



Mario Dimovski

30 years and still going strong!

AS MARIO DIMOVSKI CELEBRATES 30 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY, WE CATCH UP TO DISCUSS THE JOURNEY, HIS VIEWS ON PLASTIC REPAIRS, SUSTAINABILITY IN THE INDUSTRY, AND HIS UPCOMING MOVE TO THE US.

The journey

We kick things off with a reflection of the past 30 years to identify what have been the keys to Mario's success. Mario considers that there have been three primary factors: people, timing and industry knowledge. We take each of these in turn.

"Without doubt, the biggest single factor in our success has been the people. I am very focused on recruiting and surrounding myself with individuals who can add value to what I have to offer and to the business long term. I have been fortunate to have built a network of individuals that are loyal, driven and likeminded. As a unit, we have developed a strong passion for innovation and challenging the status quo, and as we've evolved, we have become a champion team that understands our place in the industry and where we can add value to our current and future customers.

In terms of timing, Mario speaks about not only having the great idea, but that our industry needs to be ready. He recalls the early days when at times they were too early with new technologies or solutions. "The idea or the solution has to align with what the collision industry needs at that time – if you're too early, perhaps you're ahead of your time, but that doesn't necessarily mean the industry will embrace it until it is ready. Timing is particularly critical for us entrepreneurs and businesses that lead the way."

It may be self-evident but understanding the industry in which you operate is critical, especially when you are trying to innovate and initiate change. Mario says they have spent

an extraordinary amount of time and investment understanding where the industry is today, what it's going through and where it is headed. "We then align our vision and strategy in such a way to ensure we are able to influence positive change to our business and the industry as a whole by adding value through innovation and collaboration."

So, we turn to the "if I knew then what I know now" question, and I ask Mario to tell us what he would do differently. The answer may surprise you. "I am where I am today as a direct result of all the decisions – good and bad – that I've made over the past 30 years. I never imagined that I

would be where I am now. Although I'm a dreamer, I always look at the big picture. The answer is that I would not change a single thing. If I did, who knows what the journey would have looked like and who knows where I would be today."

The COVID-19 effect

Mario reflects on 2020 as one of the most challenging years for business, for people and for communities as a whole and really feels for those who did it tougher than he did. It will come as no surprise that when the coronavirus put the brakes on just about everything, he took the opportunity to stop, breathe and take

Mario Dimovski 30 Years

Automotive Plastics & Sustainability



"It's been a pleasure working in such an evolving industry with quality people many of whom are now close mates."

stock of what he and the business had achieved. "I was travelling a great deal to conferences and industry events and didn't have the time to process all the information or the interest our business was generating. When all the activity stopped, I was able to spend quality time working on the business, rather than in the business, assessing what I had gathered over the previous two years, and exploring potential opportunities, partnerships, products and collaborations."

Some of the examples of these changes are that they have launched Plastfix Labs, their plastic repair tools and materials, a 3D Printing Division and their online training platforms have gone to a whole new level, with Plastfix TV on the way. They have also refocused Tradiebot on training and skills assessment.

Mario also looked beyond our shores, seeking opportunities in the UK and the US as he looks to do more on a global level. It's clear he has taken a helicopter view of the business, found the silver lining and came into 2021 the better for it. "One of the initiatives of which I am most proud is the well-being program that was borne from the COVID-19 crisis. I made

myself accessible to my staff and found that many of them were hurting and just needed someone to ask: RUOK? It reinforced that the health and well-being of our people is of utmost importance."

Plastic parts and the OEM

More and more OEMs are taking positions that prohibit plastic repairs in areas around the radar systems, a position that Mario fully supports. "The OEMs are saying, enough is enough! The 'traditional' way of bumper repairs using fillers will not cut it anymore as they not only affect the performance of the radar system but also affect the performance of the bumper fascia. Over the years I have watched more and more of these commercial-driven, so-called plastic repair solutions flood the market and the sector has lost its way and the term 'plastic repairs' has been polluted. It was only a matter of time before the OEMs took a stand as radars 'hit the car parc'. This is no longer acceptable."

