

Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust

Leadership and Vision in Irish Agricultural Organisations

Now, Then and AMEN

Irish Co-operative Organisation Society
Award 2004

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May 2006



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the many people who made my Nuffield experience possible and incredibly enriching. It was a great privilege to be selected in 2004 and many thanks for the interviewing panel for selecting me to study a non-traditional topic.

Many thanks to the Board of Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS) for having the vision to actively support the development of leadership in Irish agriculture by sponsoring a Nuffield scholar on an annual basis. Thanks are due to John Tyrrell, Director General, and Seamus O'Donohoe, Secretary of ICOS, my past employers, who made it possible for me to travel and undertake my studies. I greatly appreciate the financial support given.

Thanks are due to the Nuffield Scholars in Ireland for their help and support since receiving the award. A very big thanks to the UK Director John Stones, for his unwavering and invaluable advice, referrals and help. To the 2004 Nuffielders, who make the induction week in the UK both informative and great fun. A very special thanks to my mentor, John Geraghty (2003) who has contributed so very much to Nuffield Ireland and who keeps loyalty, professionalism and laughter core to himself and makes them highly infectious.

Many thanks to the many people who I met during my study, people who put themselves out to meet me, who spoke freely to me and answered innumerable questions and also provided hospitality. The referrals opened many other doors and introduced me to people and industries I would never have had access to.

To my beloved family and friends, thanks, many thanks.

I won't try to repay you but will endeavour to pay forward – for the betterment of others and our great industry.

DISCLAIMER

The contents of this study are the result of research, personal interviews and observations made by the author while conducting the Nuffield Study in 2004 and 2005

The contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust or those of the sponsors of the scheme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust 2004

Report by Mary Webb Johnston

The Irish Co-operative Organisation Society Award

LEADERSHIP AND VISION IN IRISH AGRICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS- NOW, THEN AND AMEN

BACKGROUND

The award of a Nuffield scholarship to me in 2004 came in the midst of dramatic changes in the subsidisation of production agriculture in Ireland and the EU. In my work I observed a fatalism and lack of long term focus among many in the industry that was disturbing. I have modest forage and forestry enterprises in the southeast of Ireland and have spent ten years working with co-operatives in rural development, enterprise development and management training. I currently work as a management and training consultant.

Nuffield provided for me travel opportunities and contacts 'par excellence'. I got exposure to organisational expertise and innovation on farms and in boardrooms and was able to investigate their evolution. I believe that these experiences and people have enhanced my personal and professional development.

Introduction

Agriculture in Ireland has grown from very humble beginnings and now generates over a billion euro per annum for the economy. This progress has been driven and managed by agriculture and food organisations who have demonstrated their ability to be successful and progressive. However, the industry is currently facing some tough challenges with the reform in funding and world trade agreements. To be effective all organisations will need innovative measures and strategies for the future. There will be a demand for effective influential leaders within agriculture.

This study looks at leadership and vision in a range of organisations in Ireland, the UK, New Zealand and the USA. It looks at how leadership and vision are developed and identifies findings which can be adopted in Ireland.

Leadership and Vision

Leadership comes packaged in many ways and in the right environment it can be learned. Successful leadership is being able to inspire others to create and achieve shared visions. In an organisational setting, vision at the top is essential for success. Leadership is much more than managing; leadership is essentially inspirational with empowerment, respect and excellent communication at its core. The manager's role is to coach and teach but for leadership to be successful, a culture where the truth can be heard and is welcome needs to be created. Effective visionary leadership is the key element for ideas to be shared and solidified and creative solutions arrived at. Vision is the synthesis of instinct and knowledge; it is in effect creative problem-solving.

The influential leaders who I met were:

- Passionate and it showed!
- Put the needs of the organisation before themselves
- Were extraordinarily disciplined and hardworking
- Were flexible and listened
- Had integrity and were trusted
- Sincere
- Trusted others to make mistakes and allowed people to grow
- Recognised and acknowledged other's achievements
- Ensured they enjoyed personal leisure time

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand agriculture and the agri-food sector sees itself today as a strong vibrant industry. Capability, ingenuity and flexibility appear to be innate in the Kiwis at all levels and they attribute this to their classlessness, their isolation and location a long way from markets. These factors have forced them to do more with less. They are able to improvise and innovate sometimes with modest resources.

It was a sense of desperation that activated leadership qualities to face the deregulation of the agriculture industry in the late 1980's. Agriculture was seen as the 'sunset industry' but now makes a significant contribution to the economy so their model of vision and leadership appears to have served them well. Subsidies were removed and there were hard times but that was the spark that forced people in agriculture to find inspiration, solutions and develop a vision for a vibrant sector to emerge. Growth in production and adoption of new technologies resulted. Over time management skills improved as the 'bottom' layer of farmers exited the agriculture industry.

The focus is now on the business of agriculture and Kiwi farmers are willing to make ruthless decisions to enhance the development of their businesses. Survival alone is not an option. A culture has developed concerned with achieving competitive advantage and primary producers have a clear sense of and connect with consumer issues.

Government provides leadership by allowing the market-place to devise agricultural policy so agricultural production just follows the market. Farmers take total responsibility for their own destiny- it's a competitive world (Brownrigg, 2005). Business everywhere constantly investigates opportunities. Agriculture is no different. Innovation is not linear; it is business and market driven.

Farmers market through co-ops but these are for entrepreneurial benefit only and the council members and directors of the really successful ones are results focused. They are willing to take calculated risks uninhibited by 'parish pump' politics issues or emotion.

Some co-ops expect aspiring directors and council members to be highly experienced and skilful people. "A board room is not for learning the skills, you practice them there" (Monaghan, 2005).

Leadership in agriculture and food is such that New Zealand society 'understands' and is closely linked to food production and agriculture and there appears to be no destructive urban-rural division or consumer alienation.

It is an accepted fact in New Zealand that the industry needs emergent leaders and effective leadership can be taught to those with the character traits and capacity to learn. Consequently leadership studies are an integral part of many programmes in New Zealand and are debated and written about widely.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The USA has a strong business and entrepreneurial culture evident in the number of global entities emanating from there. It has a large consumer base and has an unequalled ability to consistently produce wealth. It promotes leadership, vision and business innovation at every turn with support programmes throughout the school and university systems for all sectors with a special emphasis on agriculture.

In agriculture, leadership decisions are driven by government policies which impinge on the market. These are shaped to make agriculture more efficient and to reduce food prices. Larger farmer co-ops and agribusiness corporations with access to capital have the vision to respond and grasped the commercial opportunities. Although there is anecdotal fondness for the farm with 'Mom and Pop a' swinging on the porch', the vision for farming has resulted in food being produced within industrial scale enterprises and the leaders of influence develop capacity and profit. The co-op structure familiar to many millions of Americans evolved to meet the changing needs of membership and provides a value added element for their business. Notwithstanding all these factors, leadership and vision within production agriculture in the USA is sporadic. Farmers often have fatalistic and reactive strategies for their futures.

There are excellent innovative role models within business to be emulated but the barriers against real vision and changes occurring within agriculture appear to be two fold. Farmers are cushioned by protection from world market issues and subsidisation. So despite access to excellent state wide leadership programmes, university attached extension services and USDA interventions, agriculture had failed to develop leadership capacity with long term vision.

IRELAND

The Irish agriculture industry is facing unprecedented opportunities to devise a direction for the future, but these opportunities are not without challenges. Agriculture and food industry entities and their supporting organisations will have the core role and will need leadership which will stimulate the necessary vision. Vision needs to be pervasive throughout organisations if they are to have a worthwhile future. Ireland has good organisations that have served agriculture in the past but is “good” enough for the future or do we need our organisations to become “great”? (Collins, USA 2003) Great organisations, whether producing goods or services, focus on understanding their market and then devise ways to service that market profitably.

