

Once Upon a Time Down on the Farm...



A study to help dairy farmers tell their story

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Executive Summary

Dairy farmers are being encouraged to tell their story by leaders in the New Zealand dairy industry. This study surveyed opinions from fifteen New Zealand dairy industry and media leaders and discovered a need to share good stories with other farmers to improve uptake of on farm practice, with the general public to improve the social licence to operate and with international markets to create value for dairy products. The science as to why storytelling as a communication tool is so effective in these circumstances points towards creating an emotional connection with the target audience that fuels a hormone induced bond and aids in persuading the audience towards a specific idea or outcome.

Building a story to create that connection is an art. International experts talk of the story structure, plot, characters, conflict and resolution but the surveyed leaders indicate sharing small snapshots of the farmers' story is adequate in building the larger New Zealand farming story. Leaders and experts agree storytelling requires the careful consideration of who the target audience is, the formation of a clear, simple message, selective use of emotive language and a creative form of delivery to have the desired effect. In the context of farmers telling their story, it is suggested that farmers use online multimedia through social networks to tell the story that they care about their farm, their families, their animals and their environment.

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Introduction

“Time to Tell Story”¹; “Primary sector needs story”²; “Get the farm story out”³: dairy farmers and the wider agricultural industry are repeatedly being advised to tell their story. The call is coming from many corners of the sector, environmentalists, policy makers, processors and industry good organisations. The message points to a strategy that telling our story better will fix many of the battles the industry faces and create new value and opportunities for the future.

However, we have many storytellers within the industry. Fonterra, DairyNZ, Beef and Lamb, Federated Farmers and their members are all actively involved in storytelling in the media with advertising campaigns, news articles and commentary, and have been for some time. They are making a difference⁴ but so are the anti-farming campaigners within New Zealand, and our international competition in world markets. Therefore, more recently the call has shifted from not to just tell our story but to get better at it⁵ and make our stories more effective.

But what exactly is a story and how do you tell an effective one?

Most people can give you a list of their favourite stories, whether it be a book, movie or conversation, but to define what makes the story effective is more difficult. Even harder can be the nervousness felt when asked to stand up and tell your story without it sounding like a vocal narration of your CV.

This study seeks to define the elements of an effective story, why you would use one, and how. The goal is to create a short storytelling guide for use by farmers and industry.

¹ Trebilcock, 2016

² Rotherham, 2016

³ Galloway 2016

⁴ Peacock, 2017

⁵ Trebilcock, 2016

Methodology

There are three parts to this study which build on each other to help guide farmers to be better story tellers.

Part one is a thematic analysis on the reasons why agriculture needs to tell its story. The data for the analysis comes from a short quantitative survey conducted of ten industry and media leaders in New Zealand along with recent media articles and published opinion pieces from five industry leaders. The core themes are then expanded using commentary from the survey.

Part two is a literature review of what makes story telling so effective in communication. It will look at the latest research into hormone-induced human behaviour that results from great storytelling and some of the side effects.

Part three looks at the elements required to tell a successful story. Included is a further thematic analysis of the diverse range of international research and commentary on the topic. Much of this research comes from those who are great storytellers themselves, and others who have made storytelling their career. To add to the applied nature of this study, input from industry and media leaders via survey has also been included. Again, the core elements are explained in wider detail.

Finally, a summary of the key points from the study was formulated into a quick guide for farmers and other agricultural story tellers to encourage the study findings to be put to good use.

Acknowledgements

The Author wishes to acknowledge and thank the inputs of those surveyed for this study.

Hon. Nathan Guy – Minister for Primary Industries

Chris Lewis – Waikato Provincial President, Federated Farmers

Chelsea Millar – CEO, Grass Roots Media

Jacqueline Rowarth – Chief Scientist, EPA

Phil Edmonds – Editor, NZX AgriHQ Pulse

Jamie MacKay – Radio host of 'The Country', NewstalkZB

Philippa Adam – External Engagement Manager, DairyNZ

Lee Cowan – Senior Engagement and Communication Manager, DairyNZ

James Ryan – General Manager, NZ Farm Environment Awards Trust

Steve Cardin – CEO, Landcorp

Part 1 - What are we trying to achieve?

There have been growing public calls for farmers to tell their story. This has come from industry leaders involved in processing, public policy, marketing, science, local and central government. Why are these leaders encouraging such behaviour from farmers, and what are we trying to achieve through storytelling?

As explained further in this report, understanding the goal or the problem you are trying to address is the important first step in constructing a story. To learn to be better storytellers we must first understand what problem we are trying to fix – what battle are we trying to win?

To understand the need for farmers to tell their stories, a short qualitative survey was conducted of ten industry and rural media leaders to gain better insight into who farmers should be telling their story to, and what they are trying to achieve. The results were combined with published articles from five other industry leaders on the same topic. Fig 1 identifies a range of target audiences mentioned by all sources. The bars represent how many of the 15 leaders specifically identified that audience in their discussion.

