

# **Women in Leadership in the New Zealand Dairy Industry**

Kellogg's Rural Leadership Programme 2012

Report prepared by

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# Introduction

The business case for gender diversity is well documented; women make up 46% of the New Zealand workforce, women control 65% of global spending (Continuum) and yet how does New Zealand agribusiness sit in the leadership space? The Human Rights Commission report of August 2010 ( NZ Human Rights Commission, 2010) indicates that 11.84% is the female gender representation on significant agribusiness boards, with most of these being in the public sector. Not really a true reflection of the market place.

Gender diversity is a strategy that is a matter of the bottom line not political correctness. Gender diversity is a powerful source of innovation and it also can act as an insurance policy by providing a wide range of thinking. In today's volatile markets managing risk is a key strategy. Recent reports in the industry (KPMG, 2012) suggest urgent action is needed to supply people for the sustainability of the industry. It suggests that equipping future leaders to take governance roles as one of the TOP 10 on the agenda. The report "Call to Arms" indicates one of the enablers to meet our future needs is transformational leadership. Gender diversity will challenge the status quo and help facilitate this transformation. Gender diversity is definitely a topic on the table in all business and is part of the equation. Part of this unlocking the future and developing a strategy for dairy in 2025, I believe is to tap into a resource sitting on our door step, the women in the dairy industry. The KPMG report recommends that ' industry good' organisations should "Actively support initiatives' that engage with women, to support them in their roles as directors/trustee of their farming business" (KPMG, 2012). In the years to come I want to reflect and know that the industry has built capability to ensure a succession plan for the future generations and that women have had the opportunity to participate in that conversation.

## Aim

To understand what the motivators/drivers and barriers are for women in leadership in the dairy community.

Dairy NZ strategy contains "Ensuring leadership programmes are growing a talented pool of people to influence policy and industry strategy." (Nz, p22.) This pool of people will provide the capability to ensure DairyNZ strategies can be delivered into the dairy community. According to Alston & Wilkinson (Alston, Dec 1998) raising awareness for the need for gender diversity in Australian agriculture is required. The same is true of New Zealand, especially when we are in a dwindling work force. Inspiring the sense of "I am a leader" amongst the women themselves is a starting point. Women's view of what leadership means can be restraining them from seeing themselves as leaders. Is there a lack of understanding of how to get on the pathway to leadership or maybe a lack of desire, or maybe there is no defined cohesive pathway and women are already there, they are just not

recognised as being leaders? A 'glass ceiling' for women on the road to leadership is often discussed. Are women trained in the skills ready to take on the challenge and are there existing leaders wanting them to succeed but neither knows how to cross the bridge?

## **Methodology**

I am involved in Dairy Women's Network which has a strategy around enhancing and empowering women to build their skills and leadership capability. So originally I wanted to look at seeing if there was a gap in the chain from inspiring a sense of "I am a leader" to actually getting leadership roles. What I quickly learnt through brainstorming with mentors in narrowing my research question was that I needed to go back further so my question became about understanding more about what gets women involved at a higher level and what are her needs. I started to think about if there was a need for a programme but this approach meant I would have jumped to a conclusion before I started. Also I believe that leadership is multi-levelled from personal, business, community, industry and governance leadership all play a part in a vibrant industry, thus the survey which I distributed at the Dairy Women's conference in Rotorua tried to incorporate this thinking. This is an important message as not all women aspire to sit at a board table, whatever the level of contribution it must be valued.

My preparatory investigations led me to narrow my research question down to:

"What are the motivators/drivers and barriers to women's participation in leadership in the dairy industry?"

I wanted to know if women are limiting themselves or are there other barriers to their participation on leadership.

At the same time Dairy Women's Network (DWN) had launched the inaugural Dairy Women of the Year Award. Through this organisation I now had access to some women who had already displayed leadership capabilities, so I have collected a group of these women plus others in the Dairy Women's Network to listen to their experiences to paint a picture of the reality of their leadership journey. I conducted semi structured interviews with 7 women already involved in some level of leadership to listen to their experiences to try and capture some understanding of their journey. All these women are connected to DWN in some form,

and they live throughout NZ. They are in different stages of their journey from being involved with on farm leadership, industry and community leadership through to governance roles. I have transcribed the interviews verbatim and based my analysis on these transcripts. I also worked with Dr. Peter Blyde who has extensive leadership development and consultancy experience. Peter's company Catalyst 4 was involved in Dairy NZ's 2009 review of leadership development in the dairy industry. Peter helped me to develop a survey which was put out at the 2012 DWN conference to gather information from women who were most likely interested in leadership. This survey had limited participation and feedback was that it was complicated to fill out, so for the purpose of this report I will only be using data in the areas relevant to my interviews. This report will be based on a qualitative analysis only.

My method of analysing the interviews was based on a thematic approach. I have analysed the interviews on the following key themes:

1. Triggers –what originally got them involved?
2. Drivers- what influences them to be involved?
3. Self –what is involved here?
4. Where were the skills gained?
5. Barriers?
6. Future?
7. Support needed?

