Gibson, Wendy (2006)

Chalk and Cheese - using VARK

"for Primary Industry Council/Kellogg
Rural Leadership 2006"

Wendy Gibson
Executive Summary

My Research Question is:
Can VARK create a positive team environment?

The name of my project ‘Chalk and Cheese” defines the essence of my project. It gives us a clue to the nature of the project. My project is all about people, how different and diverse we all are. The ability to communicate in their own style and learning mode and to have the opportunity to learn to respect that others learn differently.

The main objective of the project for me was to use the project to implement learning styles on diary farms to create more open communication and build up positive working relationships. Developing strategies that we could practically implement on farm for the employer and employee in achieving this objective, I could develop my own leadership and communication skills in a practical, hands on situation.

8 Case Studies, with 36 participants in total were interviewed, practical outcomes were implemented and feedback from participants are all included in my report as are my conclusions and recommendations.

Most of the participants found that the information, suggestions and discussion as a group relating to their own farm scenario was beneficial, because it was personal and pertained to their own particular situation, not based on assumptions and preconceived ideas. Most importantly there are no comparisons between the case studies and the participants. Every case study is stand alone.

The project is for me a ‘living’ document and I hope to use it in a practical way, not shoved in the cupboard collecting dust. This is a project of potential, having discussed, met and worked alongside many people involved in the dairy industry on farm and in a consulting position. I feel that the information I have included in my report and the background investigations that I carried out identifies the needs of the farmer employer and employee and looks at how learning styles and raising the awareness of this concept can change the workplace environment in a positive way. Practical implementation is the key to the project and monitoring is the key to its ongoing success. The word ‘team’ is important and should not be omitted because it changes the concept from ‘boss and staff’ to ‘team and workplace’. Exploring the concept of how we learn best and tailoring this to the dairy farming industry will grow our people and our agribusiness’ and will allow us all to reach our potential.
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Introduction

The 4 aims of my project are:
A. To help employers and employees realize that we all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

To ensure the aims were achievable, I made them a priority for me throughout the project when working with the participants, they were constantly discussed and reinforced.

This was achieved by developing strategies and focus areas that we could practically implement on farm for the employer and employee that included all of the above aims with plenty of discussion and correspondence.

Case Study Participants:
Over the past year I have been involved with various dairy farming operations, staff and employers. I have worked with 8 on farm Case Studies.

My research and investigations ranged from initial discussions with Owner/Operators, AG ITO Trainees, Employers—full time, part-time or absentee, Herd Managers, Managers, Assistant Managers, 50/50 Sharemilking, Lower Order Sharemilking (LOSM - acronym), Farm Assistants (FAs) and Multi Farm Equity employers/owners.

Every case study participant was given an information interview pack that contained a starting point questionnaire, an employers or employees sheet that pertained to their workplace, how they preferred as individuals to receive information and transfer information, what they looked for in an employer/employee, background information to implement and support learning modes.

Working with employers and employees together we were able to look at some practical achievable outcomes that would benefit everyone in the team.

The aims set out in the planning stages of the report were all achieved with confidence.

Some of the limitations of the project was ensuring that contact was maintained throughout and the arrival of new staff meant that the process was often repeated on farm. However, I did not see this last point as a limitation to completing my project but more reinforcing the aims set out at the beginning of the project.

I feel that this project is ongoing and for the participants to really benefit from their involvement in this project I feel that contact should be maintained.

This would allow me to monitor outcomes more closely, evaluate the success of the project and have the flexibility to modify and develop ideas further so that participants really do benefit 100%.
Participants Input and Process

1. The meeting that was set up went through the information pack and the Questionnaire sheets were filled out at the meeting or prior to the meeting. The four learning preferences were: Visual, Aural, Read/write and Kinesthetic learning modes (VARK).

2. Having reviewed and added the scores on the sheet and looking at the learning modes of each participant we went through the individual questionnaire and looked at the results tabling them on the Team VARK table (attached to each Case Study report).

3. The Neil Fleming questionnaire was only the starting point and was only used to establish learning modes, whether people were single mode, bi modal, tri modal or multi modal as a team and most importantly we ascertained how all individuals preferred to relay and receive information.

4. The next stage was talking about the various learning styles and how you can recognize the learning styles. Using a sheet written up we went through traits or characteristics that can be connected to particular learning modes. Using Neil Flemings VARK training materials and the sheet about frequently asked questions and other information supplied by Neil Fleming on the CD Resource kit, questions and background information could be supplied.

5. The main part of the meeting was an information sheet that looked at suggestions and ways to incorporate all the learning styles on the farm on levels from operational, management and strategic. This was a simple practical way to look at how we could interpret the information into a doable, workable project that would benefit everyone on the farm.

6. The next part of the meeting entailed looking at how we all receive information and how we would like our information given to us. Employees and employers were given opportunity to talk about traits and expectations from staff and areas that they would like to develop for personal and professional growth. Words like trust, reliability, punctuality, using initiative, honesty and of course communication was the top priority. Employees talked about levels of responsibility, job satisfaction and being allowed to make a mistake but learning from mistakes. On job hands on instruction was important for employees and aural discussion. To be shown about jobs and then to give employees an opportunity to try it and have employers check was important.
Taking the initiative and listening were really important skills to the employers, and especially honesty and saying when you do not feel confident in the task you are being asked to perform.

Looking at the big picture past the day to day operational level of the Farming operation only but more at the management and long term goals and focus areas of growing our businesses and making decisions based on information gathering, discussion and how it will benefit the farm, staff, production and make sound financial sense.

We discussed 'cause and effect' of why we do a job and what is the impact of the job? or neglecting to perform a job and what is the impact?

We discussed following instructions, understanding the information given in all forms of learning styles and how best we can communicate this information as employers and employees.

Specific tasks and areas of management and responsibility was another area that employers had concerns but felt that using the knowledge of knowing how to communicate with particular staff could really develop this area on farm.

7. Each case study group then looked at some outcomes that they felt they could achieve from setting up formal staff meetings, to keeping a diary, recording information on whiteboards, showing on job instruction rather than telling, keeping staff informed about management decisions, mobile phones, contact lists at shed, socialisation using the HR toolkit, Federated Farmers for good employment practices, using the yellow book, Farm maps etc.. Information Farm folders that could be tailored to their own dairy farm operations. Structured meetings and on farm on the job instruction were also areas that both employers and employees were eager to put into place.

8. Evaluation sheets were sent out and I was in contact with all participants over a period from May through to October. These feedbacks gave me another opportunity to make with my participants and discuss with them the outcomes that they actually were able to implement.
Participant Info Pack

Every Participant involved on farm received an information pack that contained the following information:

What does the project mean for you, the participant? what are the aims of the project?
A. VARK is an acronym which means Visual, Aural, Read/write and Kinesthetic learning preferences.
B. Learn to accept and respect that everyone learns in different ways.
C. Help to make team members more open-minded of one another.
D. Opens up the communication between staff and employees in a practical way and supportive way.
E. Gives everyone the opportunity to learn about how they learn best
F. Look at the learning preferences and see where they fit
G. A different way to build and grow the agribusiness and help it to reach its full potential using the skills and areas where employers and employees can excel in the overall management and operational level of the farming business.
H. Use VARK to build on the HR concept - building an effective team.
I. VARK is a learning preference and not a personality type or strength, but the way that we learn.

Process:
A. Fill out Pre-interview sheet
B. Meeting with employer and find out their learning preferences
C. Discuss aspects of VARK and benefits
D. Participants – Employers & Employees and we will meet to see how VARK can be implemented in the workplace.
E. Set Time frames and Objectives- Aims and Goals that as a team we can practically achieve within the time-frame.
F. Look at how VARK can build a positive team environment in the workplace practically.
G. Monitor and report on observations and findings as we progress (my own reference notes)
H. Meet on a regular basis with participants involved in project – before calving!!!
I. Evaluations – self and from Participants at completion of the project.
J. Information is confidential and only the case study numbers of participants will be written down. Employees' names will be confidential and the report at the end of the project will contain only general observations, trends, findings and what differences VARK made as a whole project.
Question Sheets

Please fill in below:
Name:
Address:
Contact phone and E-mail address:
Location:
Farm Size/Sizes:
Cows-stocking rate
Number of employees:

Type of Dairy Farm Agribusiness operation/operations:
(tick which is appropriate)
- Owner living on the Farm
- Absentee owner
- Owner/operator
- Corporate Farming Operation
- Equity Farm Company

Employees/ or your involvement in your farming operation/operations
- Share milking position
- Manager
- Farm Assistant/Staff
- Casual/Part-time Staff
- Permanent staff
- Married Couples
- Single staff
  - Permanent Part-time

Please answer the following questions
1. As an Employer /ee what do you consider to be your strengths?
2. What areas are you as an employer or employee involved in on a daily basis?
3. What attributes do you look for in an employee or employer?
4. What do you feel are the most important areas in a team working environment?
5. Do you feel are the areas as employers/employees you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
6. Do you feel that these areas may impede or raise issues of concern within the workplace?

7. What areas do you feel that your employees or employers are not as strong in, or do not contribute towards the team ethos, regarding the work environment?

8. Do you feel as an employer that employees follow instructions easily or do they find they do not have enough information to carry out the task?

9. Do you feel as an employee that employers give instructions easily or do they find they do not give you enough information to carry out the task?

10. How do you relay the information to others?

11. How do you as an employer explain the information to your employees?

12. How do you as an employee explain the information to your employers?

13. Do you know what your learning preference is?

14. Do you know what the learning preferences of your employees/ers are?

15. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your staff or employer’s learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?

The information that is provided from you for my project will not include specific names or details of employees, but will include your name as a case study that is contributing to my research for the project.

The project will ascertain whether or not VARK (learning preferences) can make a difference in the workplace, and how it can create a more positive working environment for employers and employees if implemented.

Thank you for your support and input.

I give Wendy Gibson permission to use the information provided in the pre-interview sheet as part of her research towards her Kelloggs Rural Leadership project.

