
Welcome to [ASK] - Always Seeking Knowledge!

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1. Quick [ASK]

Try considering yourself as a *holistic goal seeker* (the description of who you wish to be). Avoid describing yourself as a (*tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, candlestick maker* i.e. those things you 'do'). You can more readily see the risk of unexpected adverse outcomes in your life, and act accordingly.

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2. Welcome

Not long before Christmas I was talking to a NSW Agriculture Beef Cattle Officer, and asked him what types of people were doing best in the prevailing drought conditions. He replied firmly and quickly - 'people who are doing grazing planning and people who have invested in their education'. This issue addresses both subjects.

It is really encouraging to witness the results I have encountered of people who have firmly stuck to their grazing planning under the very difficult conditions many have - and continue - to face. Doing the planning is a very BIG thing for some. It is human nature to abandon the 'new' when under stress.

As the Aide Memoiré says, it is when drought conditions are building or present that that the planning is most important, and when it is most likely to be abandoned. I applaud those who have experienced the power of planning.

I came across a situation recently where the fellow involved had been resisting grazing planning. He was concerned it would increase his work load, and he already had enough on his plate. He was correct to resist undertaking any form of stock movement. The reason is simple - anyone who develops a grazing plan that is socially unsound (as an increased workload would have been for him) is creating a totally unsound plan. Equally, any plan that is biologically unsound would be totally unsound. It takes serious human creativity to create a sound grazing plan.

This is a timely reminder perhaps that Holistic Grazing Planning is neither rotational or cell grazing. It is the inspired use of the following tools: **Human Creativity passed through** the tools of **grazing**, **rest**, **animal impact** and perhaps even living organisms. The key is

the Human Creativity, as this is the tool that beats all others into a cocked hat. It is the tool not included in most alternative forms of grazing management.

In severe drought people may reach the planned end point of their drought reserve. This has occurred many times this year. The people who have planned have s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d their end point by making early decisions. One family near Gloucester made some early destocking decisions. They replanned their financial affairs by extending their overdraft facility, to accommodate the decreased revenue.

They got through to December with no feeding. Others around them where desperately feeding. They had significant relief rain, and were immediately able to restock with agistment stock. The financial plan is now back on track. Yes, they were luckier than many in that they had relief rains. The point is, they were flexible and ready for either relief or continuation of the dry conditions. At all times they knew their end point.

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3. A grand social experiment

Few people have yet grasped the significance of the grand social experiment that has been perpetrated upon the dairy industry in Australia. The consequences will be quite huge when eventually all the 'cows come home'.

Several years ago the industry was de-regulated nationally. During the long period of regulation, farmers mostly supplied milk to often quite small producer co-operatives. The government set prices, and of course in periods of drought were sympathetic to farmers rising costs. There was political trade off between the needs of the farmer and those keeping basic commodity prices as affordable as possible. Farmers usually struggled through droughts with some form of compensation for their cost.

Since deregulation, many things have changed. Most of the co-operatives have gone, or are going. They have been replaced by a few large companies, many multi-national. These days most milk is forward sold at a contracted price with severe penalties for non delivery. On face value that seems like a good arrangement for all parties - producer, processor, retailer and consumer.

However, farmers have seen purchased feed costs rise this year by between 300% and 500%. A 300 cow herd consumes around 900 tonnes of such feed, so each \$100 per tonne rise is around \$90,000 additional cost.

Here is the rub. Understandably, processors expects their contracts to be honoured. They rightly argue they have egotiated upstream contracts based on their downstream farmer contracts and that the price of feed is not their problem. I have no issue with this, even though right now, many farmers are delivering milk at a LOSS of between 10 and 12 cents per litre.

I refer you to Pp 8-9 of Mastering the Basics in the Financial Planning/Wealth Generation module. It is the section on 'Debt, Overhead, Risk and Scale'. Here are some extracts:

The key to survival in a world dominated by paper dollars is remaining nimble-able to shift quickly from one enterprise to another or even to sit out a bad market. In no industry is this more true where markets, **weather**, land prices, and **input costs** fluctuate drastically, and without warning.....Whether or not a small family farm can stay in the game turns on the balance of fixed and variable expenses and scale of production, and the deck is sometimes stacked. The most significant economies of scale in agriculture exist in the supporting industries-machinery, chemicals, **processing**, and advertising-not on the farm itself. John Deere profits most by making a big volume of very big combines. Cargill profits from handling grain by the trainload. Since ultimately their money comes from your solar dollars, they would like to persuade or force you to fit their pattern.