CONCLUSION

The basis tenets of good leadership are that:

- Results are a product of personal choice and actions and are not just a product of circumstances. Accept that and organisations can blossom.
- We rightly expect leadership from chief executives and chairmen of the board, but organisations need to develop and encourage leadership skills throughout their structures *‘by people being given a opportunity to be heard’* (Parnell, UK 2003) and they then become part of the emerging solution.
- No matter what the function of an organisation is, some basic immutable laws of organized human performance and timeless principles in people management should be recognised. These can be learned by people willing to channel their ego needs away from themselves and toward building a great organisation. Good leadership values respect above popularity. Diversity of personalities and leadership styles can be a significant source of strengths in an organisation.
- The culture of an organisation emanates from its leadership and when challenges and failures arise; good leaders take responsibility themselves for these failures and never blame other people, external factors or bad luck.
- In harbouring leadership and vision, emerging talent needs to be nurtured. People can be encouraged to learn from their success and mistakes. Good leadership will let others be brave. Don’t punish those who make small errors while trying, but recognise leadership potential and offer relevant training using good role models.
- There is a degree of sheer rigour needed in leading people and in decisions involving people. If the organisation has good, well chosen people with the vision communicated clearly to them;
 - They will act responsibility
 - They will require leadership and strategy, not management
 - They will be self-motivated by the inner drive to produce the best result
 - Where ideas and visions are shared, you have self-disciplined people who don’t need hierarchies or bureaucracy to excel
 - Good people put peer pressure upon each other to hold their side up
 - They need to resist the temptation to exclude those who are underperforming as it is better to work out strategies so that standards improve
 - Leadership talent is vital at committee level, executive level and throughout various layers within organisations
- Organisations with committees need to focus on the selection and preparation process of these people and abandon some of the prevalent practices. Don’t assume that people with potential emerge without intervention.

- There is an argument against regimented structures such as regular committee meetings which can become 'chat shows'. Instead, strategically focused groups, meeting for a specified function and within a specific timescale can be more effective.
- Always be cognisant of the agriculture industry's image and the self esteem of the people involved. More can be gained with positive statements telling the audience what we stand for rather than what we won't stand for. Avoid the 'reactive approach' and the negative macho response of "we reject"! Good communication of an honest message is how you win people and influence public opinion. Trust is hard gained and easily lost. Unfortunately the agriculture industry is judged by its lowest standards rather than by its highest.
- Leaders in key positions can be their own worst enemies. They allow themselves to experience burn out and become inert with resulting negative effects on the organisation. They limit their own professional growth by failing to realistically assess their development needs and by not actively seeking the means of realising them.
- Leaders need to:
 - Be self-aware and address their own lack of critical knowledge and skills
 - Prioritise and manage their own learning and self-development
 - Accept that most learning is difficult and requires serious commitment of time and energy and help from others
 - Resist the lure of martyrdom

Leadership and Vision - The Future

- Leadership and vision can be taught, nurtured and enhanced
- Learning should be lifelong and dynamic
- We should integrate leadership concepts into a broader range of courses and programmes
- Leader should constantly assess their own skills and proficiencies and take action
- We should listen to and learn from what others are thinking, in different sectors and in different markets
- We should have cross-industry participation in formal training:
 - Get producer discussion groups to explore the broader industry
 - Understand the value of networking and the experiences of others
 - If you cannot innovate – emulate

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*“The ideal reader is the sceptic; the future belongs to the sceptic not the cynic.
Sceptics do not take ideas on faith; they use a multiplicity of information to compare and contrast”*
Sculley J, CEO Apple Computers 1987

BACKGROUND

In 2004 I was delighted to be awarded an Irish Nuffield scholarship sponsored by the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS), the national coordinating body for co-operatives. My chosen study was: Leadership and Vision in Agricultural organisations. When receiving the award, I was working with the co-ops nationally in member development, rural development, forestry and management training. Previously to that, I had worked with a regional rural development organisation, promoting enterprise development and training opportunities in rural areas.

I have a small holding which I manage part-time in Co. Wexford, in the southeast of Ireland with a mix of forage and forestry enterprises. The farm size is close to the national average holding of 32 hectares. Until the mid 1990's I farmed full-time but now most of my income is earned off-farm. In this I am typical of many Irish farm householders in 2005: less than one quarter (22 per cent) of the household income comes from farming profit and over half (58 per cent) of farm household income comes from employment; the rest comes from farm subsidy. The same survey worryingly shows that 42 per cent of farmers are over 55 years old and 11 per cent under 35 years old.

The numbers attending agriculture and food related vocational and academic programmes are also reducing. This is evidence for me that at production level the industry is income poor and it has a poor image, perceived as not offering a viable career choice nor always attracting the brightest and the best.

My award in 2004 came in the midst of dramatic changes in the subsidisation of production agriculture in Ireland. The EU with the Single Farm Payment (SFP) scheme was replacing production based subsidies and there was a much resisted move to market led production and prices.¹ It is predicted that agricultural output will fall by 9.4 per cent and agricultural employment by 12 per cent in the next 5-7 years.²

I observed a fatalism and lack of long term focus among many in the industry that was disturbing. Within the production sector there appeared to be no enthusiasm for the future and “doom and gloom” scenarios were being reported about a stagnant and “grey-headed” agriculture and the relentless drift of farming people into other industries. The level of on-farm entrepreneurship was also diminishing and the resultant negative effects from all these factors was cited as likely to impinge negatively on the fibre of rural communities.³ It appears that, in the view of the Minister of Agriculture, the assessment for the year 2006 for the agri-food sector is negatively dubbed “A Year of Continuing Challenge”, and her department's stated sole achievement for the year ; CAP reform.⁴ This led me to consider the role farmers and their organisations have in devising and influencing their own future. Could leadership within agricultural organisations provide a more positive vision that could drive desirable outcomes?

I travelled extensively in the preparation of this report and the Nuffield network, which has provided scholarships since 1947 to promote leadership in agriculture, provided for me travel opportunities and access to contacts ‘par excellence’. The very name of Nuffield opened doors and I got exposure to organisational expertise and innovation on farms and in boardrooms and within academia. This report is an examination of my findings.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and Food in Ireland has grown from very humble beginnings and now generates over a billion euro per annum for the economy. We are an exporting industry with 90 per cent of our beef and 85 per cent of dairy production going to foreign markets. This progress has been driven and managed by agriculture and food organisations, especially farmer owned co-ops, who have demonstrated their ability to be successful and progressive and to exploit new markets and develop new products. However, the industry is currently facing some tough challenges with the focus on reforms in agricultural funding and world trade agreements presented as challenges.

To be effective all organisations will need innovative measures and strategies in the future. There is a demand for effective influential leaders with a positive outlook within agriculture. I wondered what skills would be needed within organisations to face the challenge of change in the industry and where was this leadership going to come from?

This study looks at leadership and vision in a range of organisations in Ireland, the UK, New Zealand and the USA. It looks at how leadership and visioning are developed elsewhere and identifies findings and strategies which can be adopted in Ireland to bring about a unified, vibrant and positive agriculture and food industry.

METHODOLOGY

In preparation for my study I asked myself why there was such evidence of despondency and negativity within the industry and investigated what factors were most likely to drive an organisation's strategy. I questioned what factors restricted their growth and effectiveness. Conversely I paid particular attention to the drivers in the evolution of successful co-ops and their more recent development. The commonest values cited throughout were; Leadership and Vision – my subject was decided. My use of the title; Now, Then and AMEN was prompted by my intent to investigate the current and past situation. AMEN: meaning strongly affirm, I believe it can be done.

I then talked about my subject to industry leaders and agricultural experts. To measure possible commonalities I looked at the structure and organisation within successful rural sporting and community organisations to see how they operated and achieved their successes. I investigated and reviewed the extensive academic literature on management theory and leadership and vision while recognising that most writers on management theory do not have any managerial responsibilities. My recent studies in psychology helped me to understand the dynamics involved in leading and motivating people and I knew that by exploring these theories in practice, I should see how people in successful organisations operated and interacted. I hoped to measure the salient skills and show how they could be applied.

I travelled in the USA, in Canada and in NZ and undertook interviews over an extended period. I also wanted to investigate if national culture would have an influence on outcomes. Initially I focused on agricultural organisations and co-ops dealing with production, policy and representation. In parts of the US where the majority of land use is forestry, I investigated the operations of organisations involved in that industry also. I visited academic institutions and agencies involved with taught leadership programmes and funding agencies involved with promoting leadership in all sectors.

“Heroism consists of holding on one minute longer.” Norwegian proverb.⁵

I was looking for leaders and I was not disappointed. I met them on farms, in boardrooms and in colleges. They answered my questions honestly and they often had to grapple with naming the key factors in their success. I met people who were an inspiration and who had built strong healthy vibrant businesses. The information shared was extremely valuable. I found that these people subverted their own success to make their organisations great. Leadership that facilitated the development of other people.

