

Learning from other organisations:

What can DairyNZ do better?

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Kellogg Rural Leadership Course 35

June 25, 2017

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Executive Summary

This project aims to assess what DairyNZ can do to improve the way it learns from other organisations.

Thirteen interviews were carried out, seven with people from DairyNZ and six from organisations related to the kiwifruit industry (HortNZ, KVH, NZKGI, Zespri). The interviews were transcribed and then analysed. The key findings below are supported by the literature.

All those interviewed believe there are gains to be had through improving the way their organisation learns from others. The key benefit would be better and smarter solutions with lower risk and cost.

Five factors are outlined as having significant impacts on an organisation's ability to learn better from other organisations. These are leadership, organisational culture, empowerment of personnel, process, and reward. These were needed in all organisations regardless of size; however in the smaller organisations some of these factors may be addressed in a less formal manner.

Currently there are many barriers that restrict learning from other organisations. To address these requires a change in the learning culture within the organisation, personnel empowerment through delegated authority and time, and leadership to bring about these changes. Other factors including establishing a clear and transparent process and rewards were also noted as barriers but were not as significant as the previous three. Addressing these barriers requires concerted focus and willpower from the leadership of the organisation. It is acknowledged that all five aspects are interlinked and as one changes this will impact the others, so an integrated approach is needed for the change to occur.

For DairyNZ to achieve better and smarter results for farmers, they need to learn more effectively from other organisations. This can be said for any organisation that wishes for the same outcomes. The results of this project are not limited to DairyNZ, being relevant to any organisation wishing to achieve better and smarter results.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance I have received from many people during this project.

For DairyNZ's sponsorship of me in the Kellogg Rural Leadership programme and flexibility of time when I have needed it.

To the people I interviewed, Tim Mackle, Rick Pridmore, Jenny Jago, Lain Jager, Nikki Johnson, Mike Chapman, Dave McCall, Andrew Reid, Carl Barnao, Chris Morley, Dave Courtney, Simon Limmer, and Andrew Harrison, for their willingness to give their time for the interviews and their openness and honesty of their answers – it provides a real richness to this project

To Frances Edwards for editing and writing advice.

To my husband, Ian Foster, for his support in and willingness to be abandoned for many weekends and evenings. Thank you for taking over some of my farm responsibilities and cooking many meals to allow me the time to attend the programme and to work on this project.

Introduction

Eight years ago our business changed from focusing on one industry, dairy, with the purchase of a kiwifruit orchard. Since then our understanding of the primary industry has expanded and we have learnt that other industries operate and think in different ways than we were used to.

This has prompted me to start thinking about how limited my world view was. It challenged me to think about what I should be learning from other sectors/industries that could benefit our own business, and how I should go about doing this more effectively.

I also work for DairyNZ full time. I know that DairyNZ is working hard to answer the many questions and challenges that face our dairy industry today. This situation and my thoughts from our own experiences has made me consider what DairyNZ's approach to learning from other organisations is, and what DairyNZ could do better.

As a part of the extension team within DairyNZ I know that new ideas/thoughts are brought into the organisation. I found that I had a limited understanding of how that process happens and was unsure of what the process was or if there even was one. So it was with this limited understanding that I decided to explore what DairyNZ could do better.

Project Aim

The project will explore how people currently bring ideas into organisations, what the benefits of learning more from other organisations would be and what the perceived barriers are within the organisation along with some possible solutions.

Literature Review

To focus our attention on how DairyNZ, or any organisation, can learn from other organisations, it is important to define 'organisation' and 'inter organisational learning'.

For the purposes of this project I have used the Cambridge English dictionary's definition of 'organisation', which is, "a group of people who work together in an organised way for a shared purpose."

Ingram (2002) describes inter organisational learning as follows:

"Inter organisational learning is where one organisation causes change in the capacities of another, either through experience sharing, or by somehow stimulating innovation" (Ingram, 2002:642)

Ingram's definition implies that a result of inter organisational learning will be change that occurs in one of the parties, a result of this is stimulated innovation shown by faster learning at less cost and risk (Greve,2016: Kilo, 1999), and/or an organisation's ability to speed up their capability development and minimize their exposure to technological uncertainties by acquiring and exploiting knowledge developed by others (Lane and Lubatkin 1998).

Although this all seems straight forward, the ability to learn from other organisations is not necessarily easy to implement, and Greve (2015) notes that it doesn't occur naturally even if there is a clear imperative. This implies that there are barriers that prevent this from happening. Simpson writes in her book *The Innovation-Friendly Organisation* (2016),

"The (current) model of organisation that has emerged since the First World War, and which largely forms our experience and expectations of organisations, was never meant to enable innovation. Rather, it's aim was to facilitate replication."

This could help explain why innovation and creating change from organisational learning is not easy, especially for large established organisations.

Essential factors for inter-organisational learning to occur

Mariotti (2005) summarizes four essential factors of inter-organisational learning that are particularly important as: the ability to develop and sustain valuable resources, absorptive capacity, combinative capacity, and trust.

1. To develop and sustain valuable resources there is a need for mutual reciprocity between the two organisations that are learning from each other. This is the idea that 'I will share with you as you have shared with me'. This may happen concurrently e.g. in the current joint project, or in the future e.g. you may need information/resources I have not now but later. Trust becomes a vital component, not only in the latter case but also in relation to the depth of experience/information shared.
2. Absorptive capacity. Cohen and Levintahl (1990) defined this as "a firm's ability to recognise the value of external knowledge, assimilate it and apply it." This shows the importance for an organisation to be able to recognise and value external knowledge, and to incorporate it into its existing structures and processes.
3. Combinative capacity is essential, it means there is an ability to synthesize and apply the newly acquired knowledge to generate new applications. This creates an extension of the existing knowledge base from the combination of internal and external learning (Kogut and Zander 1992).
4. Trust is the 'all-important' facilitator. It can act as a governance mechanism (Uzzi 1996) between organisations. More importantly goodwill and trust promotes voluntary, non-obligating exchanges of assets and services between people (Dyer and Sing 1998; Dyer and Chu 2000). Trust also allows for a depth of sharing to occur that would not otherwise happen (Cowen et al 2000).

To implement the ability to develop and sustain valuable resources, absorptive capacity, combinative capacity, and trust several things must be occurring within an organisation.

Boundary Spanning

Boundary spanning is the process of networking and listening to external organisations and customers with a view to improve/develop a better product for the customer (Gilmore, 2009). In most cases it is exhibited through both the formal and informal networks that occur between one organisation another. Boundary spanning can be either a formal role or

can occur informally by many people in an organisation. In a learning organisation all staff will participate in boundary spanning to some extent. March & Simon (1958) points out that being able to communicate across boundaries is an important linking mechanism. It builds understanding and trust between the parties involved. Ashkenas et al (1996) states that organisations produce new ideas by learning from what other companies do. The production of new ideas/products is a natural outcome of boundary spanning. Another important benefit of boundary spanning is the development of a learning organisation, which "involves breaking down boundaries both within and between organisations to create companies that are focused on knowledge sharing and continuous learning" (Daft, 2007). These aspects relate to Mariotti's (2005) first essential factor of building and maintaining valuable resources and the development of trust between parties to allow for the facilitation of information.

It is then important to explore how boundary spanning can be enhanced. Janowicz-Panjaitan and Noordenhaven (2008) identified two main ways the effectiveness of boundary spanning interactions can be enhanced: through formal interactions, which are orchestrated or programmed, eg formal meetings; and informal interactions (i.e. social or spontaneous). Janowicz-Panjaitan and Noordenhaven (2008) showed how both types of interactions have a positive effect on organisational learning. However, the benefit of formal interactions decreases as the level of collaboration increases, while the positive effect of informal organisational learning has a positive linear relationship with learning. They warn that although both informal and formal interactions positively affect inter organisational learning, an excess of formalisation can threaten learning. Organisations can promote boundary spanning by encouraging their staff to be more connected both across and within organisations through assisting them to develop more extensive networks. This will result in improved learning and depth of information sharing.

Gilmore (2009) highlights that if organisations wish to communicate and collaborate across boundaries it is essential for personnel to be empowered to do this. Otherwise, as Hackman and Johnson (2004), point out without empowering the personnel, knowledge will not be shared. Hackman and Johnson (2004) explain that empowering personnel means that personnel know that they have the authority and support of the the organisation as they exchange information with other organisations. When personnel are empowered, the

results are greater group co-operation, the personnel will set and achieve higher goals and persist in the face of difficult circumstances. (Hackman and Johnson 2004)

Organisations can facilitate the the development of both internal and external networks. Internal networks can be developed through in-house transfers, varied job assignments etc. whereas external networks can be developed through selective travel, supporting further education, secondments, promoting professional organisation network groups etc. to encourage the building of networks outside the organisation.

The importance of an organisational learning culture

Daft (2007) explains the corporate culture is important if you wish to develop an organisation that is continually learning. Simpson (2016) defines culture as “...the ways in which we behave and express ourselves, as well as the customs and languages which enable our individual behaviours to be meaningful to those around us.” Every organisation has a culture that encompasses certain values, expectations, and assumptions. This culture affects the priorities, efforts, and the willingness of personnel to believe and act in a certain way. Culture is established not by the words that are spoken by leadership but by the actions that they undertake. A succinct way to explain this, is the principle of ‘you reap what you sow.’

Gill (2010) explains learning culture as a culture of inquiry; an environment in which employees feel safe asking tough questions about the purpose and quality of what they are doing for customers, themselves, and other stakeholders. In a learning culture, the pursuit of learning is woven into the fabric of organisational life (Gill, 2010). To develop and maintain a learning culture, organisations must not only bring in people who see beyond the majority mindset, but engage with alternative perspectives that could disrupt their own practices and assumptions (Simpson, 2016). Gill (2010) comments on the attributes of a learning culture in the organisation as being outward focused, actively engaging with people of alternative views and beliefs, and willing to challenge the ‘status quo’ or ‘there are no sacred cows’. These organisations invest time, resources, and effort, while accepting the risks that change could cause and seeing it all as a learning experience. Gill (2010) outlines for an organisation to have a learning culture that these attributes would be evident in every aspect of organisational life.

