

Developing people on Irish Dairy farms



A report for Nuffield Ireland

Farming Scholarships

By

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Executive summary

Abolition of milk quotas on the 1st April 2015 will lead to an expansion phase in the Irish dairy industry. To maximise the opportunity farmers need to up-skill themselves to manage a growing and larger business. They need to improve and develop their employees in order to grow their business or get the most from their current operation. They and their employees also need time off for family, community and social involvement. The farmer and his/her staff are their own most valuable asset. The best investment you can make is in yourself.

Reason for Development

- In Ireland development of both the farmer and his/her employees is essential to build competitive dairy farm businesses
- Development of skills on farm and off farm leads to better decision making and helps people reach their potential

Skills needed for success

“We mastered what was profitable. What really matters and what matters less.”

Colin Armer, Dairy Farmer, 2013

The more developed skills available to people, the better their decision making will be. Problems are often complex and require numerous skills for solving from mathematical to animal health knowledge.

Knowledge of hard sciences such as grassland management, financial accounting and animal requirements brings success in technical farm performance.

Knowledge of soft sciences such as effective communication and psychology are critical for evaluating qualitative situations such as dealing with conflict.

Roadmap for development

“Education, network and benchmark. Never claim to know it all, network with people and benchmark yourself against the best.”

Enda Hawe, Dairy Farmer, 2013

There are various ways to advance the development of the dairy farmer and his/her employees in Ireland. The Irish dairy industry has a well developed strong information transfer culture with many dairy based knowledge bodies, papers and magazines now existing.

Some options are as follows:

- Open forums (includes discussion groups)
- Formal education
- Read relevant books and literature
- Training courses
- Networking and building friendships
- Entering competitions
- Finding mentors
- Becoming a leader

Corporate Development

Farmers can learn a lot from larger businesses. The best ones normally are based on a completed mission statement and company values that provide a focus and buy-in to the culture.

Investment by the better, larger companies goes outside of the employees' role and includes their own personal development. The better larger companies invest heavily in their employees, including their personal development. This investment is derived from detailed planning and performance measurement. Such investment needs to be mimicked at farm level, with a training plan and budgeted investment for all people working on the farm.

Measuring Performance

In larger businesses around the world measuring employee or management performance is commonplace and part of the culture. Google employees have been reported to be dissatisfied if candid feedback is not provided. It is argued that performance measurement is somewhat lacking in the small business arena of Irish dairy farms.

Components of performance measurement at farm level would include:

- Goal setting
- Measuring performance and setting Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)
- Annual training plans
- Feedback sessions

Recommendations

- Goal setting and performance measuring are critical for progress within both personal and business life. On farm mission statements must be standard giving a framework for goal setting.
- Discussion groups should play a much larger role in goal setting where members act as coaches to each other, holding each other to account.
- Investment in the farmer and staff should be planned and budgeted for annually. Annual training plans should detail relevant areas for improvement.
- Teagasc should evaluate dairy industry training needs. Various courses are available across multiple bodies but more coherence is needed. An industry training body lead by Teagasc with stakeholder involvement is needed.
- Due to the broad nature of the topic further study by Nuffield would be of benefit to Irish farmers. Measuring performance, adapting corporate people development techniques and mentoring should be further studied and refined.

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Foreword

I am married to Aileen and dairy farming in a family partnership in Mountmellick, Co. Laois. I graduated from UCD with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree in 2001. I'm a member of the Damer and O'Moore Discussion Groups. I enjoy most sports, especially GAA, reading and learning about businesses.

I worked for Laois County Council for 10 years in the water pollution laboratory starting as a Technician and working my way up to Laboratory Manager in late 2008. In July 2012 I started fulltime dairy farming.

My first travel opportunity with Nuffield was to the Contemporary Scholars Conference in Canada in March 2013. I truly enjoyed the experience of meeting scholars from many different countries. We all shared our experiences and knowledge, and I made many friends with whom I am still in contact.

At the conference, the Global Dairy Farmers interviewed scholars for an opportunity to attend their annual Congress. I was the successful candidate and so in September 2013, I travelled to Israel. There I had the opportunity to interact with dairy farmers from Holland and the USA and industry people from Canada and Holland. All of these farming enthusiasts were involved in confinement systems.

Following on from this, I spent two days in Brussels with my fellow Irish scholars. Alo Mohan, Nuffield Scholar 2013, organised meetings for us with Michael Tracey IFA and Marian Harkin MEP. We also met Padraig Walsh (Former President IFA & COPA - The Federation of EU Farmers' Unions). All parties gave generously of their time. We were afforded a fascinating inside view into the machinery of European bureaucracy.

I then travelled to New Zealand on a Dairy Study tour with Michael Murphy, international dairy farmer and Con Hurley, life coach and former dairy editor of the Farmers Journal. We met and questioned some of the best farmers in New Zealand, learning the steps needed to grow a dairy business.

January 2014 brought me to California USA, where confinement farming is the norm. Both large scale and small scale producers were interviewed to get a sense of the challenges they face.

Brazil is a world leader in commodity production and in July 2014, two fellow Irish scholars and I travelled 4000km around the area north of Brazilia. Gregg Lindsay, a New Zealander

living and farming out there, organised and translated for us. We witnessed the potential of Brazil first hand and thanks to Gregg, had a good trip.

My study consists of interviews, surveys and research carried out in the last two years. Relevant data from books, papers and videos I've encountered in the past is also included.

Finally, I would sincerely like to thank **The Peter Daly Trust** in conjunction with **LIC** and **Dairymaster** for sponsoring my Nuffield study.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- to improve and enhance the development of all those that work on Irish Dairy Farms
- to give options for the development of people involved and
- to make farmers and employees aware of the successful outcomes of development

Development and positive change must become the norm.

Introduction

In March 2015, the abolition of Milk Quotas will lead to an inevitable increase in milk production. A 50% increase in production has been forecast in the Food Harvest 2020 Report (Dept. Agriculture Fisheries and Food, 2010). Efficient producers are most likely to achieve the greatest increase. Increased production will lead to increased labour demand and more importantly, the need for farmer up-skilling and development. This increased reliance on other people for the running of the farm business, highlights specific skill requirements in people management and development.

People are the key ingredient in farming. My study will look at ways to develop farmers, partners, managers and employees to create better farm businesses and a better agri-industry. Improvements in the skill set of people in these businesses will hopefully be of great benefit to the people themselves, helping them to achieve their personal goals also.

Traditionally most of the labour demand on the farm was borne by the farming family. With the aforementioned predicted expansion, extra labour will need to be serviced by people outside the family unit and on a more permanent basis rather than the 'relief milker'. The farmer himself/herself bears the greatest challenge to run his/her business smoothly.

With the average age of dairy farmers currently being 55 and with 50% of them having no identified successor, managers or partners will need to be brought in to continue the business. A strong family attachment to the land will keep the farm in the family in a lot of circumstances, even with little family involvement.



A large scale dairy farm in California. The cost of production in the most efficient of these dairy farms is now matching the New Zealand average.

1. Importance of Personal Development

“If you always do what you always did you’ll always get what you always got.”

