

WE ARE VDA

**Change is Inevitable
Growth is Optional**



Change is inevitable in life. You can either resist it, and potentially get run over by it, or you can choose to cooperate with it, adapt to it, and learn how to benefit from it.

When you embrace change you will begin to see it as an opportunity for growth.

Jack Cranfield

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1. WHO IS THE VDA?

We are in a bad way....

Through my experience of meeting with, and working for, repairers throughout the UK, in our training and coaching sessions, as well as the other work we're involved with for distributors, we constantly see in countless instances, that the position of the vehicle damage assessor, has been the place that many arrive at by default. Some as they wind down heading towards retirement and some as they pass through on their forward journey, towards the possibility of a managerial position. But Why? When you think about it, the VDA, is one of the most, if not the most 'KEY' position, aligned to the generating of profit within the repair facility. Don't get me wrong, they're not a lone superhero (in the fictional sense), but they are the initiator of success within the repair process. So why would you not be more focussed on exactly who is going to be awarded that honour?

Whilst I understand that many may not currently view being a vehicle damage assessor as the ideal career path, you simply can't ignore the importance of the 'atomic details' required by this position and the catalytic role it plays in laying the foundations for the success of the business each and every day. I have found in discussions, that many of those who currently occupy this placement, whilst driven to do their work, and do it to the best of their abilities and understanding of the business, often feel isolated and left somewhat, to their own measures with little or no training other than the normal Audatex etc. I know that many of my clients appreciate my direct honest speaking approach (even if they do wince from time to time when we speak) but the position of Vehicle Damage Assessor, is like no other, within the business of repairing accident damaged vehicles, and without a full and proper display of sound leadership from those responsible at the head of the business, it will just remain a staging position that fails to deliver its full potential for the business.

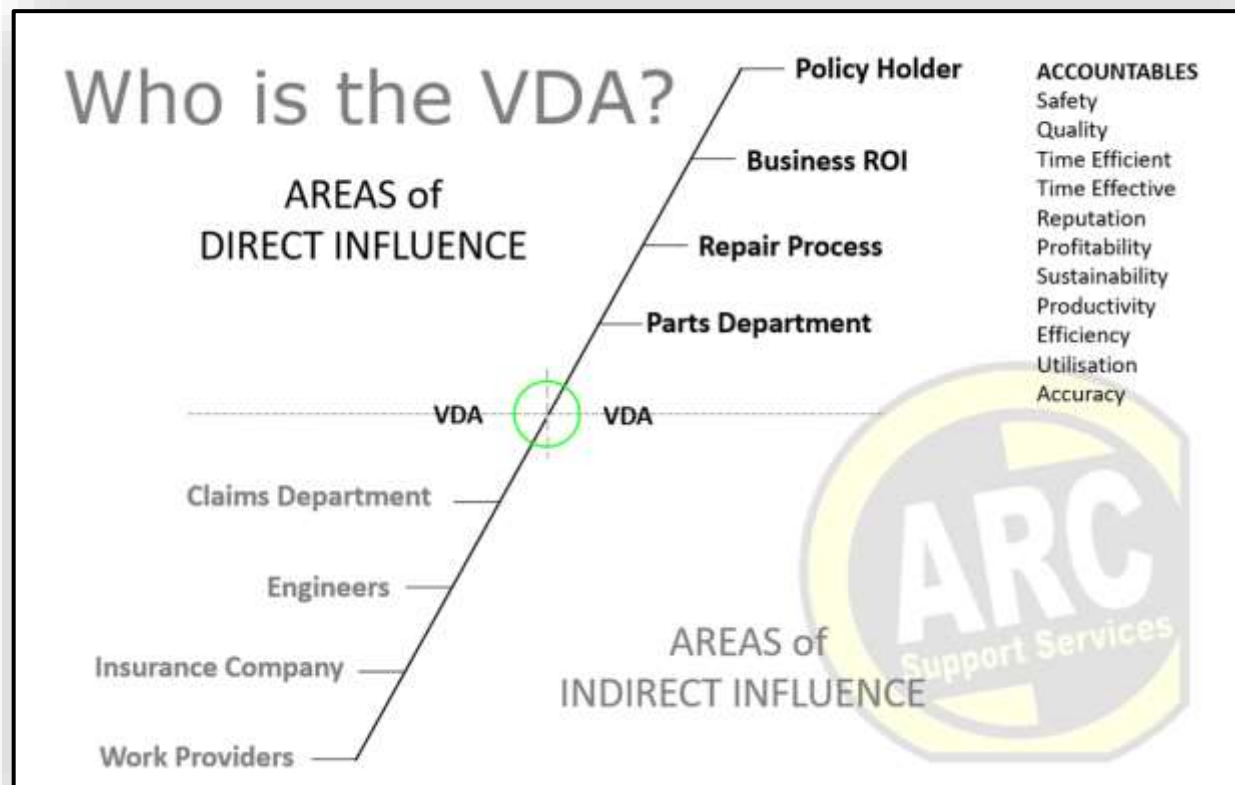
Never the less, it remains a position that demands the highest level of knowledge, a supreme amount of integrity and a carefully controlled environment in which to perform the duties of the VDA, for the sustainability of the business, and possibly more so, in the wake of this devastating pandemic.

