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HOW DOES A DWINDLING MOHAIR
INDUSTRY IN NEW ZEALAND LEARN TO
PLAY THE INFINITE GAME?

Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With conscious consumerism (Nguyen, 2020) on the rise, natural fibres are making a comeback. The rise in awareness of the damage which is caused by synthetic materials on the environment has led to the growth of natural materials, including growth of natural fibres like mohair (Data Bridge Market Research, n.d.). Mohair fibre, produced by the Angora goat is one of those natural luxury fibres that has seen a resurgence in popularity in recent years.

Unfortunately, the New Zealand Mohair Industry has been rapidly declining along with the world production of mohair fibre. New Zealand mohair production peaked in the late 1980's, producing up to 0.6 million kilograms of greasy mohair (2.4% of world production), dropping to current levels of 0.03 million kilograms or just under 1% of world mohair production (Hunter, 2020). This decline in production is not the basis for this report, but instead the reason for finding out how the industry can be helped to stay alive and relevant, taking advantage of the increase in demand for more natural fibres over the use of synthetic materials.

The New Zealand mohair industry is not in a place to capitalise on the global trend of increasing use of natural fibres in its current state. The industry has seen an ageing base to its producer group form. The lack of new entrants coming into the industry has meant it has struggled to remain relevant and viable. Despite the global mohair production decline, the demand has remained very strong, especially for top-end quality fibre and prices for mohair have remained high as demand continues to exceed supply (J. Woodward, personal communication, February 10, 2022).

With this global trend playing in favour of the mohair industry, the purpose of this research project was to identify what the New Zealand Mohair Industry organization could do to help the industry stay relevant and thriving long into the future. Research was conducted to explore what makes other organizations and businesses successful. Interviews were conducted with leading innovators to identify the reasons for their success and how the learnings could be adapted to help the New Zealand Mohair Industry. For the New Zealand Mohair producer's organization to be successful, there were several key factors identified that were required. They included the following:

- **Leadership** – having the right person(s) guiding the organization with a meaningful vision and empowering its members to create change.
- **Innovation** – finding solutions to existing problems by challenging the status quo.
- **Resilience** – learning how to adapt to change and analysing past failures to be stronger in the future.
- **Collaboration** – successful businesses work effectively with others both inside and outside their organizations to develop their ideas or processes.

Another key element that was identified was having the right people on board, who demonstrated courageous leadership, adopted an infinite mindset, who were able to share their vision with others and whose behaviours reflect their values. Together, with these key factors several recommendations were made to assist the New Zealand Mohair Industry going forward.

The recommendations from this project include:

- Utilize the findings from the Mohair New Zealand Incorporated SWOT analysis conducted in 2018 to help guide the strategy for the organization going forward.
- Adopt an infinite mindset; a mindset where the members of the Mohair New Zealand Incorporated organization challenge the status quo, looking beyond the present to remain relevant long into the future. This will improve the levels of trust, cooperation, and innovation among the members of the mohair producer's organization and its leaders.
- Undertake a step change and guide Mohair New Zealand Incorporated members through that process by following John Kotter's (2012) proven eight-step process for leading change. The three phases of the step change are as follows:
 - Phase 1: Create a Climate for Change
 - Phase 2: Engage and Enable the Organization
 - Phase 3: Implement and Sustain the Change

By adopting the above recommendations, the New Zealand Mohair Industry can successfully implement a step change and help turn themselves from a declining industry, into something that's innovative and relevant long into the future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the partners of the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme for their support and sponsorship for such an amazing programme. The course facilitator, Dr. Scott Champion for always trying to push us beyond what we think we are capable, to Dr. Patrick Aldwell for his wisdom and advice with the projects, and to Lisa and Annie for their communication and organisation behind the scenes. You all do a sterling job! Thank you for making my experience one I will never forget!

To my fellow Kellogg cohort 46, you are truly inspiring! When we first came together, I was feeling like I was not good enough to belong to such an amazing group of leaders. However, over the course of the programme, you all showed me how to believe in myself and further highlighted the reasons you were also a part of this amazing programme. Thank you for your friendship, wisdom, laughs, insights, and support throughout the course of the programme. I look forward to continuing this journey outside the Kellogg programme with you all and seeing where this will take us.

And finally, to my four beautiful children and my amazing husband, Michael, for being my support crew behind the scenes. I could not have done it without you, and I know I have been somewhat absent from Mum and farmer duties over the course of the programme so thank you for picking up the slack and understanding my absence. And especially thank you to Michael for pushing me beyond what I thought capable for myself. I would not have turned in my application if it wasn't for your belief in me and I most definitely wouldn't have completed this project if you weren't there when my focus was wanning to help steer me back on track. You are my rock, and you get me. You have an amazing ability to see my strengths especially when I can no longer find it within me to carry on. So, thank you for always being by my side and walking across the finish line with me. It was definitely more enjoyable knowing I had you in my corner the whole way through.

FOREWORD

Being an outsider has its advantages and disadvantages. In terms of the advantages, an outsider can provide a unique perspective because they have no preconceived notions. They are more open minded and instead of saying “I can’t,” they ask, “why can’t I?”. I am an outsider. Originally from the United States, I grew up on a family dairy farm in upstate New York where we raised our cows indoors and milked them three times a day. Fast forward to the present day and together with my husband we run a pasture-based New Zealand style dairy farming system that has integrated Angora goats into the farm. Prior to coming to New Zealand, I knew nothing about pasture-based farming systems, let alone an entirely different species that produced fibre.

For the past three years I have been a member of the board of directors for Mohair Producers New Zealand. The purpose of the board is to serve its levy paying member producers and see to it that their levy money goes to good use. However, what I have witnessed in my brief time in the mohair industry is that it is lacking cohesion and direction from its producers. Its ageing producer base is a concern and there is no succession plan for the industry. As a younger member of the industry, I would like nothing more than to see a thriving industry, whereby the producers are getting value for money for their product and support from the industry organization to assist its producers in being profitable, knowledgeable, and passionate producers of mohair fibre.

With the increase in conscious consumerism (Nguyen, 2020), awareness from consumers on their impacts on the environment, climate change and the environmental impacts from livestock, and the swing towards more natural fibres and less synthetics, we have the prime opportunity to showcase the positives of Angora goat farming and mohair production in New Zealand.

For this reason, I decided to focus my Kellogg report on how I could assist the New Zealand Mohair Industry in not only growing but thriving long into the future. This is what sent me on a mission to discover how other successful businesses and organizations get to where they are and to take away some learnings with the intention of supporting the mohair industry to make change for the better.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The New Zealand Mohair Industry finds itself at a crossroads. After years of dwindling goat numbers and an aging producer base according to John Woodward (personal communication, February 10, 2022), it is clear it needs to re-focus on where and how it spends its resources to reinvigorate the industry so it can survive long into the future. There is currently an opportunity to grow the awareness around natural fibres. Primarily due to the fact that climate change is on the front of everyone’s minds and consumers are very aware of the long-lasting effects of synthetics on the environment (Nguyen, 2020).

Even in the current New Zealand climate of the potential long-term effects of intensive livestock grazing systems on New Zealand’s waterways and the overall contribution of livestock emissions to the current climate crises, there is an opportunity to promote the benefits of farming Angora goats for mohair production. However, this report will not focus on the environmental benefits of angora

goats in diversified farming systems in New Zealand for the simple fact that the industry is headed in a downward spiral to extinction and must shift their focus to getting out of that death spin so to speak.

