

It's a coffee shop. It's a lounge. Maybe with the giant glass windows, it's an auto shop aquarium.

Simply, it's RPM Autoworx.

"We like to say we're in the customer service business," said RPM owner and chief executive officer Rick Broussard, "but use auto repair as the venue."

The repair shop, located on Chatham Parkway, has changed the business of local auto repair from its beginnings.

In 2008, RPM opened what is believed to be the first LEED-certified auto repair building in the nation.

From the beginning, the shop has incorporated available technology into its practices and has shown a willingness to test the newest technology in the industry.

"They continue to invest in tools, training and equipment," said Alex Holbrook, commercial account manager for Advanced Auto Parts. "They continue forward thinking in terms of expanding growth, and they put their customers first."

RPM opened at the beginning of the recession, a time Broussard said was ripe for non-dealer auto repair shops.

"We thrived as an alternative to the dealer," he said, "Now we're filling a niche between dealer and small 'mom and pop' shops."

The company, Broussard said, is "big on show and tell."



## Local auto shop turns industry in *new direction*

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The couches, relaxed lighting and large windows in the interior of the store allows clients, service advisers and technicians to interact.

"I started the company with relevant business experience, not industry experience, which is what makes us different," said Broussard. "This plays a big part in creating the atmosphere and creating our model of being a customer service business."

While Broussard worked at Gulfstream many years before opening RPM, he has experience relevant to the auto industry, including driving race cars.

The biggest challenge facing the company, he says, is hiring technicians that fit the business model. RPM requires its technicians to interface with the customer.

"It's just a completely different environment," said Broussard. "It's the way you walk in and how the technicians are available to talk with you ... people are so worked up, stressed about car repair. They can relax here because we are no pressure/no up-sell friendly."

RPM services over 5,000 customers, according to Broussard, and specializes in diagnostic services. Even some dealerships have employed RPM's skills to find difficult issues.

"We charge a fixed diagnostic fee depending on the issue, we don't charge by the hour as other shops and dealers do," he said.

The shop also offers a 24-month/24,000 mile warranty, whichever comes last in most cases.



**SHOP:** RPM Autoworx    **LOCATION:** Savannah, Ga.    **OWNER:** Rick Broussard

**1)** Owner Rick Broussard says customers often describe the waiting area as a coffee shop or lounge, where they can unwind while their car is repaired. They offer complimentary coffee, soft drinks and Wi-Fi.

**2)** Adding to the coffee shop ambiance is the furniture. It's sleek, modern, comfortable and, most importantly, inexpensive. The items were purchased from IKEA and Pier 1, and they've been a hit among customers.

**3)** Broussard wants his shop procedures to be transparent. The window overlooking the shop floor allows customers to monitor their repairs from the waiting area.

**4)** The children's play area is hugely popular, keeping the kids entertained while Mom or Dad relaxes, or works at the counter.

**5)** The shop is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) registered facility. Much of the décor fits into its green status, including the rug, which is made from recycled plastic.

**6)** Artwork from a local artist sets the waiting area apart from other shops. All of the pieces are car-related, depicting Savannah street scenes.

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