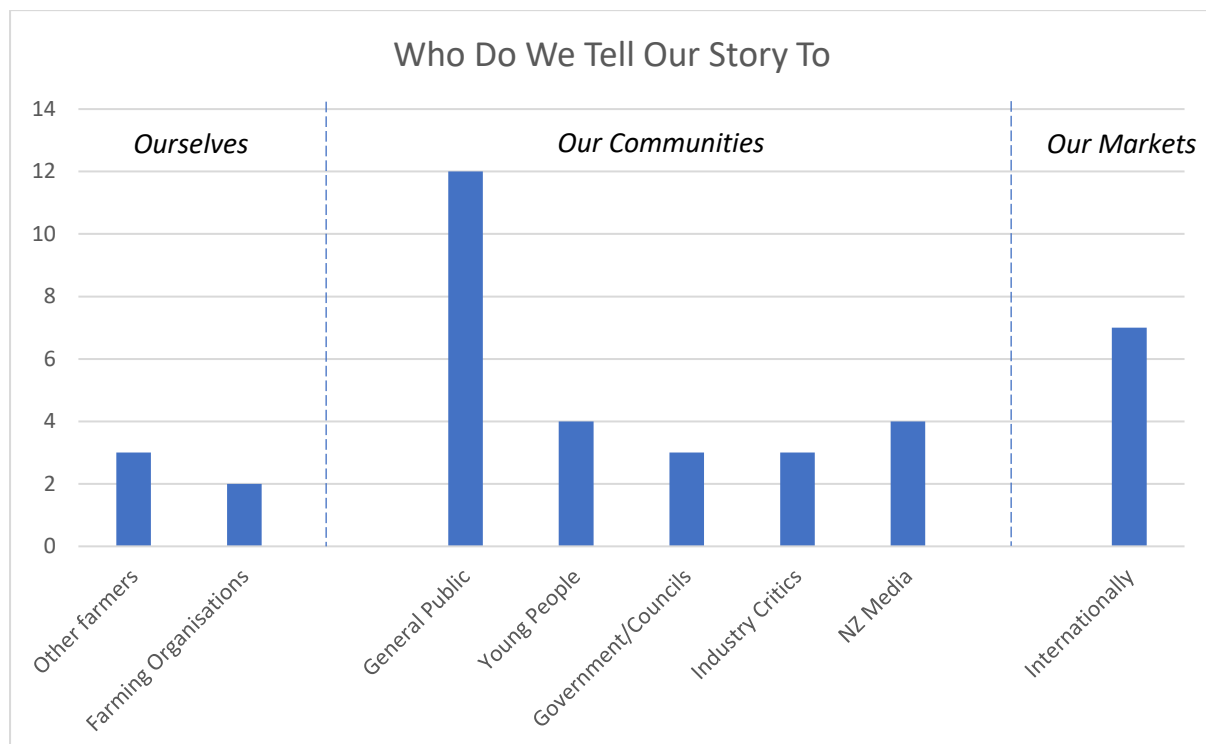


Fig 1 Survey results showing who farmers are advised to tell their story to

To better describe the reasons given why we need to tell our story to each target audience, I have broken them into three categories, also illustrated in Fig 1.

Ourselves – Adoption of Good Practices

Telling farmers' stories to ourselves is about farmers talking to other farmers and to those who represent us.

Leaders who discussed farmer-to-farmer storytelling had a strong link to influencing policy under which farmers operate, and are often influenced by public opinion and the social licence to operate. Their view was that public perception on farming practices could be influenced by a greater number of farmers being aware of what they do inside the farm gate and how that is viewed by those outside the farm gate. They believed that faster implementation of new or even just good farm practices could help with public image and ease the policy burden on the sector.

The emphasis was on environmental discussions and the wave of environmental policy currently sweeping across the country. They saw it as the best way for farmers to learn about new policy and new practices required on farm to meet the new policy.

Chris Lewis, of Federated Farmers, focussed on the recent scrutiny of farming's influence on the environment. His summary was that farmers should tell stories "to encourage standards being met, raise management practises amongst fellow farmers, and help set the environmental agenda, if we don't set it, others will for us".

Hon. Nathan Guy, Minister for Primary Industries, took a broader view, encouraging the use of good practice environmentally but also being good employers and better caretakers of our animals.

James Ryan, General Manager of the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust and Jacqueline Rowarth, Chief Scientist of the NZ EPA both mentioned farmers sharing their stories with industry good groups to achieve a similar purpose of delivering positive farm practice stories to other farmers. This partnership can make good use of the resources, knowledge and reach that many of these 'industry good' organisations have.

The leaders generally agreed that telling fellow farmers their story will help spread good farm practice, which while improving results on farm, will also have flow on effects by relieving some of the public and policy pressure on farmers.

Science backs up their views.

In 1957 a study of the Diffusion of Farm Practices⁶ categorised farmers into groups based on their method of uptake of new farm practices. They are described as:

- **Innovators** – had larger farms, were more educated, more prosperous and more risk-oriented
- **Early adopters** – younger, more educated, tended to be community leaders, less prosperous
- **Early majority** – more conservative but open to new ideas, active in community and influence to neighbours
- **Late majority** – older, less educated, fairly conservative and less socially active
- **Laggards** – very conservative, had small farms and capital, oldest and least educated

This study and the way it defined these groups was later developed into the Law of Diffusion and the innovation lifecycle by Everett Rogers illustrated in fig 2

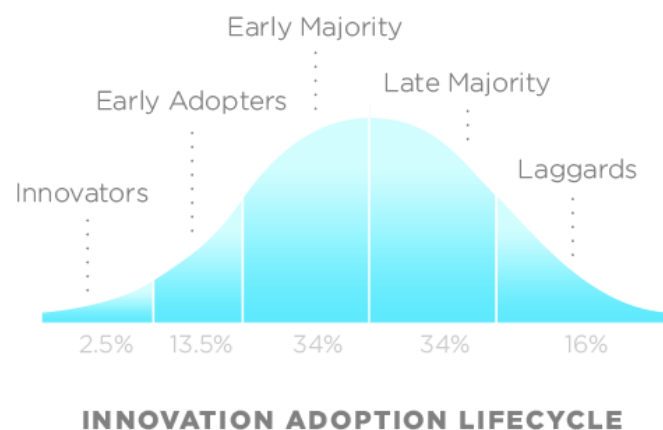


Fig 2 Innovation Adoption Lifecycle.

Source: Rogers, 2003

The 1957 study looked at the process of adoption and the source of information for all groups. The number one source of trusted information for the early majority, late majority and laggards (a total of 84% of the population) was friends, neighbours and other farmers.

Malcolm Gladwell and Geoffrey Moore, experts on the topic of diffusion, describe a 'Tipping Point' when the first 16% of the population has adopted the innovation. After this point, through peer to peer communication, the innovation can go 'viral' and spreads without the need for external encouragement⁷.

⁶ Beal and Bohlen, 1981

⁷ Moore, 1991 and Gladwell, 2000

So, the law of diffusion, which began as a study of the spread of farm practices, shows that farmer to farmer communication is critical in encouraging the uptake of new practices amongst the vast majority of farmers.

Our Community – A social licence to operate

The audience most leaders discussed was the general New Zealand public. The term ‘Social Licence to Operate’ appeared frequently; but what does this mean, and how does it involve the public and dairy farming?

The NZ Sustainable Business Council describes a social licence to operate as the ability of an organisation to carry on its business because of the confidence society has that it will behave in a legitimate, accountable and socially and environmentally acceptable way.⁸

Research shows that if a company fails to maintain an effective social licence to operate, it can feel direct economic pressure from that society. Customers shift away, profits decline and business value drops⁹. Dairy farming in New Zealand is a unique situation whereby the social licence is not generally enforced by customers or its owners. The majority (95%)¹⁰ of milk produced in New Zealand is exported to international markets and customers who do not live and work in the society from which the product originates. They may be aware of social licence issues in New Zealand through media reports, but do not see or experience first-hand the impacts and are therefore less likely to shift buying behaviour than a customer who does.