In 2018, a SWOT analysis on the New Zealand Mohair Industry was conducted, however due to the disruptions of COVID-19 in subsequent years, nothing has been actioned coming from this report after it was presented to the organization at the 2021 annual general meeting of producers. The lack of urgency combined with external disruptions to date, have not helped the mohair producer organization to build the momentum for a change transformation that was clearly identified in the analyses. This Kellogg project aims to address how the New Zealand Mohair Industry can implement change through the findings of the research in the subsequent sections of this report.

2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to:

- Provide a review of published sources regarding the key aspects of running a successful business or organization.
- Explore what leading innovators have done to grow a successful business or successfully implement a change in their organization.
- To complement the actions that were identified in the Mohair New Zealand Incorporated SWOT analysis conducted in 2018.
- Provide a set of recommendations to the board of Mohair New Zealand Incorporated to focus it on specific areas of improvement and change with the intention of helping grow the mohair industry in New Zealand.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology in this report comprised a literature review and semi structured interviews; allowing the author to explore the principles of the infinite game (Sinek, 2020) and how leading innovators use these principles to achieve success in their businesses.

The interviews were designed to be semi-structured to allow for the opportunity to be more exploratory in nature. Leading innovators were chosen to be interviewed because it was felt they would provide insights into how they think and act and how these insights could be used to help answer the research question. All interviews were performed via Zoom and lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. A total of five entrepreneurial individuals were interviewed, from across a range of sectors (both in the primary sector and not), both male and female, and young and old. This gave the research a good breadth of perspectives with which further analysis could be made.

The data was then analysed qualitatively as per Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's article on thematic analysis in psychology to develop the main points for the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The conversations with the interviewees were uplifting, encouraging and soul fulfilling. They helped to identify that behind every success story, there is a lot of hard work, numerous setbacks, but most importantly, grit and determination to keep playing the "infinite game." This was by far the most

rewarding part of the research process, having these people be open and transparent with their journeys, and allowing the privilege to listen to something very personal to each and every one of them.

For the literature review, two particularly useful platforms were used that also took the author to many more sources of information. They included the following:

1. “The Infinite Game” by Simon Sinek. This book was published in 2020 and Simon uses the ideas of James P. Carse who wrote “Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life as Play and Possibility” in 1986 to understand how we can adopt an infinite mindset.
2. “Leading Change” by John P. Kotter. This book explored the 8 Step Change Model designed by John Kotter which is the foundation for leading change in an organization.

Qualitative analysis of the literature was completed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) which highlighted several key themes. Although the literature covers a wide variety of such concepts the review will focus on the top six themes which emerged repeatedly throughout the literature reviewed.

4.0 MOHAIR: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Mohair is the fibre produced by the Angora goat, named after the Turkish province of Ankara (Angora or Ancyra) (Hunter, 2020). The word mohair is derived from the Arabic *mukhayyar* (“goat’s hair fabric”), which became *mockaire* in medieval times (Britannica, 2016). The Angora goat is thought to have originated in the Asian Himalayas or Highlands of Tibet.



Picture: Angora goat

Mohair is characterized by, and renowned for, its high lustre, durability (hard wearing), elasticity, resilience, resistance to soiling, soil shedding, setting, strength, abrasion resistance, comfort (including moisture absorption) and pleasing handle, and by relatively low flammability, felting and pilling (Hunter, 2020). Mohair is an extremely strong fibre and when compared diameter to diameter, it is stronger than steel (Samil Natural Fibres, n.d.). For centuries, mohair has been regarded as one of the most luxurious and best quality fibres available to man. It is generally a long, straight (uncrimped but often wavy), smooth and naturally lustrous fibre, and predominantly white in colour which can be

dyed to deep, brilliant and fast colours (Hunter, 2020). Mohair is often referred to as the “diamond fibre” due to its high lustre and bright white characteristics.



Picture: Mohair fibre

The mohair industry was first developed in Ankara, Turkey, which was also the first country to supply mohair as a raw material (Haigh, 1949 as cited in Hunter, 2020). The first Angora goats to leave Turkey went to South Africa in 1838 (Anon., 1981; Kennedy-Sloane, 1977 as cited in Hunter, 2020), and Angora goats arrived in the USA around 1849 (Ryder, 1989 as cited in Hunter 2020). Angoras were also introduced into Australia during the 1850 and 1860s (Ryder, 1981 as cited in Hunter, 2020), but attracted little interest until around 1970 (Ryder, 1981 as cited in Hunter, 2020). Angora goats were introduced to Britain in 1881 (Ryder, 1981 as cited in Hunter, 2020). In about 1867 a number of Angora goats were introduced into New Zealand by the Auckland, Canterbury, and Otago acclimatisation societies in an attempt to farm animals with more valuable skins (Gillingham, 2008). In 1990, when the demand for goat fibre was high, it was estimated that there were about a million goats (not including feral goats) on farms in New Zealand – 68% of these animals in the North Island (Gillingham, 2008). Furthermore, when fibre and goat prices declined in the early 1990s, goat numbers dropped to about 153,000 (71% in the North Island) in 2002. In 2007, the number of Angora goats was estimated to be 20,000 goats. Although there are no official publications of Angora goat numbers in New Zealand, it is estimated to be 10,000 Angora goats in New Zealand as noted by John Woodward, Ohuka Farms Mohair Division (personal communication, February 2022).

Today, as can be seen in Figure 1 below, mohair is largely produced in South Africa (which presently accounts for over 50% of global production), and the USA (Texas), but also in Turkey, Argentina, Lesotho, Australia and New Zealand (Hunter, 2020).

