

December 20, 2021 | [Staff Writer](#)

CEOs look back and share the most important lesson they learnt in 2021



It's been another year of lockdown and supply challenges for all companies dealing with the COVID-19 variants as they pop up.

But with challenges, comes opportunities to learn and grow. So as the end of the year approaches, we took the chance to tap our client list and ask CEOs of ASX-listed small caps – from sand miners to cannabis growers to fintechs – what they learnt in 2021, their highlights, and what they hope for in 2022.

We're kicking off the series with:

What's the most important lesson you learnt in 2021?

Alastair Wilkie (CEO, Change Financial, ASX:CCA)

Upon reflection, the most important lesson for me would be the value of concise and enhanced communications. With our staff working from home globally – and with 146 clients across 41 countries – communicating effectively was a crucial part of our business execution in 2021.

Robert Martin (Chairman, Suvo Strategic Minerals, ASX:SUV)

In October Suvo revealed its maiden resource at the Nova project in Western Australia and with a potential upgrade already in the post here's two lessons for all of us – resilience and patience.

Paul Lock (MD, Pan Asia Metals, ASX:PAM)

The underlying fundamentals for lithium have not changed; auto companies did not decide to build EVs this year, that decision was already embedded in their strategy. The writing was on the wall yet at the start of 2021 no one was interested in lithium.

I remember a discussion on Ausbiz in late 2020 where I mentioned some of the cheap EV models available in China, as a precursor to the wall of lithium demand coming our way. I think they thought I was from another planet. The lesson is: avoid the noise and trust your instincts.

The last two years have been quite extraordinary with COVID. Operating via video conference goes a long way to making sure everyone is connected, but it doesn't replace face to face.

Karim Nejaim (CEO and MD, ActivePort Group, ASX:ATV),

So, there are few things that I have learnt (or re-learnt!):

- Everyone has reacted to the last two years differently. It's important to remember that and take the time to communicate, make sure people know you have heard what they are saying.
- The value of kindness. With the constant lockdowns and uncertainty caused by Covid, the saying "everyone's fighting a war" has never been more true.
- I've learnt the importance of looking after myself as well as others – to keep track of my energy, not get caught up in the noise, balance priorities and to always listen to understand instead of trying to fix things.
- 2021 demonstrated in a brutal way for society that we can only succeed when we stand together and work as one team, and there are plenty of leadership lessons to be learnt here about keeping things simple and focus on what you need people (or a team) to know, feel and do.

Alex Biggs (MD, Critical Resources Limited, ASX:CRR)

After securing a binding terms sheet on Mavis Lake a few weeks back, I can tell you, it's the importance of fast decision making and working towards a clear vision.

Idan Schmorak (CEO, Crowd Media, ASX:CM8)

In times of uncertainty – hello Omicron – people have different perceptions of safety. As people come first, it's crucial to provide the most safe working environment for them. A focus which has brought light to new ways we can support our teams in the digital age.

Milan Jerkovic (Chair, Wiluna Mining, ASX:WMC)

Keep your shareholders informed and close to you. Bring them along during critical times, during periods of uncertainty and let them know where you are when the markets are volatile.

Paul Russell (Executive Director, IOUpay, ASX:IOU)

IOUpay has strong lessons to share. Our experience is simple and successful. Stay agile and keep focused on execution. Minimise distractions.

Steven Yatomi-Clarke (CEO, Prescient Therapeutics, ASX:PTX)

Pick the fastest growing field; get ahead of the curve; and stay there. And here's something perhaps a little more personal as Christmas looms – 2021's lockdown restrictions taught us when the opportunity arises, never pass up a chance to catch up with friends and family.

William Howe (CEO, Andean Mining, ASX:ADM)

Don't assume anything when dealing with monolithic organisations.

Paul Glass (CEO, Nexion Group, ASX:NNG)

We live in a global economy and although most CEOs appreciate this and always consider the risks and rewards associated, managing the business to best react to unprecedented times needs to become a forward looking position in every company review. It is now evident more than ever, we are part of a global community and winds on one of end the globe will reach us over time.

Change happens, it's inevitable. Adapting to the change in a strong and responsive manner is the key to long term sustainability. We are surrounded by technology in every facet of our lives, we as leaders of technology have a role to play in the ability to use technology to connect and collaborate even when borders are shut and meetings

online become the normal. We have a social responsibility to innovate for change, for the community and for the future.

Roby Zomer, (CEO, MGC Pharma, ASX:MXC)

The most important lesson I learned this year is to never give up and always believe in yourself. We achieved two huge milestones this year in being listed on the London Stock Exchange and seeking emergency approval of CimetraA to be used as a COVID 19 treatment and this definitely taught us to never give up and always believe in what we are doing – even when everyone is telling you that you might be wrong.

Ralph Highnam (CEO, Volpara Health Technologies, ASX:VHT)

When entering uncertain times, look after your people, and they will repay you as things resolve. That's what we're seeing now as we accelerate out of COVID with a loyal, resilient, and positive staff.

Michael Anderson (Managing Director, Firefinch, ASX:FFX)

Surround yourself with good people; employees and consultants. There is no substitute for talent and experience.

Glenn Smith (Managing Director, TALi Digital, ASX:TD1)

There is value in having people in the office. Most of our team is in Melbourne so we've been working remotely for a good part of two years. In November we started easing back with a dedicated day a week when we all try to be in the office. Let me tell you the difference is palpable.

There's something intangible but valuable about the energy levels and sense of team. Not everyone feels the same, of course, so we need to have balance, but it's nice having some buzz back in the building again.

Source: <https://stockhead.com.au/news/ceos-look-back-and-share-the-most-important-lesson-they-learnt-in-2021/>