I discovered that even accounting for a vast disparity in personalities, leaders in all sectors had common attributes. I wanted to find out what makes some organisations successful and investigate the styles of the people who initiated and executed this success. In many cases I found that leaders had a major impact in shaping the company and their company an example within the sector. Often, leaders over the period of their tenure had such a positive influence that the organisation was transformed and heralded as the model. I was

told stories of how this was accomplished, and the type and ‘modus operandi’ of the people doing it. Each interview led to recommendations of other success stories and invariably these originated from the US: *“the undisputable heavyweight of management theory and practice throughout the world”*.⁶

The conclusions of this report show how leadership and vision if applied, can transform Irish Agriculture and Food. I outline some strategies and actions which if applied can bring this about.

DISCUSSION- LEADERSHIP, VISION AND MANAGEMENT

“It took me fifteen years to make it look this easy”... Fred Astaire

“And I can do anything he does, just backwards and in a skirt; Ginger Rogers

Visionary Leadership, when we see it, inspires us, wows us even! The evidence of leadership can be seen throughout society and but is notoriously difficult to define. When we see it in action it is easily recognised and in organisations where it is missing we see evidence of confusion and frustration.

Confusingly, the terms ‘leader’ and ‘leadership’ are often used interchangeably. The term ‘leader’ is sometimes used when referring to a formal role in an organisation, for example when referring to a chairperson or to executive management. Conventional leadership models present the idea that leadership is using one’s authority to influence others and accordingly you had to be in a position of authority to be considered to be a leader. In fact, the exercise of power ‘power over someone’ – is more correctly ‘authority’ - as in the authority of the police or teachers. Other models focus only on how to exercise authority in specific situations. None of these truly explore the reality that a true leader is simply someone who is showing leadership, the traits of leading, and they can be anywhere in an organisation. People at the head of an organisation – the CEO, manager or chairperson are often referred to as ‘leader’. It is possible that they are in the leader’s position and have the capacity; they are not always providing the leadership. The whole notion of power has become unpopular so management theory has been moving away from power, based on leadership positions, to power which is based on knowledge. This has been particularly evident in the newer hi-tech and internet based businesses. Organisations have been re-defined, it has been accepted that to innovate, to apply new knowledge, be an agent for change is not the monopoly of people at the top of organisations. These skills can and should occur at all levels and especially at the ‘front line.’

“The natural instinct of men is to follow. And whoever has the strongest sense of purpose will always dominate the rest”

Leadership is essentially about influence or someone’s ability to influence others. It is about having a sense of direction and having ‘vision’ and being able to see further than others can. But vision can motivate without necessarily providing the direction. Visionary leadership is about getting people to trust and believe in the goal even if they can’t actually see it and also showing people that they are part of achieving that goal. It is about establishing direction, aligning people, motivating, inspiring and energising people to overcome barriers to change. It is about innovating and championing new directions. Leadership produces change and it is the passion that fuels that change. Influence is the means not the substance of leadership.

No one is born a leader, just as no one is born as a champion jockey or a great footballer. But you can be born with the underlying traits that give you the potential to develop the skills, given the right stimulus and positive environment. The innate characteristics can be positively influenced by childhood experiences and then either embellished or enhanced by life and work experiences or they can be stunted and never develop. Academics suggest that one third of the characteristics that effective leaders share are rooted in heredity or early life experiences and these include drive, intelligence and emotional health. Human competencies like self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence and empathy are of greater consequence than IQ in much of life.⁷ There is no doubt that an individual’s capacity to develop skills must correlates to that person’s basic intellectual capacity, their sense of self worth, and the drive and dedication to want to develop leadership skills.⁸

“Leaders manage the dream”

Successful leadership is being able to inspire others to create and achieve shared vision.⁹ In an organisational setting, vision at the top is essential for success. The key is to create the conditions for leadership to emerge informally and spontaneously throughout the organization.

Part of the manager’s role is to coach and teach. For leadership to be successful, a culture where the truth can be heard and is welcome needs to be created.¹⁰ Effective visionary leadership is the key element for ideas to be shared and solidified and creative solutions arrived at. Vision is the synthesis of instinct and knowledge and is, in effect, creative problem-solving. Vision can motivate without providing direction. It gives us something to believe in, work towards and identify with. Leadership is an episodic act of ideas or creativity that some people will exhibit some times and not other times. Leadership in itself is not a position of

responsibility. Leadership is much more than managing; leadership is essentially inspirational with empowerment, respect and excellent communication at its core.

The need for visionary leadership with the ability to inspire and move people looms large. A person who helps followers to change and to move from where they are to where they should be or where they want to be is a rare talent and it has been demonstrated that workplace competencies based on 'emotional intelligence' play a far greater role in star performance than just intellect or technical skill do. Companies who recognise and cultivate these capabilities benefit from doing so.¹¹ Most influential leaders were motivated by an obligation to others and to society at large.¹² The maxim 'transformational leadership' is evident in many key leaders' actions where, in return for a favour, the giver does not expect a return of the favour. It would merely become a 'transaction' but instead expects for it to be passed on to the next person on the road. The age old principal of 'what goes around comes around again' can thus transform an organisation, a community and a society.

"Leaders do the right things. Managers do things right"

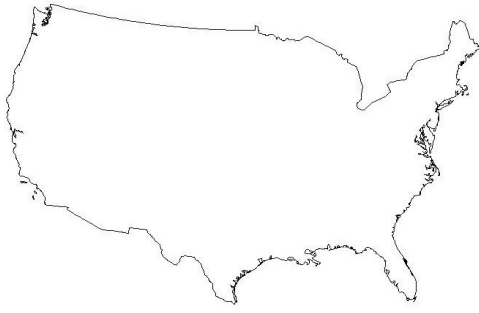
In an organisation there are two fundamental organisational tasks: devising new directions which require leadership and executing existing ones which requires management. For an organisation to be effective it has to be accepted that some people are more naturally suited to management than others. But managers must be able to establish a vision which motivates performance improvements. Managers must have skills because to deliver operationally you have to be organized and systematic and it is expected of you. So in essence, management is a set of responsibilities. Leaders direct, managers execute. Management is like making an investment – trying to get the best return from all your resources - your energy, talent, and time and all other resources at your disposal.

"The more I practice - the luckier I get" Tiger Woods

Getting clear about the distinction between the kind of leadership required for operational management and the leadership which is purely innovative is important as it helps people in organisations to focus their energies where the greatest potential is gained. Executives who think they are leading when they are actually managing can be blocking leadership potential in others and it limits the new ideas an organisation constantly needs to survive. Over-managing people can make them become dependent on the manager.¹³ In an organisation where leadership and management are clearly differentiated, people are freer to identify areas for change and are encouraged to champion change. It should not be possible or desirable to call yourself a leader simply because you are a good manager and when you make the distinction between leadership and management, the profile and vital role of the manager is enhanced. Effective, profitable execution is as important for business success as is generating the future of a business. Leadership serves the function of finding a new direction, management the function of getting us there efficiently. Conversely, leadership can be shown by all and ideally it can shift from one person to another rapidly in any given context.

In summary the main attributes identified in the truly influential leaders who I met are;

- None set out to be leaders – they became leaders because of the quality of their actions
- They were passionate about what they were doing and it showed!
- They were able to put the needs of the organisation beyond narrow self-interest
- Were extraordinarily disciplined and hardworking
- Were flexible and listened to others
- Had integrity and were trusted by their peers and within their industry. Understood the difference between ethical and moral behaviour. Ethics are to obey the rules. Morality has to do with reasoning and behaving according to our values.
- Were sincere
- Trusted others to make mistakes and allowed people to grow
- Recognised and acknowledged other's achievements.
- Preferred to keep a low profile, stay out of the limelight and get on with what they do best
- Loved their work, but work itself was not enough, they ensured they enjoyed personal leisure time



LEADERSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The USA has a strong business, entrepreneurial and leadership culture evident in the number of global entities emanating from there. It has a large consumer base and has an unequalled ability to consistently produce wealth. It promotes leadership, vision and business innovation at every turn with philanthropic and other support programmes throughout the school and university systems for all sectors with a special emphasis on agriculture.

