



How can the NZ dairy industry design workplaces to attract the best of the next generation into our workforce?



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Executive Summary

In 2019, my partner Isaac and I were offered an 1100 cow contract milking job in the beautiful Bay of Plenty. We were 23 and 24 years old, I hadn't been dairy farming full time before and Isaac had for roughly 3 years experience, in primarily a farm assistant role. We received a lot of great advice prior to our first season. And what was the most common piece of advice we received?

“Cows are easy, people are hard”

After having many discussions with friends around a beer and being sick of asked “Do you guys really work eight days in a row?” or “Are you really waking up at 4am?” I began to wonder if we were doing right by our team, or if we were just accepting what had always been done.

This research project investigated what is being done in our industry and how we can learn from industry leading employers, and out of industry leaders. The question is, “Learning from global workplace trends, how can the NZ dairy industry design workplaces to attract the best of the next generation into our workforce?”

Over the past 20 years the dairy industry has seen huge expansion, with the herd size doubling in a twenty year period. As of 2018, the NZ dairy industry workforce was made up of roughly 40,000 people with 22,500 of these being employees.

Nationally 88% of employee are either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs, and research by StatsNZ identified six key metrics driving work satisfaction. These were hour and times of work, flexibility, job security, workplace autonomy, workplace relationships and work related stress and tiredness.

From my twelve semi structured interviews with leading employers the key common themes across both in and out of industry employers were the need for clear communication, importance of developing a competitive workplace and the importance of flexibility and work life balance.

My call to action is for our industry to question current practices. The areas that I believe are worth focusing on

- Encourage flexible rosters and pay scales
- Foster leaders not managers on farm
- Develop safe workplaces cultures that allow autonomy and innovation
- A share purpose on every farm

I have put forward many ideas in the final section, and my hope is that any farmer who reads this report considers each idea and whether they could implement one on farm. My key recommendations are

1. Look within
2. Ask your people
3. Try something!

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I would like to thank my employer and farm owners Robin and Claire Barkla. I wouldn't have even considered applying for the course this year without Robin's encouragement.

A big thank you goes out to the two most blue sky thinkers I know, Callum Eastwood and Brian Dela Rue. Without the financial support from DairyNZ and Regional business partners network this course wouldn't be possible, but without Callum and Brian's guidance, networks and fantastic crazy idea's, this project would not have been completed in the scope it has been. I hope I get to brainstorm with these two for years to come.

Logistically, this wouldn't even be possible without my team at home running the farm in Kawerau. A big thanks to our farm team who I hope can benefit from this course through improved leadership and their workplace design. Thanks Elliot, Liam, PC, Markus and Ross.

I need to send a big shout out to my parents Sandra & Allan. Their passion for the industry is the reason I'm here and that believe in our industry so much. In this particular case, especially my mum who in the final few days helped my jumbled thoughts become merged into some sense of cohesion. Maybe B.Art graduates do have some use.

But, the biggest thank you goes to my business partner, partner in life and best friend for making this whole course possible. Thank you Isaac, words can't express how grateful I am for your support.

2. Introduction

Over the past 20 years the dairy industry has seen huge expansion. From nearly 13,000 million litres of milk being processed at the turn of the century to 21,000 million in the 2020 season. The dairy industry has made more milk, run more cows and employed more people.

From the early 2000's the number of herd's in New Zealand has seen a slow decrease from its 1998's peak. In that same time the average herd size has been on an upwards trajectory from 251 cows in the 2001 season to almost double that in the 2020 season, and 14% of these herds having 750 cows or more (LIC & DairyNZ, 2020). The result of this increase in herd size has meant that the average farm has gone from a one man band with some seasonal help from family to employing 1-2 people and requirements for staff greater in Canterbury and Southland. So, again the farmer who enjoys working outside and feeding his cows finds himself in the same position he has many times in the last 20 years; needing to gain skills and knowledge in an area that they had no interest or knowledge in when they entered the industry.

Not only have the number and size of workplaces in the dairy industry grown in the last ten years but so have the people who work in them. The last eighteen months have completely changed the way that people work in most other industries. Though the dairy industry was relatively unaffected by Covid-19, the global workplace trends that were already gaining in importance seem to have been accelerated, and dairy industry employers need to keep pace. The key global trends identified were;

- Flexibility of hours and rosters
- Increased autonomy
- Personalised workplace structure and culture
- Increased technology use
- Increased desire for sense of purpose in work.

In my view, there are many positive reasons why someone would become a dairy farmer such as enjoyment in working the land and working with animals, varied work, living in beautiful locations, no commute, plenty of opportunities to progress and become self-employed, and a strong sense of purpose in your work. On the flipside, there are a lot of challenges in dairy workplaces that many would find too big a sacrifice to make, such as longer work hours outside of the standard 9-5 work day, at times seven days a week, isolation, health and safety hazards on farm and physical fatigue. So is it possible to minimise some of these aspects so that dairy is *the* sought after workplace?

Throughout this report I will examine the current industry in order to understand the great work farmers are doing, and how we can improve our workplace design through learning from others in and out of our industry.

3. Aim

In this research the question I posed was “Learning from global workplace trends, how can the NZ dairy industry design workplaces to attract the best of the next generation into our workforce?”

I began by researching current workplace trends, looked at current workplaces on farm and then conducted a series of semi structured interviews with seven farmers who were identified as leading employers. I then went on to interview four employers from other industries examine how some of their best practices might be applicable to dairy workplaces.

As a result of this report my aim is to develop some practical ideas that New Zealand dairy farmers can implement or reflect upon in their own workplace design and people management on farm. The ultimate goal being that we as farmers improve our workplaces and become a desirable industry that the best and brightest are drawn to.

4. Method

The methodology used for this report was a literature review and semi structured interviews.

The literature review was the first component of my research and provided foundational understanding around workplace trends both globally and nationally. This review also provided clarity around work currently being done in New Zealand workforce development.

My twelve semi structured interviews were the largest portion of time involved in my report, and provided huge scope for knowledge gathering. I found them truly invigorating and encouraging. They provided real insights into the great work already being done around the country in both dairy and in the other industries.

My semi structured interviews were a series of eight open ended questions. These questions were:

1. How long have you been farming and what was your background coming into farming?
2. What is your role in your business & how many in your team?
3. Can you give me some background on your philosophies of running a team?
4. What are the top three things you have identified your staff wanting? How adjustments have you made to be flexible to these needs?

5. What difference have you seen in people coming into your workplace now versus when you began as an employer?
6. Over your time managing people how have your people's wants changed around the following areas of: flexibility of hours, tenure, autonomy, technology and awareness of community and consumer?
7. In the next five years what are the things you are wanting to implement/change in your workplace to adapt to the changing needs of your people?
8. Do you have any final comments on the future of workplaces to add?

My interviews included eight dairy farm businesses who were identified as leading employers, and four interviews with employers who ran businesses in industries with similar challenges to dairy farming.

Upon completion of the semi structured I then analysed all of the responses and pulled out the key themes within both dairy and out of dairy. The results were analysed in excel.

These two methods allowed both the theoretical ideas around workplace design and the "real life" examples to come together and provide a great picture of workplace design for my research.

5. Global Workplace Trends and our industry

4.1 Dairy industry workplaces

As of 2018, the NZ dairy industry workforce was made up of roughly 40,000 people (DairyNZ, 2021), with 22,500 of these being "employees". The largest percentage of the workforce resides in the Waikato (10,900) however only a little over half of these are employees, the remainder are self-employed. Canterbury and Southland have the largest proportion of farm employees between their regions (DairyNZ, 2021)

Despite the large number of people employed in the industry, a labour shortage still exists. According to DairyNZ and Federated farmers surveys based on job adverts, the labour shortage is between 2,000 and 4,000 people (DairyNZ, 2021). To put this into perspective, in a survey of 1,148 employers nearly **half** of all farmers said they were short. These figures have been further exacerbated by the impact Covid-19 that impacted the industry's ability to source skilled staff.

