

INTEGRITY CUSTOMS

Connections keep 12-year-old restyling shop in the know.

By Patricia Kaowthumrong

While many restyling shops long for rapid growth, Joe Hair welcomes gradual progression.

The owner of Tulsa, Oklahoma-based Integrity Customs is happy to advance his business, which has grown to include three shops in Oklahoma and Arkansas over the past 12 years, one step at a time.

"I feel like a lot of the shops want to grow too fast, too quickly," he says. "You have to give it time."

CORE FOCUS

Integrity Customs' 13,000-square-foot Tulsa headquarters offers complete restyling services, including lift kits, wheels and tires, electronics, custom interiors, paint protection and spray-on bedliners. Lift kits, wheels and tires are the shop's biggest sellers, and dealer sales make up 90 percent of the business.

Meanwhile, Integrity's 2,500-square-foot location in South Tulsa focuses on window tinting services for area dealerships, and its newest 4,000-square-foot shop in Springdale, Arkansas also caters mostly to dealers with core products like leather, sunroofs, electronics and window tinting.

"In Arkansas, we don't do lifts," he says. "When we grow into it, that's just fine. We're still in infancy there, in my opinion.

I think we have a good framework in place that we can build off of."

Hair established Integrity Customs 12 years ago, when he started the business out of the back of his truck.

ONE MAN & A TRUCK

A 20-year veteran of the aftermarket industry, Hair started his career at age 18 as a driver at a local car dealership. He eventually served every role in the restyling business, from installing leather and sunroofs to sales and working as a shop foreman.

"This is all I've ever known," he says. "I can't do the jobs as well as my guys—but at some point, I've done everything. I've installed everything and understand what's going on in the shop and what our business is."

Now, Hair has more than 30 employees working at his three stops, many of whom have been with him since the beginning.

Most of Integrity's installers have been with the company for more than 10 years, which Hair credits to good pay, working environment and shop conditions. Heating



Joe Hair of Tulsa-based Integrity Customs. Hair started the business from the back of his truck in 2005.

and air conditioning are key, he says.

"We pay them well, and they work hard," Hair says. "It's a win-win for everybody."

Since Integrity Customs started in 2005, 60,000 to 70,000 cars have come through Hair's shops. Upgrading trucks, Jeeps—and even Subarus—with lift kits, wheels and tires is big business for the shop and it's also the sector of

the business Hair enjoys the most, noting he likes their *cool factor*.

One of Hair's favorite builds is a Jeep that Integrity outfitted with about \$30,000 worth of accessories, including a new hood, grille, stereo, fenders, top and leather interior. Every lift part is powder-coated, and the only body panels that stayed the same were the doors, he recalls.

MAKING DEALS

Most of Integrity's customers are from the greater northwest Oklahoma area, but the company will pick up and deliver cars from dealerships for service within a 60-mile radius, if necessary. The shop works with



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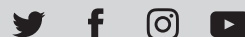
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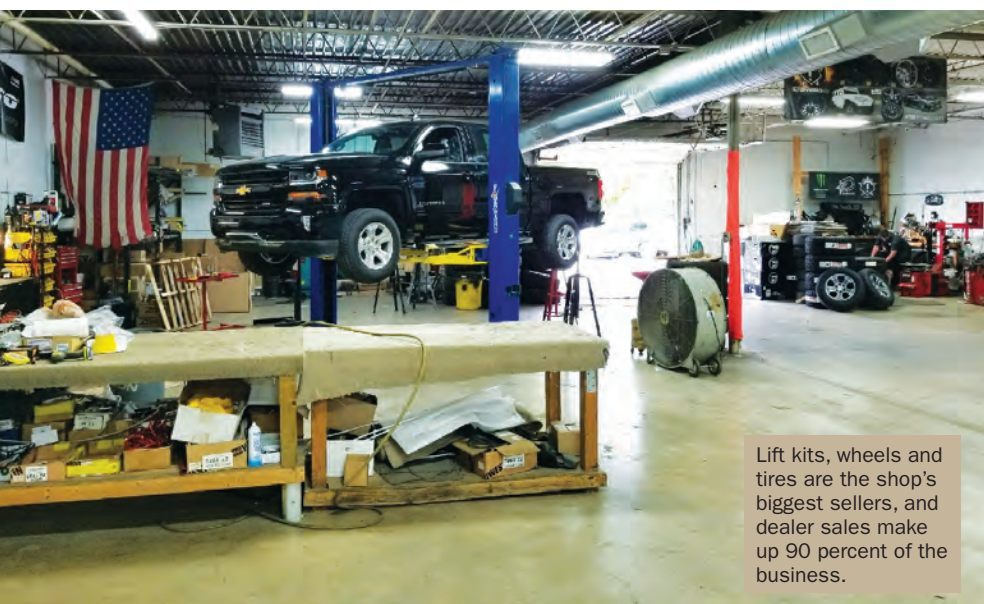




