Gumboots on the Ground Approach to Role-Value in the Food and Fibre Sector.

I wish to thank the Kellogg Programme Investing Partners for their continued support.

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Executive Summary

The research report explores role-value within The Food and Fibre Sector (TF&FS) in New Zealand, aiming to align traditional workplace practices with the expectations of Generation Z. Through an analysis of KPIs, salary benchmarks, and employee perspectives. The report offers strategic recommendations to redefine role-value, enhance business performance, and foster career development.

Key findings reveal a significant gap between conventional management methods and the preferences of Generation Z, emphasising clear communication, regular feedback, and personal engagement. The report integrates motivational theories to underscore their impact on job satisfaction and performance.

Focusing on KPI frameworks, enhancing communication channels, maintaining competitive salaries, and aligning roles with personal values aids in creating role-vale. Flexible work arrangements and continuous professional development are crucial for maintaining sector demands. Strategic insights aim to attract and support talent within TF&FS, contributing to sector sustainability and growth.

Recommendations:

For Businesses:

- Schedule regular KPI reviews with SMART objectives.
- Introduce flexible working hours, especially during off-peak seasons.
- Train managers in supportive, flexible leadership practices.
- Develop comprehensive training programs and career progression plans.
- Establish regular communication channels and open forums.
- Conduct annual salary reviews and collaborate with industry to create standards.

For Early Career Contributors:

- Schedule frequent one-on-one meetings with managers.
- Identify preferred feedback styles and maintain transparent communication.
- Initiate regular KPI discussions to monitor performance.
- Maintain records of accomplishments for performance evaluations.
- Seek mentorship from industry professionals.
- Set boundaries to maintain work-life balance.
- Define personal values and goals through a purpose statement.
- Embrace continuous learning for leadership development.

Implementing these recommendations enhances organisational effectiveness, attracts talent, and supports career growth in the dynamic Food and Fibre sector in New Zealand.

Acknowledgments

This research report could not have been completed without the input and support of so many valued people, and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has taken the time to discuss this research report with me and ask how I am doing. Your support has been invaluable.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Rural Leaders Trust for creating a fantastic program that has broadened my thinking and challenged my assumptions. Thanks to Scott Champion, Dr. Patrick Aldwell, Lisa Rodgers, Annie Chant, and Lyndsay for creating an inspiring and empowering environment. I leave this course with more skills and knowledge because of your input.

To those who took time out of their busy schedules to be interviewed, WhatsApp'd, called, and emailed. I appreciate every minute of time given to this report.

Special thanks to FruitFed Suppliers and MPAC for their financial support, SCH for allowing me time off to head down to Christchurch. To my cadets, graduates, and team, thank you for giving me patience and pushing me to do this course.

A huge thank you to my husband, Jared, for surviving through the late nights, a stressed wife, all while looking after our 3-month-old baby. Thank you for your love and support. To my mum and mother-in-law, thank you for looking after my son while I worked on my report.

Thank you to all my industry connection friends—Krystal, Charles, Meg, Erin, Hannah, George, Lydia, Fiona, and everyone else—a special thank you to the people I interviewed. To my kiwifruit girls (KGGO), thank you for always being a great sounding board.

I would also like to thank Cohort 50 for starting the journey with me while very pregnant and Cohort 51 for welcoming me into your group. Thank you to all of you for the laughs, the drinks, and the support. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know you all and look forward to staying in touch in the future. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know you all and look forward to staying in touch in the future.

Thank you all for your unwavering support and encouragement.

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Abbreviations and Definitions

Summary of Abbreviations and Definitions found in this report

Definition or Meaning	Abbreviation or Term
The Food and Fibre Sector	TF&FS
Gross Domestic Product	GDP
Key Performance Indicators	KPIs
Self-Determination Theory	SDT
Intellectual Property	IP
Executive	Exec
As Soon As Possible	ASAP
*Silent Generation Baby Boomers Generation X Millennials Generation Z Alpha Generation	(1928 – 1945), Silent Generation (1946 – 1964), Baby Boomers (1965 – 1980), Generation X (1981 – 1996), Millennials (1997 – 2012), Generation Z (2013 – Present), Alpha Generation
Generation Z, (1997 – 2012)	The next generation
Generation Z, (1997 – 2012)	The younger workforce
Generation Z, (1997 – 2012)	Young professionals
Generation Z, (1997 – 2012)	Early Career Contributors
Baby Boomers, (1946 – 1964)	The older generation
Baby Boomers, (1946 – 1964)	The traditional workforce
Baby Boomers, (1946 – 1964)	Aging generation
Organisation, Business, Company	Have all been used interchangeably with the intended purpose to maintain readability and flow throughout the research report

*Generations defined by Michael Dimock (Dimock, 2017)

1. Introduction

The Food and Fibre Sector (TF&FS) is fundamental to New Zealand's economy. One in seven New Zealanders works in these sectors or over 350,000, contributing over $46.4 billion in export revenue, representative of 11% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Food & Fibre Skills Action Plan, 2019). New Zealand exports high-quality, innovative, sustainable products (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, 2024) in this rapidly evolving world characteristics in TF&FS need to be upheld, such as increasing urbanisation, ageing population, and work traditions. These characteristics must be addressed to thrive in this changing environment and maintain its reputation (Regional Skills Leadership Group, 2023). These characteristics must be addressed to thrive in this changing environment and uphold its reputation (Regional Skills Leadership Group, 2023).

The title of this research report, "Gumboots on the Ground," is a metaphoric representation of a practical, hands-on, realistic approach to role-value. It highlights the importance of applying a real-world lens to theoretical concepts. A practical, real-world approach is critical as the intended audience for this research report is often more attuned to practical outcomes.

Role-value refers to both the perceived and actual contributions of a position within a business or company, as well as an element of personal identity. In this research report, role-value is captured by factors such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), salary benchmarks, subjective experiences of interviewees, real-world experiences, and the overall economic benefit of the company. KPIs are fundamental, serving as measurable indicators that enable performance evaluation and contributions toward business goals. KPIs play an essential role in serving as measurable indicators that evaluate performance and contributions toward business goals.

This research report addresses key fundamentals and disconnects in Food and Fibre workplaces by reviewing literature and seeking real-world experiences. These disconnects must evolve to retain New Zealand's reputation. Intergenerational contribution will be required to come to the table and adapt. Future success will require diverse and specialised skills to meet changing consumer demands, value-added products, technological advancements, and to meet industry sustainably goals. By critically assessing role-value with emerging workforce needs, this research report seeks to enhance business success, personal fulfilment, and professional growth by proposed strategies that demonstrate role-value and align traditional workplaces with the evolving needs of the younger workforce. Comprehending role-value for young professionals entering any industry, but specifically TF&FS for this research report, is essential for our future.

Young professionals often find it hard to understand their career path and how their roles contribute to the overall success of a company. This research report seeks to address these challenges by offering

detailed information, strategic advice, and helping the early career contributors to confidently advance in their careers. By understanding and addressing the needs of the future leaders of our industry, businesses can create more inclusive and progressive work environments. This not only benefits the employees but also enhances overall business adaptability and performance.

Understanding the value that different roles bring to a company is crucial for optimising business strategies. The research report aims to provide a data-driven analysis of how roles, orchard managers, contribute to business success, thus helping organisations make informed decisions about talent management and resource allocation.

In a competitive job market, having a clear understanding of role-value helps businesses attract and retain top talent. The report's insights into KPIs, salary benchmarks, and role expectations are designed to support businesses in TF&FS in creating attractive career paths for their employees, leading to better retention and engagement.

This research report aims to ensure that young professionals are equipped with the tools and knowledge of how to respond to traditional management and questions regarding Role-value. By providing clear metrics and value definitions, the research report aims to help individuals articulate their contributions and value confidently while aligning with business strategies.

2.   Aims, Purpose, and Objectives

The aim of this research report is to provide a comprehensive and strategic analysis of role-value across various careers in The Food and Fibre Sector (TF&FS), highlighting how these roles contribute to and align with broader business strategies and career development opportunities.

The purpose of this research report is to equip current and future professionals in TF&FS with an understanding of role-value and impact of these young professionals while offering insights to executives, directors and industry bodies, to foster environments that enhance career development and attract new talent to the sectors.

To achieve the above, this research report aims to achieve several specific objectives:

1. Identify and analyse Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and evaluate the KPIs that define success across various roles similar to an Orchard Managers in Kiwifruit, comparing that to other industries such as Apples and Pears, Viticulture, Dairy, Sheep and Beef and Arable.
2. Compare salary benchmarks by gathering and comparing salary data across these sectors to provide a clear picture of what professionals might expect to earn in different roles and the roles expectations.
3. Assess career desirability and professional growth by investigating how different contributing factors influence the perception of these roles.
4. Outline key discrepancies between industries in TF&FS and identify key contributors to Orchard/Farm Management roles.
5. Provide strategic recommendations based on the findings for both parties to improve role-value perception, enhance career development frameworks, and effectively attract and retain talent.

By focusing on these objectives, the research report intends to answer the following research question:

2.1 Research Question

> How can young professionals in the Food and Fibre Sector articulate their role-value, and what recommendations can enhance role-value perception, career development, and talent retention?

3. Methodology

3.1 Question Tree

A question tree methodology was used to initiate the investigation process and compartmentalise the report. This approach began with a brainstorming session where all relevant ideas and questions were 'dumped' into a document. These ideas were then organised into themes and key ideas or simply removed. By systematically exploring these themes, the question tree provided a comprehensive structure, ensuring the research remained focused and avoided potential distractions or irrelevant information. (Culmsee & Awati, 2013; Rasiel & Friga, 2002; The Strategic Capability Team at the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2004).

3.2 Literature Review

A literature review was utilised in this Kellogg research report drawing from a mix of sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, reputable websites, and industry publications to better understand the alignment of traditional workplace values and management practices across various businesses not specifically TF&FS. The 12 prominent theories were examined to critically analyse the dynamics of role-value perception within organisations these are listed below along with a brief description of each theory. Through this process, the review aimed to provide insights into the functioning of businesses and the underlying theories behind certain behaviours and the roots of many day-to-day practices.

- Hierarchy of Needs Theory - Ordered human needs, motivational progression
- Two-Factor Theory - Hygiene verses motivation, job satisfaction
- Expectancy Theory - Anticipated outcomes, reward expectations
- Social Identity Theory - Observational learning, social interactions
- Equity Theory - Fairness in workplace compensation and treatment
- Human Capital Theory - Investment in skills, economic productivity
- Role Theory – Role expectations and organisational behaviour
- Transformational Leadership Theory - Inspirational leadership, personal growth
- Gender Role Theory - Societal gender norms, career impact
- Self-Determination Theory - Intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and psychological needs
- Transparency Theory - Openness, honesty, and clarity in communication
- Communication Theory - Elements and processes of effective message.

3.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this research to systematically explore the complex aspects of role-value perception in TF&FS (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach involves organising qualitative data,

identifying groupings, developing themes and insights providing a flexible structured to uncover meaningful patterns and insights within the research report, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To support this process, thematic maps have been created using Miro and Microsoft Word SmartArt to illustrate key themes. This visual illustration aids in comprehending the complexities of the interviews and complements thematic analysis.

3.4 ChatGPT

In addition to traditional research methods, I engaged in brainstorming and bias accountability from ChatGPT, it provided helpful sentence structure, clarity and grammar tips. While AI tools, including ChatGPT, were consulted to generate brainstorming layouts, their role was limited to providing organisational structure and sentence orientation rather than insight. The content of the assessment was determined through my own critical thinking, research, and synthesis of information.

3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as part of this research report to gain insights into industry best practices, including KPI reviews, salary brackets, to build on the literature review findings with real-life experiences. The interviews explored the general roles and employment practices of the individuals, as well as to understand how interviewees navigate and manage their businesses within the industry. A total of 25 interviews were conducted with individuals representing diverse roles and perspectives within the industry, comprising Directors and Executives, Managers with 5+ Direct Reports, Human Resources Professionals, and Early Career Contributors. The interviews were guided by a set of 24 questions, covering topics such as employment practices, KPI reviews, salary brackets, industry practices, general roles, and situational questions. These questions aimed to provide an understanding of industry dynamics and individual experiences. Data collection methods included in-person interviews, phone interviews, and online interviews using Microsoft Forms, providing flexibility and accessibility for individuals. Ethical considerations were paramount to ensure interviewees confidentiality and privacy. Company-specific data was grouped per industry, specific details will not be disclosed to maintain confidentiality and protect sensitive information shared during the interviews.

Table 1 Summary of participants of the semi-structured by role and industry

	Directors and Executives	Managers with 5+ Direct Reports	Human Resources Professionals	Early Career Contributors
Kiwifruit	2	2	-	3
Viticulture	1	1	1	2

Apple and Pears	1	1	1	2
Dairy	-	2	-	2
Sheep and Beef	1	1	-	1
Arable	-	1	-	-

4.   Limitations

Balancing personal responsibilities with work and the demands of the Kellogg programme limited the time available for this research. This research report focuses on the following key sectors within New Zealand's Food and Fibre industry; however, this is not all of the sectors. The sectors that have been chosen is due to their significant contributions and personal experience:

- Kiwifruit
- Viticulture
- Apples and Pears
- Dairy
- Sheep and Beef
- Arable

Kiwifruit has been chosen as the baseline industry due to my direct experience and access to industry experts. Due to my experience, roles in other industries were compared to the equivalent of a Kiwifruit Orchard Manager role. The research report is confined to roles based on the farm or orchard, excluding packhouse operations, processing, and manufacturing. The research report focuses on individuals aspiring to long-term careers in these sectors.