(You) the producer can win by holding onto solar dollars through creative marketing and keeping production flexible....If getting bigger means debt and inflexible capital investments, it will force you to play by rules written by multi-national , high volume industries, and they will win at your expense.

I have highlighted a couple of key points (as I see it). This is a classic case of unexpected adverse consequences of conventional decision making. Some will argue that it is simply the severity and widespread nature of this drought, and these were unpredictable. I am not sure about that!

So what really has gone wrong? In my view, several things. Firstly, dairy farmers have contractually abdicated their freedom to sit out a difficult market. Secondly, they have forgotten Robert Kiyosaki's basic business premise - if you are going to take a significant risk, somebody else must pay for it. These farmers are taking both the risk of adverse markets etc, and then paying for it when the event occurs. Not good business.

Thirdly and paramount, dairy farmers have long thought of their purpose as a 'dairy farmer'. This paradigm alone has set the seeds of destruction. A new paradigm is to think and believe about themselves that they are a **holistic goal seeker**. That simple change allows them the opportunity to sit back and **test** the action of dairy farming, asking 'Will it lead me towards my holistic goal?

If the concept of 'doing' a dairy passes that test, holistic goal seekers then test any number of ways to dairy farm (read here 'do' graphic design, do accountancy, do agronomy, do beef production, do wool production etc). The holistic goal allows people to envisage and describe how things *will look and feel for them* when the activities they choose to do are functioning properly. I'll bet no dairy farmer would willingly describe their current situation as how they wish to look and feel!!

What might be a better way of doing things? I do not pretend to be a marketing expert, but let me describe one dairy model I have seen, developed by an organic dairy producer selling his unique product at a premium price. The family remains a member of their co-operative. They physically sell their entire production to the co-op at the ruling price, and buy back from the co-op their daily needs. They process and market that milk themselves to their discerning customers, at their price. Every litre of excess production is sold as a commodity, and the majority is sold at a handsome premium, reflecting their relationship with their customers - and the cost of production. If the wheels fall off, they have no supply contract with the co-op, and no obligation to deliver their product to any customer at a loss. The customers pay the risk of increased costs of production.

My question is, how many people are caught in a marketing model designed to suit someone else's goal?? If you are one of them, are you happy to accept that outcome much longer? You will need to redesign your future, describing how YOU wish to look and feel!

Please re-read Pp 8 and 9, and in particular think through the two graphs shown there. Do they have relevance to your business? how do they make you look and feel?

Try considering yourself as a *holistic goal seeker* (the description of who you wish to be). Avoid describing yourself as a (*tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, candlestick maker* i.e. those things you 'do'). You can more readily see the risk of unexpected adverse outcomes in your life, and act accordingly.

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4. Update your Diary

Events we have planned include:

Monday, February 17, Quirindi, NSW	Introduction to Holistic Management
Thursday, February 20, Singleton, NSW	Overview
Tuesday, February 28, Perth, WA	Introduction to Holistic Management
Saturday, March 1, Gresford, NSW	Wealth Generation/Financial Planning
Monday, March 17, Wanaka, NZ	Introduction to Holistic Management

Friday, March 21, Taree, NSW	Introduction to Holistic Management
Monday, March 24, Comboyne, NSW	Overview
Friday, April 4, Gresford, NSW	Wealth Generation/Financial Planning

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Coaching (unashamed marketing spiel)

For many years our business has been coaching people in holistic goal formation, wealth generation planning and biological planning. This service is provided by regular phone schedule, by email, or in person at your location.

Successful people use a coach to stay on track. Importantly, in difficult times coaching often provides the critical difference between clarity and debilitating confusion.

Without caring help, it is all too easy to deviate from where you want to be - to some place else. We act as a 'process coach', letting you focus on the outcome you require, taking away the worries people so often experience - such as, 'Am I doing this the right way?' Coaching is an important part of working on your business rather than all the time in the business.

Email blward@holisticresults.com.au to discuss your coaching time.

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5. An important field-day

HDMA has organised a field day at Kooragang City Farm (KCF), part of a wetland in the mouth of the Hunter River, at Newcastle, NSW, and later at Newcastle University. There, a range of practitioners from both brittle and non-brittle environments will share their stories. The date is March 29th.