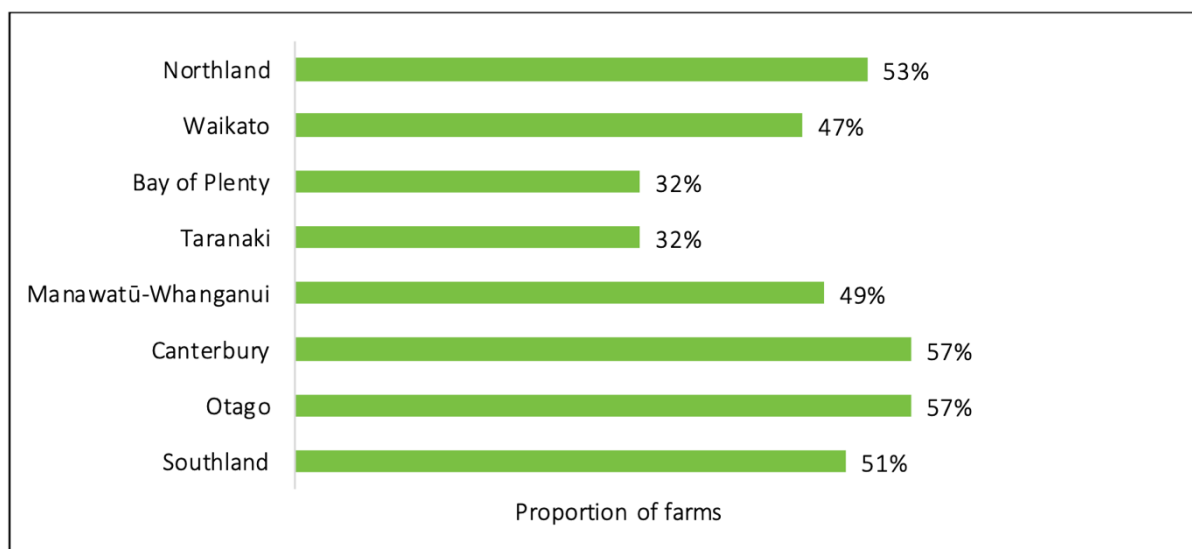


Figure One: The proportion of farmers interviewed in 2021 who were ‘short staffed’ (DairyNZ, 2021)

In 2017, the strategy for the NZ dairy sector was refreshed and renamed “Dairy Tomorrow” by industry leaders. The sector pledged to pursue six commitments, one of them being “We will build great work places for NZ’s most talented workforce” (DairyNZ, 2017). The four goals associated with this commitment are:

- By 2025, ensure all farm businesses have best employment practices and quality work environments operated by vibrant and proficient farm teams.
- By 2020, implement people initiatives to inspire, attract, grow and retain dairy talent.
- Ensure everyone gets home safe and well every day.
- By 2020, implement new programmes to support and integrate new entrants into the sector and our rural communities.
- By 2020, implement programmes to build and sustain our governance and management skills-base through diversity and leadership. (DairyNZ, 2017)

My hope is that this report will offer some ideas of possible steps for farmers to work toward meeting these goals.

4.2 The next generation in the workforce

When I pose the question of “... attracting the next generation” I don’t only mean the next young people in our workforce. So what age group & ethnicities is our workforce made up of? And how do we accommodate their needs.

4.2 a Age

Millennials (born from 1980'S to 2000's) are now the largest age group in the global workforce. Unlike any generations before them, they are digitally fluid and are on track to be the most educated generation of all time (PWC, 2012). In the 2012 PwC report, millennials were predicted to make up 50% of the global workforce by 2020. Key findings about millennials in the workplace were:

- Shorter tenure: Only 10% of the millennials they interviewed said they were planning on staying in their role long term
- They require constant feedback and clear targets
- Following the 2008 global recession, 55% millennials are more willing to compromise when accepting a role
- Desire progression and a good work life balance over monetary reward
- Embracing technology. Half of millennials said they're prefer to communicate electronically than face to face and ¾ think technology makes them more effective at work
- Wanderlust; 72% of millennials wanted to work overseas
- Policies on diversity and inclusion are a high priority when choosing an employer (PwC, 2012)

The other age group that has seen a rise in numbers is the “retirement age” group of our workforce. Like much of the industrialised world, NZ has an ageing workforce. In 2015, only 5% of the NZ workforce was aged 65+, but the total number of our workforce aged 65 and over is predicted to reach 13% by 2036 (Bentley, T et al. 2015). While the overall job satisfaction with the older proportion of our workforce was relatively high, 1 in 4 of respondents in a recent survey disagreed there was a strong appreciation of the value older workers brought to their workplace.

These two generations may seem like chalk and cheese but they are most definitely not; *“That wisdom and experience is the perfect balance to the next generation workforce coming through, who are smart and flexible and are our future leaders. They can learn a great deal from the older generation while bringing in fresh and innovative ideas that help challenge the way we work and think”* (NZ Business + Management, 2020)

4.2 b Cultural diversity

In the NZ dairy industry about 22% of all employees hold a work visa, and of all new entrants to the dairy industry in 2019 half are entering on work visas and 23% are entering the industry as career changers. Compared to a decade ago, the number of migrant workers has doubled (DairyNZ, 2021), making for increased workplace cultural diversity. The diversity of our workplaces brings an exciting opportunity for a wide range of thought, and

to learn from other customs and traditions. However, our reliance on migrant workers has proved hard during Covid-19 and will remain a barrier as long as New Zealand's borders are closed.

4.3 National and global workplace trends

The previous section provided some understanding of what dairy industry workplaces look like, and what our workforce may look like in 10 years' time. But what are they looking for? Here in New Zealand, job satisfaction is higher than globally with 88% of kiwi's saying they feel either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their job (StatsNZ, 2019). StatsNZ identified five key characteristics relating to work satisfaction, these were:

- Hour and times of work
- Flexibility
- Job security
- Workplace autonomy
- Workplace relationships
- Work related stress and tiredness

4.3 a Hours and time of work

Hours of work, in particular long hours have strong links to work life balance dissatisfaction. Those who work long hours were less satisfied with their work life balance, however surprisingly the same isn't true for job satisfaction (StatsNZ, 2019). There is no significant difference in dissatisfaction levels for those working long hours or non- standard time (outside 7am – 7pm from Monday to Friday) (StatsNZ, 2019).

4.3 b Flexibility of hours

Almost half of employees involved in the StatsNZ survey's do not have flexible hours. Of those with flexible hours though, only 3.0 % reported dissatisfaction in their work (StatsNZ, 2019).

4.3 c Job Security

Dissatisfaction of job increased as job security decreased (StatsNZ, 2019). Of those who had a high chance of losing their job 13% felt dissatisfied with their job versus 2.5% dissatisfaction of those who felt they had no chance of losing their job.

