

**Welcome to [ASK] - Always Seeking Knowledge!
#16 - Finding the CommonPoint, 28 June 2004
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1. Quick [ASK]

Management Clubs are a long way removed from the odd Saturday meeting, kicking a bit of dirt here, chewing a piece of grass there, or checking a fence for power! They are not social clubs. It is gutsy stuff, and takes courage. Remember that the opposite of courage is conformity. Management Clubs require courage to both start and continue. They are a commitment of time and resources, and as one Club member noted, sometimes it is the last thing you want to do that day, yet when it is over, you realise how much poorer you would have been without it.

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2. Welcome

Sometimes technology is abused, and perhaps none is more widely abused at present than email. Apparently, more than 50% of email traffic worldwide is now considered to be 'spam', and much of the sick content appalls reasonable people.

Our Internet Service Provider now considers that an email sent simultaneously to more than 40 people is probably spam, and that's a problem when you send a newsletter to hundreds or thousands of people. In order to get around the problem, we are now using a new email program that keeps the ISP happy, but at the cost of dropping out colour (ie HTML capacity). So welcome to our new, 'plain jane' version of ASK! We are

researching a colour work-around.

There are a couple of important events coming up, in Western Australia and New Zealand (details further on), which I really do urge people to attend, because they are a forum to support you as you move through change. You embarked on our training because you knew that new knowledge meant a state of change. Don't give it up!

One more thing: Are you as annoyed as I am about the continuing efforts of well intentioned but misguided public servants who are spending significant sums of our money developing ways to reduce the methane output of ruminant animals doing their necessary rehabilitative work on our rangelands. What possesses people to think that natural rumen function is wrong? A quick look at 'Cause and Effect' tells an interesting story.

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3. Management Clubs

On April 1st this year the 12 Australians attending the South African Holistic Management® Conference at Tiger Kloof, near Vryberg experienced a shot in the arm regarding support groups.

Remarkably, the South African Conference was hosted by "Our Management Club" (OMC), a group of just six practitioner families who meet every 6 weeks, and have done so for some years now. What is even more remarkable is that the members of OMC have a geographic spread of more than 1,100 kms, and are located in several countries. They are committed (that terribly abused word) to making a difference in their lives and to their land.

Some of the participants in OMC are cattle breeders, some are irrigated croppers. Some are owner operators, and some are managers of corporate properties, yet they are willing to make the effort to work with each other, very much like an external board of directors. Dick and Judy Richardson are members of Our Management Club. Dick recently surveyed members of a number of other Clubs in southern Africa, looking for telltales of what constitutes success, and I want to share some of those findings.

But first it is important to define a Management Club. Dick described the situation like this: "A Management Club is a small group of businesses that opt to work in tandem with each other. They have planned meetings where all members of the club get involved in the management of each individual or business situation. This is not a Study Group. A Study Group looks primarily at figures impersonally, not the broader situation, and studies

the figures anonomously and in general. In Study groups the individuals must extract information which is pertinent to their situation, on their own. In Management Clubs on he other hand, personal input and personal scenarios are studied. In other words the Club works as a Board of Directors for each business. Each business does their own planning but it is then assessed as a group and recommendations and suggestions are made. This way individuals feel more secure, included, are motivated and gain support."

Once people undertake Holistic Management® training, part of their brain is permanently changed. This means they become more aware that the world around them is in a constant state of flux, as are the thought processes they now use to deal with these changes. As Dick noted, "People will always be in a state of discovery and testing (after all, every action has a reaction), so in the end, people need some sort of support mechanism for this flux, or they tend to fear what is different and go back to what they know. This is often disastrous - like taking your sword to a gunfight because you are unsure of the value of the gun!"

Quite clearly Management Clubs are a long way removed from the odd Saturday meeting, kicking a bit of dirt here, chewing a piece of grass there, or checking a fence for power! They are not social clubs. It is gutsy stuff, and takes courage. Remember that the opposite of courage is conformity. Management Clubs require courage to both start and continue. They are a commitment of time and resources, and as one Club member noted, sometimes it is the last thing you want to do that day, yet when it is over, you realise how much poorer you would have been without it.

Most Clubs seem to have either 3 or 4 businesses, several have 6 members, and there is one with 7 members. Distance is not the critical factor. Finding people who are compatible is the key factor, but this does not mean they must be in the same business. Diversity is, as always, vitally important. One African Club has been careful to include a member who has no exposure to Holistic Management®. Most Clubs have membership drawn from considerable distances - in the order of some hundreds of kilometres, and the successful Clubs tend to naturally include spouses. It was clear that one dysfunctional member is sufficient to pull a Club down, so be prepared to form a strategy for how to deal with this early on. Tough for the dysfunctional member, but even tougher on the others unless they are pulled into line or invited to leave.