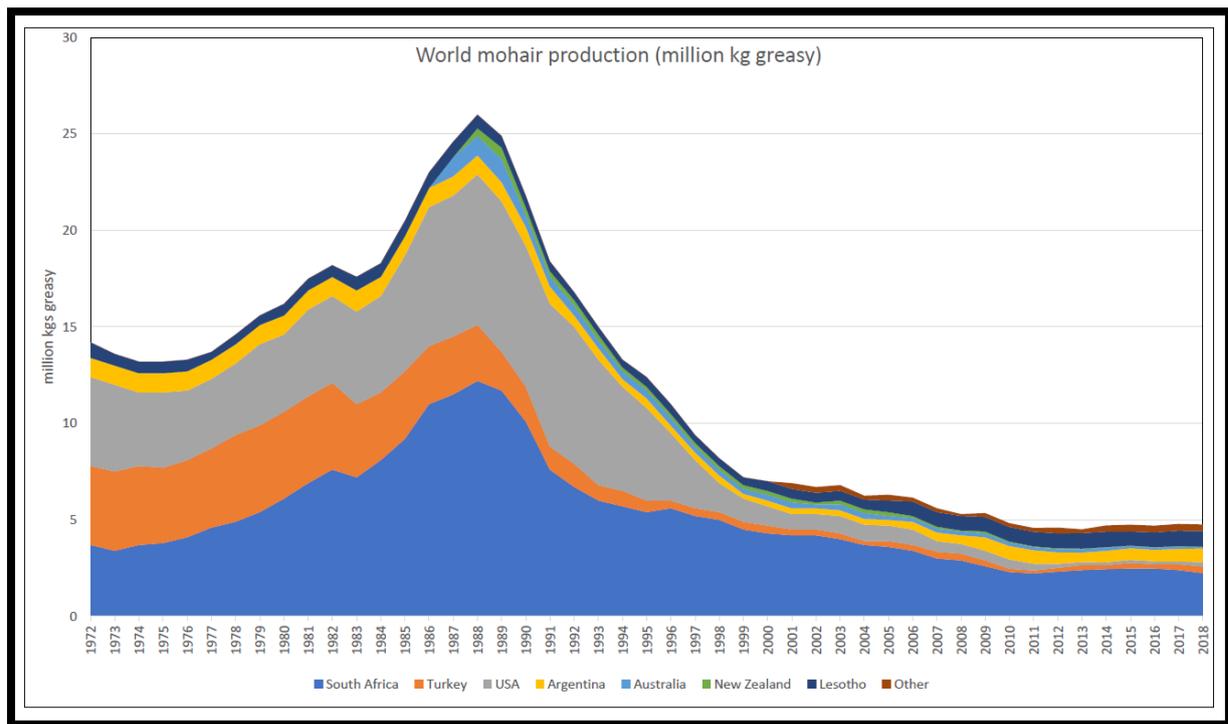


Figure 1: World Mohair Production (Modified from Hunter, 2020, pg. 336)

New Zealand is a small producer of mohair on the world scale. Today, New Zealand only accounts for 0.03 million kgs of greasy mohair, or less than 1% of total world mohair production, down from a peak of 0.6 million kgs (2.4% of total world production) of greasy mohair in the late 1980's. The world trend of mohair production as seen in Figure 2, shows that world production peaked in the late 1980's to approximately 26 million kgs of greasy mohair and has seen a sharp decline during the 1990's, holding steadier for the past two decades to current production figures of approximately just under five million kgs of greasy mohair.

What does this mean for mohair production into the future? Is there a place for mohair fibre? As seen in Figure 2 below, the global natural fibres market is expected to increase. Data Bridge Market Research (2022) analyses that the natural fibres market was valued at USD 4460 million in 2021 and is expected to reach USD 68447 million by 2029, registering a CAGR of 5.50 % during the forecast period of 2022 to 2029. The market report curated by the Data Bridge Market Research (2022) team includes in-depth expert analysis, import/export analysis, pricing analysis, production consumption analysis, patent analysis and technological advancements.

The natural fibres market is seeing an increase in demand for natural fibres, including protein-type fibres like mohair, silk, and wool. The rise in awareness of the damage which has caused by synthetic materials on the environment has led to the growth of natural materials (Data Bridge Market Research, 2022). The growth of natural fibre-based materials can replace the synthetic materials. As a result, there is a rise in demand for commercial use of the natural fibre in recent years for several industrial sectors. Moreover, increase in emerging new markets and strategic collaborations will act

as market drivers and further increase useful opportunities for the market's growth rate (Data Bridge Market Research, 2022).

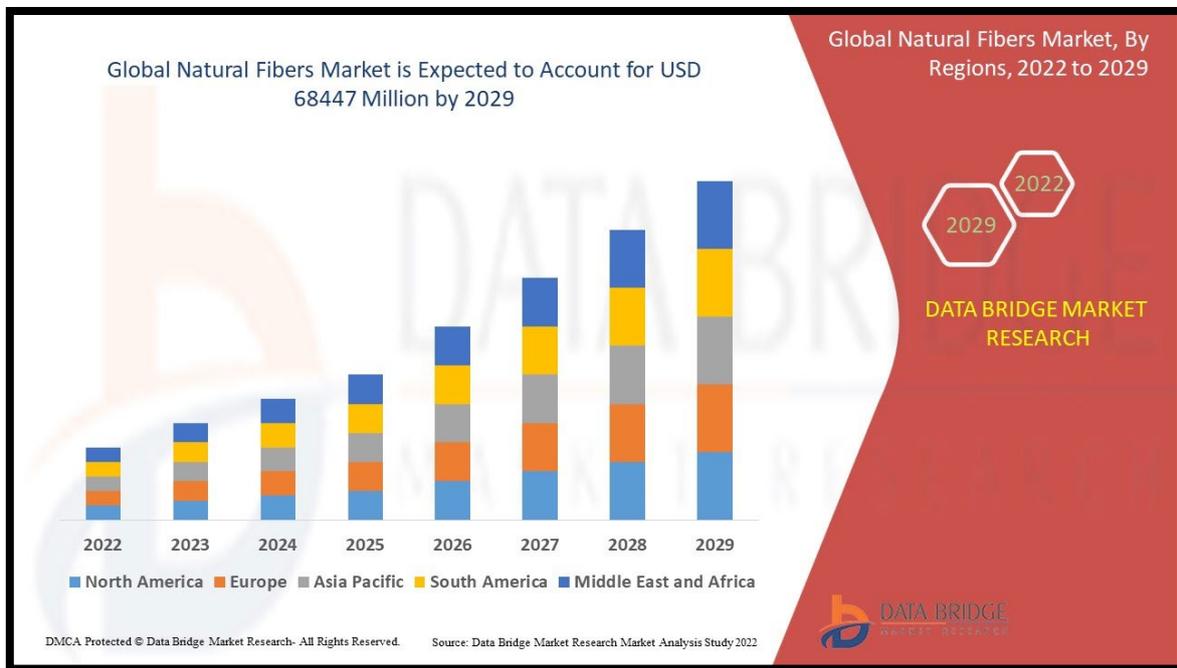


Figure 2: Global Natural Fibres Trend (From Data Bridge Market Research Market Analysis Study 2022)

With the increase in demand for natural fibres, the New Zealand mohair industry could be able to take advantage of this demand. However, as identified in the Mohair New Zealand Incorporated (MNZI) SWOT analyses conducted in 2018, one of the major weaknesses of the New Zealand mohair industry was poor industry organization. MNZI did not have any credibility, it had uncoordinated engagement and communication with its producer members and lacked in depth stakeholder knowledge. Therefore, MNZI is not able to take advantage of the surge in demand for natural fibres in its current state. For this reason, the research focused on ideas that could help future proof the New Zealand mohair industry going forward. Literature that centred around leadership, change management and innovation were chosen as the basis of the literature review that follows.

5.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a review of literature published by selected authors who are well versed in the areas of leadership, change management and innovation. The major themes identified from the literature can be seen in Figure 3 below, with the top six themes being trial and error or resilience, innovation, teamwork, leading with courage, vision, and values.

