

2000 SSGM Garage of the Year

Ottawa-based Roy Rump & Sons combines modern methods with an innovative facility for maximum productivity.



By: Jim Anderton

If first impressions count in the automotive service business, then Roy Rump & Sons, an Ottawa, Ontario full-service facility, succeeds in sending a message of competence and business success. The family-run Carquest Auto Place member derives their profitability through efficiencies built into both the operations and the

facility they operate in. Roy Rump Sr., president, is justifiably proud of the business which involves two sons and a daughter, along with a grandson in the bays as a co-op student. "We really opened (the current facility) on the first working day of January 1997. We started with two technicians and an apprentice. Now we have four techni-

cians, and a co-op student. There's 5000 square feet of total working area, give or take a few." The well-groomed facility features five bays, split three and two by a centrally located service reception area, with a total of ten vehicle stalls. Productivity bottlenecks caused by the two deep

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arrangement are minimized by a combination of drive-through hoists and enough lateral room to jockey vehicles around obstacles.

A major part of what makes Roy Rump and Sons a successful business is tied to the structure that houses it. The Auto Place member facility is not just attractive, but has many features that aren't commonly seen in the service industry. One is R2000 construction, with six inches of insulation in roof and walls, combined with dual-pane argon-filled "low E" glass in the building's five roll-up doors. Energy saving design also includes the building electrical service. "All the lighting is energy-efficient (slimline) fluorescent, and halogen", explains Roy Sr. Roy's son Don Rump adds: "All the big equipment runs on 600 volts. Whatever we could use on high voltage, we did". Don notes that although the system requires a \$10,000 on site transformer, the ability to run large electric motor driven equipment on three-phase power boosts energy efficiency. Low voltage halogen lighting is also used throughout the facility, while radiant heaters warm both concrete floors and technicians in the bays. Glass block installed at eye level throughout the

building gives additional diffuse lighting. "You have to remember, we went from a dingy, two bay dungeon that the guys were working in. We needed more light", relates Donna Rump-Egan, who notes that rainwater drainage from the building's roof is used to water the landscaping. Runoff from the considerable paved surface of the lot is held in a sump to prevent overwhelming local storm sewers during a heavy downpour. The building is completely air conditioned, and technicians have both washroom and lunchroom facilities. The entire structure is overbuilt to accept a second floor, enhancing redevelopment potential should the business move to a larger location.

The customer reception area overlooks bays on two sides, and features glass on four sides for generous natural lighting. Hanging plants are suspended over tire and battery displays, and recent issues of popular consumer auto magazines are neatly arranged in a rack. Complimentary coffee is readily available. The design places the service advisor's desk directly in front of the entering customer, without restricting movement either laterally to the bays, or between door and desk.

The basement area is relatively small, but is used for maximum efficiency. A small amount of parts storage area is available, but the key feature downstairs is the placement of compressors and bulk storage tanks. Three compressors are installed, with two needed for normal operations, and the third acting as a backup. The backup is plumbed to the main pneumatic circuit so that a single valve and switch actuation brings it on line without delay. Basement mounting of compressors, although expensive, significantly lowers noise levels in bays and in the customer waiting area. "One of the fantastic things



The Roy Rump & Sons team: Top left to right: Dave Rump, Roydon Rump, Diane Rump-Egan, Roy Rump Sr., Cody Egan, Tom Belford. Bottom left to right: Jeff Newson, Frank Priori, Dan Powell

about the air compressors is that all the piping is insulated; consequently there's hardly any humidity in the lines" says Roy Sr. "The piping goes in a complete circle; it's up high with traps to keep water out of the tools", adds Don. According to Roy Sr., "I can't think of an air tool that's broken down here". Line lubrication is the next system improvement in the works, according to Roy Sr.

Both Roy and Don are considering another addition to the basement: recalling the aftermath to the famous ice storm which crippled so much of Eastern Ontario, Don states: "We're thinking of a generator".

Bulk storage tanks for 5W-30 engine oil, coolant and waste oil are neatly arrayed in a spill containment sump, and are plumbed for fill and drain at the rear of the building. Oil and coolant are dispensed at wall-mounted stations, an arrangement that nears the efficiency of overhead reels at substantially lower cost. Workbenches are arranged in the traditional back wall locations, with a PC running Mitchell On Demand installed in a corner workstation. Small parts cabinets are located near the parts inventory area and close to floor and transmission jack storage and a hydraulic press. At the other end of the shop, diagnostic equipment and a drill press complete the package. Electronic scanning and

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Light and climate control make this shop a very comfortable work environment.



alignment equipment allow the business to perform service ranging from an engine change to driveability diagnosis. "We do pretty well everything. We never turn away anything," declares Don, who uses the Mitchell system to create schedules that form the basis of the shop's favourite service: preventative maintenance. In-house testing of oil, transmission and brake fluid, combined with hard copy from the Mitchell system make a persuasive consumer argument for regular maintenance.

