



NUFFIELD
Farming Scholarships



LEADERSHIP

Leadership and developing your
career in agriculture;
A Bitesize Guide

INTRODUCTION

Each year, up to 25 people aged 25-45 are selected as scholars and sponsored by the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust to travel, research and report on subjects they are passionate about and which contribute to advancing farming, food, horticulture, forestry and ancillary industries.

These studies bring new thinking, technology or management approaches from across the globe to the UK. While many know of Nuffield Farming scholarships, few farmers are aware of the huge knowledge base of global reports, dating back to 2006, that can be accessed via the online Nuffield Farming library

This Bitesize Guide, supported by the Elizabeth Creak Charitable Trust, Central Region Farmers Trust, Gloucestershire Agricultural House Foundation and the Royal Agricultural Society of England, gives an insight into the practical farming experiences and research freely available at:



<https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/reports>



WHAT IS THIS GUIDE, AND HOW SHOULD I USE IT?

Effective leadership is key in all businesses. In an industry dominated by small to medium, often family-based businesses, developing effective leadership skills can be challenging. In a rapidly changing world, these skills will be crucial for adapting and progressing business and staff alike.

For individuals in larger farming businesses or working in the corporate supply chain and support businesses, being able to see and grasp opportunities to develop and advance careers will always remain important. In addition, clear career development and progression will attract people into agriculture from other sectors, bring fresh perspectives and different expertise.

This Bitesize Guide on 'Leadership and developing your career in agriculture' is designed to provide ideas and inspiration for anyone seeking to develop their career, whether at the start of the journey or leading a team.

It's a broad topic, and this Bitesize Guide brings together key findings, discussions and ideas from relevant Nuffield Farming reports, all highlighted as 'Talking points' and as 'In practice' sections. They're designed to be short, thought-provoking extracts, and each one includes a TinyURL link and QR code to access the relevant Nuffield Farming report for more information, case studies and discussions.



TALKING POINT 1:

The value of leadership

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Putting it into action

Izak van Heerden NSch 2023



The value of leadership within the agricultural sector is critical, yet it remains underexplored and often underestimated. Despite being the backbone of rural economies and sustainable food production, the agricultural sector has not systematically fostered leadership and management development.

The 2020 [AgriLeader 'Bridging the Gap' report](#) from AHDB on Leadership and Management Development (LMD) opportunities found that only 0.37% of farming businesses invested in any formal LMD across England, Scotland, and Wales, emphasising the lack of structured pathways to develop leaders across all levels. The report's insights underscored just how limited and fragmented leadership training and professional growth opportunities are within UK agriculture.

According to a Promar report on behalf of DairyCo, ['The Relevance of Leader Personality in Relation to Farm Business Performance'](#), dairy farmers with higher emotional intelligence (EQ) were up to five times more profitable (per cow) than those with lower EQ, highlighting the significant financial impact of strong leadership.

Effective farm management relies on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and social awareness to drive performance, build relationships, and create momentum—skills that can be developed through Leadership and Management Development (LMD). All skills that are teachable. In an industry that increasingly relies on collaborative networks of people, effective leadership is essential—not just to sustain individual businesses but to foster the resilience, innovation, and community ties that ensure a sustainable future for agriculture.

My Nuffield Scholarship found that “you don't need a title to be a leader” in agriculture; leadership in this sense is about effecting positive change, supporting collaborative growth, and empowering those around you to succeed at whichever level you are in an organisation.



Izak van Heerden



You don't need a title to be a leader.”



AgriLeadership for tomorrow's world <https://qrco.de/bgKIXI>



TALKING POINT 2:

What is leadership?

Chris Manley NSch 2021



The military is often held up as an exemplar of leadership, with groups of people having to work with discipline and a common purpose in some of the most challenging situations in the world; I met with senior leaders in the RAF and the Army to discover their thoughts on leadership.

I met RAF Air Chief Marshall Sir Michael Graydon GCB CBE, who was of the belief that the core of leadership was treating people as human beings. If you just focus on the processes that needed to be achieved, that was simply management, he suggested.

Next, I met RAF Group Captain Mark Lorriman-Hughes OBE. A leader's role is to 'make decisions and take action according to the best available information at the time' he explained. When giving a decision it is important to give your reasons for choosing a course of action and it is important that opposing viewpoints have the chance to be heard as part of this process. Being transparent and admitting when you are wrong helps build trust within a team.

The danger of not acknowledging different points of view is that resistance to a decision develops which will have the potential to disrupt the task in hand, said Group Captain Lorriman-Hughes. Once an individual feels that their view has been listened to, they are far more likely to back the leader in their decision.

The final armed forces leader I spoke to was Lord Dannatt GCB CBE MC, who was Army Chief of General Staff between 2006-2009. He placed a strong emphasis on character and integrity in a leader. He also discussed the importance of enthusiasm in leadership, which in turn creates enthusiasm among followers. He stressed the importance of having a clear mission so team members have the opportunity to understand the value of their individual actions.



