

# Forward Thinking for 2006

To judge how well a farming business is equipped to capture opportunity into the future, I've learnt to ask these three questions:

1. *How much of your time is spent on holiday?*
2. *What are you reading?*
3. *Who is your mentor?*

I've found those three questions to be significant indicators of business success. The first creates space for creative thinking; the second provides 'food for thought' and the third proves your goals are possible through contact with someone who has already achieved what you are trying to do.

## **Time Out**

With the holiday season rapidly approaching, it can be a real juggle to ensure your team gets a suitable break. Too often I see employers take up the slack and put their own recreational and family needs on hold while they allow everyone else to recharge their batteries.

The 'creation' component of 'recreation' is a critical reason for business owners getting time out. It's only by getting away from the day to day demands of management that you will see appreciate the big picture of what's going on in your business, your industry and economy. Sadly, I've seen too many who are so bogged down in their production systems they have missed opportunity for expansion or investment that would have paid much faster dividends.

Getting away from the coalface offers an opportunity to look at life differently and mix with people in other industries and lifestyles to get ideas on how you could work smarter to achieve your goals.

Most importantly, it provides an opportunity for you as a family to reflect on your values and really get in touch with what matters and come back to the New Year with focus and enthusiasm. Making time off 'not negotiable' is step one in building new opportunity for next season.

## **Recommended Reading**

There are a number of excellent books that make great summer time reading to complement your recreational mode. Too many to list here, I have named the ones I would recommend on our website. They offer different insights to personal and business management. Each provides an excellent resource of ideas and thinking that can be adapted for your operation.

From a chapter a day through to a quick read of the cover in a bookshop, making time to read can be enough to spark your ideas. Don't rely on your own inventiveness – use the thoughts of those who have put a lifetime into developing theories and techniques for business success as raw material for creative power.

## **Who is your Mentor?**

There are very few people on this planet trying to do something that no one has ever done before. If you have a business strategy you are striving to implement or a problem you can't see past, getting good advice from someone who has walked your path makes real sense. I'm grateful to those who continue to give me their time and ideas to support what may otherwise have been daunting business objectives. I've found most successful people owe some of their success to someone who helped them that way. For that reason, many are more than happy to pass on their knowledge and insights for little return.

I still hear comments about professionals who while they may do a good job of their core service lack imagination and inventiveness to spark new ideas in their clients. If you are finding this is the case with your professional team, think about finding a mentor who can meet this need and accelerate success.

Most of this is about accepting you alone are not the source of all knowledge and wisdom. As a business operator, you will often be too caught up in assumptions and emotions that reduce your ability to make the right calls. An independent view from someone who has done the hard yards just like you will sharpen your focus and often cut through the fog surrounding business options.

I wish you well for 2006 and trust that your success will in some part reflect the time you have taken over the next few weeks to recreate yourself, your future and your relationships.

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