Garvin (1994) believes there is a need for organisations to commit to organisational learning and to not do so risks the organisation's ability to evolve and keep up with new practices Garvin (1994) explains this commitment in this way:

Continuous improvement requires a commitment to learning. How, after all, can an organisation improve without first learning something new? Solving a problem, introducing a product, and reengineering a process all require seeing the world in a new light and acting accordingly. In the absence of learning, [organisations]—and individuals—simply repeat old practices. Change remains cosmetic, and improvements are either fortuitous or short-lived. (pp. 78–79)

In our ever-changing world the ability to keep learning and evolving our organisations is critical to business success. Having a learning culture in the organisation will enable it to increase its absorptive capacity, as it will value the external knowledge brought into the organisation and it will be more open to integrating the new ideas into the organisation. A learning culture will also aid the combinative capacity of the organisation because it will learn from the knowledge/idea brought in and create something new from it.

Changing organisational culture is not a quick process, it will take years. McGuire et al's (2009) white paper on Transforming Your Organisation, highlights that there is a need to grow bigger minds and build capacity for new ways of working to rise above the current beliefs and practices that organisations have. They identify six key strategies to help with this transformation they include developing the organisation's culture, develop personnel capabilities, create a leadership strategy, transform the leadership team, be continually learning, and align employment processes. All six aspects are worked on at the same time however no 'programme will work without a transformed leadership team. Simpson (2016) describes the evidence of a learning culture as when staff from all levels contribute equally to the organisations learning and development.

The role of leadership

Alvesson (1992) explains that leadership is closely related to culture at the organisational level. The senior leadership group/executives/board of an organisation determine the culture of that organisation. They set the strategy, approve the budget, allocate and approve the work to be done. However Alvesson (1992) notes that the existing culture of a well established organisation can affect the recruitment of the leadership team. Schein (2010)

shows that culture is embedded into the organisation by the leaders through what the leaders measure, how they react to critical incidents, how they allocate resources, how they allocate rewards and status, how they recruit, promote and excommunicate. These are all actions that the leadership take. Hence the leadership of an organisation is critical to the organisation's ability to learn from other organisations. Robinson and Schroeder (2014) point out that learning organisations cannot be created or maintained without being led by the right kind of people and that the leaders themselves can only be as good as the structures and systems they set up to govern the way their organisations work. Not only is the learning culture is both established and supported by the leadership team but there are key processes and systems that must also be set up for the leadership to be successful in developing an organisation that learns from others.

Enlisting the whole organisation

Employees are increasingly being recognised as a central source of value-creating ideas in organisations (Bauman and Stieglitz 2014). Schwarz (2015) develops this further and shows that enlisting the collective brains-trust in an organisation is essential to better connect with customers and to innovate at all levels. However for this to happen there are often barriers that need to be addressed; these include bureaucracy, limited participation, poor communication on issues, poor ideas, work silos, middle management feeling threatened and leadership's focus on the 'big' ideas and not the many small opportunities. Many of these can be addressed if the leadership in the organisation believes in what can be achieved by all personnel participating and working on developing a learning culture in the organisation.

Robinson and Schroeder (2014) have developed what they call the 80/20 Principle of Improvement. This principle states that roughly 80% of an organisation's performance improvement potential lies in front line ideas and only 20% in management-driven initiatives. They believe that empowering front-line personnel to come up with innovative ideas and solutions to problems, results in more applicable ideas and a greater return on investment. To harness this potential will require personnel in leadership positions to empower their personnel through allocation of time and, possibly, resource. Robinson and Schroeder's(2014) examples all demonstrate the importance of allowing personnel to talk through their ideas together and to develop them further. When decisions are small the

ability to make decisions about the idea can also reinforce the empowerment these personnel feel, which results in greater 'buy-in.'

Some of the barriers Schwarz (2015) mentions can be resolved using the processes Wood (2003) suggests must be in place for an innovative organisation to be successful. The processes enable idea collection and processing to occur in an open and transparent way. These include an effective idea-generation system, a way to handle ideas quickly, an effective idea-evaluation process, a way to ensure ideas are implemented and a method for recognising/rewarding those involved. Not all process systems will be the same either between or even within an organisation. The main attributes are that the process exists, personnel know how to use it, it is quick and effective, and gets results both in terms of outcomes from the idea and rewards for those involved. He also states "One of the worst things that can take place is for a leader to call for everyone's ideas and then not have the process in place to handle the submissions. This causes immense harm." This reinforces the need for the whole process to develop at the same time and not to start one aspect of the learning culture without the whole organisation being ready.

The issue of if and how people should be rewarded has many differing views. It is commonly agreed that large financial rewards should be avoided as they can inhibit teamwork and as a result idea implementation (Baumann et al. 2014). One idea put forward by Wood (2003) is that whole teams should be rewarded based on their input. But individuals do not view what a reward is in the same light. Individuals respond to different types of reward depending their values, income level and motivations. Lee (1998) summarises the different types of rewards as: intrinsic rewards, which are internally mediated and involve outcomes such as feelings of accomplishment, self-competence, and personal growth; and extrinsic rewards, which are derived from the environment surrounding the work, and which consist of such outcomes as financial incentives, promotions, and job security. Perhaps it is more important for the individual to select the reward appropriate to them rather than limiting reward to one dimension, such as financial.

Bringing it all together

The following model has been developed in view of the literature outlined above. It brings together the broad concepts as described earlier in this review. The following explanation describes the key attributes of each component in the model

Figure 1. Model of the key components of a learning organisation



1. Leadership

The leadership of the organisation or business is at the core of the model. It establishes the culture of the organisation. The degree to which the leaders in the organisation believe the potential their organisation can achieve by learning from other organisations will determine the degree to which they will empower personnel, have an open process and reward people appropriately. Without the senior leaders' belief, encouragement and modelling of the attitudes and the possibilities of what could and can be done, the potential of an organisation to learn from other organisations will be limited. Leadership has been placed in the centre of the triangle. It is the starting point for learning and determines the degree to which all the other components exist.

2. Culture

An organisation that has a culture where people feel supported, valued and empowered to bring their ideas will be successful in bringing in ideas/innovations. The senior leadership team establishes/reaffirms an organisation's culture, not only by what they

say but by what they do and how they act. If actions do not match words, then personnel will not believe the words and will work according to the actions they see. For example, if there is no time allowance given to explore and develop ideas, it will be assumed that exploring ideas is not important to the leadership. Likewise, if personnel have an idea and there is no clear process of what should be done next, that idea will be lost to the organisation. Culture has been placed in the circle surrounding all components to represent the environment within which learning occurs.

3. Process

There is a clear process that all the personnel know and understand so they can see how their innovative ideas and suggestions are developed and acted upon. There may be different processes established depending on the types and significance of the ideas/issues brought forward. The process can vary depending on the impact that idea will have on the rest of the organisation, the departments affected, and on the ability to get a good cross section of appropriate people evaluating and developing the idea further. E.g. In DairyNZ if the idea related to operational efficiency in a regional office, the process and decision making responsibility could be done at that level. However, if the idea was an exploratory application about synthetic milk this should go through a different type of process because many different elements may need to be involved, even at an initial scoping stage, and the idea may require a much larger budget and amount of time. With good processes in place personnel will feel empowered to think creatively and will know that their ideas are not only valued but needed for the success of their organisation. They will also have a clear process for putting ideas forward for consideration.

4. Empowerment

Empowering personnel means that all personnel know they have the support of the organisation to think, explore, test and create ideas, which they see are highly valued in their company. All personnel would be encouraged to think creatively and use the networks they have developed as a natural part of their role. A learning organisation allocates time to develop networks, explore ideas, and look for solutions, and it allows access to other people both internally and external to the organisation to explore the ideas, putting it all together to bring into the process. Some personnel may be given greater responsibility for idea development if they have an aptitude for it, but all

personnel will feel empowered to think creatively and know that their ideas are not only valued but needed for the success of their organisation

5. Reward

People receive tangible reward or feel rewarded for the ideas and effort they have contributed to the organisation. Different people can feel rewarded in different ways. It is more important that a person feels appreciated and rewarded for their effort than having the same reward for all.

Symbols

The triangle is not only a symbol of strength but shows that all factors, the process, reward, and empowerment are as important as each other, and that all are needed for the learning organisation to be successful.

A circle has been used for culture as it has no beginning and no end and must surround and encompass every aspect.

Methodology and Analysis

Method

Structured interviews were used to research the question “How can DairyNZ learn from other organisations better?”

Structured interviews were carried out with 13 people from: DairyNZ (7) and the kiwifruit industry organisations Zespri (3), Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH)(1), New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Inc. (NZKGI)(1), and Horticulture New Zealand (Hort NZ) (1).

DairyNZ, HortNZ, NZKGI and KVH are all levy funded organisations.

The people were selected primarily to get viewpoints from people in similar roles, across 2 industries, although incidentally we also got views from 3 small (but valuable) organisations as well as 2 larger ones. All the interviews were carried out either in person, via video link or facetime and were recorded with permission, to be transcribed later.

People Interviewed

	Dairy NZ	Kiwifruit industry
Strategic Leaders	Tim Mackle Rick Pridmore Jenny Jago	Lain Jager (Zespri) Nikki Johnson (NZKGI) Mike Chapman (HortNZ)
Team Leaders	Dave McCall Andrew Reid Carl Barnao Chris Morley	Dave Courtney (Zespri) Simon Limmer (Zespri) Andrew Harrison (KVH)

Organisation size

Large	DairyNZ (250 staff approx.) Zespri (400 staff approx.)
Small	KVH (10 staff) HortNZ (10 staff) NZKGI (4 staff)

Interview Questions

The interview was split into two parts

Part 1 questions related to the value, potential and barriers to 'learning more from other organisations.'

