

# SHORTCUTS TO PROGRESSION

**Ben and Nicky Allomes  
Woodville**

We are 50/50 sharemilkers and farm owners from Woodville, in the Tararua District, and have three children Jack 5, Lucy 3 and William 2. We have been dairy farming for nine years and sharemilking for six years.

## **Current situation**

We purchased our first farm in June 2008 of 42 ha and peak milked 140 cows this season while still 50/50 sharemilking on two partially irrigated farms (with the same owner) calving 650 cows. Production ranges from 1150kgms/ha to 1300 kgms/ha in generally a System 4. Two lease blocks (150ha) are also farmed, which are used to run beef animals and some dairy support. 600 calves are reared, which are sold as weaners or finished on the lease blocks. The business employs 3 full time and 2 part-time staff over the three farms.

## **What started our career?**

In our first year of milking, we attended a strategic planning course by the then 'Dexcel'. It was a real turning point for us. We created a vision, and a mission statement, and decided that we wanted to be in control of our destiny. We wanted to be financially secure and bring our kids up on a farm. Someone also said it wasn't possible to own our own farm!!

## **What are the "shortcuts" we have used?**

We don't see our actions as shortcuts, as in taking the easy route, but more about speeding up the progression process.

## **Build a strong team**

From the start of our dairy career, we have tried to focus on building a good team of people around us from our consultant and mentor to our accountant and friends. Coming from a past with not a lot of dairy experience, we realised the importance of gathering the people around us that could help us learn and progress fast.

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## **Attitude**

Attitude and actions are two very important traits to focus on. Proactively seeking new opportunities and taking on new things each year have kept the momentum of our business moving at a fast pace. A vision of “Making it Happen” was activated early on, and this has been a key driver of our positive steps in the dairy industry.

## **Sharemilker of the Year**

In May 2008, we were lucky enough to win the NZ Sharemilker of the Year title. We entered this competition a total of 4 times. After each entry our business grew as a result, as we believe it made us look hard at the inefficiencies and opportunities of our business, and then allowed us to make timely decisions to change and progress. Since winning the title we have been given some unique opportunities to build up our networks and skills – including attending the Westpac Halberg Awards and speaking at a number of conferences.

## **New Zealand Young Farmers**

Ben is currently the National President of New Zealand Young Farmers. Both of us have been active members for over 10 years. During that time we have made the most of the skills and contacts that can be made in the organization from organizing events to competing in the competitions. Ben has entered the Young Farmer Contest and twice competed in the Grand Final – placing 6<sup>th</sup> in 2004 and 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2006.

We strongly believe that a lot of our quick progression has come from what we have learnt and whom we have met from entering these competitions.

## **Where to from here for us?**

We are continuing to put ourselves into a position where we can have a business that is large enough to free us from being tied to it day to day to be able to spend more time with our children as they grow up, but while still keeping a hand in on the ground level of the farms and our involvement in the community. We are interested in looking at furthering the careers of our staff through finding 50:50 contracts with them, which will also grow our business.

Nicky is keen to get more involved with school and our local area, while Ben is more interested in industry issues and activities on a national level.

## **A few pieces of advice for those trying to progress**

The following tips are what we did to help our progression:

- Save, Save, Save!!!
- Always ask questions
- Write everything down

- Go to every course and discussion group you can
- Participate in your community!
- All of the above = getting yourself known
- Do something new every year
- Develop your farming system
- Think about business structures
- Set some financial rules for yourself
- Save, Save, Save!!!
- Do things properly
- Have pride in yourself
- Don't be too cocky
- Don't be pushy or arrogant
- Treat people with respect
- Look for win – win situations
- Save, Save, Save!!!
- Don't give up!

### **Where to from here for you?**

- Make a plan,
- Stick to it.
- Enrol for Mark and Measure 1
- and
- Go for it!!
- You won't regret it.

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