Edmond Harty, CEO Dairymaster, 2013

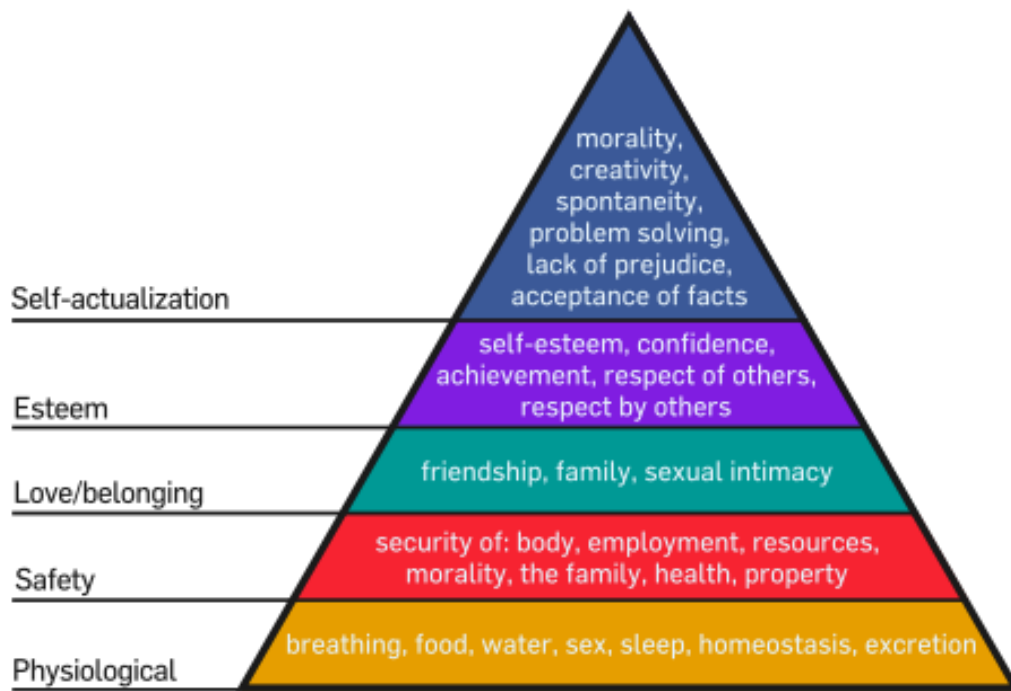
Developing people is a process of continuous improvement. Those farmers and their employees that develop new skills and improve existing ones give themselves a much better chance of success in their personal and business life. It is up to the farmer and those around him to choose what success they want and to continuously improve to achieve it. Achieving goals brings about the creation of new goals increasing the potential and capability of the individual.

Helping and up skilling those around you should improve the business and future profits. This comes from better decision making and being involved in the development process. Having dependable skilled competent people allows time off. Time off is required for health, family and community contribution.

1.1 Reaching your potential

With most farms in Ireland being owner-operator run, the most return will come from farmers making a conscious effort to improve and develop, and then learning to help those around them reach their potential.

Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs sets out the things that people are motivated by, from the most basic e.g. physiological, to the most complex e.g. self actualisation. According to Maslow, self actualisation is the pinnacle of human development, the point at which one reaches one’s potential and becomes fully human. It is argued that this should be the target for dairy farmers, and for those who work for them.



Maslows' Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)

Providing opportunities to satisfy social, esteem and self actualisation needs is important for creating a motivating work environment. Striving to reach your potential gives confidence, knowledge and creates an awareness of potential mistakes. Farmers and their employees owe it to those around them and most of all to themselves to reach their full potential. Striving to do this gives clarity of purpose to achieve their goals, and improves their happiness and effectiveness in their personal and business life.

Some individuals have improved or perfected an area of their life to such an extent that they reach a heightened level of performance called 'flow'. Flow has been described as an optimal experiential state while performing, and has also been referred to as 'in the groove' or 'in the zone' (Csikszentmihalyi & Jackson, 1999). There are nine factors necessary for flow:

1. *challenge-skill balance*: both the challenge of the situation and our skills to meet the challenge need to be at personally high levels in order for us to flow
2. *merging of action and awareness*: being totally absorbed so that there is a feeling of total immersion and oneness with the task
3. *having clear goals*: being clear, moment by moment, how you are doing. Actions and goals soon become seamlessly intertwined

4. *receiving unambiguous feedback*: this provides a clear idea of what we should do next, and enables us to know we are on track and headed towards achieving our goals
5. *total concentration on the task at hand*: this means full and sustained concentration with the ability to exclude irrelevant or unhelpful thoughts
6. *sense of control*: complete trust in your skills and a belief that the task is achievable. There is no sense of failure or lack of confidence
7. *loss of self-consciousness*: there is no worry about the evaluation of others. There are no negative thoughts that produce self-doubt and fear
8. *transformation of time*: you may lose track of time so that hours can pass by like minutes
9. *autotelic experience*: this means that flow is rewarding, enjoyable and almost addictive

Sport is one of the most facilitative contexts for flow. Take Kerry footballer Paul Galvin as an example. Even though he wasn't naturally blessed with the magnificent skills of Colin Cooper, he still managed to reach an athletic and mental level that season such that he was the undoubted Footballer of the Year in 2009. What is interesting is that on receiving the award, Paul mentioned that he had written his goals down the previous year (RTE, 2010). During his documentary, it became clear that the nine factors listed above were instrumental in getting to where he wanted to be.

The advantage of getting close to this in your own business or personal life is that you can stay in flow for as long as you want unlike our favourite sport stars. The most impressive example from my travels is that of New Zealand farmer Colin Armer (Armer & Armer, 2013). He has perfected a grass based system through continual personal education and experience. He can take mediocre land, develop it to its full potential and put a highly profitable, indestructible dairy business in place. He has absolute confidence in his system and amazing clarity on how to execute it. Grey areas on how something should be done are nonexistent with Colin.

1.2 The Skills needed for Success

1.2.1 Introduction

According to Charlie Munger, partner to Warren Buffett at Berkshire Hathaway (large business conglomerate founded by Buffett), you need useable and adaptable levels of knowledge in a topic (Lowe, 2000). Lack of knowledge can lead to disastrous results. You must rank your development requirements in order of importance.

In Fonterra, the world's largest milk processor, members elected to boards must show potential or experience in the following competencies: governance, communication and leadership, strategic thinking, international experience and perspective, business and finance, industry knowledge (Fonterra, 2013). Positions on the board require candidates to have high levels of development across both the hard and soft sciences.

1.2.2 Hard Sciences

Munger (Lowe, 2000) states that there are 4 main hard sciences you must be aware of:

maths, physics, economics, chemistry

For farmers' animal and plant sciences are important and an everyday grasp of them is required for running a successful business. Biology in its purest form is a mix of chemistry and physics. Knowledge of the rules of finance and accounting are essential for farmers to understand their business. This allows them to see for themselves what strategy will give an economic reward.

Munger argues that without numerical fluency you are like a 'one legged man in an ass kicking contest'.



Without numerical fluency you are like a ‘one legged man in an ass kicking contest’

All of these sciences come into play on dairy farms. Colin Armer and Arthur Bryan, dairy farmers from the North Island in New Zealand understand their farming system incredibly well. They run simple low cost grass based systems understanding every part of their business. What is also clear is that they understand the science behind their business (Armer & Armer, 2013)(Bryan, 2013). Both farmers used knowledge and information available from Dairy NZ at the time to develop their successful systems.

1.2.3 Soft Sciences

1.2.3.1 Psychology

You must also delve in the soft science arena in order to monitor your own thought processes, and the thought processes of those around you, so that silly mistakes are avoided. On this Munger points out that you should be a collector of inanities making your own path the one of least resistance (Kaufman, 2006). As Munger so elegantly puts it: 'You want to be the only one to be without a blindfold in a high stakes game of pin the donkey' (Lowe, 2000).

