You've got to know when to hold 'em, and know when to fold 'em," and in our business, mastering how and when to flatten them is how you play a winning hand. **TB**



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BACK TO THE FUTURE

What the 2026 URG Conference Revealed About the Future of Automotive Recycling

In May 2026, nearly 1,000 automotive recyclers, technology providers, suppliers and industry partners gathered in Denver, Colorado, for the 2026 URG Conference with Team PRP. With attendees traveling from across the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the conference once again demonstrated why it has become one of the automotive recycling industry's premier events and a meeting place for those shaping the future of recycled OEM parts.

Appropriately themed Back to the Future, this year's conference returned to Colorado, where the very first URG Conference was held. While the location honored the organization's history, the week's conversations focused squarely on its future.

Across more than 85 educational sessions, industry leaders explored AI, cybersecurity, EVs, inventory management, leadership, sales, digital



commerce, and business innovation. The topics were diverse, but the underlying message was consistent: automotive recycling continues to evolve at a rapid pace, driven by technology, stronger data, and a commitment to raising industry standards.

One of the most anticipated sessions featured the URG Board of Directors, who joined CEO Kristi Werner to discuss the organization's strategic priorities. Board members include David Gold (Standard Auto Wreckers), John Jr. Catalano (Bionic Auto Parts), Matt Carman (Lentini Auto Parts), Kelly Roepke (Y-Yard Auto & Truck), Matt Ehlers (Road Tested Parts), Ryan Falco (Aesop Auto Parts), and Pat Huesers

(PAM's Auto). Together, they highlighted ongoing investments in technology, education, partnerships, and member services while engaging members in an open discussion about the future of the industry.

One of the conference's most significant announcements was the continued rollout of Auto Part Search, URG's next-generation marketplace for recycled OEM parts. Developed with direct feedback from recyclers and continually refined through collaboration with buyers—mechanics, repair shops, insurers and industry partners—the platform is designed to simplify the way collision repair facilities, mechanical repairers, insurers and consumers search for and purchase recycled parts.

Features such as VIN-based fitment, real-time inventory, detailed imagery, warranties and streamlined purchasing reflect the industry's continued investment in creating a more modern and connected buying experience.



Kristi Werner is the Chief Executive Officer of United Recyclers Group (URG), a leading organization dedicated to advancing the automotive recycling industry through innovation, technology, and collaboration. With over 18 years of experience in the recycling sector, Kristi brings deep expertise in operational efficiency, software solutions, and member-focused program development.

Kristi began her career in 2005 with Actual Systems Pinnacle as a software trainer, where she quickly advanced to project management and later sales, gaining a comprehensive understanding of both the technical and business sides of automotive recycling. In 2011, she joined United Recyclers Group, where her passion for technology-driven growth and member success helped shape URG's modern direction. She was appointed CEO after more than a decade of service and leadership within the organization.

A graduate of St. Cloud State University with a Bachelor of Science, Kristi went on to earn her Master of Science from Colorado Technical University. She is committed to expanding URG's suite of programs and benefits, fostering collaboration across recyclers, and supporting the industry's ongoing digital transformation. Having witnessed firsthand the evolution of recycling technology, Kristi is a strong advocate for empowering recyclers to reach their full potential through innovation, education, and community.

CONFERENCE IN PICTURES



Auto Part Search not only streamlines purchasing, but also the claims and repair process. Adjusters can now create quotes for shops to review the recommended recycled parts for the repair and complete the purchase through a simplified, online checkout process.

Rather than simply launching another parts marketplace, Auto Part Search represents a broader shift towards greater efficiency for insurers, repairers, and recyclers alike. It makes recycled OEM parts more accessible, more trusted, and easier to integrate into the repair process.

The conference also reinforced the importance of collaboration beyond technology.

One of the week's most meaningful moments came through URG's continued

partnership with the National Auto Body Council and its Recycled Rides® program. Across two vehicle gifting events, four vehicles were presented to deserving veterans, made possible through the combined efforts of collision repair facilities, insurers, and URG member recyclers who donated the recycled OEM parts needed to complete the repairs. It served as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when every part of the industry works together.

The conference also celebrated those whose contributions have helped shape automotive recycling over many decades. Carol Roedder of Modern Imports and Jim Counts of Counts Consulting were inducted into the URG Hall of Fame, recognizing careers dedicated to advancing professionalism, innovation and

leadership throughout the industry.

For more than 30 years, URG has provided a forum where recyclers can collaborate, learn and challenge one another to improve continually. Increasingly, those conversations are extending beyond automotive recycling to include technology providers, insurers and the collision repair community as a whole.

As the industry continues to evolve, one thing is becoming increasingly clear: the future of automotive recycling will be driven not only by better technology, but by stronger partnerships across the entire repair ecosystem. If the conversations in Denver were any indication, that future is already well underway.

See you back in Orlando in 2027! **TB**

More Than Cars...

It's About the Families Behind Auto Recyclers



There is something special about the vehicle recycling industry.

Most people see an old wreck arriving at a yard and assume they're looking at the end of a vehicle's life.

We see something completely different. We see opportunity, value and responsibility. But more than anything else, we see families.

Across the automotive recycling industry, there are hundreds of family-owned auto recycling businesses. Some have been passed from grandparents to parents and now to sons and daughters. Others started with one tow truck, a few acres of land, and a willingness to work harder than everyone else.

They are businesses built before sunrise, after dark, and through countless weekends.

Businesses built on trust, reputation, and on people.

I've had the privilege of visiting recyclers across the world for many years, from small independent yards to some of the largest operations. Every time I leave, I'm reminded that while every business is different, they all share the same values.

Hard work, honesty, innovation, and a determination to leave the business stronger for the next generation.

That is something worth protecting.

Our Industry Is Changing Faster Than Ever

Today's vehicles are nothing like the ones many of us dismantled twenty years ago.

Modern cars are packed with electronics, advanced safety systems, radar, cameras, artificial intelligence, and increasingly, high-voltage electric vehicle systems.

The days of simply pulling an engine and draining the fluids are disappearing. Today's dismantler has become part technician, part environmental specialist, part safety professional, and increasingly, part educator.

Electric vehicles have brought incredible opportunities, but they've also introduced risks many of us never imagined.

A battery can store enough energy to seriously injure or kill.

A damaged battery can ignite hours, or even days, after a vehicle has arrived.

Knowing what to do is no longer enough; knowing why we do it has become just as important.

Professionalism Isn't About Looking Bigger ... It's About Looking After Each Other

Sometimes people hear the words "professional standards" and imagine more regulations, more paperwork, and more bureaucracy.

That's not what professionalism means.

Professionalism means making sure everyone goes home safely, knowing your employees are properly trained, protecting the reputation of an industry that has spent decades proving its worth, and ensuring the next generation wants to join the family business because they see a future there.

When customers, insurers, manufacturers, and government agencies look at our industry, we want them to see confidence.

Not risk or uncertainty, but confidence.

We Have Always Adapted

Think back over the past thirty years. Innovations have included: Catalytic converters, airbags, hybrid vehicles, advanced electronics, digital inventory, and online parts sales.