Chance of losing job in next 12 months by job satisfaction, 2018

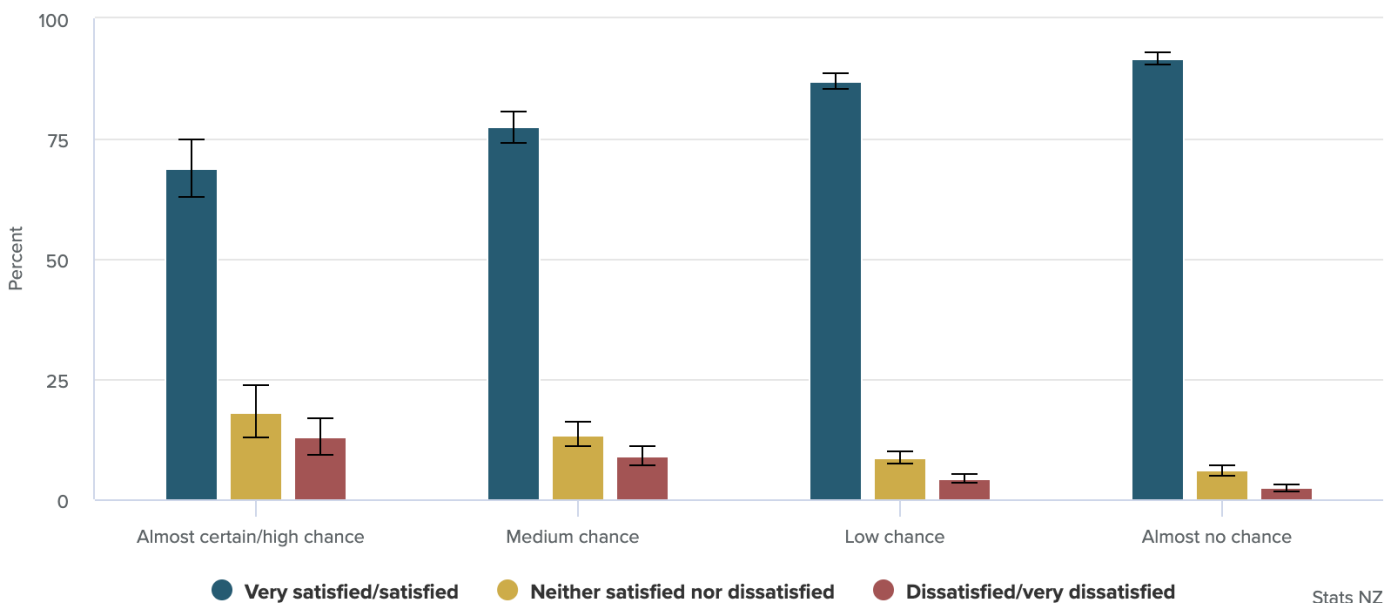


Figure Two: Chance of losing job in next twelve months by job satisfaction (StatsNZ, 2019)



The circle of safety described by Simon Sinek in his book “Leaders eat last” that by creating a circle of safety in businesses people feel less threats from internal pressures e.g. redundancy so they can focus their energy and time to protect the company and the work they do from outside dangers and seize opportunities (Sinek, 2017).

The left circle of safety is a great depiction that if job security is not high, people don’t feel safe and

therefore aren’t as effective at helping the business respond to outside threats.

4.3 d Workplace autonomy

Autonomy in the workplace was separated into three forms when surveyed:

1. Control over how their daily work was organised
2. Control over how they do their daily tasks
3. The level of influence they have over their tasks (StatsNZ, 2019)

Across all three measures of autonomy, employees with lower autonomy showed increased dissatisfaction in their work (StatsNZ, 2019).

As depicted in the graph below, those with little or no control over how their work is organised saw a 15% lower satisfaction against those who had a lot of control. Similar trends were seen for the other areas of autonomy surveyed.

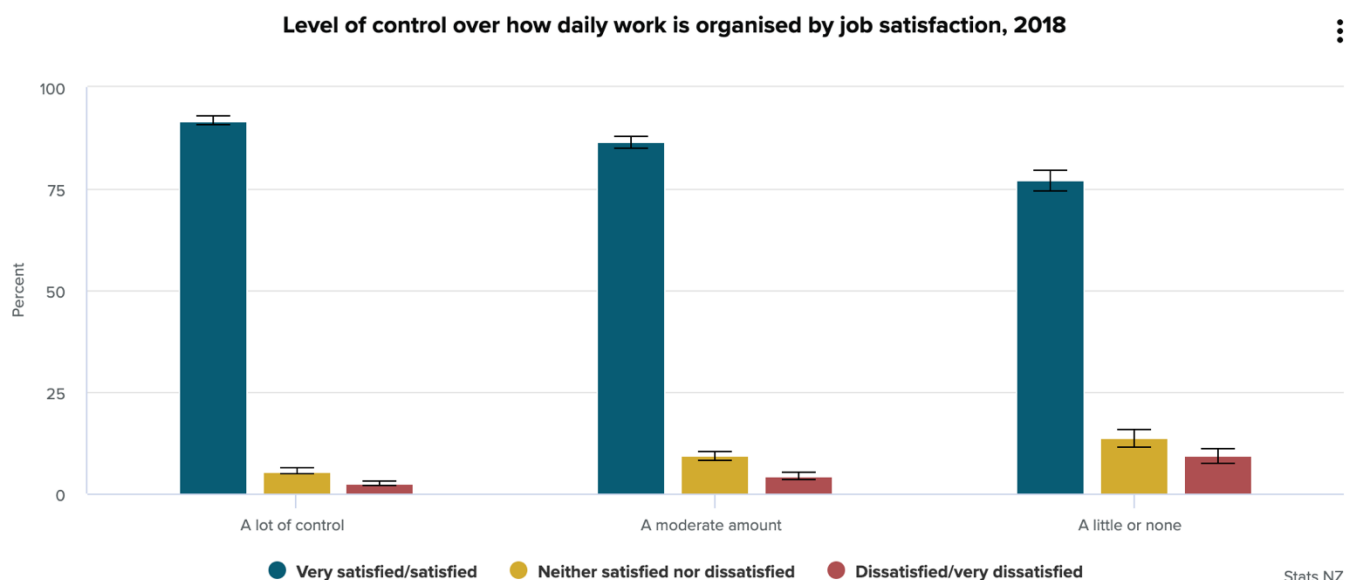


Figure Three: Level of autonomy in workplace, relative to job satisfaction (StatsNZ, 2019)

4.3 e Workplace relationships

Employees who have good overall workplace relationships with both their managers and their colleagues, had much higher satisfaction than those who did not. This difference was the largest of all factors examined, of those who had good relationships at work 91% were satisfied with their job, versus 55% satisfaction for those who did not have good working relationships (StatsNZ, 2019)

Only 2.7% of employees with good workplace relationships were dissatisfied with their job, compared with 20% of those who did not have a good workplace relationship, 10x the proportion. Those who described their relationships as 'very good' had even smaller rates of dissatisfaction, <2%. See below graph for these figures in a visual form.

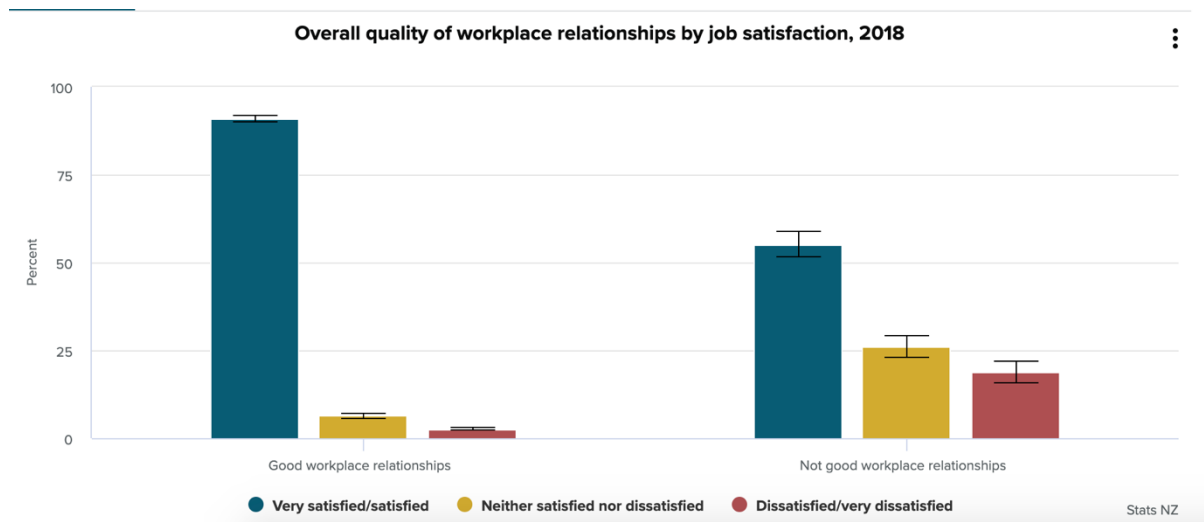


Figure Four: Overall quality of workplace relationships by job satisfaction (StatsNZ, 2019)

4.3 f Work related stress and tiredness

Levels of dissatisfaction increased with incidence of workplace stress. Those who were always stressed were a lot less satisfied with their work than those who were 'hardly/never stressed at work'. See below figures, there is a clear trend of decreasing satisfaction with increasing workplace stress.

