



**Chantal Lamarre,**  
Sales Director  
Eastern Canada, CARRUS

## **CARRUS APPOINTS NEW SALES DIRECTOR**

Exemplary career woman, Chantal Lamarre has built over the last 20 years a solid reputation as a business leader in the auto body industry. It was a pure coincidence that Mrs. Lamarre first discovered a passion for the automotive industry which had her creating two companies. After leaving her position as director of customer service for a windows and doors manufacturer, she has agreed to temporarily occupy administrative functions in a body shop. The experiment, which was supposed to last only three weeks, took a very different turn. Pleased with her sense of leadership, the shop owner asked her to stay and acquire more experience in accounting and finance in order to help him grow the business. Not afraid of challenges, Chantal Lamarre accepted and followed various courses in accounting, human resources and body shop management. After months of hard work, she was appointed to the role of Director of Operations, and under her guidance, the body shop saw its sales triple within one and a half year.

Ambitious, she decided to venture into her own business and opened a mobile body shop (Pro-Chip) in 1998. After ten years of mobile operation, she then opened a body shop in Brossard on the South Shore of Montreal (Collision Prestige Brossard). Chantal Lamarre is now ready to take on a new challenge within the team of Carrus Technologies. She brings with her an increased awareness of the collision repair environment and a diverse experience that will benefit all current and future customers of CARRUS. A determined leader, Chantal Lamarre is highly aware of the changes affecting the automotive industry, the customer expectations, and the challenges that lay ahead.

## **VEHICLES OF THE FUTURE: ARE YOU READY TO FACE THE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION?**

**By Marie-Claude Veillette, Carrus Technologies**

What seemed wacky and even impossible a few years ago is gradually becoming reality. After getting the green light in May to hit the road in Nevada, the Google self-driving car was allowed to – under certain conditions – travel on some roads in California as of late September. Google co-founder Sergey Brin said *Google* will have autonomous cars available for the general public within the next five years.

### **Myth or Reality?**

Whether people are for or against it, the trend of automated vehicles is here to stay. Moreover, several models of intelligent vehicles are already available on the market, including cars that park themselves, adjust their speed according to the vehicle ahead, slow down or change direction when a collision appears imminent.

Members of The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) have forecasted that driverless vehicles are the most promising form of intelligent transportation. They added that they will account for up to 75 percent of cars on the road by 2040.

Although the technology is evolving, two factors come to curb the mass production of these automated vehicles. The first is economic, the second social. Manufacturers will have to find a way to make these vehicles affordable despite high production costs due to technology. They must also convince drivers to delegate more control of their vehicle to an on-board computer, hence the importance of developing vehicles that offer more security.

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## Google Not Alone in the Race

Despite the fact that on May 7, Google became the first to get a license for a vehicle without a driver, similar requests are currently emanating from Detroit automakers as well as Asian manufacturers. In Germany, the Continental Automotive Group is performing tests in order to obtain the same rights as Google.

Unlike Google's attempt at a self-driving vehicle which called for sophisticated and expensive equipment, Continental's take on the self-driving vehicle would be more of a semi-autonomous version that they are hoping would be a more affordable and a shorter-term solution using their own technology. They have taken a Volkswagen Passat and replaced its brake and steering controls with sensors and technology that would allow the vehicle to analyze its surroundings and drive accordingly.

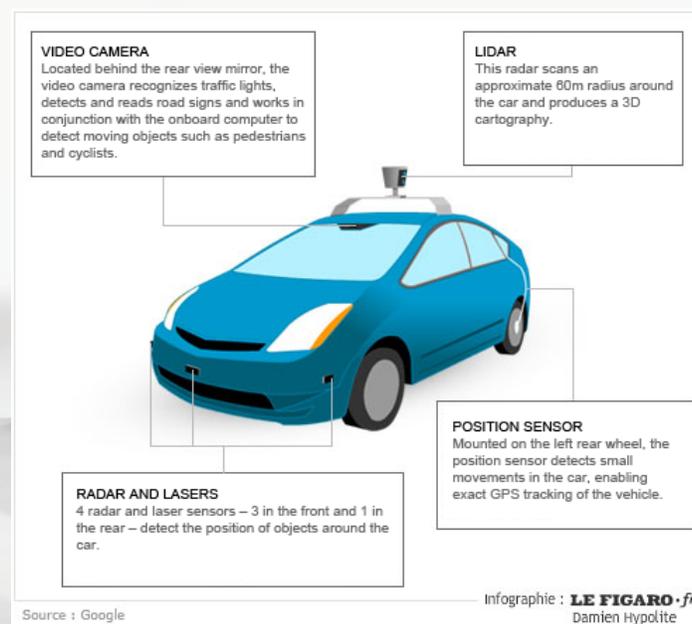
Nowadays, most of the major automakers are working on prototypes more or less automated. This is the case of GM, BMW and Audi who invest heavily in research and development of tomorrow's cars. The newest model of GM Cadillac XTS is equipped with sensors, radars and cameras scanning 360 degrees to prevent accidents. Like Continental Automotive Group, General Motors plans to market models of semi-autonomous vehicles by 2015.

