

## **Finding YOUR focus: What's driving you?**

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The most valuable asset you have in your business is ...YOU! The biggest liability to your business can also be ...YOU! What you spend your energy on can make or break your business. So, what are the most important things you need to spend your energy on to ensure you are operating at your peak and therefore able to manage your dairy business for a strong future?

### **What motivates you?**

Have you ever been drilling with a hand drill whose battery is about empty? It's slow going and requires heaps more energy to get the job done. Working in an unmotivated state is much the same. Latest psychological studies suggest that people who are in a positive mental state and physically fit are more productive, make better decisions and are happier people. Sounds ideal, but how do we get there.

- **Look after your body**

Stay fit, eat well, exercise, relax and rest. When things get tight our tendency is to work more and look after ourselves less, which is not sustainable in the long term. Short bursts are achievable but your ability to sustain productive levels of input will decline over time. We need to work smarter not harder.

- **Celebrate achievement**

Achievement is a great motivator. But how often do we actually set goals, and celebrate when we have achieved these goals? Setting SMART Goals, (ie Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) is a proven way to keep yourself both focused and motivated.

- **Aim to influence**

Ensure that you have avenues both on the farm and off where you can influence change to things that are important to you. This may be on the board of the local UDV or managing a young farmer doing his apprenticeship.

- **Created for friendship**

Often when things are tight we work longer hours and choose to not participate in activities deemed as not essential to the running of the farm. Often we miss the social factor, and start to get unmotivated and resentful of all the time we spend working.

Don't miss the opportunity to go to field days, sports events, church or family gatherings; they are important for keeping you motivated and productive.

### **Is there an elephant in your dairy?**

Another sapper of motivation is worry. Have you got an elephant in your dairy: something that you know is of concern and can have a big impact on your business, but you just don't want to look at it?

If you have children, you will know that the monster under the bed only comes out when the light is off! Our problems and concerns are much the same. We can reduce

our worry by shining the big torch of investigation on them. For example, if cash flow is an issue, get a budget done. Concerned about feeding the cows? Seek some advice from a trusted advisor. Elephants don't give milk, so get them off your farm; they are wasting valuable feed for the cows that make you the profit!

### **Focus your energy on what you can control**

Everyone has a limited amount of mental energy, and where we focus that energy will have a huge impact on the success of your business. Do you know what you can do to improve your profitability the most?

What is in your sphere of influence? Do you spend time thinking about, and complaining about things you can not change like the price of milk or lack of rain? In his book called '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' Steven Covey suggests that highly effective people focus their attention and energy on things that they can control. You can have a huge influence over the amount of grass you grow and consume, and this is the single biggest driver of profit. So take time to focus your energy on maximising the fundamentals which are well within your control

### **Keep a long term perspective**

The decisions you make today will have an impact in the future. It's an unavoidable fact. Short term decisions to ease cash flow issues such as not feeding cows properly or putting fertiliser out, will impact on our ability to make a profit at a later point, either this season or the next.

**Ask yourself: In five years time will I be glad I made this decision?**

#### **Key Messages:**

- \*Understand what motivates you and keep doing these things.
- \*How you deal with stress can have a big impact on your performance.
- \*Don't let worry control you. Get rid of the white elephants.
- \*Focus your energy on things you can control and impact.
- \*Keep a long term perspective.
- \*Ask yourself: In five years time will I be glad I made this decision?