

# SEISMIC SHIFT IN COMMUNICATION

Facebook groups are shaking up  
the garage door industry

By Vicki Jones, Editor  
Editor, Door + Access Systems Newsmagazine

# THE CORE FOUR

## Garage Door-Related Social Media Groups

This article focuses on four popular Facebook groups: Garage Door Installers of North America, Garage Door Techs, Garage Door Techs United, and the Garage Door Tech Deplorables. All four have different objectives, rules, and audiences. Below is a quick synopsis of each group.

Name of group	Date created	Number of members	Number of posts for Dec. 15, 2019	Number of posts for Nov. 15 - Dec. 15, 2019
Garage Door Installers of North America	Jan. 31, 2015	5,089	6	459
Garage Door Techs	Oct. 17, 2015	4,781	12	1,388
Garage Door Techs United	Mar. 20, 2017	1,659	3	200
Garage Door Tech Deplorables	June 16, 2017	2,663	114	4,052

Data collected on Dec. 15, 2019. Source: Facebook

### HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING HOW IT STARTED

There's a new go-to source for technical information in our industry, and you might be surprised to learn what it is. It's not an industry trade association or a notable manufacturer; it's thousands of collective members on a social media platform.

In the past five years, several Facebook groups have emerged dedicated to technicians and installers in the garage door industry.

John Longest, creator of the Garage Door Installers of North America (GDINA), was the first to form a Facebook group dedicated to garage door installers.

"I searched Facebook for a long time looking for groups affiliated with garage doors, but found none," he told us. "Out of necessity, I started one on Jan. 31, 2015, and added my co-workers."

The steadily growing number of garage door-related Facebook groups and members and their overall posting activity is creating a powerful shift in communication. It's transforming how the community broadcasts and receives information.

As more and more door techs, installers, and industry players join, it raises the question, *Who is dominating communication in the garage door industry?*

This article examines the emergence of these newly formed and heavily used communication sources. It also

explores the benefits and potential drawbacks and the actions manufacturers should take—if they aren't responding already.

### HOW IT STARTED

#### Big groups, big numbers

In five years, Garage Door Installers of North America has attracted over 5,000 members and now averages 450 posts a month and 18 posts a day. Longest began working for Genson Overhead Door in Locke, N.Y., 24 years ago.

Since the inception of GDINA, several additional Facebook groups have been formed, and they report equally impressive membership numbers and/or posting activity.

Ronnie Vinson, a contractor for Elite Garage Door based in Atlanta, Ga., created the Facebook group Garage Door Techs (GDT) on Oct. 17, 2015. "I noticed there were groups for plumbers, electricians, heating, air, etc., so I created GDT. I wanted door techs to be recognized for their skill and craftsmanship like any other trade."

GDT has now nearly 5,000 members, averages over 1,000 posts a month, and over 20 posts a day. (See "The Core Four" sidebar for additional groups and stats.)

In comparison, the International Door Association (IDA), formed 25 years ago, has about 2,000 members and communicates through four main channels: its website, bimonthly magazine, annual seminars, and annual Expo trade show event.

### THE POSITIVE ASPECTS

#### Common bond

Even though these Facebook groups are relatively new, their power and influence is impossible to ignore. What makes them so popular?

Whether posting about a technical issue, showing off an impressive installation job, or uploading a picture of a bloody severed finger, members can immediately communicate to one another on a variety of topics and know the audience can relate.



A GDT member posting about a serious hand injury caused by a winding bar.

Vinson said, "I've seen techs join the group to show off their skills, to share techniques and the tools they use, and to connect with other techs in the industry."

In addition to the core groups like GDINA and GDT, several subgroups have been formed. These subgroups are even more targeted; they are designed for very specific content such as hiring techs, selling tools, and promoting products.

#### Strength in numbers

In the past, if you needed tech support, waiting on hold was your only option. This type of traditional tech support would give you access to one person.

