



Gary A Smith

Setting the benchmark on the South Island

AN INSPIRATIONAL STORY THAT REFLECTS THE TENACITY AND RESILIENCE THAT WE HAVE COME TO EXPECT FROM OUR COUSINS “ACROSS THE DITCH”, AS THE BUSINESS LOOKS TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH GLASURIT.

Geoff Smith, Director of Gary A Smith, has a distinct focus: providing all customers with exceptional service. This commitment to quality is evident the moment you enter his shop – one of the largest on the South Island of New Zealand – and see the high-end finishes. However, the business as it stands today didn't come without its challenges.

Established in 1968 by Geoff's father, Gary, it was originally located in the small farming town of Milton. The business relocated in 1977 to Christchurch with a loyal staff of four following Gary to their new location, a 300 m2 building that they shared with a paint and panel shop. In the 1980s, Gary took over the whole building and then bought another business across the road that they turned into a dedicated paint shop.

The 1990s saw further business growth when another building across the road was purchased and re-purposed to become a primer shop, storage, and also a purpose-built office. Then in 2011 tragedy unfolded for the Christchurch community when an earthquake hit. “The earthquakes took care of most of the buildings, so we were temporarily still in those (the surviving buildings) for 4-5 years while we decided what we

were doing,” said Geoff. Having purchased another business about three months prior to the earthquake hitting, Geoff had two panel shops running, but the third had been flattened in the earthquake.

The recovery process would take Geoff seven years, and through hard work and persistence, Gary A Smith is now one of the largest smash repair businesses on the South Island. “I found 3,000 m2 of land around the corner and went about building the shop that we are in today, which is the 3,000 m2 block with a 1,200 m2 building.”

Gary A Smith was just the second Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) approved shop in New Zealand, and Geoff values this approval greatly. At the time of rebuilding, he realised the growth potential of this business sector and commenced planning for the future of his business. “I went full JLR: we have three aluminium bays. JLR wanted to look at the growth, so initially we had to have one, but we future-proofed it and made it three, with two paint booths and five preparation bays.”

Always forward thinking, Geoff has recently made the decision to install Glasurit 100 Line into his business, the latest refinish technology offered by

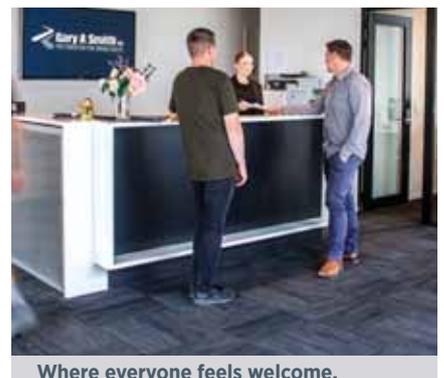
BASF. “I went to Australia and had a look at it over there, saw it working and said ‘let's go and let's get it in.’” By converting from a competitor's system, Gary A Smith was once again reunited with Glasurit. “My dad was a Glasurit man through and through – just loved Glasurit.” Geoff has a different approach from his father and looked at every proposal from the perspective of how it will benefit his business. “I had negotiations with a couple of distributors in New Zealand and Glasurit managed to come up with a solid proposal that was going to work for us.”

R.A. Johnstone is now the supplier of BASF products to Gary A Smith. “100 Line is a very different animal to 90 Line. It's more modern and it's 1.5 coats, so it's a lot more user-friendly than the other products.”

One of the attributes Geoff appreciates with Glasurit 100 Line is the environmental benefits it delivers to his business. Glasurit 100 Line was the first basecoat line on the market with a VOC value < 250 g/l and is 40% below solvent limit – exceeding all global VOC requirements. “The biggest thing is probably everything has got to be green. That's one of the reasons why we went with 100 Line – it's waterborne so it is better for the environment.”



What a great first impression.



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In recent times, with restrictions on travel, face-to-face training has been difficult to conduct; however, more businesses are embracing online learning and communications. Training is pivotal to Geoff and his business, as acquiring skilled labour is becoming increasingly difficult in the New Zealand market. "We have taken on a few apprentices at the moment, and we are training a few ourselves just to

try and get some skilled staff."

The team at Gary A Smith has taken advantage of BASF's online learning platform, "Glasurit Know-How", a virtual system keeping painters up to date with safety, processes and product knowledge. The painters at Gary A Smith are registered to the program with special access to the 100 Line processes and have the support of a local BASF

technical sales representative. "BASF's Brent Cayless was the main guy, he has been really good, he's had all the staff there and there are no issues."

In addition, the support given from JLR is highly valued. "The amount of JLR work we get from all around the South Island has been huge and I think the training from JLR is also good, but it's their online systems that have been amazing," concluded Geoff.



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