Signed..................................................
Dated..................................................
Practical ways to use Vark

Staff Meetings
This could be in the form of a meeting at the shed/ employers home/ neutral ground and could occur weekly, monthly or quarterly depending on type of dairy operation

Visual learner – likes to see the whole picture, look at where the business is heading, the future. They are enthusiastic and will think outside of the square if necessary.

- The V would enjoy staff meetings as it would give them the opportunity to ask about the overall picture of the farm, such as; Cows production and budgeted production, Pasture Management and monthly planning, weekly planning etc...
- Visuals would get most benefit from graphs, bullet point notes, diagrams etc... (E.G: Fencepost graphs of production and target tables and production achieved etc....)
- Visuals would grasp Herd Records well as in table form and order that is clear and easy to see.
- Vs can have valuable input into discussion when ideas or suggestions are being tossed around the group, but can sometimes miss the obvious e.g.: 1 comes before 5 but Vs may start at the end result and work backwards.
- Vs are not as methodical in how they would achieve the end result and will need ways to keep on track especially in the planning stages.
- Vs are sometimes not as practical in the way that they would go about achieving a goal but can see the goal and how to achieve it.
- Vs will grasp ideas that the team may be talking about pictured in their head but will need other members in the Team: the K, A & R/W to put it into practice.
- Vs will give good feedback and discussion if the meeting is addressing longer term decisions rather than short term, immediate results.
- Vs like a meeting where they can see that there is a positive result at the end of the meeting.
- Vs can lose interest if there is no goal or objective as a result of the meeting.
- Vs like a challenge and enjoy working together with others to embrace the challenge.
2. Aural Learners –
Enjoy discussions, conversations, listening to others, full descriptions of an incident, situation or other real life examples:

- An A will take an active part in the discussion of a meeting.
- An A will enjoy sharing and hearing opinions and various strategies and ways of dealing from everyday tasks to achievable goals.
- An A will benefit from a verbal report – (report that is read out)
- An A will remember interesting stories, examples or situations and be able to describe them.
- An A is very descriptive and will enable others in the meeting to visualize the situation he/she is talking about.
- An A will not always come up with an original idea, but may adopt an initial idea and develop the idea.
- An A will be able to explain tasks, instructions and methods well.
- An A sometimes will need to talk the whole idea out thoroughly, not missing out any details, this can be useful.
- An A could contribute hugely if asked to explain an idea in a step by step format, so that the whole group will understand. They will be able to do this very well.

3. Read/Write –
Read/Write learners enjoys lists, details, reports, Handouts, any written information that they can read and learn from. They will enjoy the age of ‘IT’ as it gives access to information. They enjoy listening to speakers who are erudite, learned and use their words well and give lots of information.

- The R/W learner will enjoy the formality of a meeting.
- They will benefit from a written report.
- They will have a list of jobs that have been done and need doing and this person in your team would be a fantastic administrator.
- They will keep a work diary very well, sometimes with too many words.
- They will use manuals and instruction/Procedure sheets and would keep records accurately.
- The R/W will sometimes be reluctant to delegate as they may feel they are more thorough than their workmates in procedures etc., and a solution for this is to put them into a mentoring role with other farm employees who would benefit from structure e.g.: especially a Visual. The R/W could support a V, K or A to achieve their objective.
4. **Kinesthetic** – The K will be the doer of the staff, they can problem solve in a practical way, they like the hands on approach, and they will listen to people who give real life examples. They learn through trial and error and enjoy working with others and teaching practical skills to others in the team.

- The K is the practical team member at the meeting and will contribute to the discussion when it is something that has been done on the farm, especially something that the K has experienced before or can give an example of someone who has attempted it.
- They will want the meeting to be relevant, real and doable.
- The K is able to show and teach others on your staff, various jobs, tasks, if this has been discussed at the meeting as long as he/she has been able to do it himself.
- The K will be able to give you the most practical options and solutions to achieve an objective.
- The Ks will need the RIW and V to keep records etc. to keep themselves organized and structured.

**The Workplace Environment:**

This is the actual farming operation from the daily running of the farm on a day to day basis and it does not mean that all learning modes cannot take on some of the tasks of any of the learning preferences

**Visual:**

- Assessing a situation that arises on a farm, will evaluate well.
- Looking at production targets etc...
- Looking at the long term goals
- V can see past the day to day jobs
- The V preference are aware of the working environment e.g.: Organization of the Cow Shed/ Milk Room
- The V has an awareness for space, colour, light, and could be involved in setting up charts, Planners, Calendars, Whiteboards, Diary, Procedure Sheets, BOFB, ACC books, First Aid kits, etc... in the cowshed and milk room
- The V could work with the RIW to provide various forms of written communication and necessary records and documents.
- Planners, Herd Records, Farm Maps could be the responsibility of the V.
- Numbering paddocks, Fences, moving stock could be an area for a V as the space of the outside would suit the V.
- A V person would work well if assigned to a task that would take a period of time with a set time-frame but without astringent cut off time, e.g. Working on setting up fences or putting up fences for cows could be done within milking hours, Fencing, Water lines etc.
- A V is interested in others and so would be able to communicate easily with rest of the team.
Aural:

⇒ A real team member who can relate to other staff members through discussion, keeping the staff together and on task.
⇒ He can explain new ideas to staff members and use the V, R/W and K to implement them.
⇒ He will be more conservative and will keep the V from getting too keen!!!! And keep everyone on task.
⇒ He will openly discuss the jobs or task allocated and ensure that the V, K and R/W have grasped the concept before taking on something new or making changes.
⇒ An A is the glue of the team and is the sounding board of the V, K and R/W. This he/she does freely and enjoys giving encouragement and support to the other team members.
⇒ The A person could be a good person to use as the farm contact person for Contractors, Vets etc... who may come to the farm as he/she would relay the information back to the employer accurately and the employer could confidently tell the A exactly what he wants or needs and the A will pass on the information.
⇒ An A person could work easily with a K person on the day to day running of the farm.
⇒ An A person could consult with the R/W with regards to milking, cow condition etc..
⇒ An A person could work with a V person if they are working on a project based or Development based project.
⇒ The A person could inform others on the team times and appointments and ensure that these are kept. A good contact person.
⇒ An A could communicate easily with the rest of the team.

Read/Write:

⇒ The R/W could organize and put structures in place for other staff members – a plan for the week, or month.
⇒ The R/W could make regular Diary entries of tasks to do and tasks achieved.
⇒ The R/W could become the liaison person between employer and employee if employer is an absentee employer regarding administration and reporting back.
⇒ The R/W would ensure that OSH, BOFP, Shed Diary, Accident books, Antibiotics used, SCC results and Mastitis Cows are written down and all records would be kept up to date.
⇒ The R/W person would keep up to date with latest technology and ideas in the Dairy Industry, bringing in new ideas.
The RIW could perhaps be the person who looks after quotes, costings etc.

The RIW could investigate new projects (sourcing information etc...)

The RIW could work with an A person when wanting to know what is happening on the farm on a day to day basis.

The RIW may like to work within set hours and work in regular patterns so for example: Milking, Feeding Cows, Washing up etc.. that happen on a daily basis and at basically the same time may suit a RIW.

The RIW would communicate with the others in the team, mostly when it was work orientated or task focused.

**Kinesthetic:**

- The K person will carry out and be responsible for the practical day to day running of the farm.
- The K person will be a key person in the Team but will need the skills and learning preferences of all the others.
- The K will look at how to solve a problem or tackle a job in the most practical way.
- The K person will talk to the A about the jobs at hand and how he/she is going to carry them out using the experience of the A person, from what he has learned and heard.
- The K person will meet and talk with the RIW person as regards to recording and writing down what has been achieved and a 'to do list'.
- The K person will work and talk with the V person as to why this task has been allocated and what is the relevance of the task.
- A K may be prefer to work with machinery as they are very hands on and could probably manage tractor work, feeding out supplement, spreading fertilizer etc...
- The K person will keep the V's feet on the ground.
- The K person has the ability to work with all members of the team.
- The one drawback that the K person may have is that because he/she has the ability to do a job well in a hands on situation, that he/she may have to remember that to pass their knowledge onto the others in the team, they will need to show others how to perform the task and not expect them to know.
- A K could communicate well with other team members especially when discussing jobs and tasks to carry out on the farm. The V and A would have to ensure that they did not exclude the K, as they may be more extroverted than a K and get caught up in conversation and lively discussions.
Professional and Personal Development

**Visual:**
- Will not enjoy Power point that is wordy but will enjoy using Graphs, bullet points, pictures, diagrams
- Will benefit from Speakers who are not traditional—in presentation style.
- Will be inspired by listening to others who have achieved against the odds and looking at the big picture, goals etc.
- Fieldays and interactive Professional Development workshops will appeal to the V person.
- Goal orientated and focus-driven courses will benefit a V in Professional Development and Personal Development.
- Innovation and unorthodox workshops will not worry a Visual.

**Aural:**
- As really enjoy listening to speakers
- They enjoy discussion and the opportunity to ask questions
- They will gain real personal development from listening to others describe their life experiences
- An A will absorb knowledge and put it into practice and benefit from Professional Development, as an A will be able to describe the setting, the stories, the examples and the Humour used by the speakers.
- An A is interested to hear about new ideas and innovations and will retain the information so as to inform others.
- An A will enjoy an interactive type of workshop or course where discussion and feedback are used.
- An A will evaluate and review with clarity and this skill will grow with opportunities for Professional Development.

