

TIM HARSLETT

***“THE CHALLENGE OF RURAL
LEADERSHIP”***

4th – 16th NOVEMBER 2007

HOSTED BY: DUCHY COLLEGE

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FARMERS

THE UNIVERSITY OF PYLMOUTH

PERSONAL THANKS TO: JETSET TRAVEL GRIFFITH

NUFFIELD AUSTRALIA

Jetset 



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1. ITINERARY

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURD/
Case study management Farms	Creative thinking	Case study	Strategic management	Strategic	Strategic manager compute
	Case study	Organic farming	Agribusiness management	Case study	simulatic
		Press releases	Brand development visit to Lloyd Maunder	Gene technology	
	Creative thinking	Case study			
Group work on case study	International Perspective	Grain marketing	Case study	Presentation of case study to Alvis	Crazy nig in Exeter

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	Computer simulation presentation	Music debrief	Leadership	TV studios	Interviews
What is leadership	PR	Leadership	Motivation		
	Introduction to leadership		Staying alive	Radio studios	Course evaluation
Business strategy	Music as a metaphor		Drama skills		
TV presenter presentations		Military leadership	Generational leadership	Changing media	Course dinner

2. INTRODUCTION

“The Challenge of Rural Leadership” course has been running annually for 12 years. It is put together for the Worshipful Company of farmers by Duchy College. This year there were 18 participants from various locations around the UK, one from South Africa and myself. Peoples’ backgrounds are related to agriculture, but only about half were farmers.

Nuffield Australia has been sending one participant each year for some time now. Jetset Griffith sponsored the air ticket. I had to pay for the course myself. Duchy College does offer the course at a discount rate of £2000 to the Australian Nuffield Scholar. I would say that Nuffield Australia didn’t specify the financial agreement at all well during the application process, but I chose to take the approach that the course is worth the price.

I chose to travel over 2 weeks early and do some of my own travelling around England for my Nuffield Scholarship. I had arranged some contacts myself before I left and then the UK Nuffield Director, John Stones arranged some contacts for me to fill in the rest of my time.

The course was held at the Passage House Hotel in Kingsteignton, Devon. The location is fairly obscure. The nearest train station is Newton Abbot (about a £10 taxi) which is on the line to Plymouth. I had hired a car during the lead up to the course so I ended up returning that to Exeter Airport, then catching a bus to Exeter and Kingsteignton.

The group is forced to stick together for the 2 weeks so there is an opportunity to make some good friends. There is a bar in the hotel so it would have been seen as un-Australian of me not to regularly visit that.

The course is very intensive. Sessions start at 9am and most days run to 9 or 10pm. The first week was based around a case study of a business. We were given the financial details of a company and then as a group we had to look into all aspects of the business and come up with a strategic management plan that was presented to the managers. There were sessions looking into strategic management. The second week was dedicated to leadership and media.

I would imagine in the future that the Australian Nuffield representative will not be the only foreigner attending the course. It is healthy to have some foreign inputs into the course, so I made an effort to try and be controversial. My plan was to provoke thought into why British agriculture is in the state it is and why they continue to do things the way they do. It was very well received and encouraged.

3. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

On the first day we were taken to a dairy farm that also has a sizeable cheese factory and farm shop selling a variety of produce. We are given a full day of insights into the business by the owners and various managers of the business. They also gave us detailed financial data about each sector of their business. The rest of the week mainly focused on analysing the data and coming up with recommendations for their future. We then made a group presentation at the end of the week to the owners and managers.

The theme of the project was more related to strategic management rather than leadership, but it was relevant to the overall idea of the course. It would be an interesting exercise to do the same thing to my own business. We were encouraged to think about why things were being done the way they were and justify them financially and rationally.

4. LEADERSHIP

4.1 WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER (Steve Fisher)

The group was asked to make a list of traits of a good leader. The list was extensive. Steve then chose a few leaders that everyone knew. Hitler, Thatcher, Ghandi, etc. There were various traits that did not fit these leaders. We were then asked to disregard these traits that make a good leader and consider them as tools for making a good leader. Consider the following as the characteristics of a good leader.