## Vehicles of the Future: Impact on Collision Repair Industry?

Although it is impossible to guess at the exact impacts on the collision repair industry at this juncture, it is sure that computer-driven vehicles will impact the industry in one way or another. Although its technology is still unproven, Google has traveled over 480,000 miles without accidents, and they now have 12 driverless cars on the road.

It remains to be seen how these vehicles will perform in Canada. Tested under more lenient conditions, cameras, sensors and lasers have not yet passed the test of snow, ice and slush! This reality will certainly throw a wrench in the plans of automakers, who, despite all the technological considerations, have not perhaps taken into consideration the full scope of Mother Nature's whims.

## Google Autonomous Car



# AUTO INSURANCE CLAIMS ON THE DECLINE: HOW TO SUCCEED DESPITE THE DOWNTURN

By Marie-Claude Veillette, Carrus Technologies

It's a known fact among insurance providers, but collision repair shop owners have also borne witness to a decrease in the number of damaged vehicles coming into their body shops over the last few years. The *Autorité des marchés financiers* (AMF) qualified 2010 as an exceptional year, noting in its annual report that the number of collision-related insurance claims reached its lowest level in 25 years. Although the numbers increased by 4% in 2011, the total number of claims has remained at a very low level.

This downward trend has also had an impact on the average auto insurance premium. The *Groupement des assureurs automobiles* (GAA) indicates that between 2005 and 2011, the average annual price of auto insurance policies (fire, theft, vandalism, glass breakage and collision) decreased 10% from \$589 to \$536.

## Why the Decline?

Several factors explain the general decline in the number of claims that some shop owners unofficially estimate at 35%. In its annual report on automobile insurance rates, AMF surmises that milder winters and less precipitation are key factors in the reduced number of claims.

Anne Morin of the GAA argues that other factors must be taken into consideration, such as aging of the population and vehicle automation.

GAA statistics show that the number of accidents decreases for drivers in the 30 to 65 age bracket, which reflects the demographic age portrait of Quebec, where the median age is estimated as 41.4 years, according to Statistics Canada.

The introduction of ever-more efficient vehicles, equipped with antilock brakes, radar, cameras, intelligent parking assist systems and other electronic equipment may also have had an impact on reducing the number of claims, says Morin.

## Get the Right Tools to Perform Better

"Faced with lower volumes, shop owners have to secure the loyalty of their customers and manage their businesses more closely if they want to continue generating profits," advises Chantal Lamarre, Sales Director at Carrus.

This is why it is crucial for collision experts to equip their shops with efficient management software that will help them analyze their strengths and weaknesses.

"Shop owners should understand where they are making money or why they don't. They must be able to analyze their profitability and understand what works and what doesn't," says Lamarre.

## Improve Customer Management and Monitoring

Collision repair shop owners should review the internal structure of their company in order to provide better customer service.

"Taking charge of your customers means a lot of things," says Lamarre. "It's important to put the right person at the right place and provide them with a clear job description and proper training. The customer who just had an accident should feel reassured, comfortable and safe."





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For example, pro-actively contact your customer to give them an update on the repairs. “By taking the lead, you control the situation. The customer will not be calling you at an inopportune moment, and because they feel safe, will be less inclined to doubt the quality of the repairs,” points out Lamarre.

## Diversify Your Services

“Let’s be honest; a customer who visits you to have their car repaired hopes to get good service, but their biggest wish is to never see you again,” says Lamarre.

It is therefore important to diversify your services as much as possible so that customers can return to your shop for something other than only repair work.

“Why not take advantage of the aesthetic side? You might offer, for example, to apply 3M adhesive tape on the hood of a customer’s car that has just been repainted. You could sell carpets or offer Aquapel treatment. These are products and services that don’t require much investment but that may provide big payoffs,” explains Lamarre.

She also suggests offering special promotions at certain times of the year, or promoting loyalty cards with which customers can earn points to redeem on various services.

“The goal of all these approaches is to ensure that the customer won’t forget you. Be everywhere. Participate in conferences, collision repair seminars, talk to your customers. In short, ensure customers will continue to need you,” advises Lamarre.

## Keep Your Employees in the Loop

One of the best investments you can make as a manager is helping to make your employees successful. Tell them what to do and why they should do it. They will necessarily become more productive and better in offering great customer service.

“Make people aware of your expectations and about what’s happening in the industry. Tell them why it’s important to have a particular attitude or do a particular thing,” concludes Lamarre.



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