

Friendly expert care at your doorstep

Cowbell Mobile Bike Shop

No time to plan your meals for the week? Don't worry. Your meal kit from Blue Apron is on its way. And that Ikea TV stand you bought that will be impossible to put together? TaskRabbit is coming to your house later this afternoon to assemble it. Guess what? The chariot is due for an oil change, but your schedule is filled this week. Why not drop your keys with Zippity, the car-care startup founded by two Tuck alumni—this business comes right to your workplace!

Top: Sometimes, if the sun is shining, Todd will work outside on a bike.
Above: Cleaning the cassette on a standard tune-up.



“Todd has a reputation for being the best bike mechanic around,” says Liz Pierce, a Norwich, Vermont, resident who is a repeat customer. “He comes to my house, which is an unimaginable convenience.”



Clockwise from far left: Todd makes corporate visits to maintain and repair employees' bikes.

Riders celebrate a mountain ride supported by Cowbell. Todd picks up a bike needing repairs in Burlington, Vermont. The Cowbell van is well stocked to service a whole fleet of bikes.

Todd's guiding principles are to be honest, pay attention to detail, and just be kind.

Consumer-first companies that offer personal, convenient services at your home or your place of work are continuing to pop up around the country, and the Upper Valley too is benefiting from this make-your-life-easier fever. Cowbell Mobile Bike Shop, founded by longtime bike mechanic Todd Chewning of Lebanon, is the latest convenience brand to pop up in the Upper Valley.

“The Best Bike Mechanic Around”

Cowbell offers a number of services for the casual or expert cyclist: tune-ups, bike assembly and disassembly, wheel builds and care, suspension, and even ride support for group rides. But here's the kicker: Todd meets customers right in their driveways and works directly out of his detailed cargo van.

The setup is a win-win. The benefits to the customer are obvious: A friendly, knowledgeable bike mechanic works on your bike in a location that's most convenient for you—and he's finished by the time you've mowed the front yard. And if you're not around that day? Not to worry; Todd can leave you an invoice and touch base with you later.

“Todd has a reputation for being the best bike mechanic around,” says Liz Pierce, a Norwich, Vermont, resident who is a repeat customer. “He comes to my house, which is an unimaginable convenience. Last winter he disassembled my bike, shipped it to Florida, and a month later I shipped it to him in Vermont and he put it back together—all from the comfort of my home. You just can't beat that.”



The Cowbell racing team at the historic Gloucester, Massachusetts, venue, one of the longest running cyclocross races in the country.

Doing What He Loves

For Todd, who fell in love with bikes the moment his training wheels came off, this business model affords him the ability to do what he enjoys with little overhead and the freedom to create his own schedule. It's an idea he's been kicking around for most of his career.

"I started researching other brands out there offering this type of service, and I noticed that they were very expensive," says Todd. "My family, especially my dad, really encouraged me to go for it. He told me, 'Anything they can teach you, you already know. You should just do it yourself.'"

Todd, who grew up outside Baltimore, began BMX racing when he was 13. He loved the high intensity of the sport and excelled at it. "I have about 100 trophies sitting in my parents' attic right now," he says with a laugh.

As a kid, he spent hours in his garage cleaning and tuning his bike before

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and after races. But it was his father, a mechanical engineer, who really taught him the ins and outs of mechanics. The two spent a lot of time in the garage working on motorcycles and cars—one time even completely overhauling a classic MGB together.

“He was my mentor; he taught me everything I know,” says Todd. “You used to be able to work on your car or your bike yourself. It’s a lot more technical now. You need a specialized person to do that stuff. And people are too busy, so they hire someone to help them out, which is kind of good for me.”

Staying True to His Values

You could call Todd a bike aficionado. Not only has he been riding since he was a kid, he’s worked on bikes professionally since the ’90s. In 2005, he relocated to the Upper Valley with his wife Kim to accept a job as head of the bike department at Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS) in West



The Cowbell team’s tent is set up to support teammates at the races in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

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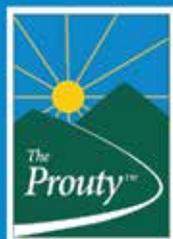


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Lebanon where his sales and labor soared. Later, as head mechanic at the BikeHub, a former bike shop in Norwich, Todd's attention to detail, his honesty, and his friendly demeanor quickly gained him a reputation as a top bike mechanic in the Upper Valley. When the BikeHub closed its doors in 2016, Todd took it as a sign to finally go out on his own.

His first year was admittedly tough, but the following year, 2017, was profitable. Now that he's established his brand and a network of customers in the Upper Valley, he's decided to expand his services north to the Burlington area.

In addition, Todd recently cofounded a racing team, Cowbell Mobile Racing, with local cyclist Stephen Kohr to help engage Upper Valley cyclocross racers and get the word out about his brand. His Cowbell van can often be seen at road and cyclocross races across New England, where he offers his support to racers.

Besides expanding to Burlington, Todd also hopes to increase his visits to companies that offer wellness programs. He offers a corporate-rate discount and can come directly to a company's lot. But whatever the next step is for Cowbell, he plans to stay true to the values he's held since the very beginning: Be honest. Pay attention to detail. And just be kind.

"If someone brings their bike to me, I'm going to be honest about what the bike needs," says Todd. "When it's in my hands, from that point on, it's my bike. I want it to run like my bike, so I'm going to care for it like it's my bike. I think people feel that." ❶

Cowbell Mobile Bike Shop

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