



# Beth Rutter

## Tradiebot Industries – Director Industry and Customer Engagement, North America

FOLLOWING HER RECENT APPOINTMENT, WE CAUGHT UP WITH BETH RUTTER AND DISCOVERED A TRUE COLLISION INDUSTRY VISIONARY WITH A PASSION FOR PEOPLE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THE DRIVE TO TAKE TRADIEBOT INDUSTRIES INTO NORTH AMERICA.

Beth Rutter was born and raised in Alberta, Canada, and went on to the University of Calgary where she gained her Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Sociology. Almost 20 years ago she moved to Los Angeles with her then husband and went on to carve out a career in the collision repair industry. She proudly speaks of her two sons who also live in the United States. Josh, the eldest, was born in Canada and has dual citizenship, and the youngest, Connor, was born in the United States.

I asked how a university graduate with a degree in sociology found her way into the collision industry and Beth opened up about her true passion. “Sociology is the study of the social relationships of humans and how they behave in groups. I think anyone would agree that how an individual behaves internally (psychology) is quite different than how they act when they are in a group.”

Her involvement in the industry actually started when she met her former husband who lived, ate, inhaled, slept and dreamt cars, so she realised early on that if she wanted to have any sort of conversation with him, then she had to learn about cars. “His dad owned a body shop and that’s where I learned to write hand-written estimates – when Mitchell was just a DOS program and P-Pages were actual pages in a book.”

Through the years, life happened. They got married, had children, moved around and got divorced. During that time, however, Beth took some accounting courses, sold estimate auditing software and scheduling software, and worked as an office manager. “There were groups of people

everywhere – and with a decent amount of effort I became pretty good at managing collision facilities. What I realised was that you could almost always find the specific instructions on how to section a quarter panel for example, but there was no clear set of instructions on how to manage the human resources. This is where I fit in. This is the piece I understood. From there, I kept working on my skill set, attending leadership development training, reading, taking classes and webinars.”

Beth is also keen to explain that her experience managing collision repair facilities has allowed her to develop extensive capabilities in leadership development. “I am currently working a pilot project funded by a private grant to recruit students into colleges that use a robust collision repair curriculum and then match those students with mentors out in industry to gain practical, real life knowledge and to apply what they learned during class time. Tradiebot and their immersive virtual training technologies are a perfect fit for this pilot, and early conversations between key stakeholders have been very positive as we plan the best way forward. My role is to help recruit the right students and then to work with the collision industry to develop mentors who are able to help these students move from the classroom to the workplace using the

new online and mobile app tools that Tradiebot will be able to offer. When educators and industry realise that, through cooperation and collaboration, both parties will benefit greatly, the technicians will be the ultimate winners.”

We moved on to the topic of immersive technology and Beth’s true passion really became apparent. “One of my life-long obsessions, however, is



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behavioural neuroscience and neural plasticity, which are the studies of how new pathways are built in the brain when it is presented with new information that is both positive and requires movement. Ironically, both are critical pieces of the science around why training in immersive environments is almost as effective as the 'real thing' in producing results."

She went on to explain that although a technician is functionally aware that they are not "really" spraying paint on a vehicle, the new neural pathways that are created during the immersive learning process are the exact same pathways that they use when you get into a "real" paint booth. "What that means is that your brain can't tell the difference between the 'real' world and the 'immersive' world when learning a new skill and building new neural pathways, and why learning in an immersive technology environment is highly effective. It's fundamentally the same reason why astronauts train in flight simulators before they ever take their first real flight into space."

Turning to her new role with Tradiebot Industries, Beth tells us that it was she who reached out to CEO Mario Dimovski after she saw his online presentation during the IBIS Symposium. At the time, she had been asked to moderate a panel at the 2020 California Mobilization Summit and was preparing for the event, together with the Director for Advanced Transportation and Logistics for the state of California. Coincidentally, the theme was artificial intelligence (AI) and she immediately saw that Mario would be a perfect fit, so they connected on LinkedIn and started the conversation.

Beth also takes an active role on the Scholarship Committee of the Women's Industry Network (WIN), which is made up of women from all parts of the collision repair industry and is a perfect way to support each other. "It's a tough industry and women have unique obstacles to success, which are compounded by the fact that there are still relatively few of us in it. Leadership development is my passion and it

made perfect sense to help the young women who have worked hard enough to earn a scholarship get off to a flying start in their career." Specifically, Beth helps select the young women who will receive the scholarship, based on specific criteria, and in addition, helps to match them with senior WIN members to be mentored the following year. "We are revamping our entire mentorship process and I raised my hand to help. Unfortunately, COVID-19 led to the cancellation of our conference in Newport Beach this year, but we all stay connected in other ways and are already looking forward to 2021."