So who is the VDA?

The VDA is the first definitive factor in the fortunes of the company, and it is this position within the repair process that will determine the extent and level of success to which the repair facility can rise. In today's technical marketplace, the accountability of the VDA is now a key element in the fight for brand loyalty, especially for the business in its locality, both from a work providers perspective, as well as the needs and desires of the vehicle owner and drivers. Additionally, in our current market place of work distribution through national distributors, in a bid to lock in repairer/client loyalty, there is much more that could be done, ensuring the repairer survives, grows and remains... a client!

Effectively, the position of VDA, is the hub around which every element of the repair process revolves. No matter the hierarchical set up of the business, the VDA should be able to hold council as the technical manager of the repair process, outwardly in client facing and internally at shop-floor level, and without exception. If currently, this is not possible, due to a lack of technical skills &/or ethical experience on behalf of the VDA, then here is the first red flag a business should review. How will the business intend to participate in a market that demands this level of repair process management. The influence of the VDA has far reaching consequences for the enterprise.

These consequences, can be great or catastrophic, dependent upon how the business management/owners, support or deny the required authority, backing, care, time and environment, for this is an incredibly complex area of the repair process, in direct relation to the businesses current and future successes.



The procedures of the VDA, and the environment in which they are delivered are the foundation of the repair process. Just like the foundation of a building performs a number of functions such as bearing the load of the structure above, isolating it from minor ground movements, as well as protecting it from rising ground moisture, each element of the assessment process is there to provide reinforcement in a procedure that has direct bearing on the outcomes and results that are required to constantly deliver safety, quality and profitability of a repair. The influences of this position are both direct and indirect, but in every aspect of the business, the impact this position has, is far reaching, if managed well, will cut the cost of conflict, both internally within the business and externally, outside the business. If not, the statistics will speak for themselves.

2. CHANGE IS INEVITABLE - GROWTH IS OPTIONAL

These are not completely unprecedented times especially in relation to business and how quickly its changing. History is littered with examples of astounding events that have preceded extreme changes. When you take a good look at history, it shows us that unexpected events have constantly changed the face of how many companies go about accomplishing their goals, and in todays fast moving pandemic landscape of our repair industry, it will be no different.



In his book 'That Will Never Work' Mark Randolph tells the story of building an exceptional business and the trials he and his team constantly faced as it organically grew into a model that was so different to anything that had gone before. It tells the story of how they had to continue rising to a myriad of challenges, any one of which could or maybe should have closed them down.

His determined individualism pushed, forced and cajoled his business forward to a point of performance that heralded the end of another renowned business.

