

final report

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Identifying and overcoming barriers to implementing practice change - Overcoming barriers to adoption

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Abstract

In the farming business context, gaining skill and knowledge is not enough to ensure practices change on farm. A complex interplay of factors exists in farming businesses that can prevent good ideas and new practices being adopted.

This pilot project utilised a business coaching process with farmers to address barriers to adoption. The coaching process could provide an additional extension tool to help achieve practice change where lack of knowledge and technical skill are not the key barriers.

The results from this pilot show that a coaching approach supports farmers in overcoming barriers to implementing practice change. Four options of how coaching could be incorporated into current meat industry extension programs are provided.

Executive summary

Barriers to adoption of knowledge and skills in beef businesses have been shown to consist of both tangible (resources, time, labour, land capability) and intangible barriers (decision inertia and decision paralysis). While traditional extension methods are able to address tangible barriers, the intangible remain more challenging.

In this project, eight farming businesses participated in a variation of business coaching to help identify barriers to practice change and adoption. Through business coaching, means of achieving goals and moving farm businesses forwards were identified for each business.

With the business coach, each business identified goals that were important to them and worked towards achieving them with a process of five- one hour sessions of business coaching over a six month period. Coaching was delivered by an experienced coach using a mixture of face-to-face and phone/Skype coaching sessions. At the conclusion of the program, all participants were invited to a group session to review the success of the program.

An important aspect of the program was that the coaching goals were self-selected by each participant and congruent with their personal values. Generally goals selected for coaching were more strategic in nature, being important but not necessarily urgent.

All barriers to adoption identified by participants were related to themselves. That is, something they needed to 'do', or action they needed to take, rather than being a lack of knowledge or skill. In one case, acquiring knowledge and skill was part of how they achieved their goal; however they identified the barrier as time to acquire the knowledge.

This is an important point to note as in most extension activities the emphasis is on providing knowledge and skill with participants planning how they are going to implement the information within the time frame of the activity. Coaching offers a means of enabling participants in extension, to have additional opportunity to put the knowledge and skill they have gained from a range of programs and workshops into practice and follow through their actions to a satisfactory conclusion in the medium to longer term.

Barrier identified by participants included:

- Planning time to determine priorities, making time to implement a plan
- Taking the time to plan and clarify strategic direction
- Too much going on in the business; needing to plan next steps and stay focused
- Lack of a practical system to monitor cash flow in the business and the discipline/motivation to monitor it regularly and adjust
- Unsure how to generate new business with no system to ensure it happens
- Plan to achieve goal and hold commitment to following it through
- Ability to prioritise strategic versus daily priorities and communicate them to others in the business
- Sensitive topic of farm succession so hard to talk about with family or others. Difficult to prioritise to discuss the issue.

The most valuable part of the coaching process was identified by participants and the coach as its ability to hold the participants accountable for their actions. This process consisted of:

- Setting self-appointed tasks during the coaching session
- Having the participant articulate these tasks in their own words
- Having the participant write and send their agreed tasks to the coach
- Reviewing the tasks at the next coaching session and celebrating achievement

- Redefining uncompleted tasks and setting new ones
- Repeating the process until it becomes second nature.

Most participants thought coaching had contributed to changes to their farm business productivity, income and/or profitability. The results from this pilot show that coaching farmers does move them forward by overcoming barriers to practice change. The process potentially has a place in extension.

Farmers participating in the project rated the value of the benefit of coaching to their business as 7 on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is very low value and 10 is very high value. This compares to an average of 8.4 for participants in other More Beef from Pastures activities.

Farmers paid \$200 to participate in the pilot project, however the program would be commercially valued at \$1500 (including travel costs). Participants were asked whether they would be prepared to pay the \$200 amount for more coaching. Eighty percent said 'yes' to valuing the service at \$200-500. Based on the participants' perceptions of value, the cost of coaching was priced at a level acceptable to them.

Suggestions are made how industry support could be provided if coaching becomes part of the extension domain. It is worth noting that in general, how much people are prepared to pay for a service is a reflection of their own value of their time, their self-development and self.

There are a number of ways coaching could be incorporated into a beef extension program. Four main options identified in this pilot project include:

1. Standalone one-to-one coaching program
2. Group coaching program
3. Add-on to a group discussion or training program
4. As a skill that is added to the group facilitator/consultant 'kit bag' to enable coaching conversations to take place within extension activities.

A literature review provides an overview of previous work identifying barriers to practice change and how coaching has been shown to be effective in overcoming barriers to practice change in a range of businesses.

This pilot project was work carried out by Inspiring Excellence in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries BetterBeef program.

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1. Introduction

Investment into Agricultural Extension in the Beef Industry has the primary aim to affect change at an industry level to improve the productivity and profitability of the Beef Industry nationally. Meat and Livestock Australia annual investment into Meat Industry R,D&E and marketing in 2012-13 is \$174.5 million. This represents a significant investment by government and industry that has recently been questioned in the productivity commissions 2011 report as to the benefit to the Australian Economy and the degree of change that occurs (public/private benefit) as a direct result of this investment.

At the extension program level, this highlights the need to attribute change on farm to the investment made in extension activities. However there can be a big gap going from extension activity to on-farm practice change. This gap is often referred to as the 'barrier to adoption' and in recent years has received a lot of attention as extension agencies endeavour to achieve more change with fewer resources.

Comprehensive extension work undertaken in the Upper Murray region of Victoria during 2006 – 2009 following a severe drought suggests that there are existing barriers to the adoption of practices and technologies in the region beyond skill and knowledge of the farming practices. Simply put, gaining skill and knowledge is not enough to ensure practices change. A complex interplay of factors exists in farming businesses that can prevent good ideas and new practices being adopted that are more to do with the individual farm business situation, the family dynamics and personal skills and motivations of the business managers.

The project aimed to identify the key barriers to adoption and to identify ways of overcoming them. To address these 'barriers to adoption' the concept of executive/business coaching was selected to trial with farmers to see if it could better address these barriers and provide an additional extension tool to help achieve practice change where lack of knowledge and technical skill are not the key barriers.

