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From the Back Paddock to the Board Room:
Dairy Women's Network and Pathways to Gender
Diversity in Governance

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The highlight of my report was connecting with these people.

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Executive Summary

Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without. ~ William Sloane Coffin Jr.

Dairy farming in New Zealand has advanced so much in the last decade. The transferable skills and strategic mindset that women develop from farming could qualify them for roles in banking, trades, accounting, animal health, HR and psychology, just to name a few.

I explored the ways that we can get dairy farming women into New Zealand boardrooms to see better outcomes for our businesses and economy. This is not about men versus women or disregarding the importance of experience, it is about what we need to do to be closing the gender gap on boards, having diversity of thought around the boardroom and avoiding 'group think'. It is about the individual having the confidence to bring their true self to the table and express their views.

For this study I conducted semi-structured interviews with 9 amazing women who have had an affiliation with Dairy Women's Network (DWN) in some capacity, whether it has been since the beginning of the network, on the trust board, as Regional Leaders, or winning Dairy Woman of the Year and other awards offered through DWN. They are all based in New Zealand and represent gender diversity in the boardroom. I asked them about their journey to commercial governance and how they achieved it. I also spoke to 10 women and men represented on other agri-business boards in New Zealand to get their opinions.

The women I have spoken to have a great drive, determination and commitment for change. For the women who won Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year and other awards offered through DWN, it has given them the profile and funding to further educate themselves and gain confidence and visibility, which has contributed to their further successes.

Please note that I have formed my conclusions from a small pool of women whom I interviewed between September 2020 to February 2021, the outcomes could change with a bigger group. I interviewed women who in some cases were appointed, and other cases that were in farmer elected directorships. I decided not to delve into the percentage of women going for appointed versus elected roles as I believe it is another report.

I have also done a literature review to gain an understanding of the importance of having more women on boards for diversity of thought which results in an increase of companies performance. More representation of women on boards creates the change that needs to be implemented at a high level. I explored the need to see more women on boards and the current shortage of female representation in the boardroom. One of the reasons for fewer women on boards appears to be a lack of confidence or imposter syndrome.

Imposter syndrome is the voice inside our head, experienced by both men and women. It most often comes to the forefront of our mind when we are challenging ourselves and pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone. It is the feeling of being a fraud and that someone will catch us out, because we don't feel qualified enough for the job we are expected to perform. In my research I found it affects women more often than men and stops us from taking that next step into the unknown.

Vulnerability, resilience, and the power of the mind can affect our behaviours and hinder future opportunities. As women we need to learn to manage the 'coach' and the 'critic' to create better outcomes for ourselves.

Following are some of the main recommendations that have come out of my findings to see an increase of women in the boardroom:

- Let people know you are looking for a board role.
- Women need to support each other and utilise networks for visibility.
- Women should constantly be learning and upskilling.
- Have a strong governance CV and have it ready.
- Be prepared to be yourself and use your USP: unique selling proposition.

It is important to recognise the role of networks like DWN in helping women to build confidence, and in providing support for when they move outside of their comfort zones. The network plays a major part in the increasing representation of women on boards.

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About the Author

I was fortunate enough to grow up on a dairy farm. I have one older brother and two younger sisters. Leadership was ingrained in me from a young age as I had to lead by example to my siblings.

My mother was the traditional housewife who met a farmer and gave up her career to raise a family, support her husband and in charge of all domestic duties. She was involved in the growth and success of local community groups like anti-natal, playgroup, Plunket, and coached sports teams. All in the best interest of her children with no acknowledgement that this was governance at a community level.

I have been full time dairy farming for over 10 years, and a passion of mine is to be constantly learning and evolving.

I became a Regional Leader for DWN in 2017. Being part of DWN was a turning point for me. It was the first time since moving to the Waikato that I felt 'a sense of place'. I finally felt like I belonged to something.

DWN has contributed to my successes and given me the confidence to push myself out of my comfort zone, to take on new challenges and learn new skills. It has opened my eyes to the possibilities of governance and the importance of having competent skill sets in the boardroom to run a New Zealand business.

I currently hold my first "future director" position. A great initiative that the Institute of Directors (IoD) has implemented to encourage people to start their governance journeys early in their careers. My hope in the future is to see a wide pool of fresh ideas, new thinking, and a diversity of people in New Zealand boardrooms.

I am not one to fully utilise my networks. Writing this report has given me the confidence and push to get out there and connect with my networks to get a further understanding about my topic. This is the first time I have written a report of this degree. It has been a huge learning adjustment and an exciting challenge.

Introduction

This report discusses the importance of women in commercial governance roles and the untapped potential of dairy women behind the farm gate. As the first self-governing country to grant women the vote, gender equality has historically always been at the forefront of our nation's objectives. Is the representation of women on our boards displaying this?

In the early days dairy women's voices were probably not heard. They were at home nurturing the family or working in off-farm jobs. This report will talk about the history of DWN and why it was formed. I will explore the factors that contribute to the slow representation of women on boards. I will explore the emotional side of how women are wired for example the effect of imposter syndrome and the pathways that networks like DWN create towards positioning women in governance roles.

I am aware that diversity includes ethnicity, culture, age, and education. For my research I have chosen to explore and focus on gender diversity.

This study is based on my observations and interpretations from the people I have interviewed, and the literature review I have undertaken.

1. Methodology

Information was collected between September 2020 and February 2021. This report is based on qualitative research by way of semi-structured interviews and a literature review.

I set out to find if there is a gender imbalance on boards in New Zealand. What I discovered during my research was that I needed to step back further and look more into the genetic make-up of women and the 'natural' limitations women come across in their careers.