#### Interviews

1. Dairy Women's Network convenor x2
2. Dairy Women's Network Board
3. Industry Group Chair
4. Industry Director x2
5. Industry Executive

I acknowledge that this report only provides a snapshot of women in leadership in the dairy industry and any conclusions would need further investigation.

## Literature Review

Upon approaching New Zealand's Ministry of Women's Affairs to see what resources and research they knew of, Pamela Cohen who is the director of nominations for the Ministry indicated that very little was done in the Agriculture industry. This came as a surprise to me as the dairy sector directly accounts for 2.8% of GDP (NZIER, 2010), and primary industry would easily be the largest contributor to GDP. Yet in Australia, our closest neighbour there have been numerous reports on women's participation, or lack of, in agriculture industries, Margaret Alston, Jane Wilkinson and Barbara Pini to name a few.

In the article "Australian Farm Women -Shut out or Fenced in (Alston, Dec 1998) Alston discusses Sinclair's (1994) work of looking at the issue from the executive's view point. Sinclair identifies four attitudes to women's contribution or lack of it on boards.

1. Denial- there is no problem with not having women on boards we pick the person with the right skills.
2. The problem lies with the women themselves.
3. Management acknowledges the issue and seeks to address the lack of women, though often putting it back on women's issues.
4. Leadership: where it is acknowledges that the problem lies in the culture of the organisation itself.

The report Male Champions of Change (Commission), a report commissioned in Australia suggests that men and women need to work together on this issue and that a cultural shift is necessary. It is about recognising the need and then putting it on the strategic agenda and finally capturing the advantages of the diversity. Here the strategy starts with the leaders at the top, the 'gatekeepers'.

The first two attitudes are also popular with the 'pipeline theory' (Pini, Barabara, 2005). According to this theory when women acquire enough skills they will get into leadership, it is simply a matter of waiting. Those that support this theory think there are no barriers to women aspiring to obtain leadership positions rather it is a lack of knowledge and interest from the women themselves. Pini suggests if it was the case that it was just based on supply we should see a substantial increase in women's participation. That too would be the case

for New Zealand as there were more female graduates from both Lincoln and Massey Universities (M.O.E, 2011) in 2010.

Lindy Nelson of AgriWomen's Development Trust completed a Kellogg project in 2008 asking "How can we assist rural women achieve success beyond the farm gate?" (Nelson)

Nelson's work indicated that some of the enablers were self and the support the women received. She found that passion contributed to their success. The skills they gained in their lives within the community were found to be transferable into leadership roles.

The biggest barrier she found was how the women's choices impacted on the family.

In an article by Harvard Business Review (Harvard Business Review, September 2010) which looks at the outcomes from women having mentors in achieving promotions, men achieve more promotions. The differences between mentors and sponsors are highlighted in this article, especially in the context of women's career promotions. In reviewing the mentoring relationships it was more likely that the men received sponsorship, than the women. It is a sponsor who actively works for the mentee to be considered for opportunities and helps make the connections needed for promotion. This article suggests it is not the magic bullet but that sponsorship of both sexes' not just men is necessary for advancement of women.

## Analysis of Key Themes

### **Triggers to the leadership journey –What gets women originally involved in the leadership journey?**

#### **The key elements were found to be:**

- All these women are 'doer's'
- They participate in their communities.
- Their skills are recognised in the community and someone shoulder taps them.
- They have been asked or invited to participate at a leadership level.
- One woman indicated that it was innate, that she had always taken a lead role in whatever she had done, that she had joined organisations and before she knew it she had taken on a role.

#### Examples of relevant comments were:

*"I have probably always been shoulder tapped, in the last 20 yrs I have more often than not been shoulder tapped."*

*"I have always taken a lead role in whatever I have done. So in any job I have had, even raising my children and I was helping out with scouts, within a couple of months I find myself as the leader."*

Being approached to go on a board or take on a role helped with that first sense of confidence, indicating people believed in their capability. It also meant that there was a sense of support from the beginning.

*"So I got to do it with their support which was basically the perfect way of starting."*

*"The Board and CEO asked me to stand because they want me to be on the board, they can see I can add value."*

Sometimes without being shoulder tapped the opportunity is not in their radar.

*"If I hadn't been shoulder tapped for it I would have never heard about it."*

*"I had seen the role initially advertised and I had looked at it and thought that would be cool, put it aside because in my head it was not really what I wanted to be doing and then someone contacted me about it and presented it in a light that I hadn't really looked at myself."*

From all the women who had been asked it was important that it came from someone that they respected.

*"People that you respect come along and ask, look we need you in there, we will get behind you and so you do it."*

So getting started on the leadership journey is about displaying one's capabilities which often leads to opportunities. Interestingly, the research showed that is how they get started but they don't believe that happens further up the leadership ladder. Also there is a gap here in their knowledge about what it is going to take to achieve the next level of leadership?

*"I do think I will have to put myself out there rather than having opportunities come to me and the door open. That is the next level of the leadership ladder"*

#### Recognition as a key element

It was demonstrated that another form of recognition is winning an award; Sharemilker of the Year was the launching pad for two of the interviewees. This recognition of their skills again led to people shoulder tapping them for opportunities.