**Read/Write:**
- Professional Development is paramount in learning for the Read/Write person who thrives on information.
- The R/W will respond to a speaker who presents themselves well with good content and provides lots of information in the sentences.
- Handouts are must for a R/W when attending any type of Professional Development or Personal Development.
- Regarding Professional Development a R/W may struggle with unstructured courses and if the speakers or facilitators are a little unorthodox or ‘touchy, feely’
- However if the course or workshop is about Personal Development and is loose in structure, the R/W has an enquiring mind and wants to know what makes them tick in a structured way with some detail.
**Kinesthetic:**

- Ks love field trips
- Exhibits, Shows
- Personal Development courses if it is real, and relevant.
- A K enjoys Documentaries, or self made successful people who tell their life story, they will have the K captivated and will encourage the K both in Professional development and personal growth and development.
- A K may enjoy workshops, courses, personal development that may be centered around a theme, e.g. a K’s hobbies may be that he/she is a collector of things
- Sports may be a strength of a K, so Personal Development may involve physical aspects e.g. Outward Bound.
- The Fieldays would be heaven for the K
- Practical Training Days and practical sessions would have to be part of Professional Development for the K.
- A K will really enjoy meeting others who put their theories into practice in a relevant way.
- Ks enjoy a hands-on type of learning environment.
- Ks will enjoy something that requires problem solving
- A K may not enjoy a Professional Development training session if it is not practical and requires the K to stretch beyond their comfort zone, if they cannot relate to the topics or speakers.
- If a training session or Course is a little unorthodox and if a K has had some experience or a similar experience that relates to the topic or activity, they will adapt their prior learning into a new situation and will cope well.
Implementing Learning Styles in the Workplace

Information covering all preferred learning styles

**Dairy Shed:**
- Planners, Whiteboards, Calendars,
- Diaries, Farm Information Folder (Tailored to your specific farm), Records of Milking – LIC, Animal health (Vet), BOFP
- HR toolkit, Health and Safety and all procedure manuals
- Farm Maps & diagrams
- Mobile phones & Contact phone list
- Ensure hazards identified, Health and safety hazard sheet, Accident book
- Procedures displayed in Shed: Starting up, Washing up, Vat washing etc...

**Staff Meetings**
- Farm reports
- Production graphs etc.. Fencepost
- Tasks and Priorities
- Planning and time frames
- Staff meeting notes written as record with date, action, completion date
- Goals and targets and areas of concern to discuss

**On farm**
- Discuss the job and what is needed
- Gather information, quotes etc... if project
- Work through step by step process. Use diagrams or maps.
- What the job or task will achieve – why we are doing it.
- Go to site if a project- water lines, fencing etc.. and work through the how tos of the job.
- If daily day to day running use aural, and hands on instruction, give overall reasoning and use written notes if required;

**Professional Dev and ongoing training**
- Farm courses and practical training days
- Ensure that staff have access to farming magazines, periodicals etc..
- Information available regarding our dairy industry
- Encourage training and gaining NZQA credits if possible
- Modern apprenticeships – AG ITO and other ongoing learning
Vark in the Workplace

Aims
Goals
Tasks
Daily Jobs
Staff meetings
Projects

Visual Learning Style
'Visualizing what needs doing, holistic approach – using maps, pictures etc..

What are doing?
Why and how are we going to approach it?
Show me how we are going to do this

Aural Learning style
'Talking, listening & discussion'

Group discussion,
Talk, analyze, Problem solve and work through the ideas in a discussion format

Read/Write Learning Style
'The written word' Organized, reinforced information

Written information, sourcing info, Reports, Notes, lists, Yellow books, Computer data, Procedures
To achieve goal
By planning

Kinesthetic Learning Style
'Doing, Hands on' Practical, Relevant

Let's physically look at what we are going to do and how we can practically work through the planning, job or proposed idea

Relaying info: Use Maps, graphs, planners, pictures, symbols and give reasons of what and why so that a V can grasp the whole concept

Relaying info: Regular verbal contact with staff, discussing and meeting with them either in person or phone.

Relaying info: Written notes as form of contact in the form of a diary at the shed, yellow books, reports, reinforce info so available for R/W

Relaying info: Show by hands on instruction, on job instruction and explaining & physically looking at the job or goals you want to achieve together
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Region: Waikato
Participants involved: 6
Employers: 2
Employer/Employee: % LOSM and Farm Manager
Assistant Manager: 1
Herd Manager: 1
Farm Assistant: 1

8 Case Studies and 36 participants involved.
Case Studies

Case Study #1

Employers - Husband and Wife own multi farms and employ various staff. Employees - 50/50 Sharemilkers. Employers are absentee employers.
Sharemilkers: Employ 1 staff as Farm Assistant
Farm Size: 120Ha Eff Stocking Rate: 2.83 Cows: 340

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:
Husband:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
A very strong Aural, uses the phone as a management tool. Farm Visits, Like to discuss and go and see what is happening on the farm and then identify the needs of their Sharemilkers and all other employees.
Wife:
A strong aural, efficient in read/write and record keeping. Involved in the Administration and management areas of the paperwork side of employees and agribusiness. Both have the ability to implement ideas and to achieve goals through self belief and a can do attitude.

2. Employers Strengths:
Communication, Treat staff as equals, offer support and encouragement

3. Attributes they look for in employees:
- Good previous employment record
- Stable relationship
- Clean and tidy personally and in all aspects of their work
- Able to communicate effectively
- Honesty

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
- Communication

5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:
- They are still learning about themselves and gaining life and work skill experiences.

6. Outcomes as employers using VARK in the workplace:
- Using VARK with Sharemilkers as the S/Milkers themselves look to employ more staff. They feel this will have a flow on effect.
- Introducing the Learning styles and asking potential staff at interviews how they receive and transfer information will enable them as employers to ascertain how they will fit and how a stronger team ethos can be achieved.
- Setting up a farm information folder they can adapt and tailor for their own farming operations.
- Using more visual and read/write aids in the cowshed using whiteboards, planners, diaries and farm maps.
- Hope to use all of these concepts and as employers let go of the operational and management side of the business allowing employees to work more independently so that as employers they oversee implementing strategies and goals.
Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employees:

Husband:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
Multi modal and is comfortable with most learning preferences although he feels that his Read/write style could be more fine tuned.
Uses aural, showing hands on instructions, and practical implementation as his main areas of receiving and relaying information.
He practically problem solves through trial and error and discussing what is needed on the farm.

Wife:
Likes to listen, gather the information and discuss any relevant questions that arise.
Implement ideas in a practical way and will use visual learning preferences to plan or write up information.

2. Employees Strengths:
Communication, Management of farm pasture monitoring, feeding levels, cow condition and planning.

3. Attributes they look for in employers:
- They like to be able to contact and discuss the farm on operational, management and strategic levels comfortably with employers.
- Employers that make themselves available and give positive feedback.
- Give them opportunities to upskill and learn as much as they can about the dairy industry and give direction.
- Able to communicate effectively

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
- Communication

5. Areas you feel that employers are not strong in:
- Very happy with employers, they give us room to develop skills and take responsibility on the farm offering guidance.

6. Outcomes as employees using VARK in the workplace:
- Using blackboards at the shed, and diaries
- Writing up management goals with short and mid term goals. This is always discussed but often not written down.
- A whiteboard at the shed for rotation and grass cover
- Become educators and encouragers themselves by implementing practical systems on the farm ensuring that their employees can learn practical work skills and build a sound knowledge base.
- Acknowledge and practically use the learning styles of employers and their employee to create a practical team ethos that is workable and will grow their business, production and all areas of the dairy farming operation.
- S/Milkers would like to see Farm Assistant identify 2 or 3 areas that he can comment on or written comments working towards the end goal of Farm Assistant writing up farm reports or contributing to them on a regular basis.
Learning preferences of the Team

A real mixture of learning preferences with the team being multi modal so that all learning areas are implemented.

K is the strongest in the team environment.

Wife as employer is the strongest in the read/write learning style and this shows with written organizational skills working with the Sharemilkers and own business administration skills.

Employer as husband uses A learning preferences in the workplace and k to implement this is obvious in the table.

Wife as Sharemilker uses her A preference very much in the listening side of Aural and will contribute to discussion when she feels it is necessary and get her feelings and opinions across or to discuss ideas.
Employers Evaluation Sheet

The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the ‘Chalk ‘n Cheese’ project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you)
   ABCD
   • Used VARK questionnaire and then discussed outcomes as a group.
   • Thought of ways to improve to communication together according to results of learning styles.

2. How did you benefit personally?
   • Realize people learn in different ways to me.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Awareness of each others strengths when implementing VARK

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   • Able to recognize the different preferences of staff more accurately
   • Made us think about how we communicate with each staff member and how it can be improved.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   • Use of whiteboards for messages/things to be discussed.
   • Farm information folders
   • Team approach– they are in control of their own farms but with plenty of support.
   • Monthly walk with owners and farm consultant.
   • Husband continues to talk and discuss regularly to all staff.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   Whiteboards and monthly walks with consultant.

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   The folders with 1550 calves to feed it has been busy but these have been started.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made? Awareness of learning preferences, so that all learning styles implemented


The Aims of the Project:
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D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the ‘Chalk n Cheese’ project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A, B, C or D any many as you feel apply to you)
   B and C
   - Learning about learning styles with employees and employer, one is able to present ideas, jobs and tasks in a more effective, productive way.

2. How did you benefit personally?
   How we can be even better with our communication in relaying and receiving information.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   To cater for all those employed and involved in the farming operation regarding communication and learning.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How? Better communication within whole team involved.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   - Identified learning preferences especially when assigning jobs to employees.
   - Inform employees more effectively
   - A more time efficient run day no double up on instructions.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   - Recognizing learning styles and instructing using all forms of VARK

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   We need to change our mental thinking before we inform so that we give our employee information that he requires to complete task or instruction.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made?
   Thinking outside the square and changing the way we communicate.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project? Everyone that needs to be upskilled and to retain employees. Would benefit educational organizations in farming.
Case Study #2

Employers -
Husband and Wife own multi farms. Live on farm, involved in other farming ventures but assists on farm when home and available.
Wife assists when required.

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:

Husband:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
Feels that it depends on information but is multi modal so is able to implement all four learning styles.
Uses mostly verbal aural learning style but if information is technical he will write it down. He will show how to do tasks and will write lists for instructions.

Wife:
Will pass on information clearly and concisely using aural learning style. Will write down messages and take relevant information down on paper using R/W learning style.

2. Employers Strengths:
Honesty, fairness, standards, openness and an even temperament.

3. Attributes they look for in employees:
- Good work habits
- Ambition, attitude and motivation
- Clean and tidy personally and in all aspects of their work
- Cheerfulness, Honesty
- Aspire to doing better

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
- Respect for others
- Knowing your role
- Transfer of knowledge to give common cause and training

5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:
- Being open on all levels.
- Different issues at different levels of the job sometimes hinder judgment or decisions.