Within agriculture, leadership decisions are driven by the federal government policies which directly impinge on the

market. These have been shaped to make agriculture more efficient, lower food prices and keep US food more globally competitive. So little of consumer income is spent on food and so small a portion of food costs are associated with farming that whether farming is more or less efficient no longer makes much difference.¹⁴ Farmers are less than three percent of the population and consumers now spend less than ten per cent of their income on food. For each one dollar spent on food only twenty cents go to the primary producer the other eighty cents go to the food processing and marketing industries. The cost of food has been reduced, and an amazing forty-seven percent of food in America is consumed away from the home.¹⁵ Food has been 'dumbed down' – has become a cheap, low value consumer commodity. So the leadership strategy for food and agriculture has come from the federal government's farm policies which have just been good for the nation's purse. These policies have resulted in fewer farmers with larger farms and farm prices so low that the public no longer has to worry or care about its food supply or food waste. Larger farmer co-ops and agribusiness corporations with access to capital had the vision to respond and have grasped the commercial opportunities and pushed farmers to get bigger. This resulted in agricultural policy subsidising the big and those with access to capital. Current farm programmes with their industrial agriculture bias are helping to bring American agriculture under the contractual control of a handful of multinational food corporations.¹⁶

Although there is anecdotal fondness for the farm with 'Mom and Pop a' swingin' on the porch', the vision for farming that has been implemented and the industry has gone along is quite different. Food is being produced within industrial scale enterprises where the leaders of influence develop capacity and profit. The continual urban creep creates land and water use issues and the US has devised a programme of buying out future development rights into perpetuity so that agriculture land can be retained.¹⁷ As in other parts of the world the availability of water for irrigated crops is under threat and political influence has moved towards the urban majority and out of the hands of the embattled farmer.¹⁸

Despite all these factors there is a new vision emerging for food and farming. In the US as in many other places there is a back swing to a more direct link and connection between the producer and the consumers who are choosing how and where their food is produced. This has been followed by a move to new types of community supported agriculture and the questioning of the established notion that there is only one right way to farm. It is slowly being accepted that there is room in the countryside and in the marketplace for many ways of growing and supplying crops and livestock.

Many millions of Americans are familiar with the co-op structure as apart from agriculture, utilities, housing and other commodities and services are managed co-operatively. The co-op structure has continued to evolve over the years to meet the changing needs of the membership and provides a value added element for their business. The development of new co-ops is directly funded by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) through a series of regional centres. Each centre concentrates on delivering community animation, mentoring and education services. This helps in the facilitation and continued development of collective enterprises in all sectors and they operate as vehicles for collective action to develop markets and improve the economic vitality of their membership.

In the US, despite the fact that there are a multitude of excellent innovative role models within business to be emulated, leadership and vision within production agriculture in the USA is sporadic because the production and marketing dice are stacked against small producers. New entrants to the industry and smaller farmers often have fatalistic and reactive strategies to their futures and no faith in their ability to alter the status quo. Farming is cushioned by protection from world market issues and their production is subsidised. So despite access to excellent state wide leadership programmes, university attached extension services and USDA interventions, agriculture had failed to develop leadership capacity with long term vision.¹⁹ The barriers

against real vision and change occurring within agricultural policy appear to be two-fold. Farmers themselves are happy with the status quo; they have become complacent, allowing a policy of cheap food produced in large operations to become institutionalised within government policy and acceptable in the consumers mind.

CASE STUDIES- UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Leadership Training and Development



Kellogg Foundation²⁰

Political structures and the huge economic successes over many generations in the USA have produced a myriad of philanthropic organisations and societies who make funds available from their invested capital for projects that fit their criteria. Frank Taylor, of W K Kellogg Foundation is rightly proud of the achievements of the foundation where he is Programme Director. The foundation was established in 1930 by breakfast cereal pioneer W.K. Kellogg and today the organization ranks among the world's largest private foundations. Current year grant and programme payments totalled \$243m (€190m) and the mission of the organisation is to help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations. It has funded a myriad of hugely successful leadership and development programmes in the USA and worldwide.

One such programme the Farmers Study Programme (KFSP) initiated in 1970's as a pilot aimed to be a model for leadership developments which recognised the continuing need for effective rural leadership in the USA. The planning recognised that many successful farmers, though well-schooled in farm technology and management, were lacking in the broader education elements of the social sciences and liberal arts, knowledge and understanding. Many advisors believed that a broader educational background and a knowledge and understanding of world economics and politics were essential for solving the special problems rural people faced in their times. Basic to the proposed programme concept was the belief that a concentrated training experience could accelerate the leadership development process. Normally, many years are required for potential leaders to rise to responsible leadership positions in the community. Gail Imig, Programme Director explained that the KFSP was designed to speed up much of the extended metamorphosis which is commonly part of leadership attainment. The new proposed programme – called Ag leadership programmes in most of the states where they are run, offered a new approach that would result in a well-informed band of agricultural leaders; a truly new experience that would expand their horizons, both in agriculture and the world around them. While they were aware that many young agriculturists are well-skilled in their own professions, it was their belief that leaders of tomorrow must also be prepared to deal with broader issues if they are to be effective in a new and complex society. In short, the traditional mode of rural life would be challenged and a new understanding necessary to function effectively in a global environment. The proposed programme built on the concept of "*agricultural statesmen*" or persons intensively trained and well-informed on their state's public policy issues, particularly those applying to rural areas²¹

Agricultural Leadership Programmes-Washington State (WA)²²

In 1976 a Kellogg Ag Leadership programme was first mooted in WA and the programme has been running now since 1979 with the initial seed capital provided by the Kellogg Foundation and the State's Department of Agriculture. The programme is modelled on those being run successfully in other states with the



aim to promote excellence in leadership training by offering seminars to help participants increase and expand their leadership skills. Meeting with Larry Gueck, Vice President of the Ag Forestry Leadership Programme gave the writer an insight into how the programme is delivered. The current programme in WA is very prestigious and is delivered through modular, part-time, two day, themed seminars at various locations around the state with an average yearly intake of twenty-five participants. Relevant professional industry and academic speakers deliver at an academic institution; although the programme itself is not academically accredited. It also includes two travel seminars: one within the US within the first year, usually

to Washington DC, and within the second year abroad, to give the participants a global perspective.

Graduation requires the submission of a project.

Potential candidates are selected from a range of agricultural backgrounds and from the forestry industries to reflect the fact that the majority land use in the state is in fact forestry. Washington State aims to have sixty percent of each year's class as primary producer and they represent the diversity of products produced in the state: grain, forestry, fruit, fisheries, dairy, vegetables, and wine. Programme participants enrich their learning opportunities through real-world activities helping them to face challenges with confidence by addressing issues and problem solving. The programme ensures that graduates are given the skills and knowledge to make a difference to their states' natural resource industries in its broadest sense. A key element of the programme is the opportunity it provides for participants to meet and network with others. Graduates of the programme go on to fill leadership roles in their organisations and have gone on to serve as elected officials, officers of their companies, or top administrators in state government.

Ag leadership depend heavily for funding on grants and donations from organisations and industry leaders with the participant also raising a portion themselves. Legislators often see an advantage in supporting a programme that stresses intensive leadership development. The programme has a full-time office and staff and managed by a board of governors who operate as a non-profit organisation with an annual budget of \$500,000 pa.(€390k)

Alumni of the programmes are active in providing support and in recruiting new members, as well as continuing the learning process. In Washington State this means a programme of graduate seminars are arranged annually and attendance at them provides continued opportunities for networking with industry experts and with past graduates. The main benefit is to continue to build relationships to network across the groups and agencies to facilitate change.

The Kellogg Agricultural Leadership Programmes is currently in thirty states of the USA. New Zealand, Australia, Scotland and Canada have also established similar programmes. Each programme is operated autonomously and is linked through the US based consortium of leadership programmes; International Association of Programmes for Agricultural Leadership (IAPAL). The mission statement of that organisation is "With Leadership Comes Responsibility". An international seminar is run annually, hosted by the graduate services of a chosen state.

Wilcox Farms²³



This is a truly remarkable family business near Yelm, Washington state, which produces and distributes 3.6 million eggs per week and 90,000 gallons of milk per day. TJ Wilcox told of the farm being started by the present owner's grandparents in 1909. They were colourful people. Grandfather Wilcox was one of the sons on a small farm and was an adventurer. He first tried his hand in Alaska at gold

panning. He didn't strike it rich and came back to Washington where he and his wife opened up a hat shop in Seattle, but being raised in the country, he didn't like city life very much. He asked around and found out about a small farm where he could work for his room and board. After a week, he was hooked and swapped his home and business in Seattle for the 240 acre mixed enterprise farm that is now Wilcox Farms - all without consulting with his wife.