When you treat people as human beings that is leadership, without this it's just management."

RAF Air Chief Marshall Sir Michael Graydon GCB CBE

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Putting it into action



LORD DANNATT MENTIONED THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE TYPE OF ACTIVITY:

1. **Strategic** – ideas and larger objectives
2. **Operations** – plan and convert the big idea into practical application
3. **Tactical** – the things that you need to get done

The military has a wrap-around culture of care, which means that they don't just prioritise the care of the service personnel, but their families and communities as well. If service personnel are being deployed and in stressful situations, it is really important that they have stability at home whenever possible.



Lord Dannatt



Leading Your Farm to Success <https://qrco.de/bgKIZC>



TALKING POINT 3:

Emotional intelligence and soft skills

Holly Beckett NSch 2015



“It’s a smart move to take personal responsibility for developing your leadership capacities, whether you are formally recognised as a team leader or not. In some aspect of your life, you are the official leader - and in any case, you are the boss of your own life, which is an important opportunity to lead!” It’s a quote from James Terrell, who I met on my Nuffield and who is an expert in emotional intelligence, a key factor in leadership.

THERE ARE FOUR MAIN PILLARS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:

1. **Self-awareness:** The ability to understand your own emotions – knowing what you feel and why you feel that way.
2. **Self-management:** The ability to use your emotions wisely, knowing how to manage and express them intentionally.
3. **Social awareness:** The ability to understand and respect the emotions of others.
4. **Social management:** The ability to respond to, influence and interact with the emotions of others.

The scientific recognition of emotional intelligence means ‘soft skills’ are becoming more widely acknowledged as vital attributes to develop within business, including;

- Effective communication – caring
- Ability to listen – engaged
- Empathy – adaptable
- Positivity – focussed
- Ability to delegate – clear values
- Passionate – vision

The more knowledge we hold, the greater our understanding of situations can be. To understand how our emotions interact with our cognitive processes and physiology of our bodies can lead to a great management of the self.



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Putting it into action



Emotional intelligence - or indeed business success - is not necessarily related to academic achievement. We have probably all heard a story about a successful entrepreneur who left school with little if any qualifications and became a self-made millionaire: Lord Alan Sugar and Sir Richard Branson are two of the most famous examples.

These people have demonstrated great leadership skills and seem to have a fantastic ability to recognise talent in others (social awareness) and coordinate people to achieve their end vision or goal (social management).



Holly Beckett



Practical applications for business growth through developing people:
<https://qrco.de/bgKIZp>



TALKING POINT 4:

What is leadership in agriculture?

Chris Manley NSch 2021

People I met on my Nuffield travels provided their definitions of leadership:

- “Leadership is all about having a good team,” said Chris Loxton from Loxton Cellars in California. He placed an emphasis on developing his people and wanted to see the people who worked for him go on to achieve great things in the wider wine business.
- John Mwit Kamencu, an agronomist from AgVenture and Centre for Excellence in Crop Rotation in Kenya, told me about how he leads changes in agronomy with farmers. “Can you perceive where you want to be in the future?” he said, “You can then tell people, in their own way of understanding, and give them live examples.”
- Peter Muchiri, CEO and Founder of Rockbern Coffee in Kenya, founded his own coffee business, coming from a family of traditional coffee growers. He said “A good leader is one who leads by example. You need to be able to become a puller not a pusher. You need to be at the forefront, at the tip of the spear.”
- Elisa Blanco is a Nuffield scholar and agronomist and water management expert working on irrigation in central Chile. “Leaders are passionate and community driven,” she said. “They have an awareness of a long-term problem that they need to solve,” she went on, describing how being able to communicate with different people in different ways. Leaders tend to focus on areas where consensus can be found and strengthen them.
- Lucie Douma was another Nuffield scholar and Head of Client Strategy and Advice Services at the Farmers Mutual Group from New Zealand: “Leadership is not micromanaging or focusing on day-to-day tasks. Leadership is setting direction and empowering your team to move in that direction. An important characteristic for leaders is to be charismatic to get buy-in from your communities and the people who work for you. Leaders will treat you like a person without a big sense of hierarchy, they can take you along on the journey and inspire you to be the best that you can be.”
- Wilson Odiyo, General Manager, Human Resources for Kakuzi PLC in Kenya, said “When you have an important task, choose the person with the best skills set, not just the person with the leadership title.”

These examples show the importance of the relationship between the leader and those they are trying to influence.

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Putting it into action



LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

- Leadership people at the centre of decision making.
- Leaders inspire others to act, providing them with a clear mission.
- Leadership is about caring for those that you lead.



Chris Manley



Leading Your Farm to Success <https://qrco.de/bgK1ZC>



TALKING POINT 5:

Know your personality type

Hannah Batty NSch 2022



“You need to understand yourself before you can begin to appropriately manage someone.” This insight did not come from the paddocks of an Australian dairy farm but rather from the boardroom on the 117th floor of a high-rise in Melbourne.