Not only did the increased stress and tiredness decrease satisfaction at work but resulted in employees being too tired to enjoy out of work activities. (StatsNZ, 2019).

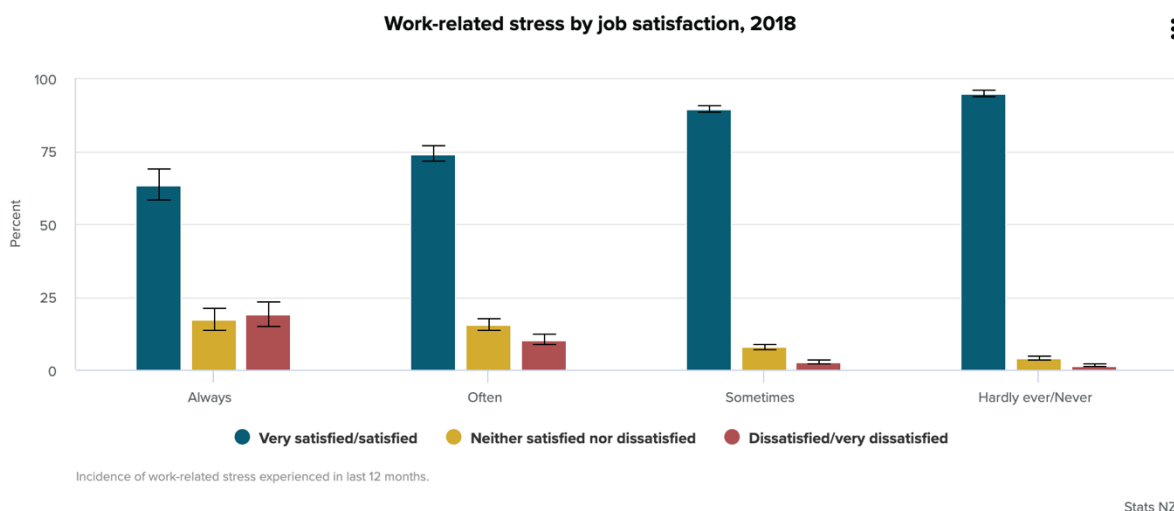


Figure Five: Work related stress by job satisfaction (StatsNZ)

These themes aligned with the key global themes discussed in *Leaders eat last*, the Deloitte's insight report's and lead to summarising the key trends to:

- Flexibility of hours and rosters
- Increased Autonomy

- Personalized workplace structure and culture
- Increased technology use
- Increased desire for sense of purpose in work.

6. Semi structured interviews:

I had the most fantastic time doing my semi structured interviews for this project. I came away from each interview feeling invigorated and excited about the future of people management.

My interviews involved a one hour to ninety minute open ended question format.

The dairy farmers I interviewed were:

Richard & Amy Fowler – 50/50 sharemilkers, farm lessees and farm owners in the Bay of Plenty

Murray Linton – Farm owner 400 cows Bay of Plenty

David Jensen – Farm owner with 750 cows contract milker and owner of three Kiwifruit orchard's

Victoria & Jared Clarke – 50/50 sharemilkers, Canterbury

Rhys Roberts – CEO Align Farms

Erin Christian – 50/50 sharemilker, Canterbury

Rebecca Miller – 50/50 sharemilker, Director Milk IQ, Canterbury

Robin & Claire Barkla, Farm owner 3,000 cows with contract milkers

Out of industry:

Steve Turner, Business Manager TempRite, Rotorua

David Blackmore, General Manager Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Rotorua

Jessamine Bradley – General Manager Kaitiaki Adventures, Rotorua

Adrian Barkla – New World store owner, Auckland

5.1 Within dairy

Key themes from interviews with dairy farm employers

Out of industry experience of employers

One of the commonalities for those I interviewed was that all of the farmers had employment, experience or education off farm prior to entering farm employment. From comparisons made throughout their interviews it was clear that these experiences allowed my interviewees to make workplace comparisons almost impartially, not from the singular view of farming and that it was a lifestyle.

“Very few people walk into McDonalds wanting to own it” – Jared Clarke

Making workplaces suit the people in them not the people suit the workplace

Through every single interviewee I spoke to this theme was clear. Following all of my interviews it became obvious that there were similar characteristics to each of these managers, but the way in which they developed their workplace completely depended on the individuals in it.

A couple of the key ways that these workplaces flexed to the people in them were:

- Rosters: The rosters ranged from 5:2,6:1, 11:3 with 2 afternoons off during weekdays, 6:2, 5:2 to a fully flexible rostering system. The key point from all was that they decide the roster as a team.
- Made adjustments to accommodate visa requirements: We have a huge number of highly skilled workers in our industry on visas, and visa requirements are becoming increasingly difficult to meet. One of the farmers interviewed has a team who are all on various visas. They restructured their team roles, hours worked and pay rates to allow for each member to meet their visa requirements. *“This job is their pathway to residency, they may likely leave the industry once they’ve got their residency. But they enjoy the farm, the team and we enjoy having them here.” – Jared Clarke*

Align farms had taken the most radical approach to being flexible to their staff of my interviewees, with their introduction of fully flexible rosters. They have developed an app where staff select all of their shifts at the beginning of the week, with a requirement being to do 45 hours. The shifts are 4:30am-9am, 9am to 1pm and 1pm to 5pm. The result of this is that staff are able to work when they choose, and can fit work around their life. Diverse skills are needed for a fully flexible roster, with the result being that they saw a large uptake in training and utilising the ‘underemployed’ in their local community.

*“Revolution not evolution, slowly integrate the change” Rhys Roberts,
Align farms*

*“Be courageous, curious and compassionate. Once you get the purpose of
your business right everyone can start making courageous decisions” Rhys
Roberts, Align farms*

Farming is just a job for many, it doesn’t have to be a ‘lifestyle’

The old phrase of “I did it, so they should have to as well”, came up in many of my interviews as an example of the kind of attitude we need to remove from our industry. All of the farmers I interviewed have worked long hours and made sacrifices to get to the position

they are in, but they all acknowledged that they do not expect their staff to do the same. In many of the cases that I interviewed they are making farm system changes to accommodate the people on farms life outside of work.

Two simple on farm examples:

1. Erin & her husband Nathan Christian have a policy of fair and flexible hours. They run an 11:3 roster as staff enjoy the 3 day weekend, and provide sleep ins during the week. The team do 45 hours per week and move to 3in2 milking from roughly Christmas. If staff have a social commitment e.g. night time social netball, they have a discussion and the team work to accommodate.
2. Jared and Victoria Clarke milk 25% of the herd once a day to allow hours to remain at 45 hours per week, and focussed on MaxT milking principles to improve hours worked per week from 53hours per week to 45 hours per week.

“Train people well enough so they can work anywhere, treat them well enough so they don’t want to” – Richard Branson quote said by Jared Clarke

Use of technology limited to information transfer currently, but that will change.

