

## Spend more time working 'on' the business

The industry strategy launched at the recent HortNZ conference presents a challenge to every individual horticultural business to examine it can grow the value of its products and services.

Growers should take the opportunity to run a "health check" over their business says HortNZ president Andrew Fenton. A "strategy workbook" has been developed to help with this.

At conference speaker Jamie Sinclair, a culture change specialist from a New South Wales consultancy, told delegates that business owners and managers need to view themselves as leaders.

He defines leadership in business as: working to create a sustainable future, build high-performance teams and prepare future leaders – a "leadership pipeline". One trap is spending too much time working "in" the business and not enough time working "on" the business, planning and monitoring performance against plans. "A leader needs to think about the future of the organisation and then get on and create it."

He advised growers to "hire harder and manage easier, rather than just hiring anyone with a pulse", that is, ensure they have staff who are well-suited to the role and the business in the first place.

He encourages owners and managers to communicate with workers about the business strategy: "give them credit that they can be interested in it and motivated by it".

The most useful way to describe a business culture is in terms of behaviours. "List the very best behaviours that you've seen from employees over the past year – and then list the negative ones – then you will understand your business' culture." The business culture will have an impact on staff motivation and the organisation's ability to achieve its goals.

Analysing the business' customer base is also important, particularly in difficult times (see side-bar page 12). "While it is tempting to batten down the hatches, make sure your customers know you're thinking about them. You need to have meaningful dialogue with your customers so that you understand what their priorities are and how they fit with yours."

A particular customer might emphasise:

- Price: cheap, value for money, or
- Quality: zero defects, future legacy, or
- Service: that generates quality and value, or
- Timeliness: on time and 24–7 responsiveness, or
- Relationships: trust, integrity, emotional connection

### The one-page plan

By Jamie Sinclair of Peter Berry Consultancy (pictured)

Ask yourself:

1. Our top 3 priorities for the coming year are ...?
2. The most pressing leadership issues are ...?
3. Our planning cycle could be improved by ...?
4. The culture could be improved by ...?
5. Our key people challenges are ...?
6. The key process/efficiency challenges are ...?
7. Our key customer challenges are ...?

Then, use your answers to fill in the following table:



Big Picture Goals (Revenue, Growth, EBIT, Market Share)	
<b>Growing the Business</b> New Markets Cross-selling Networks/Alliances Pricing Whole of customer	<b>Improving the Business</b> Employee performance/ training Sub-contractor performance New technology Process efficiency Productivity measures
Culture Statement	
Positive behaviours	Negative behaviours

Measurement helps performance, because "what gets measured gets improved". Typical efficiency or productivity issues are:

1. Better quality
2. People/labour
3. New technology
4. Overheads/budget
5. Supplier performance
6. On time delivery
7. Better time management
8. Less red tape/bureaucracy
9. Reduced cycle time
10. Better equipment/resources

Sinclair suggests leaders work with a template to produce a "one-page plan" to guide development of their business (see side-bar above).