

Hi, everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI, and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week, I want to ask the question, why do people in business and in life spend so much time looking in the rear-view mirror? We were having our quarterly strategic planning session recently and one of our consultants, Doug McWright, was talking about a situation with which he was wrestling. It happened to be a family construction business in this case, but this applies to non-family businesses, too. I think at least 50% of our members are not technically family businesses anymore. They probably started out that way, but they certainly are not today. But this is important because I think this continual looking in the rear-view mirror often holds people back, and it was certainly holding this particular contractor back.

Doug used a wonderful analogy for these folks, and all of us in the meeting were fairly taken with it. Doug said, "You've got to think about this in an analogous way." Think about driving your car and think about the relative sizes between the windshield out of which you look forward and the rear-view mirror in which you look to see backwards. That's about how much time that you should spend in meetings or in discussions looking forward versus looking backwards. The windshield is at least 10 times bigger than the rear-view mirror, and you should spend the vast majority of your time looking forward and not in reverse.

There's nothing we can do to change the past at this point. We can think about it differently, we can react to it differently, we can accept, and we can move on, we can forgive, we can do lots of things, but we really can't change the past. There's nothing any single human being on earth can do about things that have taken place in the past.

I talked to a friend of mine who's a psychiatrist about this phenomenon, and she said that there are genuinely upsetting memories that people carry with them. Sometimes they're real hurts. Even physical hurts that they carry. They see carrying these insults, hurts, injuries as carrying a debt. They're carrying a debt that someone else owes to them, and they often in business have perceptions of favoritism, that one family member was treated more favorably than another at a certain time, and that led to another series of events.

My guys inside, I've talked to them about Doug's analogy and what the psychiatrist said, and they said they thought there were three other reasons that people tend to look in the rear-view mirror. Number one, it's easier than dealing with the vexing problems of the present and the future. The second thing is it allows people to feel morally superior, more virtuous than others in the group if they keep bringing up these slights, hurts, insults, injuries, et cetera. The rear-view mirror view is more tangible than things when we talk about the future.

In business, especially our members that are doing the strategic planning we recommend they do, to us, concrete people, I happen to be one of those folks that likes tangible, concrete stuff, it's kind of difficult. It's very difficult, in fact, to look into the future and peer into your crystal ball and try to determine where you're going to be in a year or three or five years in terms of business. What's your revenue going to be? What's your head count going to be? What business are you going to be in the sense of customers and lines of work and all kinds of other things? It's tough. It's challenging. But that's part about what I think makes it so rewarding.

Doug's analogy is terrific. Spend most of your time looking forward into the future through your windshield. The rear-view mirror is a very useful tool and that can inform the future, but you shouldn't spend very much time looking backwards, because there's not anything you can do about changing the past.

I'd like to hear what analogies or what, oh, I don't know what, what wisdom has been good for you in terms of building your business and keeping people integrated and whole as a team. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI and *We Build Better Contractors*.