Soft sciences would include psychology and social sciences. Psychology is a very important tool in dealing with people. Whether managing people or negotiating a deal you have to be aware of vices which affect the other individuals. Knowledge of soft sciences such as communication, building confidence and psychology are critical for evaluating qualitative situations such as dealing with conflict.

You must be aware of psychological factors that lead to a certain result. An example where

this can be of benefit is in persuasion. There are six main persuasive areas according to Robert Cialdini the Californian professor (Cialdini, 2007). Getting people to work with you and help you is critical for your development.

1. *Reciprocation* – returning a favour
2. *Commitment and consistency* - public commitment leading to consistent commitment
3. *Social proof* – monkey see, monkey do
4. *Liking* – preferring to deal with someone you like
5. *Authority* – obeying those in a higher role whether right or not
6. *Scarcity* – perceived scarcity of land can lead to irrational rent prices

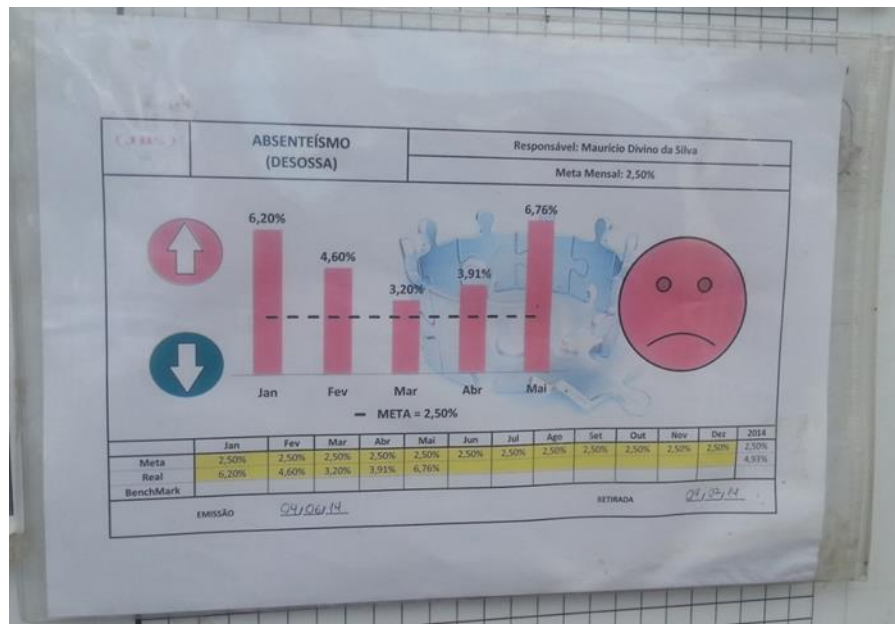
1.2.3.2 Communication and confidence

Communication and how a message is communicated, is key for buy-in to a system or process. Some people are natural communicators, others can improve with help. Warren Buffett took a Dale Carnegie (American writer and lecturer and the developer of famous courses in self-improvement) course when he was 20 as he was weak in public speaking. He says “it changed my life” and it’s currently the only educational achievement which hangs in his office (Dale Carnegie, 2013).

1.2.4 Other Critical Skills

In Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, he lists seven main habits for success (Covey, 2004). Under the first three habits, be proactive, begin with the end in mind and put first things first, you are striving for self mastery. Once a level is achieved, interdependence or working with others becomes the next phase of development. The next phase is an interdependent higher level activity. It includes win–win thinking, seeking to understand first, synergising and continuous improvement.

At JBS Group Facility in Goiana, Brazil, measurement of certain performances such as production and absenteeism was a useful management tool.



Absenteeism measured monthly at JBS, Goiana, Brazil

It was also a significant psychological tool. The recording and public display of performance essentially ‘threw down the gauntlet’ to the employees, ensuring a high performance was reached. This facility was the most productive meat factory of the groups’ facilities in Brazil.

1.2.4.1 Diligence and focus

If you want to achieve success at something you have to have diligence and focus. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett agreed over dinner that *focus* was the main reason for their success as well as circumstances (Schroeder, 2008). Diligence means putting in the hard yards like former Corkman and New Zealand farmer Arthur Bryan. On his first farm he milked and calved up to 360 cows by himself and spent “8 years without a day off” (Bryan, 2013).

Colin Armer, to me, was an example of focus in play in dairy farming. His life was dedicated to growing and improving his business. Little distraction was tolerated in the early years until a level of great expertise had been reached.

1.2.4.2 Clarity

Clarity is the number one key point. It sets out the very best from the best. You need to be clear on what you want from your business and life. This allows us to achieve the goals we really want and helps us filter out the huge amount of noise in our lives.

Steak Goodin, dairy farmer in Taranaki, New Zealand, said he didn't want to buy the neighbours farm and took up challenges outside farming. He maintained an extremely low cost farm system that gave him the freedom to do work outside his farm once debt was under control.

Steak with major help of his wife Chris spent 13 years in charge of Taranaki's Life Education Trust and doubled the number of classrooms available for teaching disadvantaged children (Watt, 2013). They opened their home to disadvantaged children and used the farm as a rehabilitation aid.

Steak also developed a successful horse breeding business. A man full of life and energy like Steak with his wife Chris were clear about their goals early on and led a life that has made themselves and many others very happy (Life Education Trust, 2010).

Although Colin Armer was mentioned as highly focused on his business, his overall clarity on the system that he ran was also clear to see. The key determinate on farm was the amount of pasture harvested (Armer & Armer, 2013). Every facet of his farm system centred on achieving this objective. Anything that would reduce this metric such as meal fed was eliminated.

"We mastered what was profitable. What really matters and what matters less".

Colin Armer, Dairy Farmer, 2013

1.2.5 Multidisciplinary Approach of hard and soft sciences

When a problem arises a range of disciplines to solve it is needed. Often times problems fall into a grey area which requires financial, scientific and psychological reasoning to solve.

The multidisciplinary approach to problems prevents the 'man with the hammer syndrome' according to Charlie Munger.

"To a man with only a hammer every problem looks pretty much like a nail".

Charlie Munger (Kaufman, 2006)

On reaching a good knowledge of multidisciplinary fields the way is clear for what Munger calls the '*Lollapalooza Effect*'.

"A lollapalooza effect is a combination of factors, filtered through multidisciplinary models

that lead to an outstanding result”.

Charlie Munger (Kaufman, 2006)

For farmers to achieve outstanding results, they must be carried out with the resources at hand such as their current farming setup and system. When and where you're born is outside of your control but the knowledge you achieve and your level of social development is a choice you make. The more strings to your bow the more potential for improvement and development inside and outside your business. Circumstances can also magnify the results, however this does not give someone an excuse not to 'learn, commit, do'(Covey, 2004).

An example of the lollapalooza effect would be the outstanding performance of the Coca Cola Company over a long period of time. The Coca Cola began in 1886 as a soda fountain beverage seller and has evolved into one of the largest companies in the world (Kaufman, 2006).