Blockbuster Video was a sizeable business with a healthy level of profits organised to deliver what the public wanted....seemingly. However, Mark Randolph and Blockbuster Video were in the same game, providing home movie entertainment, but as his business evolved and gained it's market share, Mark began to appreciate there could be a wholly different approach to his delivery.

As Netflix continued to evolve, Mark realised that there had to be a more convenient and cost effective way of delivering their service to the end user. Rather than the customer having to visit an expensive to run, piece of real estate on a high street, to pick up and drop off the physical copy, Netflix sought a new way of delivering their brand. Firstly, by a new type of media 'DVD' and utilising the quickest form of postal service available, and then evolving to use streaming over the internet as the technology became reliable and readily accessible.

Blockbuster Video knew it was happening and even considered competing but instead they decided to tighten their grip on their market share in an attempt to hold onto what they knew, all the time working harder (not smarter) trying to increase their retention on an old outdated business model. Indeed, it is believed that Blockbuster Video's board of directors refused to change because they made 12% of their profits from the late returns that were inherent in that hard copy business model.

And now?... Netflix has dominated, and what of Blockbuster Video?.....well, they went bust!

The current situation of the pandemic has exploded in what seems like no time at all and superficially out of nowhere, although there are some frightening political views on that. However, the effect that it is having on all businesses throughout the world is forcing, or is going to force, each one of them (including us at ARC Support Services) to look long and hard at how they deliver their service or product post pandemic.

I live in a small market town in Suffolk and due to COVID-19 we have seen the numerous hospitality businesses in town very quickly change their model. The restaurants that used be a hive of activity with customers coming and going throughout the evening in our busy little market place shut their doors and then re-emerged as takeaways. Then, in what seemed like a nano second, changed and evolved once more by adding a delivery service so they could implement the controls required to comply with government directives of social distancing. With the likelihood that hospitality outlets will not be allowed to reopen, possibly well into the autumn this year, the future is looking very uncomfortable for those who will not change or don't want to change, maybe through not wanting to leave the security of what they know. Charles Darwin wasn't wrong when he said that its not the strongest of a species that survives, nor is it the most intelligent. It's the one that is most adaptable to change that will survive.

3. WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Change - What might it look like in the repair industry?

Many of the changes we could see, may currently not even have been thought of as yet. However, what will not change, and this is beyond any doubt – driven by the immense impact created by COVID-19 – will be the massively troublesome fall-out generated by this appalling episode. I am already seeing good, well rounded VDA's being laid off. Some have been Furloughed in an attempt by the business to take advantage of the job retention scheme, endeavouring to put the business on ice, so to speak, and preserve it until the recovery period begins and the economy of the UK will begin to define its new face of normal.

What If... a more cost effective way for the assessing function of the repair facility could reduce cost exposure of the ARC.

What if... responsibilities were more effectively delegated, reduced to, taking images, recording the pertinent facts and then transmitting this information via a mobile platform, to a remote independent VDA who's only involvement was to compile the assessment, negotiate and seek authority?

Sounds far fetched, doesn't it?... But its not, its happening right now, and its evolving and growing.

Back in 2013, we were asked to present at an accident management road show, and this was exactly the scenario we presented, since then we have built, tested and seen growth of our own product, The Virtual VDA. I don't deny that the process has had its issues, the idea itself, is often met with scepticism and the journey has been a steep learning curve, but like Mark Randolph, we continue to iron these out with the client, through technology, training and improved communication channels. Now we are seeing the up side, new clients and work

providers talking to us about our model, and the repairers already involved are seeing a genuine cost saving, and for them, it's **considerable!**

Paying only for what is done their behalf. the service, is modular and adaptable and its so different to what has been the 'norm' for so long.

Innovation needs to deliver a greater value and in this instance, being able to have the service of a competent VDA, but without the eternal high level expense of a full time employee, but I understand, its not for everyone!



The system may not be perfect yet, and in the book 'Start Now, Get Perfect Later, Rob Moore, explains that hardly anyone gets it right the first time. So many are crippled by indecision and fear of failure that they never start. The desire to get it right can inhibit us from getting started but the quickest way to getting perfect is to start now and improve as you go.