Part 2 related to the process that people used when they brought ideas from another organisation/industry into their own organisation.

A full copy of the interview questions is in Appendix 1. A diagram was used to encourage people to think beyond the natural relationships that their organisation has. This is shown in Appendix 2.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used as the basis for analysing the transcripts generated from the interviews. Theoretical thematic analysis uses predetermined themes to identify patterns – a top down approach. This was used to analyse the transcripts using the themes identified in the literature review and summarized in the model. Deductive thematic analysis, which looks for common themes and derives the code from the data, was used to analyse the processes that people used to bring information into their organisation (Braun, and Clarke, 2006).

Examples of the analysis process are in Appendix 3.

For the purpose of this report it was agreed that any reported comments would not be attributed to individuals. This allowed full and often frank discussions and has provided richness to the following discussion.

Results

A: Results from Part 1 interview questions

The interview questions were grouped into four main topics.

1. Critical factors people exhibit that assist them to learn from the experiences of other organisations. (Q 3a)
2. The results that could be achieved if their organisation could learn from the experiences of other industries/organisations better. (Qns 3b, 4a, 11)
3. The barriers that stop inter organisational learning. (Qns 5c, 6)
4. Changes that would need to happen in your organisation for it to be an example to others of what learning from other organisations could achieve. (Qns 12, 13)

For each of the four topics the relevant questions were thematically analysed according to the model presented earlier. In each of the following tables the number in the box relates to the number of responses that included that theme, the percentage figure relates to the proportion of the respective companys' responses that related to that theme. The full set of results are available in Appendix 4

1. Critical factors people exhibit for them to learn from the experiences of other organisations.

The dominant two attributes that the interviewees used to learn from other organisations were mindset/attitude and networks.

Table 1. Dominant attributes people exhibit when learning from other organisations (Qn 1)

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KVH, KGI
Have a mindset to improve/learn and develop	3 (33%)	2 (33%)	
Networks	6 (66%)	2 (33%)	5 (100%)

Other attributes mentioned included; make time and get people in to challenge our mindset.

Words that were used to describe mindset included attitude, an interest in learning, enquiring mind, desire to continually improve. Mindset and networks work in conjunction

with each other and are strongly based on an individual's attitude. The interviewees described deciding to develop a set of strong and wide-ranging networks, and it is through this set of networks that they are continuously learning and being challenged to improve. This mindset causes people to look for information beyond their normal convenient sphere, it inspires them to go to events and look past their own personality (introvert or extrovert) and meet and connect with more people. As one introvert participant put it,

“The only reason I meet someone is to either to get information I can use or to influence someone or something. It’s about learning more and finding the common ground.”

And another participant commented,

“Becoming more like other businesses helps us understand their values and the similarities we have. This builds trust.”

2. The results that could be achieved through better learning from the experiences of other organisations.

Table 2. What could be achieved by learning from other organisations (Qns 3b, 4a, 11)

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KGI, KVH
Better results and smarter solution	5 (50%)	1 (33%)	3 (37%)
Cost savings	1 (10%)		3 (37%)
Improved partnerships and leverage	2 (20%)		2 (26%)
Be leading edge in their industry	2 (20%)	2 (67%)	

Smaller organisations identified a financial benefit to learning from other organisations compared to the larger companies. People in all three of these small organisations talked about the impact of being small and levy funded, and as a result, the need to be careful about the risks they take.

“It would allow us to shortcut our learning experience and reduce the risk.”

The only commercial company interviewed (Zespri) had a strong focus on being leading edge (or world class). The Zespri interviewees know that to achieve their vision of being 'world class' will require Zespri to be continually delivering smarter and better results.

"We need to be exploring new technologies that we may never use to keep ahead of our competitors who want our shelf space."

One comment from a DairyNZ interviewee provides a contrast to that.

"We don't have commercial imperative to stay ahead of our competition, that means we don't have the 'edginess' that we would otherwise have to be leading at the front vs leading the next group (of adopters)."

This highlights the need for organisations to be very clear in what they are trying to achieve. It will influence where an organisation needs to position itself and the desire it requires from their personnel for continual improvement.

Based on the interviews it appeared that all the organisations believe that as a result of learning more effectively from other organisations they would achieve better and smarter solutions. A secondary benefit would be in the resulting better relationships and leverage available from partnerships. The interviewees often talked about both of these factors at the same time. This indicates that the interviewees believe they are related to each other and in some cases are synergistic.

"It teaches us how not to do things and at times how to do things that are really good. Working with partners creates size, which is leverage. Working with the right partners can help open doors we couldn't open ourselves."

3. Identifying the barriers that stop inter organisational learning.

This section provided the greatest number and range of answers. The results are shown in two tables. Table 3 shows the types of barrier responses according to the model components. The two dominant attributes across all organisations are circled in red. Table 4 breaks this down further and identifies the key issues within each of the model components.

Table 3. Types of barriers for each organisation/group

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KGI ,KVH
Culture	36%	24%	30%
Leadership	17%	19%	12%
Process	14%	5%	6%
Empowerment	28%	47%	41%
Rewards	5%	5%	11%

Across all organisations the culture of the organisation and the empowerment of the personnel are seen as the key areas where the barriers are most significant. Together they account for 64 - 71% of the barriers mentioned.

The results from both DairyNZ and the small organisations show that of these two, culture is the most dominant barrier, while for Zespri empowerment is mentioned twice as often as culture (47% vs 24%). It seems in Zespri's case it's the ability/freedom to implement by their personnel rather than the culture set by the leadership that could be an issue.

It would be wrong to assume that the other areas are not important or that there are no barriers in those areas. They are not as important in the eyes of the interviewees but they still account for between 29-36% of the responses.

The most mentioned barriers within each model component for each organisation are shown in Table 4. A full set of results is in Appendix 4. The percentages shown have been calculated using the number of responses given within that category for that organisation. E.g. 75% of the DairyNZ culture responses said that mindset was a key barrier.

Table 4. Summary of key issues within barrier types

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KVH, KGI
Culture			
Mindset	14 (75%)	1 (20%)	2 (50%)
Narrow Focus		3 (60%)	1 (25%)
Leadership			
Need to develop the culture	3 (50%)		2 (100%)
Hands on too much	2 (33%)	1 (33%)	
Not a strategy	1 (17%)	1 (33%)	
Empowerment			
Immediate workload	3 (19%)	5 (56%)	2 (40%)
Need permission/time	6 (38%)	1 (11%)	
Reward			
System needed	2 (100%)	1 (100%)	
Return for company			2 (100%)
Process			
Process unclear	6 (66%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)

*The percentages shown are calculated using the number of responses given within that category for that organisation

Culture

Key Issues Identified: Mindset, Narrow Focus

Mindset was a top issue for the levy funded organisations. Words used included, “arrogance – we are different”, “pride”, “afraid to fail”, “be safe”, “people aren’t interested”, “willingness to change.”

Interviewees from Zespri identified a narrow focus as their top culture barrier.

“We have a tendency to look internally for solutions.”

The narrow focus was related to two aspects, workload pressure and arrogance - that we have the answer and don’t need to look externally.

Leadership

Key Issues identified: Need to develop a culture, Hands on too much, and Strategy

The key leadership barrier identified was the need for the members of leadership teams to create the culture required. The words used for culture included; an attitude of continual learning, support, humble, confident (but not arrogant), curiosity to learn and try.

The interviewees were all in leadership roles themselves, so they were essentially reflecting their need to demonstrate to their teams the attitudes and mindset of a learning team. They also believed there was a need for a strategy to create the urgency for change.

“It needs to start with the Chief Executive and at board level and be all the way down through all teams to get everyone with the culture. If there is no strategy to make this happen it won’t.”

The challenge to do this relates to the next issue identified, “Hands on too much.” When attention is focused on the immediate issues, deadlines and the delivery of the work, then this becomes the culture of that team (‘the normal way we work’). Therefore assisting team members to strengthen their networks, challenging them to look wider and in a longer timeframe can get pushed down the ‘to-do’ list. One person commented,

“Managers tend to be operational.”

Empowerment

Key Issues Identified: Immediate workload, Need permission/time

Immediate workload is seen as a barrier in all organisations.

“There is no headroom for blue sky thinking or to develop an idea. It’s all filled up with the day-to-day work/projects.”

From this set of interviews I did not seek to find out the reason for this issue.

A number of those interviewed commented on ‘needing permission’ to investigate ideas from other organisations. This implies that people do not currently feel that this is part of their role/their current job description. One insightful comment was,

“What we measure drives behaviour, if we want to change a behaviour we need to support this by changing what we measure.”

They surmised what this might look like.

“Could it be an individual or team performance criteria with some sort of reward attached? Is it a KPI for performance reviews with a minimum set?”

Many of those interviewed mentioned the need to develop an individuals’ strengths and many mentioned that not everyone is as comfortable with the concept of bringing in new ideas as others.

Reward

Key Issues Identified: System needed, Return for company

Although not indicated as an important barrier, interviewees identified that there needs to be a clear rewards process for people who bring ideas. Many different suggestions of rewards were given by interviewees including; financial, promotion, some type of acknowledgement, ability to see the idea through to completion, training, conference attendance, attending workshops, etc. However they noted that rewards might not always be extrinsic, as those listed but can often be intrinsic e.g. personal satisfaction, being valued, working together.

Several of those interviewed talked of the need to see a reward for their energy and investment for their organisation. This could be different depending on idea size and impact, e.g. for larger ideas a formal return on investment (ROI) evaluation is needed. Some form of measurement is needed that can be used to track the value of the ideas coming in along with the investment/outlay that may be needed by CEO/board/levy payers.