Every challenge looked difficult at first, yet our industry adapted.

Electric vehicles are simply the next chapter. The businesses that invest in people today will become tomorrow's leaders.

The Greatest Investment You'll Ever Make

It isn't another forklift, another building, or another dismantling machine. It's your people.

Training isn't about collecting certificates; it's about building competence



Andy Latham is Managing Director of Salvage Wire. His desire is to highlight the professionalism in the vehicle recycling industry, increase knowledge and understanding, and keep everyone safe, ethical and profitable. Book your complimentary one-hour consultation today at www.salvageinsight.co.uk.

Professionalism is making sure everyone goes home safely, knowing your employees are properly trained, protecting the reputation of [the] industry, and ensuring the next generation wants to join the family business because they see a future there.

and developing confidence. It's about creating a culture where people ask questions, follow procedures and never become complacent.

The safest businesses are rarely the ones with the biggest budgets; they're the ones with the strongest culture.

Our Responsibility to the Next Generation

Most family recyclers aren't just building a business for today; they're building something they'll one day hand to someone they love. That's a huge responsibility.

The decisions we make today, about safety, training, leadership and professionalism, will shape what that

next generation inherits. If we get it right, they'll inherit an industry that is respected, profitable and ready for whatever technology comes next. If we don't, someone else will define our future for us.

A Final Thought

I've always believed that vehicle recycling is one of the most important industries people never think about.

Every vehicle we dismantle responsibly protects the environment. Every part we reuse helps another family keep their car on the road. Every material we recycle reduces the demand for new resources. Every technician we train makes our industry safer.

We don't just recycle vehicles; we protect communities, preserve resources, create careers, and build businesses that families are proud to pass on.

That's something worth investing in, that's something worth leading, and that's something worth protecting for the next generation of automotive recyclers. **TB**

To find out more about how to invest in professional standards, technical training and leadership development, head to Salvage Wire, Charge-Ed and Driven Leadership at:

<https://www.salvagewire.com>

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Efficiency Isn't About Working Faster

It's About Eliminating Waste

For decades, automotive recyclers have measured efficiency by how quickly their teams answer phones, quote parts, process orders, and move vehicles through the yard. But today's most successful businesses are redefining what efficiency really means.

It's no longer about working faster—it's about removing waste from everyday operations.

The Hidden Cost of Interruptions

Many recycling businesses believe they have a staffing problem. Often, they actually have an interruption problem.

Every phone call requiring a salesperson to stop what they're doing, every inquiry about opening hours, every request for directions around the yard, and every call transferred between departments breaks concentration and delays higher-value work.

While each interaction may only take a few minutes, the cumulative impact across an entire day—or an entire business—is significant. The result isn't simply lost time; it's reduced productivity, delayed customer service, and missed sales opportunities.

AI Is Changing the Definition of Efficiency

Artificial intelligence is changing how businesses think about productivity. Rather than asking people to work harder or longer, AI is increasingly being used to remove repetitive, low-value tasks from daily operations.

Routine inquiries can be handled automatically. Information can be gathered before a staff member becomes involved, and administrative tasks can begin before an employee even picks up the phone. The objective isn't to replace people—it's to ensure people spend more time doing work that creates value.

Not Every Customer Interaction Requires the Same Response

One of the biggest opportunities for efficiency comes from recognizing that not every inquiry requires the same level of expertise. Some customers are ready to purchase immediately, while others need information.

Modern AI systems can identify the purpose of an inquiry, gather relevant information, and direct customers to the most appropriate resource.

By ensuring experienced staff focus on high-value conversations while routine requests are resolved efficiently, businesses can improve both customer satisfaction and operational performance.

From Theory to Practice

At B&R Auto, AI has become what Michael Severyn, Chief Revenue Officer, describes as a “force multiplier for our sales team.”

Before introducing ari's AI voice agent, “Maria,” B&R Auto was dropping approximately 40% of incoming calls. According to Severyn, that figure has since fallen to approximately 2%, while positive customer satisfaction has increased from around 70% to roughly 95%.

Beyond simply answering more calls, the technology is helping B&R capture better information before a salesperson becomes involved. Customers can provide details about the parts they need, allowing higher-value opportunities to be identified and prioritized and giving salespeople greater context before they return a call.

As Severyn explains, “Maria did not replace any humans. She made our humans more effective.”

The result is a combination of AI-driven consistency and human expertise. The AI helps ensure opportunities are captured, qualified and prioritized, while B&R's salespeople



Chris Daglis is CEO & Founder of ari (auto recycler intelligence), powered by Auto PARTnered Solutions.



bring the product knowledge, judgment and customer relationships needed to convert those opportunities.

For recyclers, this is where the productivity opportunity becomes tangible: fewer lost calls, better-qualified opportunities and salespeople spending more of their time selling rather than starting every customer interaction from zero.

Importantly, the technology hasn't replaced B&R's salespeople.

Beyond Customer Service

Efficiency doesn't stop once the phone is answered.

Artificial intelligence is also beginning to reshape inventory acquisition, administration, and business workflows. Vehicle buying inquiries can be qualified more quickly, information can be collected automatically, and internal systems can be updated without duplicate data entry.

Opportunities that might otherwise be missed outside business hours can be captured and reviewed when staff return, creating a more responsive business with fewer manual processes and greater consistency.

Better Data Leads to Better Decisions

Another benefit of AI is the quality of information it generates. Businesses gain greater visibility into customer

inquiries, response times, common requests, and operational bottlenecks.

These insights allow owners and managers to make informed decisions about staffing, workflow improvements and customer service priorities. Efficiency isn't only about doing things faster—it's also about making better decisions.

People Remain the Competitive Advantage

Technology alone doesn't create great customer experiences. People do.

Experienced salespeople understand customers, build relationships, and solve complex problems in ways technology cannot. The role of AI is not to replace these skills, but to amplify them. As B&R's experience demonstrates, AI can provide the consistency, information and prioritization that allows experienced people to do what they do best—apply judgment, build relationships and convert opportunities.

The Future of Efficiency

The automotive recycling industry continues to evolve. Labor shortages, rising customer expectations, and increasing operational complexity mean businesses are continually looking for ways to improve productivity without compromising service.

Artificial intelligence is emerging as one of the tools helping recyclers achieve that balance—not because it works faster than people, but because it enables people to focus on the work that matters most.

Ultimately, the businesses that succeed won't simply adopt new technology. They'll rethink how work flows through their organization, eliminate unnecessary interruptions, and empower their teams to spend more time creating value.

Because the most valuable asset in any automotive recycling business isn't technology.

It's the time and expertise of its people. Protecting that time may be the greatest efficiency gain of all. **TB**

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Building a **CIRCULAR BATTERY ECONOMY**

Cirba Solutions is Investing Resources in the Safe Handling and Recycling of EV Batteries to Build a Network that Auto Recyclers Can Count On.

Automotive Recycling™ ToolBox Editor Caryn Smith sat down with **Danielle Spalding of Cirba Solutions** to discuss the current state of EV battery recycling, and the efforts her company is making to ensure that a reliable battery recycling system is available to auto recyclers.