6. What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
- All aspects especially getting the basic organizational skills right
- Looking at the workplace in the employment workplace scenario regarding hours of work, rosters and comparing to other workplaces ensuring that we are fair employers.

7. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees' learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
Perhaps get a clearer flow of information between employer and employee
Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employees:
1. Receives Information and Transfers Information:
   Husband:
   Multi modal but use A, K and V daily on the farm. R/W is used for recording and management of the farm. R/W may not be a natural learning preference but a learning style he is developing in the position of manager.
   Prefers to receive information aurally, written down and use of whiteboards and maps. He will transfer information aurally mostly
   Wife:
   Likes to receive information in the written form as well as aurally so that she can use written information to follow up.
   Strong in R/W and likes to have procedures and structures in place.
   0 in aural but will use this learning style to communicate but relies more on R/W to gather information and knowledge and then uses her K to implement them.

2. Employees Strengths:
   Relaxed, good people skills, open minded, willing to learn.

3. Attributes that you look for in employers:
   - Positive attitude
   - Enthusiastic
   - Able to communicate effectively

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   - Communication, honesty and being happy—enjoying your work and the work environment.

5. Areas you feel that employers are not strong in:
   - Not always using different forms of communication and give time to communicate in instructions, methods and approach to the job.
   - Need to use various form of relaying information so that as employees we can then pass on information to other staff so that we are all on the same wavelength.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning preferences as a Team</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Aural</th>
<th>Read/Write</th>
<th>Kinaesthetic</th>
<th>Modes</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

R/W and K are most prominent learning styles in this team but most can move within the four learning modes. Assistant Manager 1 is south African and has only been in country recently so giving clear instruction and relaying information by the manager is essential to the day to day running of the farm. Assistant Manager 2 is Bi modal being strong in R/W and K where the strength of the team seems to lie.
Outcomes we hope as a team to achieve and implement into the workplace:

1. Farm reports from Manager on a fortnightly basis and these are sent out prior to the meeting. Reports are then discussed at meeting.
2. Use Diary more effectively, could fine tune time management skills by all employees.
3. Employers discussed Qfenz – implementing the concept of Qfenz.
4. Verbal updates or IT communication if employer has been away especially with farm management decisions.
5. Give the manager the opportunity to take ownership of his management roles and learn how to employ strategies and make management decisions.
6. Coffee Tea at cowshed social space and also meeting place.
8. Farm manager reports templates written up for the season.
9. Dexcel HR toolkit using resources.
10. We could look at focus areas and goals that the Manager may feel is important and inclusion of V preferences gives clearer direction for all involved.
11. More structured Time (set times and dates written into work diaries) for meetings that are more formal.
12. More involvement by Manager in staff selection, expectations and factors that make for good staff and positive team environment.
13. Draw up a ‘living’ document that can be used on farm in a very practical way with input from staff.
14. Farm Managers likes to have information relayed to him aurally, written and visual.
15. Employers already relay instructions and information aurally, written, magazines and whiteboard so implementing VARK will not be difficult.
16. Planning to make up a Farm Information Folder tailored to the needs of the staff with practical information pertaining to the farm. Included in this folder will be human resources in the form of staff meetings with pages set out for input from all levels of employees in areas of operational and management levels.
17. One of the new Assistant Managers is South African and has only been in the country for 7 weeks so communication and using learning styles will be even more necessary. Farm managers thought an orientation checklist would be a good idea with new staff starting in June – copy taken from Dexcel HR toolkit.
18. Farm Policy Manual is being written so that it becomes a living document and is applicable to this farm.
19. Selection and involvement in recruitment and employing for this season by the employer and the Manager has been implemented. This is the first step of the employers wanting the Managers to take control of their actions, use their initiatives and the employers themselves to take on more of the role of a mentor and support person, rather than be involved in the day to day operational running of the farm.
Employers Evaluation Sheet

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D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A, B, C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how did you achieve it
A and B
- Filling out the Vark Questionnaire as a guide to their learning preferences.
- Using information to get a better understanding of how to effectively teach and relay messages.

2. How did you benefit personally?
Understanding my own learning preferences and finding out what I considered deficiencies in my ability to immediately understand some information given to me.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
Process made us realize we are different and there is no stigma attached to that. It was interesting for everyone and new employees felt like we were trying to help them to achieve the highest level that they were capable of.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
Most of our people had a strong learning preference in more than one area so we didn't need to modify our teaching techniques very much.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
- Managers wife as am employer strong R/W so has taken on role of reporting, herd records etc.
- Manager has organized regular discussions with his staff in office set up at shed using whiteboards and diagrams—this has made relaying and receiving information easy for them.
- Manager and myself meeting regularly and informally and with manager being strong visuals as I have learnt maps for instructions on farm has helped and diagrams.
- There is less miss communication now resulting in people knowing more clearly what they need to achieve.
6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement? Meetings—All individuals are keen to learn and develop their skills.

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain? I committed to sharing financial information with managers and this is only just being put in place. This is mainly due to other work pressure and I haven’t actioned it.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made? A respect for all colleagues that they have preferences about how they receive information and patience to deliver information in a particular way.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project? Everyone that needs to be upskilled and to retain employees. Would benefit educational organizations in farming.
The Aims of the Project:
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D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A, B, C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how?
   B, C, D
   - Filling in VARK questionnaire and question sheets we were able to understand how our own two staff received and transferred information.
   - We use whiteboards and maps a lot more.
   - Group discussions occurred over a cuppa in the office during calving.

2. How did you benefit personally?
   Has enabled us to put into place tools that help each preference in the workplace: tea/coffee for discussion time A, Large whiteboards and maps for the Vs, RIW in the form of Farm manual and recording and ensuring that all staff are well supported in kinesthetic preferences.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Individual strengths have been identified and weaknesses and now we have a better understanding of each other. If someone doesn't understand something one way we use another learning preference to explain.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   Opened communication in different formats and raised awareness of learning styles.
5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?

- Group discussion occurs more frequently over a coffee where the team discusses the up and coming week along with time off and HR issues.
- White board maps are used along with listing jobs to do and items to be purchased next time employer is on farm.
- The farm manual has been completed and we have taken over the herd recording.
- Staff are involved in off farm learning—AG ITO, Farmsafe etc. Where K learning is carried out by others, this gives more ideas and a different teacher rather than us all the time.
- Subscription to the Dairy Exporter and we are involved in a 'Pasture Plus Group” run by Dexcel.
- Employer and managers (us) catch up regularly on farm and phone contact is maintained with employer as wife who then transfer information onto husband.
- We have a very good team of people who are all trying to achieve goals in the dairy industry which is a good start. We are all very positive and open which really helps. Open communication is half the battle.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?

Regular meetings

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?

We haven’t been supplying monthly reports to employer as busy over calving and new staff.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made?

Knowledge that we all learn differently

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?

Ag Ito may find it useful, it is simple to carry out, and could be helpful possibly at interview times or to use staff once they are employed.

We will continue to use VARK and implement it practically in the future to help us understand our employees.
Case Study #3

Employers -
Husband and Wife Live on farm, involved on farm
Employees— 2 fulltime—Herd Managers & 1 part time staff in spring
Farm Size: 250 Ha Cows: 975

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
   Husband:
   Hands on involved in the operational, management and strategic levels of farm operation. Strong in Kinesthetic learning preference.
   Uses on job instruction by showing and lets employees have a go, then tell them once they have practically done the task.
   Employers will draw pictures and use maps if necessary
   Wife:
   Strong read/write and good organizational skills. Uses Aural learning preference to receive information and relay information.

2. Employers Strengths:
   Hands on, up with latest industry best practice, experienced and good communicator.

3. Attributes they look for in employees:
   • Good work habits and work ethic
   • Enthusiasm
   • Clean and tidy personally and in all aspects of their work, punctuality
   • Honesty and ability to communicate
   • Ability to work as a team

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   • Communication
   • Honesty
   • Punctuality
   • Team work ethic

5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:
   • New staff so unable to answer

6. What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
   • Patience, tolerance and communication

7. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees’ learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
   Yes, because you could all learning preference to reinforce instructions and relay information and the staff would then be able to receive information in their preferred learning style.
Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employees:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
   Herd Manager 1
   Very strong kinesthetic, likes to be shown task and then left to try on his own, will ask for assistance if he doesn't understand. Likes to use aural skills and is a strong listener.
   Herd Manager 2:
   Multi modal and adapts learning styles to particular type of job at hand whether management or operational. He likes visual teaching and instruction to receive information and lists—to do lists. He likes to discuss a job and is happy to be left to implement it.

2. Employees Strengths:
   Flexibility, good work ethics, willing to develop new skills, reliability and honesty

3. Attributes that you look for in employers:
   • Someone that will push you to reach your full potential
   • Enthusiastic and challenges us.
   • Good communicator.

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   • Communication
   • Making work environment fun and interesting
   • Being well organized and structured.

5. Areas you feel that employers are not strong in:
   • Employers are new for us this year so cannot give an answer
### Case Study #3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning preferences as a Team</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Aural</th>
<th>Read/Write</th>
<th>Kines-thetic</th>
<th>Modes</th>
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<td>Employer–Wife</td>
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<td>Employee–Herd Manager 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee–Herd Manager 2</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Bi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bi modal A and k are strongest modes of learning in the team. This farm is very intensive with supplement feeding year round and winter milk so these learning modes will suit many of the tasks required in the day to day operational side of the business. There is a big gap to the V and R/W learning styles but employer husband does keep farm diary and recording is all done by him on the farm so his R/W is implemented but is not his most natural learning preference.
Outcomes we hope as a team to achieve and implement into the workplace:

1. Use Discussion and meetings in the workplace as the main form of communication to discuss the day to day needs of the farm and look at what we are doing for the week ahead.
2. Job description have expected targets with expectations and outcomes so that staff have goals that they can achieve. This becomes a living document and can be used to encourage and direct staff.
3. A monthly planning meeting may be a suggestion so that as a team it would benefit everyone so that all learning preferences are addressed.
4. Yellow books and the diary at the shed will be good to record jobs, reminders, paddock rotation and help herd manager providing management tools.
5. A farm map is up on the wall in the cowshed—good for the visual learning preference.
6. Start the season by simply looking at the list of priorities and job lists piece meal and working through step by step will build a strong solid base for employees and employers. Looking at the team and the way they learn will work well.
7. 0800 home phone number for all staff to use to keep in contact and a phone contact list at the shed.
Employers Evaluation Sheet

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D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how did you achieve it
   B
   • By sitting around to discuss things

2. How did you benefit personally?
   By practicing communication we have become better at it.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   By ensuring that good communication and discussion has taken place.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   Made me aware of the different learning styles of my employees.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   I am being more careful and aware that I use visual examples when giving instruction.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   All outcomes.

