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AN EMPHASIS ON GROWTH WITH PURPOSE

When customers drive into an Expert Car Care bay in central or southern Florida, they're buying more than a repair. They're buying a service model that began as a father son apprenticeship and has been disciplined into repeatable systems: intentional staffing, measurable throughput, capital reinvestment, supplier partnerships and a leadership style owner James Sada calls servant leadership. Today that model runs across six locations, handling everything from routine maintenance to EV diagnostics and fleet service.

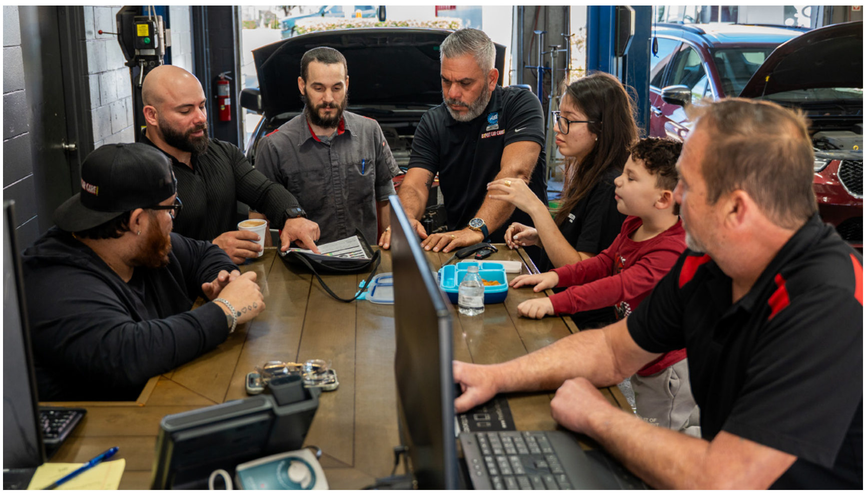
Sada's approach offers a practical theory of scaling: invest in people and tooling, standardize the customer experience without sterilizing local flavor and expand only when the financials and culture will travel.

From a family apprenticeship that became a business model, Sada's entry into the trade was literal and early.

"My grandfather owned a Goodyear store near Miami and my dad grew up with him doing automotive repair," Sada says. "Grandpa ended up selling the business, so my dad went to become a paramedic and firefighter – that wasn't really what he wanted to do, so he went back to automotive repair, something that he knew, and he grew up in. Then he came north and in 1998 opened the first Expert Car Care in Winter Park I was about nine years old and then did the same thing he had done – went to work with him every day. He trained me. We've worked together through the years. We started opening locations together and that's what I've done my whole entire life.

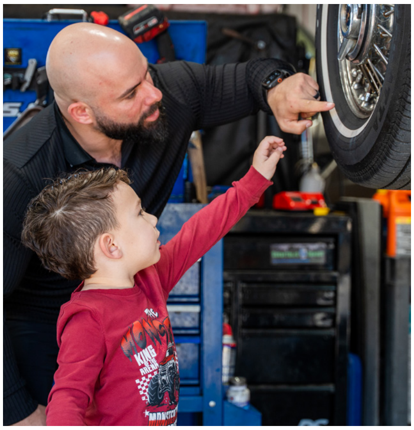
"I was doing oil changes, learning how to balance tires... my dad was my best friend, so if I got to be with him, that's what I wanted to do," he remembers. Because his father and grandfather had been successful in automotive service, Expert Car Care's technical DNA came with moral instruction: honor customers, be transparent and hustle with care. Those early lessons became company policy and eventually the guiding metric for expansion.

That lineage explains why Sada



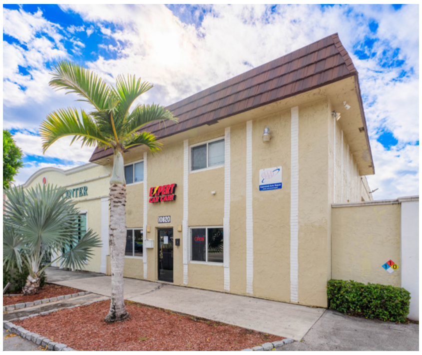
frames business decisions in human terms first. "First, believe that none of this is ours and it's all given," he says when asked about fundamentals for success. That faith informs the stewardship mindset that shapes everything from reinvestment priorities to hiring incentives. It's a business model built on both conviction and measurable outcomes: higher technician retention, faster cycle times and better average ticket value driven by certified skill.

