

SMASH Strategic Planning Seminar Notes

**Lynaire Ryan, Business Developer DairyNZ, Joyce Brown SMASH farmer
Morrinsville and Whangarei cluster groups, autumn 2012**

*The 2011 SMASH conference included a very successful session on strategic planning, using DairyNZ's **QuickPlan**. SMASH invited Lynaire Ryan to lead another session as a follow-up to this. The following are the notes from the focus groups' meetings, held in Morrinsville and Whangarei in autumn 2012.*

There were 3 main topics for the day:

- Develop your own bucket list.
- Strategic planning using DairyNZ's QuickPlan.
- Using the Decision Matrix to make better decisions.

Develop your own Bucket List

Have you ever watched the movie Bucket List which features two older gentlemen who have been diagnosed with terminal illnesses? They write a list of all the things that they want to achieve in their lives before they kick the bucket. It is a great movie to watch.

At the seminar each person wrote their own bucket list. We decided to write things we wished to achieve in the decade, rather than think about kicking the bucket. So may I encourage you to get out a blank piece of paper, number it from 1 to 10, or print off the "Bucket List" page in the Appendices (below). Then spend 15 minutes writing down things you would really like to achieve in the next ten years.

Some great examples were shared:

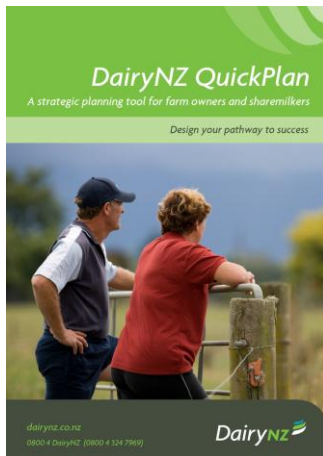
- Plant some fruit trees
- Go on a 6 week world trip
- Ride in a limousine
- Organise a family trip to Rarotonga
- Plant one tree every birthday from now on
- Walk the Routeburn track
- Sponsor a child through World Vision
- Go fishing from a kayak

So draw up your bucket list, pin it up on the wall, and make it happen!

Strategic Planning using DairyNZ's QuickPlan

DairyNZ's QuickPlan was developed in response to a request from SMASH. If you attended the 2011 SMASH Conference you would have seen a copy of QuickPlan. It is a really useful booklet which guides you through developing a plan for your life within two hours. You can ring 0800 4 DairyNZ (0800 43247969) or order a copy through the website <http://www.dairynz.co.nz/page/pageid/2145866560/Career>. There are two booklets – one for owners and sharemilkers, and one for employees. Make sure you order the correct one! Work through the booklet to develop your vision, goals and actions. It has about 200

examples for you to select from, which makes your planning very easy, you don't have to start with a blank sheet.



QuickPlan for farm owners and sharemilkers



Quickplan for farm employees

At the seminar many SMASH farmers shared how they had used the QuickPlan they developed at the 2011 Conference and found it really beneficial. Going through the planning process helped farmers clarify what was really important to them, and put a plan in place to make that happen. Planning gives direction, confidence and makes dreams become reality.

Example Planning Wheel



Using the Decision Matrix to make better decisions

The Decision Making Matrix is a useful tool to help make decisions. Whether it is decisions about where you would like to live in the future, how you want to operate your business, where you would like to go on holiday, planning your retirement, or what high school you might choose for your children, it is a useful process. A decision making matrix simply lists a number of criteria which are important to you in evaluating a decision, and then gives you room to rank how the various options meet your criteria. This encourages great discussion about options. A blank template and an example template are available from http://www.dairynz.co.nz/page/pageid/2145864398/Are_you_in_charge_of_your_direction or see the Appendices (below).

Case study

SMASH farmers Joyce and Warwick Brown shared their example of using DairyNZ's Decision Making Matrix to make a decision on their farming future. Over the past three years they had been wondering what path to take with their family farm. As owner-operators of a 200 cow unit they were ready to retire from the day-to-day farming operations. They considered:

- employing a manager - "still need to drive the business",
- selling the farm - "not so keen on this – would prefer to stay in farming",
- grazing heifers - "initially the most likely option",
- running dry stock - "uncertain returns",
- engaging a 50:50 sharemilker - "don't have the housing or infrastructure for this",
- engaging a contract milker,
- staying the same as now - "would like to reduce the physical workload".

Joyce commented on how these options had been going round in their heads for 3 years, and they had pretty much decided to sell the herd and go for the heifer grazing option. Then they heard about the Decision Making Matrix and decided to print it off the website and discuss the options fully. They were quite amazed when they found the 50:50 sharemilker option came out as the preferred option for them – the best fit for what they wanted in life. So instead of thinking "We can't have a sharemilker because we don't have the housing and infrastructure on the farm" they started to think "What do we need to do to make a sharemilker work in our situation?" Using the Decision Making Matrix really helped them fully discuss the various options, and then make a good choice.

In summary...

Each event was attended by approximately 30 people and was an enjoyable opportunity for each participant to work on what they wanted to achieve in life, and mix with other like-minded SMASH farmers in a warm and friendly environment. A great event – so watch out for the next one.

Appendices

My bucket list...



A series of ten horizontal dotted lines, each corresponding to one of the numbered bucket icons, providing space for writing.



Decision Making Matrix



How well does this opportunity rank or fit with your preference for each criteria? Rank on a scale from 1 (poor fit) to 5 (best fit):

Criteria	Options					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fit with vision and long-term goals?						
Enjoyment level - is it something you love doing?						
Time involvement required, initially and ongoing, at strategic, management and operational levels?						
Investment - returns, cash surpluses and capital gain?						
Risk level - 1 Financial and business risk e.g. 'debt to asset' ratio?						
Risk level - 2 Knowledge, skills and experience in this area?						
Will you be working independently or with partners or staff?						
Matches your personal strengths and weaknesses?						
Investment choices - on or off farm, local or overseas investment, passive or active?						
Does it open up further opportunities? e.g. scope for development, building new contacts, learning opportunities						