Process

Key Issues identified: Process unclear

Although there were not many barriers mentioned about process, this may have been because all the people interviewed either had, or had created, a process that worked. When asked if everyone in their organisation knew about the process one comment was,

“Well I know the process that I use.... but I do admit if you aren’t a general manager/team leader you may not know what to do.”

According to interviews, attributes of good process included that the process needed to be clear for everyone, transparent, and flexible enough to handle the different types of idea that could come through.

Another particularly interesting comment was;

“We need to learn how to fail and fail fast.”

This was mentioned in light of both process and culture.

It was mentioned that Zespri have just instigated a programme where new ideas can be considered for further development, to provide a way ideas can be captured and to enable a clear process for everyone to access and use. It is currently in its first year of a three year roll-out plan. I was unable within the scope of this project to investigate this further.

4. Changes that would need to happen in your organisation for it to be an example to others of what learning from other organisations could achieve.

The following table outlines the key areas interviewees highlighted that would need to change in their organisation.

Table 5. Key areas that need to change in an organisation to lead the way for the industry to improve the way they learn from other organisations

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KVH, KGI
Leadership - belief/strategy	2 (14%)	5 (50%)	4 (80%)
Culture	6 (43%)	1 (10%)	
Empowerment and development of people	5 (35%)	3 (30%)	
Clear processes	1 (8%)	1 (10%)	1 (20%)

Note: 1 = the number of responses from that organisation

(14%) = percentage of that organisation’s responses within that model component

Some of the smaller organisations appeared not to see themselves as either ‘significant enough’ to bring about any change, nor as having the mandate from their levy payers to instigate change. Their response was that there would need to be a change in strategy at board level for them to take on the role. This relates to the role of boards in setting the strategy of an organisation. Findings showed that interviewees felt that if there are not the skills and breadth of understanding by those around the board table it was very hard to enact any change. As one person put it a little cynically,

“They are in general full of middle-aged white men who have come up through the industry and don’t necessarily have the skills to be forward looking, can be more about status quo.”

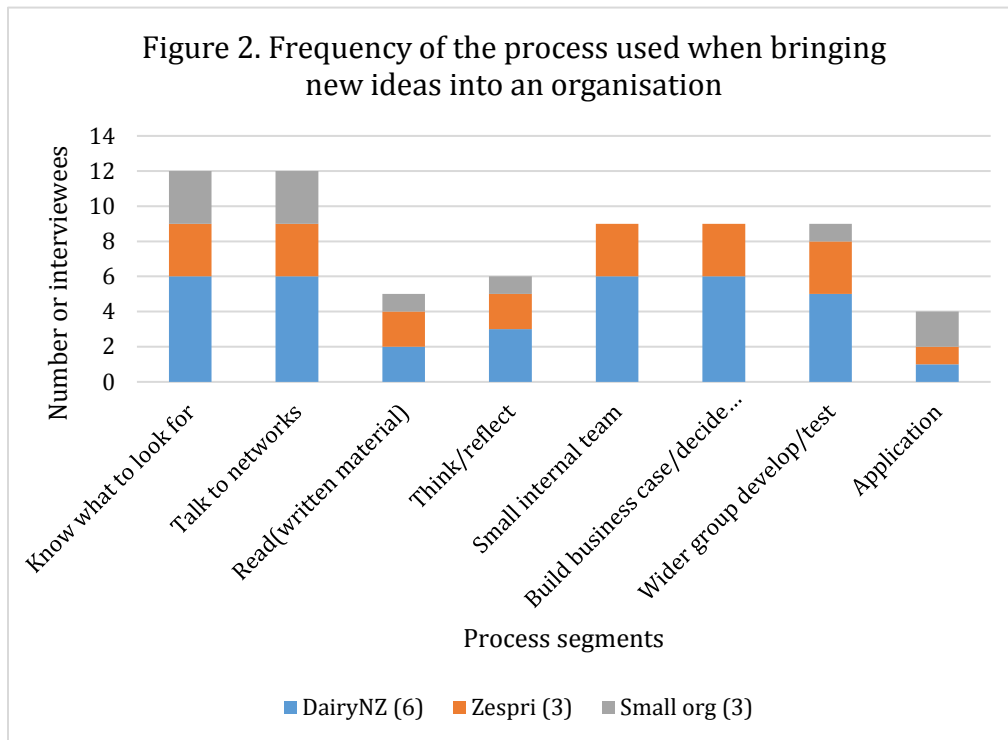
Due to the limitations of this project’s scope no board members of any of the organisations were interviewed.

B: Processes people currently use to bring in new ideas (Part 2 interview questions).

The 12 people interviewed were questioned about the process they had used to bring an idea into an organisation they have worked for. Each person talked through at least one example.

The bar graph below shows the frequency of use of each process component for each organisation. The small organisations have all been grouped together to form one representative ‘organisation’. The number of people interviewed from each ‘organisation’ are DairyNZ – 6, Zespri – 3, Small organisations (NZKGI, HortNZ, KVH) – 3.

The following were identified as key parts to their process.

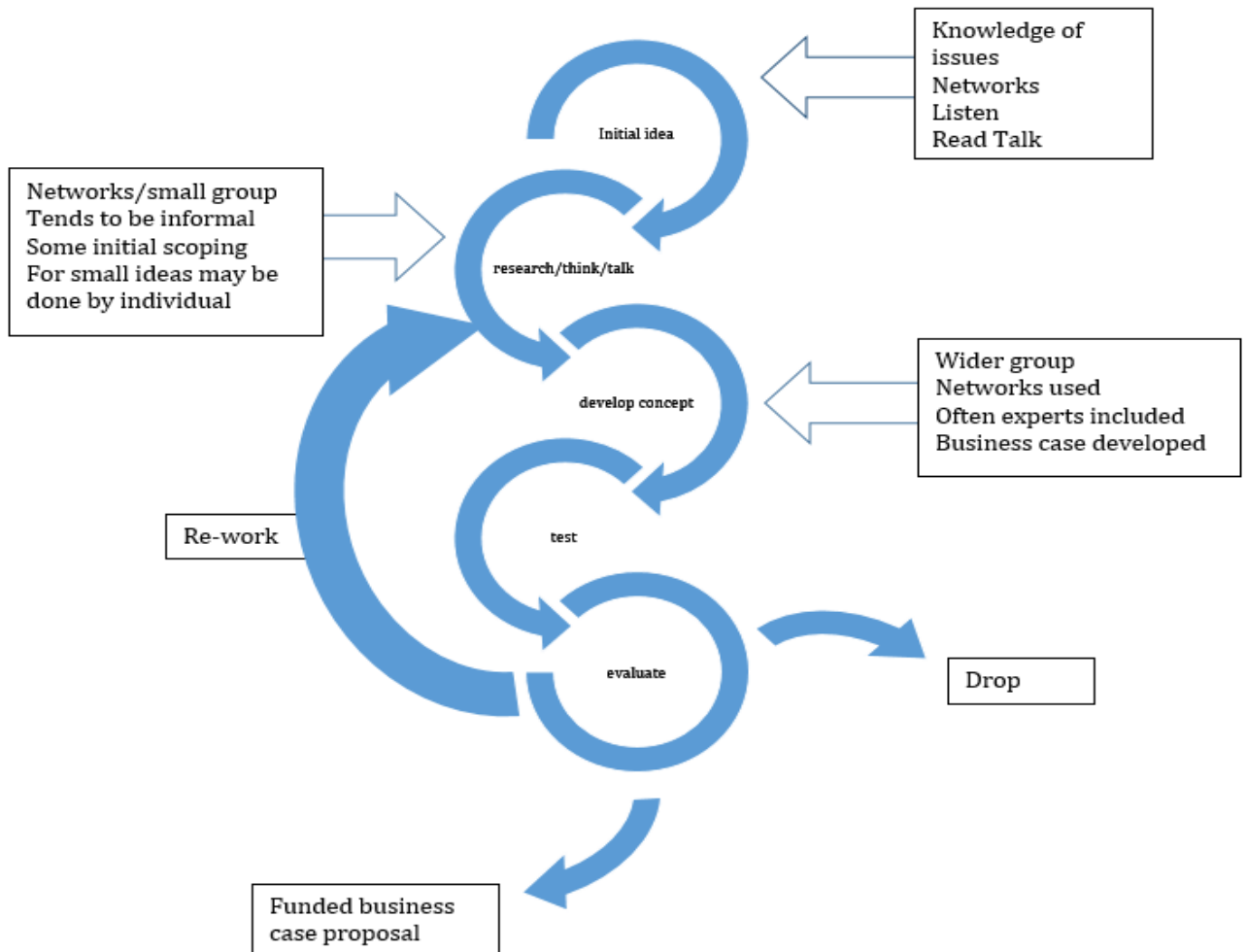


Knowing what to look for and having strong and wide networks were used by all of the participants. Using a small team and building a business case were used by all the participants in the larger organisations but were not identified in a formal way in the smaller organisations. This shows that there are more stages in the process for larger organisations, whereas in the smaller companies the interviewees acted more autonomously and could develop their idea and make the decisions about its promotion without needing approval from a wider team.

The examples that interviewees discussed were wide and varied in nature. The interviewees used words like ‘in this case’, or ‘for this idea’ which implied that the process they described was used for that particular example and there could be variation to the process depending on the ‘size/scale/nature’ of the idea they brought in. One key point made was the importance of networks in the process. Networks were used at various times to spark the initial idea, develop the idea and, at times, to test the idea. This highlights the need to allow people to develop a strong and wide set of networks. The role and importance of networks is a key element to learning better from other organisations.

The process used by the interviewees is summarised in the following model Figure 3.