A larger sample size would have been preferred, and if more time had been available, this would have been optimal. Out of the 40+ individuals approached, only 25 responded. This sample size is not representative of the 350,000 people in the Food and Fibre industry (Food & Fibre Skills Action Plan, 2019). Additionally, the initial bias towards managers and early contributors causes the findings to not fully reflect the industry's diversity. Consequently, the insights drawn from this study may be limited in their generalisability and may not capture the full spectrum of perspectives within the sector. Future research should aim for a more extensive and varied sample to better represent the industry's demographic and occupational diversity.

The shift from a rigid question set to a more conversational approach led to inconsistencies and gaps in the data. This change was necessary to facilitate a better flow of discussion but resulted in some questions not being uniformly addressed. The qualitative nature of the research report relied on the

subjective experiences of interviewees, and variations in note-taking quality affected data accuracy. Some data had to be recalled from memory, which may have impacted its reliability.

Concerns about the sensitivity of shared information led some participants to agree to participate only under conditions of anonymity and some to be rather reserved in their sharing, complicating data collection and analysis. Additionally, the location of the Apple and Pear industry in Hawke's Bay and the viticulture sector in the South Island meant that interviews were conducted over the phone or via Microsoft Forms, potentially affecting the depth of interactions compared to face-to-face interviews.

5.   Literature Review

5.1 Introduction

The literature review utilised multiple sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, books, industry reports, and reputable websites, to provide insight and identify themes relating to role-value, KPIs, and individuals' influence on business success. These 12 prominent theories were critically analysed, summarised, and organised into themes. Theories include Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Expectancy Theories, Social Identity Theory, Equity Theory, Human Capital Theory, Role Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Gender Role Theory, Self-Determination Theory, Transparency Theory, and Communication Theory. Each of these theories contributes insights into the relationship involving intrinsic and extrinsic components that influence role-value. By critically examining, comparing, contrasting, and evaluating these theories, this literature review aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the philosophies behind businesses within the working environment.

5.2 Role-value

Role-value encompasses the perceived and the actual contributions made by an individual in a business or company (Becker, 1964). Role-value also incorporates an aspect of personal identity associated with the role, where individuals may become deeply entrenched in their roles. Role-value encompasses various elements, including KPIs, salary benchmarking, and business outcomes. Understanding role value is essential for professionals across all industries, providing insights into a particular role within a business or organisation. In TF&FS, where complex dynamics and unique challenges exist, understanding role-value is crucial for driving success (Becker, 1964).

5.3 Needs Theories:

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs discovered in 1943, offers a hierarchical structure of human needs. According to Maslow, to create business motivation individuals require specific needs to be fulfilled.

These needs are arranged in a pyramid with five levels. Rudimentary physiological requirements such as shelter, food, and water are at the base of the pyramid, overlain by security and comfort, then needs such as belonging and love. Esteem needs are the second highest, capped by self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943).

While Maslow's theory offers valuable insights into human motivation and behaviour, it lacks practical realistic evidence. However, it emphases the motivation behind career choices and progression by understanding the requirement for basic needs to be met first (Herzberg, 1964). This could look like security, stability, and a supportive work environment and shelter. But once these fundamental requirements of food and shelter are satisfied, individuals look to obtain opportunities to fulfil personal growth, self-improvement, and self-actualisation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory separates hygiene factors; these avoid dissatisfaction and motivational factors; these lead to job gratification (Herzberg, 1959). According to Frederick Herzberg in 1959, factors such as working conditions, salary, company values, and colleagues are hygiene needs, while factors like recognition and achievement address motivational needs. Herzberg's theory suggests that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not necessarily cause and effect but rather separate events. This could look like individuals being satisfied with their job if they find the work challenging and meaningful (motivational factors), despite their salary or working conditions not being optimal (hygiene factors).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) founded by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, this theory suggests that there are basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) that when fulfilled leads to greater satisfaction in a task being achieved. SDT focuses on intrinsic motivation (engaging in an activity for the satisfaction and enjoyment of the activity) and the psychological needs such as ownership, empowerment, trust, autonomy, skills, and abilities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). While it fails to investigate the influences of motivation, the SDT does emphasise the association of personal values and career development (Deci & Ryan, 2012). These physiological needs provide a motive that drives human behaviour. This could look like providing empowerment for individuals to make decisions, development of skills, training, and fostering a supportive environment that creates motivation in the workplace (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

All three of the above theories aim to explain human motivation and behaviour by approaching it from different perspectives. Maslow's theory suggests a progression of various needs, Herzberg's theory suggests that motivation and dissatisfaction can exist in isolation. SDT varies from both by highlighting intrinsic motivation and the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in driving behaviour, whereas, Maslow's and Herzberg's theories consist of external influences on motivation. SDT highlights the role of internal psychological needs (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a broad insight into the background

of motivation but has been criticised for its lack of realistic observed evidence and practical application (Hofstede, 1984). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory offers valuable insights into factors influencing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction but risks oversimplifying complex workplace dynamics. SDT is backed by a significant amount of research and delivers a higher level of understanding of intrinsic motivation, making it particularly relevant in existing organisations and businesses (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

A key theme identified in Maslow, Herzberg, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) includes the importance of recognising and validating contributions. This is especially significant when examining the generational influence. Generation Z (Gen Z) (1997 – 2012) has a heightened need for validation compared to the traditional workforce, such as Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964) (Dimock, 2017). This is due to the differing sociocultural and technological influences on these generations; Baby Boomers were not as affected by digital technology and social media, while Gen Z has been immersed in it (Turner, 2015). Gen Z's workplace expectations significantly differ from those of Baby Boomers. They seek clear communication, regular feedback, and meaningful engagement in their roles, viewing their jobs as extensions of their personal identities (Turner, 2015). This strong desire for frequent recognition extends to all areas of life, not just in the workplace (Twenge, 2020). This contrasts with Baby Boomers, who typically experienced a professional environment that valued long-term career progression with less frequent feedback (Seemiller & Routledge, 2019). Therefore, modern organisations need to adapt their leadership style to meet the multigenerational workforce.

Another key theme in Maslow, Herzberg, and SDT is personal value through intrinsic motivation. This highlights the significance of aligning work tasks with personal values and intrinsic motivators for fostering engagement and satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). By ensuring that the role an individual performs at work resonates with their core beliefs and internal motivation an individual will find the role rewarding, creating increased engagement, satisfaction, and overall well-being (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). By understanding this theory, young professionals can identify career paths within TF&FS that resonate with their values and offer opportunities for growth and development.

The final theme, echoed in all three theories, is the need to fulfil individuals' needs to create business success. This encourages a holistic approach, addressing both basic needs and then higher needs to motivate individuals effectively as well as enhance their well-being. By ensuring that individuals' physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation needs are met, businesses can foster a motivated and productive workforce that creates business success.

5.4 Behaviours Theories:

Expectancy Theory, pioneered by Victor Vroom in 1964, is a prominent motivation theory that suggests individuals are driven by their anticipation of positive outcomes or rewards resulting from their actions and behaviours (Vroom, 1964). Vroom put forward the idea that people assess the chance

of achieving an anticipated outcome and the perceived value of those outcomes before deciding how to act. Vroom's research indicates that individuals are more motivated if they believe the effort they put in will lead to favourable outcomes and rewards. The theory emphasises three key correlations between performance and one, effort two, reward, three, and personal goals (Vroom, 1964).

Social Cognitive Theory, generates by Albert Bandura in the 1970s, highlights the role of observational learning, social interactions, and cognitive processes in shaping behaviour (Bandura, 1977). By observing other behaviours and assessing the outcome of those actions individuals learn what mannerisms are acceptable. Bandura also evaluates self-efficacy (the expectations and capabilities of an individual) which plays a pivotal role in influencing individuals' motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

Goal-Setting Theory, by Edwin Locke and Gary Latham in the 1989 and 1990, suggests higher performance and motivation is achieved through setting challenging and specific goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). Clear and challenging goals provide targets, focus efforts, and increase resilience. Individuals are motivated to achieve these goals, especially when they are accompanied by feedback and support (Lee, Locke & Latham, 1989).

Expectancy Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Goal-Setting Theory each offer a different perspective on motivation in the workplace. While Expectancy Theory emphasises the expectation of rewards as a key motivator (Vroom, 1964), Social Cognitive Theory emphasises the impact of observed social interactions on motivation (Bandura, 1977). While Goal-Setting Theory emphasises effect of setting clear and challenging goals enhancing motivation, performance and role-value in TF&FS (Locke & Latham, 1990).

A significant contrast in the three theories is the drive behind the motivation. Expectancy Theory focuses on motivation from effort, execution, and results, believing this relationship will lead to more desirable motivated outcomes. In contrast, Social Cognitive Theory emphasises observational learning and self-efficacy, suggesting that improving an individual's motivation relies on observing other individuals' behaviours and outcomes. Meanwhile, Goal-Setting Theory highlights the importance of providing motivation through direction and focus on the form of goals (Lee, Locke & Latham, 1989).

Expectancy Theory and Goal-Setting Theory rely on individuals internally generating motivation or intrinsic motivation, this is narrow-minded as it fails to address various circumstances that may hinder motivation. For example, mental health. Furthermore, lack of support, low self-esteem, or experiencing burnout, could be factors that diminish motivation. On the other hand, Social Cognitive Theory relies on social factors for motivation. However, being surrounded by unmotivated individuals may cause a negative influence on motivation levels, potentially leading to negative influence. Therefore, Social Cognitive Theory relies on high-performing environments to foster motivation.

One key theme across all three theories is the insight into the psychological process that can enhance performance and motivation. The psychological process, outlined above, offers practical ideas for business implementation that creates business value in the workplace.

Fostering supportive environments is a theme that is common across these behaviours' theories. Supportive environments are conducive to creating business success, by understanding these theories and implementing strategies such as cultivating a positive culture, providing opportunities for development, mentorship and coaching programmes, encouraging work-life balance, recognising and rewarding achievements, surrounding teams with link-minded high preforming individuals workplaces can create a positive culture, a thriving business, increase retention and engagement of individuals (Schein, 2010).

Expectancy Theory, Goal-Setting Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), all focus on motivation. While Maslow, Herzberg, and SDT focus on intrinsic and extrinsic needs as drivers of motivation, Expectancy Theory, Goal-Setting Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory emphasise the cognitive processes and cultural factors that influence motivation. Despite differences in their approaches, all these theories aim to explain the methods behind human motivation and its impact on individual and business outcomes (Vroom, 1964: Locke & Latham, 1990).

5.5 Identity Theories:

Gender Role Theory, proposed by Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood (2012) suggests that societal gender norms significantly influence behaviours and opportunities within a business. Their work demonstrates how individuals follow traditional gender roles in modern workplaces. The expectations and perceived value of individuals affect their career choices and the opportunities they are given, revealing gender inequalities. Gender Role Theory highlights the societal expectation around traditional masculine and feminine labels, it also looks at how this societal pressure affects opportunities given and biases in the workplace (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Social Identity Theory, established by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), proposes that an affiliation with different groups influences attitudes and behaviours. Social Identity Theory emphasises the importance of retaining a positive social identity within a group context. Individuals define themselves based on their association with social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This association demonstrates value in roles within a business by individuals aligning personal values with business values, for example, increased productivity, loyalty, and commitment, taking on leadership roles, or advocating business success, could become individuals' behaviours (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979.).

While Social Identity Theory emphasises group influence, Gender Role Theory focuses on the effect of gender norms, both theories highlight the significance of how social context influences the identity and behaviour within organisations. The famous quote from Jim Rohn, *"You're the average of the five people you spend the most time with,"* shows the impact of these two theories and how creating a positive environment can foster a productive and successful workplace. While also emphasising the need to understand role-value and career paths.

Although a strong organisational identity can foster a sense of belonging and commitment among individuals, it can also have negative consequences if individuals overly invest their self-worth and identity solely in their job. This can lead to issues such as workaholism, burnout, and emotional distress when faced with setbacks or challenges in the workplace (Avanzi et al., 2012). Additionally, it may hinder individuals' ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance and prioritise other aspects of their life outside of work. Therefore, while fostering a positive business identity it is beneficial to have an identity outside of a professional career. Businesses must promote and encourage a balanced point of view to cultivate fulfilment beyond job roles thus the importance of work-life balance (Avanzi et al., 2012).

Social Identity Theory focuses broadly on group influence, Gender Role Theory specifically examines the impact of gender norms (Turner & Tajfel, 1979; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Gender Role Theory explores how societal expectations and norms regarding gender influence behaviour and identity in the workplace. Both theories underscore the significance of social context in shaping professional identity and behaviour within organisations. However, Social Identity Theory emphasises the broader business association, whereas Gender Role Theory focuses on the specific role and expectations placed on individuals based on their gender. This highlights the need for a nuanced understanding in analysing role-value and career paths, considering both the broad organisational context and the specific societal norms that influence individual behaviour and identity (Turner, 2015).