City Farm is a 150ha. part of a publicly funded \$10m project to restore the 1,500ha. Kooragang Island. Manager of KCF, Rob Henderson has chosen many ways regenerate this once sad environment of . Of particular interest is his decision to use cattle to rehabilitate both saline and fresh water degradation. I would rate this as a major project involving holistic decision-making in Australia, even though the total area grazed at the moment is relatively small. It flies in the face of conventional wetland management thinking.

The guest speakers in the afternoon at the University are:

Megan and Andrew Mosely, who farm 70,000ac. in a brittle environment at Cobar, producing meat goats and sheep, cattle and opportunity cropping. Several weeks ago Megan was runner-up in the prestigious ABC Rural Woman of the Year awards.

David and Mary Marsh, who principally produce wool on Allendale, near Cowra, NSW. David and Mary are members of a very active support structure in their region, and widely

regarded for their husbandry practices.

Margaret McMahon, a cattle producer from Clarence Town, in the lower Hunter Valley. Margaret is a lawyer by training and a 'refugee' from Sydney some years ago. She supplies stock to the City Farm. Margaret is particularly active in support activities in the Hunter Valley, and widely regarded and respected as a leader in her community.

Martin Babakhan, is a senior meteorologist with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, and is the Hunter District Meteorologist. He is also a highly acclaimed lecturer in aviation meteorology at Newcastle University and resident broadcaster on ABC local radio in the Hunter. His special area is El Nino, and the end of drought. He has predicted this drought to be finished by the end of March, so bring your gumboots, because he has a reputation of not getting it wrong.

Peter Howarth, well known to many of you, is a farmer with his wife, Judy, at Wombramurra, at Nundle NSW. Peter and Judy have applied their city business skills to agriculture and to their community. In recent years they have assisted Nundle to gain an excellent tourism profile, and several years ago constructed a woollen mill in the town. At the moment they are constructing with others a meat processing plant in Tamworth, to vertically integrate their beef production. This production was originally from Simmental and Devon stock, but is now largely composite in nature.

Concurrent with this field day will be the Annual General Meeting of Holistic Decision Making Association (Australia and NZ) Limited.

You will shortly receive full details of this field day and the AGM.

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6. Books and Materials you can use

"The Secret Life of Plants"
By peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird
ISBN 0 06 091587 0

The front cover announces: 'A fascinating account of the physical, emotional and spiritual relations between plants and animals'. That is hardly an adequate description of this book. It is a must read, along with its sister publication by the same authors, 'Secrets of the Soil'.

This book is applicable to both crop farmers and graziers. The basic premise is that plants respond (either with positive or negative outcomes for humans), to not only the actions of humans but also the thoughts (intent) of humans. Throughout its 373 pages are descriptions of a multitude of credible scientific experiment with plants. I use the word credible, as such well regarded and widely published scientists as Darwin and Voisin, and perhaps one hundred more, are extensively quoted.

The book stretches conventional credulity at times, but one always has the feeling of, 'What if they are right' If they are right, the basis of agriculture is likely to change dramatically in years to come, as agriculturalists come to grips with new paradigms.

I strongly recommend you put this book on your birthday reading list, at around \$A45.00. You will be fascinated and I expect moved in some way to become better in your natural environment. Whatever you do, do not treat this book as a recipe book - you know - apply 'this' and get 'that' result. You would be dissatisfied. This is holistic thinking in that it recognises the functioning of greater and lesser wholes together co-creating greater functionality for all of us.

By the way:

You can get this book from The Book Connection in Dubbo, NSW
Ph: 02 6882 3311 Fax: 02 6882 3311 or email orders@bookconnection.com.au
(Also ask them about their Mail Order Catalogue - it is terrific)
or
Scorpio Books in Christchurch, NZ
Ph: 03 379 2882 Fax: 03 379 2886 or email scorpbk@ihug.co.nz

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7. Quotes that mean something

'There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.'
-- Albert Einstein

A moment of choice is a moment of truth. It's the testing point of our character and competence.'
-- Stephen Covey

Dreams come a size too big so that we can grow into them. '
-- Josie Bisset'

'The kindest thing you can do for the people you care about is to become a happy, joyous person.'
--Brian Tracy

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This publication is intended as information and not advice. You should test any ideas contained herein towards your own holistic goal.

Regards

Bruce Ward