I undertook two different types of research. The first one was a literature review – the two most useful platforms that took me to many more sources of information were the following:

1. "Take your space" successful women share their secrets, Jo Cribb and Rachel Petero. This book came out in late 2020 and is an amazing resource for women to refer to when "taking their space" in the workplace and in their career. It has accounts of women's stories and experiences and I felt it to be very relatable.
2. The other source I found very helpful was the Global Women's website. Global Women was referred to often in my semi-structured interviews. Global Women is proud to partner with and support some of New Zealand's most ambitious organisations, who are committed to driving increased diversity and inclusion in their workplaces. On their website there was reference to a lot of documents around diversity. An information source like this is necessary to keep the conversation alive and awareness around the increased diversity we need to see in our senior leadership positions and on our boards in the future.

My second useful platform of information was the semi-structured interviews and semi formal conversations, if there ever was to be a time for conversations with purpose it was these semi-structured interviews. The conversations that I had with these people were soul fulfilling and were one of the most enjoyable components of putting this report together. All interviews and conversations either happened over the phone, in person or over email. They ranged from an hour to an hour and a half. I conducted my information from a total of 19 people, the list of respondent's names is in the appendices.

I analysed my data qualitatively by looking for common themes and information that kept showing up in my research. Before starting out with this report I had my own opinions and they have changed due to my further research. We can never just assume.

2. History of Dairy Women's Network (DWN)

In 1998 four farming women from Waikato started the network: Christina Baldwin, Willy Geck, Hilary Weber and Robyn Clements (Kellogg, 2000). The idea was a support network for women in dairying. Where women could increase their knowledge of the dairying business, develop confidence to participate in all levels of the industry and promote recognition of their varied roles in dairying (Clements, R 2000). It was named Network for Women in dairying with a name change to Dairy Women's Network in 2008.

Today, we do not experience the struggles that were faced over 20 years ago when the idea of this network was formed. Back then it was normal for discussion groups to be attended only by men, or when answering the phone to be asked to speak to the farmer.

There was no other network like this formed in New Zealand at the time. The four women did a lot of their research by talking to groups in Australia and attending international conferences. On their return they presented their findings and sought to find sponsors.

The network was originally based on a dairy email group- The inaugural "Absolutely Positively Dairying" Conference was held in May 2000, and it was very successful with 200 attendees. This conference was promoted via radio and print media, at Large Herd conferences and Livestock Improvement Corporation (LIC) women's discussion groups. This kept the sponsorship coming and grew their email database (Weber, H 2012).

Today email is still used as the main form of communication and now other social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook are used to promote 'our story' and positive stories happening on farm and in our communities. The network is governed by a trust board with eight members, seven women, one male, and an executive team.

DWN now has over 11,000 members.

Fonterra Dairy Woman of the Year and Regional Leader of the Year are awarded annually, and there is an opportunity for a Regional Leader to sit on the Trust Board.

New and exciting workshops are held in the regions, funded by our network partners, and the inaugural DWN conference is still held at different locations each year. For 2021 there will be three regional conferences held in Taupo, Ashburton, and Queenstown.

Table 1 DWN Vision and Value Statement



Source <https://www.dwn.co.nz>

Table 1 shows the current vision and purpose of DWN. As a not-for-profit organisation, a primary focus is creating events and initiatives for the members to learn and grow their connections.

3 Importance of Gender Diversity in the Boardroom

This report is not about “taking away the ladder” from the men (per comm, 2021). It is more about putting “out the net” to create inclusion and success for men and women, and the future of our New Zealand companies (Fox, C 2019). “More women in leadership means better decision-making, better organisational resilience and better performance” (Genter, J A 2018). Women make up just over half of our society. Building a thriving New Zealand means all of us having a seat at the table (Gender stocktake govt, 2019).

International research shows the positive changes that are seen in business with increased gender diversity. Increasing gender diversity on corporate boards delivers better financial results and performance (Hardaker, J September 2017).

IoD is a professional body for directors and is at the heart of New Zealand's governance community. They support and enable directors to add value to their organisations and wider communities and prepare them to positively transform the future. “Companies that prioritise diversity in their leadership are 45 percent more likely to grow market share and improve shareholder value, compared to publicly traded companies lacking diversity. They’re also 70 percent more likely to capture new markets” (IoD, 2018).

A more diverse board will raise and consider a wider set of issues and responses (Deloitte, 2019). Diversity creates disagreement when making a business decision (Egon Zehnder, 2020).

“I do think women in business bring something different to the table. I’m not sure if it is innate in women, or if it’s just socialisation” (Thomas, J 2020). “Women exhibit an equivalent diversity of skill

sets to men and that there is nothing to be gained and much to be lost by not accessing those skills in total rather than in half” (Campbell, R Global 2019).

“Gender diversity is not achieved by a single woman, gender diversity requires multiple women to create movement and momentum” (Newton, J 2016). The Critical Mass project is the first research study to examine multiple perspectives on the impact of the number of women on corporate boards of directors (Kramar, W V et al 2006). This suggests there should be at least three women appointed to a board to enhance the likelihood of women’s voices and perspectives having a positive influence on boardroom culture.

3.1 Representation of women on agri-business boards.

Table 2: Gender Diversity on a selection of New Zealand Agri-business Boards.

