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Classic Information (Kim's Tips) – Think positive during vehicle restoration!

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Okay, your project vehicle might need a bit more time and effort than you anticipated, but with determination and effort you CAN revive it!



Classic vehicle restoration... Don't give up! You CAN do it...

Kim Henson advises.

When trying to restore, recommission or even just re-invigorate a classic car, van or pick-up, to get the vehicle to its rightful place back out on the road where it can be enjoyed, there will almost certainly be times when the scale of the task weighs heavy. Indeed things can build up to the extent that sometimes you just cannot see the wood for the trees; progress may seem slow or even completely static, and you cannot see a way forward at all, let alone to get the vehicle running and on the road.

I have been in this situation several (actually, many) times over the years, and it may be tempting to give up, make life easier for yourself and just consign your dream to join the 'Unfinished Project' adverts so often seen in classic car magazines and on websites.

This is particularly sad if you have already invested a great deal of yourself, your time and cash.

So here is the antidote... In the following notes/tips, based on my own experiences and those of other enthusiasts who have struggled at times to progress their automotive restoration projects, I encourage you to get back out in that garage or on the driveway or wherever, and to have another go.

PLEASE do not give up on your dream. Jolly well get back out there tomorrow in daylight (at the moment the evenings are staying lighter, later...) and re-assess where you are.

Are you sitting comfortably? Then here goes with my 'Top 10 Tips' (and of course there are many more...) which I hope will help and re-encourage you...

1. **DON'T THINK ABOUT THE WHOLE PROJECT**

This advice was imparted to me by my late, great and very wise dad (who was a development engineer used to working through long and complex projects to get the



required result), when I was completely flummoxed by the scale of a project I had undertaken to put a rusty and long-dormant car back on the road. One day he called to see me as I surveyed the heap that appeared to be disintegrating on my driveway, although I had already spent hours with the welding torch etc.

When he observed how evidently downhearted I was, he said, "Cheer up lad. Okay, what needs to be done to this old machine?"

"Everything!" I responded, "...and I haven't got a clue where to start".

"Right", he advised, "Forget about the whole project or you'll never get anywhere". He continued, "Prioritise the jobs and decide on which aspect you are going to tackle first. Get stuck into it and complete that section, then move on to the next. Making a list of the various jobs can be a great help, so you know what needs to be done and you can tick off each job as it is completed. That in itself will make you feel better".

He was quite right, and by adopting this approach I saw the project through to completion in a remarkably rapid time. Ever since then I have used this approach; thanks Dad!

Okay, so this brings me on to...

2. [MAKE LISTS](#)

Write down, neatly, and in a logical sequence, on lined paper (or use a computer/tablet etc. if this is preferable to you) list(s) of all the various tasks that need to be tackled. Ideally work through the most difficult ones first, then the remaining jobs will seem easier.

While doing this, make separate lists of the components that you think you will need. At the earliest opportunity, start sourcing these, so that they will be available to you when you need them, rather than having to wait. The internet is a good place to search, but don't ignore autojumbles, and fellow owners of similar vehicles, talking of which...

3. [JOIN THE CLUB](#)



...If you have not already done so, find out whether there is a club (or clubs) catering for your project vehicle. If so, join it! This will put you in touch with fellow enthusiasts who have gone through similar struggles with their vehicles, many of whom will be only too happy to provide information, advice, moral support and sometimes even practical assistance.

4. **READ ALL ABOUT IT**

If available, obtain as many relevant handbooks, workshop manuals and books as possible relating to your vehicle model, including technical publications and parts lists, etc, many of which contain invaluable photographs, diagrams, etc.

5. **PHOTOGRAPH OR VIDEO IT!**

Ideally, take a few close-up photographs (or a few minutes of video footage) of any component assemblies that you are intending to remove/dismantle from your car/van/pick-up/whatever. This action will provide invaluable references when re-assembly time comes. If you don't possess a camera or mobile phone, make a hand-written drawing/diagram, and label it so that you will know what was fitted where, when the time comes.