2. Project objectives

The main objectives of this project were to:

1. Identify key barriers to practice change adoption
2. Develop strategies and action plans to deal with barriers to adoption.

3. Project methodology

The concept of business coaching was adapted to use in a farming context as a novel way of overcoming barriers to adoption. In adapting business coaching to farming, it was decided to lengthen the time between coaching engagements from once a week to once a month as previous work in this area¹ has shown a preference by farmers for more time to digest and act. In addition face to face interaction was introduced to address the issue of developing rapport with farmers and as a way of finishing the engagement.

An overview of the coaching process used in this project is shown in Figure 1.

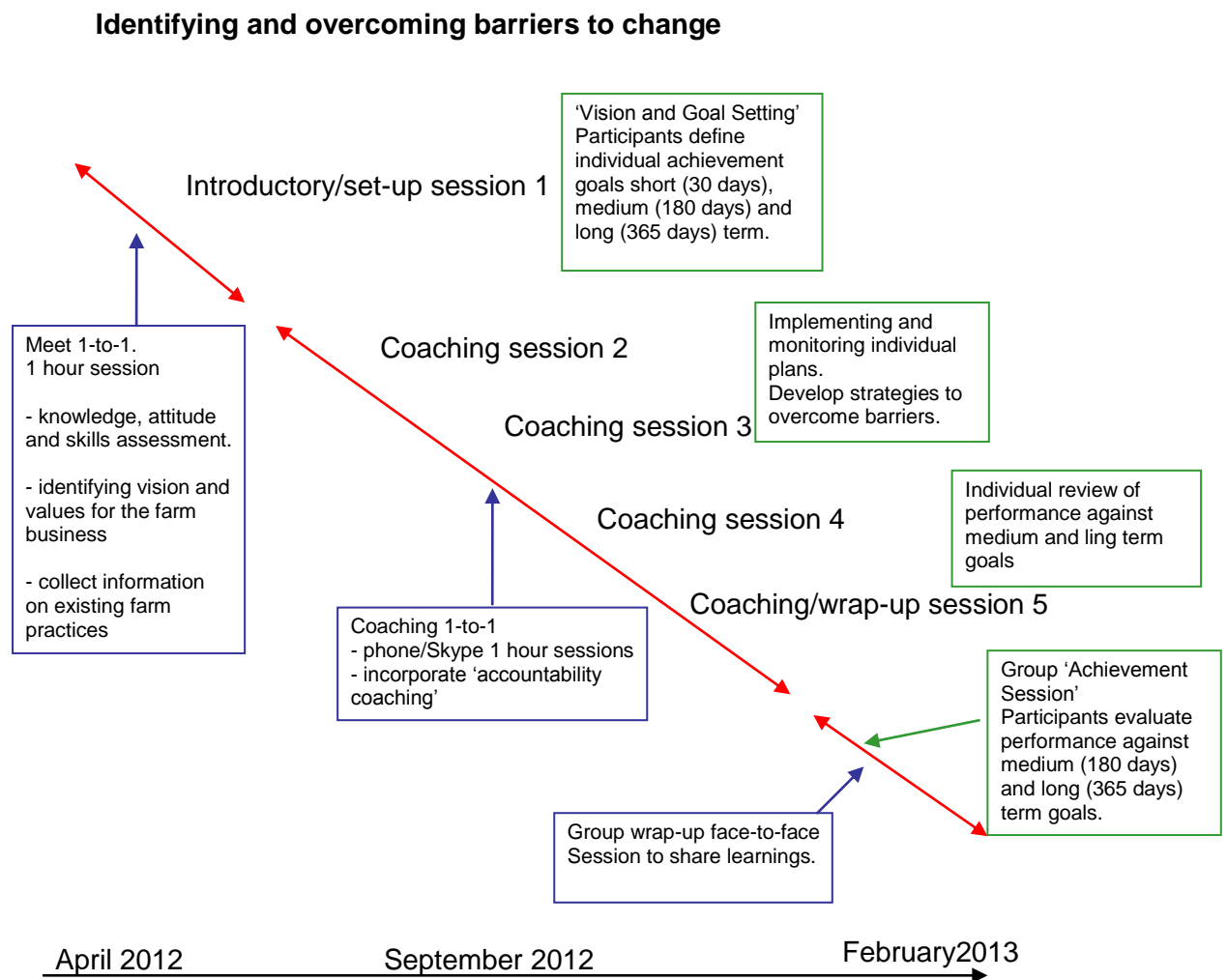


Figure 1: Process for identifying and overcoming barriers to change

¹ Howard, KA (2009) A Coach Approach to Achieving Practice Change – Department of Primary Industries Victoria – Internal report.

3.1 Methodology development

The following processes were developed as part of this project:

- Farmer recruitment strategy
- Ex-ante and post-ante questionnaires for farmers
- Coaching background material for farmers i.e. EOI form, background information, coaching agreement.
- Invoicing process to obtain contribution from the farmers
- Coaching tools i.e. values and vision exercises, goal setting and review processes etc.
- Communication processes for use with farmers to ensure smooth flow of sessions.
- Final group review.

3.2 Recruiting farmers

Eight farming businesses were recruited from:

- Existing BetterBeef Groups (2)
- Targeted recruitment (2)
- BetterBeef newsletter recruitment (4).

The recruitment process was a stepwise engagement process that consisted of:

1. Initial email to all BetterBeef group and associate members in North East Victoria inviting them to participate (BetterBeef Group coordinators also targeted specific members)
2. Prospective participants contacting the coach (Dr Kristy Howard) for an EOI form and background information sheet
3. Farmer submitting the EOI electronically to the coach
4. Assessment of all EOI's for suitability for coaching by the coach
5. Acceptance email to successful applicants that included an ex-ante questionnaire (baseline information on each participants' level of skill and knowledge and current on-farm practices), values exercise and an invoice (\$200 + GST) to each farming business
6. Scheduling of first coaching session.

3.3 Introductory/set-up session

The first coaching session occurred face-to-face on farm. The purpose was to:

- Establish rapport
- Establish goals for coaching
- Developing an understanding of the clients business and personal vision, values and goals as well as any barriers to achieving these goals.
- Establish the context for the coaching.