All of the farmers interviewed were using technology on farm, but the comments were made that the technology that’s currently being used on farm is “informational technology” not disruptive technology that we have seen in other industries.

Common technologies used on farm were:

- MINDA and protrack: both technologies related to cow animal health information and improved efficiencies around management on farm
- Pay Sauce: Payroll and electronic timesheet provider. All the farms interviewed used Pay Sauce for their payroll and timesheets.
- Fonterra apps: Provides daily monitoring of milk collection
- SPACE: Pasture monitoring data
- FarmIQ: Farm health and safety systems

The biggest disruptive technology on the horizon that was mentioned was Halter; a fenceless farming collar on cows that reduces time spent bringing cows in, drafting cows, setting up fences and could lead to farms having no internal fences. The biggest barrier to uptake right now is cost. Erin and Nathan Christian are considering it on their farm *“We predict we’d gain a 20-30% return on each collar in labour cost”*.

In comparison to other industries interviewees commented that we have little technology on farm to assist with labour requirements. Interviewee David Jensen who has interests in

kiwifruit noted that in kiwifruit, who are predicted to have a huge labour shortage in the coming years, post harvest technology such as automated packing and stacking is reducing their labour requirements in the packhouse by 50%.

Developing a workplace comparable to “9-5 or “living in town”- we need to be competitive

“In the past we’d be competing with other farms for good people, but now we’re competing with bunnings, McDonalds roading and more ” Jared Clarke

All interviewees mentioned developing a workplace as competitive with “9-5 work in town” as being important to them. Richard and Amy Fowler both came from jobs off farm when they first began their journey in the dairy industry. Amy at Sport BOP and Richard with Land Corp (now Pamu), one of their key goals from the beginning was to try and match a job in town as best they could; with a particular focus being that everyone has 4 days off/fortnight. With some of these days being made up of 2x afternoon’s per week. *“I always employ more people than I need” – Richard.*

Align farms have developed four strands/goals of their employment that will place them as leaders in the people management space, Rhys Roberts shared these:

1. Fully flexible rosters
2. Full health insurance for all staff on farm and their families
3. Pay living wage
4. 60% of the diets of people on farm is provided from on farm
 - a. This includes growing vegetables on farm in a greenhouse and staff ordering a vegetable box each week.
 - b. A full time person has been employed to run the greenhouse and distribute vegetable boxes
 - c. Green waste is also collected from farm houses and utilised at the greenhouse

These kinds of initiative place Align farms as a leading workplace in Ashburton, and exemplified Rhys’ ability to think about the whole person and make courageous decisions to look after their needs.

Encouraging of autonomy in the workplace

Most of the farmers that I interviewed had very flat management structures.

Rebecca Miller described their management structure on farm as being a ‘teal blend’. Teal organization management is the theory that advocates for self-management and encourages no need for hierarchy. Rebecca said *“We give our team the empowerment,*

coaching and tools to be autonomous”, she noted that to adopt a teal management strategy you need to have developed the right culture within a team.

Of the farmers interviewed, when asked “What are the top three things you have identified your staff wanting?” Four of the seven identified autonomy as on this list. The second part of the question was “How have you made adjustments to these needs?” The answers included:

- Having clear systems and expectations of how things should be done
- Little to no hierarchy within team
- Don’t provide the answers *“I always listen to what you have to say, but we don’t always do it”*
- Trust inherently
- Give them (staff) the tools to get the job done
- Fully flexible rosters, and all team members highly skilled
- Safety in their workplace so have the confidence to try things and bring forward idea’s
- You Choose afternoons (discussed further in report)

Clear communication

Like autonomy, clear communication was identified as one of the top three things their employees wanted in a workplace for over half of the farmers I interviewed.

The ways farmers interviewed ensured good communication with and within their teams were:

- The use of WhatsApp as a tool to having written communication. Especially useful for teams who didn’t all have the same first language.
- Being present – this doesn’t mean being on farm but always having a point of contact available
- Acting consistently
- Weekly meetings
- Sending out a weekly email on Sunday night including key targets, plan for the week
- Kan Ban boards – whole team contributes and is actively involved in a task orientated whiteboard
- Farm management calendars displayed for whole team
- “Going deep” – expect all managers to know deeper details of their teams e.g. what do they do for fun? What’s their favourite food?
- Formal reviews annually & three monthly

The overwhelming theme's with communication is firstly ensuring that multiple communication forms are used, they are clear to understand and secondly that knowing their drivers at a deeper level than as an employee.

"Gone are the days of just knowing your team well, I expect my managers to 'go deep'" Rhys Roberts.

5.2 Out of industry

"The workplace of the future is a challenging environment with added regulation and compliance, in addition to seemingly constant tweaks and adjustment to things like minimum wage rates, and leave entitlements.

In saying that good people doing good things is rewarding and we live in a world where things will constantly evolve so we need to embrace the change as a good thing." - David Blackmore, Waimangu Volcanic Valley

I felt privileged to interview the out of industry employers. They provided interesting and frank insight's as leading employers in their fields and were so generous with their time.

I targeted employers who faced similar challenges to our industry

- Work 7 days per week
- Low levels of education levels among staff
- Industries with staff shortages
- Variable shifts e.g. not Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm

There were two key themes that I identified the same as my dairy interviews, these being: the need for clear communication and needing to be competitive in the marketplace.

Alongside these there were three key themes that differed from dairy. These themes were, the importance of covid response and the importance of lifestyle and flexibility with their teams.

Autonomy was not identified as a key theme in the workplaces that were interviewed in tourism and TempRite, however this theme did come through strongly from Adrian Barkla from New World, he mentioned an analogy I think it would be useful for all employers to remember at times

"Does a police officer get out into everyone's car and move them all during a traffic jam? No, they stand in the middle and coordinate traffic" Adrian Barkla, New World

Clear communication

Similar to the dairy employers interviewed communication was a strong theme. The key ways that the businesses that I interviewed ensured clear communication were:

- Use of long range radio's
- Meeting at the start of each day/shift
- Staff memo's
- Staff newsletters
- App called SimPro. Used at Temprite and each employee has an ipad with SimPro installed. Simpro receives jobs, receives notifications sent from head office, can take photos of jobs to update clients instantly , quotes completed and timesheets.
- Deal with each other face to face daily
- Give specific intentional positive feed back, not vague
- Know everyone's name, and what they're interested in

Developing a competitive workplace

All employers mentioned competition for good people in the workplace as a priority of theirs. The way that the employers ensured that they were cultivating the best workplace to attract the best people were:

- Competitive salaries: All of the employers identified competitive pay as one of the top 3 things their staff were wanting. Interestingly, the majority of employers in the businesses I interviewed were paid hourly, or paid based on the activity they were doing e.g. head guide's taking a group rafting at Kaitiaki adventures will be paid a different rate than a junior guide or the photographer on the river. The hourly rate may differ from head guide to head guide depending on experience level and skill set too.
- Flexibility of hours: During summer employees at Temprite can choose their hours and most work 6am to 3pm, opposed to the regular 8am to 5pm, to utilise daylight hours *"Many of our staff move here (to Rotorua) for the lifestyle so they like to make the most of the daylight and get to the lake or into the woods"* Steve Turner, Temprite.
- Training and inspiring the next generation: Since 1999, Kaitiaki Adventures have run a rangatahi training program. The company runs it for 2 days over a weekend, and invite 16-17 year olds to join them. They roster on their best guides to give them a great experience and the rangatahi get to experience rafting, hiking, health and safety, photography. They've had great success with their program, and many rangatahi who have gone through this program are still in the industry today.