4.2 3 KEYS TO LEADERSHIP

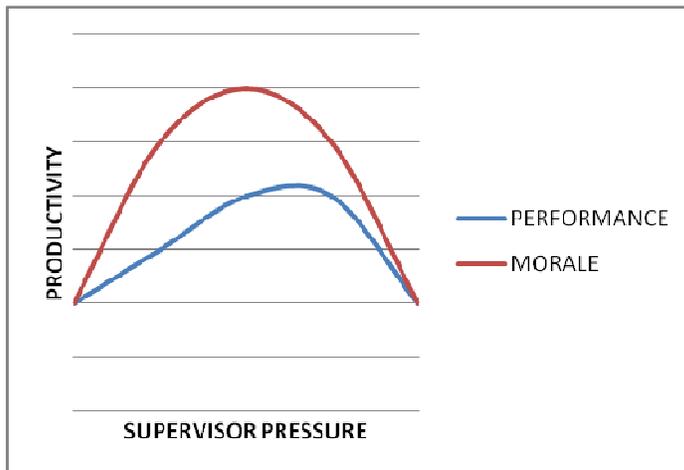
- HELICOPTER The ability to look from above to get a clear picture
- IQ Be above average IQ, but not massively better
- GOOD COMMUNICATOR Remembering communication is 2 way

Then it is important to THINK about which leadership tool you use and when to use them.

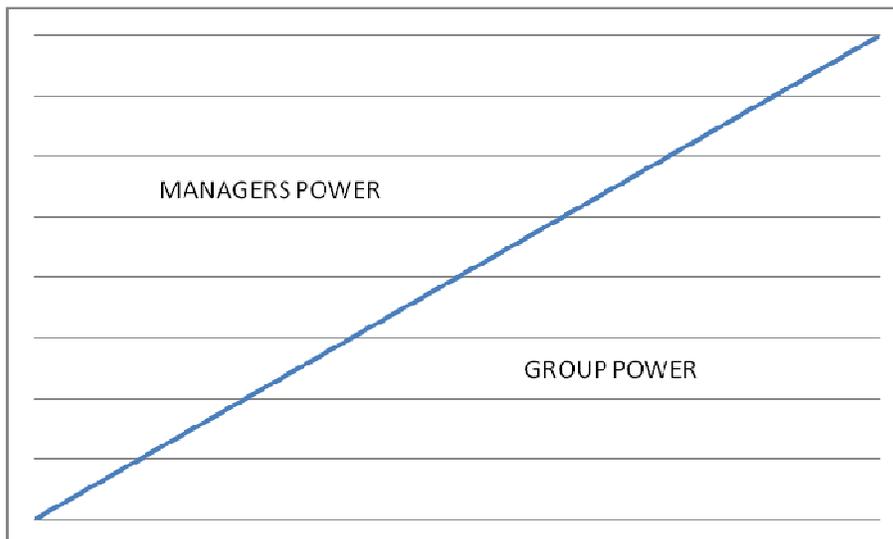
4.3 TYPES OF PROBLEMS & TYPES OF LEADERSHIP REQUIRED (Keith Grint)

- CRISIS Requires a spontaneous response. eg 9/11
- TAME Has a known response and management strategy. eg fire evacuation
- WICKED No defined method of response. eg war on terrorism

4.4 LEADERSHIP (Steve Fisher)



When dealing with permanent staff a supervisor shouldn't push pressure beyond peak morale, because beyond this point long term performance will be jeopardised. When dealing with casual staff, there is a trade off that needs to be assessed by leadership to decide how much to push performance. That is you may be able to push the casual staff a little harder past peak morale for short term increased performance.