By the end of the first session, the farmer had:

- Set their goals and tasks to complete before the next coaching session
- Established dates and method for follow-up sessions i.e. phone or Skype, date, time etc.

The coach kept track of farmer's progress via emails between sessions to hold them accountable for their actions.

3.4 One-to-one phone/Skype coaching sessions

The coach interacted one-on-one with participants three times throughout the duration of the project using Skype or telephone (three businesses chose Skype for some or all of their calls). Each coaching session was evaluated by the coach against the farmers self-assigned tasks (emailed to the coach after each session). The coach reflected on the ability of the interaction to achieve the desired outcome and adjusted the process to suit. Focusing on the individual participant and their business, the one-on-one sessions enabled the coach and participants to identify barriers to change, develop processes and tools to overcome the barriers and assist participants in implementing actions to achieve their goals.

The coach:

- Assisted participants identify what prevents achievement of identified goals and develop strategies to overcome these issues
- Monitored the actions implemented to achieve the goals, identifying barriers to implementing actions.

3.5 Final coaching session

A final (fifth) coaching session was conducted face-to-face with six out of the seven remaining farming businesses to evaluate the success of the coaching process.

During this final session the coach identified:

- Achievements made by each participant (and celebrated these achievements)
- Any obstacles or barriers that were overcome during coaching
- Whether the initial goals for the coaching were achieved and what else needed to happen
- Pathways forward to continue the process or a way to achieve any outstanding goals.
- What could have been improved or changed to make the process better.

3.6 Farmer feedback session

Each farmer was invited to participate in a group feedback session 2-3 months after the final coaching session.

The purpose of the feedback session was to:

- Celebrate the progress made by each participant
- Review the outcomes of the project with the coach and project sponsors
- Suggest improvements to the process
- Recommend ways the project and process can be used in the future
- Comment on anything else pertinent to the project i.e. participant willingness to pay and assess price prohibitive points post- project.

This day was attended by the participating farmers, Victorian DEPI Senior Specialist Beef, DEPI BetterBeef coordinators of the groups involved, MLA representative and the coach.

4. Project results

4.1 Who was engaged?

The engagement process yielded the required eight beef businesses for the pilot. The most successful strategy was advertising the pilot in the BetterBeef e-newsletter. Nine responses were gained from this process alone in addition to direct approaches to groups and individuals. Of the nine inquiries from the BetterBeef e-newsletter, one was not suitable (business was beyond the scope of the project), and four were placed on a waiting list in case any participants dropped out.

The eight farming businesses that participated in the pilot coaching program represented a variety of beef based businesses from 50 head of cattle to 2000 head run on 44 ha to 2800 ha.

Three of these businesses had only participated in one previous BetterBeef event or course; the other five participating businesses had participated in a variety of beef events, groups and training such as BeefCheque, Storelink, BetterBeef etc. Four of the participating farm businesses enrolled two of the business members i.e. husband and wife or business partners in the coaching. These partners were coached together.

Of the eight participating businesses, seven completed the coaching and one business ceased participation after session two citing that it was not what they expected and was not meeting their needs. This highlighted the need for clear communication up front as to what coaching is and what it delivers. This business had not fully engaged in the expression of interest process and had not signed the coaching agreement which in hindsight, was something that needed to be followed up prior to coaching. This business was given a refund and encouraged to provide feedback at the end of the pilot.

4.2 Goals for coaching

The first phase of the coaching program required each participating business to identify a goal for coaching to work towards. During the course of the coaching, these goals were adjusted to reflect the change in focus some participants experienced. The initial and revisited goals for each business are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant initial and revised goals

Farm number	Initial goal	Revised goal
1	Develop newly purchased blocks of land to be productive and generate cash flow as quickly as possible	No revision required
2	Integrate farming enterprises, work better together	Timeline required revision
3	Recover cost of bull through semen sales	Develop semen sales plan
4	Explore marketing options	<i>This business ceased participation</i>
5	Create cash flow budget and monitoring system	No revision required
6	Generate more business cash flow	Developing a marketing strategy for business
7	Explore use of AI in commercial herd	Extra goal added – to develop a weekly communication schedule for family, work and farm activities
8	Investigate options for family trust and succession	No revision required

Each goal was chosen by the participants as being something important to them, the farm business and something they wanted help to achieve. It was an essential part of the process that the participants choose their own goals as it ensured they were committed to achieve them and to make their goals a high priority.

Generally goals selected for coaching were more strategic in nature and things that are important but not necessarily urgent (although in the case of participant 6, the need for cash flow was more urgent).

4.3 Barriers to adoption

Participants identified their own barriers to adopting their goal at the start of the coaching relationship (Table 2). As they received coaching and began to explore their goals and actions to achieve their goals, other underlying barriers emerged that were perhaps what was really holding them back (Table 2).

It is interesting to note that all the barriers to adoption that were identified by participants were related to themselves, that is, something they needed to 'do', or action they needed to take (rather than being a lack of knowledge or skill). In one case (although it is not clearly articulated in Table 2), acquiring knowledge and skill was part of how they achieve their goal, however they identified the barrier as time to acquire the knowledge as they work off farm. This is an important point to note as in most extension the emphasis is on providing knowledge and skill rather than getting participants to plan how they are going to implement the information.