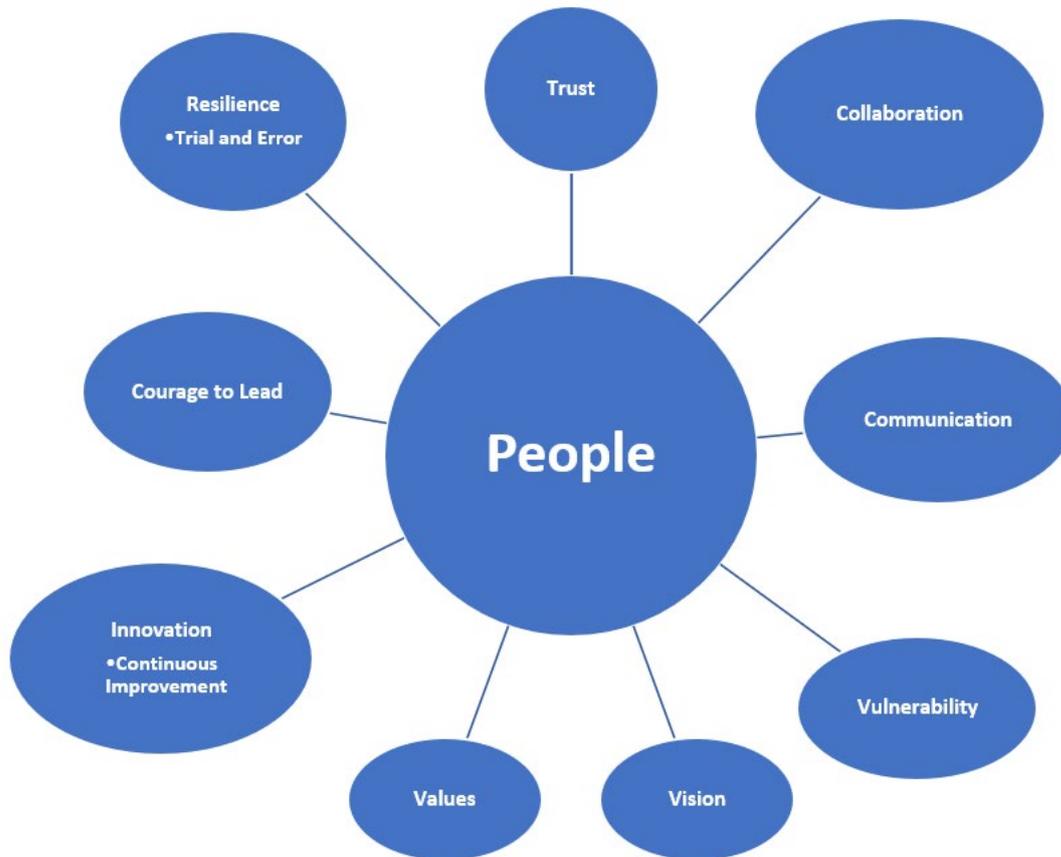


Figure 3: Themes from Literature Review

The major themes identified in the literature review had people at the centre of it all. Without the right people who have the right attributes, change is not possible. Ultimately, an organization will fail if the people do not share the above attributes. Below is a summary of the six key attributes that were identified in the literature as previously mentioned.

Ridley (2021) points out that innovation occurs through trial and error. Because no one gets it right the first time, they need to learn how to do it better through the trial-and-error process. This process is similar to step 6 and 7 in Kotter’s (2012) 8 step change model. Creating quick wins and building on the change are like the trial-and-error process. You celebrate small successes and learn from them to improve and get better. You implement a change, review how the change went and then tweak it to make it better. Because trial and error take time, it takes some special qualities of individuals to be able to keep pursuing those changes. One of those qualities that is crucial according to the research (Brown, 2018) is rising skills, also known as resilience. If we do not learn how to get back up after a failure, then we won’t try the next time or even try at all. Learning how to be resilient before we fail will help us understand how to analyse what went wrong and how we can do it better the next time.

Another theme according to the research (Brown, 2018; Sinek, 2019) was leading with courage. According to Brown (2018) it takes vulnerability, clarity of values, trust, and rising skills to be a courageous leader. Sinek (2020) points out that courageous leaders are strong because they know they do not have all the answers. They use their trusting teams for support which is one of the values Brown points out is needed as well to be courageous.

The research also highlighted the importance of teamwork and collaboration. Innovation and leadership were only successful when many people were involved. Nothing ever happened as a result of one person's genius. It was the collaboration from many people that encouraged the uptake of an innovation, or the teamwork of trusting individuals to make a successful change in their organization. Teamwork and vulnerability were both seen in the example of the Wright brothers as explained by Ridley (2021). They drew upon the experiences of many others to make improvements to the design of their plane. And even when they successfully flew their aircraft, there were still sceptics trying to belittle their efforts, however the Wright brothers showed great vulnerability by putting their heads down and carrying on, despite the naysayers.

[“The courage to be vulnerable is not about winning or losing, it’s about the courage to show up when you can’t predict or control the outcome.” – Brené Brown, Dare to Lead](#)

Another theme that came across in the literature was having a vision and following that vision. This was true for innovators, leaders and those that followed them, their “teams.” Without a meaningful vision, no one will support you as a leader. In order to make change in an organization, there needs to be a strong purpose of why that change is necessary. For the innovator, they are the visionaries that can see the future possibilities that others cannot. It is important that the vision is inclusive, as it encourages other people to join the cause.

The final theme that was apparent in the research was the importance of values. Recent research (Brown, 2018) found that only about 10 percent of organizations have operationalized their values into teachable and observable behaviours that are used to train their employees and hold them accountable. That means the other 90 percent of organizations have values that are virtually meaningless. They are not “living into” their values. When you live your values, you are demonstrating integrity by doing what you say you believe in. This rings true in the saying, “actions speak louder than words.”

The themes identified above are all required to implement the concept of the ‘infinite game’ as described by Simon Sinek in his book, “The Infinite Game” (2020). Sinek (2020) explains how adopting an infinite mindset is necessary for leaders who want to build stronger, more innovative, and more inspiring organizations (Sinek, 2020). Sinek (2020) draws on James P. Carse’s (1986) theory of finite and infinite games. A finite game is like a game of rugby. There are known players, a set time limit, a set of rules that govern the game, and ultimately a winner and loser. An infinite game is slightly different. Unlike a game of rugby, there is no winner or loser. Because an infinite game has an infinite timeline, there is no practical end to the game and so there is no such thing as a “winner” (Sinek,

2020). According to Sinek (2020), in an infinite game, the players are known and unknown, there are no exact rules, and the players can choose to play in any manner they wish.

To implement the infinite game the right people are required to ensure success. This was supported throughout the literature and identified leadership as taking precedence over management. Management is about the processes and the plan, whereas leadership is about the people. In order to have a successful organization, the people need to be taken on a journey where they feel included, valued, and trusted to play their part in the success of the team. Without the right people and a cohesive team, it is evident that there will be bumps along the road and unless there is true leadership to steer the ship, it will eventually sink.

6.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership is not something that just happens. There is plenty of work that goes in behind the scenes to build true leadership. Leadership by simple definition is the action of leading a group of people or an organization. However, this definition is lacking the characteristics that were often described in both the literature and the interviews from the research completed. Everyone can be a leader. It is not as simple as being born a leader. Leadership is a skill that can be developed over time. A more relevant definition of leadership is described below.

“The definition of leadership is to influence, inspire and help others become their best selves, building their skills and achieving goals along the way. Furthermore, when one person harnesses their powers to lead, it strengthens the leadership opportunities of others, rather than diminishing them. That’s because the ultimate definition of leadership is empowering others to become effective leaders as well.”

-Tony Robbins, Motivational Speaker

The following findings from Sinek (2020) and Kotter (2012) capture the essence of true leadership. First, Sinek (2020) talks about the infinite game, or the infinite mindset. Below is a summary of his book, *The Infinite Game*, which highlights how having an infinite mindset can lead to success in an organization.