Gender norms and stereotypes significantly impact careers in traditional industries like TF&FS, where women have historically been underrepresented. Such stereotypes often depict men as more suited to physically demanding or leadership roles, limiting women's opportunities for advancement (Croppenstedt et al., 2013). This can discourage women from entering the field, compounding the issue of a lack of female representation and role models in such industries (Sachs, 1996). Traditional farmers who dominate this sector, may struggle with these changes due to their adherence to traditional gender roles, potentially resulting in unconscious biases in hiring and promotion practices (Turner, 2015). To address these issues, the industry must challenge existing norms by promoting gender diversity and inclusion, raising awareness about unconscious bias, and creating mentorship programs for women. This can help make TF&FS more inclusive and equitable, allowing individuals to succeed based on merit rather than outdated stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Croppendtedt et al., 2013)

5.6 Leadership Theories:

Transformational Leadership Theory, initially introduced by James Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bernard Bass (1985, 1998), examines how leaders can inspire and motivate employees by creating a business goal and environment of mental stimulation and personal growth (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders focus on motivating and inspiring followers by creating a compelling vision, fostering an environment of trust and innovation, and encouraging personal and professional development (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). This theory emphasises long-term change and employee development. This management philosophy motivates and inspires employees to be creative and innovative by providing employees with ownership and authority to make decisions and encourage problem-solving (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Role Theory, derived from Robert Merton (1957), explores how individuals fulfil the expectations of their roles within organisations, providing a framework for understanding how role expectations contribute to the perceived value of a position. Role Theory examines the dynamics between individual behaviour and the social roles they occupy, highlighting how organisational roles influence behaviour, identity, and performance. Benefits of roles include connection to others, access to resources, security, status enhancement, and ego gratification. Role theory is valuable for understanding how clearly defined roles and expectations can enhance performance and satisfaction, though it may overlook the fluidity and evolving nature of roles in modern organisations, where juggling multiple roles and changing roles commonly occur (Merton, 1957).

Transformational Leadership uses a shared vision to motivate and inspire employees, while Role Theory concentrates on how individuals meet role expectations within a business context. Both theories address motivation but from different angles. Transformational Leadership emphasises inspirational motivation and personal growth, whereas Role Theory focuses on role clarity and expectations as motivational factors (House & Aditya, 1997). Transformational Leadership prioritises long-term change, employee engagement, and personal development through inspirational leadership, which can be demanding for leaders to sustain as it requires leaders to maintain elevated levels of charisma and motivation (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Role Theory emphasises the importance of clearly defined roles and expectations in shaping behaviour and performance, offering a more structural approach to understanding organisational dynamics. Transformational Leadership is effective for driving long-term organisational change and high levels of employee engagement but may be challenging to maintain due to the high demands on leaders (Bass et al., 1987). Role Theory provides a solid framework for understanding the impact of role clarity and expectations on performance and satisfaction but may not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of roles in contemporary organisations (Northouse, 2021). Transformational Leadership is associated with fostering long-term change and innovation, while Role Theory is linked with providing structural stability through well-defined roles and expectations

(Merton, 1957). This theme highlights the balance between dynamic leadership and stable organisational structures in achieving organisational goals. Both theories contribute to understanding how leadership and role clarity influence employee development and satisfaction. Transformational Leadership promotes personal and professional growth through inspirational leadership, while Role Theory emphasises the importance of role clarity in achieving job satisfaction (Bass, 1985).

Integrating these theories provides a comprehensive understanding of how leadership styles and organisational roles interact to influence individual behaviour and organisational performance. The above themes highlight the interplay between leadership, role expectations, and organisational outcomes.

By integrating these theories within TF&FS, individuals and businesses can develop effective leadership plans that increase motivation, role clarity, and overall performance. Understanding and applying these leadership and organisational theories provides a robust foundation for fostering effective leadership practices and organisational development (Hogan et al., 2018).

5.7 Economic Theory:

Human Capital Theory was developed by Theodore Schultz (1961), which then Gary Becker (1964) expanded upon, emphasising behaviour and the role of education, training, and development (Becker, 1964). Later Jacob Mincer made an important addition to the theory looking at the relationship between various socioeconomic influences and remuneration (Mincer, 1974). Together, Schultz, Becker, and Mincer are among the key figures associated with the development and advancement of Human Capital Theory, which is the foundation for education policy, economic development, and labour economics (Mincer, 1974). Together, Schultz, Becker, and Mincer are among the key figures associated with the development and advancement of Human Capital Theory, which is the foundation for education policy, economic development, and labour economics.

Schultz was an agricultural economist. Schultz's theory emphasises the three main components. First, countries missing human capital will struggle with physical capital. This can be seen by individuals having the top of the line machinery but lacking the education on how to operate it, without a skilled workforce, output and productivity will be underutilised. Secondly, Schultz highlights the relationship between physical capital and human capital, stating that they are not mutually exclusive. He emphasises the need for them to both increase simultaneously to create economic growth as they are complementary. Thirdly, investing in human capital has the greatest influence on economic growth. Businesses may have financial capital and lots of resources but can be restricted if the workforce lacks education and health. Schultz's theory is mathematically and analytically tested, creating a theory basis for others to build upon (Schultz, 1961).

Becker's human capital theory believes individuals' skills, knowledge, and health are forms of capital that enhance productivity and economic value. The Human Capital Theory states that individuals and organisations invest in education, training, and development to improve the capabilities and skills of employees for business success. This investment is seen as crucial for improving productivity and achieving economic growth. By individuals increasing productivity through higher education and training leads to higher earnings and greater economic growth. The theory also suggests that higher earnings for individuals can increase profitability for businesses (Becker, 1964). Mincer's research focused on the influential model of wage determination based on education and work experience. Mincer's development of economic metrics to estimate the returns is highly regarded as he analysed a large data set of influences that contribute to business outcomes. This large data set included occupation, gender and race, geographic location, job tenure, skills and abilities, labour market, family background and socioeconomic status, as well as similar industry roles, individuals' earnings, and labour market outcomes, providing a robust framework (Mincer, 1974).

Human Capital Theory guided by Becker (1964) emphasises the importance of skills, knowledge, and experience in influencing business economic productivity. His Human Capital Theory focuses on the individual and business level, examining how investments in people lead to economic returns. However, he has been criticised for oversimplifying the relationship between education and productivity, not accounting for the quality of education and the varying returns on investment across different contexts. Mincer (1974) and Schultz (1961), on the other hand, provide a broader perspective on how these investments impact the economy, including labour markets and wage structures. However, they can sometimes be too broad, making it difficult to apply their insights to specific industries or applied to specific business strategies (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974; Schultz, 1961).

Human Capital Theory remains highly relevant in today's economy, particularly within the context of TF&FS. An educated and well-trained workforce is vital for economic growth and competitiveness, especially for sectors like TF&FS that rely heavily on innovation and efficiency. By investing in human capital New Zealand can continue its competitive role in the global market (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974; Schultz 1961). Human Capital theory also provides crucial insights into labour market dynamics, including wage determination and employment trends (Schultz, 1961). Understanding these allows for informed decisions about workforce planning and development (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974, Schultz 1961). Human Capital Theory also focuses on measuring the returns from investments in education and training, considering both direct and indirect economic benefits (Becker, 1964). These insights have significant implications for policymaking, particularly in education, workforce development, and economic planning, where effective policies can enhance human capital and increase economic growth. Effective policies that address labour market conditions can help mitigate issues such as skill shortages and wage inequalities (Mincer, 1974; Schultz, 1961).

5.8 Interpersonal Interaction Theories:

Communication Theory, suggested by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1948), provides an understanding of how messages are transmitted and received. The theory identifies these key elements: sender, receiver, channel, message, and noise, within the communication system as a way of efficient and effective communication by being precise and optimising communication.

Transparency Theory, introduced by Rawlins (2008), highlights the significance of openness, honesty, and clarity in communication. It advocates for organisations to disclose information, address concerns, and engage in open dialogue to promote transparency and credibility.

While Transparency Theory focuses on the ethical and relational aspects of communication, emphasising the importance of trust and accountability, Communication Theory offers a technical framework for understanding message transmission within a communication system. It identifies elements such as sender, receiver, channel, message, and noise, aiming to optimise communication efficiency. Despite their shared goal of effective communication, the two theories diverge in scope and emphasis. Transparency Theory prioritises ethical principles to build trust and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders. While Communication Theory focuses on the technicality of communication. Transparency Theory is fundamental for the existence of TF&FS as operational transparency and communication fosters environments of trust in individuals and investors. If individuals are aware of strategic goals this creates purpose, greater engagement and motivation. Transparency Theory encourages feedback, this leads to high performance, business advances, increased workplace satisfaction, and a culture and environment of continuous improvement.

6. Analysis and Result

The following analysis and results, gathered from job descriptions, KPIs and insightful semi-structured interviews conducted within New Zealand's Food and Fibre Sector, delved into the intricacies, perception and experiences of role-value across: Kiwifruit, Viticulture, Apples and Pears, Dairy, Sheep and Beef, and Arable industries.

6.1 KPI and Job Description Key Themes

Participants were asked to provide orchard manager/farm manager equivalent KPIs and job descriptions. These have been analysed and arranged into key themes based on various Food & Fibre Sectors orchard manager counterparts. These themes include production and yield, operation efficiency, financial reporting, quality and safety standards, team leadership, sustainability and environments, communication and investor management, innovation and adaptability.

Production and Yield was one key theme that emerged during the thematic analysis was the KPI. This was strongly present across all sectors within TF&FS. For example, kiwifruit managers focused on crop yield per hectare and fruit quality metrics, while farm managers emphasised crop yield per hectare and crop health indicators. In the dairy industry, the focus was on milk solid yield per cow. Production and yield crucial in TF&FS as it directly impacts performance, is measurable and somewhat (excluding weather and seasonality) within the control of the manager.

Operational Efficiency was another significant theme identified. In the kiwifruit sector, this involved the timeliness and effectiveness of seasonal activities, resource allocation, and machinery operations. On Sheep and Beef farms this is highlighted labour efficiency, machinery utilisation, and the timing of field operations. Operational efficiency is vital for maintaining productivity, minimising costs, and increasing returns across TF&FSs.

Financial Performance was a prominent theme across all industries. Vineyard managers were concerned with the profitability of orchards, adherence to operational budgets, and expenditure management. Arable managers measured financial performance through the cost of production per hectare, profit margin per hectare, and input costs. Dairy farm management emphasised milk sales in terms of price per litre, animal health costs, and overall profitability.

Quality and Safety Standards were highlighted as critical KPIs in TF&FS. In Apple and Pears this included compliance with food safety standards, Global Good Agriculture Practices (Global GAP) requirements, and traceability systems. This was very similar for Viticulture and Kiwifruit. Most industries stressed the importance of pest and disease control and soil health indicators as well as a strong focus on health and safety.

Team and Leadership emerged as an essential theme for achieving KPIs. Arable managers emphasised team motivation, development, leadership effectiveness, and training programmes. Others mentioned labour efficiency, team productivity, leading by example and culture. The emphasis on labour cost per hectare and the training and development of staff was evident across all industries. Strong leadership and effective team management are crucial for operational success and employee satisfaction.

Environmental and Sustainability practices were identified as key themes. Most focused on sustainable practices, biosecurity risk management, soil health indicators and environmental impact highlighting water usage efficiency. Dairy farm management tracked environmental impact, including greenhouse gas emissions and nutrient inputs as well as waste management, whereas other industries were starting to gain traction in the recording and tracking of this. Implementing sustainable practices is essential for long-term industry viability and kaitiakitanga.

Communication and Investor Management were recurring themes. Prioritising operational updates, investor communication, relationship management, communication of field operations and investor

engagement were required. Strong communication practices ensure transparency, build trust, and facilitate smooth operations across all sectors. This also helps to educate and take investors along on the journey.

Innovation and Adaptability were key themes identified in the analysis. By upskilling in new practices and attending industry events, adopting new techniques, responding to environmental changes or adapting to market demands, managers were required to show adaptability and resilience. Both innovation and adaptability allow businesses to stay competitive and relevant to industry changes.

These themes highlight the multifaceted nature of KPIs across the TF&FS and underscore the importance of a holistic approach to management and performance evaluation.

6.2 Interview Thematic Analysis

Participants were asked to consider various approaches to understanding role-value, and share their thoughts on what constitutes role-value within an organisation? Questions on KPIs and salary information has been recorded in groups, themes, graphs, and tables to ensure anonymity remains with some of this information being intellectual property (IP) that belongs to the business.

The pie chart below presents a breakdown of interviewees participants in this research report. Among them, 20% held director or executive positions, 32% were managers overseeing five or more direct reports, 40% were early career contributors, and 8% represented Human Resources professionals.