Table 2: Participant identified barriers to adoption and underlying barriers'

Farm number	Initial barriers to adoption	Underlying barriers
1	Externalities i.e. rates, overheads, weed infestations, government restrictions	Planning time to determine priorities, making time to implement their plan
2	Time, insight, finance	Taking the time to plan and clarify their vision
3	Business in its infancy – need to develop a network of potential clients	Too much going on in the business – need to plan next steps and stay focused
4	Not enough labour, More time needed on marketing	<i>This business ceased participation</i>
5	Cash flow dictates capital expenditures which are the basis of improving farm production levels. Should we improve liquidity/cash reserves or keep investing in on farm production? A change in our program result in costly mistakes - no matter which way you go.	Lack of a system to monitor cash flow that makes sense and the discipline/motivation to monitor it regularly and adjust.
6	GFC causing lack of new clients	Not sure how to generate new business and no system to ensure it happens
7	Being employed off farm, not knowing where to start	Plan for how to achieve goal and commitment to following it through Ability to prioritise strategic vs. daily priorities and communicate them within the business
8	Restricted and tight budget, starting the task	Sensitive topic so hard to talk about with family or others, time to discuss the issue

There were some common underlying barriers for all the participants. They were:

- **Taking time to focus on their goal:** All participants struggled to prioritise their 'less urgent' versus 'urgent tasks'. Their coaching goals were often important but not urgent thus they needed to learn to set aside time to focus, or re-focus, on their goals and make them a priority.
- **Confidence in self:** Many farmers lacked the confidence in their own abilities to answer their own questions or make the first contact with others that could help them.
- **Not knowing where to start:** Many participants did not know where to start - coaching helped them to identify first steps in a complex process.
- **Not having a clear set of steps/actions to take:** If goals had not been fully thought out, participants got stuck at what needed to happen first and subsequently to achieve their goals and to overcome the 'overwhelm'.
- **Task too big:** Breaking the task into manageable chunks helped.
- **Easily distracted:** This was about focus management and staying on track and not chasing 'butterflies' or 'bright shiny objects' as they came up.
- **Motivation to keep going:** Lack of motivation was experienced by all participants at some stage of the process.

4.4 Benefits of coaching

Of the seven businesses that completed the coaching, all received benefits. The main benefits are summarised in Table 3 in their own words.

Table 3: Benefits of coaching identified by each participant

Farm number	Achievements and benefits
1	<p>We are more inclined to think of the bigger picture and prioritise. More consultation with other players e.g. used more than one agronomist <i>Most significant change was that we sourced outside professionals to assist i.e. more soil testing etc than previously - quotes from several sources</i></p>
2	<p>We now have a calendar of events which reminds us what we need to do or where we need to be at, at each stage of each of our enterprises i.e. Beef/calving/joining/drenching/etc, Hazelnuts/weeding/mowing/pruning/spraying/harvesting/etc; garlic/preparing/planting/weeding/harvesting/etc. <i>Most significant change was timing each enterprise so that the farm can work as seamless as possible</i></p>
3	<p>Outsourced sales in bull semen to another company. Expanded size and quality of genetics (from Australia and Canada.) Given more thought into the future direction and goals of the stud." I believe that I have stopped "chasing butterflies" and am able to make decisions at this early stage of our business based on financial gain. The major result was the decision to outsource promoting our bull to semen sales company and allow me to focus on the areas I am better skilled to deliver on." <i>Most significant change was out sourcing bull to a semen sales company. This allows the semen sales company to focus on sales targets/profits and Snowline to promote product awareness and growth and quality improvement through AI and ET programs.</i></p>
5	<p>"Met with my accountant to make our financial reports more relevant and useful. Created a system to best monitor our financial situation. Created an annual and monthly activity and task calendars to help with our farm management." <i>Most significant change was creating the cash flow spreadsheet balanced to our cheque account statement</i></p>
6	<p>Made more contacts which lead to contract work – gained a \$40K contract <i>Most significant benefit was that I restructured my business and generated cash flow</i></p>
7	<p>"We now understand the time needed for an AI program. Weekly program developed to manage the household. Organised the bus operators" Found out the cost of AI procedures, the procedures themselves i.e. how to, and how many times you needed to handle the stock, likely success rates and some pitfalls of using AI. <i>Most significant achievement was understanding the AI procedure itself and organising the bus operators (weekly management plan for home, farm and business)</i></p>
8	<p>Started the conversations about succession planning Looking at further options of structure of business and family involvement.</p>

4.5 Participants response to coaching

Participants completed a before and after coaching questionnaire to elicit information about their businesses and to provide benchmarks for the experience. Copies of the questionnaires used can be found in the Appendices 2 & 3. Below is a summary of the key data from the questionnaires

4.5.1 Did the coaching experience live up to your expectations?

For the majority of the participants, the coaching experience lived up to or exceeded their expectations. For one business, which ceased participation, the coaching experience was not what was expected or were looking for.

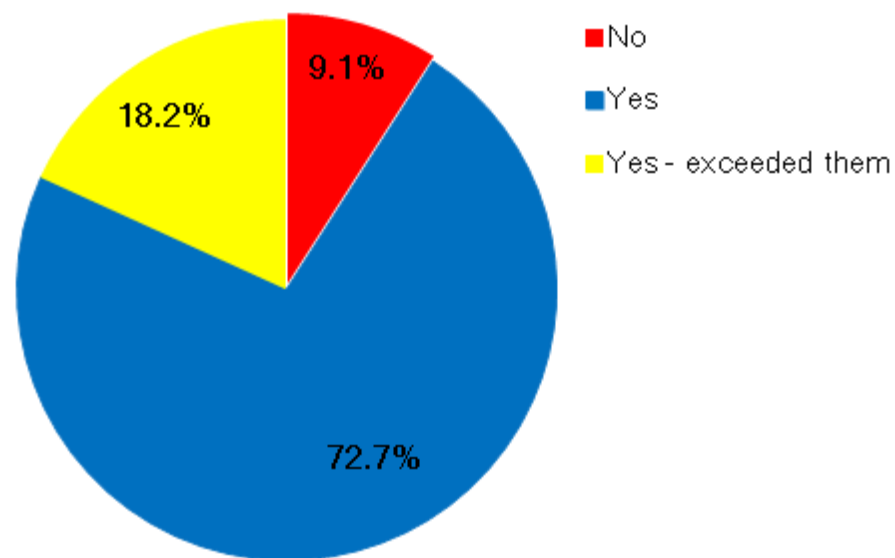


Figure 2: Participants response to the question 'Did the coaching experience live up to your expectations'

4.5.2 Overall, how satisfied are you with the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program?

On average, the participants rated the experience as 7.09/10.

Participants' responses - satisfaction with the program:

I probably overcommitted myself - my time management skills aren't very good.

The extra person to bounce ideas off was excellent. The biggest thing I gained from it was accountability.