Likewise, NZ dairy farms are largely owned by individuals or families often with multigenerational ties to their farm. When compared with publicly listed companies who are subject to short term market sentiment, farm ownership is less affected by social sentiment. The larger agricultural companies that service farmers either through processing or supplies are also predominantly cooperatives owned by farmers with similarly long term ownership models with stable values.

So if the social licence to operate for the dairy industry does not directly affect its profit or value through customers or ownership, what influence does it have?

The answer lies in how local and central government set policy to create the boundaries within which the industry must operate. These boundaries can then directly impact many areas of a

⁸ NZ Sustainable Business Council, 2013

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Dairy Company Association of New Zealand, 2017

farming business from land use, labour rights, animal welfare and ultimately productivity and profitability

Steve Cardin, CEO of Landcorp, summarised the situation in his survey response as “As much as science drives regulations, the rule makers and the local and central governments behind them, are influenced by public opinion”.

In this statement, the social licence to operate is important because it influences decision makers who determine the legal right to operate.

The survey responses offered a range of ways telling the farming story to the public would improve the social licence to operate. From Philippa Adam, manager of External Engagement, DairyNZ:

- Increased understanding of dairy farming by the public
- Increase the public’s awareness of what dairy farmers are doing to protect and enhance the environment, how they care for their animals and how they contribute to the community and economy.
- Bust myths and misconceptions about dairy farming.
- Build pride in dairy.
- A balanced and fair story – influence journalists/media and provide facts.
- Build a common connection with the public.

From Minister Guy:

- The primary industries are part of who we are as New Zealanders and a critical part of the New Zealand economy;
- We are good stewards of our natural resources

Others mentioned highlighting compliance with regulation, efforts made to self-regulate and influencing the agenda on environmental policy.

Overall the aim was to improve the trust and pride that the general public has in dairy farmers to do the ‘right’ thing and to be seen in a generally positive light.

Within the general public, a few smaller audiences were identified.

Young people and their schools were highlighted in a few responses as channels for attracting new people to the industry. Specific mention was given to showing farmers can be good employers, offer meaningful work with fair rewards and the many opportunities within the industry.

Industry critics are very vocal in their opinion of the industry; however, they were not seen as a key target for storytelling. They were seen as unlikely to change their minds and were as emotionally dedicated to their view as farmers were to theirs. However, ignoring them altogether could waste the opportunity to keep the pressure on and perhaps slowly influence their thinking.

In summary, while the New Zealand public may not be influential customers of the industry or have the same impact as a dissatisfied customer, their regulatory influence has a similar effect therefore there is incentive to treat them as an important customer. We need to tell them our story to primarily improve the social licence to operate, build trust, pride and understanding of the industry but to also attract new talent to the industry and work away slowly at influencing vocal critics.

Our Markets – Driving Value

The New Zealand Government has an ambitious target to double export totals by 2025¹¹. In a recent speech by Minister Guy, it was stated that the volume growth to achieve this target would be minimal and therefore the value of the product exported would need to rise substantially¹². Minister Guy's comments summarised many survey comments that the future growth of agricultural sector lies in increasing the value of its products rather than the volume.

Our dairy industry is export based, therefore the value the international markets place on New Zealand-sourced products determine the industry's success financially and will help achieve the government's goal. Telling our story internationally could therefore be viewed as a product marketing exercise aimed at proving the value of our product to the world.

Many surveyed industry leaders, with a more international focus in their roles, agreed.

Minister Guy spoke in his survey response about pushing our image as producers of high-quality food and fibre that is produced sustainably and ethically; and that we have a unique

¹¹ Guy, 2017

¹² ibid

story that is the envy of the world. The clean-green sustainable and safe food message was reiterated by a number of leaders as the theme of international messages to market our product. Cardin went so far as to say that identifying market segments and tailoring the message was important; however, this was seen more as a role for the industry and processors as a whole.

In contrast, Chelsea Millar, CEO of Grassroots Media, emphasised that New Zealand lacks a clear agricultural marketing image like those in Ireland and Canada and that the clean-green image was out of date and easily replicable.

None of the surveyed leaders suggested that creating a national farming image was the responsibility of farmers, but they did agree that the farmers story of simply being responsible in what they do and creating a safe product was a good universal story to tell our customers.

These same industry leaders point to not only changing types of products we produce to add value, but to marketing the product in a different way to change customers' perception of the product. To tell them a better story about products we already produce and hope to produce is seen as an area farmers can get involved in both directly through their own, mostly online, channels, but also indirectly by sharing their stories with processors and industry good groups who can then spread the story internationally.

Part 2 - Why Tell a Story

Whoever Tells the Best Story - Wins. This is the title of a book by Annette Simmons¹³ outlining the benefits of storytelling in the business environment, but it could also be used to describe the theory behind many of the calls for farmers to tell their story. Storytelling as a technique has been used to educate, inspire, persuade, entertain and sell. So why is storytelling such an effective communication tool?

The Science of Stories

We can all say when we have heard a great story. When asked what made it great, we might talk about the plot or perhaps the characters, but science tells us it is certain feelings that give us the buzz of a good story. Dr Paul Zak has led modern research into why we feel so good after witnessing good storytelling and it starts with oxytocin.¹⁴

A good story gets the listener to relate to a character. That character might be the presenter, a third party or non-human object given human characteristics (think of Simba in the Lion King). Once the connection is formed, the brain releases the hormone oxytocin. Oxytocin enhances our sense of trust and empathy towards the character. We are also likely to replicate the feelings they exhibit. When the character is happy, we feel happy; when the character is scared, our heart races and we feel scared too. Oxytocin creates a bond whereby the story teller can take the audience on a journey.

The increased sense of trust is important. When telling a good story, the listener forms a stronger sense of trust in the storyteller. Research shows people who have a story-induced bond with someone are more likely to believe what is being said even in the face of clear, opposing evidence.¹⁵

How does this happen? Research shows oxytocin has the greatest impact by stimulating the part of the brain called the amygdala. The amygdala is what enables us to experience emotions including the trust and empathy that creates the connection through storytelling. It also sits at the centre of the limbic brain, sometimes called our 'emotional brain', which is responsible for long term memory and the majority of decision making. This is why we are more likely to remember emotional stories and why they are more influential in decision making.