"Moving forward we are working towards ensuring family and lifestyle are regarded very highly in our business" Steve Turner, TempRite

Reaction to covid, continued management through clear values

Unlike the dairy industry; tourism was hugely impacted by Covid-19. Throughout the interviews with employers in the dairy industry, response to Covid-19 was not mentioned, however it was a large part of the two tourism providers interviewed, and impacts the number and type of employment they can offer still.

“We retained 95% of our staff during the last 18 months following covid, including those staff who usually leave over winter to chase the sun. We lost 90% of our income overnight, as 80% of our clientele are from overseas.” Jessamine, Kaitiaki Adventures

Both Kaitiaki adventures and Waimangu valley retained most, if not all of their staff from pre covid, this was one of the primary reasons they were identified as leaders in the great employers in their industry. Kaitiaki adventures in particular were a stand out in their ability to pivot their business to respond to covid.

Pre covid, Kaitiaki adventures primary business was half day experiences up Mt Tarawera and on the Kaituna river. They had 190 visitors in their business each day, with 80% of these clients being international. Following covid they retained 95% of staff with the following initiatives

- Clear communication and meeting involving whole team on their response to covid and loss of income.
- Gained environmental funding for projects so once alert levels decreased staff still had full time employment in two environmental projects.
- Weekly yoga sessions
- Used the time to upskill and offer staff additional training
- Food parcels assembled at a warehouse in Rotorua, and staff assigned collection times.
- Retainer offered to core staff to ensure they have financial security for essential payments e.g. rent & food

Kaitiaki adventures completely changed the skillset of their business, while continuing to live by their key pillars of “Manakitanga, Whanakitanga & Kaitiakitanga”. Throughout my interview with Jessamine, there was many examples of how they lived their values in every day in their business.

“Kaitianga: A ‘kaitiaki’ is a guardian, keeper, preserver, conservator, protector. The addition of ‘tanga’ denotes preservation, conservation and protection. The concept of Kaitiakitanga is a part of a complex social, cultural, economic and spiritual system.” Kaitiaki Adventures

Importance of lifestyle and flexibility

“Most of our guides have never had a “real job” because they don’t call rafting a real job” Jessamine Bradley, Kaitiaki adventures.

This comment made me laugh and think, how do we shape our workplaces so no one feels they have a ‘real job’? From my interviews with these out of industry employers, emphasising the importance of balanced lifestyle helped this.

The flexible rosters mentioned by Steve from TempRite were an example of flexibility in hours to accommodate lifestyle. Interestingly, both tourism operators and the new world owner don’t emphasise 5 days a week as a goal, and they do not run set rosters e.g. 6 days on 2 days off. Rosters vary depending on season and fluctuating workload with most staff working at least one weekend day.

Jessamine described their work life philosophy as being based on the Poutama theory. This is the theory that to reach the top of the mountain /reach your goal, the best way is to work hard, then have a break, described as take steps opposed to climbing straight up.

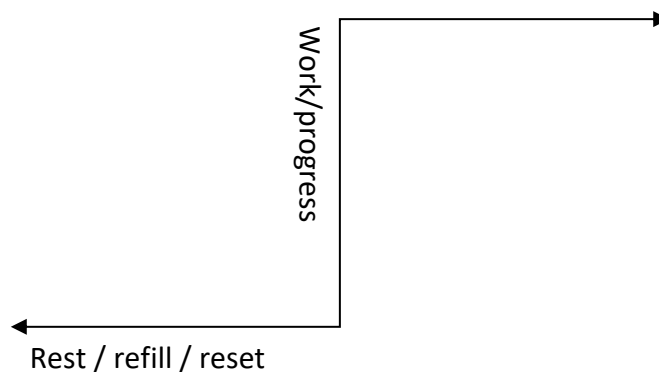


Figure Six: Illustration of Poutama theory

7. Call to action and steps forward

In the middle of my interview process, we were getting some cows condition scored on farm by a DairyNZ consulting officer and he was discussing a recent conference he has been to, where a prominent sport psychologist had described high performing teams with the following acronym;

High performing team (**HPT**) = A leader worth following (**LWF**)

Work worth doing (**WWD**)

A Culture worth committing to (**CWCT**)

This acronym almost perfectly summarises the key theme from my interviews over the past three months. Each theme and global trend fits into this acronym.

My hope is this section will answer the second part of my question “How can we design dairy workplaces to better attract the next generation?” I hope through this section we can challenge some of the standard practices in the industry, and ask “why do we think this?”.

I have identified the following areas of focus for our dairy workplaces

- Encourage flexible rosters and pay scales
- Foster leaders not managers on farm
- Develop safe workplace cultures that allow autonomy and innovation
- Share common purpose on farm

6.1 Foster leaders not managers on farm

“I don’t know a single organisation in history that was managed out of crisis. They were all led”. - Simon Sinek

Throughout all of my interviews one thing was clear; these employers are all leaders. They are all interested in their people, enjoy managing people and they are all interested in developing themselves as a leader. The unfortunate part of this reflection, is that they are not the norm. Like almost every industry, if you’re good at your job, you progress, and eventually you will probably find yourself in a position of managing people, even if it is not what you enjoy. So, how do we help farmers enjoy and progress in their people management as fast as they do with animal and grass management?

6.1 A Self-reflection and skill gap analysis

Feedback on farm is critical to understand how teams are rating performance of their leader. Offering feedback to the boss on farm can be tricky, the best feedback system would be anonymous, easy for staff to give and be relatively regular to ensure you aren’t catching people at a bad time.

Idea One: Gathering feedback from teams on managements leadership

A small survey that is completed when timesheet is submitted for the fortnight with 5 key indicators on happiness (anonymously submitted), a report sent to employer e.g. enjoyment of work, rate workload, support given to complete jobs, tank (energy levels) level. This could be a sliding scale as shown below. It takes no longer than 5 minutes, and is a requirement just as submitting the timesheet is. The questions could differ from week to week, with more focussed on the management team at specific times. See picture below