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   None, being aware of learning styles made a big difference.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made?
   A respect for staff and the way that they learn.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project? Workplace where learning styles are essential to their business.

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Employees Evaluation Sheet

The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A, B, C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how?
   Herd Manager 2
   A, C, D
   • Filling in VARK questionnaire and question sheets
   Herd Manager 1
   A, B, C and D
   • Communicating in a way that the other person understands.

2. How did you both benefit personally?
   Herd Manager 1: Explaining things in different ways
   Herd Manager 2: Understanding instructions more clearly

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Herd Manager 1: Clarification of instructions
   Herd Manager 2: Much easier to understand what is happening on farm.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   Herd Manager 1: More efficient work done because of better explanations to each other.
   Herd Manager 2: Working with learning styles and having the employer know the best way to give instruction and information to his staff.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   • Understanding how others think
   • Learnt different ways to get points across
   • More responsibility
6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement? Explanations i.e.: Show, Tell, Draw, and discuss

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain? Remembering each others learning modes and ensuring that we cover all learning styles daily.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made? More efficiency

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project? The pen pushers in the offices! That they realize that we all learn differently and not all people are read/write preferences.
Case Study #4
Employers -
Husband and Wife  Live on farm, involved on farm
Employees— 23% Lower Order Sharemilker & 2 Farm Assistants
Farm Size:   Ha    Cows:

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
Husband:
Hands on involved in the operational, management and strategic levels of farm operation.
Strong in Kinesthetic and R/W learning styles. Employees receive information on farm, discussing tasks and how to implement them. Use a farm advisor as an outside support for staff and employers.
Wife:
Strong in Aural, R/W and Visual. Uses verbal communication by phone and will personally go and discuss with staff.

2. Employers Strengths:
Communication, applaud employees for work well done, say it as it is and always fair.

3. Attributes as an employer that you look for in employees:
• Enthusiasm
• Knowledge of the job prior learning and eagerness to learn new skills.
• Honesty imperative without trust there is no relationship between parties.
• Ability to work as a team

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
• Communication—being able to listen—regular meetings
• Fairness
• Remembering that together everyone achieves more.

5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:
• Not sharing information, not delegating, not rewarding others for work well done.

6. What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
• More patience
• More regular meetings to assess progress and to review.

7. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees' learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
Yes, communication lines would be more open
Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employees:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
Very strong kinesthetic and aural learning styles are strong. Relays information by talking about things and works with the learning preferences of other staff members. One of the members is limited and English is a second language so showing and working alongside is important when giving instruction and relaying information.

2. Employees Strengths:
Good sense of humour, hard working, honest and has goals that he wants to achieve.

3. Attributes that you look for in employers:
   - Employers that will encourage and support you
   - Good communicators and good listeners.

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   - Communication
   - Knowing where we all fit within the work team

5. Areas you feel that employers are not strong in:
   - More read/write instructions would help management of farm and keep a record of a weekly to do list.
   - Regular meetings will help with communication

Outcomes we hope as a team to achieve and implement into the workplace:

1. A farm diary at the shed to keep a daily record of what is to be done and what has been achieved.
2. Regular meetings that are structured.
**The Team on the VARK Table**

**Case Study #4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning preferences as a Team</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Aural</th>
<th>Read/Write</th>
<th>Kinesesthetic</th>
<th>Modes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer–Husband</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Bi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer–Wife</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee–23%</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Tri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tri modal A, R/W and K are strongest modes of learning in the team. Employers are also involved in the management and administration of other farm investments and so Aural learning styles are used via telephone or farm visits. Farm Assistants that are employed by the 23% LOSM have no VARK scores as one is from S. America and communication is very much visual and Kinesthetic. The other farm assistant is new to the team this season and had not arrived when the questionnaires and interviews were held, but he is strongly read/write and uses lists to tick off jobs and implements this in a kinesthetic way.
The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how did you achieve it
   A and C
   • By implementing and recognizing learning styles where possible

2. How did you benefit personally?
   Greater awareness and understanding of learning preferences

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Improved work output and a greater awareness of learning preferences.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   Ensure that individual learning preferences are used

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   • Where possible used individuals learning preferences in the workplace.
   • Greater awareness and understanding among employees about learning preferences.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   C
   To raise the awareness of learning styles and preferences in the workplace.
7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made?
   Working to each person’s strengths and identify how they learn best to enable those employees to work with the learning preference that they are comfortable with.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?
   Not sure about specifics. But anything that aids communication will benefit the ‘business’. After years of employing it never ceases to amaze me how individuals interpret what is “said to them” and “asked of them”. Expectations of how a job is to be carried out is the dilemma.
The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the ‘Chalk ’n Cheese’ project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how?
   Herd Manager 2
   A and B
   • Implementing learning styles and how we learn best into the workplace.

2. How did you both benefit personally?
   Not having to repeat myself as often

3. How did you benefit as a team? Understanding of each other’s learning styles.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   More efficient use of time

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   • Delivery of message using appropriate learning styles
   • Farm assistant now uses a list of jobs using his R/W learning preferences
   • Foreign Farm Assistant listens and watches me and learns by showing.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   Jobs were related to learning preferences and the easiest way to explain taking account learning styles of staff

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   Difficulty between relaying and receiving information in different ways, being conscious that learning styles are covered.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made? Greater awareness of how we communicate.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?
   Using Vark questionnaire and finding out how applicants relay and receive information at interviews.
Case Study #5

Employers -
Husband and Wife Live on farm, involved on farm
Employees— 1 Trainee Manager & 1 permanent part time staff
Farm Size: 92 Ha Cows: 312

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
   Husband:
   Works off farm during the week employed full time employment off farm.
   Strong learning preferences in RIW and K and A to a lesser degree.
   Prefers to relay information through Aural and written using mobile phone texting and writing in the farm diary on a daily basis with all relevant information pertaining to the day or week. He prefers to receive his information in the same and will use his K to implement ideas that have been discussed and written down.
   Wife:
   Involved in financial, administration, operational and management areas of the farm.
   Strong in Visual and Aural learning preferences and likes to discuss in depth and go and use visual aids such as whiteboards, farm maps, diagrams.
   RIW is not a preferred learning style but has developed this preference as is important when employing others.

2. Employers Strengths:
   Prepared to try new ideas, good communication in all forms of learning styles and always available for employees to contact.
   Recognize good work when it has been achieved.

3. Attributes they look for in employees:
   • Honesty
   • Looking past the day to day and where the direction of farming is taking us.
   • Reliability
   • Good sense of humour
   • Be prepared to go the extra distance when required

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   • Communication
     • Honesty
     • Searching out information and knowledge from others and implementing when understood from employers or other stakeholders in the agribusiness.
     • Pastoral Care and the employment best practices—ensuring that we look after our staff and encourage and support them.
5. **Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:**
   - Do not always indicate which learning style they prefer, it is not always obvious and at times we are instructing them in the incorrect learning style for them depending on the job or task, or if it is management, operational or focusing on targets or goal setting.

6. **What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?**
   - Accepting that we do not all think the same and we all learn differently.

7. **If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees' learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?**
   - Yes definitely we can give instructions more clearly and without confusion working with the learning styles that our employees prefer.
   - Recognizing learning styles and how we learn best can grow our agribusiness.
   - Happy people work better so it is important that our workplace is a place where we can develop personal skills and employees can receive a solid knowledge base.
Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employees:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
   Trainee Manager:
   Prefers to receive his information by verbal discussion and K being shown and watching and learning.
   Trainee manager is multi modal however although Visual is the strongest learning style, it is not his most natural learning preference.
   He moves within K, A and RIW. Read/Write is not his preferred learning style but has developed this skill.
   Permanent Part-time:
   Prefers to receive information aurally verbally explaining step by step and being shown. K is strong for employee and works within this learning preference best.

2. Employees Strengths:
   - Reliable, Punctual, Communicates well with employers, positive work ethic and willing to learn, Integrity

3. Attributes that you look for in employers:
   - Open to opinion and progressive.
   - Good communicator good listening skills.

4. Most important area in a team working environment: Communication

5. Areas you feel that employers are not strong in:
   - New to the farm this season so will have to answer at end of the year.

6. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees' learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
   Considerably improve communication and learning abilities.

Outcomes we hope as a team to achieve and implement into the workplace:
1. Set up a farm information folder that is kept at the shed with all farm information. Management folders that employers and employees keep and use as a living document with information regarding management and operational day to day running of the farm.
2. A telephone contact list and Mobile phone for employees with 0800 home number for employees to ring employers at home.
3. Professional development and practical courses and skill days.
4. Weekly meetings that are formal and structured
5. GPS farm maps and pads for employees and other contracting that come onto farm.
6. Whiteboards and diary at shed and personal diary for trainee manager.
## The Team on the VARK Table

### Case Study #5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning preferences as a Team</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Aural</th>
<th>Read/Write</th>
<th>Kinaesthetic</th>
<th>Modes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer—Husband</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Bi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer—Wife</td>
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<td>Employee—Trainee manager</td>
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<td>Employee—Perm Part time</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Multi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The team is multi modal and working with all learning styles and using the adapt and adopt policy will work well once preferred learning styles and natural learning preferences have been ascertained.
**Employers Evaluation Sheet**

**The Aims of the Project:**
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the ‘Chalk ’n Cheese’ project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how did you achieve it
   A, B, C and D
   - By relaying information in that particular person’s learning style.

