

KNIESEL'S AUTO BATTLES BY

INDUSTRY GOLIATHS UPGRADING TO ACTIVANT SERVICEWITER



Leveraging the Latest Technology to Contend with the Giants

The Kniesel family has seen lots of changes in their neighborhood since Kniesel's Auto Service Center first opened in 1965. The family-owned and operated company has faced increasing competition from large chain stores, express service centers and independent repair shops.

The Citrus Heights, California business has been passed down through three generations of owners. And over the past decade, the company has

upgraded through two generations of Activant shop management systems. "In order to compete with places like JiffyLube and Goodyear, we need to present a professional image to our customers," says Brent Kniesel, the current owner of Kniesel's Auto Service Center. "We also need our workflow to be as efficient as possible. Our management system is one of the keys to the success of the business."

Kniesel's Auto uses the latest Activant technology to give it the competitive edge it needs to go head to head with industry giants. The shop uses Activant ServiceWriter® (ASW) to accurately source parts with Activant ShopCar®, its full-line electronic catalog. "ASW shows us real-time parts availability and pricing right on our computer screens," Brent says. "We don't waste time with phone calls."

ShopCar also provides Activant LaborExpert® to enable service writers to instantly calculate precise job estimates. "With ASW, we can now look up vehicles all the way back to 1968 and transfer parts and labor pricing directly to an estimate," Brent continues. "This kind of competence keeps our customers coming back and directly affects the bottom line."

Kniesel's also uses Activant's two newest integrated catalog features. Activant Cover-to-Cover™ provides part images, OE cross reference numbers, specifications, warranty information and more to Kniesel's service writers. VIN Look-up is Activant's integrated VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) decoding tool. "VIN Look-up helps us find the right parts," Brent says. "It is especially useful with vehicles where the door jam sticker is missing, and the customers aren't sure exactly what they have."

A Painless Upgrade

Kniesel's Auto originally implemented Triad ServiceWriter® (TSW) in 1997 and recently upgraded to Activant ServiceWriter. ASW was designed specifically as a next-generation upgrade for Activant's Triad ServiceSystem (TSS), Triad ServiceWriter and ServiceExpert® EZ systems, so the upgrade process was fast and easy.

"There are a lot of new and enhanced features in the latest version," Brent says. "We wanted to be able to make use of those features, but we couldn't afford any downtime for an upgrade. I'm glad to say the process went quickly and smoothly. One day we were on the old system, the next day we were on the new one. It was painless."

PROFILE

Headquarters: Citrus Heights, California

Annual Sales: 1.4 million

Number of Employees: 12

Locations: 1

Founded: 1965

"Our service advisors use Activant ServiceWriter from start to finish—from the moment the customer walks through the front door to the completion of the job."

BRENT KNIESEL
OWNER

KNIESEL'S AUTO SERVICE CENTER

Kniesel's Auto has grown steadily over the 10 years that it has used Activant shop management systems. Currently, the business is experiencing a 21% increase, year-over-year. "As our company has grown, Activant products have evolved along with it to support our rising information management needs," Brent says. "The upgrade was easy—our database, all our customer data, and all pertinent information was automatically transferred to the new version. It looks and feels the same but it's much more powerful. Now we have a system that can support our continual growth and keep us competitive against the big players."

Staying True to a Successful Formula

Kniesel's Auto has had plenty of opportunities to migrate to other management software. But over the years, the company has remained with Activant. "We evaluated some other well-known software products," Brent says. "Activant is superior. It does everything we need it to do."

Brent doesn't gamble with his business. He carefully weighed the potential benefits of the new system against the cost of upgrading. "Sure, the software represents an investment," he says. "But if you don't have a solid management system, you can't measure your results and make adjustments to your strategy. Activant ServiceWriter delivers accurate data and equips us to make good decisions. It's had a positive impact on the business."

Support for Effective Business Decisions

Brent believes that some of his competitors lack the ability to identify internal problems and make appropriate changes. "A lot of shops struggle because they don't know how to manage their business effectively. Activant helps us identify what's working and what's not, and then correct our processes as needed."

ASW's ability to support business decisions and track profitability helped Kniesel's create a more efficient team. By monitoring technician productivity and work habits, Brent was able to increase his workforce output by over 50%. "Activant gives us the information we need to set goals, so we can hold people accountable," Brent says. "We have hard data about workforce productivity, rather than acting on hunches or general perceptions."

Adopting Best Practices

Activant ServiceWriter is designed to follow a shop's optimal workflow. Best practices are built into the system to help move work through the shop as efficiently as possible. "Our service advisors use Activant ServiceWriter from start to finish — from the moment the customer walks through the front door to the completion of the job," Brent says. "When we write an estimate, the system identifies each labor operation that we will do for that vehicle. It shows us the part numbers, identifies whether the parts are in stock or need to be ordered, recommends mechanic skill levels, and calculates the total cost and customer pricing for the job."

ASW also maintains vehicle service histories and provides manufacturer recommended service intervals so service writers can suggest necessary maintenance and repairs. "Basically, ASW transforms a series of services into an ongoing relationship with each customer," Brent says, in summary. "Upgrading was absolutely the right decision."



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Brent Kniesel
Owner

Kniesel's Auto Service Center

ABOUT ACTIVANT

Activant, a leading technology provider of business management solutions serving small and medium-sized businesses, offers customers tailored proprietary software, professional services, content, supply chain connectivity, and analytics. Activant's systems are designed to help customers increase sales, boost productivity, operate more cost-efficiently, improve inventory turns and enhance trading partner relationships.

To learn more about this or other
Activant products and services,
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