*"The biggest thing that launched my career is when we won Sharemilker of the year. It was almost like an endorsement of what we were doing on the farm and then people started to want to take that further in the dairy industry"*

*"Sharemilker of the year, that was a personal challenge and then you are getting a lot of feedback that you are really good"*

## Summary on Triggers

The interviews demonstrated that asking women to participate at a leadership level is often the start to the journey. Recognition of the capable women in communities is key. The underlying message that someone believes in their capabilities is often enough to enable participation. Winning an award also gives an underlying message that they are capable. Both of these are forms of feedback which I will comment on in another section.

Succession planning in organisations needs to recognise the capabilities of women and ask them to participate. This is a key strategy to getting more participation. Capable women often need to be asked and supported to get to the next level, so if organisations really wish to incorporate a gender diversity strategy this may require a change in mindset, to start to actively seek. This reflects the need to seek a strategic change in an organisation, where leadership sees the value of women and actively seeks to engage with them.

## **Drivers –What gets them involved?**

Leadership is very much a personal journey but there were a couple of themes I wish to highlight.

**Passion-** This is displayed in different ways:

- **Make a difference**
- **The people**
- **Need for change**

The question was asked: What drives you to do it, is it that you want to make a difference?

Some key responses were:

*“Yes, not just in DWN but in my farming career I have been lucky enough to been supported by so many women already. I wouldn’t be here today if it hadn’t been for having great female bosses, bosses wives, AGITO tutors, whatever to support me through.”*

*“Basically with Dairy Women’s Network I want to join a network with someone where I could make a difference with. “*

*"Where leadership is concerned you want to help people, you want to be or make whatever situation, society or company better."*

*"Do it for the cause, or do it for the passion."*

*"It is my way of contributing to the community. The driver is being part of the community, supporting people and working with the people, it is the people that drive me."*

*"The driver for me as well was I believe that you shouldn't sit or stand on, sit at a meeting and not say anything or stand on the rugby field and complain about what isn't right and what is right if you feel strongly about something and you have your facts, then you need to put your money where your mouth is really."*

*"Definitely making a difference, nothing that I like more than someone will ring me with a problem and I can step that right through to a result."*

The driver of Need for Change is demonstrated with this woman's experience

One woman's negative experiences with an employer and her husband working ridiculously long hours and the subsequent burnout and near exit from the industry are leading them to be the change in human resources on farm. For them they want to demonstrate positive human resources policies, they want to make a difference to the industry and demonstrate it is a positive light, for them they see a need for change. This experience is driving her leadership pathway.

**Challenge: When the question was asked about what keeps them motivated the need for a challenge was reflected.**

The interviews showed all these women as lifelong learners ; continuously learning. The lifelong learning mindset was a very strong theme across these women, and that their skills learnt became transferable.

*"Challenge, so that is my intrinsic thing, it is sort of like getting my head around it to say that would be really cool if I can pull that together. Most of the things I take on I haven't necessarily done before, I just get to the point where I back myself that I can work my way through it."*

Challenge is also one of the things that keep them motivated now. They are self aware enough to recognise that they don't need to be 100% ready, that they need a bit of a challenge.

*"It is all about me, it pushes my buttons, it gets my brain going and it gets me excited and passionate."*

*"I think it is that being prepared to put yourself forward even if you feel you don't fully understand everything about the role you are doing, you want to learn"*

All these women demonstrated that they were willing to take on roles without knowing 100%, this sets them apart, as there is research indicating that women wait until they can say they are 90% ready (Parr, 2012) . One female director I spoke with indicated that women wanted to be involved but they often felt they needed to be 100% ready.

### Summary on Drivers

Leadership is a personal journey, but these women 'dive in' and do it with passion. If you have a lifelong learning mindset you can learn along the way, just begin. They are prepared to learn the skills they need along the way, they don't wait until they are 100% ready. Also as they progress they often do it for the challenge, the need to be engaged at a higher level.

## **Self Awareness and Feedback**

There was displayed a high level of self awareness from understanding how they worked with people to what 'pushed their buttons'. It was evident that maturity and being on the university of life helped with the self awareness. The youngest being in her early 30's seemed to be only beginning that journey. Taking on roles provided the opportunity to learn more about their capabilities and themselves.

This is reflected in the following comments.

- *"If I can see a better way to do something or an easier way or different way I have to do it, it is part of me and I think the biggest thing is recognising it is a part of you. That is what you are good at, why not use it."*
- *"Learning to understand my personality and recognising my strengths, so intuition, empathy and people are my skills."*
- *"The other thing that happens as you get older you lose that fear of making a fool of yourself."*
- *"You have to believe in yourself and you have to believe you can do it, if you don't have the skill, you have to believe I can learn this. Self belief is really important."*

Feedback is part of the 'learning loop' in self awareness and it is probably not something practiced a lot in dairy farming. As farms have grown to having multiple staff more formal forms of feedback have become part of the Human Resources tool kit. But often roles are performed in a solitary nature, like one woman doing all the financial documents for the farm. Yet feedback is one way of getting confirmation that you are doing something well and helps to build that confidence and leads to personal growth. Feedback seemed to be part of the process of getting to the next level.

Sharemilker of the year gives the feedback that you are successful at what you are doing. When asked how important that feedback loop was, she replied.