Figure 3 Idea Integration Model



Assessment of the Applicability of the Model of the key components of a learning organisation

Questions 3- 6 from the interview were used to assess if model represented on page 11 is appropriate.

During the analysis over 95% of the comments that the interviewees made could be attributed to one of the 5 components in the model. This would suggest that the model has identified the key attributes of an organisation that learns from other organisations.

Table 6. Most frequently used words in each model attribute.

	Overarching Meaning	Examples of words used	Frequency of answer
Empowerment	Development and enabling of all team members to participate	Time allocated, networks needed, training to expand out thinking, workload, prioritise, expectation	34%
Culture	Attitudes and environment around the individuals	Arrogant, feelings of failure, safe, accepted, encouraged, supported, narrow views, humility, expectation	23%
Leadership	Attributes the leader influences	Strategy, modelling, resource allocation, mandate, set the culture	18%
Reward	To the individuals involved and to the organisation as a whole	Depends on person, better smarter solutions, need to exist	16%
Process	How to do it	Needs to exist, how do we capture ideas? What's a fair way to look at ideas? open and transparent	9%

The model component most frequently used was empowerment (34%), the development and enabling of all team members, followed by culture (23%), leadership (18%) reward (16%) and then process (9%).

Some of the comments that reflect common aspects of each model attribute follow.

Empowerment:

"People need to feel empowered to be able to do this – currently they don't."

"Time is needed, networking takes time and we get tangled up with the day-to-day stuff."

"The organisation's responsibility is to make the time available, it's the individuals responsibility to make sure its being used."

Culture:

"Learning from other organisations is not limited to just leadership. To do better we must develop a curiosity culture with context in our company. If we have this, we will create the time and way to make it (learning better from others) happen."

Leadership:

"We used to find one particular organisation really hard to connect and collaborate with. One role was changed in the company and now it's easy and instead of 'competing' against each other we look for ways to work together. It changed the culture of that organisation."

Reward:

"When we change the metrics of what we measure for the staff we get a change of behaviour."

"We want better solutions for farmers."

Process:

"We need a process of how we capture the ideas and get them in."

"Our process is informal because I can catch up with the people I need to see regularly, couldn't really get away with that in a larger organisation. There would need to be something more formal or too many ideas would be lost."

Discussion

The purpose of this project was to identify how DairyNZ can improve the way it learns from other organisations. The following discussion compares the interview results with the literature review and draws conclusions for DairyNZ to consider. Although this project has been completed using DairyNZ as its focus, the key findings are useful to any organisation regardless of size or industry, not-for-profit or for-profit.

1. Critical factors people exhibit to allow them to learn from the experiences of other organisations.

The importance of networks and a continual learning mindset were the two factors identified by those interviewed as critical to learning from the experiences of others. The importance of networks and networking is critical to sourcing information outside an organisation. This is in line with Gilmore's (2009) work, which identified networking as an important factor in boundary spanning and Daft's (2007) discussion, which identified how the networks help build understanding and trust through individuals and are developed over time.

Findings show that the networks were built up over the duration of a career, and often colleagues in one role are added to the network as workers move to alternative roles or organisations. The networks were used as sources of information and as a 'reference points' to introduce the interviewee to other people who could help with an idea/issue. This demonstrates the trust that had been developed between the participants as discussed by Daft (2007).

The methods used by the interviewees to interact with their networks aligned with Janowicz-Panjaitan and Noordenhaven's (2008) work discussing how both formal and informal interactions have a positive influence on organisational learning. One example of such interactions was where an interviewee commented, "The formal networking just does the introduction but it's only at a certain level, it's when we have informal catchups over a coffee that we get the real value." Most of the interviewees talked of catching up with parts of their network group on a regular basis either over drinks, coffee, or dinner. With this being the case, the role of the organisation to provide sufficient networking opportunities is important in both developing and maintaining the networks. However, it was found that individuals needed to take the next steps to deepen those relationships using informal interactions. This finding is supported by Gilmore's (2009) study where organisations are warned of the necessity to

empower personnel if they want to get collaboration and communication occurring across boundaries.

DairyNZ will need to consider how it can develop bigger and richer networks if it wants to learn better from other organisations. The development of networks over long periods of time, even over careers, should not be undervalued. When a new person is employed they bring with them a set of already-established networks, which are valuable to the organisation. It is important for DairyNZ to identify contacts within the new employee's network that DairyNZ wants to retain as a connection and integrate them into the wider DairyNZ network. If this is done the contact will not be lost if the person employed moves on. DairyNZ should reflect on training that could be provided to personnel on how to develop and maintain networks, to assist personnel to understand the value of networks, and on how to use them more effectively.

The interviewees had a mindset of continual learning. They identified this as a key aspect to be able to learn from others. This learning mindset is highlighted by phrases such as:

"I always have my antennae up on the search for different ideas."

"When I talk to someone I'm always thinking 'What can I learn?' "

"I'm always reading, and scanning. It sits at the back of my mind."

The words 'always', 'search', 'scanning', 'thinking' are noted as active words. For many their continual learning mindset is now a natural process. It is being applied when the interviewees are talking to people in their networks, reading material, or listening to a presentation. Some of those interviewed talked of being inherently naturally curious, whereas other talked of making a conscious decision to develop a curiosity/learning mindset. Although the decision to develop a learning mindset has been decided at an individual level it can be encouraged and supported by the culture of the organisation. To develop this type of learning mindset culture in an organisation Gill(2010) commented on how the pursuit of learning is *woven* into the fabric of organisational life. To do this a learning mindset would have to be incorporated into every aspect of the organisation. The term 'woven' is significant as it implies that it is integrated into every aspect of existing work throughout the organisation, not introduced as a new project to be 'done'.

Every organisation has its way of doing things. Developing a learning mindset within an organisation is a gradual process and it takes a long time to implement this sort of culture shift

within an organisation (Boonstra, 2013). As with any organisational change it would require active demonstration by the leaders of all teams to make it work. Within DairyNZ there will be some parts of the organisation that are already functioning this way, and which could be used as a model for other teams, thereby leading to a gradual growing of capacity across the organisation. Although some suggestions of how this could be done are made (refer Future Possibilities on page 40), DairyNZ should explore their current 'learning mindset' state within their organisation and develop a plan of how to grow this if they wish to better capture the benefits of learning more from other organisations.

2. The results that could be achieved through better learning from the experiences of other industries/organisations.

The findings of this study showed that all interviewees believe there are further gains to be made by learning from other industries and that the potential returns are worth the investment. Even when the interviewee believed that their organisation was doing quite well at learning from other organisations, they still believed there were gains to be made.

Some of those interviewed believed in the importance of targeted networks to get a good return for the time invested. These interviewees consider who are the right people to include in their network and use their time to develop deeper relationships with these people, verses with anyone they happen to interact with. Assessing how to maximize the return from networks is beyond the scope of this project, but warrants further consideration to ensure that organisations do get a return on the time and effort invested.

The key benefit identified as being able to be achieved through learning from other organisations was 'being able to provide better results and smarter solutions'. This was also a conclusion Greve (2016) drew by outlining that inter organisational learning stimulated innovation, resulting in faster learning at less cost and risk. Better results and smarter solutions are a consequence of the 'stimulated innovation' that Greve (2016) discusses. Learning from other organisations gives individuals the ability to see an issue or idea from diverse viewpoints and forces them to think in a different way. This in turn can inspire creativity that may otherwise not have been catalysed. Zespri have grasped the essence of this by developing project teams which include people from all areas within the organisation so they can get a '360° view'. Personnel from all the areas within the organisation look at the issue or idea from their

department's viewpoint, and by considering all aspects they can fully evaluate the impact this proposal will have on the organisation, their customers, growers, pack houses, marketers etc.

The findings from this study also showed that the smaller organisations were more cost-conscious. All three small organisations noted this was one of the benefits of learning from other organisations. Small organisations have a small pool of funding and an imperative to show a return on investment to their levy payers, which was not as evident in the 'for-profit' organisation.

All members of levy funded organisations represented in this study highlighted the importance of partnerships and collaboration and the potential that this brings for the future. This could in part be due to their size and because they represent just one sector/group of producers. One person interviewed commented,

"We have to collaborate to give us enough size to be heard. And if we collaborate with the right (trendy) sectors, that opens doors and we can get our message to the right people."

One reason for this could be the increasing workload in policy, environment and compliance for their sector being reflected in their interview results. They all mentioned the need for greater cross sector collaborative efforts in the future to tackle some of the up-coming sector issues.

The key result of learning better from other organisations is better and smarter solutions a result that fits with DairyNZ's strategy. This could indicate that if DairyNZ improves the way it learns from other organisations they will get better and smarter result for their farmers.

3. Identifying the barriers that stop organisations learning from other organisations.

There were many different barriers identified by those interviewed that limit their ability to learn from other organisations. The most frequently mentioned barriers involved the empowerment of individuals, particularly via current work load pressures and the requirement for permission from the organisation. Aspects of organisational culture (a narrow focus and mindset) were the next most frequently mentioned barrier, and although leadership was close behind, the comments given related to developing an organisational culture with a mindset for learning; hence both the cultural and leadership comments have been amalgamated. If learning better from other organisations is important, then the root causes of these barriers must be

considered. The other barriers noted included an unclear organisational process and lack of reward system for personnel.

The interview comments indicate that empowering individuals by resolving workload and permission issues would result in improved learning from other organisations. Those interviewed reflected that to improve their networks and bring in more ideas their current workload would have to change. Many commented about having little/no 'thinking time' or 'blue sky thinking'. They believed that this limits their ability to develop ideas and that it is also a reflection of what is happening for other personnel in the organisation. It must be noted that workload is not always a result of manager expectations. Sometimes it can be a result of the individual's unreasonable expectations of themselves.

