

AkzoNobel Coatings Helps Columbus Body Works Grow Century-Old Family Business

AkzoNobel

by Autobody News Staff

In 1918, **Woodrow Wilson** was president, World War I was drawing to a close, and **Philip Wynn's** family established an auto body shop in downtown Columbus, GA.

Now known as Columbus Body Works, the shop has grown and changed over the years – even moving location a couple of times into bigger and more sophisticated facilities – but it has remained in family hands. With that kind of long history, you might think Wynn would take a more laid-back approach to business, perhaps resting a bit on the family laurels. But you would be wrong.

Instead, when it was Wynn's turn to take over the reins of the business in 1992, he decided to take the shop to a new level.

"Until I joined the company, we were just a one-shop, mom-and-pop business. But I had a little further ambition and wanted to grow the business. So I went after some dealerships and started working with them and was able to open up a second store on my own in 1998."

It hasn't all been smooth sailing over the decades, but under Wynn's leadership, Columbus Body Works went from being a "mom-and-pop" shop that brought in less than \$100,000 per month to two shops bringing in close to \$15 million in 2023. According to Wynn, the business currently repairs around 400 cars per month.

Wynn noted the company wouldn't be where it is without its commitment to customer service and high-quality workmanship. And he said the team made a decision early on to use the best products they could find. When it comes to paint, that means AkzoNobel's Sikkens product line.

"We were one of the first companies in the U.S. to start working with AkzoNobel back in 1986. Everyone was a little nervous with it coming out of Holland, but we had a friend that was using it out in Texas and we decided to give it a shot."



Family-run Columbus Body Works has been in business since 1918.

According to Wynn, Sikken's color-matching and ease of application are just a couple of the reasons he is so dedicated to the product – and his employees feel the same.

"When anyone comes to apply for a job, if they find out we use Sikkens, they get excited. They're glad to see that we're willing to use Sikkens and not a cheaper brand. It's a simple, high-quality product that is easy to use."

Wynn has been continuously impressed with how uncomplicated AkzoNobel has kept the Sikkens line over the decades and how well-tested every Sikkens product is.

"Each time they've come out with a new product, they've made it easier – and by the time we get it, it's already been put through the wringer so we know it works in the field. They're always trying to solve problems like how to get the clear to dry faster, how to get it hard, how fast you can get any kind of imperfection out."

Wynn has also taken full advantage of AkzoNobel's continuing education, and he credits that training with giving him the business acumen that has helped him grow the business to where it is today.

"That training has probably been one of the biggest things that's helped me learn to run the shop like a business. I started using

their 20 Groups, which taught me how to grow this business. And they had consultants that worked for Sikkens that would come in and show you how to put these management systems in place and how to run your shops with them."

At one point, Wynn decided to try out a different paint line. But when it comes to product quality and customer care, Wynn has found other companies can't compete with AkzoNobel and the relationships he's built with Sikkens representatives over the years.

"It's the shop tours. It's the shop follow-ups. It's having people that you know coming in and out of your business checking in on you, keeping your numbers up to date, and keeping you informed versus just letting you run up a big bill. They will pop in on us and do a can test to see how much waste we have in the back, making sure we're not over-pouring."

Wynn is on the cusp of opening a large new facility, the third branch of Columbus Body Works. The business has come a long way from its humble beginnings as a small shop on Columbus' Front Avenue. But as it grows, some things won't change for this family business, and one of those is its relationship with AkzoNobel.

"We're 100% committed to Sikkens," said Wynn.

Columbus Body Works

Columbus, GA

706-322-0676

columbusbodyworks.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 60

In Business Since: 1918

Number of Locations: Two

Combined Production Space:

60,000 square feet



Owner Philip Wynn said employees find Sikkens to be high-quality and easy to use.



Columbus Body Works has been partnering with AkzoNobel since 1986.

AkzoNobel Coatings

800-618-1010

www.SikkensVR.com/us-en