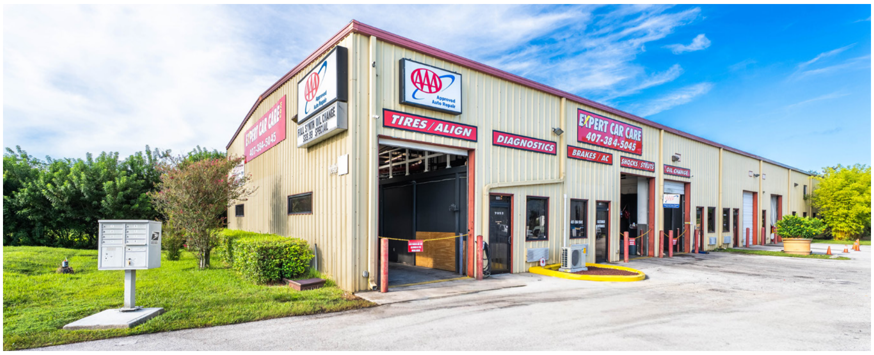
Sada's "servant leadership" mindset is more than just a leadership philosophy; it's an operational lever. He sees his role as steward – someone responsible for the livelihoods of employees – so policies are designed

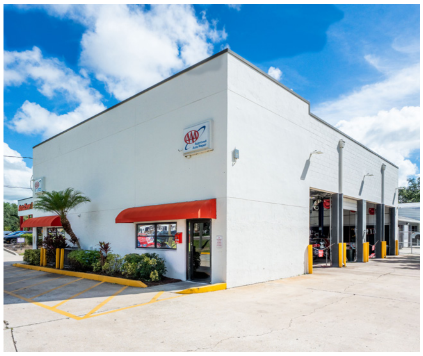


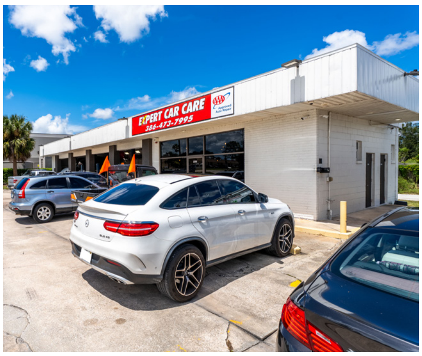
to reduce turnover and increase capability. No technician commissions, paid health benefits, free training and certification reimbursements and certification bonuses are all manifestations of that ethic. "All the training any tech wants to take is free… we also bonus you every single time you pass," he says. The financial calculus is straightforward: investing in training reduces hiring costs, lowers rework and warranty expenses and expands the range of profitable services.

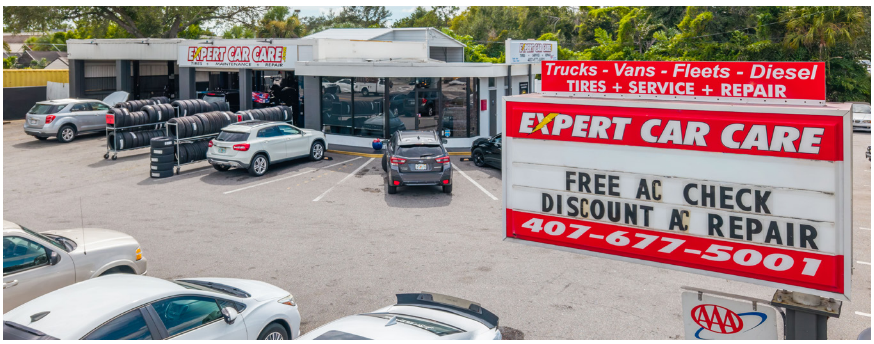
Expert Car Care treats training as capital expenditure. Certification costs, tools and software subscriptions are budgeted as required investments rather than optional HR spending. The logic is simple, Sada believes. Certified technicians perform diagnostics faster and more accurately, enabling the shop to win and profitably deliver complex work that raises average