The VDA is just one area of change that is long overdue, and my guess is that the consequences of this pandemic for the repair industry, will continue to be as disruptive as they currently are, for quite some time, and with cashflow being the hardest hit element for the immediate term, despite the current government support there will be much pain ahead for us all. Work volumes extending well into the short and mid term will be erratic, and parts supply will be slow as the rest of the world works to regain its supply chain. All of this will continue well into 2021 and possibly for the longer term too. When you realise that social distancing and other business restrictions could be a reality that stays with us for the long haul, you begin to appreciate just how different the current business model will have to be to participate in the accident repair industry..

The number of businesses that will become casualties due to the myriad of failing factors in our industry, may continue grow for quite some time – possibly longer than many might currently believe probable. So a meticulous plan for the comeback is needed now as the landscape of the repair industry’s future is going to be wholly different to anything we have experienced before.

4. WALKING SLOWLY... BUT NEVER BACKWARDS!

The outcomes you get, are a lagging measure of the habits you repeat and in the repair process, and as an industry, we tend to concentrate more on the final results, than we do on the initial input. But think about it like this - Winners and losers both have the same goals but they don't all win, some win better than others, but the rules of the game are the same for both. So why are the results so wide ranging, from a serious win to a massively serious loss, (I think this gap will become far more evident as we move forward out of this pandemic). Just to clarify goals are about a specific point or result. However, the systems you employ to reach that point, are about your speed and just how effective the result will be when you get there.

In some of our short videos, I speak of a 'POINT-SNAP-CLICK-PRINT' approach of assessing damaged vehicles. This is one of the most widespread issues that negatively affects the assessing function in many businesses or to put it another way it's a poor system delivering a less than effective result. Unwittingly it has weakened and undermined otherwise healthy businesses. Being fast in the assessing function is not spatial, and in many ways it will just get you the wrong result, quicker. Good, or Bad habits in the assessing function are like compound interest, they multiply their effect, each time you use them, and the Point Snap Click Print is a bad habit. In the coming uphill struggle of this pandemic as we return, the inaccuracies that are inherent in this approach will become will become evermore apparent, and a greater catalyst for failure in many businesses that would, in easier times, have continued to trade through tough periods.

It is easy to understand why some repairers miss or fail to address the issues of POINT-SNAP-CLICK-PRINT – Many don't even realise that its happening in their businesses and for those that may have an inkling, because the solution appears paradoxical, its possible they believe the issues they are experiencing emanate solely from other areas of the supply chain, or poor productivity or workshop efficiency or rates* or discounts* etc... etc...

Not that these aren't an issue (they most certainly are*), but for the repairer who truly understands, when the results of POINT-SNAP-CLICK-PRINT are interrogated, they will fully appreciate that 'Busy and Fast' does not guarantee 'Bigger and Best'. Additionally, common misconceptions that other 'easier to understand metrics' such as Key to Key or Cycle Times as an alternative focus, will deliver the results they seek, are also wrong. It is a mistake to believe that if you focus on one or two, or even all of these easy to understand metrics, then organisational and financial success must be guaranteed for the business!



The reality is, that any metric, or every metric is just a small piece of a complex puzzle of measurement. But fail to produce those metrics from the level foundation of an accurate assessment, and the results will always be wrong.

Logic would have us suppose that if we get a specific result measured as a percentage, from a single repair job, then the results we get from thirty repair jobs will be thirty times the multiple, however that is certainly not the case.

The economist Charles Goodhart said “Any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes”. What this actually means is that when a measure becomes the target, it ceases to be a good measure. Measurement is only useful when it guides you and adds context to the overall picture, not when it consumes you. Each number, each piece of data is just one piece of feedback in the overall process of the repair business.