2. How did you benefit personally?
   By understanding that others don’t learn in the same way.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Everybody contributed in their own way using their own learning style to get the information across and receive information.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   That I need to relay information more precisely in that person’s learning style and explain more simply so that message is understood.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   - As an employer I identified areas that I needed to be clearer with when giving instructions.
   - Adapting all aspects of the farming operation to meet learning styles of employees.
   - Having found out how employees wish to have information relayed to them it allowed better understanding of our employees and how they perceived the tasks and the way they went about doing that particular job or task.
   - Bringing our Farm advisor on board looking at our learning styles and how we as a team relay and receive information was a bonus for us as employers and employees. He is now aware that he has to relay and transfer information in four different learning styles. Our understanding of how we learn best and how he presents the information will make a big difference to understanding the reasoning behind the recommendations of his advise to us. This can only be good for our agribusiness.
6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   Showing the employers what was required.
   Introducing the read/write learning style into the workplace and getting the information folders written up.

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   Giving clear, concise verbal instruction as it is not my natural learning style.
   Ensuring that employees use the diary and write daily in the diary.
   Encouraging them to use the maps so that they become familiar with the farm layout as this seems to still be an issue for them and they get confused with areas and farm paddock numbers.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made?
   It has helped us as employers to achieve some of the outcomes we desired.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?

   Consultants and Farm advisors, professional advisors could implement some of the concepts into their presentations when giving workshops or working with those employed or involved in the agricultural sector.
Employees Evaluation Sheet

The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the ‘Chalk ‘n Cheese’ project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how?
   Trainee Manager: A, C, B, D
   • Provided all team members with information about other members learning styles.
   Permanent Part time: B, C, D
   • Good communication and good demonstration of how to do things.

2. How did you both benefit personally?
   Trainee Manager: Worked at improving aural instructions to others.
   Permanent Part time: made learning easy so you could get on with the Job.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Trainee Manager: Developing an understanding of best communication form to use in different situations in the workplace.
   Permanent Part time: Everyone has a role in their job and you work more as a team.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   Trainee Manager: Need to use written information for employees.
   Permanent Part Time: Better understanding of how we all think.
5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? Employee as a team?
   Trainee Manager:
   • Written instructions given using brief phrases and pictograms
   • Improved awareness of different learning styles
   • Awareness that new manual tasks need to be displayed when other team members learn these tasks.
   Permanent Part time:
   • Communication achieved on all levels
   • Learning about everyone's learning levels and styles and actually putting into practice.
   • Talking more about what you like and what you don't like and coming to the right decision.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   Trainee Manager: Providing written instructions with diagrams
   Permanent Part time: Learning about the learning styles

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   Trainee Manager: New Manual tasks
   Permanent Part time: none

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made? Greater awareness of how we communicate.
   Trainee Manager: Improved awareness of other team members' learning preferences.
   Permanent Part Time: More of an understanding of others' needs.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?
   Trainee Manager: Learning styles and how we use them in the workplace should be applied to all industry sectors where communication among team members is required for task completion.
   Permanent Part time: Any workplace where people work as a group and dialogue is big part of the workplace.
Case Study #6

Employers -
Employer lives on farm, involved in all aspects of farm operation

Employees— 1 Farm Assistant

Farm Size: 80 Ha Cows: 280

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:

1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
Works on farm alongside employee. Employer encourages employees to ask questions from day 1 of employment so that instructions can be given clearly. Employer transfers information using pictures and aural discussion. Employer encourages them to contribute so you know what information and in what form they require to understand.

2. Employers Strengths:
Calm and fairly patient, enjoys encouraging and teaching, fair

3. Attributes they look for in employees:
   - Honesty
   - A willingness to learn
   - Reliability
   - Enjoys working with animals
   - Good communication skills

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   - Communication
   - Sharing and give and take

5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:
   - New employee beginning in June cannot answer question.

6. What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
   - Giving clear instructions and making employees feel involved and important

7. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees' learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
   - Yes it would be easier to make the instructions suit the person you are dealing with.
**Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets**

**Employees:**
1. **Receives Information and Transfers information:**
   Farm Assistant:
   Employee feels his strength is kinesthetic but VARK questionnaire shows multi modal. He prefers hands on practical learning and likes to receive his instructions by showing and discussion.

2. **Employees Strengths:**
   - Very practical and keen to learn and develop new skills.

3. **Attributes that you look for in employers:**
   - Prepared to take time to show new methods and how to do the job with on job instructions.

4. **Most important area in a team working environment:**
   Communication

5. **Areas you feel that employers are not strong in:**
   - New to the farm this season so will have to answer at end of the year.

6. **If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees’ learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?**
   Yes, because I could areas where I can learn to develop and use other learning styles

**Outcomes we hope as a team to achieve and implement into the workplace:**
1. Use our yellow books and the whiteboard that are going up in the milk room.
2. Employee would like to learn more about pasture management and feels that employer would be a good teacher and support for him.
3. A telephone contact list and names of farm businesses involved with at the shed.
4. Continue Ag ito courses throughout the season—on job credits.
5. Employee going to learn hand held palm notebook as this is used for all recording, pasture monitors and throughout the spring with the yellow books as back up.
6. Employer wishes to teach employee but feels that too much information may drown him so working on a step by step process so that learning is reinforced using various learning styles.
The Team on the VARK Table

Case Study #6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning preferences as a Team</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Aural</th>
<th>Read/Write</th>
<th>Kinesthetic</th>
<th>Modes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee—Farm Assistant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals Numbers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The team is Tri modal. R/W is lowest score. Visual learning mode used by employer uses graphs, number recording, whiteboards and farm maps to instruct. R/W recording is done on hand held note pad and then put onto computer so that recording is done through visual learning style and this will suit both employer and employee. Both are high in Aural learning preference so discussions will happen by default. The K learning style is stronger so ability to implement from the V and A learning styles in a practical problem hands on form.
The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the ‘Chalk ‘n Cheese’ project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A, B, C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how did you achieve it
   A, B, C
   • Has raised the awareness of how employee learns best has enabled me to instruct and teach in a style that suits him.

2. How did you benefit personally?
   Yes, we learnt to recognize how we prefer to receive and pass on information.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   As above

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   Allowed employer to look at the different ways of learning a new skill and develop some personal skills which makes for a healthy workplace.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   • The aural preference has been strong so far this year and implementing tasks or jobs using K was easy to implement.
   • Employee is very practical and sees everyday jobs that needs to be done.
   •

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   Using the A and k preferences was easy as they were natural learning styles for both of us.

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   Using all the learning styles

8. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?
   All areas of sector where groups of people are working for the betterment of us the farmers, would enable them to look at how farmers take in information and relay information.
Case Study #7

Employers -
Employers live on farm, involved in various farms
Employees - 1 Manager
Farm Size: stocking rate: 3.7 Ha  Cows: 210

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
Employer:
Uses aural discussion or telephone to relay and receive information. Uses farm maps and diagrams to explain in more details. Will show by instruction and employee watches.
2. Employers Strengths:
Encouraging, very practical and keeps it simple,
3. Attributes they look for in employee?
A good attitude towards work and life in general
4. Most important area in a team working environment:
• Communication
5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:
• Taking a step back and looking at the simple side of the operational day to day running and getting those basics right.
6. What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
• Writing down what is in my head and give the full explanation not half of it.
7. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees’ learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
• Yes definitely we can give instructions more clearly and without confusion working with the learning styles that our employees prefer.
Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employees:
1. Receives Information and Transfers information:
   Manager:
   Strong on A, K and V learning styles and implements R/W as matter of part of the job of manager. This is not a natural learning style but is used in management position. Receive information from my employer aurally most of the time.

2. Employees Strengths:
   - Worked with lots of different people
   - Have an in depth understanding of cows and grass

3. Attributes that you look for in employers:
   - Open to opinion and 2 way thinking
   - Good communicator
   - Easy to get along with.

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   - Communication
   - Fun times and hard work times
   - Understanding expectations
   - Positive attitude

5. Areas you feel that employers are not strong in:
   - Need to explain instructions more fully and go step by step especially in the practical side of manual tasks.

6. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees' learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
   Better understanding of how we want the job to be done and how to do the job.

Outcomes we hope as a team to achieve and implement into the workplace:
1. Set up structured meeting using 3 month planner with targets, and action planner using priorities of 1 to 4 most important to least important.
2. Increase the R/W aspect of the farm.
3. Writing in diary, using to do lists.
The Team on the VARK Table

**Case Study #7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning preferences as a Team</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Aural</th>
<th>Read/Write</th>
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The team is Tri modal and work well together in K, A and V as these are both areas where they learn best. R/W needs to be developed by both employer and employee and the outcomes as they both agree need this as a focus area.
The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how did you achieve it
A, B, C and D
• Made a plan of jobs and put time frames on them.

2. How did you benefit personally?
We both knew what had to be done.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
Better understanding of what had to be done in the team environment.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
Got us talking about different learning styles and we started talking more about better systems.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
• List of jobs and timeframes.
• Learn more about our weaknesses
• We put better weekly and monthly plans in place
• We also learned more about each other and we all learn best.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
Better weekly and monthly plans

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
Getting the plans in my head down on paper so staff can see what I am talking about.

8. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?
• Anyone who is employing staff.
Employees Evaluation Sheet

The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A,B,C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how?
   Trainee Manager:
   A, C
   • Lists of tasks to be completed within time frames.

2. How did you both benefit personally?
   Better information of when and what needs to be achieved.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Better communication and discussion of meeting expectations more often.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   As an employee I had clear explanations of tasks and outcomes required.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   • List of jobs and timeframes.
   • Discussion of weekly jobs.
   • Show and then let the other person have a go.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   Task lists.

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   The show and then let them have a go too keen to show and then leave. Time frames always busy.

8. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?
   Any employee/employer relationship or team environment.
Case Study #8

Employers -
Employers live on farm, involved in various farms Multi Farm Equity involvement.