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## Garage Door Installers of North America

**Created:** Jan. 31, 2015  
**Creator:** John Longest, Genson Overhead Door  
**Purpose:** “To share photos, stories and/or questions on any kind of door you may have installed or fixed.  
**Scope:** North America, but also has members from Japan, Australia, South Africa, Great Britain, and elsewhere.  
**Designed for:** Installers, but is now open to anyone in the industry.  
**Distinction:** The first social media group for installers. Longest: “I believe what distinguishes our group is the level of professionalism. Although we do allow swearing, joking, funny memes, etc.”  
**Members:** 5,089; 4,500 members visit regularly. Two admins and five moderators; 7% women, 93% men (as of Dec. 15, 2019)

Now, members have access to a huge pool of people that install the same types of products and experience similar issues. A tech can post a question, and dozens of people can respond within minutes.

Mark Fisher, a supervisor at Crawford Doors in Wilmington, N.C., is an IDEA-sanctioned trainer. Fisher has 24 years in the industry and is one of the most active members in the garage door social media world; he participates in 13 garage door-affiliated groups regularly.

“It’s great that you can post your own experiences to the group because sometimes 25 different problems can share the same 100 symptoms” said Fisher.

### Raising the bar

“Door companies are helping and learning from other door companies. It’s an ‘I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine’ mentality,” said Fisher. This type of support not only saves time, it encourages a higher level of customer service among techs in the industry.

“These groups inspire techs to step up their game. Facebook posts help new people see where they need to go, teach old dogs new tricks, and inspire good techs to become great



techs,” said Fisher.

Vinson also said that as these techs are raising the bar, they’re making other techs better. “Companies that join the group can compare their systems to those of other companies and actually

see how their techs feel about

their jobs.”

Owners get to see their employees demonstrate pride in their work, and they also get to view positive feedback from other members.

### Immediate response

Another obvious benefit of social media groups is that the responses to tech questions are often immediate. “You can post a picture or question and get a response instantaneously. Sometimes it is much faster than calling tech support,” said Longest.

A caveat: tech support via Facebook may be quicker, but there’s no guarantee the answers posted are correct. The good news is that many knowledgeable members and admins are out there monitoring and commenting.

“We have a lot of retired tech members, and they are often available to read questions and respond right away. They pass their experience

and knowledge down to the younger techs.

So their advice acts as training for new techs,” said Vinson.

“Instead of spending hours trying to figure out something by yourself, you can post a question and get a response right away,” Fisher added.

Let’s face it. Reading a short comment on your smartphone is easier than pulling out a thick instruction manual. But is it as reliable?

### Even playing field

Unlike most organizations, social media groups have no true hierarchy—and this is another appealing draw. All members have an equal voice and can post as often as they want.

This sense of equality reduces the competitive tendencies that can hinder free-flowing communication. It also creates a safe space for people to share and give feedback.

### “Willing to help”

So far, members of these groups appear to be eager to help other members. They don’t hesitate to answer questions, provide resources, identify issues and products, and give support.

“In the beginning, it was amazing to me that techs would respond to other techs. In many cases, these guys are competitors outside the group, but in GDT, members from all over the world help fellow techs with technical problems,” said Vinson.

When someone posts or replies, their background and credentials are not obvious.

## THE ADMINS



**Danielle Anderson**  
Admin for Garage Door Techs;  
Genie marketing specialist.

*"Techs go ask the group for an answer, and we hope to be there when they need that answer."*



**John Longest**  
Admin and creator of the  
Garage Door Installers of  
North America.

*"Just when you think you've seen it all, along comes someone with a better idea on how to do something."*



**Ronnie Vinson ("Ronbo")**  
Admin and creator of  
Garage Door Techs.

*"We encourage photos of installs, repairs, truck setups, likes and dislikes of products, and most importantly, any questions they have on door-related issues."*



**Mark Fisher**  
Admin for Garage Door  
Techs; member of 13  
Facebook groups.

*"In the Garage Door Tech Deplorables group, everybody speaks freely and colorfully; it's a tight group that is loyal to each other."*

On the positive side, this relative anonymity creates an open, communal, and uncompetitive atmosphere. But it also generates questions about accountability for the content posted and what safeguards exist.

## THE SAFEKEEPERS

### The critical role of an admin

Without admins, the communication among members within Facebook garage door groups would be completely unregulated. The job of an admin is to ensure that the content posted by the members adheres to the group's guidelines.