6.1 FINITE AND INFINITE GAMES

Business is an infinite game and therefore to play it, we must have an infinite mindset. Sinek (2020) says that if we lead with a finite mindset in an infinite game, problems tend to occur which include the decline of trust, cooperation, and innovation. If the mohair industry in New Zealand is going to play the infinite game, then they must learn how to adopt an infinite mindset. Sinek (2020) says,

“To succeed in the Infinite Game of business, we have to stop thinking about who wins or who’s the best and start thinking about how to build organizations that are strong enough and healthy enough to stay in the game for many generations to come.”

To better understand how to have an infinite mindset, the author looked at the five essential practices that infinite minded leaders adopt according to Sinek (2020). These can be found in Figure 4 below.

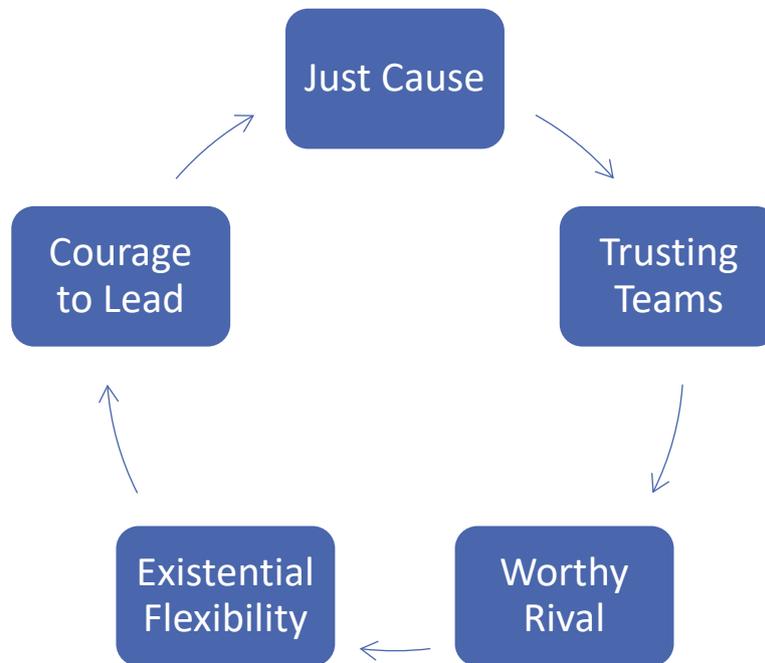


Figure 4: The five essential practices of an infinite mindset (Modified from Sinek, 2020, p. 25)

ADVANCING A JUST CAUSE

The 'Just Cause' that Sinek (2020) refers to is a specific vision of a future state that does not yet exist; a future state so appealing that people are willing to make sacrifices in order to help advance toward that vision (Sinek, 2020). So, a 'Just Cause' is very much about the future, it is visionary. Working towards a 'Just Cause' gives purpose and meaning to one's life. It's what people often refer to as the thing that gets them out of bed every morning. For a 'Just Cause' to be successful, it must include five essential features. See Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: Features of a just cause (Modified from Sinek, 2020, p. 37)

The five essential features of a ‘Just Cause’ include the following:

Inclusive – it must be for everyone. If it is not inclusive, it will not allow others to contribute.

For Something – this is what we believe in. It is affirmative, optimistic.

Idealistic – so that it is ultimately unachievable, otherwise it is just a goal. It’s about imagining something that doesn’t exist right now.

Service Oriented – must be for others, not yourself. This is so others can enjoy it.

Resilient – the ability to adapt to change, to grow, to strengthen your organization.

Most organizations vision and mission statements are not a proper ‘Just Cause.’ They usually lack one of the five essential features of a ‘Just Cause’ as described above.

BUILDING TRUSTING TEAMS

The second practice of leading with an infinite mindset includes building trusting teams. The definition of trust is *firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something*.

“Trust is the stacking and layering of small moments and reciprocal vulnerability over time. Trust and vulnerability grow together, and to betray one is to destroy both.” - Brené Brown, Dare to Lead

A team is just a group of people working together. But a Trusting Team is one where the team members feel safe to express their vulnerabilities and to ask for help. Sinek (2020) says that Trusting Teams are the healthiest and highest-performing kinds of teams and to build a high performing team, trust comes before performance. The Navy SEALs follow this model of trust which can be seen in Figure 6 below (Sinek, 2020).

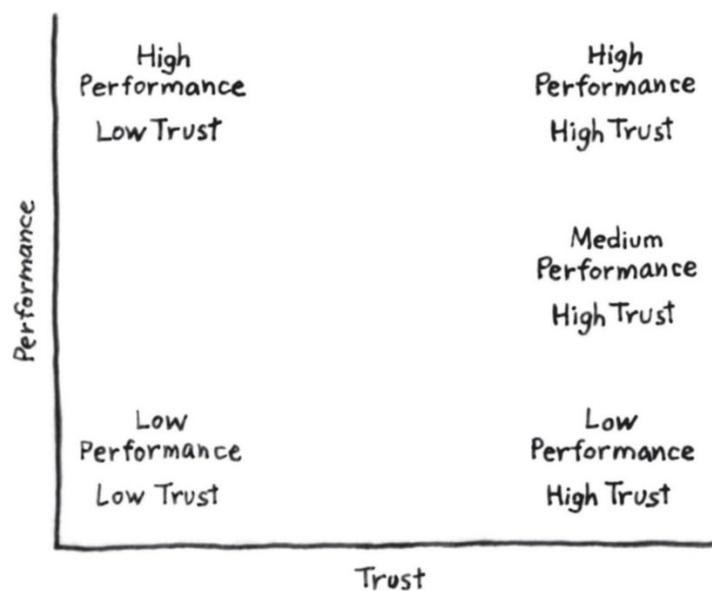


Figure 6: The Navy SEALs trust model (From Sinek, 2020, pg. 109)

It's obvious by looking at the graph that no one wants the person of low performance and low trust. And therefore, you would want the person of high trust and high performance. What the SEALs discovered was a person with low trust and high performance is toxic and has a negative influence on their team. The SEALs decided they would rather have a medium performer of high trust, sometimes even a low performer of high trust, on their team than the high performer of low trust (Sinek, 2020). This goes to show the importance of trust in a team environment and how without it, performance will wane. To build a trusting team, the right leader must be chosen to lead the team. Possessing the qualities of honesty, integrity, courage, resiliency, perseverance, judgment, and decisiveness are more likely to stimulate the kind of trust and cooperation that will increase the probability that a team will succeed more often than it fails (Sinek, 2020). In addition, organizations must be able to build new leaders, otherwise it will lose its ability to thrive for generations to come.

STUDYING YOUR WORTHY RIVALS

To exhibit an infinite mindset, one must not be competitive. People believe that being competitive will make them win. This is ok in a finite game but in an infinite game, there are no winners. One must see the other players in the game as their worthy rivals. These players will help make them better and challenge them to constantly improve. To be a worthy rival, they need to be as good, if not better than

you. The saying if *you want to succeed, surround yourself with successful people*, rings true here. A worthy rival inspires us to seek constant improvement which focuses our attention on the process rather than the outcome. To focus on the process helps build resilience and encourages innovation. Another reason to have a worthy rival is to keep the organization and the people in it honest. When the pressure is removed to “win at all costs,” the values by which we operate are upheld and even strengthened (Sinek, 2020).



