

Featured Business: Nesbit's Fine Watch Service, Seattle, Washington

Mackenzie Nesbit is a fourth generation watchmaker and employee of Nesbit's Fine Watch Service. He has an AWCI CW21 certification and is also WOSTEP certified. The current shop has been in business for more than 20 years, but his family has been in the business since 1885. *Horological Times* asked Mackenzie to draw from his extensive experience, taking us on a tour of his modernized workshop.

According to Nesbit, the CW21 certification is industry-recognized and provides assurance to his customers. The 4-day examination includes theoretical, practical and micromechanical applications, which are skills all professional watchmakers should possess. However, he believes certification is much more than just a piece of paper to put on display; rather, it's a "way of life" for the contemporary watchmaker. In addition, the 21st century watchmaker must make sure their appearance and the organization of their workshop reflects the quality and skill they put into every repair (Figure 1).



Figure 1: CUSTOMER ENTRANCE

- Modern, welcoming entrance for customers and suppliers.
- Clean and spacious appearance.
- Prominent signage.
- Entrance displays a quality image.

Let's start our "tour" of Nesbit's at the beginning—with their customers. Many watch owners will never have the opportunity to look inside their timepiece. The only information customers have to make them feel secure you can deliver on the repair is your word, your certification and your image. If your reception area is crowded with out-of-date, dusty literature,

boxes and trinkets, it may be hard for them to imagine you can keep the inside of their watch clean and that you can properly handle all the delicate parts. Nesbit says a 21st century workshop "needs to be a clean, well-organized area to be productive—with all tools easily accessible. Everything needs its own place, so you don't waste time looking for that obscure tool you only use once or twice a month." (See Figures 2 and 3.)



Figure 2: THE WORK AREA

- Tools and parts neatly stored in their proper place.
- Clean and uncluttered work area.
- Access to computers and modern technology.
- Good lighting with bright appearance.



Figure 3: TESTING AREA

- Hot plate and water resistance testing in separate area.
- A place for every piece of equipment and every piece of equipment in its place.

One of Nesbit's favorite organizational tools is the barcode reader. They use barcodes for computer tracking of timepieces. Additionally, they have quick access to status of jobs-in-progress, information on back-ordered parts, and their inventory, which promotes quality control. They also use a color code for each watchmaker which helps keep track of watches-in-progress and those in storage (Figure 4).



Figure 4: BAR-CODED STORAGE SYSTEM

- Bar codes allow computer tracking for maximum efficiency.
- Color codes identify watchmaker and job status.

Nesbit's believes the personal computer is another essential tool in your 21st Century workshop. "Not only is it a must for accounting, we use them for computerized tech sheets, industry information and internal/external communications," says Nesbit. "They greatly reduce storage space, help provide a clean image, and they're a great way to keep current on things like new lubrications and techniques." (Figure 5.)

Nesbit says it's sometimes tempting to fight change,



Figure 5: SHOP TECHNOLOGY

- Computers provide the latest information and technology.
- Supports digital microscope.
- Provides digital tech sheets.
- Essential for accounting system.
- Used for internal/external communications.

but new tools and techniques actually make your life easier. He cites the example of their Tick-O-Print that worked fine for the last 50 years. He says, however, a newer digital timing machine with an amplitude meter and oscilloscope took a lot of the guessing game out of the estimation process. In the long run, we saved time and money in replacing the old Tick-O-Print. "Remember, when you invest in new technology, you're making an investment in the future of your

business," adds Nesbit. "It may be hard to swallow when the purchase is being made, but the long-term result is more money in your pocket. (See Figures 6 and 7.)



Figure 6: MODERN PHOTO BOX

- Updated equipment improves business performance.
- Provides clean environment, proper lighting, and quality camera for optimum photos.
- Invaluable for recording condition during in take and after completion of work.



Figure 7: FINAL TEST AREA

- Final control testing area with winder for automatic watches.
- Modern equipment with printing capabilities improves functionality and record keeping.

For organized storage and tracking of parts, Nesbit's uses envelopes with detailed information, including SKU's, filed in metal cabinets. "We try to stock the most popular parts used," he notes. "We reorder once the envelope is near empty, so the part is available when needed." Nesbit recommends you categorize your parts cabinet by brand, caliber, part number and case number, where appropriate. (See Figure 8 on next page)

THE 21ST CENTURY WORKSHOP



Figure 8: PARTS STORAGE

- Parts cataloged by brand, caliber and part number.
- Identification by SKU's.