Ben James, CEO of Aurora Dairies, began his journey in the dairy industry at the age of 19 as a farmhand. He now leads an operation that cares for 47,000 cows, 22,000 heifers, and employs over 500 staff. While he is heavily involved in asset and operations management, his key focus is on talent acquisition and understanding the people within the business.

Having navigated the transition from cows to people management, Ben shared valuable insights and tools that benefit the large workforce at Aurora Dairies.

One such tool is personality profiling, specifically DISC or the Birds model. DISC profiling improves communication, teamwork, and productivity by categorising individuals into four main profiles based on their perception of themselves in relation to their environment. The Birds or DOPE personality test, based on the same principles, is designed to be more relatable and engaging, making it easier for everyone to understand.

Personality profiling helps identify key traits, enhancing our understanding of how our preferred behaviours and communication styles impact those around us. People can be broadly categorised as follows:

DISC Profile	Bird Analogy	Strengths	Weaknesses
Dominant	Eagle	Bold, highly assertive, results-focused, decisive	Direct, can lack sensitivity, controlling, struggles to delegate
Influencing	Peacock	Charismatic, enthusiastic, visionary, positive	Poor with details, impatient, bad timekeepers
Steady	Dove	Empathetic, cooperative, supportive	Dislikes confrontation, less assertive, can be risk-averse
Compliant	Owl	Analytical, detail-oriented, strategic	Takes time to make decisions, can be stubborn

Author's summary of different personality profiles



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Putting it into action



By becoming more self-aware of the different personality traits, including our own, we can improve our communication with others. Since using this tool in the field I've found that it also helps facilitate discussions around some of the less desirable personality traits in a relaxed and humorous manner, fostering openness within the team.

Ben emphasised that this approach isn't about changing who you are but about being authentic. Despite the size of the business, he noted that a 'one size fits all' approach to team management is ineffective. Understanding oneself enhances awareness of behaviours and how one's communication style affects others. This understanding helps teams work together more harmoniously, leveraging strengths and addressing weaknesses effectively.



People. Processes. Potential: A blueprint for great team management on UK dairy farms: <https://qrco.de/bgKlby>



TALKING POINT 6:

Dealing with emotions

Holly Beckett NSch 2015



People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou, poet

Why is this you may wonder? Our memories are very much connected to the ‘state’ we are in at the time we have an experience. In general, if we are in a positive mood or state, we are known to be in the Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA). If we are in a negative mood or state, this can lead to our entering the Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA).

When we are in the PEA, we are more open to new ideas, open to creativity, have a greater power to listen and retain information. How can we encourage people to enter the PEA? Perhaps by smiling at them, complementing them to give them confidence and make them feel at ease, listening to them and paying attention so they feel significant.

When we are in the NEA we cognitively start to shut down, our ability to listen or accept new ideas decreases and we are not in an active learning state. How do people enter the NEA? If someone is being shouted at and they feel threatened, if they feel they are being criticised or insulted, if they are not being listened to or feel their opinion does not count: then any of these ‘feelings’ can send a person into the NEA state.

It is now proven that the experiences that people have create feelings and emotions and this in turn has a physiological effect on the body; affecting our breathing, blood flow and releasing a whole host of chemicals which can have quite a significant effect on our state and well-being and the functioning of the brain.

I couldn’t help thinking of times when an employee had done something that I felt unhappy or unsatisfied with and acted in a way where my voice was raised, I was scowling and condescending. Given that this probably put them into the NEA and their cognitive process started to shut down, it is not surprising - when I explained to them again how the process worked - that they did not take in the information; they were not in a learning state.

Just understanding how our body and mind react to different situations gave me a totally different perspective.



Practical applications for business growth through developing people:
<https://qrco.de/bgK1fw>



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Putting it into action

In practice: Negotiating skills

Christopher Padfield NSch 2013

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The importance of good communication skills was brought home to me in a very different way during a visit to Nordhausen, Germany, in May 2015.

In 1990 Markus Meyers and his family decided to take the opportunity to rent land in East Germany, starting with 70ha and now farming 500ha. Markus has over 80 landlords. Each piece of land in East Germany legally has to be divided between all offspring so land ownership is fractured. However, if enough landlords agree, then large fields can be built up, and his fields ranged from 0.5ha to 50ha. He was also able to rationalise fields by swapping rented areas with another farmer. Markus spends around three weeks a year talking and negotiating with his landlords – people skills are clearly vital.

Markus focused on keeping himself up to date with agricultural practices by using paid advisers (e.g. an extensive benchmarking exercise with comparisons to 150 other farms in East Germany, Hungary and Austria), going on organised farmer trips to other regions or countries, using the internet, and by carrying out crop trials. Farm staff did not really attend training courses and there was little in the way of statutory requirements for training. Markus acknowledged that increasing farm wages were not a very good motivator and found that spending time communicating clearly with staff, both professionally and socially, was more important. However, the key to his business was negotiating with landlords and collaboration with neighbours.