As the premier battery recycling materials and management company, Cirba Solutions is leading the industry with 35 years of experience, driving innovation, sustainability, and efficiency across the entire process. With six facilities, they have the largest operational footprint across North America. Cirba Solutions handles all battery chemistries and formats and work with a variety of partners to collect end-of-life and scrap batteries, contributing to the creation of a dynamic, closed-loop domestic supply chain.

Danielle has more than 20 years as a public affairs and marketing professional and nearly 10 years in the battery industry. She drives company growth and brand reputation with innovative, creative, and forward-thinking initiatives. A trusted leader in battery policy and implementation, Danielle combines deep global expertise in battery recycling and sustainable critical mineral refinement with innovative ideas that help move the industry forward. She supports the industry in many roles including on the Board of Directors of the Battery Materials & Technology Coalition (BMTC) and her work as Chairperson of ReMAs (Recycled Materials Association) Battery Policy Workgroup.



TOOLBOX: What makes Cirba Solutions a leading expert in battery recycling, especially in the EV sector?

What differentiates Cirba Solutions is our unmatched 35 years of expertise in battery recycling processing and handling the complexities of used and scrap batteries through a vertically integrated approach. From collection and logistics, to disassembly, and all the way through to the recovery of critical minerals. That experience matters in an industry where battery technologies, regulations, chemistries, and the EV market are evolving.

For automotive recyclers, having an experienced battery recycling partner is crucial. Safely handling EV batteries goes beyond the materials found within them – storage transportation and regulatory compliance must all be considered. With our full-service capabilities, our teams are equipped to help customers navigate the dynamics of end-of-life EV batteries and how to properly and responsibly dispose of them.

TOOLBOX: Why is it a priority for Cirba Solutions to invest in educating consumers on proper and safe battery recycling? What tools has the company developed to build awareness?

Ninety-nine percent of Americans say they use lithium-ion battery-powered items daily. Recent research shows that EV adoption is likely to grow—35 percent of non-EV drivers surveyed said they are planning to buy an EV in the next 12-36 months. Considering how often lithium-ion batteries are used, it's very telling that education needs to be a priority. Related to EVs, 60 percent of owners have

not thought about what to do when a battery reaches end-of-life; more than 40 percent are unsure how long it will last; and nearly 50 percent do not know when it should be replaced.

Improper handling, storage, and transportation of batteries can create safety concerns, especially for those that are damaged, defective, or recalled (DDR). For automotive recyclers, those risks can extend beyond the battery itself to employees, facilities, and more. Because of this, education and training need to be proactive rather than reactive.

Cirba Solutions invests in resources that help industry partners better understand how to identify, handle, store, package, and transport batteries safely. This includes educational materials and guidance around battery safety, packaging, and Department of Transportation (DOT) shipping requirements. We also participate in community events, partner with local agencies, and provide locations where consumers can access convenient locations to recycle batteries.

TOOLBOX: EV batteries present safety risks; how can you prevent an incident from happening or handle a battery that has gone into thermal runaway?

One of the most important things to understand is that a battery does not have to look damaged to pose a risk. Collision damage, environmental exposure, punctures, improper disassembly, electrical faults, or other forms can compromise a battery and increase the potential for a thermal event.

Prevention starts with proper training and procedures. Employees should know how to identify and assess batteries, recognize signs of damage or instability, and follow appropriate protocols for handling, isolating, and storing. DDR batteries require different handling and packaging, along with additional regulations per DOT requirements.

If there is smoke coming from a battery, if it's rapidly heating or showing signs of a thermal event, follow emergency response plans for your site, maintain a safe distance, and contact emergency responders. Thermal events involving lithium-ion batteries may behave differently than other materials,



so it's important to collaborate with first responders and qualified battery experts in advance of an event to be better prepared.

TOOLBOX: What are the benefits of having a protocol and system in place for handling EV batteries?

With safety top of mind, a defined process gives employees direction on how to identify, assess, handle, store, and prepare EV batteries for compliant and proper end-of-life disposal. When everyone is educated on the process, which includes knowing what to do when a battery is damaged, it helps to enhance safety and mitigate risks to teams, facilities, and the community.

Overall, having a defined process can give you peace of mind, save your company time, help you adhere to regulatory guidelines, and reduce disruptions to your business.

TOOLBOX: Why is it important for auto recyclers in the U.S. to ensure their scrap EV batteries and other lithium-ion batteries that contain critical minerals stay in the U.S.-based circular economy?

End-of-life EV batteries contain critical minerals like lithium, nickel, cobalt, etc., and right now the United States is heavily dependent on foreign entities for these materials. When we prioritize the diversification of our sourcing streams—battery recycling is a perfect example—for critical minerals we can achieve:

- Stronger supply chains that are less vulnerable to disruptions.
- Strengthened national security.

- Positioning the U.S. as competitive players in the global critical minerals industry.

If we look at auto recyclers specifically, when we prioritize a domestic supply chain and closed-loop approach, more vehicles would ultimately be captured domestically and shipped to an automotive recycler, rather than being shipped overseas where a foreign entity will be the one to handle it at end-of-life and determine where those materials end up.

TOOLBOX: What questions should an automotive recycler ask of a potential EV battery recycler to ensure they are ethically and responsibly handled?

Choosing an EV battery recycling partner should involve more than simply asking about monetary value, as automotive recyclers are entrusting that partner with a potentially hazardous product so it is important to understand how the battery will be managed.

Ask about the company's experience and capabilities. Do they actually process lithium-ion batteries, or are they brokering the material to someone else? Where will your batteries physically go?

You also want to ask about safety and logistics. Can the company help assess battery condition and determine the right packaging, storage methods, and ensure compliance with transportation requirements? Do they have experience managing DDR batteries? What documentation and tracking will be provided throughout the process?

Further, from an environmental perspective, ask what permits and

Creating a circular battery economy requires participation at every level.

Battery recyclers help provide infrastructure and expertise, but automotive recyclers are powerful advocates. Automotive recyclers are uniquely positioned to help.



certifications they possess and how they maintain compliance with relevant transportation and environmental agencies.

TOOLBOX: What are the best practices to follow when preparing a battery for transportation?

The first step is knowing exactly what you have and understanding its condition. The transport of lithium-ion batteries is regulated by DOT, including requirements for packaging and labeling, which can vary based on the battery chemistry, size, and whether it's DDR.

Before a battery is packaged and transported, it needs to be assessed for signs of damage or instability, such as punctures, leaking, swelling, unusual heat, burn marks, etc. Terminals need to be properly protected against short circuits—this can be done by taping the terminals with clear tape, placing in a clear anti-static bag, or for larger-format batteries using cardboard, placed in between batteries or

in a box. Proper packaging for its condition, labeling, documentation, and logistics coordination are also critical parts of the process.

It's also important not to assume that every EV battery can be packaged and shipped the same way. A battery removed intact from a vehicle under normal circumstances can present a very different transportation scenario than one recovered from an accident, fire, or flood. Damaged or defective batteries require specialized packaging, handling, and transportation procedures.

