

## **Its not what you know – its who you know!**

The more time I spend consulting to farmers and driving our own operation, the more I realise that success is as much about access to timely, competent, credible professional advice as it is about technical and management abilities.

This is because growth expands the diversity of challenges and opportunities. As a business grows the issues become more complex and the range of expertise required broadens. The need for professional input moves beyond the traditional accounting, banking, legal and consultancy advice.

Success is increasingly dependent on working with professionals with proven ability and knowledge. Part of making progress through "who you know" is confidence in their capacity to deliver advice and outcomes that not only achieves business objectives but also leaves all involved better informed and less dependent on them in the future.

Choosing the right professionals is not about cost saving - its about cost effectiveness. Quality advice can sound expensive at the outset. Working with top operators has taught me that the knowledge they pass on enables clients to deal with similar issues in future with less reliance on them.

My philosophy has always been that part of the success of any professional is how effectively they educate and empower clients to be self sufficient in their area of expertise. It could be argued that a good professional in strives to make themselves redundant.

The opposite of this is a professional relationship based on dependence. Its like a manager who cannot delegate - no one grows in that environment.

These sentiments partly reflect the diversity of projects I'm involved in these days. Rather than the maintenance roles I previously had in my clients businesses, I find myself more project focused. Recent assignments have included managing the sale and subdivision of farming units, in-depth team building and staff management, rapid response to changing council planning rules as well as ongoing challenge to clients at a strategic and personal level.

Over the years I have assembled a network of professional contacts that I can call on to understand issues and react quickly. A key benefit of these relationships is easy access to them so we can get the timing of important decisions right.

The "stable" of accounting and tax specialists, valuers, surveyors, planning consultants, engineers, real estate agents, psychologists and legal experts I have access to on behalf of my clients is fundamental to bring these projects together.

Staff

I have always believed you should choose your professionals carefully -- you are likely to work with them for a long time. Selection should be based on reputation, accessibility, and the capacity to simply explain their area of expertise.

Choose people who can work in a team. I have always promoted a multi discipline approach to strategy and decision making. The synergies of professionals who bring

their various perspectives to a team decision can be very powerful. I'm also aware of the risk of "professional jealousy". There is no room for a defensive or protective approach. Effective professionals will need to function as a part of team and embrace the challenges or criticism of like mind professionals without feeling threatened.

If you are not sure who to choose ask someone you trust for a recommendation. Success tends to mix with success -- so those who are competent in one area are likely to have contacts with equal competence and others.

Developing professional networks is another of the foundation steps to business growth and sharing the load in a satisfying way.

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