The program caused me to approach decisions differently and realise I couldn't do everything myself.

Helping with motivation

Kept us on track with our research

Hoped to increase my knowledge of AI - this was mostly done

Reinforced objectives and motivated me to act.

Participants' comments – what they most enjoyed:

Being able to talk things through with the coach and suggestions of ways of dealing with issues

Setting goals and having the coach guide me through to resolution. As we moved through the process we set new goals and reviewed the farm operation over this period.

Ability to talk in confidence with professional and not feel threatened.

Being motivated to be organised by a deadline

Probably expanding into the non-core or other areas ie general time management skills

Having goals to work towards and being made to follow-up

The accountability, of having task checklists, and getting you to think it out for yourself, rather than paying a consultant.

The face to face sessions were the best. The phone sessions were beneficial but I prefer the face to face approach. The coach remained very focussed on assisting me in achieving my established goal.

It gave us ideas to look further into the tasks needed to enhance our enterprise. Often we tend to say I will do this etc, this made us think about the bigger picture. To encourage commitment and to follow through on the goal that was set

Participants' comments - what they liked least:

Again, managing my time to get things done without partners' support

Nothing - it was a little uncomfortable being disciplined in achieving the tasks and sessions preparations.

Having to confront the things I do badly and deal with them.

Expected assistance in finding the knowledge rather than being told to how to go and find the knowledge.

Myself, more interaction face to face rather than teleconferencing.

Nothing...enjoyed it.

Our personal situation through other outside business interests made it difficult for us to meet coaching times ie both in the one place at the same time

Not knowing what we had to achieve to get a 51% pass

4.5.3 Overcoming barriers

The coaching had a positive effect for most participants in assisting them to overcome some of the intangible barriers associated with making change (Figure 3). In particular challenging them to think differently about a situation helped them to move forward.

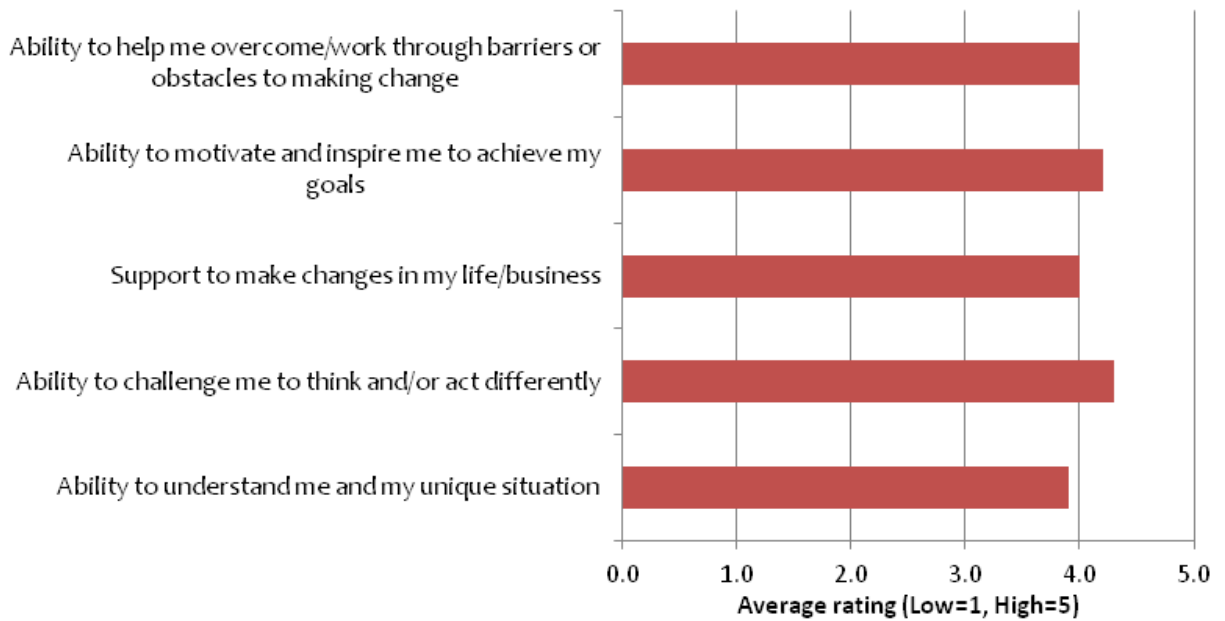


Figure 3: Participants perception of the benefits* of coaching

* Benefits scored as 1, 'Low benefit' to 5, 'High benefit'

4.5.4 Has your level of farm business confidence altered since commencing the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program?

The biggest change in confidence for the participants was in their ability to make plans and implement them to improve their business/life and their ability cope with stress and change in their business (Figure 4). For most participants, coaching did not focus on the technical aspects of farming, it is not surprising that the program had little impact or was not relevant to these areas.