Mario continues: "The Plastfix process is a restoration process, using the same material as the bumper fascia and returning it to its original condition using no fillers, putty or

two-part glues. In addition, there is the joint obligation to minimise waste to landfill, and bumper fascia restoration using the correct technique diverts a significant amount of plastic from the waste stream, whilst being able to perform to manufacturer specifications." Mario adds that they have started conversations with some OEMs to have the Plastfix plastic restoration process certified as the OEM standard for all plastic repairs, which will ensure plastic parts are repaired to standard.

The US expansion

We move on to Plastfix's future and discuss some of the upcoming changes in the group. After 30 years on our shores, I ask Mario what it was that drove the decision to move to the US, and he is very candid. "It's a combination of both the opportunities available to the business in the US market, where we are working through an agreement with a major collision repair chain, and the personal challenge to be able to perform and deliver on an elite stage. I don't ever want to look back and wonder 'what if', so I'm starting a new chapter in my career and taking what has worked very well here into a bigger market."

As Mario will focus solely on the US venture, he reassures us that the current business will be in good hands and is growth focused. He has appointed Steve Hardy as the Managing Director of Plastfix Australia and New Zealand. Interestingly, it was Steve who first employed Mario as a 16-year-old apprentice, which set Mario on the path to where he is today. In addition, Dr Nikola Rendevski, Tradiebot Chief Information Officer has been appointed to the position of CEO and he will continue to drive this business, working on several global projects and, of course, provide the supporting technology platforms for Plastfix both here and in the US.

Talent development

So, as we start to get back to business, we discuss what the industry needs to do to take a quantum leap forward. Mario immediately focuses on



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When did you join the industry?
Spent plenty of time in panel shops with my father as a kid, but Apprentice from 2003

What was your first job in the industry?
Panel Beater

What do you do now?
Sales Representative

What do you like about the industry?
The people, the ever-evolving products, and seeing vehicles that some would think destined for scrap bought back to life.

What do you dislike about the industry?
The way it's becoming almost more economic to Replace, rather than Repair

What music do you like?
From R&B to Country, to Aussie 80s – The daily playlist is an assortment

Who is your favourite artist?
Brad Cox

What is your favourite food?
Bacon!

And your favourite drink?
Canadian Club and Dry

Your hobbies?
Motorsport – Speedway and building our Drag Car. Time out with friends and family

Who in the world would you most like to meet?
Jay Leno – I want a full garage tour!!!

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talent development. “This is, without doubt, the single biggest issue we face as without a stronger and deeper talent pool we simply will not grow as an industry. We need to look at what technologies we can use to increase the attractiveness of our industry, and what channels we need to tap into to reach the technicians of the future. This may well mean upskilling mature candidates from declining industries or stimulating school-leavers to explore a career in collision repair. No one is going to come to us with a ready-made solution – we have to fix this long-standing issue ourselves.”

Mario sees that the real challenge is getting the message out there: we need to do better at selling our industry and use new marketing tools to reach into the schools to get the kids thinking about automotive as a first preference, because once they show an interest, they, and their parents, will see there is potential for a great career path. “At Plastfix we ‘sell the dream’ and we have no issues attracting new talent to our business as they see that what we do and the tools and equipment we use are really innovative. We give them the training and in-house certification as a plastic repair technician and make them feel part of the journey. The challenge for the industry is to better market the entire sector. If it seems to work for individual businesses that have redefined their recruitment process and on a micro level, then it can work for the entire industry – we just

need industry-wide collaboration and one voice.”

A global voice

Earlier this year Mario was appointed by IBIS as their first Global Ambassador in recognition of his ongoing pioneering work in automotive plastic sustainability and digital transformation, so we wanted to find out a bit more about this. His online following and global reach have given him a voice that he aims to use for raising issue on matters that have significant meaning to him, and their industry.

“As an ambassador, I wanted to focus on a couple of key issues that have meaning to me, not just in my career but in my life as a husband and father of three young girls. The first is the environment and sustainability, which, as we have already discussed, is one of my real passions and a primary driver of what we do at Plastfix. Secondly, and more importantly in today’s fragile environment, is well-being, with a special emphasis on how we can improve the mental health across our industry. We are in the early stages of developing a well-being program to take to the industry later this year. Working with IBIS, I want to champion this cause and do what I can to make a difference in this space, in my business and in the industry.

Editor: We wish Mario every success on this move to the US and look forward to hearing about the ongoing growth and development of Plastfix.



Mario presenting at SEMA 2019.