*"It was huge, it was the catalyst to everything really, catalyst to stepping out of your comfort zone."*

Other comments on feedback were as follows

*"I think it is quite important and feedback from your peers, for instance on the board we have a board review every 2 yrs and it is done through the IOD."*

*"I think it is a skill men have that women don't have. They are more direct." They ask for feedback more? "No I don't think that they ask for feedback but they give it to others." Why do you think we don't? "Because we are scared of hurting people's feelings."*

*"So when they sit around the board table with me and say I am really pleased you raised that point, you did a really good job in that meeting, that really pushes my buttons at the moment because those are the people I know that are going to help me get my first proper corporate directorship. I need them to recognise my skills and that is a new space for me."*

*"There is a certain amount of self evaluation that goes on but it is nice to have some formal evaluation too just to double check that you are who you think you are."*

*“It is really important, because how can you build on your skills and know what areas you need to strengthen your learning if you don’t get feedback.”*

In getting a better understanding of the importance of feedback to the ability to grow the woman’s leadership capabilities I asked one woman if she was given feedback willingly or if she had to seek feedback. She indicated that one organisation gave it willingly but others she needed to ask. The frustration she had with some of the boards was that they were not willing to invest money in up skilling the people.

### Summary

It was demonstrated that feedback mechanisms are part of the process in self awareness and often lead to the growth needed for the next level of leadership. It is tied into the process of someone shoulder tapping women to take on roles because this process is a form of feedback, someone thinks I am capable. This in itself contributed to their confidence level.

## **Where were the skills gained?**

There is a combination of doing, being on the ‘University of Life’ and a mindset of continuous learning. As these women are prepared to contribute without being 100% ready they also are continuously seeking learning from surrounding themselves with people, workshops, reading and high level courses. Their attitude to learning was significant in getting them to where they are going.

The following comments reflect this.

*“I think it is that being prepared to put yourself forward even if you feel you don’t fully understand everything about the role that you are doing, you want to learn.”*

*“I don’t think there has been any period in my whole life where I haven’t been doing courses or something”*

Women want to make sure they are ready for the roles they undertake. It has been suggested that women will put themselves forward when they are 90% ready where as men will put themselves forward when they are 30% ready. (Parr, 2012). The women interviewed said they were prepared to take opportunities when they present themselves. Most of these women have been involved in the community and have gained a lot of their skills through things like Brownie’s, and School Boards. These skills have been transferable to other areas. Many have turned to Institute of Directors (IOD) to seek governance training and up skill in best practice. The ‘younger’ women use the internet to research and find answers. They looked for courses that provided the tools they needed to perform the role

they had taken on. Part of this is also a high level of self awareness was being developed and they have the skills to seek the learning they needed.

The Institute of Director's courses have been used to up skill in the area of governance. The following quote reflects this.

*"It was a good catalyst to get me thinking about the whole governance, representation and management."*

One woman described the skill level she believed were needed as *"Real professional communications, influencing, analysing, and decision making skills."*

One skill that became evident that was essential was the networking ability and when moving to the next level of leadership building a profile. One woman believed this was necessary to get to the next level. Many found hard the self promotion needed for the next level of leadership where as at the previous level you had been shoulder tapped. This is reflected in the following comment, where she talks about getting 'my in', meaning getting the connections needed to find someone to promote you.

*"If I stay in the executive space then I probably wouldn't change but knowing that I want to make the transition from executive to corporate governance I know how that works, that's not actually skilled based, it is about networks and it's about who is promoting you. That is how I am going to get my in, I am not actually going to get my in based on the skills I have to bring to the table because I have seen other women with the right skill never get the opportunity because they don't have those real networking, how to promote yourself without promoting yourself skills"*

Moving to the next level almost took a different approach than the shoulder tap and one's capability being seen. When I asked one woman about why there was women in the regions but not many at national level she explained it as follows.

*"The reality is going from regional to national, it is a bit like sports going from the Magic to the Silver Ferns or the Chiefs to the All Blacks, there is a step up in capability. There is a step up in terms of who you are sitting around the table with so there is your own performance but unlike those sports teams it can not underestimate the requirement for network, connection and relationships' to get that invitation to play"*

It is this stepping into the next level that there was expressed a gap, others explain it as a glass ceiling, or grass ceiling as Margaret Alston describes it. (Aslin, volume 11 issues 2 2001).

## Summary

Most important here was the mindset of being a lifelong learner. This set them up to take on new challenges and they would ensure that they gained the skill along the way. Sometimes there was a block in that they couldn't see through the grey areas and didn't know what was needed for the next phase. The gap that was highlighted was many didn't know how to get the invitation to play at the next level, even when they had made a conscience decision to seek a role at the next level. This might be moving from regional to national level, or taking on another agribusiness directorship or even the first corporate directorship.

## **Self promotion and building Profile**

I investigated the concept of self promotion and building profile especially as in the agriculture sector there is a range of farmer elected boards. This is like a 'maturing space', different from the women being seen for their capabilities and asked to take on roles. Often they are still approached to put themselves forward, but then it is about building a profile and network to get the votes. Also to get another board position often now means self promotion, building profile and doing the 'hard yard'. This was about building a network to get to the next level. Finding the people who could recognise their capabilities and help put them forward.