Interviewed Participants Current Role

- Directors and Executives
- Managers with 5+ Direct Reports
- Human Resources Professionals
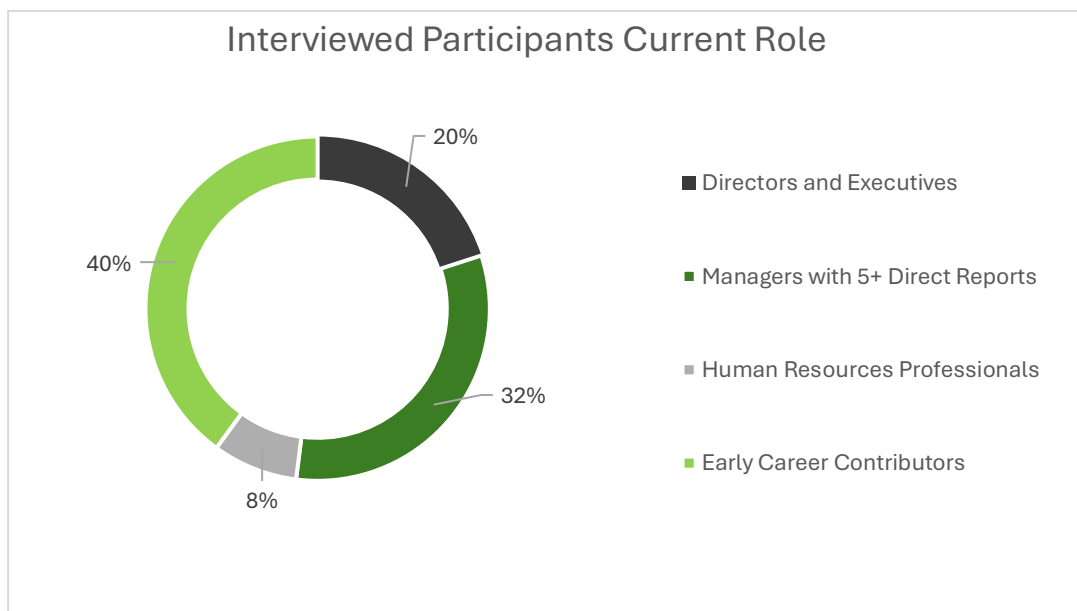- Early Career Contributors

20%
40%
32%
8%

Figure 1: Pie Chart created by Microsoft SmartArt shows The Food and Fibre Interviewed Participants by Current Job Role.

This diverse mix of roles and levels provides a balanced representation of both leadership experience, management perspectives and receivers of those within TF&FS. Initially 40 individuals were contacted regarding this research report, only 25 individuals responded. However, from a statistical standpoint, this sample size still offers a substantial and varied overview allowing for themes and conclusions to be drawn upon. Dr. Huwari states there becomes a point of saturation between 20-25 participants (Bhandari & Huwari, 2013).

6.3 Role-value

From the diverse responses four key themes emerged: assessing annual contribution, performing/seeing tangible outcomes, achieving KPIs, and upskilling to provide value. The early career contributors particularly emphasised the importance of annual assessment coupled with very regular informal check in.
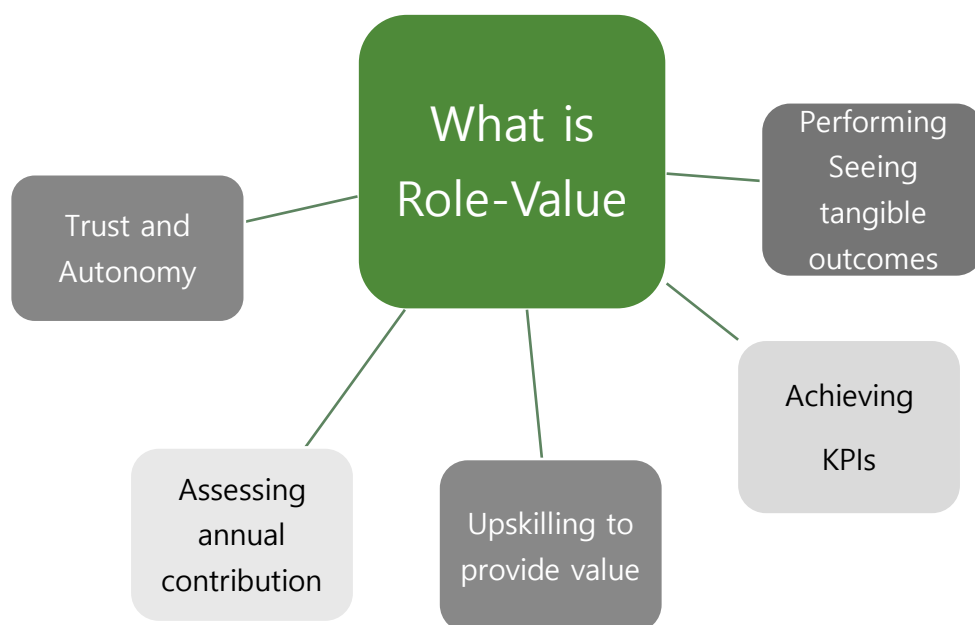
Figure 2: Relationship Graphic created by Microsoft SmartArt Displaying Role Value Definitions from Participants Interviewed.

There was considerable discussion about role-value being maximised when trust is involved. Two interviewees noted they perceived to add the most value *"when there is a high level of autonomy"*. Managers with five or more direct reports focused on their team members, expressing a desire for them to achieve their KPIs and pursue further education or upskilling to enhance business value. Directors and executives were focused on seeing tangible outcomes, with a significant emphasis on economic returns. One interviewee commented that they only see value in their employees when they see "*results for our customers... a return on my investment*".

6.4 Perceived Influence

Figure 3: Mind Map from Miro Showing Perceived Influence on Business Success, Direction and Culture into Key Responses from Participants Interviewed.

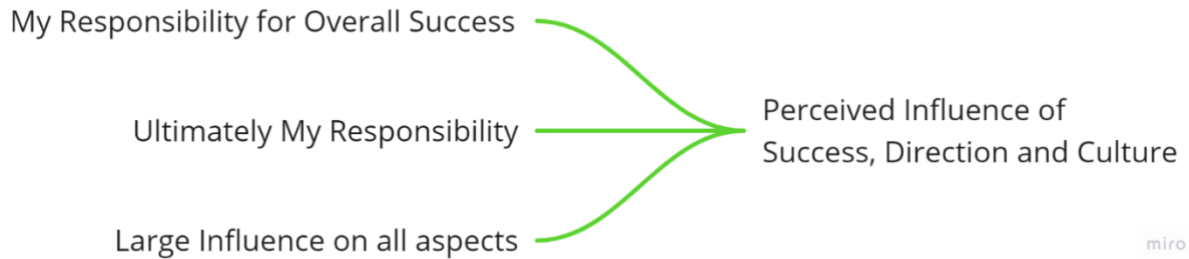One strong reoccurring theme emerged from the topic of perceived influence was the desire to evolve and grow the business, with all participants believing they have a significant influence.

Participants were asked how they perceived their influence on the business strategic direction, culture, and overall success. All 25 participants believed that they were responsible for and had an influence on at least two of the three aspects (strategic direction, culture and overall success).

Managers believed that their influence was crucial as they had to "*implement what the exec's* (executives) *decided is the business strategic direction".* The Sheep and Beef sector, across all roles, focused heavily on improving efficiency and were clear on the businesses strategic direction, whereas the kiwifruit industry focused on the future considering several seasons ahead. Executives often mentioned the importance of creating a productive and positive environment and their influence on company culture.

6.5 Contribution and Strategic Goals

Building on the question of perceived influence, participants were asked how they ensure alignment with the strategic goals and values of the business in their current roles. The responses varied, with only one prominent theme emerging: the focus on delivering high-quality work on time.

One early career contributor discussed the challenge of contributing to their best ability, stating, *"As the youngest person on the team, I can outperform someone who has been there a while, but ultimately, I get called out in the monthly updates in a negative light… but outperforming aligns with the strategic goals."* This highlights the difficulty some early career professionals face in aligning their performance with strategic goals, especially when hierarchical structures and traditional progression paths are emphasised over performance recognition. Such environments can lead to senior employees feeling threatened by young talent, which fosters a counterproductive mindset and hinders business success.

Many early career contributors expressed uncertainty about the business's strategic goals, indicating a need better communication within the business.

Managers and executives, similar to their responses on influence, often saw their role as implementing the strategic goals set by the executive team. One manager noted, *"I just stay in my lane,"* indicating a perceived gap between strategic goal setting and execution.

There was some discussion about the visibility of strategic goals within the business. Some participants mentioned that these goals are discussed in fortnightly meetings with management, while others felt they were not well-communicated.

Several directors and executives focused on how others align with the business's strategic goals rather than their personal alignment. They believed in regularly checking in with their teams, providing briefs on requirements, and prioritising through emails and calls to ensure alignment.

6.6 Skills for Career Progression

Participants were asked, what key skills have they found invaluable in their career that is essential for career progression? The responses highlighted several recurring themes, including communication; education, learning, problem solving, prioritisation, work ethic, loyalty, trustworthiness, and autonomy.
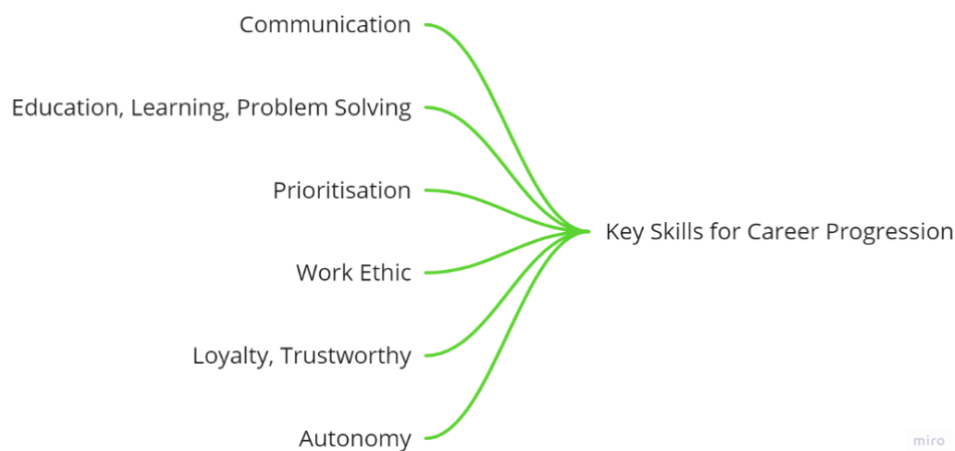
Figure 4: Mind Map from Miro Showing Key Skills for Career Progression Organised into Key Themes from Participants Interviewed.

A key theme for both the early career contributors and the executives/directors was communication, emphasising its critical role, especially when dealing with deadlines and priorities. One early career contributor noted, *"Something might be a priority for them to get done ASAP* (As Soon As Possible) *or have a deadline of 3pm, but who am I to know if they ask me to do it but don't communicate that, my own work is my priority."*

Executives/directors, on the other hand, emphasised the need to clearly communicate priorities and deadlines as well as the use of communication to inspire teams.

Managers focused more on wanting their team to have a strong work ethic and be trustworthy,

allowing them to work autonomously, unless support is required to maximise efficiency. As one manager stated, *"When you move up in management, you have a high level of autonomy, so having a strong work ethic will get you far in life."*

Executives/directors also stressed that continuing to learn and problem solving is an important trait they consider integral for career progression.

6.7 Important Traits for Employment

When participants were asked to identify important traits for evaluating potential employees, the responses were somewhat consistent across the job levels and industries. The most highly valued trait was initiative and drive, which received 50% of the votes. This was followed by communication skills (30%), time management (10%), and critical thinking (10%). Surprisingly, adaptability received no votes (0%).
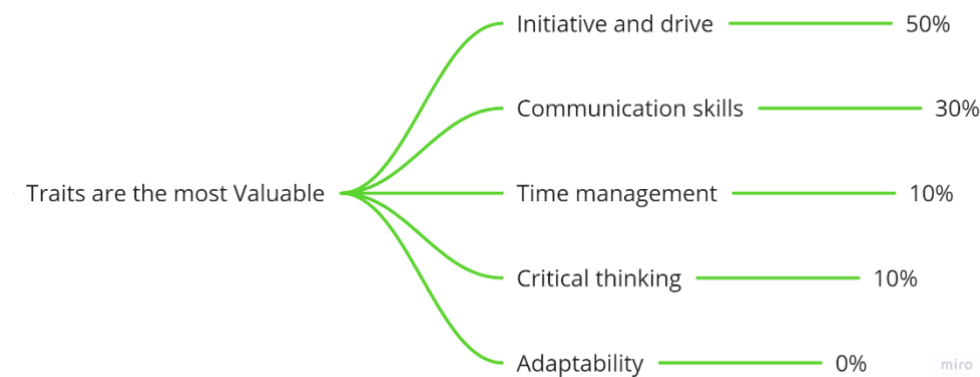
Figure 5:Mind Map from Miro Showing What Traits Participants Interviewed. Believed were the Most Valuable for Business Success.

Early career contributors are establishing their reputation within organisations. One early career contributor mentioned, *"Taking initiative shows my ability to contribute beyond just what's expected, and it helps me stand out"*. The focus on communication skills among the early career contributors stems from their need to effectively convey their ideas.