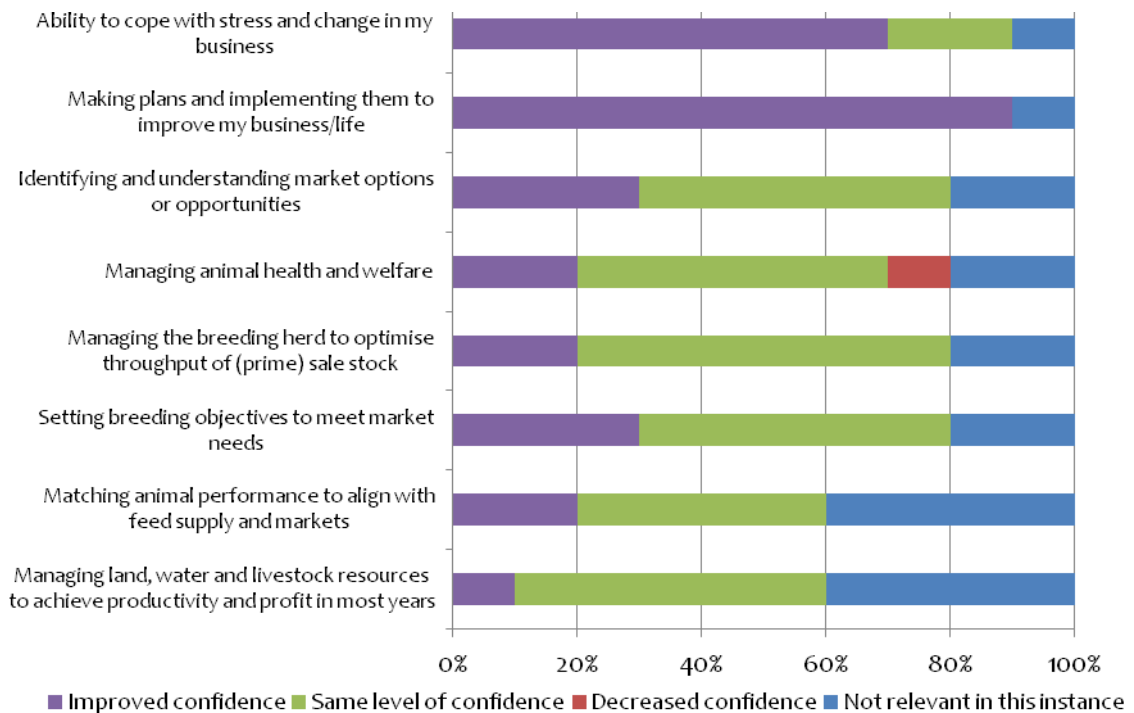


Figure 4: Change in participant's confidence levels after coaching

4.5.5 *Since commencing BetterBeef coaching pilot program have you changed your habits and behaviours in these areas?*

Most participants reported that they had changed their habits and behaviours to do with (Figure 5):

- Planning and action plans
- Analysing business returns
- Updating goals
- Identifying their values that drive their decision making
- Changing their short to mid-term visions
- Identifying barriers and what was holding them back.

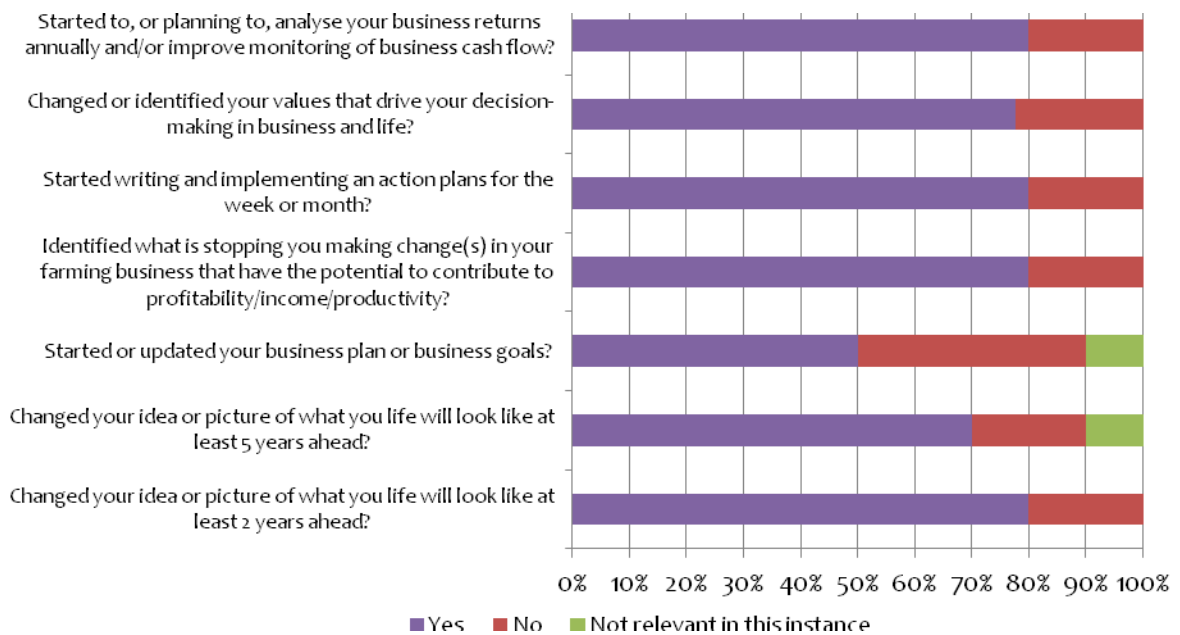


Figure 5: Participants change in habits and behaviour due to coaching

Participants’ comments – change of habits:

Principally using existing financial information to better interpret and manage our farming business.

This "identifying the limiting factor" has helped me as a guide as to what is the roadblock in profitability/income/productivity.

Far more business focussed. Planning and using weekly lists to prioritise tasks.

4.5.6 *Can you attribute changes you made to a change in productivity, income or profitability of your business?*

One participant raised his income by 40% during the coaching process and another commented that they had achieved more sales (but less income per sale) since the coaching commenced. Most participants thought that coaching had contributed changes to their farm business productivity, income and/or profitability (Figure 6).

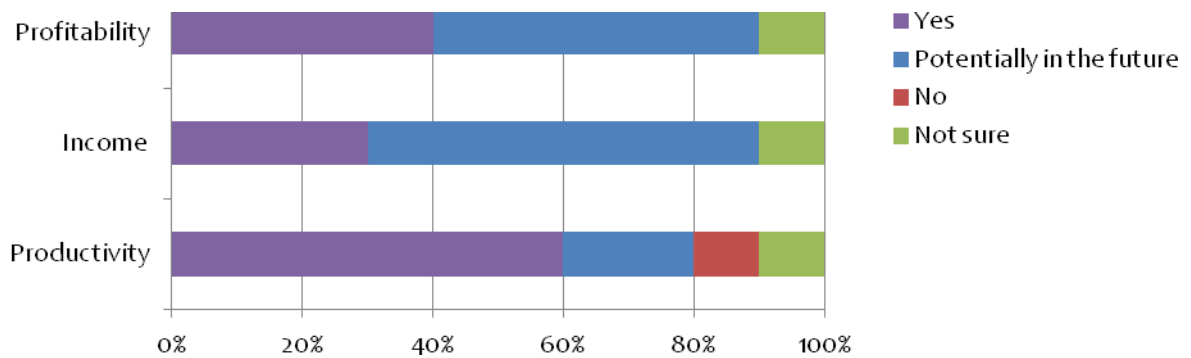


Figure 6: The effect of coaching on participant's business profitability, income and productivity

4.5.7 How valuable was the MLA BetterBeef program in assisting you to manage a more profitable livestock enterprise?

The participants valued the program as 7/10 i.e. between moderate and highly valuable (Figure 7).