Agri-Business	Total Board Members	Number of Women	Female Chair
AGMARDT	5	2	
AgResearch	7	4	
ASB	6	1	
AWDT	6	4	Yes
Ballance	9	2	
Beef & Lamb NZ	9	2	
DairyNZ	8	5	
DWN	7	6	Yes
Farmlands	9	2	
FarmIQ	5	0	
Federated Farmers	7	1	
FMG	8	3	
Fonterra	11	4	
LIC	9	3	
Meridian	8	4	
Miraka	5	1	
Open Country Dairies	6	0	
Pamu	8	3	
PrimaryITO	6	2	
Ravensdown	8	3	
RuralCo	7	4	Yes
Rural Women NZ	6	6	Yes
Silver Fern Farms	8	3	
Synlait	8	2	
Westland	8	2	

Table statistics as of January 2021(sourced off companies’ websites)

Table 1 is a list of different agri-business organisations including not for profit, Crown Research Institutes (CRI), co-operatives, corporates, listed companies, and State-Owned Enterprises (SOE). Note that on these boards, there is a variation of elected, independent and appointed directors.

I have highlighted the boards in yellow that have a 50% or more representation of women on their board. Out of the 25 organisations listed seven have a representation of 50% or more women.

Four organisations out of the 25 have women chairing them. This table is important as it shows the gap of female representation on some of our agri-business boards, when just over half of New Zealand's workforce is female (Govt, Annual 2020).

3.2 Women's Representation on Boards of Directors

The purpose of a board is to ensure the company's prosperity by collectively directing the company's affairs, whilst meeting the appropriate interests of its shareholders and stakeholders. In addition to business and financial issues, boards of directors must deal with challenges and issues relating to corporate governance, social responsibility, and ethics. To achieve this purpose, the board must be able to consider a wide range of perspectives in order to make the best decision for the company. Diversity is the best protection against 'groupthink' (Global Factsheet, 2018).

Governance in the past, was more about outcomes and less about people, and was performance focused and profit driven. Our social licence has changed and is now about engaging with key stakeholders to give better outcomes for the community and the business. That is a fundamental shift – profit is not the only responsibility of business (Watermark, 2020).

This section investigates the level of representation of women on corporate boards in New Zealand and abroad and the rate of change we have experienced over time.

Directors traditionally needed qualifications in law and accounting and extensive industry knowledge and business skills. However more recently the skills needed are insights into management of people, professional qualifications, and experience (Campbell, R 2020).

From a board perspective, gender diversity remains front and centre globally, in contrast to culture, age, education or any of the other multiple forms of diversity (Watermark, 2020).

An analysis of more than 8,600 companies in 49 countries showed women held 16.9% of all global board seats in 2018, up from 15.0% in 2016. At a 1.9% growth over two years that is going to take until 2052 to see 50% representation of women on boards globally (Deloitte, 2019).

New Zealand has had a 4% increase in representation of women on boards since 2016. (Deloitte, 2019). This suggests that as a nation our growth is only just higher per year than the global percentage increases.

In 2018 New Zealand's Top 100 companies had 617 directors. 149 of them were female – 24.1%. In 2017 that figure was 22.1%, while in 2016 it was 20.1%, which is an increase of about two percentage points every year. At this pace it will take at least another decade (approximately 14 years) for the gender gap in governance of the top 100 listed companies to close (MacLennan et. Al, 2018).

Each year there is an increase of representation of women on boards. It is a positive that we are seeing increases rather than the reverse. Although with a percentage point increase per year it seems it is not improving quickly enough. Global Women quotes this as "embarrassing". It is their mission to accelerate New Zealand's social and economic success by championing diversity in leadership (Global Women).

"For a nation that has a reputation for egalitarianism and equal opportunity" (Global, 2019). It appears many women are falling away in middle management and not represented at the senior level, therefore reducing the chance of positions on boards. Despite these slight increases, New

Zealand (where 18% of listed companies have zero female directors) lags far behind other developed countries (Global, 2019).

Table 3 Representation of Women on New Zealand's Top 100 company boards



Source: MacLennan, McGregor, Eaqub. 2018

Table 3 shows the representation of women on boards of the top 100 listed companies. Since 2008 there has been a 15.45% increase in the number of women represented on boards.

The number of female board chairs of the Top 100 companies in 2018 was 11. That is an increase on 2017 and on the previous four years, when the figure was just seven (MacLennan, et al 2018).

In recent data analysis from New Zealand Stock Exchange (NZX), 40 boards have no female directors and a further 43 have just one. This equates to 75 percent of all boards having only one female director. There are only 13 boards with a female chair (Fryer, A et al). The year 2020 was a record for the number of newly-appointed female directors on the NZX. The percentage of female directorships of NZX companies has reached the 2020 target of 30% as recommended by Global Women (Jones, J 2020).

Table 4 Percentage of Directors on S&P/NZX50 2020

	Number of Directors	Percentage
Female	79	27%
Male	213	73%
Total	292	

Source: NZX 2020

Table 4 shows the unique directors rather than 'roles' across the 150 of the NZX listed companies there are only 79 individual women directors.

New Zealand has always had a much higher representation of women in public sector governance, reaching 45.7% of the 2600 appointments at the end of 2017, despite the absence of legislation. (MacLennan, et al 2018). This has increased to 53.2% in 2020 (Deguara, B 2020).

Champions for Change is a group of over 50 New Zealand CEOs and Chairs from across the public and private sector who are committed to raising the value of diversity and inclusiveness throughout the wider business community. They are committed to achieving a ratio of 40% women, 40% men and 20% of either gender (allowing for the natural flow of people into and out of the organisation) at all leadership tiers (Champions, 2019).

As a country that has women at the helm of some of our top jobs we are not seeing as many women on seats in the boardrooms, "we seem to have this huge blind spot about women leading large companies" (Gattung. T 2018). It is important to address the pipeline problem since board members are often recruited from the executive level. Companies should not just focus on the C-suite: senior leadership team. Companies should also look to the critical "middle" management level where women often stall in their career advancement to executive roles (Watermark, 2020).