In Dairy Holdings (whose major shareholder and influence is Colin Armer), a corporate farm running 58 farms in New Zealand, farm supervisors are crucial for success. These people have a number of farms under them and assist the management of each farm to succeed. *These people are generalists not specialists* (Glass, 2013). They are well developed and have across the board expertise. They have come through the Dairy Holdings development ladder. They are repair experts, marriage counsellors, people managers, shed experts, taking in an around the house knowledge of people management and dairy farming.

1.2.6 Practical Example of a multidisciplinary approach

As already stated to be a successful dairy farmer you must excel across numerous disciplines from grass management to financial management.

For example if you require a winter solution for dairy cows first you would ask yourself:

1. Is my thinking right on the system?
2. Am I biased towards one scenario?
3. What's the best available technology at least cost?
4. What are the long term running and labour costs?
5. Is the information or farmer opinion I'm researching biased?
6. Will I personally have to use this system and how do I value my time?

You can see the different disciplines required in effectively making a decision. And there are many more questions that could be asked about this decision. Everything from science and research, numerical and psychological factors comes into play. Farmers should evaluate their own psychological state when making a decision.

Development in the soft sciences is critical for decision making. Psychology, regarded as hocus pocus by most farmers, is a huge help in making decisions. You must stand back from the decision making process and examine your thinking. Munger in his writing "The Psychology of Human Misjudgement" outlines 25 tendencies that affect our thinking (Kaufman, 2006). Three relevant examples would be:

1. *Excessive self regard* – thinking more of your opinion than is the reality, e.g. am I more favourable to one wintering technology because I know more about it.
2. *Availability mis-weighting tendency* – making a decision based on easily available material that may not be correct or fully relevant, e.g. I recently read a farming article on a system that subsequently turns out not to work.
3. *Authority mis-influence tendency* - where a sales man sells you pseudo facts on their product.

1.3 Advantages of personal development

1.3.1 Improved decision making

Knowledge and the multidisciplinary approach allows for greater clarity around making a decision. With more strings to your bow a more rounded and improved decision can be reached when needed. This will bring our dairy industry forward and help us meet and succeed with our 2020 Food Harvest targets.

1.3.2 Avoiding mistakes

Improved problem solving creates personal gain in business and life generally. Leitissimo, a successful New Zealand start up dairy in Brazil, has been developed and grown from scratch (Lindsay, 2014). Problems had to be worked through in a 'learn as you go' process. This is never an ideal way to learn. However a scientific approach with diligence and determination has seen the company succeed.

When the clarity of the overall business is unshakable, this allows for day to day problems to be solved more easily. Having a clear ‘bigger picture’ gives a framework where mistakes are minimal.

Successful dairy farmers are very open to learning from the best in their field and relevant science and they know what science *is relevant*. They are clear on their goals and just do it better and more efficiently. Clarity and focus are a powerful combination, allowing huge amounts of irrelevant 'noise' to be filtered out. This means that most executed policies add directly to the bottom line or assist in growing the business.

When taking an opportunity in dairy farming, Mark Townshend would see his three biggest risks as “people, people and people” (Townshend, Interview, Dairy Farmer , 2013). He’s clear on his farming system and is adamant that in order to avoid failure, finding good people is key.

2. Roadmap for development

The chapter lays out methods of development that can be undertaken by people on Irish dairy farms. It will also be of good use to other agri-sectors and people in other industries.

2.1 Ways of developing people

2.1.1 Open Forums

Attending open forums such as open days or regular discussion group meetings is a great way for farmers to get together. Sharing and comparing of information leads to better work practices and has a fantastic social and networking aspect. Teagasc Open days such as those at Teagasc, Moorepark facilitate the transfer of detailed scientific learning to farmers. Farming can be an isolated sport so attending open days or regular discussion group meetings allows farmers to interact, build friendships and improve their confidence and social skills.

Networking helps find opportunities that can promote development. Discussion groups play a pivotal role here allowing positive competition through peer and facilitator knowledge transfer.

This *positive peer pressure* occurs once a month in a discussion group scenario and keeps farmers on their toes in a field of work that can often be without feedback. The effect over a few meetings can be small but over a lifetime can be huge.

In 2008 Teagasc brought out the DEP (Dairy Efficiency Programme) which incentivised dairy farmers to join a discussion group. This programme sets targets for group members such as completion of a profit monitor. Next is an example of the marked benefit groups can have (Bogue, 2013).

Economic Performance: Established, New and Non-Members (2011)

Economic Indicator	Established Members	New (DEP) Members	Non-Members
Net Margin (cent per litre)	14.5	12.1	11.6
Costs per hectare (€)	2,260	2,327	2,150
Net Margin per hectare (€)	1,516	1,234	1,050

Teagasc found some improvements across every measure that the report examined showing

that immediate and significant improvement is there for those that seek it.

With our industry set to grow, discussion groups for farm managers and employees would be of benefit. For this to succeed farmers must disseminate all financial and technical information. Seamus Quigley, dairy farmer from Nenagh said he was at first reluctant but now thinks it's very important to share the data that shows how the farm compares to other farms (Quigley, 2014).

2.1.2 Empowerment

Putting trust in people and allowing them to get on with the job gives a sense of achievement when success is gained in certain tasks. Success can never really be obtained without responsibility sitting firmly at the foot of the designated person.

In the book 'Zapp Lightning of Empowerment', the following five ideas are put forward to improve quality, productivity and employee satisfaction (Byham, 1998):

1. *Maintain or enhance self esteem*
2. *Listen and respond with empathy*
3. *Share thoughts, feelings and rationale*
4. *Ask for help and encourage involvement*
5. *Provide support without removing responsibility for action*

Again the last point on ensuring 'responsibility for action' is the most important principal to allow development. The author refers to this as the 'Soul of Zapp'.

At farm level this comes down to giving a job and trusting that the person carries it out. It's important that once shown how to carry out a particular role that the person is allowed to do it themselves. The 'how' it's done is not important. What is important is that it gets done. Advice should be withheld until asked for. Open questions like 'are you happy with the outcome?' can get the person to suggest ways of doing it better.

At Leitissimo "installing quality pasture farming traits and work ethic in all our staff is one of our focuses" (Lindsay, 2014). These traits then enable the staff to be proficient and proactive in their working environment and allow them to make their own decisions.

Building a great team around you gives you every chance to reach your potential. You can learn from your close team network. Make sure your team is the best and don't be afraid to

move if the support isn't there. A great team creates an empowering environment for the farmer to strive for success in his business.

A critical business team for a farmer would include: accountant, solicitor, bank manager, agricultural consultant and agricultural contractors.

2.1.3 Mentoring

Mentoring allows you to learn from the experiences of professionals within and outside of your own area of expertise.

More developed people with very high standards raise the expectations of their colleagues and subordinates, and the inverse is most definitely true with farm managers struggling under ineffective owners. Virtually all of these owners or managers had capacity to improve and 'the rising tide lifts all boats' syndrome should take effect over time.

The best way to learn is to *seek out the absolute best people* who have done it and learn from them. Warren Buffett would mention his Columbia Professor Ben Graham as being his most important mentor (Value Investing Pro, 2009). Likewise Irish Dairy farmer Michael Murphy would say that dairy farmer John Leeson, whom he did an apprenticeship with, had a profound effect on his development and thinking (Positive Farmers Conference). An example from the Damer Group was the late Lexie Borland who developed a dairy business in Nenagh with no land and little capital by learning from the right people and having a great mentor in John Powell.