It's a fact, and one that needs to be fully understood, that all statistical relationships will break down when used for policy purposes. In other words, employees whose performance in a company is measured by some known quantitative measure (i.e. how many assessments completed or average hours per job) will attempt to optimize that measure regardless of whether or not their behaviour maximises profit. The first and foremost definitive behaviour of the VDA must be the accuracy of their repair specifications, not the number of assessments or average hours completed. Key to Key, Cycle Times or any other KPI, will not make up financially, for any shortfall in the accuracy of a repair specification.

For the sake of clarity, accuracy of a repair specification can only be described as the ability of the value delivered through the repair specification to match the target that's being measured, and qualified by the results gained. In the data driven world of the accident repair business we tend to overvalue numbers and hard logic and undervalue anything that's ephemeral, soft or too fluid to describe. Hence we have ended up with the POINT-SNAP-CLICK-PRINT approach to assessing.

The alternative (to the PSCP), is time consuming. Its often made more difficult through poor inspection facilities, crouching on a forecourt or carpark, in the rain gathering vehicle or damage information. Vehicle Damage Assessment is a problematic and complex operation to deliver but when that resource (the VDA) is placed under additional, and considerable pressures, to further deliver non assessing functions that relate to the day to day running of a business, you then begin to understand how we have arrived here, at the PSCP, and how so many VDA's find themselves and their performance being restricted. The situation may evolve purely through the point that some owners, managers and business leaders suffer with a lack of understanding about the fragility of the assessing function.

These 'non assessing functions', may be critical to the smooth running of the business, but we should question as to whether they are a critical element in the process of assessing or those required to be delivered by the vehicle damage assessor.

5. MOTION VS ACTION

There is a difference between 'being in motion' and 'taking action'. PSCP is effectively 'being in motion' and too often there are a number of catalysts that have determined and driven this behaviour. The most common one is overloading the VDA with non essential, non-assessing tasks, i.e. answering the phones, booking customers into and out of courtesy cars, ordering parts, receiving parts, signing off job cards etc. etc... Whilst there is no doubt that these are all important and essential tasks for the repair centre and must be addressed, to a focussed VDA they are little more than the white noise of business distraction. They are just part of being in motion, and if through default, they become the responsibility of the VDA, they won't deliver into the business, the opportunities that are mandatory for profit.

Look at it this way, you wouldn't expect your painter to stop mid 'top-coat application' and answer the phone, would you? You know too well that if they did, the work they had completed thus far in prepping, mixing and applying the top coat, would be for nothing. They'd have to start again only this time, there'd be an extra set of problems to deal with. Additionally, you wouldn't expect your Panel Technician to stop in the middle of welding a panel in place as you know the cost of missed welds could be catastrophic, especially if the vehicle was involved in a further collision later on down the road.

In fact, the wasted materials in the painters case alone could easily outweigh the cost of employing a good responsible customer facing member of staff. So why would you expect the VDA, the person who is responsible as the first definitive factor in the fortunes of the company, to be constantly responsible for non assessing tasks that interrupt his ability to deliver exactly what the business requires in the first place enabling it to function as a business...Sales!

The tasks that would be tagged as being in motion, are not as important or as essential to your VDA processes, as tasks that would be labelled 'taking action'.

Taking action, specifically from a VDA's point, can simply be classed as doing only that which will deliver an accurate repair specification. One that will reinstate the integrity of the target vehicle, allowing the repair centre to consistently deliver on safety, quality and profitability.

Taking action is a strategy of 'Addition by Subtraction', adding value where it matters and reducing waste. An up side to Taking Action is improved performance in relation to productivity, in productivity, 'Flow' is a term that's given to the mental state a person enters when they are focussed on the task at hand. In a state of flow, the busy noise of the day to day stuff fades into a background hum. Attention becomes centred, and the person becomes wholly engaged in the work task being completed.

This state of flow is a combination of focussed attention and peak performance, more often with its value being reflected in the results gained (accuracy). However, it is a proven fact that when you interrupt a person who is centred and focussed on the task at hand, it can add a further 20-30 minuets to reach that peak performance once more. If that person was your VDA, and you subjected them to constant interruption, it would be a safe bet that they would never reach their primary focus or objective, additionally you'd find it adds a dimension of futility to the VDA's mental approach to their deliverables, turning an effective technical manager of the repair process into little more than a disillusioned and expensive, general dogs-body. Just take a moment to think if this may be happening in your business.