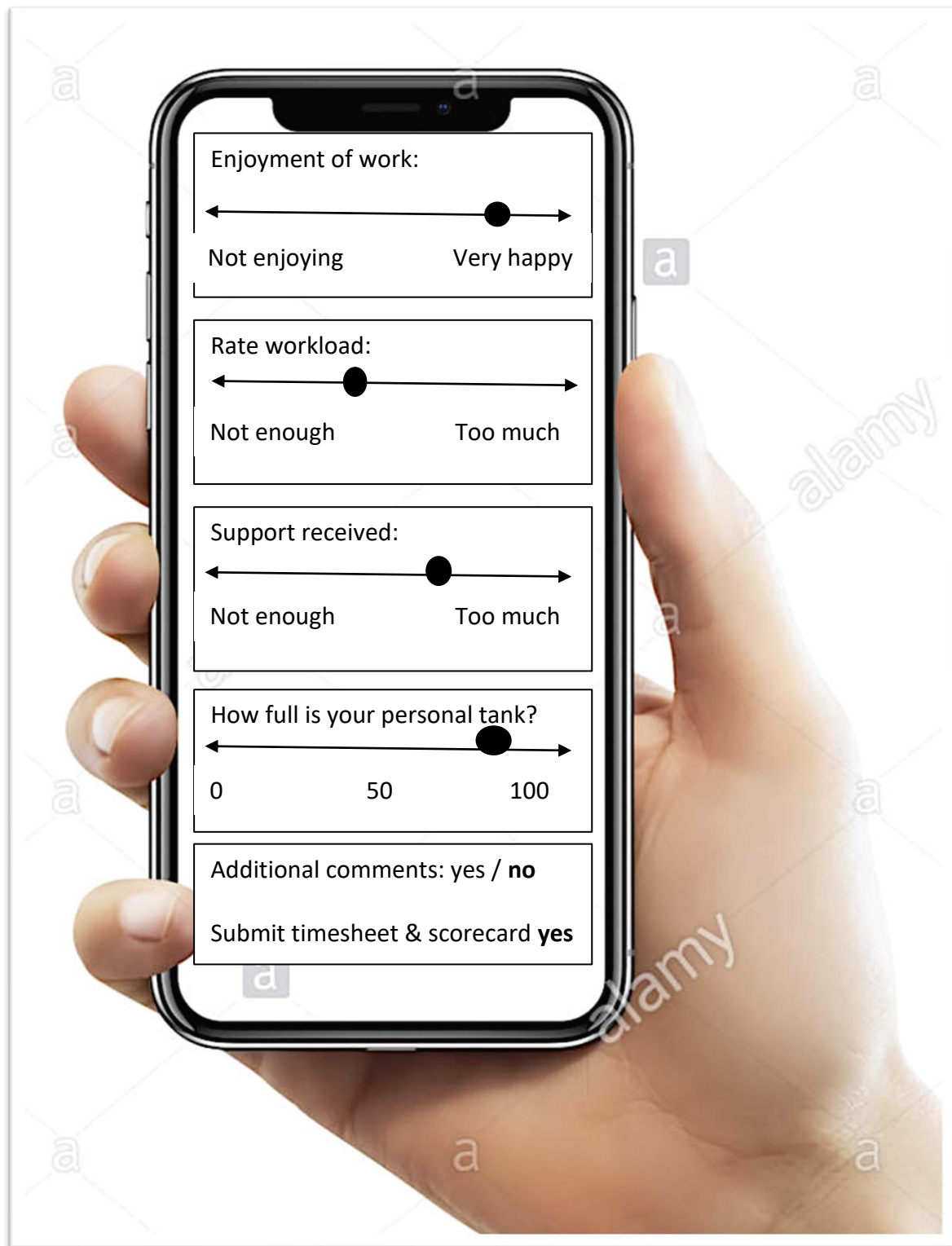


Figure Seven: Pulse scorecard for employees to fill out prior to submitting their timesheet

Other idea's on places to gather feedback from interviewees were:

- Tiny pulse
- Survey monkeys
- Written notes surveys

Self-reflection begins within, so in order for managers on farm to want to improve they must be open to this feedback, and willing to act on it. Dairy NZ offers a great resource called “Rate yourself as a good boss” that is a self-evaluation to rate your performance as a boss. See appendix 3

6.1 b Training

Coach approach & No.8 HR offer highly regarded leadership course’s that help develop leaders on farm and good employers. Our industry would benefit hugely if all people managers completed one of their courses.

6.2 Develop safe workplace cultures that allow autonomy and innovation

Autonomy was a key theme that was discussed throughout the research and interviews around workplace design. One of the glaring obstacles to building safe workplaces is the lack of job security in our industry. If employers in positions as contract milkers and sharemilkers don’t have job security past a three year contract, how can they offer job security to their team? I don’t have many idea’s around this problem, aside from a joint employment agreement between sharemilker and farm owner and staff.

Putting job security aside, the following idea’s were contributed, and could be used on farm to improve workplace cultures:

6.2 a Communication

- Implementing some sort of regular formal meeting on farm
- 3-4 formal meetings /year with staff
- Multiple types of communication used e.g. visual, written and verbal communication

Idea Two: KanBan boards

KanBan boards are used on farm and out of industry to jot down idea’s and projects, and then monitor these jobs’ progress in a way all can see. The KanBan board offers individuals an option to contribute ideas, take ownership of moving jobs around the board and for whole teams to understand progress of jobs or ideas in the business.

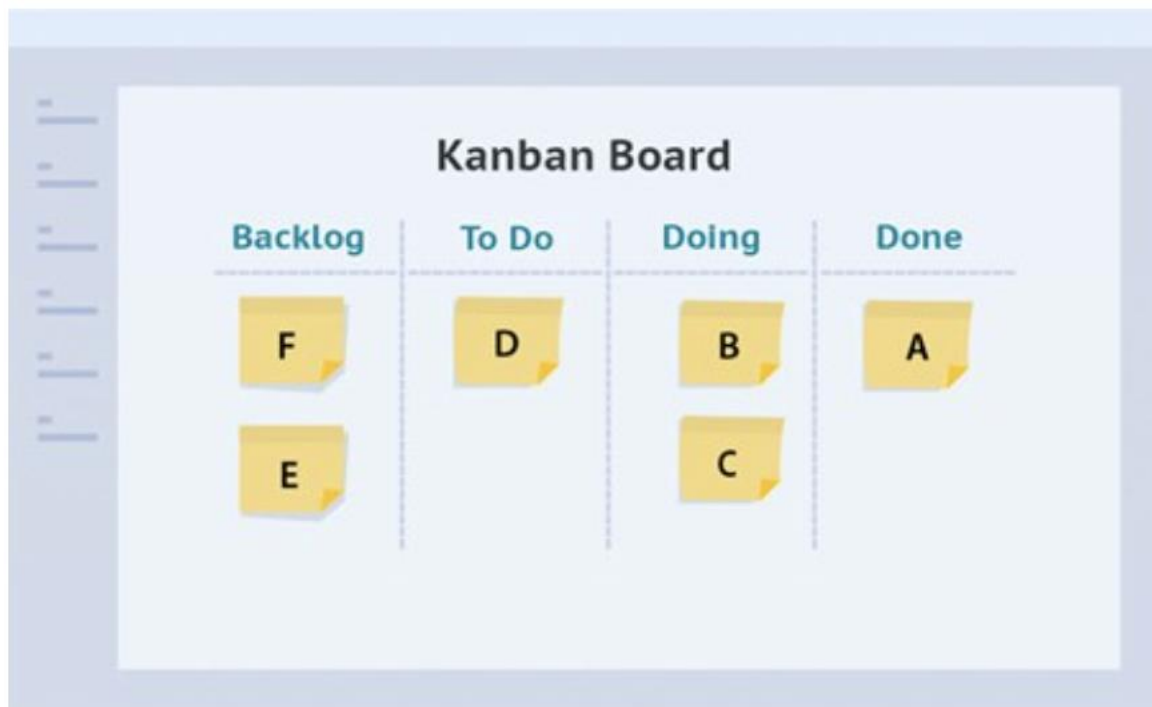


Table One: Example of a KanBan board

KanBan boards have been used successfully on farm for teams to communicate jobs and gather information from all members. The most common way they were being used on farm was in regards to maintenance on farm.

6.2 b Trust in a team

Building trust is a key element of team culture. Building trust takes time regardless of how hard you try. It is built over time, but lost in a moment's decision or action.

- An interesting concept to ask farmers is "What if no one could ever be fired once they entered your business? Would you change your recruitment and/or management style?"

Idea three: Regular biannual formal catch up with five key questions

Following an interview, a farmers shared their five questions they ask their staff two to three times a year. I would recommend every farmer sit down with the people in their team and ask their staff these questions:

1. What do you enjoy?
2. What **three** things are important to you in the next 6 months
3. How can the farm be improved?
4. How can your management team be improved?
5. How can you do a better job?

Write them down and give each team member the questions and a week to think about it, then set formal time, and designate an hour to talk through these questions. These questions allow for learning about team members outside of work.

6.3 c Encourage autonomy

Autonomy in a workplace has been identified over and over again as a key element to satisfaction in the workplace. Some ways to encourage autonomy in the workplace could be the following

Idea four: You choose afternoons

This concept began at the likes of Google and Microsoft, where employees get a whole day or afternoon to do whatever they like, there are just two rules;

1. Whatever you do must benefit the business
2. You have to report back to the whole team tomorrow about what you did

Idea's such as g-mail were created from you choose days at Google and an afternoon on farm offers freedom of thought and trust that employers believe in staff idea's. Farmers interviewed had some great results trying one you choose afternoon each month for a team member.