A review of the glass ceiling literature by (Powell, 1999) indicates that in the past, women were said to lack the necessary qualities such as ambition and confidence in comparison to men, as well as leadership skills such as assertiveness and influencing behaviour. Women were also said to lack the relevant experience or education for leadership (Powell. 1999), although women now have higher academic qualifications on average than men (HESA. 2003). It also seems that a woman's family situation is perceived as a hindrance to their commitment to the organisation, and the lack of time to be involved in corporate networks that could provide access to the right people (Singh. V et al).

4 New Zealand Governance overview

Table 5 New Zealand Governance overview

- 34% female / 66% male Directors
- Average Board size in NZ = 6
- Average tenure of 4 years
- Average fee paid of \$47,000/annum for men directors and \$40,000/annum for women directors
- SOE - \$35,400 | Listed company - \$85,000
- Current trends show it will be 2046 before Parity (50/50 gender split) on NZ boards

Source IoD. EY 2020

Table 5 shows the statistics currently in New Zealand Governance, not only are women directors underrepresented at 34% the average fee paid is less for women directors.

4.1 Public versus Private Sector

Most of my research is in relation to the private sector. As research has shown public sector companies are further advanced in addressing diversity than private sector companies. This is in part due to the New Zealand government making a commitment to see a 50% representation of women on boards by 2021 (Govt, 2017).

It is not as though we lack the networks actively pushing for this for example, IoD, Global Women's, Women on Boards etc.

In my opinion if the NZX makes some changes about gender diversity to the NZX Corporate Governance Code, which purpose is about promoting good corporate governance, the sector will see a faster representation of gender equality on boards.

4.2 Quotas

Some European countries have put laws in place and enforced quotas on businesses. Norway, France, Spain and Iceland all have laws that require women make up at least 40% of the board of all listed companies (Equileap, 2019). Norway, started the quota trend in 2003 with a law that threatened to shut down publicly listed companies unless women filled at least 40 percent of their boards (Shankland, S 2015). This got women on boards.

There has been much debate around quotas damaging or promoting women's interests (Gill, M 2012). A lot of the pros for women representation on boards is stated in this report. Quotas are the quickest and most effective way to ensure more equal numbers of men and women representation (Gill, M 2012).

Some of the negatives are such things as a "token women" is hired because of gender, not necessarily to fill the skill set lacking. Quotas can also pitch women against each other when competing for a certain amount of "women's seats". They can be stigmatised and seen as less qualified (He, J et al 2017).

Table 6 Women's Global Representations on Boards, 2019

Women's Global Representation on Boards, 2019						
Country	% Women Directorships, 2019	% Women Directorships, 2016	% With Three or More WOB, 2019	% With 1-2 WOB, 2019	% With Zero WOB, 2019	Quota and Year Introduced
Australia	31.2%	26.0%	58.2%	40.3%	1.5%	No
Canada	29.1%	22.8%	63.0%	35.9%	1.1%	Pending
France	44.3%	37.6%	98.6%	1.4%	0.0%	Yes, 2010
Germany	33.3%	19.5%	81.0%	17.2%	1.7%	Yes, 2015
India	15.9%	12.8%	21.3%	78.8%	0.0%	Yes, 2013
Japan	8.4%	4.8%	3.4%	63.2%	33.4%	No
Netherlands	34.0%	18.9%	65.2%	34.8%	0.0%	Yes, 2013
Sweden	39.6%	35.6%	96.6%	3.4%	0.0%	Yes, 2016
Switzerland	24.9%	17.5%	48.8%	51.2%	0.0%	Pending
United Kingdom	31.7%	25.3%	82.2%	17.8%	0.0%	No
United States	26.1%	20.3%	56.2%	42.8%	1.0%	CA Only, 2018

Source: <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-on-corporate-boards/>

Table 6 is an example of women's representation on corporate boards in other countries. The top four countries representing the highest percentage of women on boards - France, Sweden, Germany and Netherlands - have all put laws in place enforcing gender quotas, to increase the number of women in C-suite-senior leadership team roles and represented on boards. It is a step towards gender equality in the board room.

5 Reasons for the lack of gender diversity

As history has changed at a rapid pace one thing that is unlikely to ever change is the way that women are biologically wired and the need to nurture. Men's lives have generally stayed the same throughout history to provide for the family (Brookes, B 2016).

New Zealand rural women are already juggling so much including family, farm business, community involvement etc, "we just don't have the time" (interview respondent, 2021). Women's lives are so full that the idea of stepping outside the farm gate into roles of governance seems to "add more to an already incredibly busy schedule" (interview respondent, 2021).

As one interview respondent stated: 10 years ago the box of accounts for the farming business at the end of the financial year for the accountant would only be one, nowadays it could be up to four or more. It is that invisible workload that gradually grows over time with new legislation, consent and compliance that increases their workload which doesn't leave time to look for directorships or sit on boards.

In my research I found a great term that summed up the challenges faced as women. The "double burden syndrome" - the combination of work and domestic responsibilities. Women remain at the helm of family life (maternity, child-rearing, organising family life, caring for the elderly etc) (McKinsey 2007).

Psychological barriers are relevant to the further success of women (McKinsey 2007). The McKinsey report states that at about the eight-year point in the workplace is when men and women peak into the next level of their career, around their early 30's. However, in many cases that is the time when women opt out of a business career to focus on family.

In my opinion psychological barriers seems something that appear not to be spoken about freely, in a country that is praised for its openness and honesty (NauMai NZ Govt). Possibly as woman, it is all too restricting and confronting to admit. As women we need to not fear the consequences of honesty and our ticking biological clock.

Unconscious bias is a common part of our lives, we are all guilty of it at some point. "The biggest problem is inherent bias in the workplace against women" (Haar, J 2018).