For managers, communication and initiative are critical because these traits directly impact productivity and accomplishment. One manager commented that good communication *"keeps the team aligned and provides prompts from one manager to another, lifting our overall success"*. Another manager said an *"...employee can take ownership of their tasks, which is crucial for productivity."*

Executives and directors value initiative and drive highly because it directly or indirectly increases profitability and efficiency. One executive said critical thinking is *"...essential for pushing the company forward."* Another emphasised the skill of initiative as they need employees *"...who can think ahead and take action without needing constant direction."*

The lack of attention on adaptability suggests that while flexibility is important, it may be considered a secondary trait compared to the ability to drive results and communicate effectively.

6.8 Progression to Management

In the kiwifruit industry, the progression from a graduate to management roles typically occurs within a relatively short time frame of one to three years for graduates and three to five years for cadets. This indicates a fast-paced environment with opportunities for career growth and advancement, likely due to labour shortages and the need for rapid career progression to fill key management positions.

In contrast, the Apple and Pear, and viticulture industry have slightly longer timelines for career progression. Graduates can expect to transition into management roles within 4 to 6 years, while cadets may take 5 to 7 years to reach management positions. This suggests a more gradual career trajectory with a greater emphasis on gaining experience and expertise. These industries are older than the kiwifruit industry and have more structured and established hierarchies rooted into these progression pathways. Their growth has been relatively controlled compared to the kiwifruit industry (Fresh Facts, 2013).

The Dairy, Sheep and Beef, and Arable industries show a varied range of career progression timelines. Graduates in these sectors typically advance to management roles within 2 to 4 years, indicating relatively faster career growth compared to other industries. Cadets, on the other hand, may take anywhere from 3 to 7 years to reach management positions, reflecting the diverse nature of roles and pathways within these sectors.

Many of the interviewed companies have strict progression criteria, requiring employees to complete a specific number of hours performing certain tasks or to have worked through a set number of seasons before advancing. In contrast, a smaller number of companies base progression on skill level and ability rather than adhering to a predetermined timeframe.

6.9 Traits by Job Level

Early Career Contributors placed significant emphasis on initiative and drive because they are often in the stage of proving their value and establishing their reputation within the organisation. One early career contributor mentioned, *"thinking outside of the box contributes to advancing my career."* The focus on communication skills among this group likely stems from their need to effectively convey their ideas and collaborate with more experienced colleagues. They typically prefer more independent work verses in a group setting, are naturally multitaskers with the ability and expectation to be swapping tasks regularly and Gen Z have a strong desire to work for a company with a relevant Employee Value Proposition (EVP) (Turner, 2015).

For **Managers,** communication and initiative are critical as these traits directly impact team dynamics and execution. Managers need employees who can communicate effectively to ensure team consistency and successful outcomes. One manager commented, *"Good communication is key to avoiding misunderstandings...* (Initiative) *shows that the employee can take ownership of their tasks,*

which is crucial for productivity." Initiative is equally important as it demonstrates an ability for an employee to take ownership of their responsibilities and drive performance without the need for constant oversight. Time management is also critical for managers especially in TF&FS as not achieving timelines directly impacts profitability. One manager highlighted, *"Time management is essential; if certain tasks aren't completed on time and within spec it can mean the difference between a 5K job or a 10k job and that doesn't include the impact on profits, that's just cost."*

Executives and Directors value initiative and drive highly as these traits align with the strategic goals of growth and innovation. As one director put it *"I look for employees who can contribute proactively to the company's success… I want to invest in people who will stick around".* Another executive stated, *"Initiative and drive are essential for pushing the company forward. We need employees who can think ahead and take action."* Additionally, their lesser focus on adaptability could suggest a preference for stability and consistency in skills that directly impact current strategic objectives.

The clear preference for initiative and drive across all job levels indicates a strong organisational culture that values proactive behaviour and self-motivation in TF&FS. Communication is also a critical trait, this was highlighted for those in management and early career stages, as it underpins effective teamwork. Time management emerged as a crucial trait for managers, given their awareness of the ramifications, costs, and implications for plant and animal health in the current and subsequent seasons if timing is off. The significance of timing extends beyond mere costs; it directly influences profitability and operational success. The negligible focus on adaptability suggests that while flexibility is important, it may be considered a secondary trait compared to the ability to drive results and communicate effectively. These insights highlight the importance of aligning recruitment and development programmes with these valued traits to enhance overall organisational performance and employee satisfaction.

6.10 KPI and Performance Reviews

The information below is generalised and clustered to protect business IP. Key ideas have been grouped and themes identified based on KPI data provided by the respective industries. Participants were asked on an annual basis how many discussions they have or do they have with their direct reports. The majority of data was focused on orchard managers or similar roles across the varying industries regarding performance and KPIs.
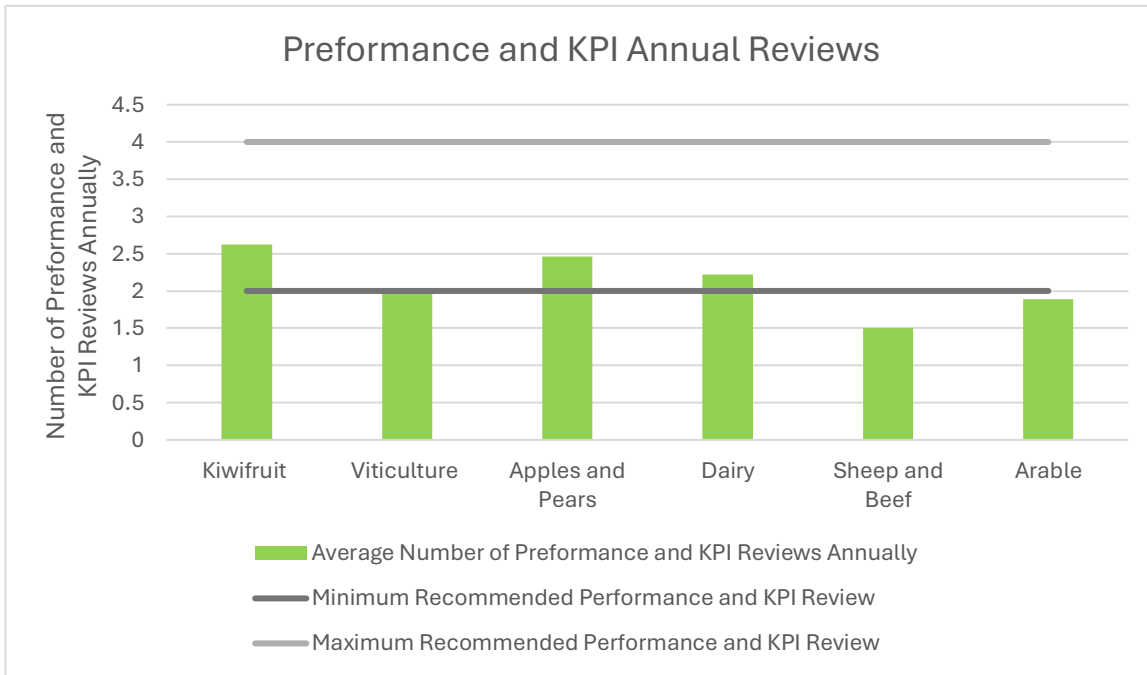
Figure 6: Combination Column and Line Graph created by Microsoft Charts shows the Number of Times Participants Interviewed Received Performance or Key Performance Indicator Reviews Over the Course of a Year.

The data in Figure 6 shows that a significant portion of participants have limited discussions regarding their performance and KPIs throughout the year. Specifically, 75% of interviewees reported having two or fewer discussions annually. Within this group, 39% have only one discussion or less, and 60% have only two discussions per year. This indicates a large gap in communication and feedback within the businesses, contrary to the emphasis that was put on KPI discussion and their importance, the lack of structured feedback is a poor reflection of management (not leadership). It is well documented that "*people don't quit jobs, they quit bad leaders*" and "*people don't leave companies, they leave bosses*." These famous quotes emphasise the importance of effective leadership and meaningful, regular communication to ensure individuals feel supported and recognised, decreasing the chances of them seeking opportunities elsewhere.

6.11 Education, Training, and Progress

Individuals were then asked whether someone at work has offered you an opportunity to learn, complete training or talked to you about your progress in the last 12 - 24 months? These numbers were surprisingly lower than expected, as TF&FS has such a strong focus on vocational training.
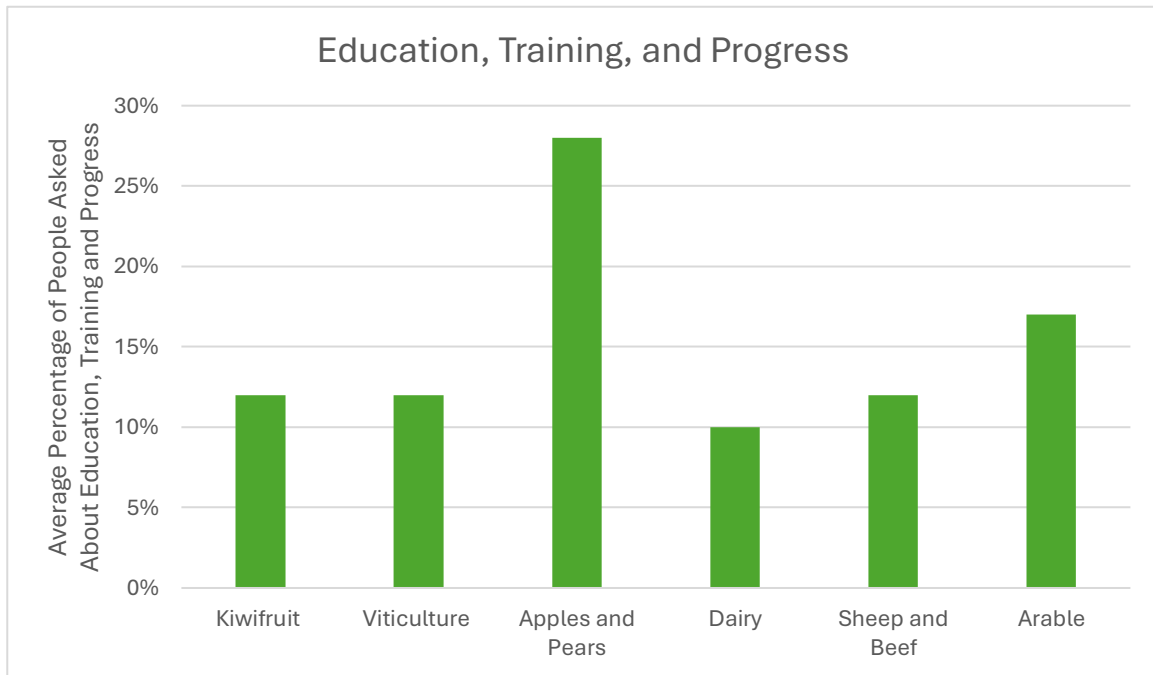
Figure 7: Custom Column Graph created by Microsoft Charts shows the Number of Times Participants Interviewed Were Asked About Training, Education and Progress.

Apples and Pears had the highest engagement in education at 28%, closely followed by Arable at 17%. Kiwifruit, Viticulture, and Sheep and Beef each reported an educational engagement of 12%, while Dairy had the lowest at 10%.

Kiwifruit reported the lowest educational engagement, however, industries investment in training lifted the average. Progress discussions were most prevalent in Sheep and Beef while Dairy reported the lowest. Overall, these relatively low percentages highlight the need for a supportive workplace environment conducive to continuous learning and development.

6.12 Hectare Comparison

This graph illustrates a comparison between the average salary and the average relative hectares equivalent to a Kiwifruit Orchard Manager across different Food and Fibre sectors. The data includes information on salary packages for orchard/farm managers, which often include additional benefits such as utility vehicles, phone plans, and health insurance. To ensure comparability across sectors, a calculation has been applied to equate the hectares in Viticulture, Apples and Pears, Dairy, Sheep and Beef, and Arable farming to the equivalent workload of a kiwifruit orchard manager. This calculation is based on the inputs, staff required, hours worked, and intensity of each sector. For the purpose of this report, 15 Dairy cows are considered equivalent to one hectare, Sheep and Beef farmers with a herd of 200 sheep or beef is equated to one hectare of Kiwifruit. Similarly, 10 hectares of arable cropping are considered equivalent to one hectare of kiwifruit management.

Figure 8: Combination Column and Line Graph created by Microsoft Charts shows the Relationship between Annual Salary ($) and Hectares (Ha) per Industry.

From Figure 8, it is evident that sectors such as Arable, Viticulture, and Sheep and Beef farming exhibit top annual salaries, all exceeding $107,000. Specifically, arable farming has the highest average salary of $109,200 with an average area of 75 hectares. Viticulture has an average salary of $107,800 and 92 hectares. Sheep and Beef farming has an average salary of $107,500 and approximately 80-hectares equivalent per manager. These sectors manage larger areas and subsequently have higher salary levels, suggesting that extensive land management might contribute to the higher remuneration.