¹³ Simmons, 2015

¹⁴ Zak, 2014

¹⁵ ibid

Facts and reason appeal to the 'thinking brain', or neocortex, which is responsible for how we process logic and language.¹⁶ We have more control over this part of the brain but as shown in Fig 3, it is slow, it takes a lot of effort to use and does not store information for a long period.

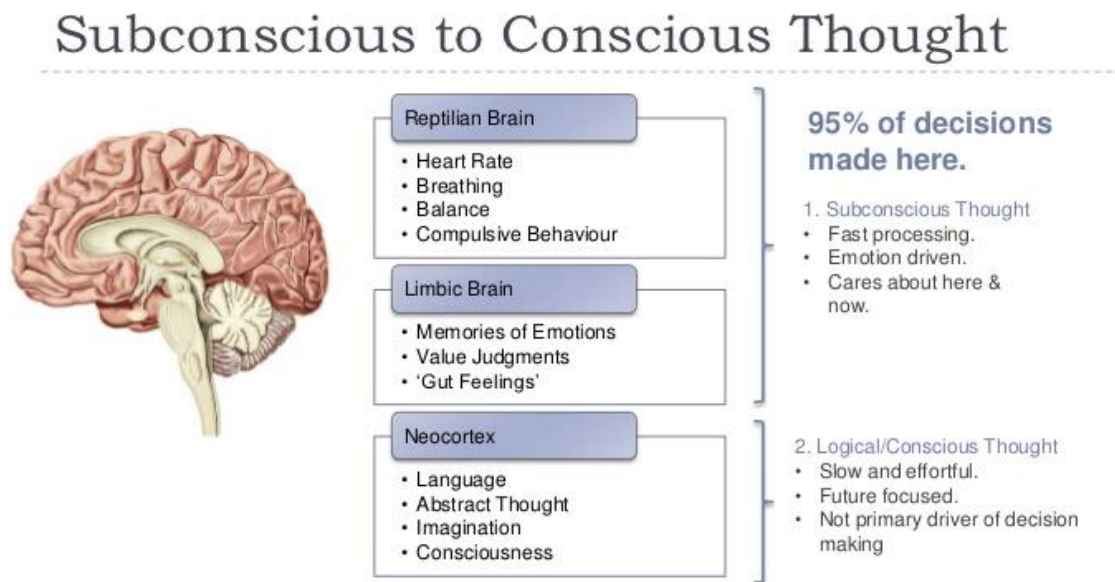


Fig. 3 Summary of brain function.

Source: Lucaci, 2012

The science of stories shows that a great story teller can form a connection with the listener by getting them to relate to a character or group of characters. This bond is strengthened by the release of oxytocin which leads to greater trust, empathy and group mentality through stimulation of the amygdala and the limbic brain. If the goal in communicating with people is to influence decisions and make a lasting impression, then starting with a story is the best way to do so. Using facts and figures to target the neocortex to educate or inform is also important but only after first forming the emotional connection.

¹⁶ Sinek, 2009

Part 3 - How Do You Craft a Story

I own a dairy farm 5km south of Oxford, North Canterbury. I milk 750 cows, employ 3.5 staff and produce 310,000 kgMS from 220 ha of irrigated land. I run a system 3 farm with a leased runoff 5km down the road. This is my farm.

When you read articles in rural publications, farmers enjoy talking about facts and figures. Whether it is farm size, in-calf rates, somatic cell counts or nutrient leaching rates, communication between farmers is often dictated by numbers. For me that is about the ability to compare my situation with theirs. Are they doing better or worse than me and should I pay attention to what they are telling me?

I am very proud of what I have achieved with my farm, but my traditional description when someone asks me about my farm is similarly full of numbers and industry jargon. My description would be lost on those outside the industry and would certainly not inspire the emotional connection of telling a good story.

Farmers are very passionate about their farms, but the way we describe them often does not show it. We are used to numerical comparisons and perhaps do not see ourselves as gifted storytellers. Experts agree that the first step is changing the story we tell ourselves to one of 'My story is worth listening to and I am capable of telling it'.¹⁷

Storytelling is an art, according to most literature, and like all art there is no one recipe to create it.¹⁸ This is reflected in the advice from leaders with a wide variety of tips and comments for farmers. However, when summarised, the advice could be categorised into three broad categories as seen in fig. 4

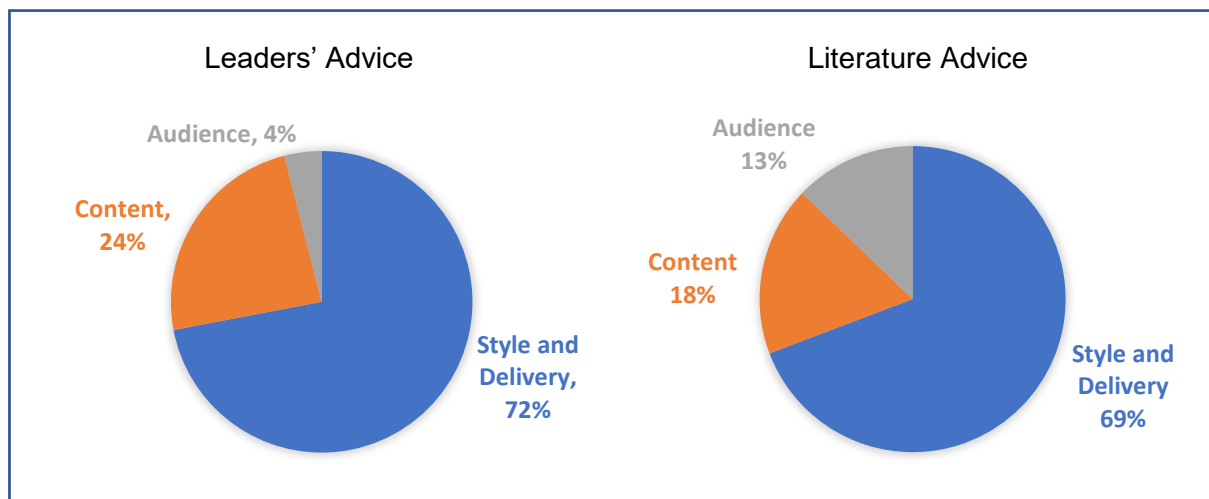


Fig. 4 *Thematic Analysis of Storytelling Advice*

¹⁷ Gallo, 2014

¹⁸ Lamb, 2008

From this chart it can be seen that the vast majority of advice from leaders focused on the topics of style and delivery (72%) with content only accounting for 24%. The comments were almost unanimous that farmers had plenty of stories to share (content) but just needed some help in sharing them. The small emphasis on audience is almost certainly under-represented in the chart as the survey asked for advice on story telling immediately after discussing the audience and what storytelling is trying to achieve. It could therefore be assumed respondents were offering advice already having defined the audience and what was trying to be achieved.