The conclusion I drew was that soft skills will be ever more important as farms get fewer and larger. The ability to work with others, to negotiate, to communicate clearly, to resolve conflict, are vital skills which need to be learnt where they are not a natural ability.



Map of German land ownership



GREAT farmers – Growing Really Exceptional And Talented farmers: training and development in agriculture: <https://qrco.de/bgKlgI>



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Putting it into action

TALKING POINT 7:

Building rapport

Holly Beckett NSch 2015



By recognising the main way in which a person thinks – whether they are visual, audio or kinaesthetic (tactile learner) - you can mirror and match to create a stronger rapport with that person, effectively by communicating with their unconscious mind.

You may notice when you are in rapport with someone you are matching each other's body language. We all know that people will buy from people they like. People will open up to people they like.

The ways in which we unconsciously establish rapport and, indeed, can also consciously create rapport are by:

- Matching the other person's modality - visual, audio, kinaesthetic (tactile learning)
- Physical mirroring – copying what they do
- Matching their voice – tone, timbre, tempo
- Matching their breathing – shallow or deep / from the chest or the belly
- Matching the sizes of information (chunks) – do they talk in details or about wider issues?
- Matching common experiences – probably the one we are most aware of and familiar with - what do we have in common with a person?

There are also cues that you can be aware of which will give you a clue as to whether you are in rapport with someone. By noticing the overall appearance of physical features, you can calibrate and then watch for changes in their physiology which will indicate if you are in rapport. Being able to improve your recognition of these changes was termed to be developing your sensory acuity. This includes:

- Eye movements
- Muscles around their eyes
- Lower lip
- Colour of face and hands
- Breathing



Practical applications for business growth through developing people:
<https://qrco.de/bgKlfw>



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Putting it into action

In practice: What makes good leaders, good

Izak van Heerden NSch 2023



There are countless attributes that contribute to a good leader being good, but this is a somewhat subjective take on what I've learned from my travels and personal experiences.

Authenticity

Authenticity is a cornerstone of effective leadership—it means being genuine and leading in a way that aligns with one's true values and character. My travels in Brazil reinforced this principle in two contrasting yet equally successful farming businesses.

At Terra Viva, they have taken the principles of Lean Management and put a big Brazilian heart at the centre of it—a truly people-focused approach. This is a large, well-structured business with a clear Mission vision: 'Plant a Better Life', supported by strong guiding principles— Economic, Environmental, Social, and above all Human.

Their management system is outstanding—with structured reviews at all levels, including daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual check-ins of technical, management and human aspects. They even conduct peer-to-peer and 360° reviews up to the CEO level, ensuring accountability and a strong culture of development. It's an efficient, high performing business that thrives on structure, clarity and realising people's potential.



“As the world becomes more bewildering, it is increasingly urgent that we treat each other as humans, always striving for the best for everyone.”

Klaas Schoenmaker - Terra Viva

In contrast, at Bernhard Kiep's Fazenda Cachoeira, near Itaberá, São Paulo, there seem to be very easy 'lean structure' allowing for individual entrepreneurship, yet it still works, Led by Itamar de Paula under the guidance of Bernhard, both unconventional but deeply authentic leaders, this farm fosters incredible staff loyalty—many workers have been there for decades.

Both approaches succeed because they are genuine. Leadership doesn't come from a manual; it comes from authenticity—when leaders are true to themselves, they build trust, inspire commitment, and create cultures where people want to stay.



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Putting it into action

People remember how you make them feel

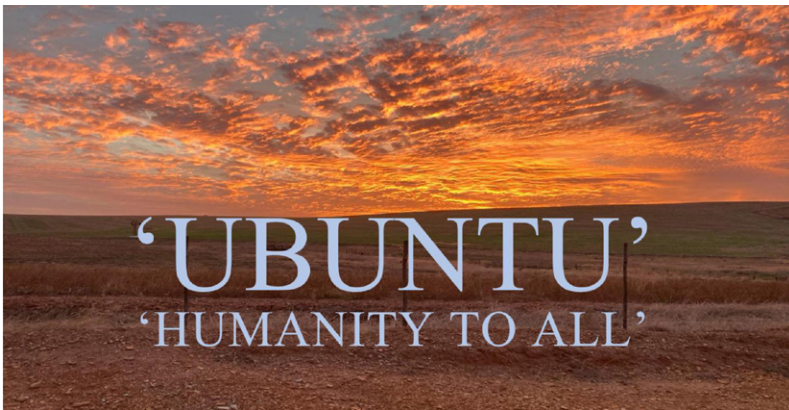
Leaders who prioritise making others feel valued leave lasting impacts. Nick Wheeler of Charles Tyrwhitt demonstrates this by going out of his way to personally thank employees praised in customer feedback, boosting morale and enhancing team cohesion. His actions not only uplift individuals but also improve business outcomes.

People remember how leaders make them feel, and positive interactions foster loyalty and motivation. For leaders, ensuring team members feel respected and appreciated is a powerful driver of both individual and organisational success.

