



In order to keep his shop open for business, ABC Auto Care owner Lee Lizarraga (pictured above) turned to the sun to power his 13-bay facility in Ventura, Calif.

Solar Solution

California shop lets the sun shine in

For the past year, ABC Auto Care, a Total Service Support (TSS) facility in Ventura, Calif., has taken advantage of a unique energy source — the sun. That’s because the entire 8,000-square-foot shop is completely solar powered.

“It all started a little over a year ago, when California was experiencing a well-publicized energy crisis,” explains owner Lee Lizarraga. Unfortunately, the busy shop was paying the price for all of the power surges and outages.

“We were having a terrible time with the blackouts which kept putting us further and further behind because we couldn’t operate our equipment properly,” says Lizarraga. “Not to mention the fact that the blackouts were costing us a tremendous amount of money.”

Considering ABC Auto Care has 13 bays and five technicians on staff, it was

imperative for the shop to stay on schedule. So dedicated was Lizarraga to maintaining that schedule, he even rented a costly generator in order to keep his shop up and running. But that didn’t solve the problem, it merely lessened it, and Lizarraga needed a permanent solution.

“A customer of mine who specializes in the installation of solar-powered systems came into the shop shortly after we began having problems and I asked his advice on how to avoid future power problems,” says Lizarraga. “His response was simple — solar power. Those two words have literally changed the way I do business.”

Lizarraga and his employees at ABC Auto Care no longer worry about power surges or blackouts. Ninety-six solar panels (seen here) were installed on the roof of the shop, collecting sunlight and converting it into useable electricity — enough to power the entire building and then some.



After much consideration and research on his part, Lizarraga says, “The customer gave me a proposal on the type of solar-powered system he thought would work best for us. It made sense, so we decided to go forward with it.”

Now Lizarraga and his employees no longer have to worry about power surges or blackouts. The 96 solar panels, which were installed on the roof, collect sunlight and convert it into useable electricity — enough to power the entire building and then some.

“The longest part of the process was filing all of the paperwork and waiting for government approval to run on solar power, but now that’s behind us,” says Lizarraga. “I’m very pleased with the results, and my customers are pleased with the uninterrupted service.”

Building an image

Keeping his customers pleased is key to the success of Lizarraga’s business. He fully recognizes the importance of creating long-term quality relationships built on trust and honesty. “Friends take care of friends. That’s what we do,” he says. “Our customers are the core of our business and without them, we wouldn’t be here.”

Along with his wife, Lisa, Lizarraga has been taking care of his “friends” for the past 15 years. “We’re the largest independently owned shop in the city of Ventura,” Lizarraga says.

Things have sure changed since ABC Auto Care first opened its doors a decade and a half ago. What was once an old sign shop that Lizarraga remodeled himself, is now an 8,000-square-foot shop that averages an impressive \$100,000 a month in sales.

“We work hard to maintain our image,” says Lizarraga. And it shows. Not just in the attitude of his employees, but also in the appearance of his shop, which recently participated in the ACDelco Image program. Now you can’t miss ABC Auto Care when you’re driving by. The red, white and blue color scheme couldn’t be mistaken for anything other than a premiere ACDelco-aligned independent service facility.

The inside of the shop follows the same basic theme, except the walls are all painted white so the shop always looks fresh and clean. “It goes along with the image we want to convey to our customers. If we can keep our shop clean, we can definitely keep their vehicles clean, too,” says Lizarraga.

Approximately every five years, Lizarraga replaces all the equipment in the shop, so that their “fresh and clean” image

never fades. So what advice can he offer to other ISCs?

He says, "Don't be afraid to express your ideas. We took a risk with the idea of a solar-powered system. Fortunately for us, it worked." He adds, "Most people have good ideas but don't follow through on them. I guess the key to our success has always been on the follow-through."

Aside from the service area of the shop, Lizarraga also added a separate lounge for his five technicians to relax in during their lunch hour. Lizarraga says, "The shop is open during lunch, but no business is conducted. We like to let the technicians recharge their batteries so they come back to work feeling refreshed after their break."

Lizarraga also had nine computers installed in the shop that are all linked. This allows his technicians access to all the equipment and the most up-to-date technological information available on the Internet from anywhere in the shop.

King of customer service

"Lee is the ideal customer and a consummate professional," says Ralph Castillo, territory sales manager for Warren Distributing in Ventura, Calif, the Warehouse Distributor that has serviced ABC Auto Care for the past seven years. "He really takes care of his customers and they appreciate the personal service he provides. I've never known anyone else to have the type of following that he has."

And it's because Lizarraga makes his business so personal that he has made ACDelco his brand of choice. "ACDelco has always been our first choice," Lizarraga says. "They have the best parts and they have an incredibly low failure rate — something that is very important to me. We're responsible for the parts we

use, so if we choose lesser quality parts, the customer perceives our work that way." And that's the last impression he wants his customers to leave with.

"Lee is the best of the best in the business," says Doug Wilhelm, ACDelco district manager for the Western Region. "He's certainly expanded his business in the ten years I've known him and I think it's because he's very customer-oriented and his technicians are very well trained." Wilhelm notes that Lizarraga and his technicians take full advantage of the world-



class training ACDelco has to offer.

"ACDelco really has the best training of anyone in the industry. It's second to none," says Lizarraga. "By taking advantage of the training that ACDelco offers, we give our customers the impression that we are as professional as we claim to be."

And Lizarraga wouldn't have it any other way. "Our customers are the reason we're in business. We have to keep building on our relationships with them."

Wilhelm says, "Without question, ABC Auto Care presents the image that ACDelco wants portrayed to the consumer. Lee's got a fantastic shop, he's well respected in the community and sets an excellent example for other ISCs to follow." ■

Top: Lizarraga had nine computers installed in the shop that are all linked. This allows his technicians access to all the equipment and the most up-to-date technological information available on the Internet from anywhere in the shop. Bottom: The walls on the inside of ABC Auto Care are all painted white so that the shop — including the bays — always looks fresh and clean.