Its not always possible to stay on point and there will always be exceptions to the rule but these must be reduced to an absolute minimum if your business is to gain full benefit from a qualified VDA. With this in mind, serious thought must be given to the non-assessing tasks and uncontrolled interruptions forcing the VDA to shortcut the assessing process and reduce it to a Point-Snap-Click-Print response.

Environment is also a key factor that affects motion or action. I have seen the desks and work stations of VDAs placed in very busy traffic areas of the reception or associated offices. This has led to countless interruptions for the VDA with people passing through on the way to their work station and stopping for a chat or to ask questions that add nothing but constant interruption for the VDA.

CASE STUDY:

“One evening, I was driving to the west country where the following day I was to deliver a training and development day for a multisite repairer. During the journey there, I received a phone call from a national Paint Distributor. Derrick explained that he had a client who had raised concerns about the results they were seeing from their bodyshop. The actual shop was very impressive. They employed 15 shop floor technicians and were part of a very busy franchised dealership. As requested, we called and spoke with the bodyshop manager and arranged to complete a VDA Profitability Health-Check.

On the agreed date we attended site and carried out the reviews and information gathering exercises that are required for us to begin to understand what was going wrong. We spoke to all of the key stakeholders in the repair process, from receptionists to senior technicians, from parts persons to car cleaners, we even interviewed the delivery drivers. Each and every one of them confirmed that if they had a question they took it first to the VDA, who would point them in the right direction of the appropriate responsible person. There were many other issues we observed. Some related to training and some to do with the way the management had broadcast what the responsibilities of the VDA were. But the biggest and most glaringly obvious issue was the constant interruptions and stoppages, suffered by the VDAs.

About two weeks after having compiled and delivered (by email) the electronic copy of the report, to the aftersales director and the Bodyshop manager, I received a phone call from the Dealer Principle, I can remember my first thought as he introduced himself on the phone. It was “oops – my honesty in the report may have been too brutal”.

My initial thoughts were wrong, I was warmly thanked by the DP for my honesty and the integrity in which I had delivered my findings and supported them with data that was taken from the information readily provided by the Bodyshop manager and the VDA's during the site visit.

The DP confirmed that he wanted further training for the VDAs and asked how soon this could be delivered. The date was confirmed in due course and I once more attended site.

This time however, I was greeted with a completely different scenario. The builders had just finished changing the office layout, moving the VDAs to an office at the end of a run. It was no longer in a heavy traffic area and they were working in a clean and tidy, uncluttered environment. The door had a number lock on it so people could not just walk in. The technicians, if they had questions about a repair process, had to approach the Workshop Controller who, alongside the Bodyshop Manager, were the only people allowed to interrupt the VDA. The phones in the dealership were on a ring-round system (if it wasn't answered in so many rings it would stop and buzz the next phone in the ring) the VDAs were removed from the ring round system so the interruptions from the phone were reduced to an absolute minimum. Reception were under instruction to ensure that all assessments were by appointment only. The transformation of the ROI of the bodyshop was measurable. Average hours increased, workshop productivity and efficiency increased and utilisation improved.

One of the greatest pieces of feedback I received from this work case was a personal thank you from the VDA who was the one, possibly most under the cosh. He told me, his working day had been transformed and he now looked forward to going to work and getting his work done, knowing he was delivering exactly as his responsibility and accountabilities demanded, and knowing he was part of a team that had at its heart, a greater focus for the values of it's clients and vehicle owners".

6. PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Success doesn't just happen, especially in the repair industry. However, in the weeks and months to come, when we return to our 'new face of normal' from this episode of lockdown, business growth and a new sustainable way of working will depend more than ever before, upon the definition of some of the most subtle, but consistently missed actions of the VDA in delivering improved financial performance that will be required if the business is to recover.