TOOLBOX: Cirba Solutions' research found there is a lack of awareness from consumers on recycling batteries. How can an auto recycler participate in community education to help close this gap?

Based on the findings, it's clear there are knowledge gaps. Related to EVs, for individuals who said they are planning to purchase an EV, 55 percent cited they have "some knowledge" when it comes to EV battery safety and about half said they have "no knowledge" of battery recycling. Consumers may understand that batteries should be recycled, but that does not mean they know what to do when they reach end-of-life. As battery-powered products, including electric vehicles, continue to reach end-of-life in greater numbers, closing that knowledge gap becomes increasingly important.

Improper disposal of end-of-life batteries or manufacturing scrap goes beyond losing valuable materials. Lithium-ion batteries that enter municipal waste or traditional recycling streams can present risks to employees, facilities, and the greater community. When a battery is properly disposed of and recycled, we are not only leaving positive impacts on the environment, but we are also recovering critical minerals that can go back into the domestic supply chain and be used over and over again to make new products, including batteries.

Creating a circular battery economy requires participation at every level. Battery recyclers help provide infrastructure and expertise, but automotive recyclers are powerful advocates. Automotive recyclers are uniquely positioned to help. They are often trusted resources within their communities and already understand that a battery needs to be properly disposed of at end-of-life.

If you would like to learn more or are interested in partnering with Cirba Solutions, please contact the company at Communications@CirbaSolutions.com or 800.852.8127. TB

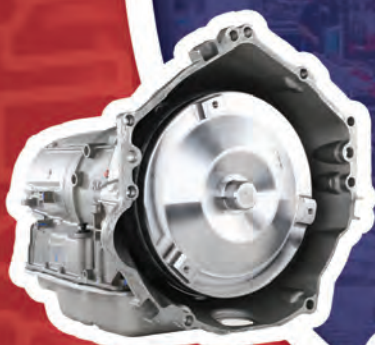




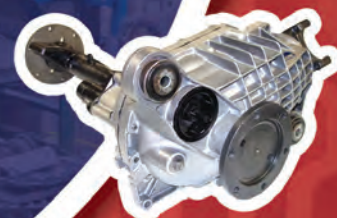
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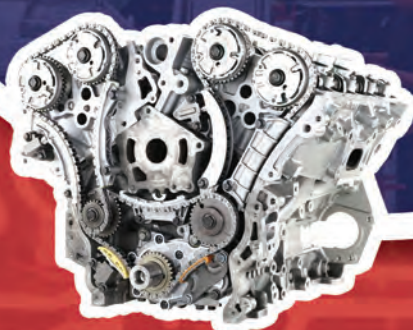
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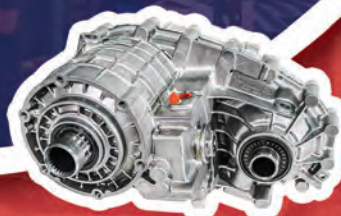
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From Stress to Peace of Mind

Entrepreneurs are taught to chase profits, growth, and recognition. But ask seasoned leaders what they value most, and you'll often hear a different answer: peace of mind.

In a world of constant notifications, financial risks, and daily uncertainty, peace of mind has become the ultimate measure of success. For owners of recycling yards, auto parts businesses, or any small enterprise, peace of mind is not about avoiding problems; it's about learning to remain calm within them.

The Stress Epidemic

The World Health Organization calls stress the "health epidemic of the 21st century." Business owners are especially vulnerable. Studies show that small business owners report nearly twice the stress levels of salaried workers. The reasons are clear:

- **Financial uncertainty:** Revenue fluctuates with markets.
- **Responsibility for employees' livelihoods:** Families depend on your decisions.
- **Endless competition:** Constant pressure to keep prices and service sharp.
- **Blurred work-life boundaries:** Work emails follow you into dinner, vacations, even bed.

But stress is not only external. It is also internal, fueled by fear, perfectionism, and lack of perspective.

Shifting the Definition of Success

Peace of mind requires redefining success. Instead of "never having problems," it means:

- Confidence in handling challenges.
- Clarity in what truly matters.
- Systems that reduce chaos.

Ramit Sethi calls this "living a rich life," where money supports peace, not stress. Similarly, Stoic philosophers taught that real wealth lies not in possessions, but in the tranquility of the mind. And spiritual traditions echo the same: Biblical wisdom reminds us, "Do not worry about tomorrow,

for tomorrow will worry about itself." Peace is not freedom from storms but trust in your anchor.

Tools for Moving from Stress to Peace

1. Simplify Systems. Complexity creates chaos. Simplifying finances, inventory, and workflows brings calm. Dave Ramsey emphasizes that budgets reduce anxiety because they create clarity and control.

2. Practice Mindfulness. Mindfulness is not mystical; it's practical. Ten minutes of focused breathing or meditation lowers cortisol and sharpens awareness. Leaders who pause before reacting make wiser, calmer choices.

3. Align Work with Values. Steven Bartlett reminds us that burnout often comes from misalignment, not effort. When actions align with values, energy increases and stress decreases.

4. Prioritize Health. Exercise, nutrition, and sleep are non-negotiables. Entrepreneurs often sacrifice these for "productivity," but without health, peace is impossible. Bill Perkins, in *Die With Zero*, stresses that health is one of the true currencies of life.

5. Embrace Gratitude. Gratitude journals or simply noting three things daily foster contentment. Neuroscience shows gratitude rewires the brain toward optimism and resilience.

The Bible mentions, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." This verse, across centuries, echoes the same truth: peace of mind comes from mastering the inner world, not controlling the outer one.

Coaching Applications

1. Stress Audit—Identify top five recurring stressors.

Ask: Which can I eliminate? Which must I accept? Which can I delegate?

2. Peace Rituals—Begin and end each day with grounding routines. Silence, reflection, prayer, or journaling.

3. Financial Cushion—Build reserves. Peace of mind often grows in proportion to liquidity. Vicki Robin's *Your Money or Your Life* emphasizes that true freedom comes from designing money around life—not the other way around.

4. Digital Sabbath—Try it once a week. Turn off work emails, social media, and business calls for 24 hours. Use the time for family, rest, or reflection. Many leaders report that this single habit lowers stress more than vacations.



Carlos Barboza is the owner of Eco Green Auto Parts, Orlando, FL. Their website is <https://ecogautoparts.com> and they can be found on Facebook @ecogreenautoparts.

At the end of each week, list moments when you felt peace and moments when you felt stress. Over time, patterns emerge. This “peace ledger” shows which actions, people, or environments contribute to calm—or steal it. It turns vague feelings into data you can act on.

The Role of Faith and Spirituality

While Stoicism emphasizes rational control, faith traditions add another dimension: surrender. Many leaders discover that peace comes not only from discipline but from trust in something greater than themselves.

Prayer, scripture reading, or quiet reflection remind entrepreneurs that they are not alone. Problems that seemed overwhelming shrink when placed in the context of eternity. As one business owner told me after a financial crisis: “Once I handed it to God, I slept again.”