Men are considered to be better leaders because they are supposed to be strong and bold and confident, whereas women are more accommodating, emotional, and nurturing and therefore suited to "women's work" like nursing and childcare. These judgments influence career opportunities (Hardaker, J 2017).

From personal experience I have witnessed it when applying for different roles in the dairy industry and as my age has increased, I am seen as a risk. In one interview the employers went so far as to say "how can we guarantee you will not get pregnant while managing our farm as you are at child bearing age?" Needless to say, I decided that taking that job would not be in my best interests.

It has been stated that a married man is seen to be more employable than a single man, because he has a partner at home to look after him. However, the opposite is said for woman – a single woman is more employable than a married woman because there is a chance, she could become pregnant requiring to take time off from her role (Jordan. A H et al 2012).

6 Analysis of Semi-structured interviews

We have come a long way since Kate Shepherd and the sacrifices she made to make sure our voice was heard.

I have really enjoyed talking to these interview respondents, who are all mothers, farmers and strive to leave a legacy for their family and the wider community. "The juggle is real" (IoD, 2020).

Each of these women in my opinion is influential. They have a strong confidence in themselves, aim to contribute and have a voice to share. They believe in themselves and have people believe in them. "If you don't feel you can add value, how do you expect others to see your value" (per comm, 2020).

In some cases, confidence was instilled in them from a young age, due to their parents being in roles of leadership, or at high school level putting their hands up to help lead different groups and sports teams. At other times the confidence was gained when their children were involved in community groups.

The interview respondents have something to say and will take on a directorship not out of flattery or need but because they know they can add value to the business and its outcomes. They were generally passionate about the boards that they sat on and mentioned that there needed to be alignment of the board's values and their values for them to want to be in directorships.

A common theme with these women is that their governance journey did not start intentionally. In some cases, it started at a community level when their children were young joining the local Plunket, playcentre, and toy library and getting on the Board of trustees at their children's schools. Many never associated their leadership as governance because it had no formal title, as it was all about creating better outcomes for children and their community. Even though it was at a community level it still had the same level of strategic forward thinking that is needed in commercial governance.

There was no information as such to help these women on their journey. A lot of them fell into it because of the exposure they had through the likes of DWN, or other courses they had completed and careers they had.

All the women have had a mentor/support along the way. The definition of a mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser which can be in the form of a one-off conversation, or someone pushing you along and holding you accountable to your word. The support for these women has been in the form of a husband/partner or family members, work colleagues and trusted friends.

For these women, the goal was never to just go get a directorship. They were all highly knowledgeable in their careers and their farming businesses. In many cases they got shoulder tapped or asked if they had ever considered governance and from that point they were pushed or kindly encouraged by others to step into governance.

The interview respondents have continuously upskilled themselves through programmes such as:

- Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme
- Agri Women's Development Trust (AWDT) Escalator Programme
- Fonterra Governance Programme
- Institute of Directors courses
- Global Women's courses
- Stanford University and Harvard University

These were places where they met other like-minded people that they would see in the same circles in the future or lead onto other opportunities and these connections also grew to be part of their support network. As previously mentioned, DWN exposes you to other networks that then increase your confidence and your network scope. "DWN is clear in what they do as a network. It does not try to replicate what other institutes or trusts are doing, they are a supported and trusted network that taps into other networks with expertise in their fields to help their members upskill and build confidence" (per comm, 2021).

Another interesting finding is that gender is not a massive barrier, "but you do strike it" (interview respondent, 2021). In some cases, it was seen as an advantage. "It's an advantage, boards are looking to balance gender diversity, but I never pulled the woman straw, I wanted to be elected because I was the best candidate not because I was a token woman" (interview respondent, 2021).

None of the women used their gender as a token or an easy card to get recognised. “Don’t market yourself as a woman, show up with the skills and talent you have” (interview respondent, 2021). Once getting into the boardroom it was even more irrelevant, getting there is the hardest part but once they are in directorships, other options naturally open up. Not all these women have been successful the first time when applying for elected directorships, rejection is not a failure, “I just had to learn by failing and learning” (interview respondent, 2021).

The women interviewed have all had different experiences with DWN, some have moved through DWN from the beginning and have held or hold chair and trustee positions on the trust board. Some have been trustees on the trust board and enjoyed the diversity of thought around the room. Others have won Dairy Woman of the Year and other awards offered through DWN which has helped them to gain confidence, by the exposure the awards have created. It has also enabled them to share their story and realise that vulnerability is an innate human emotion, and that we all go through adversity. “DWN has given me more skills to be courageous” (interview respondent, 2021).

These women have learned to be prepared for pushback because, diversity of thought is not about everyone agreeing with each other. There is going to be challenging times when hard decisions need to be made and there needs to be a majority consensus. The board holds companies accountable for what they do hence it is not just one person sitting at the table making decisions.

We must respect our gender and know the differences we can bring to the table as females. Women also need to support other women. Having a sounding board or mentor is vital for extending their comfort zone – someone to push them into an opportunity they are afraid to do. If we know we have the backing behind us we feel less alone and more confident to step forward.

Strongly believe in what women can bring to the table, the ones behind the farm gate have the skills that are critical for commercial governance.