Enda Hawe, from Windgap, Kilkenny was Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the year in 2012 in New Zealand. Enda advocates *positive industry role models and mentors*. Enda has made great leaps forward in the New Zealand Dairy industry since his first job as herd manager in Dunsandel in 2004. He now runs a 50:50 sharemilking operation in Oxford, Canterbury. Enda credits much of his success to his own mentor Ray Seebeck whom he worked with. Ray actually acted as guarantor on Enda's first loan (Hawe, 2013). Enda said Ray was always open and honest with his business from day one (Regan, 2013).

Generally successful dairy farmers are open and honest when asked to give information on how their success was achieved. They often get a kick out of helping younger people achieve their goals and human instinct brings out a love of telling their story. If farmers enter partnerships to grow their business or to free up time to enjoy life, doing more than you are

expected is often very important. It gives the partnership a culture beyond financial gain and very often financial or personal gain can come later on.

This was a major feature amongst all the people interviewed or asked for help in this study which are all successful and well rounded in their own right. No one withheld information and all were generous with their time. This often leads to *reciprocation* which can greatly improve personal and business life (Ciadini, 2007). It is a likely contributor to their success in many cases.

Choose your friends wisely.

“It’s better to hang out with people better than you. Pick out associates whose behaviour is better than yours and you’ll drift in that direction”.

Warren Buffett

Help your colleagues and friends to find successful mentors. It’s important to be an open minded mentor not an authority. Look amongst your discussion group and other network groups. Find the best people and learn from the way they work and think.

2.1.4 Networking

Whether taking part in discussion groups, finding mentors, travelling or finding a friend on Facebook it’s all networking. Building a local and global network is great for development. It’s a great way to find the best people and to find the best opportunities.

Discussion Groups are the most common network for Irish Dairy farmers but other business networks would include Co-Op Groups, Irish Grassland Association, Irish Farm Managers Association and Nuffield Ireland amongst others.

Social media is a great way of making connections to the best. It helps farmers keep up to date with the views and opinions of the best people in the industry and creates a gateway for contact. Twitter has become a major day to day portal for the latest comments and news of the day.

“Education, network and benchmark. Never claim to know it all, network with people and benchmark yourself against the best.”

Enda Hawe (Regan, 2013)

2.1.5 Reading

Reading is absolutely essential for development. Your state of knowledge must be in constant forward flux. Books, papers, internet articles, etc. give personal access to the brightest minds and greatest leaders in any field you can imagine. Reading is the best way to give you an education on a range of different topics that you would otherwise find difficult to access due to geography or time limitations.

YouTube gives fantastic access to the worlds' greatest minds. It can aid reading as a research tool. You can listen to the opinions of the best people on any topic. Before doing anything, one must review all relevant knowledge on a topic. Reading and learning from those with the most knowledge on a subject is the path to take.

“In my whole life, I have known no wise people who didn't read all the time -- none, zero. You'd be amazed at how much Warren (Buffett) reads -- at how much I read. My children laugh at me. They think I'm a book with a couple of legs sticking out”.

Charles T. Munger (Kaufman, 2006)

2.1.6 Taking part in competitions

Competitions bring the best out in people. Participation sharpens the skills of the participants and focuses the mind on what really matters. The pressurised environment draws out a professionalism that would not normally be reached by even the best people. It brings about a renewed focus on clear goals. It helps formulate detailed plans for achievement and exposes the participants to other highly skilled people. It really is the taking part that counts.

Another benefit is the clarity brought to on-farm thinking which can be eroded by marketers, resistance from others to change, and head in the sand mentalities. New networks are formed with like minded individuals, giving access to progressive thinking and friendly competition, and helping people achieve their goals.

New Zealand Dairy Industry Awards Sharemilker/Equity Farmer of the Year 2011 Jason and Lisa Suisted had very detailed future plans (Suisted & Suisted, 2013). Their focus on their goals and future was presented with remarkable clarity. Their dedication to improvement and learning has already paid them huge dividends in their business. They have moved from a smaller sharemilking job to a larger herd, in a very competitive market for 50:50 sharemilking jobs.

Since winning the Dairy Excellence Farm Business Award, Donald and Maree Anderson from Taranaki, New Zealand, have grown a large dairy business, and Donald has gone on to complete 4 years studying Agri-Business Management (Anderson & Anderson, 2013). Sharpened business focus has allowed Donald and Maree to grow a very profitable successful dairy business which now has expanded to multiple farm units.

2.1.7 Time for reflection

This mainly involves removing yourself from your day to day chores to allow time to think. Getting away allows you to see the bigger picture. Whether it is deciding your personal and business goals or strategically planning your businesses future, it can be very important and valuable time to set aside.

There are many benefits of getting out of the fire of everyday life and allowing a calm disassociated look at your situation, For example Bill Gates, one of the finest thinkers in the world today, goes on what he terms are “think weeks”. This gives him a chance outside of work pressures to evaluate his life and work situations (Gates, 2008).

Cork Dairy Farmer Michael Murphy suggests 2 hours per week of strategic planning is optimum. This is high value work which pays dividends over time.

2.1.8 Family influence

Discussions on finance and progress at the family table have helped educate successful dairy farmers outside the educational system. Open family discussions on investment, changing the system or how trying new ideas affects the future prospects of the dairy farm generates a business like ethic in the next generations mind. This sets up the children with a realistic view on problems and obstacles to be overcome within their parents business, learning how to solve these challenges doles out fantastic on the spot life lessons to the children. Mark Townshend reports that his father encouraged him to grow the business and that his father “kindled the spirit” of his kids (Townshend, 2013).

If good family influence is not available, networking and finding mentors becomes even more important to the development of young people in dairying.

2.1.9 Realisation of personal limitations

There's no doubt a few very successful farmers are all rounder's, however virtually all farmers fall down on some of the skills needed. Improvement of each skill is paramount and allows for a better running business but some people are for example more naturally adept at dealing with people than others no matter what training is received.

A key point is that really successful people are capable of recognising weak areas in their skill set. If they can't sufficiently improve a skill then their time is better spent elsewhere. A fix for this is bringing in external skilled people or hire complimentary people. A common mistake made by managers in hiring people in larger scale operations is bringing in employees that are of similar character to them. If you take a rugby team as an example, a team of scrum halves would not win any match.

Mark Townshend would say nobody is good at all traits needed in dairying. He says you should work out what you're good at, improve some areas where possible and hire people to cover the other areas where you are weak (Townshend, 2013).

2.2.10 Capacity to lead

Growth in knowledge base, personal growth, and life experience increases ones' ability to lead people. This is critical in a growing dairy business as dependence on people outside the family becomes paramount. In a small business like dairy farming if you want to grow your enterprise you must lead from the front and show the way. This builds confidence and backing of those around you thus enhancing the development of a better working environment. The best farmers in New Zealand are still the 'spiritual leaders' of their business and looked up to by those who work for them. According to Mark Townshend leaders "can't lead without integrity" and "have to do the hard yards"(Townshend, 2013).

"As a leader of people you have to be a great listener, great motivator, very good at praising and looking for the best in people".

Richard Branson, Virgin, (Big Think, 2011)

Looking at this quote from Branson, it's clear that these characteristics need to be practised and consciously adhered too. This requires constructive self-criticism and it may help to receive feedback from others to become aware of weak areas. Farmers must listen to their employees or their team.