On the other hand, Kiwifruit management involves the smallest average hectares per manager of 50 hectares. Despite this, the Kiwifruit sector offers an average of $100,000 and a median salary of $105,000, which is the second-highest median salary, closely following Viticulture at $116,500. This indicates that while Kiwifruit managers oversee smaller areas their salary is competitive due to the intensity and the high-value nature of the kiwifruit industry. Dairy farming shows an average salary of $100,400 with an average of 42.5 hectares. Although the comparative land area and herd size managed is relatively smaller, the provision of accommodation to 87% of Dairy managers significantly enhances their overall compensation package (Federated Farmers, 2024). The Apple and Pear industry offers an average salary of $103,500 with managers overseeing 60 hectares. This sector shows a lower median salary of $93,000, indicating a wider salary range within the industry.
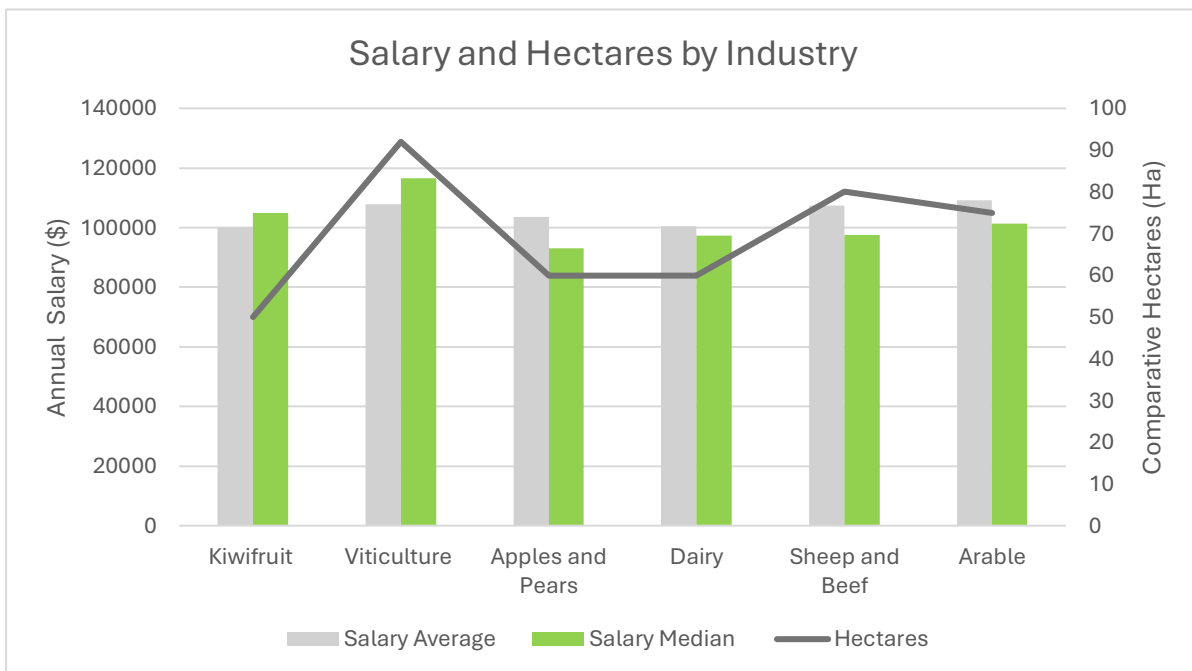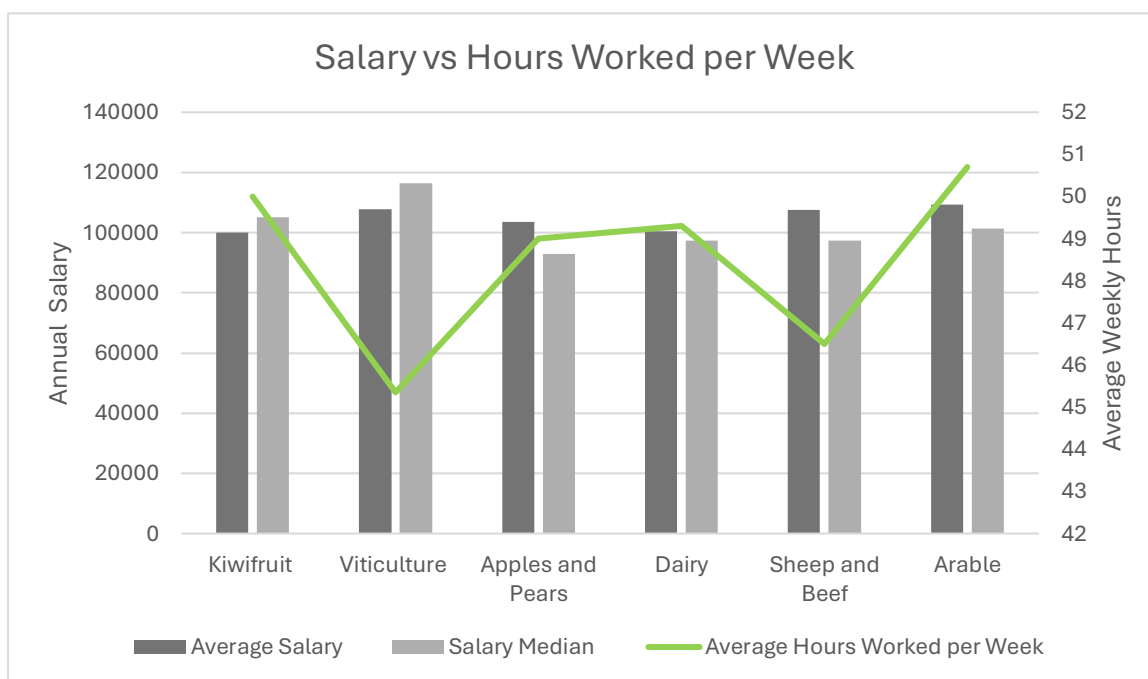

Figure 9: Combination Column and Line Graph created by Microsoft Charts the Relationship Between Annual Salary ($) and Average Weekly Hours Worked (hr), Categorised per Industry

6.13 Hours Worked

In terms of average salary, the data reveals relatively comparable figures across TF&FS as mentioned in Figure 8. This is similar for the average hours worked per week, with a total variance of 5.4 hours per week across the sectors. Arable farming has the highest average worked hours at 50.7 hours per week, followed by Kiwifruit farming at 50 hours per week. Viticulture at 45.35 hours and Sheep and Beef with an average of 46.5 require slightly fewer hours per week. Dairy at 49.3 and Apple and Pears at 49 average hours per week are very similar. This is relatively high compared to the New Zealand working average of 37 hours per week (StatsNZ, 2023).

Specifically, Arable farmers are working 13.7 hours more per week compared to the average New Zealander. With an average of 48 working weeks per year, this translates to arable farm managers

working an extra 14 days (about 3 working weeks) per year, compared to the average working New Zealander. Even in Viticulture, which has the lowest average hours per week among the sectors studied, workers still put in an extra 8.35 hours per week, equating to 9 extra days worked per annum. When interviewees were asked about their hobbies, families and activities outside of work some managers struggled to answer this question. The question was either dismissed and excused due to the "seasonality" of TF&FS. Or when follow up questions were asked "how often these hobbies were practiced" the reality was it was not very frequently and seasonality was once again used as an excuse. The long hours individuals are working seems to have significant implications for work-life balance, and the overall attractiveness of these roles. High workload demands might deter potential candidates or lead to burnout among current employees, impacting retention and recruitment in these industries.

7. Findings and Discussion

This section compares the literature review with the results from the semi-structured interviews and the KPIs, highlighting differences and similarities between theoretical expectations and real-world practices. These key themes include KPIs and their practical application, comparing flexibility and work patterns, traditional managers and workplace culture, training and development, communication and transparency, salary benchmarking, will be explored.

7.1 KPIs and Their Practical Application

The literature emphasises the importance of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as crucial tools for accountability of performance and business success. KPIs are designed to provide clear, measurable strategic goals that align with business metrics, ensuring that all employees are working towards common objectives (Lee, Locke & Latham, 1989). Illustrated in Figure 10, for KPIs to be effective, they must be SMART—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (Figure 10), which helps in setting clear expectations and benchmarks. Regular discussion and review of KPIs are recommended to maintain alignment and adjust strategies as necessary (Becker, 1964). Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory,

Figure 7 From Zhikai Chen 2017 depict the concept of SMART that has many applications. In this instance it is being used for Goals and Creating KPIs. SMART—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlight the significance of recognising contributions and aligning individual roles with organisational goals. These theories suggest that frequent feedback and recognition, which are facilitated through KPI reviews, are essential for employee motivation and satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959; Maslow, 1943; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Contrary to the literature's recommendations, the semi-structured interviews and KPI data reveal that discussions about KPIs occur less than twice a year on average. This infrequency suggests a disconnect between the theoretical ideal of regular KPI reviews and the actual practices within TF&FS. Early career contributors expressed a desire for more frequent feedback and clearer communication regarding their performance metrics, aligning with the literature's emphasis on recognition and feedback (Twenge, 2020). The discrepancy between literature and real-world practices highlights a significant gap in the application of research strategies. While KPIs are established and understood as vital tools, their underutilisation in regular discussions indicates an area for improvement. Businesses may need to implement more structured processes and a greater emphasis on the importance of KPI reviews to align with best practices suggested by these theories. The infrequency of these KPI reviews limits the chance to improve performance and alignment with business strategy creating efficiencies. Enhancing the frequency and quality of KPI discussions could lead to better outcomes in individual and organisational goals, thereby improving overall performance and employee satisfaction (Lee, Locke & Latham, 1989).

7.2 Flexibility versus Work Patterns

Flexibility, autonomy, fast paced, a strong employee value proposition (EVP) and meaningful engagement is what the next generation of Food and Fibre leader's desire in their roles, viewing their jobs as extensions of their personal identities (Turner, 2015). Self-Determination Theory supports these preferences, emphasising the need for independence, capability, and understanding to drive intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Additionally, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggest that fulfilling higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualisation is crucial for this generation (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg et al., 1959).

However, the KPI data and interview responses indicate that employees in TF&FS often work more hours per week than the average New Zealander. This workload contradicts Gen Z's expressed desire for flexibility and work-life balance. Many interviewees highlighted the demanding nature of their roles and the challenges in achieving flexibility due to the nature of the work. The off-peak times were also busy and wellbeing was not prioritised during this period. Is there enough self-respect to create boundaries? Dr. Ashley said *"resilience and respect are gained by setting boundaries and protecting one's time, promoting overall wellness and productivity"* (A. Bloomfield, personal communication,

November 9, 2023). This poses the question, is this a culture that has been created and a narrative we tell ourselves rather than factual?

The contrast between Gen Z's desires and their actual work patterns underscores a contemporary tension in the workplace. While Gen Z employees seek flexibility, the demands of managerial roles in the TF&FS sector often demand longer hours and less flexible schedules. Businesses must recognise and address this discrepancy by exploring ways to offer more flexible work arrangements without compromising productivity. Additionally, understanding the seasonality of the role is essential; in the off-peak season, it is crucial for managers to rest without pressure or a guilty conscience. Solutions could include flexible scheduling, employing more people to share the workload, prioritisation, and a focus on outcome-based performance rather than hours worked. By aligning work practices with the preferences of Gen Z, businesses can attract more labour and increase employee satisfaction and retention.

7.3 Traditional Managers and Workplace Culture

Traditional managerial styles, often characterised by hierarchical structures, can conflict with the preferences of the next generation who value autonomy and collaborative environments. Gender Role Theory and Social Identity Theory highlight the impact of traditional roles and group affiliations on workplace dynamics (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Expectancy Theory and Goal-Setting Theory suggest that clear, challenging goals and a supportive environment are critical for motivation and performance (Vroom, 1964; Locke & Latham, 1990). These theories also acknowledge the importance of aligning management styles with employee expectations to foster engagement and productivity. Interviews with TF&FS employees revealed that traditional managerial approaches are still prevalent, with many managers adhering to older, more rigid structures. This managerial style often leads to conflict and reduced motivation. KPI data further indicates that traditional managers may not prioritise regular feedback and recognition, which are crucial for the next generation (Eagly & Wood, 2012). The persistence of traditional managerial styles in modern workplaces poses a challenge for engaging younger employees. Managers must adapt their approaches to incorporate more collaborative, flexible, and supportive practices (Schein, 2010). This adaptation includes regular feedback, recognition, and the creation of a positive organisational culture (Maslow, 1943).

7.4 Training and Development

Key theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Human Capital Theory provide valuable insights into the critical role of training and development in fostering employee motivation, productivity, and economic growth. SDT underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation and psychological needs, emphasising autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the workplace. Similarly, Human Capital Theory highlights the significance of investing in education and training to enhance

workforce skills and capabilities, ultimately driving improved productivity and economic success. These theories underscore how vital training and development initiatives are for business success.

The emphasis on team motivation, development, and leadership effectiveness highlighted in the KPIs further reinforces the importance of training and development initiatives in fostering a supportive work environment (Schein, 2010). Effective leadership and team management play pivotal roles in highlighting the value of investing in training and development programmes.

Interviewees offer additional perspectives on observed data, revealing a moderately low level of engagement within TF&FS regarding education, training, and progression discussions. Across sectors, varying levels of involvement were reported, with concerns raised about the adequacy of current initiatives. Notably, early career contributors expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunities for education, training, and progress within their sectors, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and relevant training programmes. Addressing these gaps is crucial for meeting the needs of TF&FS.