Ubuntu: Humanity to all

Ubuntu, a philosophy rooted in my African heritage and the isiXhosa culture I grew up among, emphasises interconnectedness and mutual upliftment. It reflects the idea that “I am because we are” - our potential is realised through the collective well-being of others. Nelson Mandela exemplified this principle, leading with forgiveness and unity despite profound hardships.

For today’s leaders, embodying Ubuntu means fostering inclusive communities and empowering others to achieve their best. Leadership rooted in humanity builds resilient, thriving organisations where collective success becomes the foundation for individual achievement.



AgriLeadership for tomorrow's world <https://qrco.de/bgKlXl>



In practice: Focussed time to talk

Hannah Batty NSch 2022



A useful insight from Australian dairy farmer Joey Conheady was the benefit of utilising toolbox talks. Joey owns a herd of 600 Autumn block crossbreds and returned to farming after completing a degree in economics.

He was quick to highlight the importance of communication. He held 15-minute quick-fire talks every morning irrespective of the time of year and how busy the team were.

These fast-paced meetings allowed for three objectives to be met:

1. The priorities for the day were discussed and highlighted to the team.
2. Any potential blockers (odd jobs/ broken equipment etc) were identified, and solutions could be discussed.
3. The whole team had the chance to talk and communicate in a protected time slot, helping understand each other's challenges and aims for the day.

In the busy working environment that is a dairy farm, if time is not allocated and prioritised for communication sometimes it just won't happen. By protecting this talking time, Joey was able to ensure key messages were shared within the team. As a leader he could pick up on how people were feeling, and decisions could be shared with and explained to everyone.

While meetings such as this happen on many farms, I still think there is scope for more farms to utilise them. Seeing planning and talking time as equally important as 'doing' time can avoid expensive mistakes and improve efficiencies.



***Hannah Batty and
Joey Conheady***



People. Processes. Potential: A blueprint for great team management on UK dairy farms: <https://qrco.de/bgK1bx>



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Putting it into action

TALKING POINT 8:

Self-awareness

David Hichens NSch 2017



‘The one tool you need for success? A mirror.’

Being successful isn't about being perfect. In fact most of the successful people I visited not only were willing to accept that they weren't perfect, but they knew exactly what their weaknesses were and how best to manage them. They were very self-aware. But is it that we don't all realise that we don't know everything, or is it just that we aren't all willing to admit it? Being self-critical is never easy.

One thing I think self-awareness and learning about yourself requires is some time. As we mature we have had more time to get to know ourselves. For example, by working for several employers you can compare yourself against them all, how they handled situations and how you think you might have handled them differently. Good relationships with some honest family and friends will also help. Sometimes we need to know how others see us.

Once we have overcome the problem of getting to know ourselves, self-awareness becomes an invaluable part of our personality. Many people use their self-awareness to employ people who are better than themselves in certain areas. One farmer in Tasmania whom I met told me that due to his character, he would never want to stop developing farms: so, because of this fact, he planned for any additional farms to be equity partnerships and consequently wouldn't be tempted to get so emotionally involved due to it being someone else's farm.



David Hichens



The journey to building a fulfilling life and career in farming:
<https://qrco.de/bgKlhj>



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Putting it into action

TALKING POINT 9:

Mentoring

Helen Wyman NSch 2023



Throughout history, mentoring relationships have been used to pass on skills and knowledge from generation to generation.

As the world becomes more isolated, these natural relationships are not forming as quickly, so knowledge is lost as each generation leaves. The concept of pairing with an individual who has walked the path you are looking at and will help guide you to avoid the potholes they fell into is not new; however, it has fallen out of favour, especially across sectors or organisations outside of direct technical areas.

As the world developed and we saw an increase in technology and machinery, the number of people on farms has waned dramatically over the last century. A single person or small family runs many farms in a remote area with limited access to face-to-face contact with people and influence outside their sphere (I have notably excluded social media due to the echo chamber algorithm effect and rate of false information). The opportunity for mentoring has dramatically reduced, so even those who want to share their learnings and help others do not have the outlet to do so. This further increases the sense of isolation.

Farmers worldwide provide the key to unlocking the door of so many of the Global Sustainable Development Goals. This is why the focus should be on this sector and why mentorship should be a part of this solution. The ability to share and pass on knowledge will enable the industry to move forward quicker and not constantly relearn past mistakes.

To be an effective leader, everyone needs to be involved in a mentorship programme, whether as a mentor/mentee or both.

MY MAIN CONCLUSIONS ARE:

- Mentorship is a key pillar of leadership.
- People are key to the success of businesses, so look after them.
- Critical friends are vital.
- Creating connections across silos can break down barriers and resist the rise of fake news.
- A successful mentoring relationship can open doors for those not already in the industry, enabling them to have a successful career.
- Ensuring that mentorship is part of a company's culture is beneficial to employee retention.
- Dedicate time and resources to mentorship programmes.