Employer/ees - % LOSM and is Farm Manager
Employees: 1 Assistant Manager, 1 Herd Manager, 1 Farm Assistant.
Farm Size: stocking rate: 4.3 Ha Cows: 800

Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:
1. Receives Information and Transfers Information:
   Employer is also an employee in this case study and the focus is case study is both roles.
   Likes to receive information aurally, shown the task or job, have it explained to him and then attempt the job himself. Employer is quiet but is a strong listener so learn from information given to him verbally and is high in Kinesthetic so is confident in implementing his learning and will follow instruction easily in the hands on practical instruction.
   He works with 3 other employees Assistant Manager, Herd Manager and Farm Assistant.

2. Farm Assistant is a visual learner and uses maps, diagrams. He also writes notes and job lists as employer is speaking with him or afterwards.

3. Herd Manager is a strong aural and will discuss everything with lots of own input and ideas. Uses R/W in the cowshed and for recording purposes.

3. Assistant Manager is a visual learner and an aural. He uses diagrams, maps and will also discuss operational and management decisions.

2. Employers Strengths:
Pasture management, cows and feeding levels, enjoys being outside, friendly and approachable, wants to strive to be the best he can be, he is competitive and wants to be successful.

3. Attributes they look for in employees:
   • Hardworking
   • A willingness to learn and to develop skills personally and professionally.
   • Reliability and a good work ethos
   • Enjoys working outside and with animals

4. Most important area in a team working environment:
   • Communication
   • Sharing and working together

5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:
   • Tried and true works well sometimes ideas of employees are not always practical.

6. What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
   • Giving clear instructions and making employees feel involved and important

7. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees’ learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
Information gathered from Interviews, general discussion and Question Sheets

Employers:

1. Receives Information and Transfers information:

   Employer is also an employee in this case study and the focus is case study is both roles.
   
   Likes to receive information aurally, shown the task or job, have it explained to him and then attempt the job himself. Employer is quiet but is a strong listener so learn from information given to him verbally and is high in Kinesthetic so is confident in implementing his learning and will follow instruction easily in the hands on practical instruction. He works with 3 other employees Assistant Manager, Herd Manager and Farm Assistant.

   1. Farm Assistant is a visual learner and uses maps, diagrams. He also writes notes and job lists as employer is speaking with him or afterwards.
   
   2. Herd Manager is a strong aural and will discuss everything with lots of own input and ideas. Uses R/W in the cowshed and for recording purposes.
   
   3. Assistant Manager is a visual learner and an aural. He uses diagrams, maps and will also discuss operational and management decisions.

2. Employers Strengths:

   Pasture management, cows and feeding levels, enjoys being outside, friendly and approachable, wants to strive to be the best he can be, he is competitive and wants to be successful.

3. Attributes they look for in employees:

   - Hardworking
   - A willingness to learn and to develop skills personally and professionally.
   - Reliability and a good work ethos
   - Enjoys working outside and with animals

4. Most important area in a team working environment:

   - Communication
   - Sharing and working together

5. Areas you feel that employees are not strong in:

   - Tried and true works well sometimes ideas of employees are not always practical.
6. What areas do you feel as an employer you could improve in, regarding the work team approach?
   - Being the boss and not always the friend, knowing when to put the boundaries out there.

7. If you knew your own learning preferences or know your employees’ learning preferences, what difference could this make to your workplace?
   - Yes could allow employees and myself to reach my full potential.

**Outcomes we hope as a team to achieve and implement into the workplace:**

1. More structured farm meetings that are formal with an agenda and a list.
2. Make sure that as a team we keep up the social side of our relationship as this is important for a happy, healthy work environment.
3. Staff management—understanding how they learn.
4. Dealing with personality differences
5. Coping with conflict and areas of responsibility.
# The Team on the VARK Table

## Case Study #8

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning preferences as a Team</th>
<th>Visual</th>
<th>Aural</th>
<th>Read/Write</th>
<th>Kinaesthetic</th>
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Bimodal A and K are strongest modes of learning in the team. Employers are also involved in the management and administration of other farm investments and so Aural learning styles are used via telephone or farm visits. Employers are multi-modal and are to accommodate most learning styles, however they may require to receive information in more than one learning mode to grasp the whole picture. Employers have ability to give and relay information using all learning styles and this is a great plus for employee as they are aware of employees learning styles and tap into it. Employer/ees uses Aural learning style to give instructions and K by showing on job instructions. Employer prefers to receive his information through K and A so important that he recognizes what the learning styles of the people he employs to ensure he is giving them instructions and information in the way that they learn best.
The Aims of the Project:
A. To help employers and employees realize that they all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

1. As a participant in the 'Chalk 'n Cheese' project, which of the above aims do you feel that the project achieved for you? (write A, B, C or D any many as you feel apply to you) and how?
   A, B, C
   Knowing how I learnt and being aware that I had to give instructions and information using all four types of learning improved communication.

2. How did you both benefit personally?
The project helped me to reinforce everything I had learned from previous courses and working with the systems I have in place already on the farm.

3. How did you benefit as a team?
   Great team ethos and spirit aware of how people learn has helped.

4. What difference did VARK make in the workplace for you as an Employee or an Employer? And How?
   Awareness that others learn differently.

5. What were the outcomes of the project for you as an Employer? /Employee? as a team?
   Staff meetings were more structured and in doing that its helped me to manage more as a boss than a friend.
   Getting staff more active and involved in understanding the role of running the farm.

6. Having listed the outcomes which were the easiest to implement?
   Initial discussions about VARK and looking at areas we wanted to target.

7. Which outcomes have been the most difficult to implement and maintain?
   Good systems in place so was not difficult.

8. As a team in the work environment what has been the most significant changes that VARK has made? Greater awareness of how we communicate.
   Making me more aware as an employer.

9. Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project? Anyone who employs staff.
Conclusions

The 4 aims of my project were:
A. To help employers and employees realize that we all learn differently.
B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK.
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
D. To give employees and employers the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.

There are 5 main conclusions, these are::
1. Did we achieve our aims?
2. What were the outcomes of the participants and did they achieve them?
3. Attributes of employees and employers, an important part of the project
4. Fine tuning systems already implemented?
5. What are the benefits for my case study participants?

1. Did we achieve our aims?

Using the feedback evaluation sheets and discussing with participants how they felt having been involved with my project, there was a positive reaction by all participants. All of the 8 case studies achieved between 1 and 4 of the aims.

A. To help employers and employees realize that we all learn differently were achieved by all participants. This was the easiest to achieve through the VARK Questionnaire and the questions asked in the initial meeting regarding the relaying and receiving of information. All of the case studies achieved this aim with confidence. It was part of the process of the project and it happened by default.

B. To strengthen and improve communication between employers and employees in a practical and supportive way using VARK was achieved by 6 of the employers involved in the project and 6 of the employees groups from the various case studies.

This was an important aim for the employers who had larger dairy farm operation as they felt that this was necessary for the team ethos to succeed and to build a good relationship with staff.

Employers and employees working together on a day to day basis felt that it was crucial for them to build on their communication skills, especially in the Aural and Kinesthetic learning styles. This enabled job instruction and discussion to take place more easily and gave employees the opportunity to ask employers to explain more in detail.

Employers also began to use lists, farm diaries and whiteboards in this area so that the Read/Write learning style was also implemented of jobs or tasks being prioritized and accomplished. Farm Maps, Diagrams and pictograms were implemented and numbers of paddock rotation, feeding levels also reinforced the Alphabetic and K learning to encourage employees to work on time management, learning to develop Read/Write and Visual learning modes to work more efficiently in the
C. To raise the awareness that we all relay and receive information in different ways.
This aim was achieved by all participants and was achieved at the onset of the project. It was discussed initially when I approached participants regarding their involvement in the project.
In every evaluation sheet comments were made to the effect that everyone realized that they had all learned from discussions together with me round the kitchen table, filling out the question sheets and initially filling out the VARK questionnaire and giving background information.
Question sheets asking the question of how do you prefer to receive information and relay information? was asked of all participants. This began this process of self examination and what they really did prefer and how they could then interpret the information and implement it using their preferred learning style and on farm.
Employers and employees used this aim to determine what outcomes they would like to implement to create a more positive team environment. This gave the whole project a real, doable feel to it. It was workable and would practically benefit all participants.
Making more effective use of time management and not having to repeat instructions because instructions and tasks were discussed using the preferred learning modes of those people involved. This was a real positive aspect of this aim being achieved. Several of those employers and employees made this comment in the evaluation sheets.
D. To give employers and employees the confidence to work in all learning modes allowing all members of the team to develop professionally and personally in the workplace.
Employers in 5 of the case studies felt that this aim was achieved. These employers encouraged their participants to become involved in Ag ITO training, attend discussion groups, practical skill days, read farm related literature and Fieldays. Taking on board areas of responsibility in the workplace using their preferred learning styles and developing all learning modes was a positive outcome of this aim. Employers were prepared to give employees an opportunity to take ownership and implement skills they had learnt.
3 of the employees in the case studies felt that this was being achieved. The opportunity for employees to gain knowledge and develop skills was an aim that I hoped that employers would take on board. I encouraged this as much as possible and the result was positive.

2. What were the outcomes of the participants and did they achieve them?
Most of the outcomes ranged from regular meetings—informal and structured. The Read/Write learning mode was an area that most case studies looked at implementing and encouraging. Some of the areas were: Farm Information Folders, Using Farm maps and to do lists using the Dexcel HR toolkit in a way that they could tailor it to their own needs on the farm, an orientation checklist for new staff and prioritizing job lists and tasks. Health and Safety manuals were looked at, but only 1 case study was going make an actual manual, others were looking at incorporating this into a farm information folder.
The Visual learning mode was very much an outcome that all case study participants were keen to put in place. This ranged from Farm maps, Whiteboards with Paddock rotation, reminders and a to do list. Yellow books are an area that most farmers use as their bible especially in spring and in the AB season. Practical use and regular use of these yellow books were an outcome but more importantly transferring the information from the yellow books onto whiteboards and farm diaries so that everyone has the same information to work with. 6 of the 8 employers involved in the project felt that when interviewing applicants for a potential job vacancy on farm, the interviews should involve questions that relate to the receiving and relaying of information and most felt that the VARK questionnaire designed by Neil Fleming would be a useful tool in the interview process accompanied by questions regarding how they receive, transfer and relay information. Most employees felt that instructions were given more in depth by employers and expectations and time frames were included in the instruction process. Regular discussion on farm using the Aural learning mode was an outcome that was very important for employers and employees working together on a daily basis. Employers that were absentee or only involved on a part time basis on farm felt that Aural learning mode was also vital especially using IT, emails, texting, telephone and a scheduled meeting when they were on farm. The Read/Write learning mode was a necessity to enable them communicate with employees when they were absent off farm and farm manager reports, farm diaries, monthly planners and whiteboards at the shed were an outcome that would help to keep them informed when they were not able to be there every day. The kinesthetic learning mode is used on farm 24/7 and explanation of show and tell, on job instruction was a key outcome that was fine-tuned to the needs of employers and employees. Case Studies that were on a larger scale looked at the structured aspects of the farming operation and those on a smaller scale looked at how we could relate to each other using more of the Aural and Kinesthetic learning modes. Employers that wanted their employees to take more responsibility and the position of employment affected what outcomes they hoped to achieve. This often involved all of the VARK learning styles using multi modal learning.