The results of this project also indicated that many people did not feel that their organisation actively supported the time required to create, develop, and promote new ideas. They felt they would need permission to be able to do this as it sat outside their current work expectations. A result of this was that the sort of work required to learn from other organisations would often not be done as it perceived to be an optional extra rather than part of the core work. The results of the interviews support what Hackman and Johnson (2004) showed regarding the importance of empowerment in the role of sharing knowledge. According Hackman and Johnson's definition, empowering includes having the authority and the support of the organisation to exchange information. They showed that the result of empowerment was greater co-operation, the setting and achievement of higher goals, and greater persistence. If personnel are empowered to act they then have greater ownership of the problem/issue/solution because they have been given the authority and responsibility to act. If DairyNZ wishes to improve its ability to learn from other industries, it would be worth considering core issues around workload level and job expectation. If there is no time allowed to develop networks and learn then learning from other organisations is less likely to happen consistently or effectively.

The aspects of organisational culture the interviewees highlighted as barriers were having a narrow focus (focus internally cf. externally) and lacking a learning mindset. As Schein (2010) pointed out culture is embedded in the organisation; to change a culture from 'silo' or 'tribes' to be more open in thinking and connecting with networks will take concerted effort and

investment by the organisation. DairyNZ could start by considering its current organisational culture and then considering what outcomes would be exhibited in the organisation if a learning culture was prioritised. Changing an organisation's culture is a long process and requires a multi-pronged approach (McGuire et al 2009). Using some of the ideas suggested in McGuire et al's (2009) white paper "Transforming your Organisation", such as using speakers/workshops to grow bigger minds and build capacity within each person could be helpful. That way everyone in the organisation is learning more and is exposed to the same message, language, and practices. Leadership teams that demonstrate the learning behavior, and ensuring new employees have a learning mindset when appointing personnel within the company, are both strategies that could be used to influence organisational culture. DairyNZ could investigate how strategies could be developed to provide the time and funding for this to occur.

Other barriers noted during the interviews included the lack of a reward system for all personnel who bring new ideas, and an organisational process for new ideas or thinking to be developed and implemented. It was noted that the type of reward did not have to be financial, but could include work related awards, attendance to special events/conferences etc. and could be person-dependent. The concept of reward would need much discussion but the findings of this study are in line with those of Lee (1998). Lee believes some concept of reward is needed to acknowledge the effort the personnel have contributed but that the type of reward given would need to depend on the person receiving the reward.

The lack of a clear transparent process that is suitable for "new idea" suggestions and development was a common barrier identified by the interviewees. This is consistent with Wood (2003) who comments that one of the worst things a leader can do is to call for ideas and then have no efficient way to process them all. The findings in this study suggest that currently in DairyNZ it is perceived that there is no clear process to process ideas, and it depends on 'who-you-know' as to whether an idea is taken up. If DairyNZ or any organisation wishes to encourage learning from other organisations, seeking ideas will be an early part of the process. The ability to evaluate, develop and integrate these ideas into the organisation requires an appropriate process. This view of process is also supported by Mariotti (2005) who referred to it as the absorptive and combinative capacity, or the willingness of an organisation to accept and absorb ideas into the company, followed by the ability of the organisation to rework the idea

into something new. This study shows that the process in smaller organisations was often a lot less formal as it was easier for people to catch-up with each other on a regular basis; often this informal process is the format used to bring up new ideas/thoughts that can then be further explored.

The implications of this for DairyNZ are wide ranging. Many issues have been identified as barriers to DairyNZ learning better from other organisations. It is clear from the discussion that if DairyNZ wants to learn from other organisations better it would be advised to consider the culture it currently has, and to consider the development of strategy for the organisation to enable a series of changes to occur over time. Aspects to consider include providing time, creating the expectation that a learning culture is 'the way we operate', establishing a clear process for the development of new ideas, and rewarding behaviour.

An example of this sort of process in action was provided by one of the interviewees from a small organisation. Personnel in their organisation are actively encouraged (empowered) to learn and collaborate with other industries (through networks). This open learning mindset occurs across the whole team and is actively encouraged by their CEO (leadership). This is the way they operate and expect their staff to operate (culture). Members of this organisation believe that this culture helps them get better results. They have great relationships with a range of others through their networks, and now work with a wide range of groups they initially thought they had nothing in common with. In contrast, members of other organisations in this study considered the existing work load of personnel or their organisational structure prohibitive of, or at least not-supporting of, an open learning mindset.

4. Changes that would need to happen in an organisation for it to lead the way

The results show that Zespri and the small organisations highlighted that there would need to be a change in approach from the leadership team for their organisations to lead the way in learning better from other organisations, whereas DairyNZ identified organisational culture and personnel empowerment as the key organisational barriers to leading the way.

Table 7 lists some of the phrases used by interviewees when talking about each of the categories of leadership, culture, and empowerment.

Table 7. Comments used in each category

Leadership	Culture	Empowerment
Demonstrated by leadership	Be more creative	Prioritise work
Endorsed at board level	Embrace new ideas/challenges	Grow people’s thinking
Need to create the expectation	More unified culture	Include in job description
Value proposition believed at the top	Expectation of innovation	Create time in work

By listing the comments this way, a clear pattern can be seen. Leadership influences the organisation’s culture and both the leadership and culture influence the empowerment of personnel. The interaction between leadership, culture and empowerment of people is reflected in McGuire et al’s (2009) summary, which states that designing a leadership strategy, transforming the executive team and discovering/developing a culture are important aspects that need to be in place to transform organisations. It requires a mindset change from the senior leadership team. People in leadership influence the organisational culture at all levels (Alvesson 1992). The senior leadership team is responsible for strategy design, but all people in a position of leadership are responsible for the implementation of the strategy that will enable greater engagement in the process. Developing a learning culture for learning from other organisations is the responsibility of all personnel in leadership roles within the organisation; they must promote the change if the organisation wants all the personnel to fully commit to the culture change (Myeong-Gu et al 2012). It takes time to change a culture. When change is initiated many staff wait to see if you ‘really mean it’. Culture change also requires perseverance, celebration of the successes, acknowledgement of the failures and a continual commitment to keep learning as the culture develops in the organisation.

For DairyNZ to lead the way in how it learns from other organisations, DairyNZ would have to be able to promote the benefits of organisational learning to other organisations. To do this it would need to be able to show the benefit of learning from other organisations to others. Further research to validate the comments that have been made in this small project could assist in the development of strategy to focus on learning from others. This could then be implemented by the leadership team within the organisation.

Processes people currently use to bring in new ideas.

The findings showed that the basic process used by all the interviewees for how ideas are brought into their organisations was similar; however there were variations that occurred based on the implications of the idea, the specialized skills required, and the personality of the person.

The critical factors were that people:

1. Were actively looking for ideas;
2. Knew how to develop the idea further; and
3. Knew how to get buy-in from the organisation.

It was often acknowledged by interviewees that there was no clear process on how to get ideas into their organisation, and it seemed that success depended on the individual's passion, perseverance, and connections within the organisation. Zespri is currently establishing an Enterprise Project Management Office within its organisation to assist in idea capture and development. This is being done to help Zespri capture more ideas and give a clear avenue for idea development and evaluation. This is an example of Wood's (2003) effective idea generation system, and the quick and effective idea-evaluation processes are being implemented to try to capture more ideas.

All the people interviewed in this study have brought ideas into organisations, and although the process was different for each person there were similarities in the fundamental process. For the larger organisations the process is by necessity more structured to ensure that all the ideas are captured and everyone knows what to do with their idea. As there is no one correct process, DairyNZ will need to invest much thought, discussion, and research to determine the best process for them to use. Key factors must include, accessibility to all personnel, quick/efficient processing of ideas, transparency, and that the decisions are being made at the right level within the organisation (Schwarz 2015, Robinson and Schroeder 2014, Wood 2003).

Model Assessment

The findings from this small study provide overall support for the model put forward on page 12 of this paper. The model showed the five key factors that are needed for an organisation to be innovative and to learn better from other organisations. The discussion in this project reinforces that leadership, culture, empowerment, process, and rewards are all important for successful inter organisational learning to take place. These five factors are all interlinked and one cannot be changed without affecting the others.

Figure 1. Key components of a learning organisation - model



For DairyNZ to learn better from other organisations it is important to consider each of these factors in conjunction with potential impacts on the other areas of the organisation. This study concludes this model is a useful way to describe the interaction between components that are needed to learn effectively from other organisations.

Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this project was to identify ways DairyNZ can improve the way it learns from other organisations.

It was clear from all the interviewees that the returns are better and smarter solutions, with less risk and cost. To achieve this five key factors, should be considered. These are:

- Leadership that believes, promotes and endorses learning from others;
- A culture that embraces a learning curiosity and accepts the challenges that that brings;
- Personnel who are empowered and have the required training and resources to seek out and create new ideas;
- A process that supports ideas being brought into the organisation to be developed and evaluated; and
- A system which rewards those involved.

Although this project was conducted to look at what DairyNZ can do to learn from other industries, these key factors are relevant to any organisation or business who wishes to improve, regardless of size or industry.

The value of networks and networking was identified by all participants as being a critical tool in how they learn from other organisations and should be considered in greater detail by organisations so they can leverage more value from this.

Recommendations for how DairyNZ could improve the way it learns from other organisations.

1. It is worth the leadership of DairyNZ seriously considering the value that could be obtained by improving the way it learns from other organisations, and for leaders to commit to this by, for example, setting a strategy and a team to research this further, and to develop a programme for implementation.
2. All five areas of the model will need to be addressed if DairyNZ want to see improvement in their ability to learn from other organisations. Critical factors to be addressed include, developing an 'outward looking learning culture', allowing personnel time and training to develop and use networks, establishing a process that allows ideas to be captured and

- explored, and rewarding behaviour that demonstrates the desired outcomes. Of these, the first two are the most critical to success.
3. Further investigation work would need to be done to develop what this could look like for DairyNZ. Finding out what other organisations do, e.g. Zespri, Fonterra, would give some insight to the variety and implications of approaches that could be taken.