Advice from literature shows similar emphasis on the three themes. It agrees that while advice on content is important, advice on style and delivery will have the greatest impact on the outcome. The order in which to approach each theme is best summed up Carolyn O’Hara in the Harvard business Review – “Who is my audience, what is my message to them and how do I share it with them”.¹⁹

Audience

Defining the audience is all part of defining what you are trying to achieve. The two are linked in the survey and most literature agrees that defining these two aspects forms the foundation for the remainder of the story. In part one, three audiences and purposes were defined from industry leader survey results:

1. Ourselves – to improve the uptake of good practices on farm
2. Our Communities – to improve the social licence to operate
3. Our Markets – To add value to our products.

If any of these three audiences and purposes were mixed, then the desired result would be unachievable. For example, telling our international markets about the latest in on-farm practice improve won’t at all improve our social licence to operate in New Zealand.

Once the audience is defined and a purpose stated, most industry leaders spoke of gaining a better understanding of that audience. Ryan spoke of finding common points of interest and Lee Cowan, Senior Engagement and Communication Manager at DairyNZ, spoke of understanding what the audience’s agenda or motivations might be. Together they highlight the importance of trying to find ways to connect with the audience. Author Simon Sinek cautions us to be wary of assumptions about our audience.²⁰ He highlights gaining a clear

¹⁹ O’Hara, 2014

²⁰ Sinek, 2009

understanding of what they know and what motivates them before progressing with your message.

An example may be telling international markets about all the sustainable farm practice in New Zealand, when the market really wants a safe, cheap food product; or telling the New Zealand public about all the economic benefits of more irrigation when their concern is about environmental impact.

Sinek states that the art of communication is more about listening than speaking – understand the audience’s ‘why’ before explaining your own.²¹

Focussing on understanding who the audience for your story is and what you are trying to achieve by telling it is the important first step in crafting the story.

The essence is to listen to the audience. Do some research, find out what motivates them, what they know or don’t know, what channels of information do they listen too, what principles are important to them.

This then forms the basis for the following steps.

Content

One theme spoke clearly from industry leaders when considering content: have a clear message.

The message flows on from understanding the audience and what you want to achieve with them. The message is not the outcome, “it is the core moral or knowledge that I’m trying to implant”²² with my audience that will help achieve the outcome.

As an example, in addressing our communities to improve our social licence to operate, Adam suggested a message about what dairy farmers are doing to protect and enhance the environment, how they care for their animals and how they contribute to the community and economy. Cardin spoke of technology-driven best practice, and demonstrating compliance. Ryan spoke of acknowledging past mistakes and emphasising all the positive things happening to redress any perceived issues.

Which story was told to impart the message seemed irrelevant so long as the message was clear and helped to achieve the purpose.

²¹ Sinek, 2009

²² O’Hara, 2014

But choosing a story within which to imbed a message is not easy. Literature offers some advice. Sinek, Gallo and Simmons say to start with your own story.²³ It is the story you know best and the one you are most likely to find some connection to your message. “Stories are experiences retold” says Simmons,²⁴ while O’Hara calls it “mining your own experiences”²⁵. Industry leaders agree. Farmers are being asked to tell their own story, particularly the parts that relate to the core message you are trying to impart.

To summarise the advice: decide on a clear, simple message and then embed it into a personal story that connects with your audience.

Style and Delivery

Advice on style and delivery was the most common from the industry leaders surveyed and from literature on the topic. The advice from both leaders and literature appeared influenced by the context within which the storytelling was being applied, but again there was no set rules. However, there were sub-themes apparent across the sources of advice. These sub-themes have been summarised in fig 5.

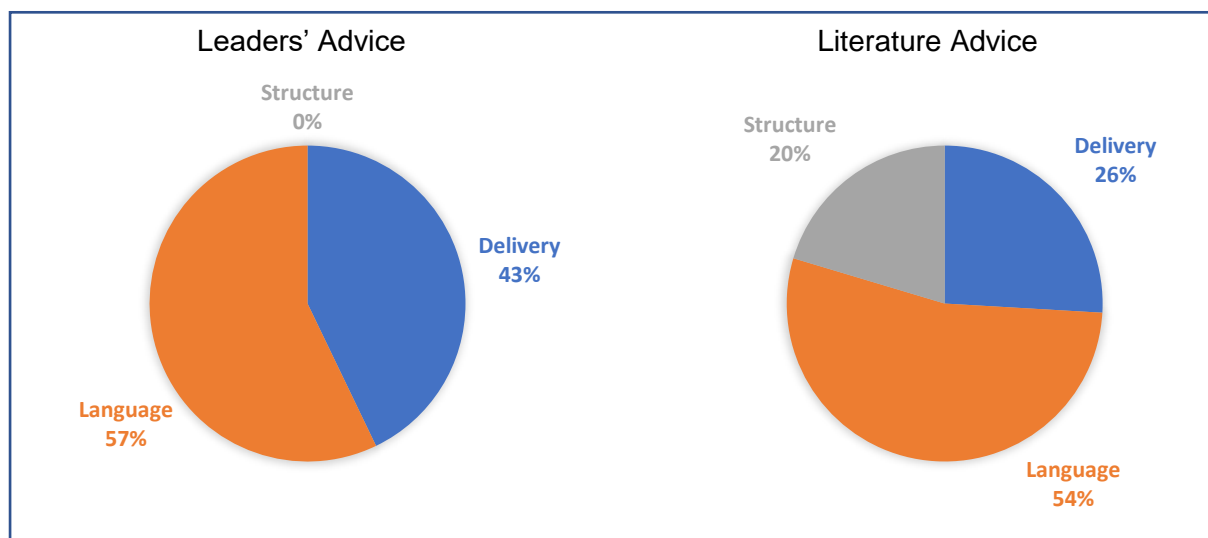


Fig. 5 Sub-Theme Analysis of Story Telling Advice in Style and Delivery

²³ Sinek, 2009. Gallo, 2014. Simmons, 2015

²⁴ Simmons, 2015

²⁵ O’Hara, 2014

Structure

There was little discussion of story structure from industry leaders. Their comments related more to the other two sub themes, but of all the aspects of storytelling, according to literature, the structure of the story is the most defining characteristic of what makes a story so effective and what separates it from other forms of communication.