We choose a Worthy Rival because there is something about them that reveals to us our weaknesses and pushes us to constantly improve.

- Simon Sinek

PREPARING FOR EXISTENTIAL FLEXIBILITY

Existential Flexibility is the capacity to initiate an extreme disruption to a business model or strategic course in order to more effectively advance a Just Cause (Sinek, 2020). Existential Flexibility is always offensive in nature, in other words, an organization doesn't change because some external force makes them, they change their course because they see the status quo as no longer meeting their Just Cause. The motivation to Flex is to advance the Cause, even if it means disrupting the current business model. A successful Existential Flex is when an infinite minded leader looks outside their industry and not within to be able to see future opportunities to advance their Just Cause. Another way to describe Existential Flex is the use of the phrase, Step Change. By definition, a step change is a significant change in something, especially one that leads to a noticeable improvement. The goal of the step change is the same as the goal of the existential flex.

DEMONSTRATING THE COURAGE TO LEAD

Sinek (2020) says the 'Courage to Lead' is a willingness to take risks for the good of an unknown future. Courage refers to a willingness to adopt and maintain an infinite mindset and to avoid the temptation of finite games. There are two ways to find the courage to lead. They include either 1) waiting for a life-altering experience that challenges the way we see the world or 2) finding a 'Just Cause' that inspires us and a commitment to playing the infinite game around that 'Just Cause' (Sinek, 2020). Courageous leaders are strong because they know they don't have all the answers, nor total control. They use others around them like their trusting teams for support. A courageous leader knows that

the success of their organization is a result of their people and not just because they were their leader. When an organization or the person that leads them acts with courage or integrity, when they demonstrate they are honest and of strong character, they are often rewarded with good will and trust from customers and employees (Sinek, 2020). True integrity means that words and actions must align. An organizations values are not something they state, but rather something they do. This is not easy. Anyone can say they are trustworthy but showing them, they are trustworthy takes real courage.

“A leader is anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential.” – Brené Brown, Dare to Lead

Ultimately, having an infinite mindset is what is critical to the success of an organization. Having a true just cause, building a trusting team, studying your worthy rivals, preparing for existential flexibility, and having the courage to lead are all key elements to continuing play in the infinite game. The limitation of leading with an infinite mindset, is that it's based around a holistic, long-term view with no end which can be hard for people to grasp. John Kotter's (2012) eight step-change model, however, breaks down the steps required for positive change in a more practical sense. These are explored further below.

6.2 JOHN KOTTER'S EIGHT STEP CHANGE MODEL FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATION

John P. Kotter (2012) said, to remain competitive, organizations must continuously change. Without change, organizations stagnate, become uncompetitive and irrelevant, or go out of business. To thrive, organizations must accelerate their speed of change to execute change faster than their competition. Through his work, Kotter (2012) concluded that *leadership* is what drives change. He found that having a solely managerial mindset inevitably fails. He noted that the key to creating and sustaining a successful 21st century organization is leadership; and without leadership skills, dynamic and adaptive enterprises are not possible. Kotter (2012) states that successful transformation is 70-90% leadership and 10-30% management.

Keeping in mind the importance of leadership to create change, Kotter (2012) also believes that successful change is associated with a multistep process that can be outlined in Figure 7 below. The eight steps below are divided into three phases. The first phase is around creating a climate for change. This phase happens first and is about creating a shared understanding of the change you want to make and why you want to make it. The second phase is about engaging your team so that they are empowered and enthusiastic to effect change with the organization. The third and final phase is about fully embedding the change within your organization. What Kotter (2012) found was that in order for change to be successful in an organization, the above steps were required in order from step one to step eight for the change to stick. Kotter's (2012) research into transforming change found that 70% of change efforts fail as a result of one of the above steps not being followed at all or in the right order. So, what are Kotter's eight steps and why are they important to transforming change in an organization?

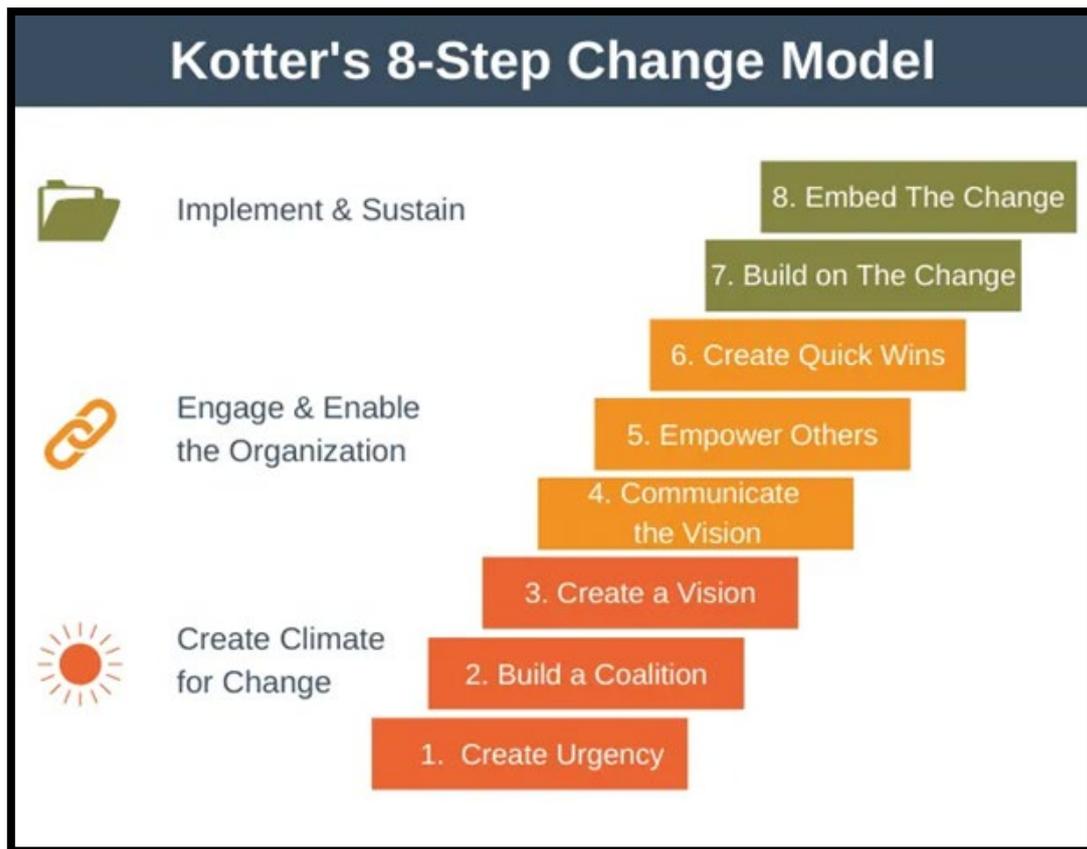


Figure 7: Kotter's Eight Step Change Model (From Expert Program Management, 2021)

STEP 1: CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY



The reason to create urgency in a change transformation, is to keep complacency levels low. When complacency levels are high in an organization, failure of that organization is inevitable. This is the opposite of what we are trying to achieve when we want to make a transformational change. When we increase the sense of urgency in an organization, it encourages the people within that organization to put in extra effort, which ultimately can lead to success. When we have complacent organizations, they are rigid, conservative and are only focused on the short-term strategies. Ultimately, we are trying to convince others to act immediately and to see that the change is necessary. We need to build

support for our initiative, so the sense of urgency is shared, and our peers are no longer happy with the status quo. Kotter (2012) estimated that a minimum of 75% of management needs to back an initiative for it to be successful.