repair orders, regardless of the vehicle platform. "We're skilled at servicing domestics, imports, EV, diesels, RVs and we're equipped to do so," Sada says. "If you don't invest back and you're taking that money for just a personal whatever, you're not going to survive. Our early adoption of EV capability – we were the first ones in the area to be able to work on Teslas, for example, is a direct outcome of this capital discipline."

OPERATIONAL DESIGN: STAFFING, THROUGHOUT AND KPIs

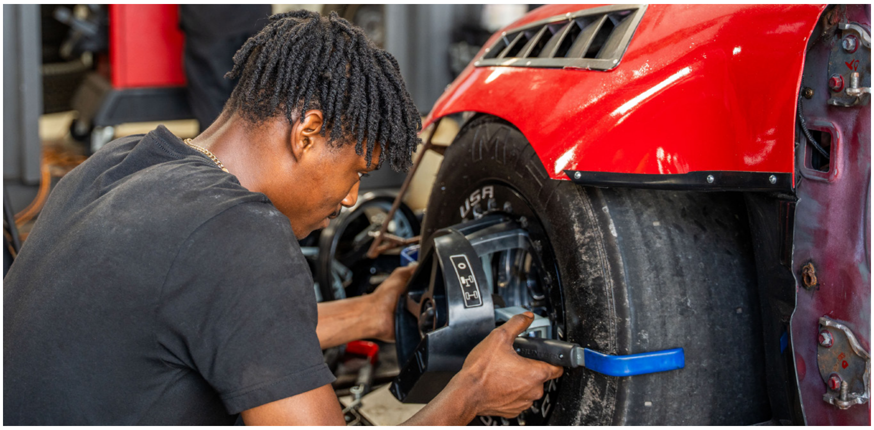
Sada runs a lean, demand sized staffing model. His shops typically run five to eight people to match local volume while avoiding idle payroll or burnout. That staffing discipline is paired with measurable throughput goals. Technicians participate in timed efficiency drills for routine services – oil changes, tire swaps, brakes – and managers track quality checkpoints to reduce callbacks. Those metrics affect three core P&L levers: labor cost per repair, revenue per bay/hour and warranty/rework expense.

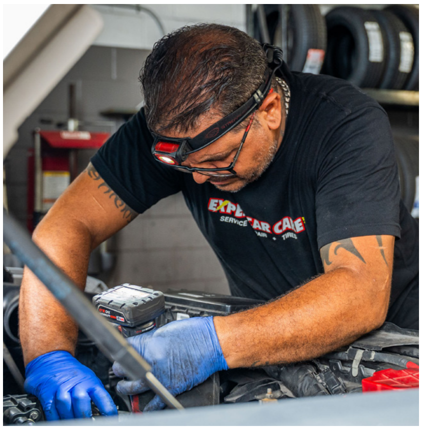
Optimizing utilization raises gross margins and even small improvements in technician productivity compound across locations and months. This results in more billable hours per tech, which increases revenue without proportional increases in fixed costs. The drills and quality checks are not punitive, Sada explains. Instead, they're framed as capability improvements that free technicians to take more profitable jobs. "When you're overstaffed, it's not good for payroll... but being understaffed is too much stress – balancing utilization and morale is central to sustainable margins."

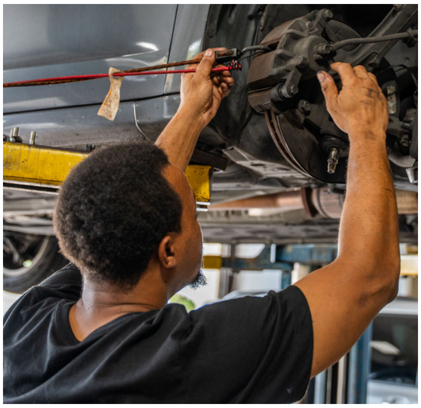
Expert Car Care's brand coherence is deliberate, but standardization meets local flexibility as well. Customers walk into any location and experience consistent décor cues, standardized scripts for customer communication and the same photo-and-video transparency practices that build trust. Those standardized SOPs protect reputation and make the brand scalable: central oversight of parts usage, labor hours and technician performance becomes possible only when the customer journey is consistent.