A number of similar structures are described in literature but they follow a similar pattern to the summary by Ditkoff²⁶.

Setting – The context within which the story takes place. Setting the context might involve describing a period in time, a geographical or social situation or perhaps a well-known event that forms the back drop to the story. It gives the audience some background to better understand the story. In a farming context, it might be the era in which the storyteller started farming, the economic climate at the time and what else might have been happening at the same time. It sets the scene for the remainder of the story.

Characters - Stories are about people or objects with human characteristics. A story can have one or multiple characters, but usually a central figure with which the audience will form the emotional bond. Taking the advice from the earlier discussion on content, the character in the farming story might be the farmer themselves or someone they know well. The story introduces the character and is focused on their actions, thoughts and feelings throughout the narrative.

Plot - All stories progress through a time period. They have a beginning, a middle and an end which are nearly always time based. The length of the timeline is usually determined by the events showing the development of the character.

Conflict - Stories involve a struggle, hardship, conflict or tension. There is a low emotional point for the character in the story. It is at this point that the message or moral is introduced as the character must learn or realise something that can bring them out of the low point.

Resolution - The story then finished with the hardship being overcome as the character takes on board the moral or message of the story.

Two scholars have represented these storytelling elements pictorially.

²⁶ Ditkoff, 2015

Kurt Vonnegut's shape of a story illustrates the characters' fortunes over time, while Freytag inverted his shape to create the storytelling pyramid. Each concept illustrates a similar principle that dates back to Shakespeare.

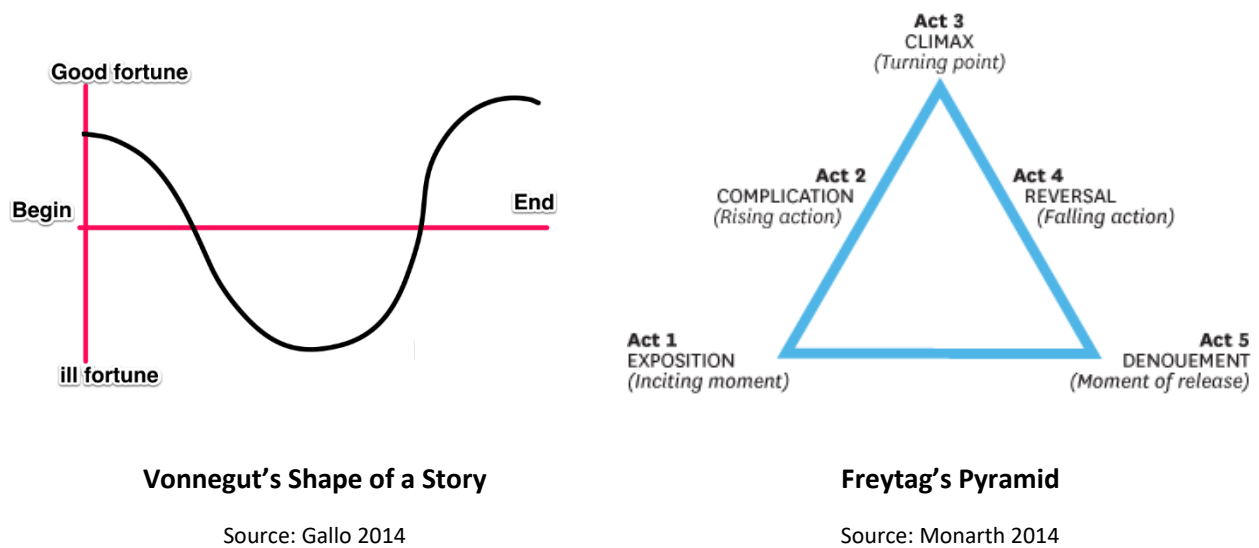


Fig. 6. Vonnegut's Shape of a Story and Freytag's Pyramid.

In both models, a turning point is reached that creates the climax of the story. A lesson or moral is learnt and the character is able to move on to reach a successful outcome.

Language

The most common industry leader remarks relating to language focused on what would relate best to the audience. Millar summed it up with her comment of cutting the farming jargon out and focusing on what would be meaningful to the audience. The most effective example is when discussing numerical terms related to farming. An example might be to talk in litres of milk rather than milk solids, or numbers of families on farm rather than full time employees.

All of the leaders emphasised the need to be honest above all else and to also be positive in your message. They said to show passion in your words, be creative and use humour if appropriate. All these principles are aimed at forming the emotional connection.

Literature agrees, saying the purpose of the story is to form an emotional connection; therefore, it is important to use language that is familiar to the audience and resonates with them. Gallo talks of using language and detail to put the audience in the shoes. "Once listeners

are figuratively walking in the shoes of the hero, they feel as though they have a stake in the outcome and are willing to do whatever necessary to help the hero reach their goal.”²⁷

Not all of the language has to be emotional, however. Industry leaders and literature agree that when aiming to persuade or educate, facts, figures and other forms of information are vital to winning over the audience as they appeal to the neocortex (the ‘thinking brain’). Gallo suggests to aim for 65% emotion to connect with the audience.²⁸ She references Aristotle, one of the founders of communication theory who talked about the ‘Power in Pathos’ in persuasion. Aristotle believed persuasion required three things: Ethos – credibility; Logos – logic and information; and Pathos, the act of appealing to emotions. In her studies of the most successful TED talks of all time, the ratio she found to be the most successful was 65% pathos, 25% logos and 10% ethos. To put this into practice she suggests spending 10% of your time establishing your credibility on the subject by talking about your background and qualifications, then 65% on establishing the emotional connection then finally educate or inform for 25% on the presentation.