All of the outcomes that they achieved ensured that all learning modes were implemented and used in the workplace. The outcomes that participants put in place was really all about sharing of knowledge, ensuring everyone was on the same wavelength, providing the right information to assist employees and employers in the management, operational and strategic levels of the farming operation.
3. **Attributes of Employees and Employers an important part of the project**

Most Employers felt that honesty, reliability, good work ethics, tidiness, a willingness to learn, communication, punctuality, stable relationship, good employment record, clean and tidy personally and in all aspects of work, cheerfulness, making the workplace an enjoyable experience, and ability to have fun were attributes that they felt were in an employee.

Most Employees felt that attributes that they looked for in an employer were: open to opinion, good communication skills, good listening skills, providing me with opportunity to push the boundaries and gain new skills, prepared to take the time to show with on job instructions how to tackle jobs on farm, Make more time for the employee, enthusiastic and encouraging.

It was interesting to note that only 1 case study employer wrote down 'ability to work with stock and all animals.'

I also noticed that only 2 employers wrote down an important attribute for them was trust and relationship.

Some of the farm case studies were employed new staff this year so many of them could not comment of areas they felt their employers or employees could develop but some of the answers from employees who had remained for another season on the farm were: not making time to explain jobs or tasks, not always letting us have a go and then coming to check up, making sure that all the information is given to us and not half of the information still being in the employers head.

Employers felt that communication, using their own initiative and decision making were areas that employers felt that employees could improve in.

While attributes are not learning styles in the workplace they can affect how we learn.

The workplace environment, the expectations and outcomes in the workplace are affected by how we perceive and respect one another. This does affect how we learn and take on board information. Negativity and lack of trust or belief in an employer or employee will determine how much we listen and take on board the information given to us by other members of the team.

This is essentially the area of relationship in the workplace. If the workplace is a positive environment where everyone is comfortable and working conditions are fair then implementing the various learning styles is easier. There is no friction, communication is open and relaxed and self confidence and self esteem are high.
4. **Fine-tuning systems already implemented**

Most of the outcomes that participants were hoping to implement using the 4 aims discussed at the beginning of the project had already been implemented to some degree. We added to what was already there and fine-tuned areas in the workplace where instructions, information and systems could be more effective and cover all the learning styles.

As individual case studies we looked at what we were already doing and how we could implement areas that looked at encompassing all the learning styles of staff.

Case Studies that were on a larger scale looked at the structured aspects of the farming operation and those on a smaller scale looked at how we could relate to each other using more of the Aural and Kinesthetic learning modes.

Employers who wanted their employees to take more responsibility and the position of employment affected what outcomes they hoped to achieve. This often involved all of the VARK learning styles and was agreed to by all those on farm.

The beauty of this project and the real advantage was that I was not introducing lots of new information and material that was going to be in the 'too hard basket'. It was not rocket science and participants felt that it was everyday stuff!!!!!! It was practical, related to their personal farming operation and was doable.

The concepts and ideas that we came to use as outcomes in our discussions were already on the wish list of some of the employers and they just needed someone to come and assist them in the implementation of the ideas.

Liaising with employers and employees so that ideas were expressed in a non threatening environment gave everyone the opportunity to contribute to the discussion and look at fine-tuning their farming operations so that we all had input and the outcomes were the outcomes that everyone in the team wanted to achieve.

5. **What are the benefits for my case study participants?**

All of the participants felt that their awareness of learning styles and that everyone learnt was definitely achieved and they felt that as a team this was a positive bringing together lots of ideas and ways to give the same information.

All participants felt that learning styles contributed to a more positive workplace environment because individuals were recognized and accepted that they learned differently to their workmates.

Employers were made aware of learning modes and this made the workplace a more relaxed environment; instructions and jobs and tasks assigned to employees were carried more effectively, employees used their initiatives using information provided from all learning tools that were introduced into the workplace.

Employees knew what the expectations of their employer was, the information and instructions were given in all learning styles, so there was no confusion and this made a real difference to time management and learning new skills.

Benefits will vary between each individual and that it is be expected but I feel that this project is ongoing, with no date of completion. I am confident that we will be able to develop even more tools that will benefit participants with learning modes and meet the needs of the individuals within the team workplace. This is a win-win scenario for all of us.
Recommendations

In the evaluation feedback sheets I asked all the participants to answer the following question which they answered either written or verbally. These influenced me when making my recommendations and taking into account where this project could benefit others and what the course of action would be.

The question was: 'Using VARK are there any other areas in the workplace or dairy sector as a whole that you feel would benefit from this project?'

Here are their answers:

- Everyone that needs to be upskilled and to retain employees. Would benefit educational organizations in farming.
- School system and implementing all learning modes not predominantly R/W.
- Any workplace where you need to be made aware of learning styles
- Workplace where learning styles are essential to their business
- The pen pushers in the offices! That they realize that we all learn differently and not all people are read/write preferences.
- Not sure about specifics. But anything that aids communication will benefit the 'business'. After years of employing it never ceases to amaze me how individuals interpret what is "said to them" and "asked of them". Expectations of how a job is to be carried out is the dilemma.
- Using Vark questionnaire and finding out how applicants relay and receive information at interviews.
- Consultants and Farm advisors, professional advisors could implement some of the concepts into their presentations when giving workshops or working with those employed or involved in the agricultural sector.
- Learning styles and how we use them in the workplace should be applied to all industry sectors where communication among team members is required for task completion.
- Fonterra
- All areas of sector where groups of people are working for the betterment of us the farmers, would enable them to look at how farmers take in information and relay information.
- Anyone who is employing staff.

The course of action that I recommend encompasses all the above reasons of why this project should be actively promoted in the workplace to create a positive team working environment working with on farm situations and with other stakeholders that are involved with farmers in their agribusiness operations.

I would recommend that this project be part of the interview process of potential applicants especially the questions relating directly to receiving instruction and information and how we relay them.

For this project to have any impact in the workplace, the employer is the key player and they need to instigate and encourage their staff to be aware of how we all learn differently implementing some of the ideas discussed in the report into the workplace.
For this project to become a reality, employers need to endorse and become involved in the project. Why? Because employers are leaders, they must lead by example ensuring that they are encouraging their employees to take the initiative, trying new ideas, empowering others and leading from the front. This project will give them the opportunity to do this creating a positive flow on effect from employer across the board.

Using background information and the project information provided, an action plan needs to be drawn up on farm or indeed any workplace, timeframes and a process put in place. This would include using all of the VARK learning modes and outcomes for that particular work environment that are achievable and will benefit the team ethos, meets the needs of individuals and create a more positive working environment.

I see great potential for this project to become a management tool that is used in the workplace. There are so many information booklets, compliances and paperwork in the dairy and agricultural sector now, we are drowning in paperwork and administration, therefore you do not want to reinvent the wheel. This type of project lends itself to motivating, liaising and supporting employers and employees in the workplace.

This is an area of Human Resources that needs more recognition.
I feel that if we could use the 'adopt and adapt' policy we could turn it into a guideline information booklet either stand alone or working in conjunction with the Dexcel HR toolkit and other knowledge we have already at our fingertips.

To ensure the success of this project, you definitely need to have someone to actually liaise and work alongside employers and employees.
They need someone who has no hidden agendas, are objective, passionate about people, motivating and work in a support role to assist them in making this possible.

With the continuing amalgamation of farms and the increase and demands facing employers and employees the workplace needs to be a place where they can feel comfortable, respected and accepted. Above all it should be a place where you feel you belong and are an integral part of the whole operation.

Knowing your own learning styles and how others learn best will go a long way to creating a more positive working environment.
When you are listened to and to know that your opinion and ideas are valued can make a huge difference to the workplace.

VARK in the workplace is about working relationships, team ethos, developing and learning new skills, identifying how we all learn best, respecting others, and individuals feeling comfortable within the team environment.
I would like to recommend most strongly that we use VARK in the workplace and actively promote it. We want to make it something that we will find easy, practical and doable—a process that has flexibility and can be modified to meet the needs of the team.
Referencing

Web Pages


Referencing


**Email Contacts**
- Fleming, N: flemingn@ihug.co.nz
- Demchy Brenda: atsolutions @xtra.co.nz
- Mandi Mcleod: maindimcleod@silvanius.co.nz
- Lincoln University Library: http://www.lincoln.ac.nz

**Book**

**Edited Book**

**Journal**


**CD**
CD: VARK Training Resource Kit: Neil Fleming
50 Idris Road, Christchurch 8005 New Zealand. Copyright 2001

**University Papers:**
*Introduction to Adult Learning and Teaching 187.180 Study Guide*, 2003

**The VARK Questionnaire**
Fleming, N, 2001 designer of *The VARK Questionnaire 2001*, CD Resource Kit or www.vark.learn.com
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Cynthia Northcote
John and Clare Hutterd
Irene Nolan
Michael and Andrea O'Connor
Clare and Rob Poole
Kathy and Chris Prankerd
Ratapiko Discussion Group
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John Troutbeck
Steven Van der Poel
Jim and Sue Van der Poel
Peter and Jean Wilson
Shaun Wilson
Women in Dairying group