Table 7: Advice for women wanting to step into Governance

- Build your CV - you need a good CV to get appointed or for people to vote for you. A CV which demonstrates how you have created or added value to a business is a good place to start.
- Start on boards in smaller organisations and work your way up.
- Aim high and work hard.
- Women need to support each other more.
- Right place right time know your networks and grow them.
- Be true to you, women are adaptable, and we wear many hats.
- The skills and actions you undertake now, make your daughters and granddaughters goals become more attainable and attribute to the success in their future.
- Just start!
- Find your place find your tribe.
- Never stop upskilling and learning.
- Have enough confidence to have a go.
- Be hungry! Seek opportunities.
- Do not forget the core basis of what makes you unique, know your purpose and your why, never place yourselves in a position of compromise.
- Do the stuff you care about the most.
- Women need to find a place to support their views.
- Focus on what we do well, rather than what we cannot do.
- You need to have the self-motivation and drive to create change.
- Do not let yourself get unwell, look after your health.
- Do not burn bridges if you want to be known.
- Recognise and utilise your networks.
- Outsource your housework or gardening or cooking, do not feel guilty for bringing in help. It enables you to spend more quality intentional time with your family.

Source: Interview Respondents

Table 7 is summary of advice from the interview respondents for women looking to step into roles of governance, it shows a lot of the sacrifice, thought and emotion that goes into creating governance pathways for the future. It shows the benefit in letting the wider community know what you are looking for and the importance of women supporting women.

6.1 Invisible Emotion

I feel lucky to have had the privilege to speak to the remarkable women that I have reached out to. Their skill set, determination, and drive is encouraging and empowering. At times when reviewing their thoughts, it has brought me to tears. It seems in life that success comes to those that do not wait around, they seek the next opportunity and upskill to the level that they feel prepared for the next challenge and experience.

From my findings and in reflection of my interviews and literature review, I have this sense of an underlying invisible emotion. It was never directly spoken about with the women in the interviews although it has shown up a lot in my research. Most women do not feel that gender is a barrier, in some situations it could have been, but also it could have come down to different personalities which as humans, female or male, we will experience throughout life at any given time.

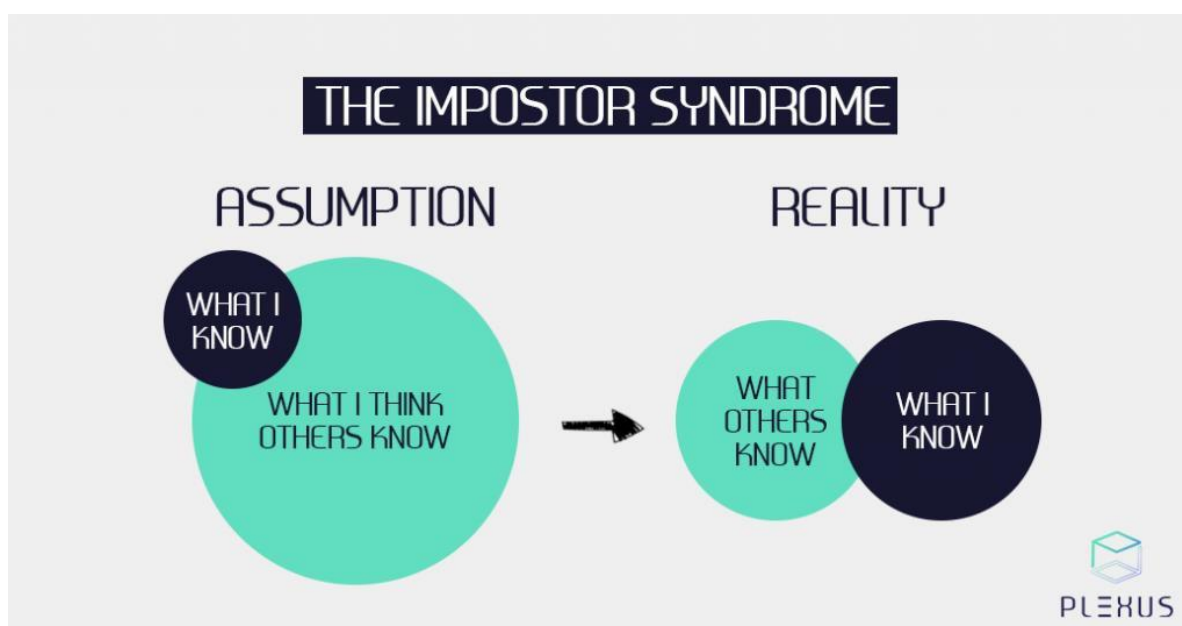
This invisible emotion, I feel can be linked to an array of different feelings; anxiety, stress, time poor, guilt. The feeling of not being a good enough mother, wife, friend, business partner. Of the women I interviewed none of them focused on their governance journey being easy and none of them focused on the challenging and hard parts either. Although reading between the lines, all the women had to put a lot more time and energy into being successful in these directorships and have had to make sacrifices along the way. “Show up prepared” (per comm, 2021).

6.2 Imposter Syndrome

It surprised me how often ‘Imposter Syndrome’ came up in my semi-structured interviews. Many men and women suffer from it and most often feel like they are the only ones that it effects. According to the Journal of Behavioural Science, 70 percent of people suffer from imposter syndrome (Sakulku, J 2011).

Imposter syndrome is like putting on a mask, it is described as that feeling of not being qualified enough for the job, or not good enough. It tends to pop up at times when we push ourselves out of our comfort zone. It is that feeling of being a fraud and the fear that someone is going to catch you out. “This fear undermines our capabilities” (Hillman, H 2019). Evidence shows it is more often experienced by women. Men apply for a job when they meet only 60% of the qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100% of them (Mohr, T S 2014).

Table 8 What does imposter syndrome look like?



Source: www.plexusrs.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Impostor-Syndrome-1024x532.png

Table 8 is a good depiction of assumption versus reality when it comes to the feelings of imposter syndrome. This acknowledges that the little voice in our head, is not necessarily telling us the right thing.

History is in the past, although the cultural norms and social conditioning (Brookes, B 2016), still to an extent haunts us in present time and could be the result of our undoing. Women wear many hats. There are still a lot of expectations to fulfil: our careers, bringing up our children and primarily being the

one in charge of domestic duties, all while not letting anyone down. Women struggle to say no and don't do a very good job at asking for help. "We feel the need to not fail and get everything perfect" (Stuart, J 2020).