They scan profiles, monitor posts, and review and remove inappropriate comments.

However, admins are not responsible for verifying that content posted by members is accurate or true; neither are they responsible for removing wrong information.

"We are not fact checkers. We do try to curb or remove posts that promote blatant disregard of safety codes, laws, or manufacturer specs and recommendations," said Fisher. "But there are simply too

many manufacturers with various models and designs for any one or group of admins to know the details of them all."

The admins of these groups may have excellent knowledge and experience and are active in the door industry. But most often they're volunteers for a position that requires no formal certification process.

All of the admins we interviewed said that they spend, on average, one hour a day monitoring their group(s). They all seemed passionate and dedicated about their roles. According to Vinson, this is the norm. "The GDT admins love what they do and help the members out a lot."

An admin for nine groups, Fisher said, "I don't watch much TV, so participating in these groups is what I do during my downtime. It's my entertainment."

### Grounds for removal

Fisher is one of 21 people who monitor the GDT group, which garners anywhere from 20 to 40 posts a day. Vinson said that they have to remove at least one post a day.

By contrast, the GDINA admins remove one or two posts a month. Longest said, "We don't allow racism or political, sexual, or demeaning pictures, comments, or off-topic posts. The bashing of other door installers or their companies is not tolerated."

The GDT guidelines are very similar. Vinson said that many of the removed posts

are not necessarily disparaging; they are just in the wrong place. For example, posts advertising job opportunities or promoting products are all considered grounds for removal and should be posted on one of the GDT subgroups instead.

"We will also delete any posts of members arguing. Sometimes we might even ban a member, give a warning, and share with the member why we deleted their posts," said Vinson.

## WHAT CAN MANUFACTURERS DO?

### Get involved

A decade ago, manufacturers and industry associations had primary control over how and what information was broadcast about their garage door products. Today, things are radically different.

These Facebook groups generate hundreds of posts every month, each communicating information (accurate or inaccurate) about a product or company to hundreds or thousands of people. How are manufacturers adapting to this obvious—some say seismic—shift in communication?

Most have hopped aboard the social media train. Vinson said, "Manufacturers like Genie, LiftMaster, Clopay, C.H.I., Hörmann, Amarr, Miller Edge, and others

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## Garage Door Techs (GDT)

- Created:** Oct. 17, 2015
- Creator:** Ronnie Vinson, a contractor for Elite Garage Door, Atlanta, Ga.
- Purpose:** “To connect the garage door industry, door technicians, owners, management, sales, and manufacturers.”
- Scope:** The U.S. and around the world.
- Designed for:** “All industry-affiliated professionals who have developed skills, craftsmanship, and have vast knowledge of all areas of the trade.”
- Members:** 4,781; 21 admins (as of Dec. 15, 2019)
- Subgroups:** GDT Certified, GDT Off the Clock, GDT Technical Support, GDT Owners, Managers, and Manufacturers, GDT Skilled Techs Wanted, GDT Admins, and GDT Buy, Sell, and Trade.

have taken interest in GDT and other door-related Facebook groups.”

Most of these groups for installers and technicians welcome and generally appreciate active participation from the manufacturers.

Brandon Bolin is the digital marketing specialist for Overhead Door, Access Systems Division. He follows GDINA and GDT and monitors the company’s social accounts to stay on top of industry trends and business needs.

Bolin said, “These groups are important for both installers and technicians alike, because they act as a medium for cross-functional conversations to enable them to do their job well.”

Danielle Anderson is a marketing specialist for Genie; monitoring social media groups is her primary responsibility. Anderson is also an admin for GDT. She said that Genie has been aware of the garage door-related groups for years and monitors the majority of them.

“The garage door installers are at the front lines of our industry, and many of them are our customers,” Anderson said. “It is important to be part of these groups because Genie wants to provide the best possible service to our customers. If the techs have a question or concern, they go ask the group for an answer, and we hope to be there when they need that answer.”

Fisher said, “We are lucky to have Danielle Anderson actively responding within the GDT group. Where else can a tech go about a Genie issue on a Saturday or Sunday and have an actual Genie representative reply back, sometimes immediately?”

