



BUSINESSSENSE

A time to reflect

By Tim Kelly

Wow, what a year. I cannot believe we are already into December and it's probably fair to say 2021 has flown by and you may have felt you haven't had the chance to draw breath.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry Christmas in advance and I hope the universe provides good health, wealth, love, laughter and prosperity in abundance in the coming year.

It is always beneficial to look back and reflect, especially after the year we've had. In 1992, when the Queen summarised the preceding 12 months as her "annus horribilis" and "not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure", she would have probably thought that in truth it "wasn't that bad a year" had she known what 2020 and 2021 had in store for us.

But whatever way you feel about the year that has just passed, I am convinced that you are no longer doing the same things either in life or business that you were doing pre-pandemic.

It is clear things have changed, and needed to change, especially for those working in bodyshops as owners. What is important is to reflect on and learn from those changes.

Reflect:

- What are our biggest achievements? What helped us do well in business?
- What goals or opportunities did we miss? What got in our way?
- What were our key challenges? How did we manage these?

Learn:

- What can we learn from these experiences?
- What insights do we have about our responses, behaviours?
- What does this tell us about our perceptions, assumptions, capabilities?

Change:

- How can we think about things differently in the future?
- What do we want to do more of or less of, stop, start or keep?
- What are the specific actions we will take individually and/or as a team?

Robust reflection requires active listening, insightful questioning, suspending judgement and/or blame, sharing ideas and being genuinely interested and respectful of others' viewpoints.

It is an opportunity for individuals and teams to think about, review and better understand what they are doing (or have done), and decide what to do differently to improve. The potential benefits of reflective practice for teams are significant:

- Increased trust as challenges and different ideas are shared.
- Commitment to new or better ways of working.
- Critical thinking and more effective problem-solving.
- Understanding others' perspectives.
- Resilience and readiness for change.
- Positive communication and relationships.
- Ongoing personal and team development.

So go get a pen and paper, write each of the following as a heading on a page, and when you get some spare time over Christmas have a think and make some notes, make plans and set goals for next year:

- What did you do well?
- What didn't you do well?
- What did you change?
- What have you learned?
- What would you change?

This is a time for coming together and enjoying each other's company and, for some, celebrating the birth of Christ. Whether you are religious or not, it is clear that the one thing the repair industry needs is to share each other's company more and talk to each other.

That bodyshop down the road might be one of your best allies, so why not talk to them and see if you can send each other work? Discuss what rates insurers are agreeing and see who can get the highest? The more repairers share information, the less leverage insurers have.

Being self-employed, I work on my own in my office and it can make you feel isolated. The one thing I enjoy is getting out and about to car shows, delivering training and going to trade shows. One show I enjoyed more than any other this past year was the Refinishing Trade Show organised by Sunny and Naomi Yip in Darwin.

Next up, I am looking forwards to the *bodyshop* magazine awards at ICC Wales where hopefully I'll be able to catch up with all of our readers. But if I don't see you there, merry Christmas.