This is not passivity; it’s perspective. Faith reminds leaders that they are stewards, not absolute controllers, of outcomes.

Neuroscience shows that stress literally rewires the brain, narrowing focus and increasing fear responses. But mindfulness, gratitude, and faith practices reverse these patterns, strengthening the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain responsible for clarity and decision-making.

This is why daily rituals matter. They don’t just feel good: they reshape how your brain handles stress.

Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.” — Unknown

Peace of mind is not the absence of stress; it is leadership beyond stress. It is the ability to remain grounded when storms hit, to protect health when business demands rise, and to choose joy over worry.

For business owners, peace of mind is not a luxury; it is the foundation of sustainable success. Build systems, habits, and values that cultivate it, and you will not only lead better—you will live better.

By combining Stoic discipline, modern psychology, and timeless spirituality, leaders can move from stress to peace of mind, and from survival to true fulfillment. Enjoy your peaceful journey. Blessings. **TB**



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The Overlooked Marketing Method Automotive Recyclers Should Reconsider

Every few years someone announces that a particular marketing method is “dead.” First it was print advertising. Then email was supposed to replace everything. More recently, the focus shifted almost entirely to social media and digital ads. But something interesting often happens when a marketing method is declared outdated. The crowd abandons it. And when the crowd leaves, competition disappears.

For automotive recyclers looking to stand out in a crowded marketplace, that shift may create an opportunity hiding in plain sight: direct mail.

When Everyone Leaves, Opportunity Appears

Marketing trends often move in waves. Businesses follow what everyone else seems to be doing at the moment. Right now, most marketing attention is focused on digital channels:

- Email campaigns
- Social media posts
- Online ads
- Marketplace listings

Those tools certainly have value. But because nearly every business is using them, they have also become extremely crowded environments. Consider the average email inbox. Many professionals receive well over a hundred messages a day. Most of them are deleted or ignored within seconds. Social media feeds are even more chaotic. Posts appear and disappear within minutes, often buried beneath hundreds of other messages competing for attention. Digital advertising faces a similar challenge. After years of exposure, consumers have learned to tune out banner ads and sponsored posts almost automatically.

In other words, the most popular methods have become the noisiest.

The Quiet Mailbox

Now consider something different: the physical mailbox. Unlike the digital world, it has become relatively quiet. Most businesses dramatically reduced their direct mail campaigns as they shifted budgets toward online marketing. As a result, the number of marketing pieces arriving in a typical mailbox has declined.

Scarcity Changes Behavior

When something interesting appears in a mailbox today, it often receives more attention simply because there are fewer competing messages around it. A well-designed piece of mail has qualities that digital marketing cannot easily replicate. It is physical. It occupies space. It can be handled, set aside, and revisited later. A shop owner may glance at a mail piece, place it on the counter, and look at it again a few days later when they have more time. That persistence creates additional opportunities for the message to register. Digital messages rarely have that advantage. An email is either read immediately or quickly disappears beneath dozens of newer messages.

Physical Presence Matters

Direct mail also creates a different type of interaction. Holding something in your hands is a more tangible experience than scanning text on a screen. A printed piece can feel substantial and intentional. For automotive recyclers, that physical presence can reinforce professionalism.

A well-produced mail piece might highlight:

- Delivery reliability
- Warranty policies
- VIN-matching quote capabilities
- Quality control procedures
- Facility photos or team introductions



Mike French is retired after 39 years of business in the automotive recycling industry. He is an author, publisher, consultant, and speaker. Mike is the founder and executive director of the Christian Auto Recyclers and Vendors Association (CARVA) and will be at upcoming recycler trade shows and events. Mike is available to speak at your group, conference, or event. He loves to share inspirational stories that demonstrate how the Word of God actively changes lives. He can be reached at mike@carva.group. Visit www.CARVA.group and/or www.PowerPackedPromises.com.



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Those elements help communicate credibility and stability—qualities that repair shops value when choosing parts suppliers.

Following Data, Not Trends

In many industries, some companies never abandoned direct mail, even when it fell out of fashion. Their decision was simple: the numbers continued to support it. While competitors shifted all their marketing resources into digital channels, these businesses maintained a balanced approach. They evaluated response rates and continued using the methods that produced results.

The Lesson is Important

Marketing decisions should be guided by performance data rather than trends. Just because a marketing method is less fashionable does not mean it has become ineffective. In fact, the opposite

is often true. When fewer competitors use a method, the remaining messages receive more attention.

Standing Out in a Crowded Industry

Automotive recycling has become increasingly competitive. Parts are listed nationally, and buyers can compare prices across multiple suppliers within seconds. That environment makes differentiation more important than ever. If every recycler is communicating through the same digital platforms, their messages can begin to blend.

Direct Mail Offers a Way to Appear Somewhere Different

Instead of competing for attention in a crowded inbox, your message arrives in a place where far fewer competitors are present.

An Opportunity Worth Considering

When people say, “Nobody does that anymore,” it may sound like a warning. In marketing, however, it can signal an advantage. If competitors abandon a marketing method, they leave behind space that someone else can occupy.

For automotive recyclers, direct mail may not replace digital marketing. But it can complement it—creating another touchpoint that reinforces your presence with repair shops and other customers.

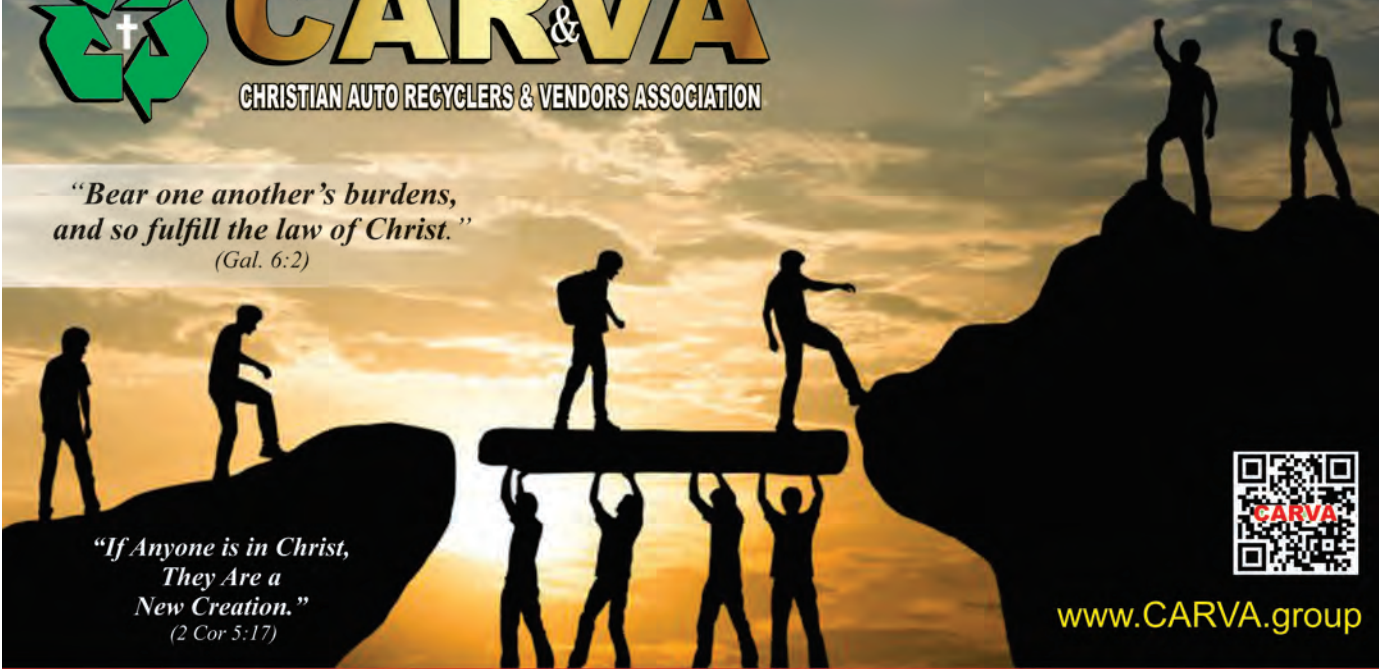
Marketing methods rarely stop working simply because trends change. More often, they become more effective when fewer businesses are using them. The key question is not whether a marketing method is fashionable. It is whether it still captures attention.