The interviewees said they felt that the step from being asked to take on a role, to having to promote oneself and build a profile was hard. It was in this area that they found the most grey and the not knowing how to approach it. There is a real 'step up' in this area when they have decided to actively seek a role. This is the next level of leadership for them, from regional to national or from one directorship to another, or their first corporate directorship, or their first farmer elected position. There is a change here because it moves from skill based, to people connections and profile. It is still a case of being seen, being

active and displaying your skills but now everyone has a skill set, how do you profile your skill set?

One described it as

*" Challenging, stretching, very out of your comfort zone."*

Another commented *"I do think I will have to put myself out there rather than having opportunities coming to me, and the door opening. That is the next level of leadership."*

In this space it was often seen to be the networks that made a difference. Gaining a profile like with Sharemilker of the Year was seen to assist in getting votes.

*"Who knows who out in the industry when you are flying under the radar, just doing the job, how do you win in a system like that?"*

One felt it was even harder now with some voting systems where large farms held a large voting power, so if you didn't get those votes it was an even harder battle.

Some felt it was the 'kiwi tall poppy syndrome' that made self promotion even harder. The dairy industry is no stranger to the tall poppy syndrome so maybe it is no surprise that it is alive and well in the leadership arena also. The 'tall poppy syndrome' is where people or industries that are successful are resented or cut down due to their achievements. The following quotes reflect that phenomenon.

- *"That is our kiwi culture, not selling ourselves."*
- *"We don't like standing up and say hey I'm really good, I can do this. There is just something about us; it's that whole tall poppy syndrome Something has to change in this country we are so proud of our sport but when it comes to business it is just totally opposite."*

Getting the first board position was hard but getting another was equally as hard. Not only were you competing on your skill base but now you needed profile. This was also the first issue with time - the time and sometimes money it took to actively build a profile was

already competing with very busy lives. Some existing roles would need to be dropped because of the time it would take to put into seeking another agribusiness directorship.

*“Time and part of it is money too, you actually have to invest money in it, you have to do that.”*

*“You look at different people in the dairy industry; the same people tend to pop up at the same events of different boards because they have the skills, credibility and their profile.”*

For women who do not yet have critical mass in the dairy leadership sector building profile is a big job without an existing network. They often need to start from scratch to build the profile. Some have the benefit of having a network in an executive position in an agribusiness but others only have their existing rural community. It was shown that getting national exposure takes time.

### Summary for Self Promotion

Moving from a leadership role where you demonstrated your capabilities and got asked and supported to take on that role to one where you have to self promote and have the time and money to build a profile is a big stepping stone.

## **Mentoring/Networks**

In taking the leap to the next level of leadership many of the women talked about wanting a mentor. For one a mentor to help with the election process to a farmer board was desired. For another it was to have a safe sounding board outside the organisation someone to brainstorm with and gain another perspective. Much of it was around using a mentor as a resource to add definition to the grey areas, the “don’t know what you don’t know” areas. It was part of building a relational gateway into the next level. One woman had strategically aligned herself with people who had the capability to put her forward for the next role. She had identified the gatekeepers. Some women had already been surrounded by mentors who were grooming them for their next role. They said sometimes this happened without them knowing, they were just being presented opportunities and gaining skills along the way, with the support they needed.

Others knew they wanted a mentor but didn’t know how to find one. It was about building a network also, there was a need to have a network where informal mentoring happened,

like over a coffee or the old business style at the bar at 5 o'clock. Depending on how far up the leadership ladder they were these women often did not have a natural network of women in their region to provide peer mentoring where they could bounce ideas.

*"You are not in an office with other girls in the same situation. I guess that is where I was coming from before not having the confidence in knowing what you know because you have not had someone to bounce that off."*

It was expressed that leadership can be kind of a lonely spot- people do look to you to lead.

*"It gets lonelier once you have a title. People forget that you just want a normal life, they think she is too busy and they don't involve you, you alienate yourself, not intentionally."*

Some said they would need to break into the men's network to gain this mentoring in their community. Women look to other women to provide support and often mentor them to the next phase.

Many organisations are now providing formal mentoring. IOD has a women's mentoring programme and Global Women's Network provides it as part of their Breakthrough Leader's programme. The Escalator programme from AWDT also provides a mentor as part of its programme.

It was shown that building a network of like-minded women where at least peer mentoring happened would extend their connections. Dairy Women's Network does this on many levels but there is potential to expand this greater in the area of women's leadership capability building. Further investigations into the area of mentoring to gain a deeper understanding of what the women are looking for from mentoring is needed.

## **Future**

What are the gateways to the leadership pipeline? Those interviewed demonstrated a real feeling that it was through people, connections and profile. This is something that you need, a team to propel you forward. That could be from joining organisations like Global Women's, or Dairy Women's Network to make those connections. It could be people recognising your skills in a senior management role, so having exposure in the right network. The following comment reflects the concept of sponsorship that was highlighted in the Harvard Business Review article (Harvard Business Review, September 2010). Her 'in' as she puts it is through someone actively promoting her.