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Putting it into action



Helen Wyman



Mentoring: A Mechanism for Driving Positive Change in Agriculture:

<https://qrco.de/bgKlij>



TALKING POINT 10:

What is leadership?

Peter Wiggins Davies, NSch 2015



A leader is the most important contributor to success of an organisation - it is a silver bullet.

Mark Hefner

In Atlanta, USA, I managed to set up a meeting with Mark Hefner, president and CEO of N2Growth, a top US consultancy company. His clients were extremely diverse, ranging from The Ritz Carlton to the New York Times and Ebay. Mark specialises in strategy and change., advising at senior management level in the USA, Canada, South America, Australia, Europe and the former Soviet Union.

He had the following to say on leadership:

- There are many different leadership styles: they depend on the organisation and how it is performing e.g. doing well/badly, rock/don't rock the boat
- Leadership determines strategy
- Leaders must be strategic thinkers and good communicators
- People must follow leaders
- Trust is the most important aspect
- Leaders must know their blind spots (I was surprised to learn skills-gap consultants exist)



Peter Wiggins Davies (left) and Mark Hefner

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Putting it into action

Other positive leadership attributes of leaders I often heard were:

- Commitment and conviction to follow judgment
- Get people to work as a motivated team
- Involved in and aware of the day-to-day
- Conviction to hold people to account
- Ability to prioritise what is important
- Ability to be honest with oneself
- Be prepared to be challenged
- High emotional intelligence
- Good time management
- Ability to delegate
- Infectious passion

Other business leaders I met had some key points on leadership:

“As you grow your business your leadership skills need to grow as well.”

Federico Lazaridis, Château Nico Lazaridis Winery

“With growth you need to become more professional, like gears in a car, with production, customers and governance.”

Albrecht Freiherr Knigge jun, Freiherr Knigge GmbH

“Be careful what you say: your words can be like bullets you cannot take back.”

Hans Caspar Graf Zu Rantazu, Prontstorf Estate



Rural Estates: Objectives, Governance and Growth:
<https://qrco.de/bgKljg>



In practice: Have a vision – or seeing is believing

Hannah Batty NSch 2022

Rosemont Agriculture, in Tasmania, an equity partnership between Rob and Jo Bradley and James and Sophie Greenacre, managed by James, showed just how impactful having a vision could be. The farm has 1,300 milking cows, in a block calving system.

The vision below was pinned up on the wall for everyone to see:



Vision: Optimise farm profitability and sustainability by having healthy cows, productive pastures and efficient, happy team members.”

This statement was not groundbreaking, elaborate or complicated. It was a clear statement of intent for everyone within the team, outlining the goals of the business. Granted there was mention of profitability, but the clarity of how this could be achieved set it apart from many other businesses I have visited. Team members knew that healthy cows, productive pasture management and they themselves contributed to achieving business success.

James was incredibly passionate about creating a positive culture and walking around the farm it was clear to see that this vision was not just written on the wall but lived and breathed by everyone within. The simplicity and clarity of this vision really struck a chord with me. The fact that this business wanted to create happy people as part of its vision showed those working within it how much they were cared about.

I'm incredibly fortunate that I get to visit a wide range of dairy businesses in my role. But there are very few where I have seen a statement of intent written on the wall for both employees or visitors to the farm. Why is this? For many farmers writing down a set of words on a piece of paper may feel a bit silly, unnecessary or too 'corporate'. Or is there a fear that writing it down means you are held to account by both yourself and others?



There is strong evidence that writing down a goal means you are more likely to achieve it. From just spending an afternoon at Rosemount agriculture it was clear to see that their vision of healthy cows, productive pastures and a happy team was being achieved. Seeing truly was believing!

Rob Bradley, James Greenacre and Hannah Batty



People. Processes. Potential: A blueprint for great team management on UK dairy farms: <https://qrco.de/bgKlBx>



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Putting it into action

In practice: Kisima Farm, Kenya

Chris Manley NSch 2021

When farms think about leadership, they can have the tendency to only think about things that are directly within the financial control of the business or their direct employees. One of the major learnings for me was the realisation that there is a much wider network of stakeholders who are looking to farms for leadership, and farmers can be powerful leaders in their local communities.

Africa was a place where leadership in the community clearly had a big impact. There are challenging conditions for businesses to operate in, including widespread corruption and tribal politics. People in these regions were clear that they had a duty to engage with their communities and local government, as well as having wider social responsibilities.

I visited Buzz Robertson, Farm Manager at Kisima Farms in Kenya who employ 700 workers on their farm which grows a range of crops. Some of these are cash crops for export, such as flowers, but others are grown purely to provide work and food for the local community, such as potatoes.

While Kisima is a large farming business, it also provides trial plots for local smallholders to experiment new techniques on. I was lucky enough to attend a workshop which was hosted by Kisima in partnership with AgVenture for the local community on the advantages of different agronomic techniques, where farmers could experiment and discuss their challenges.

