



# broad SIDE



## IT revolution puts new demands on industry communications vigilance



Fast-paced advances in information and communication technology are revolutionising every field of business activity and future prosperity belongs to those willing to invest, adapt and innovate, says Dr Jonathan Hickford, an Associate Professor at Lincoln University and President of the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences.

"How often do you read a news item on line and see two little boxes inviting you to share comments via Facebook or Twitter? This defines a new way of communicating information that food producers - and dairy farmers are New Zealand's leading food producers in terms of generating export dollars - really need to think about," says Dr Hickford.

"If there is a 'skeleton (real or perceived!) in the cupboard' of any industry and the door is opened, then news about it can be around the world in seconds! This is something that everyone involved in a food-related industry, such as agriculture, needs to be aware of.

"What is more, lobby groups will pick up on this information and further elaborate the story. Bad news spread fast!

"For dairy farmers the problem, if it occurs, could start on the farm with some aspect of animal welfare or environmental harm; or it could start in a science laboratory with revelations of a contamination issue or that a naturally occurring component of some food item is actually harmful for humans. Once the news is out there, there is no recall option for the information, as there is with product recalls.

The New Zealand dairy industry, across the board from farmer to retailer, needs to now be more aware of the power of mass media communications, and the social media in particular. This is most likely

Facebook and Twitter, but the power of YouTube, Bebo and various other platforms cannot also be underestimated.

"There are no more salient examples than the spread of revolutionary fervour associated with the Arab spring, or the speed with which most people became aware of the Sanlu milk powder scandal.

Dr Hickford says that SIDE's emphasis on the production end of dairy farming and on-farm and rural social issues could be complemented beneficially with increased attention paid to the power of communications.

"This is particularly relevant given that the portion of the population using the various forms of social media is likely to be youthful and readily influenced.

"Uncritical acceptance of messages spread universally on social media networks can have a devastating effect on any industry.

"Unfortunately there is no easy answer or solution to the problem. Freedom of expression is fundamental to our way of life. The challenge is a universal one. It highlights how the world around us has changed and it is something we all need to think about.

"Farming and food production jointly occupy a very high profile position in New Zealand's commercial life. This makes our economy particularly vulnerable to bad messaging, especially in our critically important export markets. Vigilance and responsibility in communications are essential," says Dr Hickford.

"It works both ways, though. With equal rapidity, social media can be used to spread good news and refute spurious arguments. A good example is that we don't airfreight lamb to the UK."

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## SIDE focuses on four main areas:



### The Event

- South Island focused
- Interactive workshops
- Organised by dairy farmers
- Impartial and independent
- Interactive
- Educational



### Research & Development

- Funding activities or initiatives which benefit South Island dairying
- Working with the South Island Dairying Development Centre (SIDDC)
- Representing South Island dairy farmers' research needs



### Local Learning

- Regional interactive events with content guided by farmers' needs
- Learning in the field with highly regarded presenters



### Industry Role

- Ensuring the needs of South Island dairy farmers are heard at a national level



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## Chairman's comment

Brangka Munan, Chair SIDE Event Committee.

We're proud to announce that our theme for this year is "People - Perception - Pride", the three words that kept coming up as this year's Event Committee brainstormed a theme.

People are behind every major event in the story of our industry from the pioneers of the dairy industry to the pioneers of SIDE, some 14 years ago. These were people who had a vision, managed to convince other people it was a good idea, then went for it! The people of today's dairy industry are crucial to our continuing success.

They say "perception is reality". How are we perceived by our neighbours, the wider community and the people who buy what we produce? Is the image of dairying attracting the best talent to our farms and the industry as a whole?

Most of the farmers I meet are hugely proud of what they have achieved and are very proud of their farms and cows. Are we as proud of what our industry has achieved? Maybe it's a quirk of the Kiwi psyche that we loudly applaud our sporting achievements but are strangely muted when it comes to other success in other fields. I believe we have a world champion dairy industry but seem almost afraid to celebrate it.

### This year's keynotes include:

- David Todd, back by popular demand having presented a workshop on the characteristics of a leader at last year's SIDE. David, formerly head of coaching and development for ASB, has set out on his own as a public speaker. He believes "people who expect the best usually get what they expect".
- Davey Hughes, founder of the successful Swazi range of outdoor clothing. His recent book "Untamed" had the working title "I'd rather die screaming" which gives us an idea of what to expect from this hunter, adventurer, conservationist, businessman and all round kiwi bloke.
- Rod Hamill will speak about his epic win in the transatlantic rowing race in 1997. A believer that with vision and passion, anything is possible.

BusinessSIDE 2012 will include Mike Harvey, Australian-based dairy analyst for Rabobank. The programme will also include a media training component where BusinessSIDE delegates will get an introduction to the inner workings of the media.

Robin Greer will discuss his latest venture into lactose-free milk and the challenges of being a niche producer.

As always, the SIDE Event Committee is looking forward to delivering another exciting range of topics as part of the workshop programme. These include:

- Life after intervention - a look at farmers who have farmed successfully with a nil inductions, no CIDR policy
- Taking pride in your environment, where we hear from Peter and Helen Gilder, winners of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards.
- Fast food for cows - weighing up all the options available to get you out of a feed pinch.
- Mineral supplementation, keeping it simple. With the large array of mineral supplementation products available today, which ones do you actually need and which are another means of parting you from your hard-earned money.

These are just a small sample of what we have in store for you. We are also pleased to have two workshops returning from last year's line up - Bas Schouten with his popular workshop on calf rearing and Denis Aitken with The Perfect Cow.

I guess the biggest news of SIDE 2012 is our new venue. Due to delays in the rebuild of Stadium Southland after the snow damage two springs ago, SIDE 2012 will be held at St Davids Lecture Theatre Complex at the University of Otago. This puts SIDE into the heart of the student precinct of Dunedin, an exciting opportunity for us to raise our profile in an unlikely setting. The SIDE Event Committee look forward to seeing you in June for SIDE 2012 "People Perception Pride".

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thurs 1 March - Time outSIDE  
Canterbury, North Otago,  
South Otago, Southland

Thurs 8 March - Time outside  
West Coast

25 - 27 June - SIDE  
St Davids Complex, Otago University

Check the SIDE website for further information on any of these events. [www.side.org.nz](http://www.side.org.nz)



The South Island Dairy Event (SIDE) was established in 1998 to provide a forum for those involved in the South Island dairy industry to evaluate and apply knowledge, skills and technology to their business.

The key drivers of SIDE are dairy farmers. The focus and delivery of all SIDE events is guided by farmer needs and on-going evaluation. The stakeholders in SIDE are: South Island dairy farmers; Lincoln University; DairyNZ Ltd; Industry (Processors, Service Industries; Agri-business).