*"I want to make that transition from executive to corporate governance , I know how that works , that it is not actually skill based it is about networks and it is about who is promoting you. That is how I am going to get my in, I am not actually going to get my in based on the skill that I have to bring to the table because I have seen other women with the right skills never get the opportunity because they don't have those real networking, how to promote yourself without promoting yourself skills."*

There is still a mindset that the pipeline theory (Pini, Barabara, 2005) will take care of the inequality of gender representation. I spoke with one senior director and it was evident in his response that women were now getting educated and skilled and will eventually flow through. In his mind 90% of the barriers were solved by that. If that were true then we should be over flowing with women as the statistics for gaining tertiary qualification in 2010 have 75,850 females to 55,216 males (M.O.E, 2011). But alas unless these skills are noticed by someone at his level they will not 'break through'. It is much more than skill that these women need to compete on. In Barbara Pini's paper "Progress not pipeline" (Pini, Barabara, 2005) she argues that there is a case for strategic change approach to gender balance. My research for this project has shown that the same is needed here in that training women up to be highly skilled is only part of the equation and by itself is not adequate for the transformational changes needed to lead us through the challenges the industry faces ahead. If we continue to do "business as usual" we will only get more of the same, gender diversity will not increase. This issue is not new, I spoke to one past Kellogg participant who indicated that she exited dairy because it was all too hard to get anywhere in the leadership space.

We have a group of skilled women on one side of the bridge and a need on the other side to provide some diversity of thinking but without effort from both sides of the bridge we will lack the change needed to ensure we provide an environment of success for these women. It will be a resource underutilised. One woman felt that women were responsible for making that happen.

*"So we have to get real about helping male champions come and get us."*

Support needed was about the ability to provide meaningful connections. The younger generations were definitely interested in using technology as a tool to generate those connections.

*"So I need to seek out those who can help me"*

Long term support, again building relationships was desired to ensure success. Identifying who can support you along the way, building your networks was seen as vital to success.

Organisations like Young Farmers and Dairy Women's Network were important in providing that opportunity of connecting.

## Barriers

The concept of time limiting them was not really mentioned in the context of their current roles, though they did acknowledge at times it was tough with young children. In fact one indicated that they find time for their governance roles and possibly their home life suffered. When asked about the barriers one commented.

*“So the barriers would be family commitments, farm commitments and confidence.”*

Time did impact on them taking on further roles as they were already living life to the full. For one who was interested in perusing a directorship, in order, she explained that to have the time to put into that she would need to step down from her current role. She also felt that would not be the case for a man, as she thought a man could afford to wait for a directorship to come his way, she on the other had would need to work really hard to achieve that. Another was willing to exit a business to have the ability to focus on her leadership journey.

The time needed to build the profile and networks was where the conflict came. Money played a part in this also. It was felt that you had to invest in building your profile, and it costs dollars to campaign for an election. This is probably the case for all but the women expressed conflict in that they are spending money on themselves. So it is more a psychological barrier than a physical one. It was more that the time and dollars had competing elements in their life at times, but it was shown that clarity and their passion often overcame this. Cost was more likely to have an impact to the younger generation, those starting their dairy career. Building the profile and the networks were one of the barriers to progressing from regional to national. The interviews showed that this was influenced by the ability to self promote, the need for a mentor to help with the grey areas, and the networks needed to build the profile.

*“I have education for my children has to come first, I can’t throw \$10k around.”*

*“Taking that money out of our family business and our personal budget to spend just on me , so there was the guilt.”*

There is what is described as a grey area in that they are not sure what is required to get to the next leadership role. Some had a definite plan, gaining qualifications, developing relational gateways, while others couldn’t define what was missing. The desire for a mentor was aligned to helping define this grey area and develop a pathway. There was a need for a

network specifically for the leadership space; the lack of the necessary network was often the main barrier. This would allow the brainstorming and sharing of ideas to help with this grey area. Once again they said it is all about people and connections.

It was expressed that some felt there was still a hint of the “old boys” in that at some board tables there was a lack of respect by male directors for the female viewpoint and ‘the fear of getting shut down by others’. The “wife in the kitchen” attitude was said to be still around but definitely waning. This was not really viewed as a barrier more so as an annoyance.

It was felt there could still be a stereotype of what a director was, with the perception that a man can do it better still held. One woman felt that the candidate assessment panel of Fonterra had the possibility to perpetuate that stereotype, and that it missed the value of diversity. The election process of many agriculture boards possibly perpetuates this.

*“If you look at the size of the country and look at how many of us there are in terms of having an influence there is not many.”*

### Summary of Barriers

Managing time and juggling the other commitments that women have is still an issue but women can overcome them. It was seen that there are still some barriers with male dominated leadership in the dairy industry with the need to find ways to create an inclusive culture.

## **Survey**

I gave out the survey to women at the 2012 annual DWN conference in Rotorua. I felt that here were over 300 participants who I assumed were a representation of those women actively engaged in the industry. In hindsight it was not an ideal way to deliver a survey because of the full timetable in a conference setting and little or no time to fill out the survey or digest the content. I also received feedback that it was too complicated and I take on board that feedback when I interpret the results. I only had 33 replies so I feel that there are limited conclusions I can interpret from the survey. In the survey I asked the question around what stopped or inhibits your participation in leadership development. The ones that stood out were work/business commitments, family commitment, lack of time and lack of confidence. In previous research completed in 2004 (Catalyst 4, 2004) for the AG/Hort industry exactly those barriers prevented people taking up leadership positions in contrast to the women I interviewed who had seemingly overcome these barriers or they no longer influenced their decisions. One thing that did surprise me or seemed contradictory was that

even though the women in the survey had a litany of roles they had taken on; lack of confidence still seemed to inhibit them from taking part in leadership positions.