I decide	We discuss	We discuss	We discuss	Do what
	I decide	we decide	you decide	you want

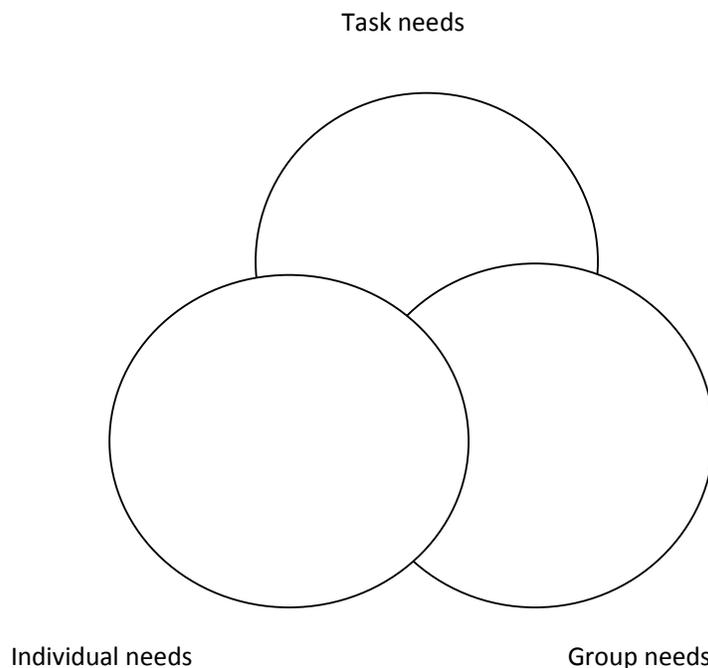
The more capable the staff, the further to the right you can move. For that to be able to work the management style must adjust. ie. If group power is increased, then management power must decrease.

There are 4 basic styles of leadership to fit this graph:

- High task input, low relationship with working group
- High task input, high relationship with working group
- Low task input, high relationship with working group
- Low task input, low relationship with working group

From a survey I was found to be high task input, high relationship with working group. And fairly inflexible to my movement between the styles. This may be a characteristic to work on.

4.5 FUNCTIONAL LEADERSHIP



A functional leader has the responsibility for the 3 interlocking areas. Actions taken by the leader effect 1 or both of the other areas. The 3 circles need to be kept in balance. It is possible to concentrate on task needs at particular times (eg harvesting needs doing), so long as the leader re-addresses the balance upon completion.

To achieve a task a leader needs to: check the task is clear, understand how it fits into overall business plan, plan how to achieve task, decide what materials and equipment will be needed, control the progress of work, assess progress and compare to original plan.

To meet the group needs the leader needs to: set and maintain group objectives and standards, involve the whole group in achieving the task, maintain group unity and morale.

To meet individual needs the leader needs to: set expectations, train, allow a sense of achievement in job, set a suitable challenge, give recognition for achievement, allow feeling of responsibility.

4.6 3 MAJOR LIFESTYLES

- PERSONALISTIC – direction from within, what I think is right or need, freedom to decide, responsibility to self
- SOCIOCENTRIC – works off discussion and agreement with others, adheres to interpersonal commitments and group norms, decides by group consensus, responsible to peers
- FORMALISITIC – direction from authorities, abides by rules, motivated by money/status/grades/prestige/advancement, responsible to super ordinate powers, desire to comply

We did a questionnaire to see which profile we fit. I was personalistic, as were most of the group. That is not surprising as the group was chosen for their leadership and drive to achieve.

4.7 BELBIN'S ROLES IN GROUPS

We did a questionnaire to see which of the following we fit in.

- PLANT – innovators and inventors and can be highly creative, provide ideas, usually prefer to work by themselves with some distance to others, use imagination, introverted, react strongly to criticism/praise, etc. The main use of a plant is create new ideas.
- RESOURCE INVESTIGATORS – quick off the mark extroverts, good communicators in and out of company, negotiators, explore new opportunities, good at picking up others new ideas, find out what is available and what can be done, enthusiasm comes from others.
- MONITOR EVALUATOR – serious minded, immune from being overenthusiastic, think things over, critical thinkers, shrewd judgement.
- CO-ORDINATORS – make others work to shared goal, trusting, confident, delegate, exploit individual talent.
- SHAPERS – motivated, need for achievement, aggressive extroverts, strong drive, desire to win, assertive, may lack interpersonal understanding.
- IMPLEMENTERS – practical, common sense, organisers, self control, hard work, systematic, loyal to company, may lack spontaneity and show signs of rigidity.
- TEAM WORKERS – supportive, sociable, concerned about others, flexible, diplomatic, may be indecisive.
- COMPLETER-FINISHERS – follow through with attention to detail, won't start unless they can finish, introverted, may be intolerant, don't delegate.