Those with imposter syndrome tend to deflect their success and attribute their successes to external factors: the team, put it down to luck or being at the right place at the right time (Stuart, J 2020).

In my semi-structured interviews, the feelings of imposter syndrome in some cases, was always in the back of their minds. Women reported that they had pulled their applications for positions or awards because they did not feel qualified enough and did not want to set themselves up for failure.

An imposter spends a lot of energy trying to minimise their uniqueness. Being yourself will enable you to give more of yourself (Hillman, H 2019).

Imposter syndrome is a case of two different voices sitting on each shoulder, the critic, and the coach. As individuals we tend to give them pet names. The monkey as Barbara Kuriger calls it.

The critic cares about you with intense tenacity, it will not let you or others down. The critic will also talk you out of a getting into a situation that you feel unprepared or unqualified for (Hillman, H 2019).

The coach will encourage and lead you and will not forewarn you of the bumps in the road. The coach makes you feel like you can achieve anything. Give it a go and do not be afraid. Be the best version of you and everyone will see your potential (Hillman, H 2019).

As women we need to learn to manage the 'Coach' and 'Critic'. They both serve their purpose in the development and evolution of who we are. We need to acknowledge them but to the extent that imposter syndrome does not hinder future success.

7 Creating the diversity drive.

50.7% of New Zealand's population are women (Annual report Govt, 2020). The New Zealand Women's labour force participation rate is 65.5%. Therefore, there is not a shortage of women in New Zealand. The diversity drive is about how we harness the capabilities of these women.

We need discussion rather than debate; it is a much more conducive way of positively influencing an outcome. Many different personalities can be sitting around the boardroom table and often, some will come across stronger than others. Women in the boardroom need to be true to who they are, and why they are there. Making sure to contribute in a positive way and have the confidence to stand up to overpowering personalities.

Creating the diversity drive is knowing the areas of skill set that is lacking in the boardroom and sharing the load by playing to people's strengths. Boards of directors need to focus on inclusion – different perspectives make better decisions for a business.

We have seen from research that 'like hires like' and 'like attracts like' (Egon Zehnder, 2020). Directors need to deliberately and strategically expand beyond known networks and include people who are different from them and others (Egon Zehnder, 2020) by changing their habits and stepping outside of their comfort zones.

Change needs to start from the top, addressing culture and ensuring leadership accountability for building a truly inclusive environment (Watermark, 2020). The capability of the chair and the culture that he or she brings to the table will filter through to the directors and through the organisation.

Two-to-five-year goals can be set as to what the intentions are as a board. The boardroom serves as a blueprint for the rest of the organisation – if we do not change our boardrooms, “how can we expect diversity to be embedded throughout our businesses and reap the rewards that come with it?” (Watermark, 2020).

A board that has a regular reviewing processes, gives them a GAP analysis to fill the skill sets lacking and to acknowledge the capabilities. Research shows that male directors are 2.5 years more tenured than female directors. Females average 5.5-year tenure and men average an 8-year tenure (Deloitte, 2019).

In conversations with my interview respondents around appropriate tenure, some mentioned that 9 years is a sufficient time to sit on a board and anything past that ideas become stale. Another respondent said six years is an appropriate time for representation on a board “we expect our CEOs to be rotated every five to seven years, why do we not expect the same for our board of directors” (interview respondent, 2021).

United Kingdom is leading the way. Directors are deemed to have lost their independence after 9 years of board service. This allows for board refreshment, and new director elections, and a systematic assessment of the board and of each individual director (Deloitte, 2019). Independence of thought is the most valuable thing and is what is most appreciated.

As a shareholder and a stakeholder, we can make decisions around who we want to invest in based on our value set as an individual. People drive change.

In businesses and in the boardroom men and women need to support each other to grow and succeed. Diversity is not necessarily down to gender, ethnicity, age and experience. Diversity is in the way we think, having diversity of thought will position companies toward better outcomes. It is important to understand the skills and experiences needed to be an effective director (Deloitte, 2019).

The unintended consequence of the diversity drive is good female directors become too busy because they are seen as “gold dust” (Fryers, A et. Al 2021).

7.1 Implementing Change.

In my research, it has come up about the challenge’s women have as wives and mothers. Sometimes they struggle to be able to achieve everything in the way that they had planned.

Organisations need to start looking at different options of how to make it more achievable and accessible for women that live a distance to town and with family commitments, to be able to add their views and skill set in the boardroom.

If Covid-19 has taught us anything it is that we must become adaptable in adverse times and be prepared to make decisions from afar.

Business’s need to be utilising the technology available to become more inclusive towards bringing women into the boardroom.

A good example of this is a company has 50% representation of both male and female directors. Two board members were pregnant. In most circumstances the women would take maternity leave and must step away for a time. This board were aware of the value and skills they added in the boardroom. Therefore, the company utilised platforms like ZOOM and Microsoft Teams to keep

them involved while on maternity leave. This is a great example of how thinking differently and changing the norm, can still create opportunities and positive outcomes for women representation on boards. Just because it has always been done that way does not mean we can't challenge the status quo and implement a new way.

7.2 USP-Unique Selling Proposition

Your personal brand is your USP. From my findings it seems that women need to show up prepared. Find out what is important to them and what companies they want to represent and make sure that the companies values align with your own personal values.

As New Zealanders we do not tend to be very good at talking ourselves up and highlighting our areas of strength. It is important when going for these board roles, that we acknowledge the skill set we bring and are prepared with our USP.