In reviewing the drivers for taking on roles it was evident that a large proportion of survey respondents had received encouragement from others.

When asked in the survey “What would best support you in seeking further leadership roles?” mentoring was by far the most common response with formal training being second. Shoulder tapping, a network of like minded people and confidence played a lesser role than the above.

The limited analysis of the survey showed me that women are taking on leadership roles and they do have future leadership aspirations. Managing their many commitments and building their confidence are two areas that most likely need to be addressed in order for them to be successful. Women are looking for the help of others to help them on their leadership journey with many believing a mentor would support them in this process. This concept needs to be further investigated as to what defines a mentor for them, and what value they are thinking a mentor could add.

## **Conclusion:**

Amongst the rich resource of human capability are the women of the New Zealand dairy industry. By others assisting women's involvement, the industry stands to benefit by providing a diverse landscape of thought to ensure the dairy industry is capturing the needs of all those who participate. My observations from my interviews is that these women, many of whom are already in leadership roles, were not themselves the barrier to success, but instead by working together and providing the connections and an inclusive culture in the dairy industry we can provide a successful framework for women to continue to succeed on their journeys. This will provide diversity of thought which will assist to reflect the contribution of women in the dairy industry. There is still work to do in building the confidence and managing time and work commitments of those seeking to start a journey.

Each leadership journey is very personal but they have common threads.

1. Triggers & Drivers \_This is what gets women started and what keeps them there.

Women do have to manage multiple roles but when they show a willingness and capability in the community we need other leaders to extend the ladder and assist them. Asking women to participate is a source of confidence building and demonstrates support, something that is necessary for success. Passion, or their purpose for being in a leadership role plays a vital role in capturing these people, the industry can only benefit from harnessing this passion.

2. Skills Gained

Women need to have a lifelong learning mindset. They have the ability to take on responsibility and seek to learn the skills needed along the way rather than wait to be 100% ready. Organisations can assist by encouraging or providing the training needed for success.

3. Connections

My research demonstrated there is a high need for women to surround themselves with people who will assist them reach their leadership goals. Assistance can come in the form of a mentor, or building a network of like minded people. Making connections with people who can help sponsor you into the next role provide a way of helping with the profile building. Building a profile for success at a national level often is the barrier to success at this level. Organisations that provide this capability fulfil a vital role in the success of women achieving leadership positions. Further understanding into how mentoring can assist women is needed.

#### 4. Self

Having a high level of self awareness assists in providing the building blocks for success. This is also a continuous process perpetuated by the lifelong learner's mindset. Women do have difficulty with self promotion, understanding this further could provide some insight into why women may not seek leadership roles.

#### 5. Barriers

There is still an issue with a male dominated leadership environment but for these women they note the reality of that environment and continue to lead in their roles. Managing the many commitments that these women have has not stopped them from taking on their roles but often influences obtaining further leadership roles. For those beginning to seek new roles managing these commitments still impacts on the outcomes.

Building a profile in order to be successful in the transition from regional to level seemed to be one area that the women found they didn't have the knowhow to overcome.

#### 6. Future

Development of an inclusive culture where women are invited to participate in areas that they can demonstrate their capabilities could assist those seeking leadership roles. This could ensure that the bridge where on one side you have willing capable women and the other side where the need to provide capability in the existing leadership framework exist becomes easily passable. This strategic change from within organisations assists women's leadership journeys become a reality.

The 'pipeline theory' will not be sufficient for success; it will take others to assist women. This could be through the mentors and networks they are seeking. It could be that the 'gatekeepers' provide a strategic change and actively seek women's participation and value the diversity that they bring. There will always be the conflict of managing work, family and time commitments but the women's sense of purpose will drive them to participate. Once there has been the inspiration that "I am a leader" the dairy industry must ensure it captures their passion and provides the connections to allow their leadership to flourish.

## Appendix A

### **Interview Questions for Kellogg**

1. Think about your first sense of confidence in leadership and describe it to me. What was it like? Who or what inspired the confidence?
2. In leading yourself tell me about some of your experiences in stepping up into leadership roles?
3. What was the trigger? How important is self awareness and why?
4. What keeps you motivated?
5. Who was/is involved in the process?
6. Where did you gain the skills needed.
7. What are some of the barriers? How did you overcome them?
8. What need to happen for you to take another step?
9. What would support you in the future?
10. Are there any barriers at this stage that is different?

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Tania Earnshaw- Rotorua

Rebecca Millar- Canterbury

Barbara Kuriger- Taranaki

Michelle Wilson- Southland

Raelyn Lourie- Westland

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# Building the capability and confidence of people to lead.