The “cool factor” is the sector of the business Hair enjoys most, as in this Jeep, outfitted with new hood, grille, stereo, fenders, top and leather interior.



Integrity Customs employs more than 30 workers at three locations.



Lift kits, wheels and tires are the shop's biggest sellers, and dealer sales make up 90 percent of the business.

between 70 and 80 dealerships a month.

“If you build good relationships, it is good work,” Hair says. “The way I look at dealer business is you can take years to gain a dealer, but it only takes a matter of hours to lose one.”

Integrity even offers a special rewards program that gives dealership salespeople the opportunity to earn cash to purchase products at Integrity by upselling or pitching their products to dealership customers.

Hair likes the steadiness of the dealership business, but hopes to boost Integrity's retail sales sector in the near future as well.

SOUND ADVICE

About two or three years ago, Hair joined Restylers United, a group of restyling shops across the country that meet to share ideas, best practices and other insight—a move that forever changed his business.

“Before I joined the group, I felt like we were an island and had hit our growth potential,” he says. “But, when I joined, it reignited a spark and helped me think outside the box.”

The members meet at each others' shops across the U.S. twice a year, and the connections have helped Hair enhance his business model and think about future growth.

As the owner of the first lift shop to join the group, Hair's guidance has also influenced other members to enter the lifts, wheels and tires market.

“I wouldn't have a drive forward if I hadn't met any of those guys,” Hair says. “Some of the members have multiple shops and have shared their wisdom with me about that. You learn about things that are working for others and think, ‘I could make that work. We can do this better.’ It keeps you thinking, so you don't get stuck in the everyday rut of your one shop in one city in one state.”

GOING SOCIAL

Hair credits much of his success to remaining true to the company name: *Integrity*.

“It all goes back to quality and customer service—that's staying power right there,” he says. “We wouldn't have made it this long if we hadn't done some things right.”

One of Hair's next steps involves hiring a marketing and social media manager to optimize Integrity's website (integrity-customs.com) and improve the company's



Good work and good relationships have kept the business moving forward for more than a decade.



Meeting and brainstorming with peers has reenergized Hair, as he finds motivation in the real-world experiences of similar shops across the country.

presence on social platforms like Facebook.

“The days of billboards, TV and phone-books don’t exist anymore,” he says. “I never thought I’d pay a full-time person to do this, but it’s not going to take much to see a return on the investment. I think it’s the right move.”

Hair hopes to market to millennials, the next generation of car buyers, and grow Integrity’s retail division.

“If we want to stay in business, we have to adapt,” he proclaims.

Integrity also recently entered the powder-coating market, which Hair says the shop is still experimenting with.

Upcoming aftermarket trends Hair anticipates include: changes to the electronics market, since many cars today are already coming factory-equipped with features restylers used to install; the potential return of old trends like lowering and chrome; and the impending arrival of driverless-car technology.

“That technology is closer than any

of us think,” he believes. “What does that look like for our business? I have no idea.”

No matter what lies ahead for the restyling industry, there’s no doubt that Hair will find a way to make his business flourish—with integrity, of course. **TS**



PATRICIA KAOWTHUMRONG
is a freelance writer based in Boulder, Colorado.



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