### Become the trusted voice

Manufacturers have much to gain by being involved in these groups. For example, they provide manufacturers with direct access to potential dealers. Group members consist of all levels of employees, many of whom are decision-makers or company owners, and these Facebook groups may be their primary source for product information.

Manufacturers who become group members can potentially grow their customer base, increase brand awareness, and become a



trusted voice. According to Vinson, many of the manufacturers that monitor the posts “do give advice and will step in if someone is asking questions about

one of their products.”

By actively monitoring posts, manufacturers can also dispute or clarify inaccurate information that is being communicated about their products. Since these groups have no dedicated fact-checkers, it is extremely important for manufacturers to monitor the posts and respond accordingly.

### Listen and adapt

Manufacturers can use feedback from these groups to adapt their products. “These discussions are an effective word-of-mouth marketing method for Overhead Door products and their functionality,” said Bolin.

Overhead Door is not the only manufacturer that considers the messages from these Facebook groups as useful. Fisher said that after months of posts about cable tension issues with jackshaft operators, Genie introduced a product without cables.

Likewise, Vinson said that LiftMaster modified one of their products after multiple posts about headroom. “Their RJO opener went from a no- to





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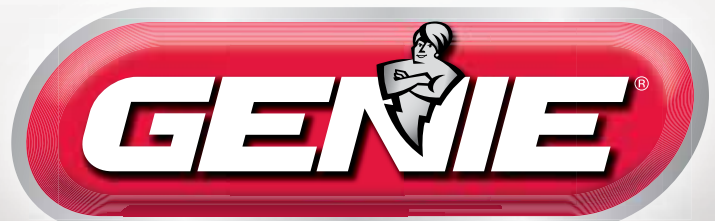
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## DON'T LUBE IT. SLIPIT.

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## Garage Door Techs United

**Created:** March 20, 2017  
**Designed for:** Residential and commercial garage door technicians and installers.  
**Members:** 1,659; four admins, one moderator (as of Dec. 15, 2019)

## Garage Door Tech Deplorables

**Created:** June 16, 2017  
**Purpose:** Have fun. Post anything. Just "don't piss each other off."  
**Designed for:** "Garage door guys only." Prospective members must answer some questions to be approved.  
**Distinction:** Fewer restrictions on content of posts.  
**Members:** 2,663; seven admins, three moderators (as of Dec. 15, 2019)

low-headroom for certain low-headroom applications, and the couplings/collars were redesigned."

It's hard to prove whether these product revisions are directly linked to the feedback from social media groups. But perhaps it's safe to say that these spot-on revisions were at least encouraged by tech posts.

### Create new technology

Social media group communication can also inspire the creation of an entirely new product. "Some of the best ideas generated from the group are new products designed to make installs safer for techs. The Surewinder, Brutewinder, and Donkey Cone are prime examples," said Vinson.

"As manufacturers, we utilize feedback in these groups to drive business decisions," said Bolin. "Our visualizer technology created for the DoorView mobile application was one product that incorporated such feedback."

"When the feedback is positive, we know we're on the right track. If the feedback is negative, we can leverage it to improve our products (or create new ones) to ensure continued business from our customers," said Bolin.

### "Join 'em"

We asked if there is a concern that group members may begin to rely too heavily on social media posts for information rather than reading manufacturer manuals and websites.

"Social media has become a tool for discussion, but many installers and technicians still rely on the manuals and installation instructions that manufacturers publish as the source of truth to complete a job," said Bolin.

Anderson said, "Genie hopes to understand and anticipate the ever-changing landscape of how customer service is defined in 2020 and beyond by meeting dealer and installer needs in the formats they choose."

This seems like a wise approach. As social media becomes the primary and preferred form of communication for the garage door industry, joining these groups may be the best answer. In other words, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

After all, in this new information age, you can't control what information is distributed. But you can control how you respond to that information. ■

*Editor's note: To respond to this story, send an email to the editor at [vicki@vjonesmedia.com](mailto:vicki@vjonesmedia.com).*

Photos and screen shots courtesy of the Garage Door Tech Facebook group.