STEP 2: FORM A GUIDING COALITION



To be successful at transforming change, you need to form powerful coalitions with key people within your organization. According to Kotter (2012), the team must exhibit four key characteristics. They include position power, expertise, credibility, and leadership. Remembering that 75% of management needs to back an initiative for it to be successful, it's important to have enough key players on board, including senior management teams, so that those left out cannot block progress. Having a mix of expertise is important because lots of different skills will be required to make informed decisions. Having enough credibility is mandatory otherwise the team will not be taken seriously by their peers. And lastly, the team needs to have the right balance of leadership and management skills for the guiding coalition to work. To create a powerful team, two particularly important components are necessary, trust and a common goal.

“Whether a friendship, family relationship, or business or personal partnership, any bond is built on trust. Without trust, you have nothing. With it, you can do great things. Think about it.”
-By Lolly Daskal, President and CEO, Lead From Within

STEP 3: CREATE A VISION



A clear vision is needed to show what the ideal future organization will look like, why it's necessary to change and helps coordinate the actions of different people in a fast and efficient way. Having a clear vision will inspire the kind of action needed to produce major change. Every member of the guiding coalition should be able to describe the vision in less than five minutes (Kotter, 2012). Kotter (2012) believes a good vision is one that is imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable.

“Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision, and relentlessly drive it to completion.”
-Jack Welch, Chairman & CEO of General Electric (1981–2001)

STEP 4: COMMUNICATE THE VISION



Kotter (2012) says that having a shared sense of a desirable future can help motivate and coordinate the kinds of actions that create transformations. Therefore, communicating that vision becomes very powerful. You cannot communicate the vision effectively if you have not completed the first three steps in the change model correctly. It is easy for a new vision to get lost amongst hundreds of communications happening within your organization every day. In order to prevent this from happening, there are some key points to keep in mind which are summarized below.

- Simplicity – don't use jargon as it could leave some people out that don't understand it
- Metaphor, analogy, and example – these are more memorable and easier to visualize
- Multiple forums – meetings, memos, informal interactions; spread the word as many different ways as you can. The more it's communicated, the more its remembered.
- Repetition – effective information transferral almost always relies on repetition
- Lead by example – often the most powerful way to communicate a new direction is through behaviour. Behaviour inconsistent with the vision can undermine the efforts of a change vision
- Explanation of seeming inconsistencies – unaddressed inconsistencies undermine the credibility of all communication

- Listen and be listened to – two-way communication is always more powerful than one-way communication

If it is required, tweak the vision to ensure its fit for purpose. Spending time reworking the vision is more productive than heading off in the wrong direction, especially if no one follows it.

STEP 5: EMPOWERING OTHERS



Now that the vision has been created and communicated to others, it's critical to remove any barriers so the team can implement the vision. Team members can't effectively help with the change transformation if they feel powerless. Removing barriers helps empower them to succeed at creating change. Kotter found the four main barriers to empowerment were structures, skills, systems, and supervisors. Once these barriers are removed, the result will be empowering people to effect change.

“Empowerment isn't a buzzword among leadership gurus. It's a proven technique where leaders give their teams the appropriate training, tools, resources, and guidance to succeed.”

-John Rampton, Entrepreneur and Online Influencer

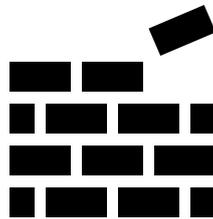
STEP 6: CREATE QUICK WINS



Major change transformations do not happen overnight. Because they take a long time, people can lose sight of the end goal and lose motivation. By celebrating short term wins, it provides renewed motivation to keep the momentum going and re-energize the team. It's also important to show the non-believers that change is in fact working. This brings credibility to the cause.

“Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead.” – Nelson Mandela

STEP 7: BUILD ON THE CHANGE



This step is important to keep the momentum going. Complacency can start to build again, and regression is likely to occur if that happens. To keep the focus, going back through steps 4-6 and repeating will help build on the initial foundation that has already been laid. Another way to look at this step is to think of it as continuous improvement. Reviewing the wins that have already been made and identifying what went well, what can be done better and setting more goals to keep the momentum going are all part of building on the change.

STEP 8: EMBED THE CHANGE



This final step is all about making the changes stick. This is where the changes become part of the

organizations everyday systems and processes. For the change to stick, it must become a fundamental part of the organizations culture. Anchoring new practices into the culture of an organization is easier said than done, however, by making the change visible in every aspect of the organization it will help to embed the change more permanently.

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast.”

– Peter Drucker, Management Consultant and Writer

Individually, each concept described from Kotter (2012) and Sinek (2020) above are powerful enough alone to create change. However, the people implementing the change transformation may resonate with one more than the other, especially in a board or group setting. Therefore, there is value in using concepts from both models to guide the change process.

6.3 ANALYSIS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews was completed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) which highlighted several key themes mirroring those of Kotter (2012) and Sinek (2020). Firstly, they all had a vision either for a new product or idea that hadn't been executed before. Second, each of the interviewees had the courage to lead. They had an idea that was futuristic and hadn't already been done. They used an infinite mindset to advance their just cause. None of the interviewees had mentioned the infinite game or Kotter's eight step change model. However, it was apparent that they all were successful in their businesses because they had followed some of the guiding principles as outlined by Sinek (2020) and Kotter (2012) above.

All of the interviewees recognized the importance of innovation in helping them advance their businesses vision. Innovation allowed for trial and error which was crucial to experimenting with their products and getting it just right. Without trial and error, they wouldn't have been able to make the needed improvements to enhance the final product that eventually made it to market.

Resilience was another theme that was extraordinarily strong amongst the interviewees. Hurdles and roadblocks were common among the leading innovators that were interviewed. They all possessed the ability to change and adapt, particularly in the face of COVID-19 restrictions for some. If they weren't resilient, they would have stopped after the first major hurdle and never reached their goals.

Four out of the five respondents had a strong story to go with their brand. This was enhanced by current global trends which helped push their visions to a wider audience than just New Zealand. It was obvious that they thought infinitely about their product and had the foresight to identify what the consumer would want before they wanted it. The crucial moment came when their vision crossed paths with the global trend to propel their product further than they had initially anticipated it to go. But rather than get complacent, they all mentioned how they were already thinking ahead to the next thing, and how their product could be even better. So, this distinctly highlights that they are playing

the infinite game, that they want to keep playing and that there is no end goal, the target is in fact to remain in the game.

An extraordinarily strong theme around people and collaboration came through from all the interviews as well. They recognized the importance that other people can contribute to their vision and how they can complement their own lack of knowledge or skills through teamwork. They weren't afraid to show vulnerability and admit they didn't know it all. They sought out other experts to learn from and grow. They all possessed strong self-awareness which allowed them to be open about their weaknesses and realistic about what they could achieve on their own. This led them to seek guidance from their peers, other professionals and experts, organizations, and further education.