And if this doesn't keep her busy enough, she is also a member of the Collision Industry Conference's (CIC) Education and Training Committee. The CIC is a place where the collision industry meets three to four times per year to discuss and address industry issues. The Education and Training Committee is just one of several committees where interested participants get involved and assist in the areas about which they are most passionate. Beth points out that the time between meetings is used to tackle issues, identify possible solutions, figure out best practices and suggest the next steps. "When we reconvene at the next meeting, we present what we've been working on and the proposed solutions, a process that benefits the entire group. It wasn't until I began my work with the pilot project that I realised that colleges and instructors were a subgroup that were not well represented in our ranks.



**The inaugural Collision Repair Education Foundation Mentor Intern Competition.**

Therefore, I am working to get more educators on board, and was recently successful in securing the involvement of the Automotive Service Excellence, a national certification organisation."

As a professional businesswoman, Beth is quick to highlight that her greatest achievement is building high performance teams and speaks passionately about a body shop where the owner was keen to "completely update everything". The business had been run the same way for over 30 years and the owner was keen to improve, but never really realised how much in the business had to change. "The all-male team was reluctant to take advice from a female and the environment was chauvinistic, at times displaying borderline animosity. The entire staff had been allowed to do their own thing so there were a lot of changes required just to bring the business up to even the most basic level, particularly changing the mindset that having lots of cars on the lot was good for the business."

It was a case of changing the culture of the business, from engendering a commitment to safety, developing new processes, and helping the staff realise that the new processes were good for them and good for the business. "One of the key things was to get the staff to focus on the customer and troubleshoot issues as they arise and do what needs to be done to meet the customers' expectations. At times people got frustrated, but I maintained my focus as I knew that change management does not happen overnight. After all, I am a sociologist and



**Beth really belongs behind the wheel.**



using this skillset is what really made the difference. By the time I left that business, everyone was working together and doing whatever it took to overcome the obstacles to reach the goals they had set for themselves and for the business.”

I asked Beth what success will look like in her new role at Tradiebot Industries and she is quick to say that when the use of immersive technology is ubiquitous in our industry, we will see:

- Students accessing an education easily using the computer technology with which they are already familiar and becoming fluent and proficient in marketable skills recognised by the collision industry.
- OEM repair procedures as easy to access as opening an app on your smart phone so that anyone can repair vehicles back to the manufacturer’s specifications.
- Technicians having access to a community that supports them in their career path and offers them options for professional growth by connecting them with mentors who have the ability and willingness to guide them.

Interestingly, Beth is adamant that the commitment to the overall strategy and the ability to influence people to embrace the vision is far more important than how the objectives will

be achieved. “One of the big things that attracted me to Tradiebot was Mario’s passion and capacity to effect strategic change, which inspired me to be part of the journey. The important thing is to roll it out properly, with the right framework, the right business plan, the right connections and the right partners. We are developing symbiotic relationships in the first instance.”

However, Beth’s experience working with the education sector highlights that one of the opportunities will be to change the mindset of those who are teaching the next generation of technicians and encourage them to embrace this cutting-edge technology.

Her advice to young women contemplating a career in the collision industry is straightforward and not the usual advice, which is often: “don’t quit” or “no matter how hard they make it, don’t quit”, which Beth says is not the best advice. “When I speak to women contemplating a career in our industry, I tell them to be great! No matter what they choose, be great at it. If they aren’t happy where they’re at currently, they need to learn everything that they can, then keep looking for a place where they can practice their passion. There are literally hundreds of

careers to choose from in the industry and unfortunately people (not just women) get stuck because they’re too afraid to go for what really lights them up. Life is too short, and the world needs everyone to show up and use the passion that was given them.”

When I asked Beth for a closing comment, she initially took the safe route and quoted others: “If you want something you’ve never had, you have to be willing to do something you’ve never done,” Thomas Jefferson; and “Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t, either way, you’re right,” Henry Ford.

However, when I pushed her for her own thoughts, her real passion came to the fore. “Fundamentally, we need to help each other, remembering that everything you know, you learned from someone else. We also need to recognise that people learn in different ways. For example, the technician pool are those that learn by doing, and therefore sitting in a classroom is sub-optimal, so we need to support them through mentorship programs. With today’s – and tomorrow’s – technology, it is self-evident that we will require so much more from our technicians than ever before. It’s our job to prepare them for this brave new world.”

