



# Leadership through emotional intelligence

Words by: **Anne Lee**

**D**on't worry if it doesn't come naturally, you don't have to be born a leader to be a good one – the skills to manage a happy, effective team can be learned.

Sha Perera is a leadership and development coach who specialises in mindset, emotional intelligence (EQ) and performance.

She's been running emerging leaders pilot courses as part of DairyNZ's workplace design project and has seen some big transformations in course participants.

The courses have been targeted at 2IC level, giving the next generation of onfarm leaders the skills and training very few ever get.

"So often people are promoted to leadership because of their strong technical skills or time in the job. They lack the tools



Leadership and development coach Sha Perera has been running leaders pilot courses as part of DairyNZ's workplace design project. She says emotional intelligence is a key leadership skill.

and strategies to lead effectively, and this results in stress, on both the leader and the team, and an overall loss in confidence."

The course took a deep dive into the concept of EQ because it's a critical part of how people interact with each other.

Understanding and building EQ can hugely enhance communication and effectiveness of teams and create an all-round, happier, more productive workplace, she says.

EQ is about how you manage, understand, use and notice emotions in



**"We pick up metabolic disorders before cows go down."**

**Brad Payne - WAIKATO**

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Waikato dairy farmer Brad Payne manages 800 cows with 3 staff. Every cow wears a CowScout collar, and because he knows how long his cows are grazing, he's alerted if there is a sudden change in their eating or rumination behaviour.

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others but also how you use your own emotions in ways that are productive.

There are four areas of EQ:

- Self-awareness - understanding your own emotional triggers, patterns of thought and strengths and weaknesses.
- Self-management – having emotions under control and being able to lift yourself out of unproductive emotional patterns.
- Social awareness – awareness of emotions in others, perceiving, understanding and acknowledging how others feel.
- Social management – leadership skills and the ability to manage emotions when interacting with others or even the ability to support others to manage their emotions.

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Sha says each area builds on the last one and it’s important to build the pathway to EQ in the right order.

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Understanding how emotions are formed can help self-awareness and self-management.

“We take a little look at the brain and how our emotions are created from how we react to different situations.

“If we see the situation as a threat then

we are negatively triggered.

“But if we see it as useful then we generate a reward state, which leads to positive behaviours and actions. It’s often referred to as operating “above or below the line”.

Sha says that just understanding these different processes can help people master their emotions because they can take a step back from the situation and use strategies to bring emotions under control.

### USING MINDFULNESS

One such tool is mindfulness and participants learn a grounding technique that helps them to pause and not be as reactive in challenging situations.

Sometimes the strategy may involve walking away from the conversation.

“That’s not avoiding it, it’s about putting space and time between you and the situation to allow you to get your emotions back under control and enable a more positive conversation.”

People learn that even though it seems that the situation is causing the stress it’s actually internal processes that have caused the emotions and once they’re under control we can deal with the situation, make decisions, solve problems and communicate effectively.

“If you’re operating above the line, you’re in a winning headspace that centres around ownership, accountability and responsibility.

“When you’re operating below the line it’s about blame, excuses and denial.”

Once people have a better understanding of themselves and their emotions, they can then move onto improving their social awareness, understanding body language and non-verbal cues.

They can discuss issues with empathy and are better able to work with people from diverse backgrounds.

A large part of the training is also on developing core leadership skills in communication, delegation, conflict resolutions and building relationships.

### EFFECTIVE DELEGATION

According to Sha, delegation isn’t just about handing over a task.

“It’s about empowering and growing other people, teaching them skills and then managing the process.

“We show people that to delegate effectively they have to set their team members up for success, they can’t just give the job over without making sure they have the ability and the resources to do it.

“And that’s something, as leaders they should be doing well before the busy calving period starts – it’s very hard to train and delegate at the same time.”

Sha advises 2ICs to do this during the quieter times.

“Understand what the team’s capabilities are, who can do certain tasks and who needs training first, do the training and make sure everything they need to do the job is available to them well before the jobs have to be done.

“Delegation is new to most people at a 2IC level and is a vital skill for them to learn as they take on leadership roles.”

Sha says the leadership course is being delivered using a blended approach of online group workshops (initially necessitated by Covid-19 lockdown), one on one coaching to talk through specific needs, a smartphone app that delivers a short dose of daily learning, 360-degree feedback as well a reflection journal and short quizzes.

The course takes place over a three-month period, giving participants a chance to learn, then apply that learning and get help from Sha or people within the group.