Despite acknowledging how important training is the data uncovered significant gaps in engagement levels. Only a small percentage of TF&F interviewees reported being asked about education, training, or progression in the last 12 months. One thing that is particularly concerning is the low engagement reported by Kiwifruit interviewees, where only 5% reported being offered educational opportunities, indicating a significant shortfall (Personal Communication, February 9, 2024). Progress discussions also appear to be lacking, with Dairy interviewees reporting similarly low levels of engagement (Federated Farmers & Rabobank, 2024). These findings align with the sentiments expressed by early career contributors, who feel that current programmes do not adequately meet their needs. Addressing these discrepancies and enhancing engagement in training and development initiatives is imperative for ensuring the industry's long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

7.5 Communication and Transparency

The foundation of business success is effective communication. Communication Theory (Shannon & Weaver, 1948) and Transparency Theory (Rawlins, 2008) suggest that open, transparent communication fosters trust and collaboration. This is particularly relevant in the TF&FS sector, where communication is a fundamental KPI across various operational aspects. Prioritising operational updates, investor communication, relationship management, communication of field operations, and investor engagement are recurring themes in TF&FS. Robust communication practices not only ensure transparency and build trust but also facilitate smooth operations by taking investors along on the journey, which most companies saw as a major part of employees' KPIs.

Despite the business emphasis on communication, employees often feel that communication from management is insufficient or lacks transparency (Rawlins, 2008). This issue is especially important

among managers and early career contributors, who express frustration over the lack of clear and timely information. Many employees are unsure of the business's strategic plan and direction, indicating a significant gap in communication between the employee and organisation. While there is a strong expectation for employees to maintain extensive communication, this expectation does not seem to be reciprocated adequately by management. Improving communication and transparency is crucial for building trust and engagement within organisations (Rawlins, 2008). Businesses should implement regular updates, open forums, and feedback mechanisms to ensure that employees are well-informed and feel heard. Transparent communication can mitigate misunderstandings and foster a collaborative environment, ultimately enhancing organisational effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

7.6 Finding Your Purpose

Social Identity Theory and Gender Role Theory involves understanding how societal norms and expectations shape one's professional identity and behaviour, they often overlook the potential risks of individuals overly investing their identity solely in their job roles (Tajfel & Turner, 1979: Eagyl & Wood, 2012). These theories primarily focus on the business benefits of strong organisational identity but fail to adequately address the negative consequences for individuals, including burnout and a lack of work-life balance (Turner, 2015).

Sector KPIs revealed a worrying lack of focus on work-life balance. Interviews highlighted the extent of this issue, with workers averaging nine extra days of work per year compared to the New Zealand average. Interviewees expressed frustration over their inability to pursue hobbies, spend time with family, or engage in activities they love outside of work. Many refer to the "seasonality" of their industry as justification for their long hours and lack of life outside of work.

This workaholic culture within the TF&FS sector is not attractive or conducive to retaining the next generation of workers, particularly Gen Z. Research indicates that these younger generations increasingly value a more holistic approach to employment, one that allows for personal fulfilment alongside professional success (Jensen, 2021). They prioritise work-life balance, flexibility, and opportunities for personal development in their career choices. Considering 47 percent of the Horticulture workforce is aged under 30 years, (Primary Sector Workforce Dataset and Forecasting Working Group, 2019–2022) there is a critical need to focus on retaining these individuals as they represent the future of TF&FS. Businesses within the TF&FS sector that fail to adapt to these shifting priorities risk losing top talent, facing challenges in recruiting, and retaining skilled workers.

7.7 Salary Benchmarking

Salary benchmarking is the process of comparing remuneration levels for specific roles against those of similar roles in other companies or industries. This practice helps organisations maintain competitive

and equitable salary structures, are fundamental for attracting and retaining talent within TF&FS employees (Swift, 1970).

Regular benchmarking within and against other companies ensures businesses remain competitive in the labour market. Below is the salary data collected from interviews, personal communication and industry reports. These reveal variations across sectors with the lower and upper averages being shown from data collected in the KPI data shown in Figure 8:

- Kiwifruit Orchard Managers: $80,000 to $120,000 annually, depending on experience and scale of operations.
- Viticulture Managers: $98,000 to $135,000 annually, influenced by region, varieties, hectares, tones of grapes, and production quality.
- Apple and Pear Manager: $82,000 to $150,000 annually, driven by hectares managed and number of varieties and complexity.
- Dairy Managers: $93,000 to $145,000 annually, linked to herd size and farm profitability.
- Sheep and Beef Managers: $97,000 to $129,000 annually, with variations based on operation size and location.
- Arable: $90,000 to $140,000 annually, depending on crop type and respective hectares.

There is a clear need for standardised salary benchmarks across TF&FS to ensure competitiveness and fairness. Regularly reviewing and updating compensation packages based on market trends and industry standards can help attract and retain skilled professionals, enhancing the overall talent pool in TF&FS.

7.8 Career Desirability and Development

The desirability and development of a career is influenced by growth opportunities, job satisfaction, work-life balance and salary. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory focus on the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in enhancing job desirability (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg et al., 1959).

While intrinsic factors like personal growth and fulfilment play a crucial role, extrinsic factors such as salary and benefits also contribute significantly to overall job desirability. Career development is vital for employee engagement and retention. Transformational Leadership Theory emphasise the importance of continuous learning and growth opportunities (Bass, 1985). Effective career development programs include training, mentorship, and clear advancement pathways. By investing in robust career development frameworks, businesses not only cultivate a skilled and motivated workforce but also foster a culture of loyalty and commitment among employees.

Based on the interviews conducted within TF&FS, it is evident that the industry appeals to individuals seeking fulfilling career opportunities. Participants expressed deep passion for their work, demonstrating a strong sense of ownership, accountability, and responsibility. Despite the demanding nature of the roles, such as long hours and large workloads, the average salary is higher than the New Zealand average (StatsNZ, 2023), assuming this compensates for the efforts exerted. However, there are disparities within the sector that require alignment. Less than half of the interviewees reported having time for formal KPI progression or educational discussions, yet well over two-thirds had received some form of external training from their companies while being employed. To enhance career development opportunities further, business should invest in more staff to reduce workloads and increase work-life balance and create clear career pathways specific to the needs of employees. This approach can improve job satisfaction and retention while encouraging continuous learning and providing opportunities for professional growth.

The findings and discussion compare the literature review with real-world practices, highlighting key themes such as KPIs, work patterns, managerial styles, training, communication, work-life balance, salary benchmarking, and career development. The interviews highlight discrepancies between theoretical ideals and actual practices, such as infrequent KPI reviews and a lack of flexibility, impacting employee motivation and satisfaction (Twenge, 2020). Traditional managerial styles and inadequate training opportunities further exacerbate these issues. Therefore, prioritising KPI and performance review frequency employing more people to offering flexible work arrangements, adapting management styles, improving training programs, enhancing communication and transparency, and standardising salary benchmarks to attract and retain talent (Turner, 2015).

8. Conclusions

The findings and discussion sections reveal several key insights into the discrepancies between theoretical expectations and real-world practices within the TF&FS sector. These conclusions address the core issues identified and provide a foundation for the recommendations.

While literature emphasises the importance of regular KPI reviews for aligning individual and organisational goals, the practice within TF&FS shows significant gaps. Infrequent KPI discussions limit opportunities for performance improvement and strategic alignment with the company. Increasing the frequency and quality of KPI reviews is essential for enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, and overall organisational performance.

There is a clear mismatch between the desire for flexibility and the demanding work patterns in the TF&FS sector. The demanding nature of the industry, characterised by long hours, is partly due to its seasonality. Additionally, a self-imposed workaholic culture is deeply ingrained in the identity of TF&FS.

Employees value work-life balance and autonomy, yet the industry's workload often contradicts these preferences. Addressing this discrepancy by promoting a more balanced approach through implementing trust in flexibility during off season periods and prioritising work-life balance is crucial for attracting and retaining the next generation of leaders. Businesses must focus on creating an environment where employees can pursue personal interests and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The persistence of traditional, hierarchical managerial styles conflicts with the performance of employees as they value autonomy and collaboration. Adapting management approaches to incorporate more supportive and flexible practices will foster a more engaging and productive work environment. This includes regular feedback, recognition, and a positive organisational culture.

Despite the recognised importance of training and development for employee motivation and productivity, there are significant gaps in engagement and opportunities within TF&FS. Encouraging individuals to join training programmes and ensuring regular discussions about education and career progression will address these gaps, contributing to the industry's sustainability and competitiveness.

Effective communication is foundational for business success, yet there are notable deficiencies in high level communication within TF&FS. Improving transparency and ensuring regular, clear communication from management to employees will build trust, enhance collaboration, and align organisational objectives with employee expectations.

Salary benchmarking is critical for maintaining competitive and equitable compensation structures. Regularly reviewing and updating salary benchmarks based on industry standards will help attract and retain skilled professionals, enhancing the overall talent pool within TF&FS.

While TF&FS offers fulfilling career opportunities, there are disparities in career development and formal KPI progression discussions. Investing in robust career development frameworks, including training, mentorship, and clear advancement pathways, will improve job satisfaction, retention, and employee engagement.

These conclusions underscore the need for strategic changes within TF&FS to bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and actual practices. By addressing these key areas, the sector can enhance employee satisfaction, retention, and overall organisational effectiveness, ensuring a sustainable and competitive future.

9. Recommendations and Actions

To ensure New Zealand continues to lead in high-value exports, it is imperative for businesses in the Food and Fibre Sector (TF&FS) to implement the following recommendations. These actions are essential to address current challenges which impact TF&FS's ability to maintain its competitive edge. Simultaneously, for young professionals embarking on their careers in TF&FS, these recommendations serve as a vital blueprint. They provide guidance on navigating the sector's dynamic landscape, fostering professional growth, and contributing effectively to business success. By adhering to these recommendations, both TF&FS businesses and the future leaders of the industry can thrive amidst industry changes, ensuring sustainable growth and excellence for New Zealand's export economy.

Business Recommendations

1. **Enhance Organisational Practices**
   - Schedule monthly KPI review meetings to ensure continuous alignment of individual and business goals. Use these sessions for feedback, recognition, and setting SMART objectives.
   - Introduce flexible working hours, especially during off-peak seasons, to help employees balance work demands with personal time. Encourage the use of leave and establish clear boundaries to protect employees' personal time.

2. **Adapt Management Styles**
   - Hire people focused of economic growth, and business success as this goes hand and hand with good people management. Management must be focused on fostering an environment of like-minded people-focused teams to drive economic success.
   - Provide training for managers to adopt supportive, flexible, and collaborative management styles. Focus on encourage regular feedback, communication, and recognition.

3. **Enhance Training and Development Opportunities**
   - Tap into the large amount of education and training available for primary industries. Offer personal development programmes such as Horticulture New Zealand's Leadership Programme, Kellogg, Nuffield and many more. Ensure these programmes are accessible to all employees.
   - Establish clear career pathways and progression plans. Regularly discuss these with employees to align their personal growth with business goals.

4. **Improve Communication and Transparency**
   - Get buy-in from employees on the strategic plan for the company. Implement regular updates through meetings and newsletters to keep employees informed about progress and changes. Promote open forums for employees to voice concerns and suggestions.

5. **Standardise Salary Benchmarking**

- Perform annual salary benchmarking against industry standards to ensure competitive and fair compensation. Adjust salaries based on these findings to attract and retain talent. Ensure transparency in compensation policies.

Early Career Contributors Recommendations

1. **Schedule Regular One-on-One Meetings**
   Regular one-on-one meetings between employees and managers are vital for aiding communication, professional growth, and alignment with company strategic goals. By following these guidelines, employees can make their one-on-one meetings more productive, focused, and foster better collaboration with their managers (Jeff Su, 2021).

   - **Set up one-on-one sessions**. Every one to two weeks have a meeting with your manager, assigning 30 to 60 minutes for discussion.
   - **Prepare an Agenda.** Ensure the agenda covers both operational updates and discussions on professional development.
   - **Start Positively.** Kick off the meeting by sharing recent successes or achievements, setting a positive tone for the discussion (a minimum of 15 minute for each).
   - **Keep Detailed Notes.** Take thorough notes during the meeting, adding them to the calendar invite for easy reference. At the end of the meeting, review these notes and establish SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound (Figure 10)) actions for follow-up (See Case Study in Appendix 1).
   - **Discuss Challenges.** Address challenges or roadblocks faced, and come with pre-prepared brainstorm potential solutions collaboratively with your manager.

2. **Establish Clear Communication and Feedback**
   Understanding one's communication style for feedback is essential. Employees should identify their preferred feedback delivery method whether direct and candid or detailed explanations and communicate this preference to their managers. Establishing clear communication channels, including regular progress updates and changes, promotes transparency and facilitates effective feedback exchange.

3. **Review KPI Regularly**
   Employees should regularly review and discuss their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), ideally once a month during one-on-one meetings (Su, 2021). If the manager does not initiate these discussions, employees should take the lead. By reviewing KPIs and identifying potential roadblocks, employees can proactively drive their performance and ensure alignment with company strategic goals.

4. **Document Achievements**

   Tracking accomplishments can provide noticeable evidence of your contributions in preparing for a KPI discussion or a performance review (Appendix 1). Keeping a record regularly of successes aids in creating justification to management of your value and contribution to business success, it also gives you an array of achievements to choose from when discussing performance. This process can be as simple as maintaining a spreadsheet see case study in Appendix 1.

