



Here we are almost 10 years into the 21st century. We have stressed over Y2K, economic instability not witnessed since the Great Depression, unmatched upheaval in automotive manufacturing, drastic changes in our work routines as well as new rules and regulations aimed directly at us! What can we expect from 2010 and beyond?

It really has been a roller coaster ride and although we have managed to keep our lunch down we can't help but wonder if the ride is going to get easier or should we prepare for the other shoe to drop?

I work for a simple spray booth company and the following are some observations we have made as industry participants/suppliers over the last few notable years. We do not have a crystal ball or an MBA from Ivey Business School but we truly do feel the collision repair industry is growing up. Even though a lot of the changes have been government mandated, your success will depend on the adjustments YOU make to YOUR shop!

We have written about equipment evolution as well as industry responses to new government regulations. We feel that everyone has been forced to reconnect with their trade and their business and the collective effect has been a good one for all of us. No crystal ball, no smoke and mirrors - we truly feel you are armed with the education and the tools to make 2010 all about YOU!

2010...

It's all about YOU!

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A few years ago we keyed on energy efficiencies and the cost of operation was being openly discussed. Spray Booth manufacturers took notice and we saw direct fired burners and energy efficient motors/controls move from "options" to standard equipment. Shop owners began to really look at the cost of operation as opposed to only capital cost. Planning was slipping into our day-to-day way of doing business.

Spray Booth companies like Global Finishing Solutions introduced their "Eco" line of products with standard features that offer the end user all the operation cost advantages that have been developed over the past few years. Variable frequency drives, modulating burners, and programmable controls made cost control an attainable tool to help a shop's bottom line. Spray Booth companies (and other shop equipment companies) also became aware of the concept of being in touch with what is good for the end users, not just for themselves. The spray booth companies once again emerged as active industry partners instead of just being suppliers.

This collective effort was a direct result of the pending low VOC conversions that will finally go into effect mid 2010. The last 3 years have brought all the industry players together in a positive fashion like this writer has not observed in his 25+ years in the industry. We ALL attended the clinics. We ALL participated in the forums! We ALL got educated on the new materials. As a result we ALL reconnected with our businesses as well as our colleagues' businesses. The suppliers were in touch with the end users; the end users were in touch with their shop's processes and procedures. The bottom line had become the common goal!

Another development in the last decade

has been consolidation. The industry has new players (and some old players who grew) that approach the business with a plan. Everything has a cost and concise business plans are formed. Budgeting and projections are realistic and essential to the consolidator's success. COST drives the business plan and processes are constantly changed and developed to improve the bottom line.

What will 2010 bring? We believe that technologically we have all digested about as much as we can over the last few years. We believe that you, the shop owner/manager are going to make the biggest changes in 2010. You have the equipment, you have reconnected with your suppliers, you understand your costs and you have new tools to better your profits. You will continue to be involved and you will feed your need for more information by continuing to attend industry conferences and clinics. You will listen to industry innovators like Ken Friesen, Tony Canade, Larry Jefferies, John Norris and the host of others who have been telling us what they already knew but we did not want to hear about until the government forced us to.

2010 will be the year of the shop owner and his/her shop. Take what you have learned and use it. You have been forced to understand your business like never before and it all seems to be working out. Take this understanding and develop it. Customize it to your shop and your needs. The tools are all there (and this time we are not talking about paint spray booths). Keep your new skills sharp and continue to be educated. Let's not allow complacency to interfere with our success.

Good Luck and Good Finishing for 2010! ■

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