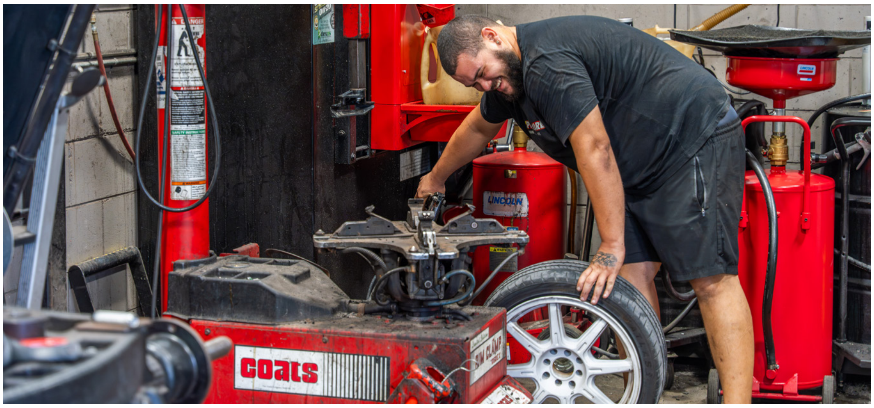
But he also knows that a strict corporate uniformity can alienate local communities. So, he allows each shop "a little bit of style, a little bit of personality" within the brand box. That flexibility encourages local teams to engage neighborhood chambers of commerce, churches and schools – low-cost marketing channels that drive referral business.

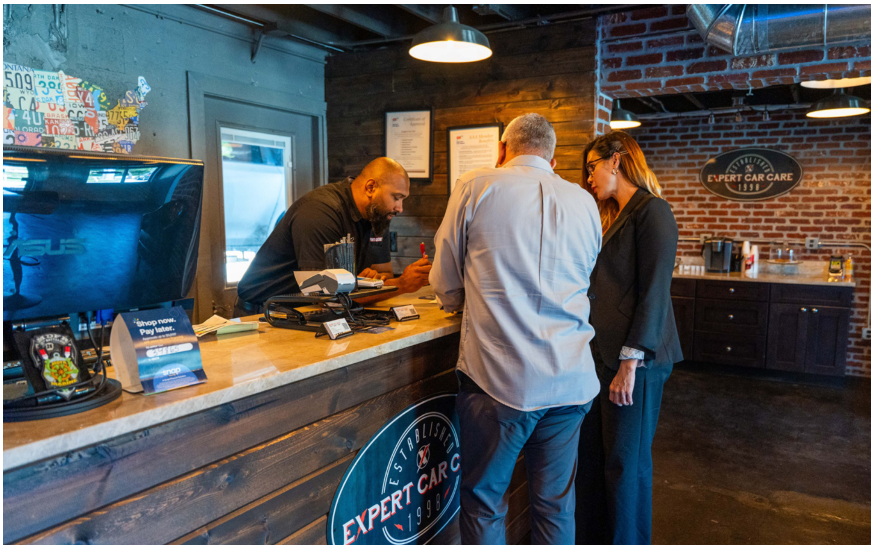
"My dad believed in customer service as well as in speed and efficiency. "When we moved up here and opened our first location, we