Future Possibilities – these ideas have been developed from comments/suggestions made during the interviews.

1. Instigating annual investigative team trips that go looking for new ideas. The teams would explore the potential of what is on the horizon. This could be in the dairy industry but also in industries that are creating ideas that could be used in, or could affect, this industry. The team would be made of people from a range of levels within the organisation and of areas of work – this would allow for different viewpoints, and for greater debate and discussion. The expectation would be that there would be ideas/concepts brought back into the business that could influence the projects/work we do.
2. Allow each team/region/individual to spend to time to case study people that are trying innovative ideas. Partner with these farmers/people to help discover why their idea does/doesn't work.
3. Create some projects/issues and have an unusual group of people develop (could involve people from different teams, different organisations, from different sectors)– where would/could it lead us? The participants could be within the animal sector or wider afield.
4. Creating funded white space projects.
5. Establish an 'ideas den' where ideas can be discussed/debated and then allowed to grow to be evaluated for further development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Questions

Appendix 2 Diagram used during interview process

Appendix 3 Thematic analysis of transcripts

Appendix 4 Results and analysis

Appendix 1 Interview Questions

Thank you for making the time available for me to conduct my project research. Just a quick introduction to who I am, Wilma Foster I have 3 roles, my husband and I own a small dairy farm at Pukehina, we also own a G3 kiwifruit orchard at Te Puna, Tauranga and I work full time for DairyNZ.

I applied for the Kellogg Rural Leadership course to expand my thinking, to widen my contacts through meeting new people both attendees and people in leadership outside my current circle.

My project is based on the value that organisations can gain by learning from the experiences that other organisations have. I am interested in exploring what this could mean to us at DairyNZ. As part of my project I am interviewing a selection of people with in the kiwifruit industry and DairyNZ.

Interview Questions

1. Briefly describe your role and key work areas within your organisation
2. What comes to mind when we talk about learning from other organisations?
3. My Kellogg project is about how organisations learn from each other.
 - a. How actively do you seek to learn from the experiences that other organisations have?
 - b. How does that help you and your industry?
 - c. If not, why not?
4. If you were better able to learn from the experiences of other organisations.
 - a. What would the potential be?
 - b. What are the barriers? (explore solutions?)
 - c. If there is no potential -why do you believe there would not be any potential?
 - d. What would the prize look like to make it worth pursuing?
5. Please give me an example of when you have found out about a key learning/idea that you gleaned from another organisation and that you have brought into your organisation?
 - a. What was it about the ideas that caught your attention?
 - b. How did you go about implementing it into your business/role?
 - c. What were the limitations you came across in using the learning from another organisation? (incl application)
6. Why don't more people look too other organisations for ideas and innovative solutions?

Process – (Use this section to identify the process that people use, if already did as a part of question 4 just ask relevant sections) I'd like to ask a few questions about when you have used ideas from other organisations to help you.

7. How do you find out about what is happening in other organisations (outside your world)?
 - b. How do you decide on what you will follow-up and research further?
8. How do you then discover what that organisations 'situation' was?
 - b. How did you discover what their results were?
9. How do you identify the key ideas that could be transferred to your organisation?
10. How is this information adapted and imbedded into your organisation?
 - b. Can I please have an example of where this has happened well
 - c. What is an example of when this didn't work?

Overall

11. Why do you believe that there could greater benefits to your industry if primary industries actively learnt from each other?
12. What would need to change I your organisation for this to happen?
13. How could your organisation go about instigating that change?

Summary

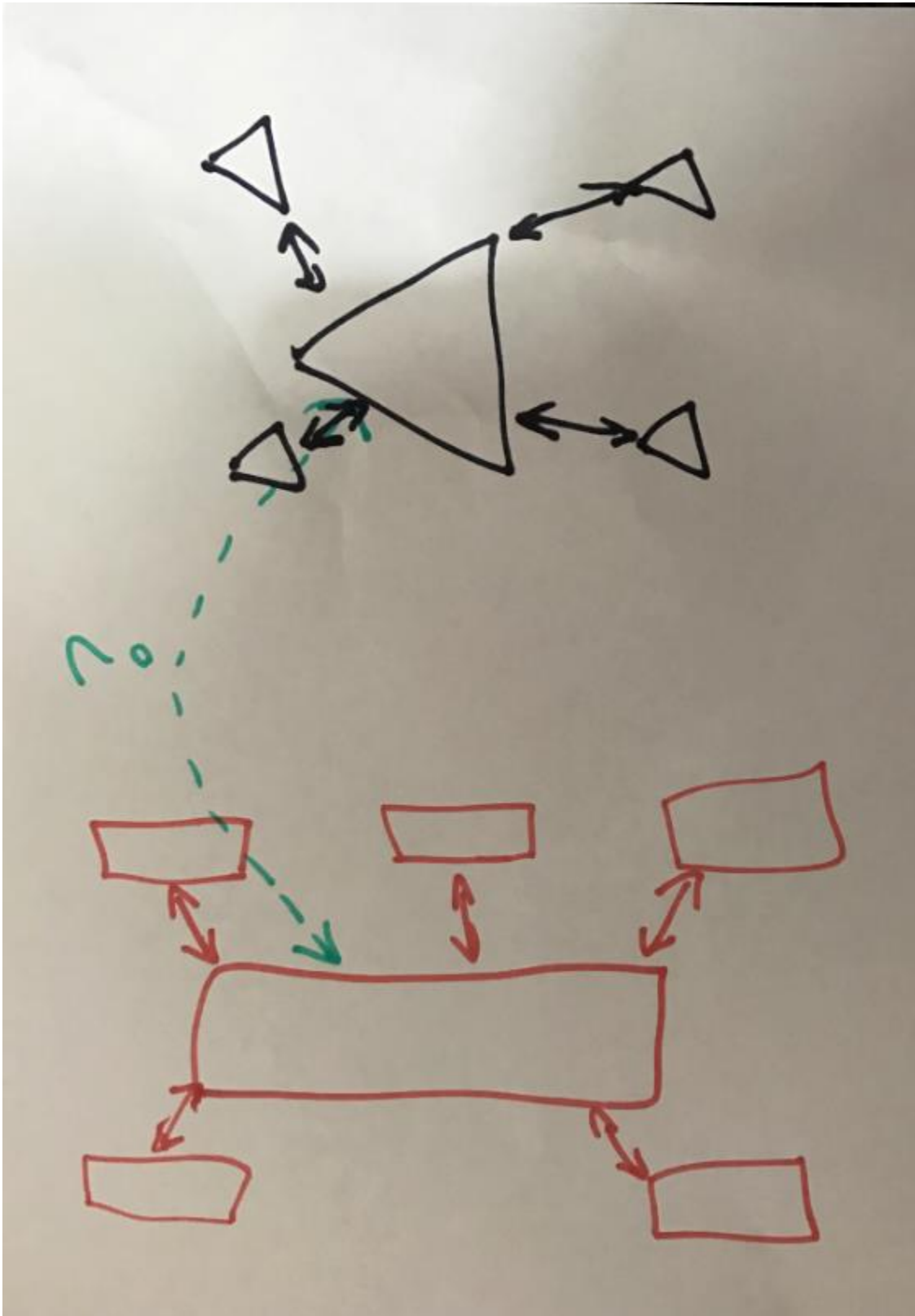
Thank you for your time and input into my project. Do you have any final thoughts you'd like to offer?

Can I contact you later if I have any follow up questions?

Do you have any questions of me?

Would you like a copy of my report?

Appendix 2 Diagram used in interview to explain project



Appendix 3 Thematic analysis of the transcripts

Themes

Yellow – leadership

Pink – empowerment

Blue – process

Orange – reward

Gold – culture

1. The process interviewees used to learn from others experiences. (Q 3a)

How do you seek to learn experiences? (3)

Yellow sticky notes:

- understand product simplification & values (DNZ)
- continually thinking to make things better (DNZ)
- Develop - books, courses, active dialog with exec. (K CEO)
- Summy - Org capability, expect team 2 do it (K CEO)
- Speed 20-30% looking outside company (K CEO)

Pink sticky notes:

- Focused networks (DNZ)
- DNZ read talk material to me (DNZ)
- connect purpose more people (DNZ)
- K time constraint
- Research + follow up (K)
- get active people in to challenge by having lectures (K)
- use of Te Hero allowed
- phone (KWH)
- network that has purpose conversation (KWH)