According to T.J Wilcox the family business was:

"founded on dreams, grandfather was a dreamer, adventurer, made changes for the fun of doing so. Did not have business skills but was not afraid to dream and risk".

In the early years they struggled and then post war they moved into eggs production giving them a "cash rich" product as they saw the need to get 'close' to the customer. They started with 100,000 birds with no previous experience. They suffered huge setbacks but learned from them. In 1970 with sons in the business who had business skills, they had a herd of 300 cows and were board members of their local co-op who marketed their milk and provided feed and finance to the growing business. In 1974 the family developed their own milk processing plant. Their business model moved them away from trading through co-ops because of the interaction at the time between feed, finance and product in the co-ops, the farmer appeared to become the 'fall guy' and some suppliers were put out of business as a result. So the 1970's were spent 'learning to' acquire relevant skills. By 1980, with grandsons now in the business they expanded to one million hens on the home farm and now have egg and milk plants in several locations throughout the state. The success of the business has made the firm question the value of production agriculture.

Wilcox supply milk and eggs to giants like McDonalds, Wal-Mart and Costco in the Pacific Northwest region. The scale of the business today means that sales to the Wall-Mart stores in the region are valued at \$25million per annum and they are Wilcox third largest customer. They compete head-to-head on the supermarket shelves with the milk from the dairy co-op they used to supply and have their products commanding a premium price because of their strong brand. Wilcox sees their future growth in a diversified customer base; food service, institutions and not through geographic expansion. They firstly developed through organic growth but now grow through acquisition

TJ says that they do not develop new products, feeling that it's too costly; they let others swallow the cost and then copy! And they aim to provide *'a service to user rather than mere goods.'*

Family members, now in the fourth generation, learn their business skills on the job with mentoring and experience key elements of their learning. Members are involved in key positions in the dairy and egg industries at state and federal levels. *"We cultivate, network, and make contacts"*.

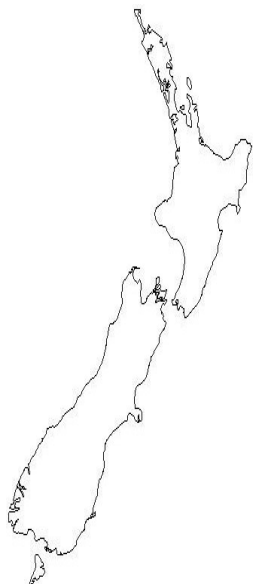
Staff members demonstrating talent and aptitude are grown into roles of responsibility. Wilcox sees leadership as the ability to keep growing and be able to use the finance to grow the business, keep everyone on a constant learning track or do not have them around.

"The business is growing faster than we are ourselves and the business demands that we keep up our self-growth. Personal growth is essential, we must identify our weaknesses, buy in the expertise we lack; be brutally honest!" TJ expounds further that the traditional thought is that we are all good at something: and that can become a trap. Skills must be honed on an ongoing basis and new skills must be learned. Inability to change and the resulting complacency becomes a difficulty. TJ believes that the vibrancy of the business is in the ability to take on challenge, keep change inherent in the company and a hatred for boredom. *"We always take it for granted that we can do anything with the business, face anything that the trade throws up"*. On business process:

"We never evaluate 'lost sales' or measure them as 'lost opportunities' only as part of our renewed strategy; looking forward, being persistent and our management is 'principle based'. Does not matter how good you are, if you are on the wrong side of trends – you are out"

Wilcox today operates from the original, much expanded farm their grandfather swapped for the hat shop on 1909. They work from small portable offices and with absolutely no frills. All the family coming into the business are well educated but surprisingly, are encouraged not to choose a background in business or dairy science so they typically have opted for history or economic graduate degrees. The thinking behind this is that family members are involved in the business from a young age and if they then come into the business they'll be involved in dairy and eggs all their life. According to Wilcox *"young folk need to grow themselves first"*. Wilcox are firm proponents of the WA Ag. Leadership programme and many of the family and staff members are graduates of the programme.

NEW ZEALAND



New Zealand agriculture and agri-food today is a strong vibrant industry. Capability, ingenuity and flexibility appear to be innate in the Kiwis at all levels and they attribute this to their classlessness, their isolation and their location a long way from potential markets. These factors have forced them to do more with less. Historically they were forced to improvise and innovate, mostly with modest resources.²⁴

It was a sense of desperation that activated leadership qualities to face the deregulation of the agriculture industry in the late 1980's. Agriculture was seen as the 'sunset industry' but now makes a significant contribution to the economy so their model of vision and leadership appears to have served them well. Subsidies were removed and there were hard times but that was the spark that forced people in agriculture to find inspiration, solutions and develop a vision for NZ agriculture to emerge. Growth in production and adoption of new technologies resulted. Over time management skills improved as the 'bottom' layer of farmers exited the agriculture industry²⁵.

The focus is now on the business of agriculture and Kiwi farmers are willing to make ruthless decisions to enhance the development of their businesses. The family farm is still the basis for agriculture with farmers farming full time. In the 1980's many had off-farm jobs which allowed farmers to survive, but the aim now is to enlarge, to farm full-time, to have a viable business with clear management structures and have operational supports provided by contractors. Survival alone is no longer an option. A culture has developed concerned with achieving competitive advantage and primary producers have a clear sense of and connect with consumer issues. Farms are attracting outside investors looking for and getting viable returns on investment and people coming from other careers are going into farming.

Government provides leadership by allowing the marketplace to devise agriculture policy so agriculture production just follows the market. Farmers take total responsibility for their own destiny because it's a competitive world.²⁶ Business everywhere constantly investigates opportunities. Agriculture is no different. Innovation is not linear; it is business and market driven.

New Zealand farmers market through co-ops but these are seen for entrepreneurial benefit only. The shareholder council members and directors of the really successful ones are results focused and are notable for their high level of professionalism. Strategy is influenced by the board who are all highly educated people successful in their own right. They are willing to take calculated risks apparently uninhibited by parish pumps politics issues or emotion!

Some co-ops expect aspiring directors and council members to be highly experienced and skilful people and co-ops provide a training and development structure to develop leaders. *"A board room is not for learning the skills, you practice them there."*²⁷

The NZ Co-op association has regular ongoing self-funded training and education programmes with specific co-operative focussed content available. This training is primarily targeted for directors and senior management in co-operatives. The training programmes are revised and updated on a regular basis to keep them relevant.²⁸

NZ agriculture uses its green and clean image to market itself and carefully guards and cultivates this reputation at all levels. Leadership in agriculture and food is such that within New Zealand society it is a highly respected industry and this respect is protected. Agricultural issues are 'understood' as there is a close societal link to food production and agriculture and there appears to be no destructive urban-rural division or consumer alienation.

It is an accepted fact in New Zealand that the industry needs emergent leaders and effective leadership can be taught to those with the character traits and capacity to learn. Consequently leadership studies are an integral part of many programmes and college have designated leadership departments. Leadership qualities are celebrated in New Zealand and are debated and written about widely.

**Farmlands Trading Society Limited
(Farmlands) New Zealand,**

This is one of New Zealand's premier rural supply companies, and ranks among New Zealand's top 100 companies and has become a market leader in farm merchandise retail. It uses the slogan;-

“100% Customer owned - 100% customer

driven” and has clear operations in place to deliver. Farmland’s mission is to be ‘*a market leader in rural retail*’ and provide a large range of products and services to their co-op shareholders at discount and other customers at retail. They operate thirty-one branches throughout the North Island. The co-op was formed in 1962 by a small group of farmers who formed a buying co-operative as an alternative for stock and station companies. Shareholders have access to management and staff at any time and are represented by regional directors.



The success of Farmlands is a typical example of farmers and growers seeing the opportunity to make their operations more profitable by forming a buyer’s co-operative. Farmlands have gone from strength to strength under the stewardship of the current CEO, John Newlands, despite huge challenges in the sector. The membership is now in the region of 20,000 and has an annual turnover of \$300million NZ (€150m) which positions Farmlands as one of the leading agricultural companies in New Zealand. Despite the success, the stores maintain a down-to-earth approach with a low overhead cost structure. They have many innovative products such as: Farmcard which is essentially a buyer card, an online catalogue and availability of low cost broadband to rural areas. All sales items are dually priced: a members price and the ‘retail’ price – often as much as thirty percent extra. This increases membership and customer loyalty.