6. **STORE ALL PARTS LOGICALLY AND WITH CARE**

When you remove parts from the vehicle, treat them with care and respect, especially if you think that they may have to be re-used. Label them carefully and unmistakably, and store them in waterproof containers, in places where they cannot get damaged. Store them logically so that you will be able to find them again when you need them (and if necessary, make more lists so that you know exactly what is where!). If, at the moment, things are in a 'bit of a state' in respect of parts storage etc, go through them and sort them out. It will help you, for sure.

7. **NOT SURE? ASK!**

If you are unsure of any aspect of the job, ask someone who really does know and understand the vehicle; especially important if you are new to restoration work and when it comes to safety related items/systems.



If necessary, engage someone who knows what they are doing, to help you through the bits you find really difficult. Yes this may cost a few pounds if you have to ask a professional to help, but will help you move on to the next aspect(s) that you can tackle yourself. In addition, you will probably learn much from working with a specialist/fellow club member/fellow owner, etc. This in itself will also help to inspire confidence that your project is 'finishable'.

8. [STRUGGLING? COUNT TO 10 AND START AGAIN](#)

We all experience days when the job is not going well, when some component refuses to be detached from, or go back onto, a vehicle, or when, quite simply, nothing is going right. Okay, so DO NOT use brute force, work yourself into a lather and/or (for example) swear profusely and/or throw things about. I promise you, it won't help and you might damage you/someone else/your vehicle. Put down the tools, step back, and take a deep breath. Take a breather and think about alternative ways of tackling the job. If necessary, phone a friend who may have some good ideas (two heads are often better than one).

For me personally, I find that going indoors and having a cuppa helps calm the situation and encourages me to think about how best to make some more progress.

9. [KEEP IN MIND YOUR GOAL](#)

The whole point of restoring a vehicle is to have fun with it, during the renovation work and afterwards. For me personally, I always look forward to driving it for the first time (especially wonderful if the vehicle has been off the road for a very long time, and/or was in a terrible state when you acquired it). Effectively you are bringing it 'back to life' to be driven and enjoyed again. Keep this in mind and it WILL help you through the days when progress is far from smooth or rapid!

10. [TIDY UP - AND REMEMBER 'SAFETY FIRST'!](#)

Working in a muddle can make the job longer and more difficult. Having said that, it is almost inevitable that, at times during the restoration work, you will end up with rust, dust, tools, components, etc, etc, 'everywhere' so that it really is difficult to find anything.



In addition, a cluttered work area can be a dangerous one.

If you haven't tidied it up lately during your renovation work, make a point of doing it before you start your next work session.

Make sure that all power tools are unplugged and put away (especially if children or animals are in the vicinity), that all sharp off-cuts of metal and rust are disposed of safely and in an environmentally-friendly manner, and that all relevant safety gear is in good condition and available for use during your next working session.

Simply tidying your working area can put you in a good mood for progressing further with your project.

CONCLUSIONS

Cheer up, tidy up, re-assess your project as outlined above, get back out there working on it again, and be absolutely determined that nothing is going to stop you getting that restoration finished. You will soon be able to enjoy your vehicle by driving it on the road, where it belongs.

In the meantime, take time to enjoy the process of renovating the vehicle, and don't forget to take photographs of progress, at each stage. When the project is finished, these will provide happy reminders of the time, effort, cash, etc, that you put into it.

Difficulties? NO! Think of every problem encountered as an opportunity for you to overcome it. Take heart and you WILL do it!

Last, but not least... ENJOY - now please get on and complete it!

(Note from Kim: This article was inspired this evening, 5th April 2017, by a fellow enthusiast in west Dorset who has hit a difficult point - as we all do, from time to time - in his restoration of a great old car that needs to be brought back to life. No names, but I hope



that these notes help! Please send a photo when you have finished it...).

FURTHER INSPIRATION? USING CLASSICS TO REACH AMAZING PLACES...

For most enthusiasts, the whole point of restoring a classic vehicle is to be able to have fun driving it, and our 'Motoring for Fun' section on this website includes coverage of various automotive excursions to fascinating places far and wide, in the UK and abroad, in vehicles ancient and modern. To read more, please click [HERE](#).