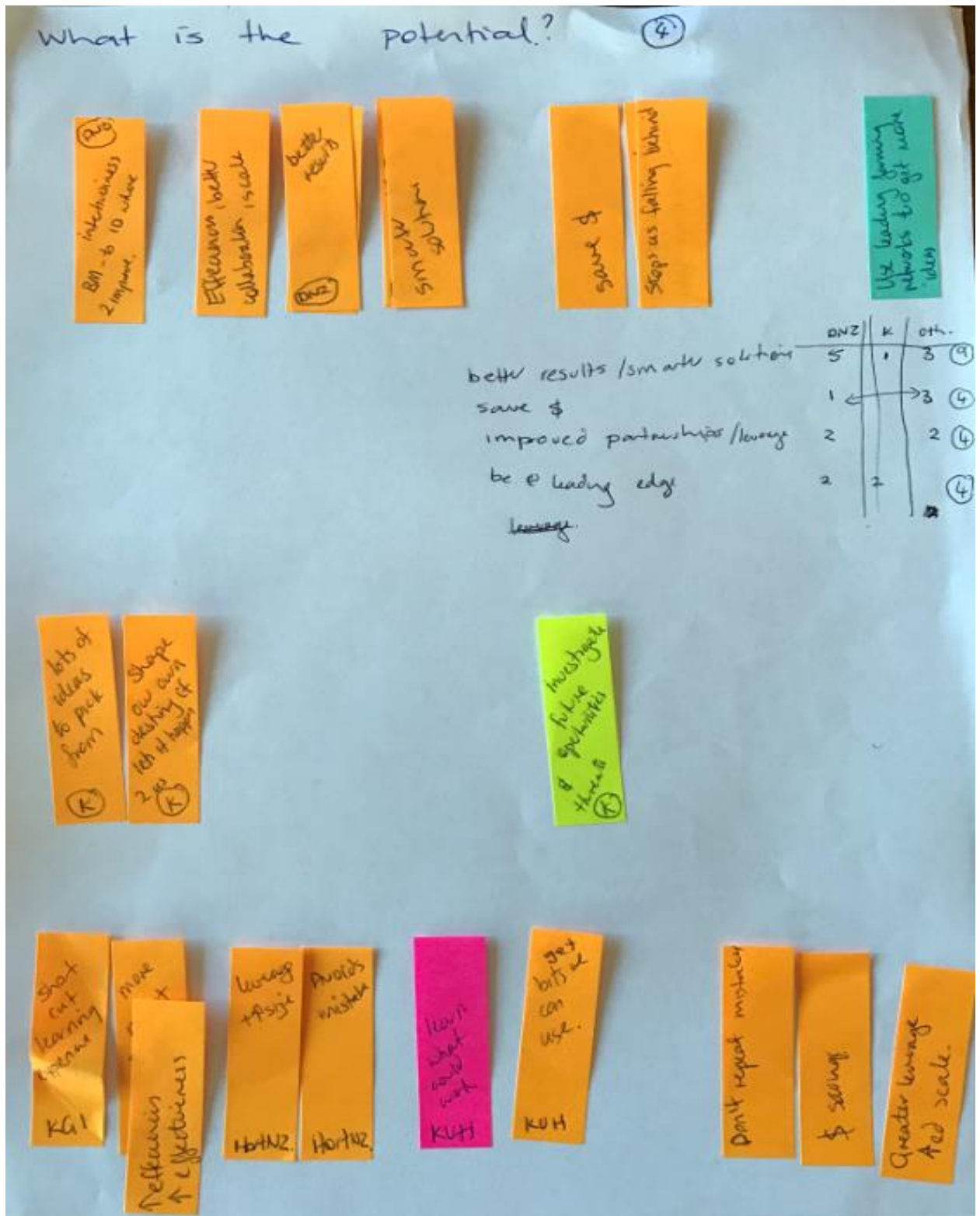
Table: How do you seek

	DNZ	K	Oth
Mindset to improve/learn	3	2	
Set time aside		1	
Networks	6	2	4
Formal development.		1	

Additional notes:

- look 4 common paper.
- prev work 4 work history often start formal - into informal - real stuff
- Te Hero network
- Attitude - look to learn

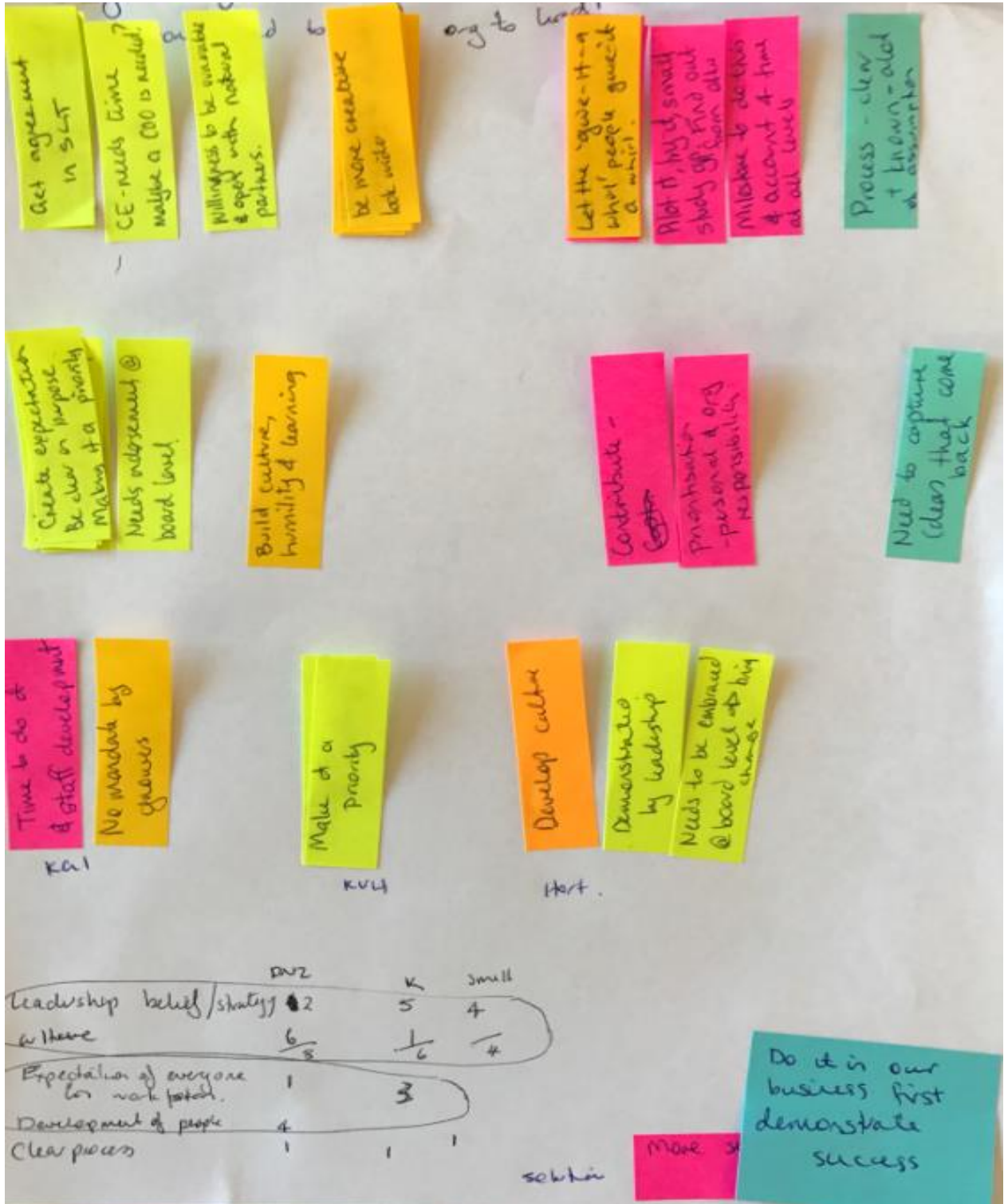
2. The results/ potential that could be achieved if we could improve the way we learn from others. (Qns 3b, 4a, 11)



3. The barriers interviewees identified. (Qns 5c, 6)



4. Interviewees responses regarding the changes that would need to happen for their organisation to lead the way (Qns 12, 13)



Appendix 4 Interview results

In all the results shown below, the whole numbers relate to the number of comments made by interviewees in that organisation. The percentage number are the percentage of comments made by interviewees in that organisation.

1. Critical factors people exhibit for them to learning from the experiences of other organisations.

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KVH, KGI
Have a mindset to improve, learn and develop	3	2	
Set time aside	1	2	
Networks	6	2	5
Formal Development		2	

Other results included; common values.

2. The results that could be achieved through better learning from the experiences of other industries/organisations.

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KGI, KVH
Better results and smarter solution	5 (50%)	1 (33%)	3 (37%)
Cost savings	1 (10%)		3 (37%)
Improved partnerships and leverage	2 (20%)		2 (26%)
Be the leading edge	2 (20%)	2 (67%)	

3. Identifying the barriers that stop inter organisational learning.

Results for each focus area split by organisation

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KVH, KGI
Culture			
Mindset	75%	20%	50%
Narrow Focus		60%	25%
Diff cultures in org	10%		
Attitude		20%	25%
Mo motivation	5%		
Small networks	10%		
Leadership			
Need to develop the culture	50%		2
Hand's on too much	33%	33%	
Not a strategy	17%	33%	
Need a challenge		33%	
Empowerment			
Immediate workload	19%	56%	40%
Need permission/time	38%	11%	
Network development	19%	22%	40%
Personal stretch	24%	21%	20%
Reward			
System needed	100%	100%	
Return for company			100%
Process			
Process unclear	66%	100%	100%
Include way to widen out thinking	11%		
Perfectionism problem	22%		

4. Changes that would need to happen in their organisation in order for it to lead the way.

	DairyNZ	Zespri	HortNZ, KVH, KGI
Leadership – belief/strategy	2 (14%)	5 (50%)	4 (80%)
Culture	6 (43%)	1 (10%)	
Empowerment and development of people	5 (35%)	3 (30%)	
Clear processes	1 (8%)	1 (10%)	1 (20%)

Process interviewees use to identify and bring in new ideas

Process used by interviewees - Grouped by organisation

	DairyNZ (6)	Zespri (3)	Small org (3)
Know what to look for	6	3	3
Talk to networks	6	3	3
Read (written material)	2	2	1
Think/reflect	3	2	1
Small internal team	6	3	
Build business case/decide progress	6	3	
Wider group develop/test	5	3	1
Application	1	1	2

Process used by interviewees - Grouped by category

	% interviewees mentioned
Know the issues/problems/opportunities your company is keen to explore	12 (100%)
Read (written research)	5 (45%)
Talk to networks	12 (100%)
Think/reflect/process internally	6 (55%)
Discuss/Pass to internal team (small)	9 (81%)
Decide if should progress further/build business case	9 (82%)
Wider group develop	9 (82%)
Application, review/improve	5 (45%)