2.2.11 Travel

Travel helps broaden the mind. It advocates a go and see attitude and has helped many successful individuals. Yearly farmer and consultant trips from Ireland to New Zealand have helped bring home usable and adaptable levels of knowledge which in the last 20 years has had a revolutionary effect on Irish dairy farming. UCD Dairy Business students travel to New Zealand as part of their 3rd year practical training. This allows students access to learning opportunities who otherwise would not get the chance to experience different thinking, culture and working environment. It not only develops dairy knowledge but encourages independence and builds confidence in experiencing the world at large as well as learning from others.

Many Irish Nuffield scholars have travelled and met incredible people. They learned from them, helped them in their own business as well as creating a knowledge transfer to other farmers. A good example of travel for the benefit of Irish dairy farmers is David Kerr's Nuffield paper (Kerr, 2007).

2.2.12 Provide a career pathway

Some staff work effectively when a clear career pathway is put in front of them. It keeps them positive and motivated in their work and hungry for learning and improvement.

Enrique Milagres, farm manager at Agroexport, Minas Gervais, Brazil started working for Leitissimo as an animal science graduate on a two month work placement. He quickly moved up the ladder to become farm manager. For personal and social reasons Enrique left Leitissimo. He is now managing all the livestock for export and a small milking herd for Agroexport on their large farm of 5000ha. Enrique is so good that the company is starting to realise grass (Tifton 85) based dairying is more profitable than sugar cane, corn and their other crops (Milagres, 2014). Providing a career path like this in Leitissimo can enhance the contribution of young people to the dairy industry.

JBS Group in Brazil had trainee managers' work in different facilities and then they wrote a report on how improvements to processing could be made. This can be used on farm by giving staff responsibility over various roles such as milking, breeding or grass management.



Mark Rochford (right), with Tadgh Bourke (left), Head of HR Operations Americas and Ger Dwyer(middle), Finance Director, Business Intelligence, Google

New Zealand has a well developed ladder of progress for ambitious and improving young talent. Successful New Zealanders have gone from farm hand to farm ownership in the course of their career and some to multiple farm ownership. Industry support networks such as Ag ITO provide training to help sharemilkers and general workers achieve the skills needed for success. New skills are required as people progress up the value chain.



A typical career path taken by NZ Dairy farmers

2.2.13 Sport, teamwork and community involvement

As a development tool, involvement in social organisations is fantastic. Learning how to interact with others and being part of a team are helpful throughout life. The value of winning and more importantly learning how to lose as part of a team, helps us recover from the vicissitudes of life. Macra is an outstanding youth development organisation giving people the chance to take part in everything from sport to drama. This builds confidence in many areas in a friendly enjoyable environment,

Networks and friendships are built supporting personal development. Participating in or helping a social cause can give great benefit to the person and gives perspective regarding business achievements.

2.2.14 Education

2.2.14.1 Higher level education

Great levels of knowledge are available to those who take higher level courses in Ireland or abroad. Access to academics with lifetimes spent researching topics can give huge leaps forward to younger and older students alike. It is important that the subject of choice be one that is of interest to gain greatest benefit.

The very fact of attending a third level course gives access to new friends and an established network. Giving young people access to a wide variety of views and people enhances their social development. Independence and confidence is gained as these young people leave home and in a sense strike out for themselves. It is the opinion of the author who attended third level for four years that the student should live away from home while in college and avoid the daily commute. This allows full emersion in a new way of life and social setting.

2.2.14.2 Educational courses

Formal education is often a starting point requirement to make the step up to becoming a manager or employee. To derive value from exceptional people a basic background of knowledge is required in a range of skills. In Ireland Teagasc delivers the Green Cert as the basic foundation for students that go through the Agricultural College system. The Green Cert can also be undertaken part time through online distance learning. The current Green Cert allows students to specialise in a certain area such as dairy once the basics are known

(Kelly, 2014). Teagasc have recently offered young people a Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management which shows the organisation is quickly adapting to the needs of the industry.

Bolt on courses should be taken through life where required. Larger dairy farm businesses in Ireland are becoming more complex with some farmers taking courses in corporate governance matching their stage of development. DCU Ryan Academy Farm Entrepreneurship and Leadership Programme that is set to run, is delivers business skills and tools for enterprising farmers (DCU Ryan Academy, 2014). Teagasc are set to run a Strategic Business Management course to meet the needs of growing farm businesses (Kelly, 2014).

Seamus Quigley, dairy farmer from Nenagh has instructed his employees to take artificial insemination and hoof paring courses. Even though professional technicians still do most of this work this gives them an appreciation of these important on farm tasks. His farm manager has also completed a labour management course (Quigley, 2014).

AG ITO in New Zealand provides training for different levels of farm knowledge and positions (Primary ITO, 2014). Larger scale dairy farming requires increased dependence on employed labour. People need support with time and money. It's a huge aid to the industry and is something that agricultural bodies in Ireland should look at. Demand for such courses has been low in Ireland due to the stagnation of our dairy industry with quota restrictions. However going forward, the offer of a range of courses even one per year should be looked at. Jason and Lisa Suisted are benefiting from this and have used AG ITO as a tool to advance their careers in the dairy industry.

Recently the Farm Relief Service in conjunction with the expertise of Teagasc and AHI (Animal Health Ireland) has developed a Milking Course. Teagasc recently ran an "Employing Labour on Dairy Farms" pilot workshop, with Nuffield Scholar and Agricultural Solicitor Aisling Meehan one of the speakers at the event.

This is an excellent step forward in day to day training for the Dairy industry. These 'just in time' courses help farmers overcome the next hurdles in their businesses. Training needs must be constantly monitored by these bodies. The establishment of a dairy industry training body in conjunction with Teagasc and other stakeholders could be considered a future step with short courses for farmers and their employees.

3. Corporate People Development

3.1 Introduction

“A company is simply a group of people.”

Richard Branson (Big Think, 2011)

Irish dairy farmers can learn a lot from larger businesses and multinationals on how they develop their people. For these larger business to function they must take in the best people and help them to improve. In the interview with Tadgh Bourke, Head of Google HR Operations Americas, said: “Just like Manchester United, we ask ourselves who are the top 5 people in the world in each role”(Bourke & Dwyer, 2014). Even single owner operated farms still require a large team or “group of people” to operate from the AI man to the accountant.

3.2 Development

Corporate development is normally formal with companies having well developed mission and vision statements which give the basis for their existence.

Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.

Google’s Mission Statement (Google, 2014)

These statements allow people in Google to focus on what management wants. This creates more harmony amongst large groups and allows pathways for development. This simple mission statement should encourage farmers and the employees to think of their own business mission. This would give undoubted clarity and focus to their work.

3.3 Performance measurement

Detailed feedback was part of the culture at Google with performance intensely measured across the following main topics (Bourke & Dwyer, 2014):

1. *Problem Solving*
2. *Domain Expertise (Process and Product Management in your own role)*
3. *Leadership*

4. *Conscientiousness & Collaboration*

The initiative required by Google from their employees is clear from the problem solving, leadership and collaboration headings above. It's not enough just to do your job and leave you must show innovation and initiative. Farm workers should be encouraged to try new things within their roles and constant improvement of practices must be the culture.

In the Great Place to Work 2013 white paper the best companies made a considerable investment in training programs, offering 66.5 hours training for salaried employees and 53 hours for hourly employees. 70% of the time was spent on the current role of the employees and 30% was spent on growth and development (Great Place to Work, 2013). How many farmers can say that about their employees?