John Newlands is a strong passionate leader whose enthusiasm and integrity has become an integral part of the culture in the organisation. He came to Farmlands nearly 20 years ago from the brewing industry. At that time Farmlands was seen as the cheap option in retail with branches located mostly in backstreets and without either a unified image, a marketing strategy or budget. There was a need for a complete redefinition of the group’s mission, purpose and market position. John and his team have steered the group into a specialist retail business and made it profitable. Farmlands now have no long term debt and John has positioned the group to be different to other retailers. It has competition in the sector from ‘big box’ stores and there is the realisation that they can’t compete on knock-down price, so must be different. Their difference is their service and their people and they “*stick to their knitting*”. They aim to “*keep our competitors honest and prices realistic*”.

The co-op aims to have all the people who run Farmlands stores highly trained and motivated and dedicated to helping customers with their specific requirements. Retailing focus is away from selling the product and towards providing solutions to customers; yet the employees are knowledgeable and confident with the product range. They have a positive corporate vision which is communicated at all levels and Farmlands genuinely values its staff and their ideas and suggestions. Farmlands place a high value on inclusive involvement in decision making. Management invest in the staff and a job with Farmlands offers long term job security and respectful progression paths. The writer wandered around the Hamilton store and was noticed and approached by staff, on realising my purpose they nevertheless talked about products and were extraordinarily attentive and helpful and they looked good. John himself attributes the success of the group to the great people he has on board.

Brownrigg Agriculture, Hastings, Bay of Plenty NZ

Jonathon Brownrigg and his brother David farm 11,210 hectares in the Bay of Plenty area. Their grandfather came to this area in the 1920’s originally from Co. Wexford, Ireland and their father and grandfather increased the initial holding from forty to five hundred hectares. The brothers now crop: squash which they pack and export directly to Korea and Japan. Other products such as onions, peas, sweet corn and maize are supplied to consumers, processors or are destined for animal feed. The livestock division fattens 300,000 lambs, 5,000 steers and bulls and has an additional 5,000



head of specialist beef cattle. David runs the livestock side of the operation while Jonathon attends to the cropping. They employ a total of eighty full-time staff and one hundred and seventy full-time equivalents including seasonal workers. The direct markets in Korea and Japan for squash were developed by *“getting on a plane and making the contacts ourselves”*. Their other crops are grown for processing and for direct supply through supermarkets to the customer. Their new cattle enterprise is an innovative joint venture with a Japanese company to produce a specific pale meat breed of cattle preferred by the Japanese market.

“We are very close to our customers and very close to their needs”.

This is a very successful partnership built since their father’s death in 1980. The challenge then was the survival of the farm enterprise, due to the ‘death duty focus’ and the problems of profitability and scale. Their solution to their problem was through leasing land. Jonathon attributes their success to adversity;-

“We learned to prioritise, we had very difficult times and very quickly we were faced with no agricultural supports, we just had to achieve self-sufficiency or lose. We had only ourselves to look to for ability. We had to show opportunities, be innovative, take risks, show return on investments-become more efficient”.

The structures in Brownrigg Agriculture identify people with the potential to develop influential roles at hiring or from their performance on the job. It is accepted among the management team that people are born with some basic skills and life, through experience teaches more, so skills can be extended. Leadership and management are intertwined. Jonathon does not use the words “leadership” or “vision” but sees these factors as critical to their business. He sees leadership as *“letting good people develop, by including them and delegating to them”*. The brothers have surrounded themselves with trusted professionals who know the level of detail that is demanded. They manage with a strong meeting structure and with written procedures for all operations. This gives them knowledge and allows them to plan. Meetings are held regularly and if needed at short notice so that the business can react immediately to identify and address problems no matter where they come from. *“Those with authority over others have to be able to earn and keep respect of others even with unpopular decisions”*.

The business depends heavily on information in decision making. Information is seen as a two-way process, everyone gets the same information at the same time as the challenge for a farm of this scale is to ensure that *“the right hand knows what the left is doing”*. They always keep abreast of prices even if they are not buying or selling. They hold weekly farm meetings by conference call with the twelve farm managers who each manage about 800 hectares, to constantly monitor and review the property’s performance. The aim is to optimise pasture growth and their computer system now has a vast amount of historical data available for each farm. Information regarding detail of pasture cover, livestock weights, numbers, animal health and supplements are inputted by the managers weekly into the system and analysed and reported back by email so that, if a market opportunity or conversely a weather event happens, they can act quickly and decisions are based on fact that are inclusive to the relevant division .

In the past twenty three years the Brownrigg enterprise has expanded exponentially from one 500 hectare farm to thirteen farms covering 11,210 hectare. More than 8000 hectare of that land is leased. This is still the favoured option for the brothers and also being on high gearing with NZ interest at seven per cent.²⁹ In making leasing or buying decisions they now have a team who understand the level of detail required before a decision is made and the assessment process is now well systemised. In one year alone the brothers considered fourteen assessments for potential lease blocks and only proceeded with six of them. The first assessment considers potential: the potential feed supply and demand, and cropping opportunities. This financial information is fed into their own devised computer model. They then look at the property value ‘through the eyes of the market’. They look at all current rental rates down to a ‘fenced and watered paddock’. They continually analyse leases to get an idea of where the market is. Each property is inspected in person, and soil tests are taken and aerial photos with farm maps are included in the final report presented to the Brownrigg brothers. Lessors are also asked about their motivation in leasing their land and whether they’re willing to invest in improvements. Often they’re invited to Brownrigg Agriculture’s home base *“to experience the philosophy behind the business and care and attention to detail.”* When the lease is complete Brownrigg Agriculture’s aim is to complete lease developments objective within two years in order to capitalise immediately on the increase in productivity, and typically up to 50% of development is funded by the company and covered by reduced rental.³⁰

The Brownrigg brothers have hands-on involvement in all operations and meet formally on a monthly basis with staff. The brothers seek inclusion at these meetings by having others lead the discussion. Jonathon believes that a good manager must be able to manage people well but also to motivate, to include, by sharing the passion. This is the process the business has used to move from the 'survival focus', to the 'grow focus'. They believe that they can't sit back in business but must keep an eye out for opportunities and dark clouds and being able to visualise on a range of fronts. The growth of the business in recent years has brought more complexity but it can still be identified on one A4 sheet with as few boxes and lines as possible.³¹ *"We try to do the right thing today, if difficulties are faced, we sometimes just chop the problem in four and do four different things. Take chances! risk and do it! Our key is to identify important factor, research the opportunities and then risk"*.

The brother's personal motivation is; satisfaction in the job, in the successes of making things happen, doing things well.

Leadership training New Zealand

The writer came across many excellent taught or scholarship based leadership programmes throughout New Zealand. Formal leadership training is embraced and promoted through education, sport and voluntary organisations. It is an integral part of many academic programmes and many colleges like Auckland and Victoria University in Wellington have designated leadership departments. New Zealand culture has an ingrained fiercely competitive streak exhibited through the Kiwi's sports and business process. Leadership and innovation skills are celebrated in New Zealand and are debated and written about widely. To balance out any potential 'hero egos' the Kiwi's practice the 'tall poppy syndrome' known in Ireland as 'begrudger' and this restricts development of inflated egos in successful people .

Leadership programmes in New Zealand

Kellogg Leadership Programme, Lincoln University, Christchurch, South Island ³²

This programme was developed from the USA model,³³ started in NZ 1979 with an establishment grant from Kellogg. The current director, Cora Bailie explained that the programme came about because of deficiencies of leadership experience and opportunity that were identified within agriculture at that time. A watershed for the programme came early on, when agriculture became fractured in the 1980's and new funding mechanisms had to be devised to allow it to continue. Consequently, the NZ programme is administered by Lincoln University who provide fifty percent of its operating budget. As with all the Kellogg programmes in the US, the NZ programme is totally autonomous, so their delivery method can reflect national factors. The time honoured tradition of young Kiwis travelling overseas means that the programme does not include an international trip.