Idea five: Reduced hierarchy in management structures on farm

Teams with reduced hierarchy in teams had greater diversity of skills, spread of responsibility and saw greater autonomy in the employers interviewed.

For a flat management structures to work in a team, training must be given, and the team must all have trust in each other's ability and values.

I do pose the question, what if we just completely changed the titles on our farms? Would this help with challenging roles and responsibilities?

Idea six: Every employer runs a ½ day workshop for their team at the start of the season – understanding each other

An easy to pick up and run template for a ½ day workshop/activity would be useful for farmers. The objective of this workshop is to learn more about new team mates, set clear values and behaviour behind each value for the team.

The general outline would involve time as a team away from work to build initial relationships and the output being an agreed upon purpose, values and associated behaviours agreed to and created by the whole team.

Idea seven: Digging deep

For employers who find digging deeper and knowing your staff at a deeper level difficult it may be useful to have a set of 5-10 questions to ask staff weekly, such as

- What did you have for dinner?
- How's your partner going?
- What book/tv show/music have you been listening to lately?
- What did you do on your days off?

These are simple questions, but placing a prompt system in place e.g. phone reminders to remind farmers to ask these questions may help employees feel heard and employers learn more about their people outside of work. All helping to build trust.

6.3 Encourage flexible rosters and pay scales

One of my key learnings from other industries, is that we don't need to be so rigid with our income and pay and with our set rostering.

Idea eight: Fully flexible roster & Choice app from Align farms

Rhys from Align farms recommends that to begin a fully flexible roster, start with a whiteboard. Fully flexible rosters are easiest to implement in bigger teams and farms in close vicinity to a town. The day is split into three shifts depending on the farm workload, the shifts for the week get released at the beginning of the week and staff need fill in their designated hours e.g. 45hours/week. The person who picks first rotates from week to week to be fair.

The goal being that each person selects shifts that work best around their life.

Idea nine: Increased hourly rates for work outside standard times and potential "on call" days off

Hourly rates fluctuate in many industries depending on what time your shift is or what your skill level is for a specific role, why don't we do this on farm?

Increased hourly rates during 'unfavourable' times of the day would result in incentive for working earlier or later, challenge the viability of completing certain jobs early in the morning or after five pm for employers and I believe would encourage behaviour change towards working in more sociable hours.

If farmers needed to pay 1.5x standard rate for milking before 6am and 1.5x standard rate for fertilising a paddock at 6:30 pm at night, they will think very hard before working at these times.

The other industries that I interviewed, "on call" days off were common. Is it possible for some farms to run with skeleton crew on the weekend, with core staff rostered on working a slightly longer day on the weekend, with someone on call for the case where a large job pops up?

Idea ten: Standard farm rates for different jobs

Align farms are moving towards focusing on keeping more work in house, through rewarding staff for specialist training e.g. welding or AB technician. In rafting you also get a different hourly rate depending on whether you are tour guide, assisting a tour or photographer. Is there more opportunity to reward skillsets that require additional training? e.g.

	\$/hour
AB inseminations	\$35/hour
Milk harvester	\$25/hour
Managing shed	\$28/hour
Welding	\$35/hour
Electrical work on farm	\$40/hour

Table Two: Example of standard skilled roles and pay rate's on farm

The primary goal is to reward specialist roles on farm, and reduce the amount of work on farm being completed by contractors.

6.4 Share common purpose on farm and industry wide

Every book and article you read on leadership mentions the importance of a purpose, or vision for a business. I don't see why our farm teams are any different. There are many courses and providers that offer support for employers in developing their purpose in their business.

Mark and measure course run by DairyNZ is a great place to start.

Then sharing that purpose with farm teams provide clarity for the season ahead.

8. Conclusion

This report investigated the state of our dairy industry currently and how we've got to where we have now. I looked into research around workplace satisfaction and design and drew the key global themes of

- Flexibility of hours and rosters
- Increased Autonomy
- Personalized workplace structure and culture
- Increased technology use

- Increased desire for sense of purpose in work

The key themes from in and out of industry employers were then discussed, and came up with some practical solutions that farms could consider to improve their current workplaces.

The key focus area's to improve our workplaces on farm were:

1. Encourage flexible rosters and pay scales
2. Foster leaders not managers on farm
3. Develop safe workplace cultures that allow autonomy and innovation
4. Share common purpose on farm

I look forward to seeing where our industry moves.

I see this as an exciting time to support employers in the dairy industry towards ensuring every dairy farm is a great place to work.

9. Recommendations

Moving forward the key area's I discussed in the call to action section were to

1. Encourage flexible rosters and pay scales
2. Foster leaders not managers on farm
3. Develop safe workplace cultures that allow autonomy and innovation
4. Share common purpose on farm

So, where to begin?

The key recommendations from this report are appropriate for every farmer employing people in New Zealand

1. Look within – What does it mean to be a leader worth following?
2. Ask your people – How do you find my leadership style, and how could I improve?
3. Try something! In my call to action I provide many idea's for farmers to try on farm.
The hardest part to do is start but I just encourage farmers to try one thing on farm.

10. References

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent form

Consent form for participation in semi structured interviews for Jordyn Crouch Kellogg project "Learning from global workplace trends, how can the NZ dairy industry design workplaces to attract the best of the next generation into our workforce?"

I am happy to participate in the research project being conducted by Jordyn Crouch, as part of her Kellogg project. I understand the following statements:

1. I understand that I have the right to decline to answer any question and can end the interview at any time
2. I understand that my name can be used unless we've discussed to keep identities private
3. I am happy for opinions in workplace design and people management to be quoted or initiatives to be discussed unless I state otherwise
4. I understand that participation involves being interviewed by Jordyn Crouch and the interview will last 1-1.5 hours
5. I understand that the interview will be recorded upon my agreement.
6. I have received a copy of this consent form

I, along with the researchers, agree to sign and date this information consent form

Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 2: Questions asked during semi structured interviews

Interview questions for Kellogg Project Dairy Workplace design

Name:

Organisation:

1. How long have you been farming and how what was your background to coming into farming?
2. What is your role in the business & how many in your team?
3. Can you give me a little background on the philosophies of running a team?

PROMPTS:

- Meetings
 - Hierarchy
 - Rosters
 - Hours of work/week
 - Assign roles
 - How long have you been with team?
4. What are the top 3 things you identified staff are wanting? What adjustments have you made to be flexible to these needs?
 5. What have you seen different of young people coming into your workplace versus 10 years ago?
 6. Over your time managing people what has changed about what people are wanting from the job?

Delve into each area.

- Flexibility of hours worked – how do you flex to suit your
 - Shorter job tenure – how have you adapted your training to accommodate shorter tenure? Changed roles/structure?
 - Autonomy – How have you encouraged autonomy, and adjusted communication to suit?
 - Technology – smart phones e.g. apps used, tech in shed
 - Awareness of consumers and the community -
 - Transferrable skills
7. In the next 5 years what are the things you're wanting to implement/change in your workplace to adapt to the changing needs of your people?
 8. Do you have any final comments on the future of workplaces to add?

Appendix 3:Self-assessment “Are you a good boss?”



I RATE MYSELF AS A...

Have a bit of fun and rate yourself as a boss



EMPLOYEES WOULD SAY THAT...	Very Good Boss (4 points)	Pretty Good Boss (3 points)	Could-do-better Boss (2 points)	Lots-to-work-on (1 points)
I regularly catch up with each of my team				
I ensure health, safety and wellbeing are a priority on farm				
They have warm and comfortable accommodation				
I appreciate the work my team do and tell them often				
I offer good systems and procedures with clear instructions				
I pay my team competitively				
I encourage development and provide quality training				
I hold regular team meetings				
I ensure my team have time for interests outside of work				
TOTAL	=	+	+	+

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