- Who you are-what you stand for?
- What do you do best-what do you bring to the boardroom table?
- What industry/subject are you are an expert in?
- What are you passionate about that will help you stand out?

8 Pathways through Dairy Women's Network to Governance

I think there is much talent sitting behind the farm gate. The skills and values of farming women can be well utilised in New Zealand boardrooms. In some situations women find themselves to be farming in quite isolated areas with a lack of community nearby. DWN is a great connector throughout New Zealand, to bring farming women together.

DWN is my "tribe", a place I feel like I belong and creates a comfortable environment to share ideas and thoughts. I liken DWN to a "shade tree" (per comm, 2021) - it doesn't fully encompass you or suffocate you but stops you from getting burnt and is always there in the background to support and help you grow.

Building your network—your village—is critical to getting where you want to go. They will point you to any skills or knowledge gaps you need to fill to stay fluid and open up even more opportunities in the future (Steele, C 2021). "Women need to increase their visibility; DWN can assist by recognising capability and inviting women to participate in industry groups so these women can become increasingly visible. Industry groups would also need to recognise the value that women would bring to the table" (Brown C, Kellogg 2012).

DWN is very much about providing a platform to tap into other networks to help enhance skill sets and further learning and development. Having a support network is important for the confidence of our women and such an asset for dairy women in isolated communities. "Life is not a solo sport; faith is knowing you're on a team even if you don't know who the players are" (Brown, B 2021).

DWN has a strategy around enhancing and empowering women to build their skills and leadership capability (Brown, C Kellogg 2012). Focusing on what they are good at as an organisation helps achieve connection of others.

To be a part of a network of likeminded women that offers this sense of place is very hard to come by in our adult life. It is someone holding you accountable, someone asking the hard questions,

someone challenging the status quo and someone encouraging you to succeed. DWN will subconsciously set you up to succeed without the intention. Influence by absence.

Conclusion

From my findings it has been discussed that there is a shortage of female representation in New Zealand boardrooms. In some ways it is due to how women are biologically wired. There will be times in women's careers, when they may need to step back for a time to raise their family, although it does not mean that they are removed from their careers forever. From my research these gaps of women on boards are obvious and we need to rethink the way we can make representation around the board table more achievable for women.

It is positive to see many organisations that are "championing for change" including Global Women and IoD that have put best practise in place to see an increase of women's representation in the boardroom and change the statistics for the future.

In my research imposter syndrome can affect anyone at any time and is prominent throughout life, especially when we put ourselves in challenging situations. It is something as women that needs to be managed so it does not hinder future successes.

From my research, the literature review, and the semi-structured interviews. I have learnt that women cannot get there by staying still. If women want to be present in boardrooms, they must keep learning, keep upskilling and be visible, which is where DWN fits in. The network contributes with connecting women with other women and helping women support each other. Helping align them to the path they want to go down and creating a network of connections.

My findings show that diversity is important, as it stops "groupthink", boards are shown to deliver better financial results and performance and a diverse board will consider a wider set of issues.

More women represented on boards is important because, women bring different perspectives, experiences, skills and knowledge to the board table and women need to be confident enough to express their personal views.

I leave you with the topic for my next report. "How do we then get more women in chair positions?"

"Strength lies in differences, not in similarities"
— **Stephen R. Covey**

Recommendations

From my interpretation of the research. I have a list of following recommendations that can be achieved as individuals and also as support networks, to see more rural women represented on boards.

- Do not give up, board appointments can be hard to come by.

Finding the right directorship often does not happen overnight, be patient.

- Create a list of target organisations that you would like to work for.

Do your research and look at what interests you and what you would like to put your time towards.

- Use your USP.

Be prepared to be yourself, have your unique selling proposition ready to show who you are.

- Have the confidence to express your own views.

Use your voice to bring diversity of thought to the table.

- Network and be visible.

Find your tribe, utilise networks like DWN to build connections and be visible.

- Constantly upskill.

Never become too complacent, there is always more to learn to increase knowledge and confidence.

- Support each other.

Surround yourself with people that support and encourage you.

- Let people know you are looking for a board role.

Utilise your networks to express your interest in directorships. You cannot sell a secret!

Further Work

Further work should be done by interviewing a larger range of people to find out more information around this subject.

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Appendix 1

DWN Interview Respondents

Cathy Brown, Chair DWN 2016-2019

Tracy Brown, Trustee DWN 2015-2020

Jessie Chan Dorman, Dairy Women of the Year 2017

Karen Forlong, Current Chair DWN

Rachel Haskew, Current Trustee DWN

Barbara Kuriger, Dairy Women of the Year 2012

Kylie Leonard, DWN Dairy Community Leadership Award 2018

Trish Rankin, Dairy Women of the Year 2019

Donna Smit, Current Trustee DWN

Agri-business conversation respondents

Kate Acland, Director Ruralco

Jules Benton, CEO DWN

Mark Clarkson, Director Beef and Lamb NZ

Robyn Clements, one of the founders of DWN

Dani Darke, Director Ballance Agri-Nutrients Ltd

Colin Glass, Director DairyNZ

Julia Jones, Head of Insight NZX Ltd

Raelyn Lourie, Chair New Zealand Institute Minerals to Materials

John Nicholls, Director Fonterra

Andrew Morrison, Chair Beef and Lamb NZ

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

- What was your journey into governance? How did it start?
- At the beginning of your journey into governance did you find easily accessible information to lead/help you to the right path?
- What information did you find useful?
- How did your interest in governance come about?
- What organisations/ mentors/people supported you in your step towards governance?
- Did/Do you ever feel gender was/is a barrier? If so in what ways?
- What role has DWN played in your journey?
- Have you had any mentors along the way?
- What is your advice for dairy women wanting to step into these roles?