5. **Engage a Mentorship**

   Finding a mentor outside of the immediate business can provide valuable support and alternative perspectives. While ideally not a conflict of interest, a mentor with experience in the food and fibre sector can offer relevant insights into the industry's demands and seasonal implications, aiding in professional growth and development.

6. **Prioritise Wellbeing**

   Employees should prioritise their wellbeing and work-life balance, setting boundaries and fostering a positive work environment. Committing to things outside of work will aid in prioritising work-life balance and imposing external obligations on work. Following Sir. Dr. Ashley Bloomfield's advice, "*resilience and respect are gained by setting boundaries and protecting one's time, promoting overall wellness and productivity*" (A. Bloomfield, personal communication, November 9, 2023).

7. **Write Your Purpose Statement**

   Write a purpose statement. A purpose statement clearly defines your essential values, goals, interests, and passions, in life it serves as a guide for your actions and maintain your drive. Avoid comparing oneself to others and block out distractions to focus on finding personal purpose and fulfilment these are essential for growth and development.

8. **Pursue Continuous Leadership Development**

   Leadership skills are cultivated through self-awareness and continuous learning. Do not fear failure but rather view it as a chance to learn and grow. Embracing failure as a learning opportunity. Being accountable for one's actions and decisions is key to fostering leadership capabilities.

By implementing these recommendations, early career contributors can enhance their professional development, foster effective communication with their managers, and achieve greater success in their careers within The Food and Fibre sector.

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Appendix 1: Case Study

Performance reviews are pivotal to employee development and organisational success. They provide structured opportunities for evaluating performance, setting goals, feedback, and identifying areas for improvement. Despite their importance, performance reviews often face challenges, the biggest usually being prioritisation. This case study aims to identify ways to improve the performance review process by trialling two different approaches to performance reviews:

1. Incorporating feedback from direct reports, alongside traditional managerial assessments.
2. Track all positive contributions.

The trial aims to enhance the performance review process by using myself as a case study. For the purpose of this study the business unit leader will be unaware of the two approaches avoid bias, performance reviews will be conducted quarterly reviews to the absence of time and requirement for two different approaches.

Usually, the business unit leader and myself meet biannually to discuss my performance, achievements, and areas for improvement. However, I struggle with documenting my accomplishments, believing that my work should speak for itself. Conversely, the business unit leader has expressed the need for me to be more vocal about my successes to the wider company. I believe understanding my value and input can be achieved in other ways than rigorously documenting my contribution and that time can be spent on adding value to the business.

Quick Review of Literature and Current Information

Performance reviews are a critical component of organisational success. They offer a structured opportunity to evaluate performance, agree on goals, and receive feedback (Aguinis, et al., 2013). Regular performance reviews foster continuous improvement and align individual performance with organisational objectives. According to Matt Nevins (2024) in Forbes, *"good organizations and relationships depend on dialogue, and feedback is at the heart of all productive dialogue."* This highlights the importance of performance reviews as a platform for meaningful conversation.

In current social media the term 'corporate tracking' is trending. Corporate tracking involves systematically monitoring performance and productivity by documenting every positive contribution you make to the business. While it can enhance accountability and provide data-driven evidence, excessive tracking can lead to micromanagement, which may suppress creativity and reduce morale (Knight, 2015). Effective managers balance oversight with autonomy, allowing employees to take ownership of their work while providing guidance and support.

Self-advocacy is crucial in performance reviews. Employees who effectively communicate their achievements and contributions are more likely to be recognised and rewarded (Stroh et al., 2009). However, there is a fine line between self-advocacy and excessive self-promotion. Employees should aim to provide clear, evidence-based accounts of their accomplishments without resorting to exaggeration. It is important to distinguish between humility and silence. Being humble does not mean being quiet. Research indicates that women are often evaluated more harshly than men and may receive less constructive feedback (Correll, 2016). In her book "Lean In," Sheryl Sandberg (2013) advocates for women to assert themselves and actively seek feedback and recognition in the workplace.

Feedback through transparent communication about performance is essential for employee development. Regular feedback helps employees in understanding their strengths and areas for improvement, encouraging a culture of continuous learning (London, 2003). In the literature review, Turner (2015) builds on SDT, Maslow and Herzberg theories discussing the importance of managers to recognise and validate team members contributions and how fundamental clear communication and regular feedback is for Gen Z. Managers should provide SMART (Figure 10) timely, specific, and actionable feedback to guide employee growth. However, it is important to recognise that seeking feedback can sometimes lead to negative feedback, and that's okay. As the saying goes, *"If you don't ask, you won't receive."* However, in the current environment, there is a growing aversion, particularly among Gen Z, towards negative feedback, viewing it as confrontational (Twenge, 2020). This aversion poses a risk, as constructive criticism and differing opinions are essential for success, both in the workplace and personal life. Without open communication channels and willingness to accept feedback, valuable insights may be kept internally, hindering the potential growth and improvement of individuals and the business. With feedback comes failure sometimes but *"do not fear failure—things will not always go perfectly, and that is okay. True failure lies in not learning from setbacks. Always take ownership of your actions and their outcomes"* (A. Bloomfield, personal communication, November 9, 2023).

Method

In this trial, performance reviews we conducted with the input of direct reports, aiming to gain a more transparent perspective on performance. Direct reports were asked questions such as: "on a scale of 1-7 (1 – 2 = not a fit, 3 – 4 = areas of improvements required, 5 = meets expectations, 6 = exceeds expectations, 7 = world class) how do you rate Megan's contribution to the company values and behaviours? Commitment to personal growth and training? Ability to take personal accountability? How has Megan contributed to the success of the company" along with other performance review questions.

For the second part of the trial, extensive notes were taken on positive contributions to the business over a three-month period. This documentation was maintained in an Excel spreadsheet and updated regularly, typically on a weekly basis.

Results

The results from the first approach were significantly positive. Direct reports highlighted numerous achievements and provided constructive feedback that would enhance the team's efficiency. This feedback revealed to the business unit manager the extent of the contributions that were being made, which had previously been unaware of due to reticence to self-advocacy. Although some contributions were missed because direct reports were unaware of them, the overall outcome was successful

For the second part of this trial, rigorous documentation of contribution were carried out. Initially, this required discipline, but the process became easier and habit when incorporated into the weekly timesheet routine. Before the performance review, the score card is sent out. This allowed the selection of key contributions from a comprehensive list, fostering a positive outlook for the review. During the performance review, questions about "key wins" and "what are you most proud of since your last performance review" were addressed allowing for accomplishments that might otherwise have been forgotten. After explaining the trial to the business unit leader, there was a review of the extensive list of contributions, including some that had been omitted but were important to the business, such as assisting an orchard manager with a spray request. Overall, this exercise added significant value to the performance review process.

Based on the experiment, here are several recommendations for individuals embarking on their management journey:

Documenting Achievements

Although I was successful in getting my direct report to do this for me, I believe this may have been an oversight for me. There is value to get from recording accomplishments and milestones. Although, in the Harvard Business Review (2016) it identifies excessive tracking can lead to micromanagement. Focusing on tracking larger accomplishments will help provide tangible evidence of your contributions and aid in preparation for a performance review, this can be as simple as a spreadsheet.

Proactive Self-Advocacy

It is important to distinguish between humility and silence. Being humble does not mean being quiet. Ensuring you get regular check-in time with your manager to share your success and ensure your hard work is noticed. Focus on the impact of these achievements.

Encourage a culture of continuous feedback where both giving and receiving feedback is a regular occurrence. Encourage opportunities to provide feedback to your manger. This encourages open

communication and improves their management, ensuring it is constructive. Practice receiving negative and confrontational feedback to foster healthy relationships.

By reflecting on my own experience and incorporating these recommendations, new managers can navigate the complexities of performance management more effectively. Tracking achievements, practicing self-advocacy and encouraging feedback will help create a happier, more productive workplace. Despite the success of this trial, the absence of an opportunity for upward feedback to the business unit leader was noted and should be implemented in future reviews.

In conclusion, this exercise demonstrated the importance of regular, structured performance reviews, and the need for continuous documentation and self-advocacy. Implementing these practices can enhance transparency, communication, and overall job satisfaction within your business.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Personal Background and Career Journey
1. What is your name?
2. Which industry do you currently work in?
3. What is your current position?
4. How long have you been in the industry?
5. How long have you been in your current role?
6. Could you describe your career progression so far?

Work Fulfilment and Contribution
7. How do you seek fulfilment in your daily work to enhance your overall well-being?
8. What unique strengths and qualities do you bring to the business that contribute to its success?
9. Reflecting on your experiences, can you describe a manager or leader who had the most positive impact on you? What specific qualities did they possess?

Employee Contributions and Impact
10. Could you share your thoughts on different ways employees can demonstrate their achievements and impact within the team?
11. How do you perceive your influence on shaping the business's direction, culture, and the success of your team members?
12. How do you ensure that your efforts align with the strategic goals and values of the business?

Work Environment and Challenges

13. What challenges might arise in maintaining a flexible work environment, and how can we address these to ensure all employees feel supported?

14. From your viewpoint, how can we effectively measure the performance and contributions of team members?

Leadership and Team Dynamics

15. What leadership approaches do you find effective in maintaining engagement and productivity?

16. Which skills do you find most influential in fostering a collaborative, high-performing, and motivated team?

Skills and Professional Development

17. Considering the dynamic nature of the industry, what skills could greatly influence your businesses success?

18. From a hiring perspective, how would you rank the importance of critical thinking, adaptability, communication skills, time management, and initiative in enhancing business value?

19. How might emphasising these skills enhance employee professional development and overall effectiveness?

Orchard Management Specific Questions

20. What are the primary responsibilities and duties of an orchard manager?

21. How do you define success for an orchard manager?

22. What are the key metrics or KPIs used to measure performance in this role?

23. Can you describe the typical career progression for someone starting as an orchard manager?

24. What are the essential skills and qualifications required for this position?

25. How does this role contribute to the overall goals and objectives of your organisation?

26. Could you share examples of commonly used KPIs for evaluating performance in an orchard manager role?

27. What benchmarks or targets are typically set for these KPIs?

28. How frequently are these KPIs reviewed and adjusted?

Salary and Compensation

29. What is the typical salary range for an orchard manager?

30. Are there variations in salary based on factors such as experience, location, or specific skills?

31. Could you provide insights into the highest and lowest salaries typically observed for orchard managers in this sector?

32. What is the average salary for an orchard manager?

33. Do you have data on the median salary for orchard managers in the industry?

Appendix 3: Miro Question Tree

Below is a question tree, created in Miro, it represents the core questions. as a part of the interview process the questions evolved and changed to suit the flow of conversation.

Appendix 4: Food and Fibre Sector Overview

What is Food and Fibre?

The Food and Fibre industry is crucial to New Zealand's economy, contributing significantly to its GDP through exports and providing employment across various industries, and their cultural identity. TF&FS includes, growing, cultivating, harvesting, processing and the distribution of agriculture and forestry products for both local and global markets. Although majority of its production is exported. Key industries with in New Zealand food and fibre sector are defined as (by the Australian and New Zealand Industry Classification Codes (ANZSIC)) include:

- **Arable:** This includes crop farming cereals, vegetables, and fruits.
- **Dairy:** Involving the production of milk and dairy products.
- **Forestry and Wood Processing:** Involves growing forests and processing wood.
- **Horticulture:** Covers fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants.
- **Red Meat and Wool:** Encompasses the farming of sheep and cattle for meat and wool production.

- **Seafood:** Includes fishing and aquaculture.
- **Pork, Poultry, Bees, and Other:** Relates to the farming of pigs, poultry, and the production of honey, along with other minor livestock activities.

In New Zealand, TF&FS is the biggest contributor to the economy, with 1 in 7 New Zealanders employed within it. The sector's exports account for more than 80% of New Zealand's merchandise exports and contributed more than $46 billion to exports in 2019, highlighting its critical role in the nation's trade and economy.

TF&FSs is essential to New Zealand's efforts toward sustainability and carbon neutrality. With consumer demands TF&FS is adapting to global and local demands for sustainable practices, including the adoption of technologies that reduce environmental impact and enhance productivity.

This sector not only provides essential products and employment but also supports the rural communities and the overall cultural framework of New Zealand, making it essential to the country's social and economic structure.

The table below provides a qualitative summary of workforce roles and skill levels, derived from aggregating insights from subject matter experts across various industries who participated in interviews. The workforce has been categorised into three skill levels: managers, semi-autonomous, and managed. These categories represent a spectrum from highly skilled to semi-skilled roles, reflecting the nature of tasks performed in different business operations. It is important to note that in smaller businesses, roles may be more versatile, often requiring individuals to perform a wide range of tasks.

Table 2 Total Number and Percentage of Workforce in The Food and Fibre Sector (TF&FS).

TF&FS	Maximum workforce counts at an ANZSIC06 class code level over a year	Skill composition as a percentage of workforce		
		Managers	Semi-autonomous	Managed
Kiwifruit Farm	5300	8	7	85
Viticulture Farm	5100	18	40	42
Apple and Pear Farm	8800	27	26	47
Dairy farm	40300	34	37	29
Sheep, Beef	17526	63	28	9
Arable	4770	56	35	9

(Nixion et al,. 2022)