Sinek provides an alternative model of language with his Golden Circle²⁹. He suggests to start with the language of ‘Why’ before moving onto ‘What’ and ‘How’. He explains the ‘Why’ as talking of why this subject or decision is important. This involves using language based on principles and emotions that the audience can feel to be true. This can then be followed by what needs to happen and how, which are usually more fact and data orientated. To use a farming example, the ‘Why’ might be creating an environment whereby rural communities can be economically successful and environmentally friendly (a principle), followed by ‘What’ is required, which may be balanced policy that takes into account economic and environmental costs, followed by the ‘How’ of creating collaborative stakeholder groups to advise the policy writers and decision makers. Sinek explains it is much harder to persuade an audience if the order of the language used is reversed. His golden circle model is closely linked to the science of storytelling as shown in fig 7 where the ‘Why’ and ‘How’ appeal to the limbic brain and the ‘What’ is the logic that appeals to the neocortex.

²⁷ Gallo, 2014

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ Sinek, 2009

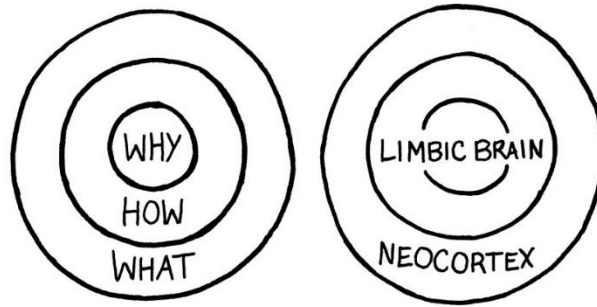


Fig. 7. Sinek's Golden Circle

Source: Sinek 2009

Delivery

The delivery is about how the story is projected from the creator's head or from paper to the audience. The industry leaders suggested a range of channels and media. This included personal presentations to a live audience, comments or blogging online, using videos, photos or other multimedia, talking to the media and collaborating with industry bodies such as Fonterra and DairyNZ. The suggestions were linked to the audience the story was trying to reach and their preferred media channels. Much of the discussion talked about reaching out to the general public. Millar, MacKay, Lewis and Adams all emphasised the power of social media in allowing farmers to reach non-farming communities directly. MacKay and Cardin also talked about using the media to get stories heard but warned that if the goal is to address the general public then telling stories in rural media may ultimately miss the target audience. Ryan and Rowarth suggested reaching out for assistance to help deliver your message. DairyNZ as an example are keen to help spread good news stories and have a team of experts that can help deliver a message to the right audience. In summary, the advice suggested to try channels of delivery that you are comfortable with, particularly online media, and reach out for support with channels that you may need help with. Creativity with multimedia was also seen as a top tip as it appealed to a wider audience. Adams and Lewis said sharing funny or impressive photos and short videos online can be very effective. Finally, whatever story telling path was chosen, the advice was to practice, practice, practice. With any new skill, it takes time to get good at it and the more people could try and review their efforts, the more effective their storytelling would become.

Literature, like the leaders, suggested to put the audience first when thinking about delivery. Simmons said to put yourself in the audiences' shoes.³⁰ He suggested thinking about what media would they watch, who would they trust, what would be entertaining for them, and how

³⁰ Simmons, 2015

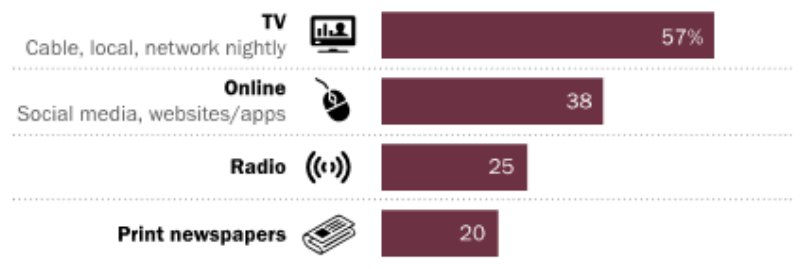
long or short does the message have to be for the audience to listen to it all? Gallo is a big advocate of a short message. She regularly references the science behind the eighteen minute length of TED talks and suggests this should be the maximum length for any message in any form of media directed at the general public. She quotes TED curator Chris Anderson's summary "It [18 minutes] is long enough to be serious and short enough to hold people's attention"³¹

Gallo supports even shorter messages if possible quoting Richard Branson "Say what you mean, mean what you say and preferably in as few well-chosen words as possible"³²

In considering what channels best reach the general public, research from the Pew Research Centre in the United States shows that social media is a rising source of news and information for the general public, and for those under 50 years of age, the source they most often get their news from (Fig 8).

About four-in-ten Americans often get news online

% of U.S. adults who often get news on each platform



% of each age group who often get news on each platform

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
TV	27%	45%	72%	85%
Online	50	49	29	20
Radio	14	27	29	24
Print newspapers	5	10	23	48

Note: Just 1% said they never got news on any platform (not shown).

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

"The Modern News Consumer"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Fig 8. Survey of American consumers' news sources

This backs the leaders' advice for farmers to use social media in reaching the general public with their story.

³¹ Gallo, 2016

³² ibid

Gallo, a TED speaker coach, also emphasises practice and observation as important tools for improving storytelling ability: practice the delivery and observe the response. Observe the response from others delivering their stories and adjust your own delivery to gradually improve its effectiveness.³³

³³ Gallo, 2016

Discussion

Industry and rural media leaders have encouraged farmers to tell their story and for a range of reasons. In summarising the feedback from these leaders, three audiences and reasons became clear:

- Ourselves – to encourage the adoption of good practices
- Our Communities – to improve our social licence to operate
- Our Markets – to drive improved value for our products.

Upon closer consideration of these three audiences, I believe it is possible to tell one story that can connect with all three audiences and achieve all three purposes. This is the story of farmers who are utilising new or best practices on farm in any area – employment, environment or animal welfare.

The use of storytelling as a tool to address these audiences is backed by developing science that shows biology is behind the connection that a story creates and why an audience is more receptive to a story rather than a lecture. Appealing to the limbic (emotional) brain then the neocortex (logical) brain creates a better persuasive outcome.

There are many forms of presentation but the leaders did not compare or discuss why storytelling was better than other forms in the farm context. Likewise in the literature there was little comparison to other forms of communication and when each was most effective. I can only presume that since much of the discussion from both leaders and literature talked of persuading the audience and creating empathy, that storytelling is the best form of communication to achieve this goal. In contrast, in the situations where the audience is already emotionally connected or onboard with the presenter, such as a farmer discussion group or articles in rural media (preaching to the converted), that the communication technique could be simply talking about the logical argument.