A typical programme has twenty four participants selected from about thirty-five applicants and the target group is mostly primary producers, as is the case in the USA. It operates with an annual budget of NZ \$ 70k (€35k). Selection is made from those working in the industry, living in rural areas or involved in leadership roles in rural type business and that have the potential to benefit from leadership training. The numbers selected in recent years are down but the quality of applications has risen although; *"people come in at different levels and move to a higher level and more exposure brings empowerment"*. There is an alumnus of five hundred people but to date no programme of events has been arranged.

The university has devised some 'spin off' programmes to supplement and compliment the Kellogg programme. For example there is a young farmer's leadership programme targeted towards people at production level and there are programmes run in conjunction with agricultural training schools at beginner's level being run regionally. These are run with small sector-focused groups funded by their grower's organisation from production levies. Its budget is NZ \$28 K per annum (€15K) for twelve people and it is a simplified version of the Kellogg programme run over six days with a project requirement. Most of the programmes dovetail and do not appear to be competitive. They provide a progressive experience for the participants and many advance through leadership programmes, from learning operational and then building strategic skills which equip them to become key people of influence in the agriculture industry.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY

Operational management

Nothing just happens. New circumstances provide opportunities – not results. Results come about by choosing a particular path and acting on it. Don't keep doing the same things if you want different results. Then it comes down to hard work. The only way to change a dream into a vision that becomes reality is work, plenty of it over an extended period of time. Hard work alone will never suffice, work has to be focused towards a goal and within an organisation that goal has to be communicated clearly. If these things are accepted people and their organisations can blossom.

The writer has been privileged, through Nuffield, in meeting with many great people and has had the opportunity to observe how their organisations operate. These are leaders who had the ability to transform the hearts and minds of their people, lifting them to higher than expected levels of commitment, motivation and performance. This does not mean transforming organisations through new structures, but actually transforming the people and the organisation follows.³⁴

This has led to the conclusion that there is a clear distinction between formal leadership, bosses, visionary leadership, innovators, and operational management. The kind of leadership required for operational management and the leadership which is purely innovative are totally different. In small organisations the formal leaders need all these skills and they can become successful if they understand their skill deficiencies and elect to address the latter through on going training or by buying them in. As organisations grow it is important to clearly understand the differences between leadership and management as this helps people in organisations to focus their energies where the greatest potential can be gained.

No matter what the function of an organisation is there are some basic immutable laws of organised human performance and timeless principles in people management that have to be recognised.³⁵ These can be learned by people willing to humble themselves enough to get their ego needs satisfied outside the job and focus on the needs of the organisation and on the project in hand.

There is a degree of sheer rigour needed in leading people and in formulating people-based decisions. In a good open organisation with well chosen people, where people's roles can grow and with the organisation's vision communicated clearly to them:

- They will act responsibly
- They will require leadership and strategy, not micro-management
- They will become self-motivated by the inner drive to produce the best result
- Where ideas and visions are shared, you have self-disciplined people who don't need hierarchies or bureaucracy to excel
- Good people put peer pressure upon each other to hold their side up
- They will self select and take on responsibility
- They need to resist the temptation to exclude those who are underperforming as it is better to work out strategies so that standards improve
- They will understand that leadership talent is vital at committee level, executive level and throughout various layers within organisations

In harbouring leadership and vision, emerging talent needs to be nurtured. People can be encouraged to learn from their successes and mistakes. Good leadership will let others be brave. Those who make small errors while trying must know they won't be punished but that leadership potential is being recognised and relevant training will be offered and good role models will be provided.

It is not enough for those in charge to foster leadership throughout the organization. An organisation needs to structure itself so that objectives can be realised. This becomes an implied and stated 'social contract' which is based on the transformational model rather than on the transactional model³⁶ and includes: having well defined roles with clear expectations, negotiated and timely goal settings and performance agreements. Feedback needs to be provided on things the organisation has done correctly but also shortcomings must be outlined fairly, while asking for solutions with timely implementation. Feedback and communication is a two way process. Then, when this structure is in place, staff at all levels needs to take more responsibility for themselves, demonstrate leadership and be less reliant on formally appointed leaders.

Great managers never underestimate how hard it is to move people out of their comfort zone. They understand that people can't possess all knowledge. As we advance in our careers there is the tendency to acquire knowledge on a need-to-know basis. Experience teaches us to practice 'selective mastery'. People may choose not to deal with demanding technology and also choose what they will become competent with. A strategy formulated which motivates people to welcome and accept change will reap benefits.

It is the employees' responsibility to keep themselves employable and conversant with the skills and training required to fulfil their roles, now and in the future. Supervisors should manage the preponderance to 'whine' about the pace of change and understand that for most people, change is not cost free, one of the costs is a sense or lack of mastery of the evolving world.

When ideas do come from staff they must be respected. Great leaders will express genuine gratitude for ideas being brought to their attention. If the idea has merit they will ask for input on its implementation. And even more importantly they show that things which are not currently workable may be considered in the future.

Great managers understand that people need to have a sense of achievement in their jobs. People who manage others need to understand the factors working in human motivation and recognise the whole hierarchy of needs.³⁷ They need to understand that people do not come to work for monetary benefit only and this is especially valid among those working on a voluntary basis. The employer needs to understand what level the employee is at and help an individual get to the next step. If a work relationship is based on reciprocity and being more of a helper than a controller, more will be achieved. Helping others achieve makes them more likely to help you in return. Trying to control people means they will merely act to avoid sanction. Giving leadership experience to others is a leadership skill in itself.

Good people in roles of leadership have learned to value respect above popularity. They understand that diversity of personalities and leadership styles can be a significant source of strength in an organisation. In other words they are not threatened by others' ideas.

The culture of an organisation emanates from its leadership and the person who defines the cultural bias of the company is 'the keeper of its soul'. When challenges and failures arise; good leaders take responsibility themselves for these failures and never blame other people, external factors or bad luck.

Many of the examples cited here of business leadership were developed in the context of the culture and particular circumstances of the country where they originated. The basic principles and themes are proven to be effective and can be adapted and used to great effect anywhere.

Conclusions for new managers

People who are newly appointed to positions of authority need to:

- Know that how they behave and use their power will set a tone and the tenor for the rest of their time as manager
- Know that it's really hard to undo a poor first impression

So they should;-

- Use plural nouns wherever possible
- Aim to create an enthusiastic and inspiring work atmosphere
- Seek out trusted mentors for themselves both inside and outside the company. Listen and act on the guidance
- Keep their ears open to new ideas and their office door open to feedback
- Not always talk to people from behind their desk. Take the time to walk around and be seen
- Be approachable and ask their mentors to observe them
- Not listen to or repeat gossip
- Be totally discreet with colleagues' private information even if it's 'common knowledge'
- Avoid at all costs being bossy especially if they got an internal promotion. Don't go around barking orders

- Never, ever bully or belittle the people who report to you
- Not be afraid to admit you don't know something. Then find out
- Not assume you know more than your colleagues do about how to do their job
- Not forget to praise others in public and keep criticisms for the privacy of your office
- Keep yourself on a learning track about the company, your industry and your competition
- No one expects a new person to know everything and you'll put people off by acting as if you do. Learn to listen and learn with honesty
- Never, ever whinge. If you are feeling overwhelmed – ask for help
- Behave ethically, while understanding the difference between sloppy work practices, un-professionalism and illegality – it's you who will be on the witness stand!
- Keep a sense of humour

Vision

Vision is the synthesis of instinct and knowledge. But nothing replaces having good, trusted information as a basis for new ideas. We rightly expect leadership from chief executives and chairmen of the board, but organisations need to have openness and develop a culture where ideas are encouraged and everyone is given an opportunity to be heard within a structure that's respectful and responsive. People can then become part of the emerging solution – even if it involves pain. Great leaders listen more than they talk. They ask lots of questions and are willing to meet people on a one to one basis.

“Business can have a human face and social conscience” Anita Roddick-The Body Shop

Ethics

Business competence requires not only acquiring fundamental skills but also being able to employ them – to lead. Now more than ever the issue of moral character is paramount. Leaders within commercial companies are constrained with the dilemmas of ensuring they achieve profit whilst still understanding the balance of interests of shareholders, customers and employees. If leaders with influence in the industry are only motivated by profit, their value system is faulty and unsustainable and they fail to take into account the influence their decisions have on those around them and within the industry as a whole. Our industry particularly must seek to retain the ideals of sustainability with the three bottom lines; financial, social and environmental. This engages with and considers the community at large.³⁸ The focus must be on long-term rather than short-term financial returns. Good decisions should consider all the stakeholder groups while still resisting the temptation to pander to just one group. Business leaders who stress social responsibility through sound environmental practices, without compromising the viability of suppliers or the future of their staff must be the model we aspire to. The financial press only know one form of measurement - money and size. Resisting being defined this way is going to be a challenge and it is possible for a business paradigm based on ethics to be revived.

