

# WHEELER'S SPEED SHOP

It's been said that the best way to find your career calling is to combine your interests with your skills and that if "you love what you do, the money will follow."

Bryan Wheeler was much younger than one might expect when he discovered this formula for success. The 27-year-old entrepreneur opened the Huntington Beach-based Wheeler Speed Shop at an age when many of his peers were still contemplating career paths and college courses.

The then 21-year-old had always had an affinity for autos, and had already spent five years working in the industry, working his way up through the ranks from his first job when he was 15 as a "cleanup" kid in a Porsche repair shop. Wheeler's Speed Shop specializes in building and restoring street rods, in addition to repairs and conversions.

BUSINESS SHOWCASE



"I was right out of high school when an older gentleman introduced me to the type of work I'm doing now," says the Southern California native. "We formed a partnership that lasted about a year before I decided to open my own business."

It was an endeavor not without challenges - ranging from finding the right personnel to populate the operation to growing a business by reputation. A year ago, Wheeler oversaw 11 employees, but because of the "nature of the business, there were way too many variables that made it difficult to manage." He subsequently scaled back the operation for a more streamlined approach, which results in "better trained employees, which translates to quality."

Wheeler adds that his current objective is to keep the operation "small enough to really focus on customer service and delivering a quality product."

"I'm happy with the team we have in place now," he says. "I have five employees and we have anywhere from four to eight projects in the works at any given time."

Some of these jobs are "in-and-out" procedures, while others are custom projects that can take several years from start to finish.

Today, the majority of Wheeler's clientele come from referrals and the company has established itself as a leader in an increasingly competitive industry.

An upside to having Huntington Beach as his home base is that Orange County and parts of San Bernadino County are considered to be "the hot rod capital" of the country.

"One of the greatest benefits to working in Southern California is that the temperate climate allows us to work 'year round,'" he says. "A lot of comparable businesses back East can only operate eight months out of the year." **HB**

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