As for overall cleanliness, Nesbit says, “It’s amazing how much dust can settle on a workspace overnight. Daily cleaning of your workbench is an absolute must,” he adds. “Not just the top surface, but lights, glass bells and air and vacuum piping must be cleaned every morning to start fresh. No matter how good you are about closing your oil cups after each dip, the oils and greases become contaminated with airborne dust and lint and must be changed weekly.” They replace all oils in their individual dishes every Monday morning to avoid any questions about when they’re due for a change. (Cleaning schedule recommendations are available on the AWCI website at www.awci.com.)

In your cleaning function, movement cleaning machines should have a log sheet to track how many cycles the machine has run. Regardless of how it “looks” at Nesbit’s, they change the cleaning solution after a predetermined number of cycles (Figure 9).

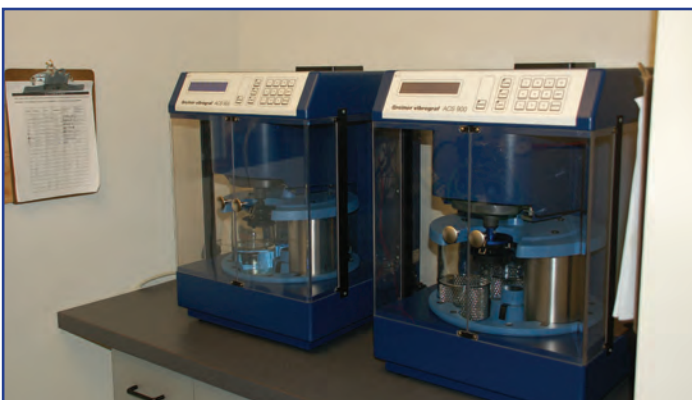


Figure 9: CLEANING EQUIPMENT

- Cleaning machines located in separate area.
- Log sheets track cycles to determine when cleaning solution should be changed.

The single dirtiest area of your workshop is most likely the case and bracelet refinishing room, according to Nesbit. His emphasis is on the word “room”—as in an entirely separate area. “You must do all you can to prevent the contamination of your clean workbench from rouge dust flying off your polishing wheels,” he says. “To combat this at Nesbit’s, our polishing machines have a strong vacuum filtration system, as well as an overhead exhaust system to remove dust and particulates before they can enter our workshop.” (Figure 10.)

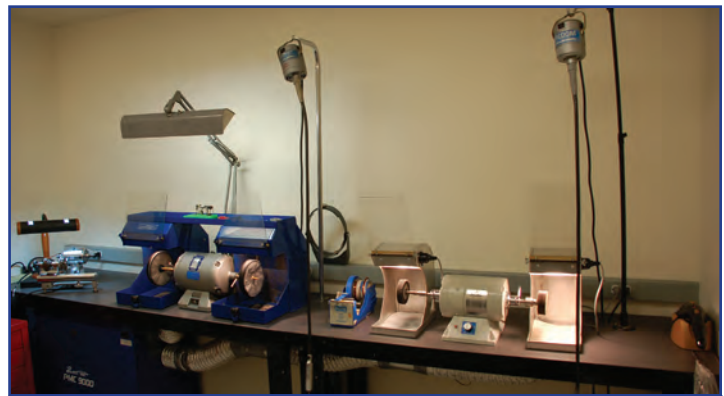


Figure 10: CASE AND BRACELET REFINISHING ROOM

- Separate room prevents workbench contamination by rouge dust.
- Vacuum filtration and overhead exhaust aid in removal of dust and particulates.

Keeping up-to-date on new techniques and equipment is vital. There are many ways a 21st century watchmaker can stay current on new techniques and equipment. “First off, maintain a good working relationship with representatives,” Nesbit says. “Seek their advice, regularly review trade magazines, and my favorite, volunteer with a trade organization like AWCI. When I do this, I’m able to work side-by-side with watchmakers from the whole spectrum of our field. This includes industry professionals, retail store watchmakers, service center watchmakers and independent watchmakers. Working with others allows you to learn information and useful tips you might not otherwise experience in your day-to-day routine.” He adds, whether you set aside \$1,000 or \$5,000 annually, it’s important to have a portion of your yearly budget reserved to upgrade equipment. He notes, upgraded equipment is also good for your state of mind. “We watchmakers are easily excited—there’s nothing like the thrill of a new hand tool to increase our morale.”

All these efforts have resulted in a successful business model. The shop projects a good image to cus-

tomers and suppliers, and that helps build business. Nesbit's has also invested in the required equipment and education to maintain their ability to purchase material from certain manufacturers. Nesbit's believes this translates into business "integrity" for both suppliers and customers. The supplier sees Nesbit's is dedicated to performing quality service on their brand—and the customer has confidence that Nesbit's is the best resource for maintaining the integrity of their timepiece. ♦



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