



Rodney and Therese Johnston, "Tivoli", Cowra, have stepped up their business with the help of a business coach.

Business coach approach

A COWRA grazing family has stepped outside the square to value-add their involvement in the dairy industry, and pivotal to their success has been the off-farm support of a business coach.

Increasingly, farmers are enlisting the services of a business coach to test new ideas and develop tailored strategies, direction and the confidence to reach goals by enacting change in their business.

Rodney and Therese Johnston, "Tivoli", Cowra, were challenged to "look up and look out" by their PrincipleFocus coach, David Duffy, Dubbo, and the result of looking at the big picture was a life-changing step into commercial business ownership.

The dairy heifer backgrounders now also operate Cowra's Dairy Farmers franchise, aptly named Tivoli Fresh, with three trucks, four employees, and big goals for increasing their current range of products and customers.

The turn in the road came in 2006, when the Johnstons joined four other farming businesses on a PrincipleFocus StrategicFocus board.

"We came home after attending a PrincipleFocus client field day where one of their clients was achieving 180 days rest between grazings on grass country, whereas I only had 10 to 12 weeks of feed in front of me before I'd have had to completely destock," Mr Johnston said.

"We looked at our crops that were failing and were looking to go off-farm for work.

"Instead, we made the decision to go away completely to give the farm a good rest."

The Johnstons packed their bags, and three young daughters, and headed to the US for 10 months in 2007, where they used contacts to work on a farm in Idaho.

"We came home to paddocks full of feed, the property was completely rested with great ground-

cover, and our minds were in a better place," Mr Johnston said.

They enjoyed a great summer for steer trading and began backgrounding dairy heifers.

They gradually sowed the property to pasture and split paddocks for cell grazing, helping them to consistently achieve 0.75 kilograms a head of weight gain a day year-round on the dairy heifers.

"We then did a visions and goals workshop with our PrincipleFocus board and worked out exactly what we wanted out of life, and we completed a life budget," Mr Johnston said.

"We came to a realisation that the size of our existing business was not going to meet all our needs and wants.

"I was actively trying to lease more country nearby, but it's fairly tightly held around here so with the help of our board we realised we needed to look elsewhere to find a way to meet our goals."

They decided to diversify risk by

buying a commercial business in July last year and, although it was a steep learning curve, the experience had been rewarding in the busy time since.

The Johnstons began working with their business coach in September last year through one-on-one meetings and continual support to help drive success.

"There's always the fear of making the wrong decision, but we can see already that this business is going to help achieve our goals," Mr Johnston said.

"David has a lot of skills that really helped us, and he's been a great sounding board for ideas.

"We can easily get caught up in the day-to-day work, whereas David has definitely got us to think more strategically, with our heads up.

"We've always thought the PrincipleFocus support network is incredible and with the positive attitude people always have at conferences, we always get so much out of them."

Focusing on new goals and opportunities

PRINCIPLEFOCUS director, David Duffy, has coached everybody from corporate executives of multinational businesses to family farm owners, and said the issues were exactly the same.

When people started looking outside their businesses for opportu-

nities, they found many – the trouble was being able to see the woods for the trees.

"Business coaching helps provide a balance in evaluating the opportunities out there," he said.

"Noise in the business quite often distracts you from meeting

your core objectives and goals and a coach's job is to maintain focus in meeting those goals.

"We can't have all the skills in the world, either, and so a coach helps to fill those gaps to provide strategies for building the business."

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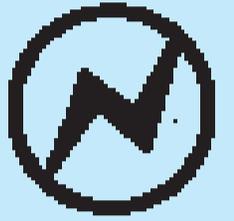
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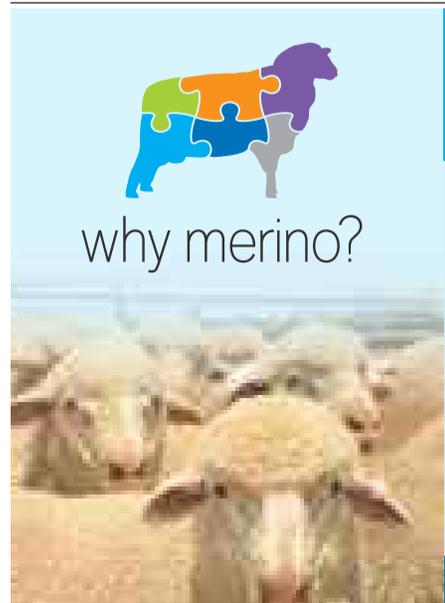


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