Alignment is the most recently added service capability to the business. "We've never had the space before", says Roy Sr. Don quickly adds, "We started small, bought a basic machine, but it's paid off for us." All equipment at Roy Rump & Sons is purchased, rather than leased.

An emphasis on training is conspicuous at Roy Rump & Sons, with an upstairs staff room featuring a ceiling-mounted monitor capable of receiving CARS IDL (interactive distance learning) or playing training tapes from a VCR. "I think it's the cat's meow", says Don, who notes that technicians simply watch the programming as it is delivered, usually between 12 and 2 P.M. "The nice thing is that they're able at any time

to push a button on the telephone and talk to the instructor directly. It's the interactive part about it. It's been a godsend for us. It (training) used to cost a thousand dollars a day in lost production", adds Roy Sr.

Computers are everywhere, and all seven PC's are linked to form an impromptu LAN, with high-speed Internet capability. Don encourages technicians to use the Internet bulletin boards such as iATN to get help with unusual situations. Roy Rump & Sons also uses a Web site for public information. "All technicians have their own E-mail address including the dog: angel@royrumpandsons.com", adds Don with a smile: "It gives information about us. We have coupons, and it says a little about each of our staff. CAA, AARO, ACDelco, and Uniroyal all have links." Another advantage is an extensive database that allows the business to use service reminder notices to generate repeat business. "We have roughly 2800 (on the database)", says Don.

The Internet is part of a marketing strategy that avoids extensive discounting. According to Roy Sr., "We were doing all the things that everybody else was doing: oil changes at \$19.95, \$29.95, knocking \$20 off. We never took into consideration the revenue we were losing. Some time ago we decided that that wasn't the way to go. The thing to do was to advertise locally, not about specials but about what we do, about our staff, and their capabilities." Part of the merchandising strategy is generous signage and POP displays, which is part of the reason for \$10,000-plus monthly tire sales for a shop that's a few minutes drive from several Big Box retailers.

The door rate at Roy Rump & Sons is \$73.63. That, although not unusual or excessive, is higher than at some local new car dealers, a situation that annoys Don: "Dealerships are playing that game. They're cheaper in labour rate, but when the customer brings in the bill, it calls 2.5 (hours) when ours is 1.5. It's no wonder they're \$62 an hour. They're doing a lot of this, especially the imports. The



Roy Rump Sr. has also embraced computer technology readily.

bottom line (for customers) is what you're going out the door with. We're not a cheap shop." "We wouldn't want to be a cheap shop," adds Roy Sr., who credits speedy and accurate estimating with turning the average 18 daily work orders into steady profitability. Longer service intervals haven't impacted the bottom line as much as could be expected due to increased volumes and more items on the maintenance checklist. "It does pay off, because customers aren't being towed in", describes Don, who is adamant about preventative maintenance. "We haven't had a tow truck in thirty years", declares Roy Sr. The dealer threat doesn't seem to be an issue at Roy Rump & Sons. Says Don: "They don't have the personalized service. Here, when they drop the car off, they talk to me, and when they pick the car up, they talk to me."

Both Roy Sr. and Don agree that finding good people, and paying the roughly \$50,000 salary a good technician deserves remains the biggest overall challenge to the industry.

In summary, what makes Roy Rump & Sons a successful business, and the 2000 SSGM Garage of the Year can be distilled to a single sentence: It's a business where good technicians like to work, and where good customers like to have their vehicles worked on. What can be simpler?

SSGM

Roydon "Don" Rump points to the CARS IDL monitor installed in the spacious employee lunchroom.



Congratulations to Roy Rump & Sons Tire & Auto Centre, SSGM's 2000 Garage of the Year

Service Station & Garage Management Magazine is pleased to award the 2000 SSGM Garage of the Year Award to Ottawa, Ontario's Roy Rump & Sons Tire & Auto Centre.

The Garage of the Year Award is presented annually to the automotive service business which best exemplifies professionalism and commitment to the industry and the community it serves. Nominations for the 2001 Garage of the Year Award are ongoing. Check out page 44 of this month's issue for a nomination form, and remember to enter by October 31, 2001.

Thanks to Cardone Industries for their sponsorship of the SSGM Garage of the Year Award.



Back row, left to right: David Rump, Roydon Rump, Diane Rump-Egan, Roy Rump, Tom Belford.
Bottom, left to right: Cody Egan, Jeff Newson, Frank Priori, Dan Powell.