In a world overflowing with digital noise, the quiet mailbox may be one of the most overlooked opportunities available to automotive recyclers today. **TB**



*“Bear one another’s burdens,
and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*
(Gal. 6:2)

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They Are a
New Creation.”*
(2 Cor 5:17)




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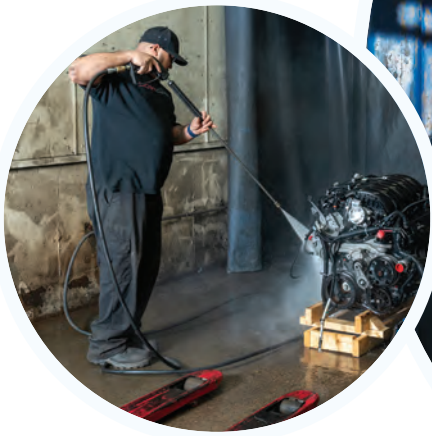
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BUILDING A MORE EFFICIENT Auto Recycling Facility

For many auto recyclers, certification is often viewed as a regulatory requirement or an environmental initiative. In reality, the Certified Automotive Recycler (CAR) program is much more than a compliance checklist—it is a blueprint for operating a more organized, efficient, profitable, and professional recycling facility.

The Automotive Recyclers Association (ARA) developed the Certified Automotive Recycler (CAR) program to establish consistent business standards throughout the industry. While the program ensures compliance with environmental and safety regulations, the greatest benefit is often the operational efficiency that results from implementing those standards.

Efficiency Begins with Standards

Every efficient business relies on systems. The CAR program provides those systems by establishing best practices for general business operations, environmental management, occupational safety and health, licensing and regulatory compliance, and documentation and recordkeeping.

Rather than reacting to inspections or solving problems after they occur, certified facilities develop procedures that make daily operations smoother and more predictable. Employees know what is expected, managers spend less time addressing avoidable issues, and the business is better positioned for growth.

Using Productivity to Drive Compliance

Certification encourages recyclers to understand the numbers that define their operation.



Sue Schauls has a Science degree in Environmental Planning. As the Executive Director of Iowa Automotive Recyclers, she developed and implemented the Iowa – Certified Auto Recyclers Environmental (I-CARE) program. She conducts on-site compliance audits and online or in-person training. As the certification consultant to ARA, Sue integrated the CAR program with the High Voltage Vehicle for safe management of electric and hybrid vehicles and Recall for airbag safety and sales in an online audit program for tracking compliance with the standards. Sue continues to provide compliance assistance through the CAR program. Guidance resources can be found at <https://certification.a-r-a.org/>.

Track key performance indicators such as:

- Average number of vehicles processed each month
- Number of dismantling bays
- Number of employees

This effort does more than measure productivity. These metrics also determine which regulations apply to the business.

For example, vehicle processing volume directly impacts:

- Fluid storage capacity
- Waste generation rates
- Hazardous waste classifications
- Oil storage requirements
- Disposal scheduling

Likewise, employee count influences OSHA training, recordkeeping, and reporting requirements. Understanding these operational indicators allows managers to anticipate compliance obligations rather than reacting to them,

reducing costly surprises and improving workflow.

Organized Environmental Management Saves Time and Money

Environmental compliance is often viewed as an expense, but well-managed facilities quickly discover that organized environmental practices improve efficiency throughout the yard.

CAR standards provide guidance for:

- Fluid evacuation and storage
- Used oil management
- Hazardous waste handling
- Battery recycling
- Refrigerant recovery
- Mercury switch removal
- Parts cleaning operations
- Vehicle and core storage
- Stormwater management

Many automotive recycling wastes—including used oil, transmission fluid,

brake fluid, lead-acid batteries, fluorescent lamps, mercury switches, and refrigerants—are exempt from hazardous waste regulations when properly recycled.

Having documented procedures ensures these materials are handled correctly the first time, minimizing spills, reducing disposal costs, avoiding regulatory violations, and protecting valuable inventory.

Spill Prevention Protects Productivity

Oil storage is a normal part of automotive recycling. Facilities with 1,320 gallons or more of oil storage capacity must maintain a Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan. Fortunately, many facilities storing less than 10,000 gallons can prepare their own written SPCC plans.

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An effective spill prevention program does more than satisfy EPA requirements. It minimizes downtime, reduces cleanup expenses, protects equipment, and keeps employees focused on production instead of emergency response.

Stormwater Compliance Prevents Costly Interruptions

Stormwater regulations remain one of the most common areas where automotive recyclers receive regulatory inspections. Most facilities require a stormwater permit, along with a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), routine inspections, employee training, and, in many states, water sampling. Facilities that build stormwater management into their routine operations spend less time preparing for inspections and far less money correcting preventable problems.

Efficient Parts Cleaning Operations

Parts cleaning is another area where good procedures improve both compliance and productivity. Outdoor washing with surface discharge is prohibited under stormwater regulations.

Facilities connected to municipal sewer systems generally have more disposal options, while facilities operating on septic systems must carefully manage wastewater.

Establishing approved cleaning methods and wastewater handling procedures eliminates confusion, keeps employees productive, and avoids expensive environmental violations.

Safety is Operational Efficiency

Every workplace injury costs time, money, and productivity. The CAR program emphasizes developing a strong safety culture through OSHA-compliant Hazard Communication programs, including:

- Written Hazard Communication Plan
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for workplace chemicals
- GHS-compliant secondary container labels
- Employee safety training
- Designated safety coordinator

Employees who understand workplace hazards work more confidently, make better decisions, and experience fewer injuries. Consistent safety meetings, documented training, and organized chemical management create a safer operation

while reducing lost work time, workers' compensation costs, and production interruptions.

Documentation Makes the Difference

One of the greatest operational advantages of certification is documentation.