One thing that Kotter (2012) touched on in his book, *Leading Change*, was that leadership is critical to the success of the 21st century organization. He states the single biggest error in the traditional model of leadership is that it is related to the fact that people are born with the gift of leadership. However, what his observations have collectively shown is that the traditional model of leadership is oblivious to the power and the potential of lifelong learning. He also states that in the 21st century we will see more of these remarkable leaders who develop their skills through lifelong learning. What does he mean? This concept of lifelong learning was very apparent in all the respondents interviewed which can clearly explain what Kotter is referring to in his above statement. The lifelong learner has distinct habits that make them great leaders and successful with whatever they do. They include the habits of risk taking, humble self-reflection, solicitation of opinions, careful listening, and openness to new ideas.

These habits mean they are more willing to push themselves outside their comfort zones, and as one interviewee even said, "getting comfortable with the uncomfortable." They are not afraid to reflect on their successes and failures, more importantly their failures. They do not assume that they know everything and actively seek ideas and opinions from others. They also listen carefully and invite open and honest feedback. They view life with an open mind and instead of approaching something with the attitude of "I Can't" it is replaced with the attitude of "Why can't I?."

Upon completion of the interviews, it became apparent that all five leading innovators were already playing Simon Sinek's (2020) 'Infinite Game'. As identified by the key themes above, the interviewees had identified their vision for the future, were courageous in their leadership to drive change, and built a trusting team of people around them to implement their ideas. Not all of the interviewees studied a worthy rival, but they all understood their own weaknesses and used other people in their teams to complement those weaknesses. They all had the characteristics of an infinite minded leader as described by Sinek (2020) which is why they were successful in their journeys to creating change.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

For the New Zealand Mohair Industry to survive, it needs to start playing the infinite game by undergoing a major change transformation. They cannot continue to do what they've always done, as what worked in the past will certainly not work for the future. The research shows that to succeed, they need to adopt an infinite mindset and work towards being viable long into the future. If the industry only focuses on the here and now, they will inevitably fail. Through being innovative, looking

at ways to constantly improve, and showing the courage to lead, they can make major changes to their industry that will allow them to thrive long into the future.

The key themes from all the literature and the interviews were:

- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Innovation

It is going to take many people working together for the same cause to make change in the mohair industry. Seeking out leaders from other industries, using those with knowledge of how to successfully transform an organization, and learning from other people's mistakes are all valuable resources to tap into. The New Zealand Mohair Industry is already on a rapid decline to becoming non-existent and cannot be complacent or else they will cease to exist in the near future. With the current mohair fibre prices at an all-time high and the desire for consumers to use more natural fibres, the industry is in a position to take advantage of these factors and use them to rapidly grow a sustainable industry long into the future. Kotter (2012) states that successful transformation is 70-90% leadership and 10-30% management. Therefore, they key for the New Zealand Mohair industry to succeed will require strong leadership, collaboration, innovation and adopting an infinite mindset.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the interpretation of the research, a list of recommendations has been compiled for Mohair New Zealand Incorporated (MNZI). These are what the author believes are the most integral areas of focus for the New Zealand mohair industry to turn itself around and stay relevant long into the future. It is a three-pronged approach that utilizes the two key models identified by Sinek (2020) and Kotter (2012) in the above discussion and ties into the MNZI SWOT analysis already completed for the industry.

The recommendations are:

1. **Utilize the findings from the MNZI SWOT analysis conducted in 2018** – while this is not a direct finding from this report, the work has been done to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the current New Zealand mohair industry and it provides an excellent foundation for the industry from which to create positive change. The findings from the SWOT analysis need to be used in conjunction with the below recommendations to help ensure a successful step change is achieved.
2. **Adopt an infinite mindset to improve the levels of trust, cooperation, and innovation among the members of the mohair producer's organization and its leaders.**
 - a. **Ascertain a future ideal** – to help direct where the NZ mohair producers' organization and industry is going in the future. Ensure it is for the producers and serves their needs, that it is optimistic while also being realistic, resilient, and ambitious.
 - b. **Research other industry equivalents** – to look externally at other organizations in the fibre industry to use as a benchmark and help the mohair producer's organization

identify their own weaknesses, therefore pushing them to improve and become better.

- c. **Build a trusting team** – to encourage and build trust among the mohair producers' organization. This can be done through setting boundaries, being reliable, being accountable to the producers, showing integrity, being non-judgmental, and showing generosity. A trusting team results in a high performing team.
- d. **Create a step change** – to initiate an extreme disruption to the current course of the mohair producer's organization to advance its future ideal more effectively. This is further elaborated on in Step 2 of the recommendations below.
- e. **Find the courage to lead** – courage comes from building strong relationships with the producers of the mohair organization and helping them find their potential and to develop it. This could be in the form of introducing an independent director who has the skills and experience to lead a step change. Or in the form of an external provider who specialises in change transformations to assist the mohair producer's organization.

3. Undertake a step change and guide MNZI members through that process by following Kotter's (2012) proven eight-step process of leading change, which looks like this:

Phase 1: Create a Climate for Change

- **Create a sense of urgency** - Examine industry crises, potential crises and major opportunities identified in the MNZI SWOT analysis conducted in 2018 and reiterate back to industry members that change is needed now.
- **Form a guiding coalition** - Develop a team of people to represent the mohair industry (with strong position power, broad expertise, and high credibility), who can build trust and develop a common goal to make the change.
- **Develop the change vision** – Develop the change vision that is appealing, realistic, provides enough guidance for decision making while being flexible enough to allow for individual initiative, and is easy to communicate to the mohair industry members.

Phase 2: Engage and Enable the Organization

- **Communicate the vision** – Communicate the new vision in every way, shape, and form by making it easy to understand, using repetition, living the values, and sharing it every chance there is to share with the members of the mohair industry.
- **Empower industry members to act** – Remove barriers like industry structure, lack of needed skills, resistance to change, and align systems to the vision to create an environment where innovative ideas can flow and support the new vision.

- **Create quick wins** - Plan and create quick wins that are visible, unambiguous, and clearly related to the change effort to help build momentum and overcome resistance.

Phase 3: Implement and Sustain

- **Build on the change** – Keep the momentum of change going by keeping complacency low, empowering mohair industry members and maintaining focus on the vision.
- **Embed the change into industry culture** – Existing mohair industry members see the benefit of the changes over the status quo, new mohair industry members see the change as part of the culture, and the culture is kept alive through well thought out leadership succession.

By adopting the above recommendations, the New Zealand mohair industry has the opportunity to successfully implement a step change and help turn themselves from a declining industry, into something that's innovative and relevant long into the future.

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10.0 APPENDIX

Interview Questions:

1. What does innovation mean to you?
 - a. Why is innovation important?
2. Describe to me a time when you've had to innovate?
3. Why did you see the need to innovate?
4. What were the roadblocks you faced on your innovation journey?
 - a. How did you overcome them?
5. What upskilling have you done to help you along your journey?
6. From your experiences, what have been the most valuable resources you have tapped into when trying to innovate?
 - a. Why were these the most valuable?
7. What are the key characteristics that you look for in people that you bring along on your innovation journey?
 - a. Why are these important to you?
 - b. How do you work together effectively with people that have different values to your own?
8. What part have these values played in your success?
9. What was the key to success in your innovation process?
 - a. How did you build momentum?
10. What would you do differently if anything and why?