Creating this time and space for discussing how future agricultural practices could evolve showed an investment in the community of smaller farmers who worked alongside farms like Kisima. While science was being taught to make farming practices more resilient, it was an opportunity for the community to engage and share their views with their larger neighbour.



Buzz and Becky Robertson and family, and Chris Manley



Leading Your Farm to Success <https://qrco.de/bgKIZC>



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Putting it into action

Putting it into action: A plan for personal development

David Hichens NSch 2017

“ While the best people and businesses I visited around the world had some similar attributes, there were no defined set of characteristics or environmental effects that drove success.

The best were the better managers of people, of time, and of their overall businesses. This was done through improved planning and by having a clear strategy. There is no silver bullet, no recipe to follow, no new discoveries or new technologies that we must all adopt. Most of the time it is about getting basic things right, not losing sight of the bigger picture and being best possible managers.



Invest in yourself; get out there and learn.

The single biggest thing I believe we can do to become better managers and to help achieve success is to invest in ourselves and invest in the development of young people. This needs to be a ‘two pronged’ approach that sees young people stepping forward and engaging in personal development, and a greater number of established figures and employers in our industry offering to help lead them. My recommendations for personal development are:



Action that can be taken immediately (Do now)

Take a personality test

Personality testing isn't the be all and end all, and I don't think trying to fit us all into four categories is that useful, but it is a great place to start. You can find tests free online and the questions will prompt you to think about your personality, how you deal with situations and how you differ from the people around you.

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Putting it into action

Get a mentor

A mentor should be able to help you decipher things such as the results of taking a personality test, and work with you on other key actions. It is important that you get along and that they have some relevant life experience, but don't stress about this it's not a binding contract, you can always look for a better one, but ideally it would be someone like the person you wish to become. Ask someone that you know locally, or someone you have heard speak at a conference that you think might be good. Most people will be flattered and happy to help.

The most important thing I think, is to get one as early as possible so that they know as much of your story and your journey as possible. A mentor should be able to help you decipher what you have discovered in steps 1 and 2 in order to complete 4 and 5.

Established people should also keep a look out for young people that would benefit from some mentoring and offer to help.

Make a plan

This one isn't easy, but it is important whether you are young or old and both go hand in hand. If you are young where do you want to be in 10 years and, if you are old, what people might you need to bring into your business over the next 10 years? What are you going to do over the next year to try and focus more on your personal development? How are you going to make time for this?



Nuffield Next Generation



Actions that require some planning (start planning)

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Putting it into action

Self-reflection

How do we consciously self-reflect to become more self-aware and learn about ourselves. Starting with reflection on what the personality test has told you. Perhaps after doing a personality test it would be useful to carry out a SWOT analysis of yourself to identify what your strengths and weaknesses are, and what opportunities or threats this poses. Think about some previous events and situations and how you reacted to them. How does this differ from how other people would have reacted?

Figure out your 'why'

All the while this process should be helping you to start figuring out your 'why'. Go and see what other people are doing. Ask them how old they are, how does this compare with what you would like to achieve by their age, what advice do they have. Have a look at what training courses, conferences and events that are taking place in your local area and ask your employers if you can get involved in them, use these to gain ideas to set your own outcomes.

It might be useful to consider how you view your parents' lives and whether your desired outcomes would differ greatly from these. It may also be useful to picture your perfect day or think about other people that you like and dislike in order to pitch where you would like to be.



Figure out your 'why'



Think about where you want to be 10 years from now

It's 10 years from now. You wake up. Where are you? Who are you with? In the afternoon a friend comes to visit you. What would they say about YOU?

This seems an odd question but when you answer it honestly it will then give you a good idea of what you're trying to achieve and how much money this will take. The bit about your friend coming round is to see how you will behave to get what you want. As I have discussed, not all 'successful' people are happy.

Anything over a five year goal is going to be too overwhelming to comprehend at a first attempt. This can be reviewed as often as required to see if anything has changed. Point A will always be today and point B can be at any point in the future, so it is very much an evolving process.



The journey to building a fulfilling life and career in farming:

<https://qrco.de/bgKIkE>



Putting it into action: Think about your future development

There are great opportunities in the agriculture and agribusiness sector to develop your career and leadership skills. The organisations and courses below (the list is not exhaustive) all seek to help with personal and/or career development and welcome applications:



Long-term options to consider (Think ahead)

Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust - Scholarships

NFST aims to inspire passion in people and develop their potential to lead positive change in farming and food. It awards about 25 life-changing scholarships each year that unlock individual potential and broaden horizons through study and travel overseas, with a view to developing the farming and agricultural industries. More than 1,000 Nuffield Farming have completed their studies and travel.

<https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/>

Scholarships - Next-Gen Scholars

The Next-Gen Scholarships are focussed on young people aged 18-24 as part of Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust's initiative to develop young talent. They aim to help young people establish themselves in agriculture, using the Nuffield Farming network to link successful applicants directly to farmers. The initiative is currently a pilot scheme and has expanded across the UK in its second year.

