



## JUMPING IN FLEET FIRST

Frank Dias and Maria Rossetti take the randomness out of collision repairs.



Story by **MAX REID**

Many people enter the collision repair industry for some sense of excitement; a career where they know that no day will be exactly like the one that came before. As a daily news outlet, we here at Collision Repair understand that sentiment intimately. While most collision centres do what they can to market themselves as fixtures in their local communities in the hopes that steady business will follow, some opt to take some of the randomness out of the equation and seek out clients directly.

Enter the world of fleet-based collision repair, where specialty repairs and corporate networking reign supreme. A star example of a facility that operates on the business-to-business side of our industry is Revline Industries in Montreal.

Helmed by the dynamic duo of president Frank Dias and vice president of business development, Maria Rossetti, this shop deals with some of the most high-profile corporate clients currently operating in Quebec, including grocery delivery chains, telecommunications companies and numerous other mobile services with fleets needing regular repair.

Part of the appeal of working with corporate fleets, according to Rossetti, is that certain amenities that consumer-facing repair centres must facilitate, such as rental cars for clients, can largely be dispensed with and therefore, more of the shop's overall focus can be placed on completing repairs. "It's really just about taking care of the client and making sure the repair gets done and in a timely manner—the process is a lot quicker," she said, over the phone with Collision Repair.



From a repair perspective, Dias says that working with fleets allows technicians to really hone in on their skills on a number of highly-specialized commercial models that traditional repair facilities would likely be unequipped to deal with. "They are a special type of client, and certain clients—they're really special, in the sense that some of these vehicles that we take on in fleets are not your standard Ford pickup truck or standard Volvo car," said Dias.



"Some of these vehicles are specially equipped with custom boxes, in some cases, and so when they have collisions you really need a body shop that has a real expertise in that repair, because now you're playing with plastic, carbon fibre and fibreglass." There are many occasions where the technicians at Revline work directly alongside their corporate partners when, for example, a vehicle with a refrigeration component is sent in and third-party specialists are needed to assist.

The experience both provides clients a one-stop-shop for the entire repair process, in addition to giving the staff exposure to the many converging technologies that may be present on a specialized commercial vehicle.

"When you're catering to these people, and you get to know their product well—some of these are refrigerated units, some are for servicing tools—that's the beauty of fleets. When they come to us, we very quickly get to know their vehicles," said Dias. These sorts of business partnerships don't simply spawn out of thin air, nor do corporate fleet managers go door-to-door offering up contracts to strangers—Dias and Rossetti put in the legwork to earn the business of their partners, no doubt about it.

As a former marketing consultant for several Fortune 500 companies in the past, including recent stints with two paint giants, Rossetti is a master networker when it comes to creating value for her business partners and has helped elevate Revline's operations immeasurably.

“It’s about establishing relationships within fleet management companies. Sometimes it’s also about dealing directly with the customers and doing research in the market to see who big corporations are dealing with, who manages their fleet, who does their collision management,” said Rossetti. “Once you’re in, it’s about being very service-oriented.”

Dias says that the part of Rossetti’s presentation to prospective partners that captures the room’s attention is when she asserts that a deal with Revline means a 60 percent reduction in repair downtime for your fleet, while still remaining well within budget.

One rather unfortunate bridge between the consumer and corporate collision repair worlds, however, is the issue of labour retention. Like their counterparts on the consumer side of the industry, Dias and Rossetti have had to put a large part of their business’ focus on securing staff to work Revline’s busy production floor.

For several years now, the shop has thrived on the talent of automotive technicians sourced from abroad and conditioned into the Revline way of doing things. “I have a fella out of Moldova here. He’s a great guy and really knows his stuff; one of the best metal refinishers I’ve seen in this industry,” said Dias, a man with a keen eye for talent, paired with a marked distain for sloppiness, disorganization, and most of all—dust in the shop.

“The one problem with him in the beginning was that we knew he was used to working in body shops back in the 70s—absolute dirt pits. It took about two years of getting his work cleaned up, but now he understands that this is how Uncle Frank works.” All this is to say, the corporate fleet repair world is by no means immune from the woes that affect traditional neighbourhood repair shops; it simply requires a slightly different set of skills.

Where one manager may have an encyclopaedic knowledge of their local community, its culture and its politics, a fleet repair manager has a keen understanding of a wider corporate climate and the strategies that inform the operational decision-making processes of these large companies.