When procedures, inspections, training records, permits, and maintenance activities are organized and current, facilities spend less time searching for paperwork and more time running the business. Good documentation also creates smoother regulatory inspections, improves employee accountability, and simplifies management transitions.

Resources That Simplify Certification

The CAR program includes an extensive collection of guidance documents that help recyclers understand and implement certification standards.

The certification website <https://certification.a-r-a.org/> provides step-by-step guidance for:

- Certified Automotive Recycler (CAR) certification
- Gold Seal quality assurance
- High Voltage Vehicle Certification
- Recall Certification for airbags

The industry compliance assistance website found at <https://www.ecarcenter.org/> offers state-specific regulatory information, environmental guidance, and compliance resources that help facilities maintain professional operating standards.

Additional OSHA Hazard Communication resources—including Safety Data Sheets, compliant workplace labels, and downloadable compliance tools—are available to help recyclers build effective workplace safety programs.

Certification is Continuous Improvement

Certification is not about achieving perfection. It is about establishing systems that promote continuous improvement. Most facilities pursuing certification discover they are already much closer to meeting the standards than they expected. The CAR program simply organizes what successful recyclers are already doing while identifying opportunities to improve efficiency, safety, documentation, and regulatory compliance.

Certification demonstrates professionalism to customers, insurers, regulators, and business partners. More importantly, it creates a facility that operates more efficiently every day.

When compliance becomes part of normal operations instead of an occasional project, productivity increases, risks decrease, and the entire business benefits. Certification isn't simply proof that a facility meets industry standards—it is evidence that the business has built the systems necessary to operate efficiently, safely, and successfully for years to come. **TB**

PODCAST OF *My Life*

This week was a wonderful reminder of things I've done during my lifetime. When Vince Edivan, ARA Executive Director, asked if I would be willing to be interviewed on the ARA *Unscripted* podcast, I was delighted to accept because it was an audio/video podcast. During the interview, I had a renewed sense of hope about my life and future, spanning 40+ years in business.

Before it was an accepted business practice, I had already branded myself as the "Car-diologist" decades ago within the auto industry. Typically, branding oneself didn't happen back then. Vince asked about my upbringing with siblings and my parents, classes, speeches, client base, how I moved forward in the speaking business, and how I became a certified speaking professional. The interview also included how I transitioned from industry to industry as well as to Fortune 500 companies. He asked about most of the classes that I have done, particularly Secret Recipes, where I dressed in a chef's hat and apron and presented to attendees from various industries. We also spoke about the class and props that I've used when I presented, "What Hat Are You Wearing."

Eventually, he turned the discussion to one of my five books, *Prescription for Life*, *Garden for Success*, and my long book-mark-style business card, with a poem on the back.

The interview went fast for me but lasted almost an hour and a half, so we covered almost all the details from my events, classes, speaking engagements, and books.

Today, I want to leave you with my favorite words of wisdom.

On the back of my book, *Prescription for Life*, which is full of my articles and published by the *Recyclers Power Source* Magazine, is a quote of mine that reads:

"Watch your thoughts; they become words."

"Watch your words; they become actions."

"Watch your actions; they become your habits."

"Watch your habits; they become your character."

"Watch your character; it becomes your destiny."

As I view my life in the rear view mirror, I've come to realize that this book while it was written for the auto recycling industry, it was also written as a prescription for my own life.

Also, located on the back of my bookmark business card that I've handed out for decades is a printed poem written by John Hall. It's called "A Day's End," and reads:

*Is anyone happier because you passed this way?
Does anyone remember that you spoke to him today?
The day is almost over, and its tolling time is through.
Is there anyone to utter a kindly word of you?
Can you say tonight, in parting with the day that's slipping fast.
That you helped a single brother of the many that you've passed?
Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said?
Does the man whose hopes were fading, now, with courage look ahead?
Did you waste the day, or lose it? Was it well or sorely spent?
Did you leave a trail of kindness, or a scar of discontent?
As you close your eyes in slumber, do you think that God will say,
"You have earned one more tomorrow by the work you did today?"*

As I finished recording the podcast, I heard my wife, Sheila, say that I had done a good job. It was a tiring hour and a half. Of course, Vince stirred the pot to keep me going and brought me back if I veered off track. I appreciated that I was asked for the interview because I was able to recall many memorable moments of my life.

If you are feeling down at this point because of stuff happening in your life, don't worry. I've been there too. It doesn't matter whether it's a personal thing or a business issue; if you have people in your life that care about you and your success, you'll make it.

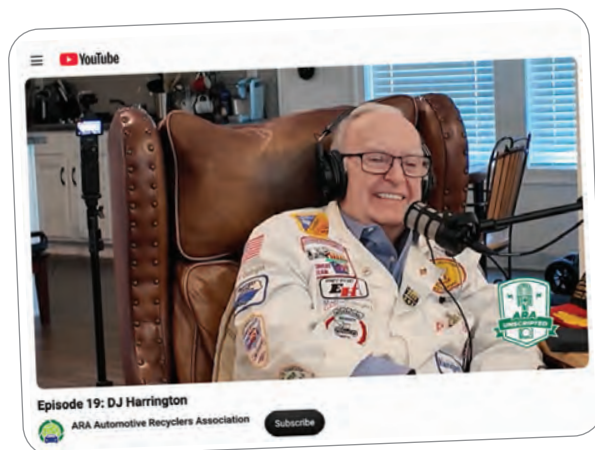
I'll finish off with Drink, Swear, Steal and Lie. Drink—drink from the cup of success, because you deserve it. Swear—swear that you'll tell someone every day that you love them before you put your head back on the pillow. Then Steal—

steal 15 minutes a day for self-improvement. And Lie—when you lie down tonight, thank God that you live in America where we have the freedom to do whatever is needed to keep going.

I did that segment on a Sunday night in a Baptist Church. It went over well, but not before the Pastor took out his handkerchief and started dabbing the sweat that appeared on his forehead. It ended well, though.

Here's a reminder from me, D.J. Harrington. During my lifetime, I've tried to surround myself with positive people, and I've made it. If I can, you can too! It might not happen for you at the time that you want, but what really matters is how you will finish this life.

Let's finish the best that we can! You with me? **TB**



D.J. Harrington is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Phone Logic, Inc., an international training company based in Atlanta, GA. He serves as a consultant and trainer to over 1,000 privately-owned businesses throughout the country, training personnel at all levels of the company, from the dispatcher to the customer service and sales staff. Please visit his website for more information at www.djsays.com.

The Automotive Recyclers Association Disagrees with GM's Position Statement Prohibiting the Use of Recycled Parts

The Automotive Recyclers Association (ARA) is disappointed in GM's updated collision position statement, Use of Genuine GM Original Equipment Parts, which strictly prohibits the use of recycled original equipment motor vehicle parts. Recycled original equipment parts give vehicle owners access to affordable repair parts at a time when repair costs continue to climb. With the average vehicle on U.S. roads now approaching 13 years old, automotive recyclers are increasingly becoming the only source for OEM parts as a vehicle ages.