In following the assumption by leaders that storytelling is the best form of communication to address the audiences outlined earlier, it would be helpful to have a formula for how to go about it. Unfortunately, it is difficult to prescribe a formula for what most literature describes as an art form, but there are a number of themes that most agree on as being important for story telling.

All sources agreed that understanding the audience was an important first step. Learning what they think, feel and how they learn are all important in forming the foundation for the story and its delivery will ensure the effort that has gone into crafting the story has the greatest effect on the right people.

The content of the story was agreed on by leaders as needing a clear message that related to the outcome or purpose of telling the story. The story, without meaning, becomes entertainment with no progress made towards achieving the desired goal with that audience. The subject of the story was also agreed as being the storyteller themselves. It is the story they know best and can speak of passionately, honestly and with the most emotion. Literature suggested that even if wanting to tell the story of others, it is best to start and practice with the story of yourself. In considering the advice from leaders I believe one message could be used for all three audiences to achieve all the purposes – farmers care. We care about our farms, our people, our animals and our environment.

The first major divergence in advice in the study came when discussing style and delivery and particularly story structure. Literature was very firm on sticking to the narrative arc, including a timeline, characters, conflict, a climax and a resolution. The industry leaders however talked very little of this, or indeed any, firm structure. In fact, their suggestions hinted more at sharing short snippets of the farmers' story rather than telling it as a whole. My perspective is that when industry leaders talk about telling the farming story, in their minds they are talking about the New Zealand farming story in which each dairy farmer plays a small part. Each farmer, in telling their own story, is contributing to this greater national story therefore each individual farmer does not have to tell the entirety of their own story or follow the full narrative arc. Rather they should share a snapshot of their personal story to help build the greater narrative arc of dairy farming in New Zealand.

The remainder of storytelling style and delivery was in agreement though with both groups supporting the use of emotional language first to form the emotional connection followed by strategic and creative use of facts and data to create the backing logical argument. The more creative the delivery of the story and message, the more it will stand out and be memorable. This seems to be achieved most easily online when targeting the general public, but also increasingly for other farmers and the international markets. If farmers can develop the one story that will target all three audiences and reach all those audiences online then this should form a clear recommendation for any farmers looking for advice on how to deliver their story.

After this, it comes down to practice, practice, practice.

Conclusion - A Guide for Farmers

The outcome of this project was to create a simple guide for farmers. I would like the conclusion to this project to be that guide.

1 - Who are you telling your story to, and why?

Storytelling is about changing hearts and minds (in that order). For dairy farmers, there are three reasons to tell your story:

- Tell it to other farmers to improve uptake of good practice
- Tell it to our communities to build empathy and understanding
- Tell it to our markets to prove the value of our product

2 - What's my message?

All stories need a message or moral. To reach all three audiences and achieve all three outcomes, your story can have just one clear message – We care. We care about our people, our environment, our animals and our milk.

3 - What story do I tell?

Look into your own story to see what part might relate to the message you are trying tell. It doesn't need to be the full story of you or the farm. A snapshot of your story may be enough to get your message across.

4 - How Do I Tell It?

Language – Your goal is to form an emotional connection, so feel free to get emotional in your language. Try to use words that will connect in a positive way with your audience. Put yourself in their shoes and talk about why you farm rather than how you do it. Try talking about providing for your family and community, rather than maximising milk solids per hectare; about your connection with the land and taking care of it for future generations rather than feed types and fertiliser use. If you want to talk numbers, use terms the audience can relate to like bottles of milk rather than milk solids or families supported by the farm rather than the number of staff you employ. Show off your passion for your farm and above all else, be honest.

Delivery – To target all three audiences, the most effective platform for your story is online. Be creative. Be memorable. Try photos, videos, humour, inspiration or bold

statements. Anything that will appeal to the emotions but remember to keep the message, audience and overall goal in mind.

5 – Then what?

Do it again. Keep telling your story and encourage others to do the same. Practice it, change it, watch how others do it and observe what works for them. Your story forms part of the greater dairy farming story in New Zealand. The more farmer stories told, the bigger and better the farming story gets and the more likely we are to change hearts and minds.

Recommendations

There are a few recommendations on how to take this study further.

1. Assumptions - There were a few assumptions made in the discussion about what may have been implied by the industry leaders comments particularly around farmers not needing to use the typical narrative arc. These assumptions could be tested in a more quantitative survey of leaders perspectives.
2. Feedback – Feedback should be sought on the farmer guidelines from industry leaders and others who have expertise in the subject. As stated above, the guide is based on some of my assumptions and ideas. I believe farmers and the industry would benefit from a user friendly, peer reviewed guide such as this.
3. Ideas – I believe it is easier to say ‘be creative, memorable and funny’ than it is to do. Farmers may benefit from ideas as to what memorable, funny or creative may look like and some tips on where to start with photos or videos. Like story telling, these forms of communication are more art than science but any guidance to make it easier for farmers I believe would be useful.
4. National Industry Message – In the discussion, I suggested one message that would suit all audiences and achieve all purposes – that we as dairy farmers care for our people, our environment, our animals and our milk. The topic of a national message came up in all three verbal interviews. It was linked to the lack of an aspirational national strategy for the industry. I would strongly support a discussion around a strategy/brand/message that all farmers could unite behind and tell the world this is what we stand for. This then would become the heart of the NZ dairy farming story.

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Appendix 1 - Sources for Thematic Analysis

Leaders

Email Survey

- Hon. Nathan Guy – Minister for Primary Industries
- Chris Lewis – Waikato Provincial President, Federated Farmers
- Jacqueline Rowarth – Chief Scientist, EPA
- Phil Edmonds – Editor, NZX AgriHQ Pulse
- Philippa Adam – External Engagement Manager, DairyNZ
- James Ryan – General Manager, NZ Farm Environment Awards Trust
- Steve Cardin – CEO, Landcorp

Oral Survey

- Chelsea Millar – CEO, Grass Roots Media
- Lee Cowan – Senior Engagement and Communication Manager, DairyNZ
- Jamie MacKay – Radio host of 'The Country', NewstalkZB

Published Articles

- Andrew Hoggard – National Dairy Chairman, Federated Farmers. (Hoggard, 2017)
- Marc Gascoigne – Dairy Farmer, Media Commentator. (Gascoigne, 2016)
- John Hart – Farmer, Green Party Candidate. (Hart, 2017)
- John Morgan – Editor NZ Farmer (Morgan 2017)
- Mike Petersen – NZ Special Agricultural Trade Envoy (Rotherham 2016)

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