At Google rotational working was practiced with employees working in different offices in order to give people experience and encourage knowledge transfer and learning. American Express has a six month overseas development programme where a particular project is taken up. This could be adapted on farms, with people given different roles annually or moving abroad to work on different farms for experience, bringing home valuable knowledge and insight.

3.4 Motivating People

Motivating people is more about fairness and public recognition than money. In Google, \$100 spot bonuses or tickets to a sport or theatre event are often given to a well performing team member. This publically rewards the person and brings a sense of competition and improvement to those around.

For farmers it's important to thank people working for them and publicly acknowledge people where possible. For staff it's not all about money. A simple note of thanks and a statement of what someone did well can mean a huge amount (Bourke & Dwyer, 2014). If you return to Maslows' Hierarchy of Needs, public recognition and the respect of others builds self esteem and confidence.

Praising people when they get something right or excel on a project or job is a fantastic way to motivate them and increase the feel good factor around their role. This can make people hungry for the next task. In conversation with Edmond Harty, Dairymaster he commented on how, if a team wins or achieves a goal *"they are buzzing and looking forward to the next*

thing” (Harty, 2013).

“Public recognition matters”.

Tadgh Bourke (Bourke & Dwyer, 2014)

“People are no different from flowers, if you water flowers they flourish, if you praise people they flourish”.

Richard Branson (Big Think, 2011)

Some companies use sets of principles for keeping up performance and development. JBS and Agroexport in Brazil had examples of this.



Values expected at the JBS Meatworks, Goiana, Brazil, posted over the entrance for all to see. The sign reads ‘Our Values: Excellence, Planning, Determination, Discipline, Frankness, Availability, Simplicity.

Agroexport used a 5 star Japanese system (Milagres, 2014). They had 300 staff in total. Once a month a HR company would come in check that set indicators were adhered to and set further standards for improvement.

4. Measuring performance

4.1 Introduction

Targets and goals are very important for development and achievement in both personal and business life. Measuring goal completion, aiming and measuring for constant improvement will result in huge dividends over time.

In research carried out by Psychology Professor Gail Matthews at the Dominican University, California the following was found (Matthews, 2006):

1. *The positive effect of accountability was supported:* those who sent *weekly progress reports to their friend* accomplished significantly more than those who had unwritten goals, wrote their goals, formulated action commitments or sent those action commitments to a friend.
2. *There was support for the role of public commitment:* those who *sent their commitments to a friend* accomplished significantly more than those who wrote action commitments or did not write their goals.
3. *The positive effect of written goals was supported:* Those who *wrote their goals* accomplished significantly more than those who did not write their goals.

These results suggest that *coaching* by someone or being accountable to someone will have a huge bearing on the achievement of your goals. Like the physical training of a football team a coach continually pushes you to achieve your potential. There's a huge opportunity for discussion groups to set individual goals and be accountable to other group members. Group members could help improve each other's personal and business life, whether it be health or financial.

To develop an effort must be made to measure performance. This requires setting goals or targets through a framework that supports their achievement.

4.2 On-farm mission statement

People want recognition for achieving their tasks or goals. In order for this to happen, clear plans must be set in place on the farm.

Everybody on the farm should know what the farm is about and where it's going. This gives

clarity for the farmer and staff working on the farm. When goals are achieved people should feel a part of them and having a mission statement gives these goals clarity and a reason for achieving them. All the people on the farm should have an input into what is set out in the mission statement (Block, 2013).

4.3 Transparency

Mission statements must be reviewed and improved. Clear plans for the future of the farm should be developed and open to all. This transparency allows everyone to feel part of the farms development. This will give a sense that everyone is contributing to the success of the business. Transparency around goal setting and the mission statement motivates people to contribute, help out with tasks outside their area and feel like they are a valuable part of the bigger picture, giving them the confidence to participate and grow.

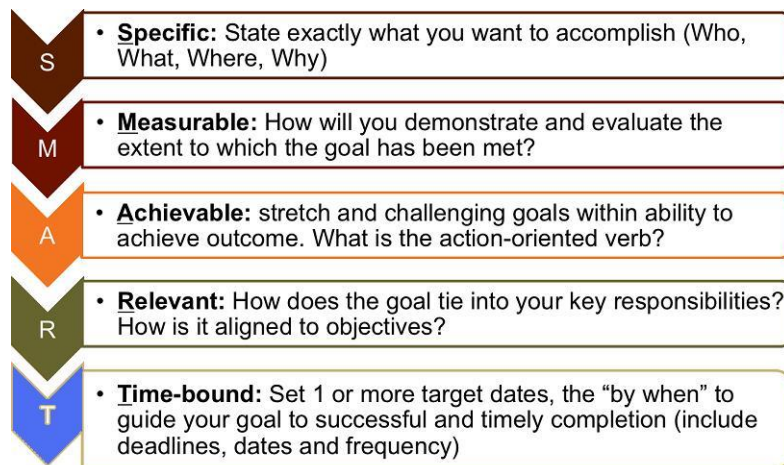
4.4 Voice

By giving a voice to other family members and staff, it allows them to share their ideas and put their beliefs and knowledge into action where applicable. By giving everyone a voice this could lead to anarchy but Google have found that every process still has one decision maker and with data driven discussion to the fore dissenters can accept decisions (Block, 2013).

4.5 Goal Setting

Improving personal development in any part of your life can be difficult and requires the big word 'change'. Improvements in family relationships, health, knowledge and business or job skills are the source of happiness.

Goal setting should be the corner stone to personal improvement. You need to set a course for yourself or you'll never arrive anywhere in particular. Like the ship that sets sail with no destination you'll drift and may even hit the rocks. SMART goals as per the picture below allow you to fully grasp what your goals should look like.



One of the many formats for SMART goal setting

Farm business goals stem from the values of the farmer and the mission statement. Former Farmers Journal Dairy editor and now development coach Con Hurley says that “Goals are the fuel that power success in life” (Hurley, 2009).

4.6 Measuring employee performance

In order to measure performance, clear roles and responsibilities need to be laid out. Informal meetings once weekly over breakfast are one way to keep tabs on daily and weekly chores. However, you must also continually address the long term goals of the farm, keeping a focus on what's really important to the farmer, employees and the business. In KPMG employees write their own review stressing their strengths and weaknesses before discussing the same with their supervisor (Mulcahy, 2014). To me this seems quite effective in reducing direct criticism. People generally know where they performed well and underperformed.

Ben Curti of Curtimade Dairy California looked amused when asked how he developed his employees (Curti, 2014). The farm had 36 employees, mostly from South America. Due to this, all training was on the job from fellow employees. This shows that even some large scale farmers are unaware of the benefits of employee development. This may be due to the fact that there is no obvious financial gain for the farmer or the farm. A culture of improvement is what is found in most successful businesses at every level.

Whatever happens in life you must push onward and encourage people you work with to create their own goals. More developed people create opportunities for themselves *and* for those around them. As Steve Jobs said in his famous Stanford speech 'you can't connect the dots looking forwards, you can only connect them looking backwards'(Jobs, 2005). In this

speech Jobs says how he dropped in on a calligraphy course in Stanford at the time just because he enjoyed it. He was able to inadvertently use this knowledge years later when creating the ‘beautiful’ type face for the Macintosh computer. This shows we should be open to opportunities no matter where they come from.

Personal improvement requires diligence and sometimes hard work but the challenge is ultimately rewarding. Motivation must come from within but can be helped by rewarding yourself with something to look forward to like a well deserved break or night out.