Meeting frequency is critical. Clubs that meet only 4 times per year tend to struggle, but there are exceptions to this, whilst those that meet every 4 or 6 weeks seem to be most effective. The most successful Clubs have a firm program. Most have allocated two meetings per year to grazing, two to

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financial planning, one to social issues, and one to land planning. A tour is also often planned as an additional event. Dates are set up to a year in advance. Meeting places are rotated. Meeting time varies between one and two days per session, but are constant in pattern, and as mentioned, are pre-planned.

The planning is not done during a Management Club meeting. Success comes when you bring your 'completed' financial plan, grazing plan or land plan as appropriate, and expose it to the caring scrutiny of others. In defending it, there is often considerable learning, even for the most skilled.

It was clear that people should avoid developing Club projects. These can distract from the purpose and actually overtake and become more important than the needs of the individuals involved. Stick to the principles of Holistic Management. Getting help from a mentor during the startup phase is invaluable.

So, there you have it. Suzie and I have since become involved in our own Management Club, comprising three businesses. Our geographic spread is some 600 kms., and none of us are in the same industry.

If you would like a full transcript of Dick's speech, give me a call (02) 9929 5568, and I will send it to you.

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4. Update your Diary

WA - July 10 & 11, Waddi Springs Resort, Badgingarra

Whole Farm Management in conjunction with RCS are presenting "Families into the Future". The focus is succession planning and strengthening the family business.

If you are in WA, I URGE YOU NOT TO MISS THESE DAYS.

Talk to Rob Harper on (08) 9651 4092 or email rtharp@wn.com.au

NZ - August 16 & 17, Christchurch and then a field trip

Day 1 of the NZ Annual Muster will be held in Christchurch. Day 2 is a field trip in North Canterbury, looking at some startling fertiliser management options. Again, like the sand-gropers, I URGE YOU NOT TO MISS THESE DAYS.

Talk to Alison MacKenzie on (03) 572 4411 or email alisonmackenzie@xtra.co.nz, or

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John King on joking@clear.net.nz

Aussies are urged to attend - there will still be snow only 70kms away (Mt Hutt) at the time.

As you know, change is a process not an event, and it is great seeing grass roots practitioners promoting grass roots material supporting change.

Support Groups - can you let both ourselves and Ann Hodgens, editor of HDMA's 'Impact' know of your dates, so we can each let others know. Email tricketty@bigpond.com

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5. Coaching and policy

Policies are used to either solve an existing problem, or to avoid a future problem. They apply in every aspect of life. Policies are not a government domain.

Recently we have worked with people developing policies covering:

- What to do if adverse climate change is real - or not
- inter-generational transfer of a business
- relocation of a business
- development of off-property investment
- bush fire management
- bull acquisition in a very large herd
- disposal of land under a government program

What problems do you face?

What problems you want to avoid?

The Holistic Management[®] policy mode is an invaluable tool in addressing most issues. Give us a call.

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

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6. Books and Materials you can use

"E=mc²"

David Bodanis

I really enjoyed this excellent little book by David Bodanis. It is a

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story about the lives of many people who each contributed part of the knowledge that enabled Einstein to pull together his famous equation. Those people included Gallileo, Newton, Voltaire, and many, many others. Each were very colourful people in their own right.

The book is written almost as a novel (which it is not), and it always remains light hearted and fun. You won't pass an exam in quantum physics once you have read it, but who wants to, anyway? You will learn a lot of interesting material about how this simple equation impacts our daily lives, why splitting the atom depends on this equation, and why any future energy sources we might discover will need to know about it as well, and much, much more.

Bodanis gives a short precis of the meaning of each of the 5 characters making up this most famous equation. Then he leads us through the lives of the aforementioned historic figures, revealing their contribution to the knowledge of the world.

Einstein himself was a simple person, and only a few people recognised his skill prior to the unveiling of his equation. But he exhibited that characteristic of leadership and vision - dedication to his task until it was done. Interestingly, for many years after he proposed the theory it was impossible to test it, as the technology to accurately measure the progress of atoms travelling at or approaching the speed of light took some time to develop.

A good read. Possibly best if you can find it in the library, in either soft or hard cover.

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

"The best advisers, helpers and friends, always are not those who tell us how to act in special cases, but who give us, out of themselves, the ardent

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spirit and desire to act right, and leave us then, even through many blunders, to find out what our own form of right action is."

-- Phillip Brooke

"Time forks perpetually towards innumerable futures."

-- Jorge Luis Borges (The Garden of Forking Paths)

"A long and countless succession of such choices makes the world what it is, and not some other place."

-- Philip Ball (Critical Mass)

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

-- Stephen Covey

"The secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for."

-- Dostoyevsky

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8. Joke

Our thanks this time to Gail Guthrie, WA.

Marriage changes passion. Suddenly you're in bed with a relative.

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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