ARA Executive Director Vince Edivan notes that, "The ability for vehicle owners to choose recycled parts is becoming more important every year. Without that option, vehicle owners may be unable to afford to keep their car on the road. We believe GM's position creates an important contradiction. If ADAS components can remain in service after a collision when they pass OEM inspection, diagnostic, and calibration procedures, then an undamaged OEM component from another vehicle should be evaluated under those same standards. If prior collision exposure alone makes an ADAS component unsafe, then all ADAS components should be replaced after every collision repair, regardless of condition or calibration results. If inspection and calibration are sufficient to validate a component already on a collision-damaged vehicle, those same principles should apply to properly inspected

and validated recycled OEM components. We support repair decisions based on safety, testing, and objective evidence, not blanket assumptions about the source of a part."

ARA is closely monitoring whether GM's updated position will affect vehicle owners' ability to repair their vehicles with recycled parts. ARA has historically, and successfully, opposed state legislation that would mandate the exclusive use of new OEM parts in vehicle repairs. GM's updated position statement highlights the importance of ARA's advocacy and its role in protecting consumer access to a competitive replacement parts market.

Since 1943, the Automotive Recyclers Association (ARA) has represented professional automotive recyclers, a vibrant and important industry within the automotive supply chain and vehicle recycling infrastructure. Professional automotive recycling facilities play an important role in the vehicle repair market by providing vehicle owners with cost-effective alternatives to more expensive new original equipment manufacturer replacement parts. Professional automotive recyclers provide vehicle owners with the ability to choose recycled automotive repair parts, thereby ensuring competition in the replacement parts market and providing vehicle owners with the ability to repair their vehicles with recycled original equipment manufacturer replacement parts.

—Vince Edivan, ARA Executive Director

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Auto Recyclers' Midwest News



Strong On All Fronts

BY SANDY BLALOCK

The theme for the 2026 Midwest Automotive Recyclers Summit & Expo was “Stronger Together.” By the time we left Indianapolis, I think everyone who attended understood just how appropriate those words really were.

Held August 13–15, the Midwest Summit brought together professional automotive recyclers, vendors, association leaders, and industry partners for three days of education, networking, business, and friendship. The event continued its regional growth this year, bringing together Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, and, for the first time, Minnesota.

Our purpose was simple: create an opportunity for our industry to come together, share ideas, learn from one another, and build relationships that make all of us better.

What we didn't plan for was Mother Nature adding a few lessons of her own.

Putting “Stronger Together” to the Test

Neither storms nor rain could dampen our spirits, although they certainly made the Summit more memorable.

As conditions outside intensified, we experienced a brief power outage and kept a close eye on the nearby White River, only about a half-mile from the hotel, as it crested. At one point, there were concerns that the hotel could face a more significant loss of resources, including power. Thankfully, those worst-case concerns never became reality.

The uncertainty did lead several attendees to make the understandable decision to leave early because of concerns about being able to get out safely. Many of us remained, adjusted to the circumstances, and did what automotive recyclers tend to do particularly well: adapt and keep moving forward.

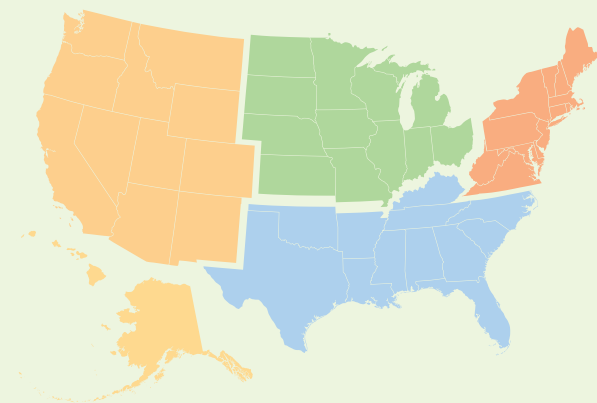
In an unexpected way, the challenges outside brought the people inside even closer together.

Why Showing Up Matters

Despite everything happening around us, the purpose of the Summit never changed.

Educational sessions gave attendees an opportunity to step away from the daily demands of their businesses and focus on issues affecting professional automotive recycling. Vendors spent meaningful time with recyclers, demonstrated products and services, and heard firsthand about the needs and challenges facing today's facilities.

But some of the best education at an industry event doesn't happen during a scheduled session.



It happens at a vendor booth when a conversation leads to an idea you can take home. It happens in the hallway when two recyclers realize they are facing the same problem. It happens over a meal, between meetings, or when someone you have known for years introduces you to someone you should have known years ago.

Those conversations are why showing up matters.

Our businesses may compete, but we also face many of the same challenges: changing vehicles, advancing technology, compliance responsibilities, workforce issues, customer expectations, and the constant need to operate smarter and more efficiently.

There is tremendous value in sitting across the table from someone who understands those challenges and simply asking, “How are you handling this?”

An Evening to Remember

After a day filled with uncertainty, many of us stayed and toughed it out together. What followed was an evening that reminded us exactly why gatherings like this are so important.

There was laughter, a great auction, plenty of stories, and genuine camaraderie.

After watching the weather, the river, and even the lights throughout the day, being together that evening felt a little different. We had another shared experience—and probably a few stories that will be retold at industry events for years to come.

That is something I have always appreciated about the automotive recycling industry. When circumstances become difficult, people step up. They check on one another, share information, find solutions, and, whenever possible, manage to find something to laugh about along the way.

Stronger Across State Lines

The continued growth of the Midwest Summit demonstrates what can happen when state associations look beyond borders and recognize the value of collaboration.

With **Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri**, and now **Minnesota** working together, we can create stronger educational opportunities, greater value for vendors, more networking for recyclers, and a broader exchange of ideas.

Each association maintains its own identity and serves its own members, but many of the challenges and opportunities facing our industry are bigger than any one state.

Working together benefits everyone.

We Lived the Theme

Looking back on the 2026 Midwest Automotive Recyclers Summit & Expo, I will remember the education, vendors, conversations, auction, and friendships.

I'll also remember the lights going out for a bit. I'll remember watching the White River and wondering what the next few hours might bring.

Most of all, I'll remember that despite everything happening outside, inside there were people exchanging ideas, helping one another, talking business, laughing, and building relationships.

In many ways, that is a pretty good reflection of our industry.

We cannot control every challenge that comes our way. We can control how we respond—and whether we face those challenges alone or alongside people who understand them. This year in Indianapolis, **“Stronger Together” wasn’t simply our theme. We lived it.** 🇺🇸



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PUBLISHED 6 TIMES A YEAR AutoRecyclingNow.com/Toolbox



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Published by Driven By Design LLC

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Important News About

Automotive Recycling™ **ToolBox** Edition

This issue marks the Final Edition of the ToolBox.

Created by industry veteran Mike French and later entrusted to Automotive Recyclers Association, the ToolBox has long provided practical ideas and insights for automotive recyclers.

*As ARA expands its digital resources, the ToolBox article library will be available as an online resource at **<https://autorecyclingnow.com/toolbox/>**.*

Thank you for being part of this journey. As the ToolBox comes to a close, the knowledge it shared will continue to help the industry move forward.

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