Co-operatives and Committees

Co-operatives have been the mainstay of development of agriculture in Ireland.

“They represent efficient well run businesses where the ethos of voluntary service and community leadership are important distinguishing characteristics and these important values are often under threat”³⁹. The model is often unfairly maligned because of perceived inflexible structures. Now more than ever there is evidence of the need to devise a strategy that reinvigorates the co-op model. Members need to be united behind the specific benefits implicit in the purpose of co-ops. These benefits when articulated over a hundred years ago promoted benefits from collective marketing with clear long term focus. The starting point for any co-op leader in today's climate is to know how to inspire confidence, be knowledgeable and committed to the co-op's background, functions and aspirations and possesses a readiness to meet them. Leaders have the additional tasks of fostering co-operative behaviour throughout the organisation and between other co-ops. A vision of the future needs to be shared with the members because without this the enterprise will never succeed or be an effective co-op. To

be effective directors have to think strategically and don the 'corporate hat' and move from a singularly 'producer focus'.⁴⁰

All organisations run by membership committees need to focus on the selection and preparation process of representatives and abandon some of the prevalent practices if they are not working. Don't assume that people with potential will emerge without intervention. A mechanism needs to be urgently devised that allows women to represent their farm. Member representatives should be on the committee because of their skills, not because of their address or popularity. Committees need to have formal education and induction procedures in place for new members with a respectful but clear exit procedure in place. Good people need to be retained for their effective contribution not for their age and experience. An evaluation process must be in place that measures critical factors.

There is a valid and proven argument against regimented structures such as regular committee meetings which can become 'chat shows'. Instead, strategically focused groups, meeting for a specified function and within a specific timescale are more effective.

As in all organisations communication must always be regarded as a two-way process that involves primary leaders listening and responding to members and vice versa. If conflicts are to be avoided the type of communication required to member producers is inherently different from what one would have with other trade suppliers. Such communication will almost certainly include informal contacts as well as more formal meetings where the co-ops long term strategy and vision is communicated.

Burn out

Leaders in key positions can be their own worst enemies. They allow themselves to experience burn out and become inert with resulting negative effects on the organisation. They limit their own professional growth by failing to realistically assess their development needs and by actively seek the means to realise them.

- Leaders of organisations need to;
 - Be self-aware and address their own lack of critical knowledge and skills. If you can't be objective ask for an external evaluation
 - Prioritise and manage their own learning and self-development
 - Accept that most learning is difficult and requires serious commitment of time and energy often with help and support from others
 - Resist the lure of martyrdom

Public Image

Agriculture and food needs to always be cognisant of the agriculture industry's image and the self esteem of the people involved. Unfortunately the agriculture industry is judged by its lowest standards rather than by its highest and there is much at risk.

Please try to avoid the 'reactive approach' and the negative macho response of "we reject"! More can be gained with the public with positive statements telling the audience what we stand for rather than what we won't stand for. If we are conveying the message that suggests we hanker for the past we won't command respect. We need to stop conducting a 'civil war' in public with people who are on the same side as us - the battle then becomes the message. Good communication of an honest message is how you win people and influence public opinion.

Trust is hard gained and easily lost.

Food Policy

The evidence of flawed food policy can be seen elsewhere and we must resist the trend to push the cost of food downward to the detriment of producers. Despite huge advances in consumer spending, people now spend less of their income on food than ever before and a very small portion of the money spent on food goes to the primary producer. Retailers use free food products like milk and chickens⁴¹ as marketing ploys in a way which would never be tolerated by firms with knowledge of consumer behaviour. Food is a life staple and is in danger of becoming a cheap, low value consumer commodity. A market where bottled water retails at more than milk reflects a marketing strategy which is fundamentally flawed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Irish agriculture industry is facing unprecedented opportunities to devise a workable direction for the future, but these opportunities are not without challenges. At present the industry does not easily identify with change let alone promote it.⁴² Agriculture and food industry entities and their supporting organisations have a pivotal role and will need leadership who can stimulate the necessary vision. Vision has to become pervasive throughout organisations if they are to have a worthwhile future. Organisations must grasp the opportunity to devise a unified strategy and realise that commonality of purpose is the only viable option which will serve the industry for the future. Ireland has good organisations that have served agriculture in the past but is ‘good’ enough for the future or do we need our organisations to become ‘great’?⁴³ Great organisations focus on understanding their market and then finding ways to service that market, whether they are producing goods or services.

Our vision has been stunted by our dependence on subsidisation. We are now in the ‘times of consequences’ from this and dependency is a by-product of the stymied effect of overdependence. Have we the will and energy to generate a new vision? Leadership is about innovating and championing new directions. It is clearly not about managing people. Organisations need to give people an opportunity to dream. The value of research and development is well documented and should not just apply to traditional research areas. It is accepted that organisations will undertake a due diligence before an acquisition but organisations need to regularly allow people to spend time on curiosity-driven projects. With pure “what if research” creative ideas will result.

Future strategies should not rely on selecting leaders or appointing people to positions. The key is to create the conditions for leadership to emerge informally and spontaneously throughout organisations. Leadership and vision can be taught, nurtured and enhanced. Individuals with latent leadership abilities must be identified and developed before they are given leadership responsibility. We must not be satisfied with mediocre results. We must all recognise that certain individuals have the capacity to enable an organisation to achieve results far beyond their apparent potential. These individuals must be identified, allowed to grow and then given opportunity.

Co-ops

Despite innovation in other countries there is reluctance in Ireland to move the co-operative business model forward. This reluctance will ultimately destroy what is essentially a very strong structure with a long proven history of providing beneficial interest and strategic control for producers. Irish co-ops have become big bureaucratic structures whose power reflects individual self-interest instead of the value of benefits to their membership. These interests are now driving the co-ops to their own agenda rather than for the best interest of the business.

Wealth

It is suggested that “*Economic wide effects will be minimal (from the change in agricultural output) owing to the relative insignificance of agricultural production in the national context.*”⁴⁴ Many farmers are currently faced with the novel situation of having money generated from income or from land being acquired for development or infrastructural projects. There will be increased movement into other land uses in the future and a disincentive to produce while still being eligible for premia payments. There will be redistribution and labour movement from agriculture resulting in some retirements. This will move increasing numbers into other sectors of agriculture or to other work and sources of income. But these changes should allow benefits to be derived if this wealth were re-allocated within agriculture and in the national economy. Never before have farmers had the scope or opportunity to reinvest into the industry that has served them admirably in the past. Those with capital should resist the hype of investment abroad and consider using their capital in Ireland and drive innovation and value added in agricultural and rural related enterprise projects. These projects can offer substantial financial gain and provide an inestimable opportunity for rural people to keep a beneficial interest and a connection with new innovative projects like alternative energy. This will address out flows of capital from the agricultural sector and be of huge benefit, for example for co-ops to continue to invest for mutual benefit.

“If you think education is expensive –try ignorance”

Leadership training

There is clear evidence that there is no substitute for education and training. We have already some good training programmes and leadership competition available within the agriculture and food sector in Ireland e.g; The Nuffield Farming Scholarships, ICOS/UCC Director Development training, and Macra na Feirme's initiatives. As with everything, these programmes would benefit from being objectively evaluated to ensure their effectiveness be made more inclusive and deliverable. Training must allow for cross-fertilisation of ideas and be focused on the broader agriculture and food ‘family’. Successful models available elsewhere can be emulated.

In order to provide direction for the future we need to:

- Realise that learning should be lifelong and dynamic
- Integrate leadership concepts into a broader range of courses and programmes e.g. Ag science at secondary schools must have a leadership and marketing business focus to balance its existing production focus
- Emphasise that leaders need to constantly assess their own skills and proficiencies and take action
- Listen to and learn from what others are thinking, in different sectors and in different markets
- Have cross-industry participation in formal training:
 - Get producer discussion groups to explore the broader industry
 - Understand the value of networking and the experiences of others, especially our competitors
 - If we cannot innovate – let’s not be afraid to emulate!

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