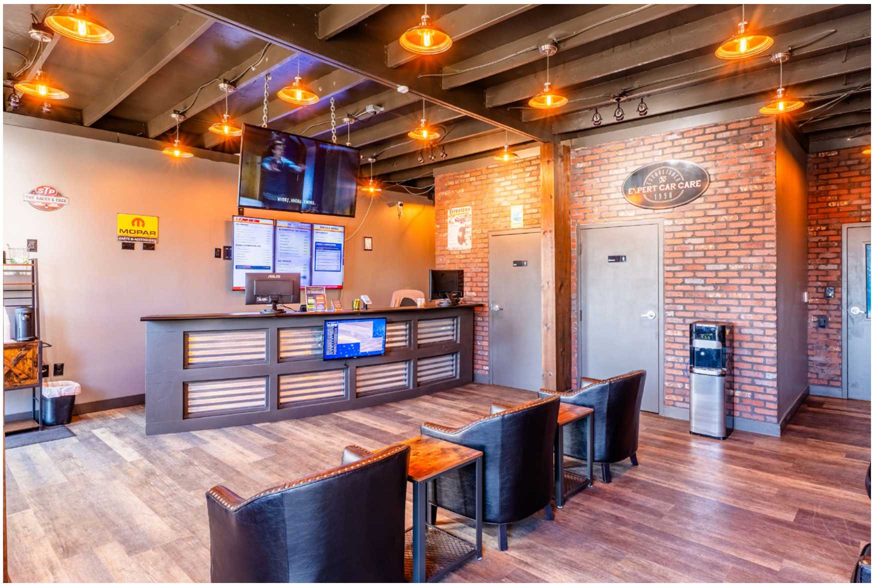












had a whole different demeanor than what the area was used to," Sada says. "Everyone was just kind of laid back, and we had a 'bring it in now, we'll take care of you right away, same day repair' kind of attitude, really hustling to the next level. This brought in the customers, and we started really growing in the neighborhood. We still have a lot of family members in South Florida, including firefighters and police and their friends and family who would drive up to get their car serviced with us because they really trusted only us. We were very transparent with our service recommendations. We were the first ones in the area to provide pictures and videos of inspections. We just believe that taking care of the customers is what separates us from everybody else. Anybody can do automotive repair – it's just a matter of how are you taking care of the customers?"

Sada treats his supplier relationships like he treats his customer relationships: strategically rather than transactionally. AutoZone is the primary parts supplier for the chain – serving about 98% of his needs, he says – and the relationship is built on sustained volume and mutual loyalty.

"I spend over a million dollars a year with AutoZone... they're always behind me; they always have my back," Sada says.

"My dad was always a man of his word, and he made it clear that that was the right way to do business. Ed Fernandez, my main contact at AutoZone is just the same – he says what he means, and he means what he says. When you do good business with good people, it can kind of create a relationship and a loyalty that is unmatched," Sada says. "There's a lot of competition for our business out there, but AutoZone believes in taking care of their customers. We have been a long-time customer with them, and because of the loyalty and the service that they provide and we provide back with them, we work very well with each other. There's give and take on both ends, not always 'am I winning or are they winning?'"

Expert Car Care's professional relationship with AutoZone goes back decades, Sada says. "Ed was a good friend of my father's too, and we still go over numbers to find ways we can improve. But it's personal too - we care about each other's families. We're all kind of in this life supporting each other – I think the key is not being greedy and trying to help everyone out."

That partnership delivers faster parts turnaround, volume leverage for pricing and occasional co-marketing support for events. For operations, the practical outcomes are clear: reduced cycle times, higher bay utilization and fewer repair delays that could erode customer trust.

The supplier strategy also complements the dealership-alternative positioning. By combining OEM-level diagnostics and dependable parts flow, Expert Car Care can promise and deliver same-day or near-term service for most work – an essential competitive edge against both quick-lubes and dealer service centers.

ACQUISITION CRITERIA AND INTEGRATION PLAYBOOK

Expert Car Care grew not by aggressive rollups but by opportunistic, disciplined expansion. Sada evaluates acquisitions through a triad lens: location quality, human capital (can the team be integrated?) and the needed capital to standardize tooling and training. Many of the company's new sites were failing shops in solid locations; Sada bought them cheaply and invested in culture and capability upgrades. Yet not every well-located shop is attractive. "It takes just one bad apple to really ruin the reputation that you build," he cautions. Due diligence therefore emphasizes team composition and community standing as much as traffic counts.