For the repair business, reliance on these elements will be critical. More so than it ever has been previously. In the white noise of a hectic accident repair centre, it's easy to look around and believe that when you see a busy reception, a packed compound and the phones ringing their little bells off, that you equate being busy to being profitable. However, and without doubt, the sheer volume of evidence can drown out the logic of simple arithmetic in the mind of the unwary.

On one hand owners and managers can be convinced that a crowded yard, a busy reception and a choked up workshop must be the disciples of profit. Yet it's possible that the same volume of work, when analysed carefully, could so easily be the outriders of financial doom. Because without the processes and tools needed to tell the difference, what might first appear as "the cavalry, riding to the rescue," could actually be the sonic boom that accompanies business failure".

Whilst that may sound dramatic, and the actual experience truly is, the subtlety of the falling domino principle is actually more gradual. In a row of dominoes, you knock over the first one and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will fall over. So you have a beginning of a disintegration that will have the most profound influence

In our 'Profitability Health Check', we analyse the results gained from the information provided. When you understand how the quality of the completed repair specification is directly proportional to the quality of the VDA's decision-making, and that their decision-making is directly proportional to their ability to evaluate the information gathered during the appraisal process, the quality of the results that will be gained is solely dependent upon the VDA's ability to evaluate. And they can only evaluate if they gather the right information. Therefore, the quality of the sustainability achieved by the repair facility, depends upon gathering accurate information. The myriad of elements that contribute to the accuracy of the assessing function and the key role it plays in the sustainability and profitability of the repair facility will be the determining factor in the direction of the future success of the repair facility.



The future success of the repair facility, post pandemic, will need to be meticulously planned for. And planning requires organisation. But where will you start? One thing that is for certain is that we cannot go back to where we have been. We will need to take advantage of every single aspect of accurate assessing.

Our advice, and that of our council of supporters, is that the atomic habits of the VDA will need to be meticulously reviewed and refined and implemented into a robust procedure. One that is uniformed, passing carefully through all stages of the assessment process to ensure accuracy of the repair specification which in turn will enable safety, quality and profitability to become the watch words of the business.

In his book 'The Vehicle Damage Assessor's Manual', Dave Shepherd lists 5 basic principles that a systematic approach for the VDA should be based upon. I wholly believe that delivering the function of assessing accident damaged vehicles through utilising the power of principles, rather than being driven by rules, provides the greatest value to the requirements of the repair facility.

Quite succinctly, a rule will externally compel a person, either through force, threat or punishment, to do the things someone else has deemed good or right. People follow or break rules. It seems to me that rules control, but principles will guide. A principle internally motivates you to do the things that are right. Developing and applying guiding principles for assessing, is an incredibly important element of the assessing department and one that most managers or owners fail to recognise and implement. Principles pave the way in designing the business or a function within the business, for high performance. When values and principles are used to drive decision-making in your business, there is the consequence that they shape your culture and culture will always drive business performance. If you doubt that statement – have you ever wondered why some organizations are better than others? It's because of the culture. And what creates the best business culture? The way people behave! Having the best technology in the world alone won't drive the best performance. However when you build the functions of the assessing department and those for assessing an accident damaged vehicle on the 5 principles for assessing, you create the opportunity for the business to achieve its greatest success in what it does..... providing repairs that are based on safety, quality, profitability and sustainability.

I truly hope you have enjoyed reading this short book and that you have gained some insights into how you can improve your assessing function and how you do what you do. As a company that has the development of the VDA at the heart of everything we believe, say and do, the aggregation of marginal gains, for the assessing function of the repair facility is key to your success. Planning and implementing the processes and procedures of the assessing function will be about having an intellectual honesty to see where you are going wrong with current assessing practices, and having the courage to make the right changes that will deliver improved results.

Thank you

James Clifford IMI VDA MIMI.

You can leave feed back about this book or your own ideas at the following address:



About the Author.