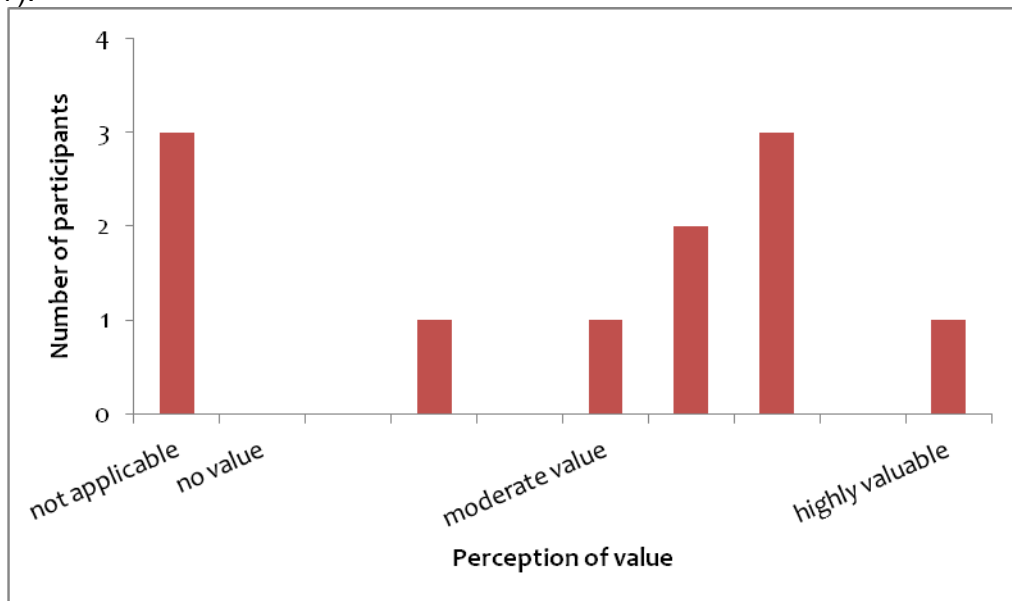


Figure 7: Participants perception of the benefit of coach to their business

4.5.8 Would you recommend the coaching program to other farmers?

All of the participants stated they would recommend coaching to other farmers. Their comments below reflect what they would tell other farmers considering coaching.

Participants' responses - recommendations to others considering undertaking coaching:

It's a very valuable tool for the business which needs 100% commitment and support from all involved in the farm/enterprise/s. It has the potential to propel the business forward to ensure profitable ventures.

Do you want to change and improve the way you are doing things, running your farm? Are you willing to review your performance?

If you want to challenge and motivate yourself to excellence, participate!

Keep you on track when setting up something new. Keeps you motivated to complete tasks.

Only if you have a specific area in mind that you have really wanted to find out more about

It will improve your farming business and get you motivated and get into action

Great tool to think for yourself, and also to bounce ideas, opinions off somebody with a fresh perspective.

If you are inclined to want to improve your enterprise try to target an area that you wish to enhance - try to spend on areas where you know in time the benefits/expense will give you a financial return

4.5.9 Cost of coaching – what was it worth to you?

Half of the participants thought the coaching was priced at or around the right place based on their own perceptions of value. It is worth noting that in general how much people are prepared to pay for a service is a reflection of their own value of their time and self. In farming it is common for farmers to value their time quite low and see little value in paying for self-development compared to the cost of new equipment or other tangible inputs into the business.

Participants' comments - cost of coaching:

Financially, we could not afford to pay \$1500 without industry support. Having said this, struggling farms/business need this type of service to help them go forward and so \$1500 may be the right price.

We paid this amount because we knew it was a pilot, you would need to be sure of your business change. If I was setting up or changing a business I think it would be worth the \$1500

Our topic wasn't all that vital to us so we would not pay as much. If you had a really big idea to investigate, you might pay a lot more.

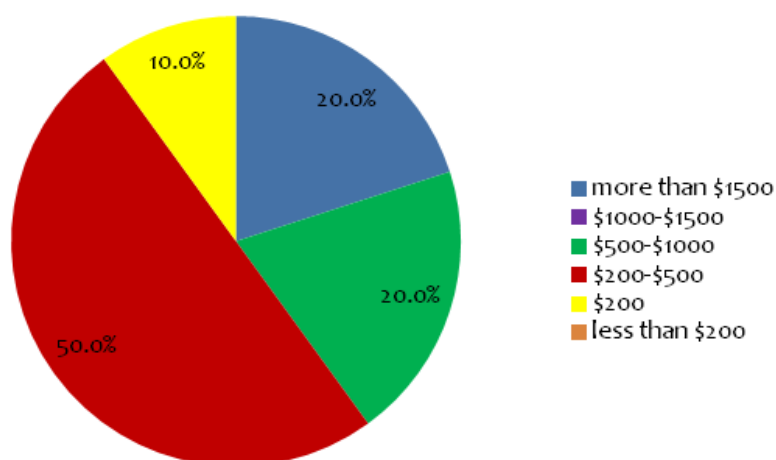


Figure 8: The cost of coaching – what participants would be prepared to pay

Participants were asked whether they would be prepared to pay this amount (Figure 7) for more coaching – most (80%) said ‘yes’. When asked if the participants would like to receive more coaching only a small proportion would like some more coaching (3 of the businesses) and 2 more were maybe’s.

Participants’ responses - would they like more coaching?

Yes

The work so far has been very rewarding. Without the discipline provided by a coach and the expertise, I would not have achieved what I did.

At the start of the program I would not have had the cash then, but after completing the program I would say yes to the \$1500 and yes to more coaching

Maybes

We have a few issues to work through and a few decisions to make before undertaking more coaching

I would if I had a specific change or business in mind

It would depend on off farm work commitments.