<https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/scholarships/nuffield-farming-next-gen-scholarship>

Worshipful Company of Farmers - Challenge of Rural Leadership

This two-week course runs aims to develop the personalities and business acumen of delegates, helping with self-confidence and communication, with visiting influential speakers covering policy and their own leadership styles. Delegates can share their experiences and develop mentors and friendships that have been demonstrated over the years to offer considerable on-going support.

<https://farmerslivery.org.uk/courses/challenge-of-rural-leadership/>

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Putting it into action

Worshipful Company of Farmers – Advanced Agricultural Business Management

An immersive and intensive management training programme incorporating online and residential elements, designed for those in agriculture and the land-based sector. The focus is on giving delegates the opportunity to review and understand all the internal and external factors likely to determine their business' success and to develop plans and the skills required for that.

<https://farmerslivery.org.uk/courses/agricultural-business-management/>

Scottish Rural Leadership Programme

Designed to help Scottish rural business owners who have the desire and ambition to grow their business. The programme includes 10 days of in-person workshops, including a learning journey to Edinburgh and London, as well as online engagement, including one-to-one coaching, all aiming to help leaders develop themselves and their business.

<https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/service/programmes/rural-leadership-programme>

The Royal Welsh Agricultural Society Rural Leadership Programme

A fully funded opportunity designed to cultivate the next generation of agricultural and rural leaders, developing up to 12 candidates through a comprehensive leadership development journey. The programme has, which includes residential time in Wales and London, has gained a reputation for helping participants gain clarity and confidence in their future career and business goals.

<https://rwas.wales/blog/2025/03/31/applications-now-open-for-2025-rwas-rural-leadership-programme/>

The Farmers Club Charitable Trust - Windsor Leadership Trust

WLT bursaries are awarded to senior leaders involved in agriculture to enhance and develop their leadership. With four different programmes depending on experience, the residential courses aim to 'Equip senior leaders to meet uncertainty with courage, resilience and insight.' It exposes attendees to others' leadership practices from the military, clergy and business among others.

<https://tfctt.co.uk/windsor-leadership>

Institute of Agricultural Management – Farm Management Skills Programme

This can be booked as a full course of two, four-day units or as individual days. It covers a range of topics, including self-development, motivating others, influencing for success, plus presenting and communicating with confidence. The second block includes finance and money, agreements, managing risk and future farming.

<https://www.iagrm.com/events/farm-management-skills-programme/>



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Putting it into action

Institute of Agricultural Management – Agricultural Leadership Development Programme

Next scheduled to run in 2027, this three-week residential programme is aimed at management-level candidates seeking to challenge and empower their leadership and management potential. A Masters-level programme, it includes a focus on UK industry leaders and policies, EU and international affairs, management and communication skills and personal development.

<https://www.iagrm.com/events/leadership-course/>

AHDB AgriLeader Programme

A practical leadership development initiative for farmers, growers and agri-business professionals, focused on improving business performance through people. AgriLeader provides resources and support across the labour lifecycle – from recruitment and retention to motivation and succession – helping leaders build resilient, high-performing teams.

<https://ahdb.org.uk/labour-life-cycle-in-agriculture>

TwoCan Mentor - mentoring

Set up by Helen Wyman as the result of a Nuffield Farming Scholarship, TwoCan Mentoring offers a structured and supported mentoring experience for the food and farming sectors. A cross-industry group, it matches and connects people across the sectors and breaks down barriers. It ensures every mentor and mentee gets the right training, the right match, and ongoing check-ins. It also offers courses, events and peer mentoring.

<https://twocanmentor.co.uk/>

SPONSORS



Central Region Farmers Trust

Central Region Farmers Trust's mission is to provide funding for education that benefits agriculture and horticulture in the central region. It strives to support farmers in adopting sustainable farming practices and enhancing their skills for a thriving agricultural sector.

www.centralregionfarmerstrust.org



Gloucestershire Agricultural House Foundation

Helping Agriculture in Gloucestershire by supporting the education, development and needs of people in the industry.



Elizabeth Creak Charitable Trust

The Elizabeth Creak Charitable Trust is a grant giving body that invests in people who will advance healthy, fair and sustainable UK food production. Grants finance projects that help farmers innovate to survive and thrive while scholarships support and encourage individuals to innovate sustainable practices in farming.

www.elizabethcreak.co.uk



Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE)

The Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) is an independent charity and membership organisation dedicated to supporting the progression of knowledge and innovation within the agricultural community.

www.rase.org.uk

IN SUMMARY

This Bitesize Guide, from the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust and RASE, provides a snapshot into the breadth and depth of reports available at



<https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/reports>



The website also features reports from global Nuffield Scholars, including Australia, New Zealand, USA and Brazil. The reports are a rich source of inspiration, case studies and thought-provoking recommendations for agriculture.

Please get in touch at info@rase.org.uk if you have questions, comments or feedback.



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Farming Scholarships