I work in an industry, which I am proud to say that I have been part of since leaving school in 1975. Starting out as an apprentice with T. W. Russel, a long and well established family run firm in St Albans, was a sound spring board that propelled me through a number of positions with other local businesses, learning my trade and expanding my technical shop-floor capabilities from a fresh faced 16 year old, through to starting out on my own as a freelance panel beater.

As our first son Matthew was born, I had just turned 25 and had decided to leave the safety of full time employment and the security of a monthly paycheque to find and fund a better life for my wife Jaquie and my family. Whilst I was working around the North London freelance circuit, Jaquie gave birth to our second child, Edward. During the time when the boys were infants, our weekends for the four of us were spent looking for suitable premises to open our own accident repair facility. The dream and the desire were so real, I had little chance to ignore the voices that drove me forward in those days.

At the Age of 30 I was very busy work-wise when Jaquie gave birth to our third child, Emily. At the same time, due to the shifting sands of business, we found what we felt was the ideal opportunity to open our own ARC, so we took it. Quickly we gained Insurance approval and becoming a forward thinking business in Hertfordshire, we progressed through various stages of growth and on the way becoming a three time winner of the Approved Repair Centre of the Year for The Admiral Group.

In writing this short e-book, I have called upon the considerable experiences of working at the sharp end of the accident repair industry for over 45 years. The first 10 years were spent learning my craft as a Panel Beater. The next 35 years have been spent learning the industry, its people, life in general and how to either pay the 'good' forward or repay the advantages that had been given to me through hard, focussed work.

In the passing 35 years I have relentlessly followed my own star. Not in a selfish way, but one where having an abundance mentality ensured that I have been able to help others, whilst supporting my family and those, of the employees who were employed at Clifford ARC. After a period away from work through illness and the decisions that accompanied that part of my life, we decided to sell up, and in 2007 we did exactly that, and moved to Suffolk.

That's when my chosen career path, be it wholly different from owning the ARC, began to show me how I could repay the industry and, in some way, make it better for those who would follow.

The experiences I have called upon in writing this first short book have been from some of the greatest wins a business could achieve. Additionally, I have also had to face and overcome, some of the darkest moments and events, a business owner could experience in business.

Some of my learnings have come from night school, business studies, business leaders, coaches and mentors within our chosen industry, and some from both great and bad experiences. I have also learnt much from some incredible client owners whose desire to improve has been inspiring. My focus on the vehicle damage assessor and the assessing function of the repair facility is key in everything we do, from the quality standards of BS10125, right the way through to training, supporting repair facilities through our Virtual VDA (Remote Assessing and Reporting) and the assessing tools and equipment we have developed for the professional damage assessor.

Acknowledgements

I'd especially, and firstly, like to thank my wife, who puts up with my 'left of field' ideas and visions about how we could build a better repair industry. Whilst this book is about the repairers and their VDAs, the insurance work providers also have a lot to answer for. I know this first hand and much to my cost. I have often found myself at a loss for 'publicly repeatable words' when coming up against engineers who have little understanding of the pain that repairers face due to poor rates, one sided contracts, or unsustainable covenants. And I felt that pain for many years as the owner of Clifford ARC. However, the forthcoming post pandemic return to work will certainly require the slow grinding wheels of the insurance work providers to match the pace of how our government improved and supported businesses to improve their chances of reopening after the lockdown.

Throughout this book and also in much of our work in developing businesses and their Vehicle Damage Assessors, we regularly reference the work of inspiring business leaders and writers such as Simon Sinek, James Clear, Mark Ralph John Maxwell and many others. In his book the 'Vehicle Damage Assessor's Manual', Dave Shepherd posted a quote from Mark Twain that reads: "The man who doesn't read good books, has no advantage over the man who cannot read". That for me, was just one of the many catalysts that have spurred me on to do what I do. In the works of all of these authors (and more) I have found inspiration and motivation as we at ARC Support Services search for a better way to train and deliver the services of the Vehicle Damage Assessor, improving their self-worth and that of the respective businesses through which they are employed.