## Dairy Women's Network

Results of this survey are completely confidential

1. Which Region do you live in?

Northland	BOP	Lower North Island	Canterbury	South Otago	
Waikato	Taranaki	Nelson/Marlborough	Otago/Central Otago	Southland	

2. Are you a.....?

50/50 Sharemilker	Farm Manager	Farm Owner	Herd Manager	
Variable order Sharemilker	Assistant Manager 2IC	Equity partner	Operations Manager	
Contract milker	Rural professional	Farm Assistant	Other(please state)	

3. Please tick the stage of family life you are at

Single					
Married/partner with no children					
Married/partner with children		In the boxes below, please write the number of children in each life stage			
		# of preschool children	# of primary age children	# of secondary school children	# of children who have left home



5. Please list the leadership roles you have had in ...	6. Using Table 1 below, write the letter(s) that influenced you to seek each of these different roles (use as many letters as you wish)
Business/on-farm(key responsibilities)	
e.g. Financial Management	I, J
Community (e.g. school, sports associations, regional councils)	
Industry (e.g. Fonterra networker, advisory board, breed society)	
Governance (e.g. Board roles)	

Table 1: Influences						
A. Need for change	B. Ability to make a difference	C. Belief in self and skills	D. Encouragement from others	E. Vision of future	F. Opportunity presented itself	G. Inspiration from role model
H. Personal growth	I. Business needs	J. No one else to do it	K. Desire to influence direction of industry	L. Supports community	M. Career pathway	N. Other(please describe)



7. Please list the roles you are considering for the future, over the next 5 yrs.	8. Using Table 2 below, write the letter(s) that are driving your decision to want to be involved	9. In thinking through this role,, who do you speak to?	10. In thinking through this role, which publications, websites or organisations do you use?	11. How easy has it been to find the information you have needed to consider this opportunity? Please use a 5 point scale where 1 = very easy and 5 = very difficult
Business/On Farm				
Community				
Industry				
Governance				

Table 2: Drivers						
A. Need for change	B. Ability to make a difference	C. Belief in self and skills	D. Encouragement from others	E. Vision of future	F. Opportunity presented itself	G. Inspiration from role model
H. Personal growth	I. Business needs	J. No one else to do it	K. Desire to influence direction of industry	L. Supports community	M. Career pathway	N. Other(please describe)



12. Please list the leadership roles that have entered your mind, but that you have dismissed ...	13. Using Table 3 below, write the letter(s) that best describe why you made this choice (use as many letters as you wish)
Business/on-farm(e.g. key responsibilities)	
e.g. Financial Management	I, J
Community (e.g. school, sports associations, regional councils)	
Industry (e.g. Fonterra networker, breed society, advisory board)	
Governance (e.g. Board roles)	

Table 3:						
A. Lack of confidence	B. Family commitments	C. Lack of time	D. No vacancy in role I want	E. Work/business commitments	F. Not interested	G. Lack of support
H. Distance	I. Don't know how to start	J. Seen as too hard	K. Cost	L. Attitude towards female involvement	M. Not skilled enough	N. Other(please describe)



13. What would best support you in seeking further leadership roles?

Formal training		Role model (existing leaders)		Change in attitude towards females	
Mentoring		Self confidence building		Network of like minded people	
Shoulder tap		Other (please state)			

14. Please list the leadership development you have already completed	15. Using Table 4 below, What motivated you to do the leadership development?
Business/on-farm	
e.g. Cashbook to Cashflow	D, H,M
Community (e.g. school, sports associations, regional councils)	
Industry (e.g. Fonterra networker, breed society, advisory committee)	
Governance (e.g. Board roles)	

Table 4:						
A. Increase my confidence	B. Mental stimulation	C. Make a difference	D. Clarity of direction	E. Build Networks	F. Increase my people skills	G. Giving back
H. Better decision making	I. Self awareness	J. Career progression	K. Personal growth	L. Desire to influence direction of industry	M. Business needs	N. Other(please describe)



16. Please list the leadership development you are considering for the future. In the next 5 yrs. Please take a broad view, e.g. mentoring, formal training, building networks	17. What is motivating you to consider this development?	18. In considering whether to do this development, who do you speak to?	19. In considering this development, which publications, websites or organisations do you use?	20. How easy has it been to find the information you have needed to consider this development? Please use a 5 point scale where 1 = very easy and 5 = very difficult
Business				
Community				
Industry				
Governance				



21. What (if anything) inhibits/stops your participation in leadership development (tick as many as are relevant for you -if more than one reason, asterix the most important).

Lack of confidence		Family commitment		Lack of time	
Lack of opportunities		Work/business commitments		Not interested	
Lack of support		Distance		Don't know how to start	
Seen as too hard		cost		Attitude towards female involvement	
Other(please state		Know it all		Can't find what I want	

22. If you left questions 16-20 blank, what might promote you to seek leadership development in the areas below?

Business/on farm
Community
Industry
Governance

24. Is there anything else about leadership that is not covered that you want to comment on?

Please enter your email if your wish to go into a draw for a complimentary Dairy Day Registration? .....

Would you be happy to be contacted by email for further follow up?

I would like to thank you for your time and the opportunity to co create an understanding of women's leadership requirements in the dairy industry.

Authors: Cathy Brown and Dr. Peter Blyde