I scored highest in implementer, followed by shaper and coordinator. I scored nothing in plant and low in team worker and completer/finisher. To become a well rounded leader it is good to excel in at least a couple of areas, but be balanced in the rest.

We also did a survey to try and isolate what our own personal blockages are that may inhibit us from becoming better leaders. My most obvious was lack of creativity. That matches up well with my low plant score in the Belbin test. Perhaps that is not a coincidence and therefore it is something I could work on.

4.8 MOTIVATION (Steve Fisher)

We spent a morning talking about motivation and the different techniques that may be applied. It is clear that each situation needs to be treated on its own merits. For example, how a leader motivates a group of unskilled labour compared to skilled labour is very different. A good leader will be able to sum up this situation and identify what would most effectively motivate the group.

Quite some time was spent trying to stress that money and financial bonuses are not necessarily a sustainable method of motivating a group. Sustainable factors for motivation are often allowing sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility, the work itself and potential advancement.

4.9 STAYING ALIVE (Richard Soffe)

Richard gave us a presentation to keep us thinking about maintaining balance in our personal lives. It was not a session that was easy to take notes about. After reflecting on the session I couldn't help but think that other people value their self time opportunities much more than I do. I suspect that is mostly because I am single and don't have a partner and children to devote time to. I also feel that the English way of life may be a little more hectic than the Australian farm boys'. None the less, when I do enter a serious relationship, how I utilize my personal time may need to be re-evaluated.

4.10 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP

During the week we were exposed to a few different practical methods of how leadership is used. We were given a session on singing and then attended a choir practice. We had a session on drama skills. And we had a presentation from a current military Colonel. We were encouraged to analyse the different methods leadership being used and then tried to link that to our own situations. They also made for some interesting sessions.

5. MEDIA

There was considerable time devoted to trying to improve our media skills. We looked at press releases, radio and TV interviews.

5.1 PRESS RELEASES

The main points to take away from this session:

- A catching title
- From the first paragraph the reader should be able to determine what the article is about while keeping it as short as possible.
- The article should only be 4-5 paragraphs in total
- The press release should take a side to an argument. I feel this is an English style of journalism and don't think that is necessarily the case in Australia

5.2 RADIO

From a press release we wrote we were given a radio interview. This was done by a professional journalist and he deliberately tried to put us under pressure. The whole group was interviewed and we went through each one analysing them. The result was that we should go into an interview with 3 main points to try and get across. It is important not to let the interviewer drift from these and don't let them try and engage in a story as the point of the message will be lost.

5.3 TV

We spent a morning at a local TV news station looking at how news is made and put to air. We also got a session presented to us by a news reader. The main things to remember here are

57% Body language

36% Tone

7% What you say

Most TV/radio interviews are 1 min. 120 words/min. Therefore must be concise and resonate with audience. Speak as though you are talking to an averagely intelligent 12 year old.

6. CONCLUSION

The course was a worthwhile experience. It was challenging and intensive. Perhaps when I am asked what I learnt from the course it will be difficult to define. But I am sure that I have learnt from it and because we were challenged to think it should have made me change the way I see some things now.

The people chosen to attend are very competent in their own businesses. I made some great friends out of the experience.

L to R: John Alvis (project farmer), Olivia, Casper, Claire, Martin, Alison, Annette, Paul, Steve (lecturer), Roger, Ian, Rob (lecturer), Tim, Peter, Chris, Peter (Worshipful Company), Victoria, Tim, Kevin, Rory, Richard, James & Jonny Alvis (project farmer)