4.7 Measuring on-farm Performance

Dairy farming can be broken down into 5 different functions (Townshend, 2013):

1. *Caring for animals*
2. *Grass management*
3. *Handyman jobs*
4. *Dealing with people*
5. *Financial knowledge*

For farmers and employees to improve at farm level the following five functions can be measured and tagged for improvement. KPI’S listed below for each of the five functions can be measured annually and help to classify the skill level to be obtained in each area. A training or improvement plan can be drawn up based on functions that need more work.

4.8 Understanding Win-win

A sixth function is understanding win-win. This involves seeing the bigger picture for a business. It helps create easy to manage situations and relationships where everyone experiences a mutual benefit. Employees that are very good in this area can be a great help in growing the business and would be good candidates for equity positions.

4.9 Townshends' matrix for measuring performance, adapted for Irish Farmers (Townshend, Development Matrix, 2013):

Skill Classification

	Grass	Animal	People	Financial	Fix Anything	Understands
	Management	Management	Management	Management	R & M and Asset Prot.	Win- Win
Very Strong	Grass Budget Competent	Natural Instinct	Selects Well - Trains Well	Runs a positive Profit & Loss a/c	Can find own solutions	Prepared to give to gain
Strong	Monitors & Manages Grass well	Little vet support required	Leads Well - Removes if Req.	Manages cash flow well	Protects Assets very well	Looks at operation holistically
Good	Needs critiquing	Likes animals	Leads Effectively	Understands their Budget	Understand asset operation	Cooperative
Building Strength	Weekly budgets completed	Learning about animals	Needs help with People Judgement	Asks financial Questions	Farm tidy and in good nick	
Adequate	Does well with some support	Knows what should happen	Solid but not a leader	Has some basic understanding	Knows the basics- Farm OK	Everything is negotiated
Needs Support	Needs both prompting & support	Animal Inexperienced	Needs someone to help with people	Weakness - wants to improve	Farm a little untidy	
Deficient	Farm restricting	Dislikes Animals	Not a Leader	Financially Incompetent	Farm going backwards	Places self interest above all

KPIs to Measure

	Grass	Animal	People	Financial	Fix Anything	Understands
	Management	Management	Management	Management	Repair & Main. and Asset Prot.	Win- Win
	Regularity of Farm Walks	Death Rate	Staff Retention	Operational Profit	Ownership Pride	
	Accuracy of Grass Budget	Cull Rate	Developing 2nd In Command's	Monitors Budget vs Actual	Farm befitting of Food prod.	
	Acting promptly	Pregnancy Rate	Leads a "team"	Involved in Budget Process	Weeds controlled	
		Heifer calf mortality rates	Good Health & Safety Record	Saves money him-herself	Low R & M Costs	

The following tool is a fantastic measuring device that can be used at farm level from managers to general workers. This tool can be adapted by any farmer or manager. Discussion groups could use it as a tool to help farmers improve weak areas or encourage them to seek help elsewhere.

Dairy Holdings give blunt feedback that hits between the eyes (Glass, 2013). Some people are offended and move on, the better will try and improve. Colin Glass, CEO regarded both outcomes as very positive for the company. You don't want the people who are not willing to work to improve.

4.10 The Performance Management Cycle (Dairy NZ, 2014)

There are 5 simple steps:

1. *Plan* - means having an accurate job description and agreeing with your employees about what their key tasks, responsibilities and targets are.
2. *Observe* - means supporting and observing your employees while they do their job.
3. *Feedback* - means giving regular positive and constructive feedback. You should give at least twice as much feedback on what someone does well as what they do wrong.
4. *Train and Coach* - means providing on and/or off farm training for your employees so that they can grow their skills and do their jobs effectively.
5. *Review* - means formally reviewing your employees work performance with them so they can develop and improve further.

This format from Dairy NZ provides a step by step approach to improving farmers and employees. Again farmers should rely on their discussion groups for feedback. An annual review on each farmer by three close group members would allow coaching and encouragement to take place. Coaches should be sought if discussion groups do not suit the situation. Employees on farm will be able to complete the cycle with the manager or farm owner.

Conclusion

Introduction

Development of farmers and their employees leads to better decision making in business and personal life. Clear goals ensure targets are set for achievement, bringing the person forward.

Endeavour to become an expert in your field. Read, research and calculate for yourself. The more knowledge acquired across a range of subjects allows for better decision making. This will make a huge difference over time. The more skills available to the farmer allow him to filter out the noise and see the factual reality of a situation.

Developing

Knowledge of both hard and soft sciences enhances decision making, taking both quantitative and qualitative functions of different scenarios, helps form more accurate models and ensures more success from decisions taken.

A multidisciplinary approach to development is key, as all life's tough decisions require a mix of skills. Focus, clarity, diligence are needed to follow through and constantly improve your development.

CAN I is an acronym for 'Constant and Never-Ending Improvement'. This is essential as your development journey never stops no matter what level you reach. There is always more to learn and improve upon.

Roadmap for development

There are many ways to develop listed in this report. The person themselves must choose what suits them at a particular time. However, the mainstays of development for farmers remain the same such as:

- Reading
- Networking
- A clear and interesting approach to learning
- Reflection

Measuring Performance

Personal

Measuring performance starts with identifying what you want to do and setting clear goals around this. Written goals are vastly superior and leave outstanding results overtime.

Personal goals must ensure a work-life balance and stretch the person in every field. Mission statements and vision statements set a bigger picture and give a framework into which goals fit.

Employees

Employees should be encouraged to develop their skills and have their own goals. On farm investment in employee training should be budgeted for and work practices should allow for development in different areas.

Competence in different areas should be measured and a plan put in place for improvement in weak areas. Feedback on performances should be clear, open and honest and “between the eyes”.

The performance measurement matrix included in the report gives a solid foundation from which to measure in farm performance.

Corporate Development

With larger scale dairies cropping up, corporate people development warrants an examination. Techniques and formal approaches to improving people have created dividends for large businesses.

Rotational working, investing in personal development outside of the employees’ role, and public recognition of achievements are some of the many lessons farmers can learn and bring into their business.

“Development never ends; it is a wonderful process of understanding and discovery.”

Author

Recommendations

- Goal setting is critical for progress within both personal and business life. Goal setting must happen within a clear framework brought about by reflection on what is needed. Goals must be written. A mission statement would set out the framework for goal setting. Goal setting and mission statements should be focused on by discussion groups where members act as coaches to each other, holding each other to account.
- Larger businesses around the world, both farming and non-farming, make a deliberate effort to improve work practices or develop people. This needs to happen at farm level. Investment in the farmer and staff should be planned and budgeted for annually.
- Measurement of on farm performance would set in motion a culture of continuous improvement of skills needed for on farm success. Annual training plans should detail relevant areas for improvement. The development matrix outlined in this report could be adopted and adjusted easily to suit Irish dairy farms.
- Teagasc should evaluate dairy industry training needs. A focused industry training body should be established, linking everything from milk skills to corporate governance. Teagasc are providing excellent on farm education as well as informative seminars and open days but courses and training are disjointed. While there may be a laissez faire attitude to development generally amongst dairy farmers, there is a strong support network available in Ireland. Further improvement is needed especially for larger farm businesses, i.e. employee management and training.
- Due to the broad nature of the topic, further study by Nuffield would be of benefit to Irish farmers. Measuring performance, adapting corporate people development techniques and mentoring should be further studied and refined.

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