The integration playbook begins on day one: replace customer-facing elements (signage, service scripts), upgrade tooling and diagnostics to the brand standard and fold local leaders into the incentive and certification program. Retaining top local talent is crucial for institutional knowledge, but the emphasis on standardized SOPs and certification raises baseline service capability. This combination of local retention and centralized control accelerates profitable turnarounds in acquired locations.

Sada's capital allocation approach is methodical. Equipment purchases are prioritized by capability: tools that unlock profitable work – EV servicing, dealer-level diagnostics – get bought before cosmetic upgrades. He budgets for recurring software subscriptions and OEM diagnostic updates, recognizing these as ongoing operating costs rather than one-time purchases. Each capital decision is assessed through an ROI lens: will the tool increase ticket value, reduce technician time per job or open a new revenue stream?

That pragmatism extends to cash flow management. Sada reinvests earnings into both human capital (training, benefits) and technical capital (tools, subscriptions) rather than extracting excessive owner dividends. That reinvestment steadies the business against technological obsolescence and positions it to capture higher-margin work. "We like to look at ourselves as a dealership alternative because we invest our money into the business with the state-of-the-art equipment," he says.

LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY AND RISK MITIGATION

Sada's succession story embodies the link between leadership and financial stability. He ran operations with his father for years, stepping into full leadership when his father's health declined. The transition was emotionally difficult – his father passed in 2020 – but Sada says continuity was the business imperative. "I went to work literally the next day... I knew what my dad would want me to do to keep it going and protect my family," he recalls. That steadiness reassured employees and customers and prevented revenue leakage during a vulnerable period.

For owners, Sada's example highlights the necessity of succession planning and visible leadership. A strong, values based leader reduces volatility in staff morale and customer trust – two assets that are hard to rebuild after a reputation hit.

Expert Car Care's marketing is an ecosystem of word-of-mouth, community outreach and targeted outreach to local anchors like colleges. The shop's early success in Oviedo, near the University of Central Florida and adoption among college students illustrate how localized trust can seed broader growth. Once customers experience the shop's transparency, they tend to return for maintenance and recommend the shop to friends. Sada stresses the empathy angle: "For most people, their second highest investment is their car... you have to respect that."

From an LTV perspective, that trust reduces churn and increases preventive maintenance visits – predictable revenue that stabilizes cash flow. The no-commission policy also feeds retention: technicians focused on customer outcomes rather than personal upsells reduce friction and complaints, increasing repair acceptance rates and lowering dispute costs.

Sada and his team track hard KPIs: labor cost per repair, revenue per bay/hour, rework and warranty rates, training-to-productivity timelines and parts fill rates. These metrics translate cultural investments into financial outcomes. For example, certification bonuses are weighed against reductions in rework and faster diagnostic times; purchases of OEM diagnostic subscriptions are justified by expanded ABIs (addressable billed inventory). The efficiency drills improve technician throughput, which raises revenue per bay without proportionally increasing fixed costs. The cultural investments – training, benefits, low turnover – become quantifiable as lower recruiting costs, fewer warranty claims and higher average ticket values.

By treating training as a capital program with measurable ROI; standardizing SOPs while preserving local marketing flexibility; ensuring staffing meets demand; using supplier partnerships strategically; and making acquisitions contingent on cultural fit and identifiable capital needs, James Sada's model synthesizes people-first leadership with disciplined operations.

Success, Sada believes, comes from a blend of practical discipline with a simple personal conviction: "Do the right thing no matter what." That's not some abstract piety; it's a behavioral anchor translated into policies – no commissions, paid training, benefits, visible leadership – that materially increase retention and capacity. In a trade where a single poor repair can inflict years of reputational damage, Sada's approach turns care into a defensive moat and a growth engine at the same time.

Expert Car Care offers a compelling blueprint for continued success however growth occurs: work the garden well, invest in people and tools, protect reputation with standardized experiences and grow only when you can deliver the same level of care everywhere you go. In Sada's hands, servant leadership becomes an operational system – one that produces not just community goodwill, but durable, scalable business results. ■