Dependant on finances

Found the link ups a bit difficult to coordinate

See what is on offer

4.5.10 *Suggestions and feedback*

Participants’ suggestions – improvements to the coaching process

A system of quarterly reviews largely based on the pilot program - focusing on our enterprise

More phone and/ or email follow up

Perhaps a bit more assistance in finding the areas for you to research/obtain information/knowledge

Face-to-face sessions would be great. Perhaps bi-monthly over twelve months.

Other comments from participants

Kristy was very good for the role

I think that a lot of small business/primary production needs more help with structuring, motivation as well as business planning.

Appreciated being involved in this pilot.

It would be better if you had a comparison to benchmark against

4.6 Reflections by the coach on the pilot

During the coaching process, a number of insights were gained that informed the coaching process and highlighted what was working or not working. These insights were:

- Participants need to be coachable
- Understanding values and goals are a vital first step
- Initial barriers to adoption are not the important ones
- Holding people accountable for their actions is vital to achieve change
- Coaching is not about helping but a listening/questioning process
- The coaching process does move participants forward.

4.6.1 *Participants need to be coachable*

Not everyone responds to coaching. This was evident with one business that thought the coaching was going to be more about receiving expert advice and opinion and did not understand it was about them setting their own goals and tasks and being committed to following them through. They were not motivated sufficiently about their goal to see it as a priority for them to put the time and effort in themselves to explore how they might do things differently. However their interpretation of the situation was different from the coachees, primarily seeing that they did not need the motivation coaching provided. This is a situation where there was a mismatch of expectations and rendered them 'uncoachable' in this context.

An ideal coaching client is one that identifies there is something they want to achieve but for some reason, it is not happening; there appear to be barriers. They also realise that it might be due to their own motivations, conflicting priorities and other internal personal processes rather than the externalities of the situation i.e. weather, finance, skill and knowledge.

Participants need to develop their motivation during coaching to achieve the outcomes they have set for themselves as the coach does not do the work for them. They need to be prepared to focus on what they can do, not what they have little or no control over i.e. weather, prices, global markets.

4.6.2 *Understanding values and setting goals are vital first steps*

In this project, all participants were asked to identify their five most important values and their own coaching goals.

The importance of identifying their important values was a self-awareness activity to enable them to acknowledge why they farm and do what they do. It was also important for the coach to understand the participant's values and how they might be conflicting with the goals or changes they were trying to make.

Integrity, honesty, achievement/excellence, freedom, family, reputation were the most common values held by most of the participant's in their top five values. These highlighted to the coach how important it was to work within these values with each participant and ensure they understood themselves when their values were in conflict with others in the business or with their goals.

An example of this arose when participants talked about how doing something new added to their workload and took them away from their family time. This is a common issue in family run businesses and necessitates developing goals and priorities that work within families so that all needs are being met and their goals are in alignment with their values. Effective decisions cannot be made when they are in conflict with deeply held values.

In traditional extension programs, little time is spent acknowledging and working within value systems and how conflicting values can stall decision making and taking action. In coaching understanding values is an essential, underlying part of the process of coaching and a first step.

Self-selected goals are also a crucial part of coaching. The goals must be set by the participant in the coaching, not the coach (although the coach can assist in defining the goal). Goals set by others and not mutually agreed are not achieved in most cases. Goals must also be well defined (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound) and stretch the participant. Goals that are able to connect with participants emotional as well as rational selves also have more chance of being achieved.

4.6.3 *The initial barriers to adoption are not the important ones*

In all cases, the initial barriers to achieving the goals set by the farmers in this project were not the important underlying reasons they were not achieving their goals. In all cases, knowledge and skill were not identified as the barriers to adoption. Instead, the barriers were related to taking action with the information and skill they already had or making time to acquire the additional skills and information they were seeking.

The key barriers identified in this project to making change and moving ahead can be grouped as:

1. **Conflicting or competing priorities** – in most cases, participants goals were *'important but not urgent'* (strategic) so there was not the urgency to achieve it compared to other daily demands and tasks. All participants were made aware of this and the importance of setting time aside to work on their coaching goal or redefine the goal so that it had higher priority to ensure they were committed to it. Setting small achievable tasks was important to keep participants moving forward. Sometimes urgent priorities meant the participants needed to redefine their timelines to acknowledge the more important tasks that needed to be done and release the guilt from not achieving their coaching goals as quickly as they wanted to. Other times they needed reminding that they had at some stage thought the coaching goal was important to refocus the participant again.
2. **Motivation:** some participants needed to continue to re-motivate themselves to work on the goal. The coaching sessions were a good way to do this. Sometimes lack of motivation was related to how important the goal was to them and sometimes it was about re-focusing them on what is important versus what is urgent. A useful quote in this context was 'People often say motivation does not last, well neither does bathing – that is why we recommend it daily' – Zig Zigler and highlights the sometimes fleeting nature of motivation.
3. **Self-confidence:** For most people, stepping out of an established comfort zone of knowledge and personal networks is very confronting. For some of the participants, the thought of phoning or contacting someone they didn't know for advice and information was a major barrier. Even in the cases where a virtual introduction was made and the other person was expecting the contact, participants still balked and procrastinated over making this contact. This is mainly to do with self-confidence and needing to overcome irrational fears of rejection. Yet in all cases, when the participant finally made the effort, the contact was helpful and did not reject them.
4. **Internal business communications:** For some of the participants, organising time to talk about the business (work on the business rather than in it) was a major barrier to moving forward with ideas and plans. Another related issue was

having participants recognise that their communication style may not be compatible with other business partners and that they needed to modify their own communications to achieve the results they were after. This included setting up new communication methods or tools to enable everyone to be on the same page and have their own concerns and information needs addressed. When participants did this, they reflected on how it had improved their daily communications within the business.

5. **Lack of self-awareness:** It is often easier to blame externalities (lack of rain, Global Financial Crisis, the market etc) instead of reflecting on oneself and what is really happening. In coaching, one of the key responsibilities of the coach is to hold up the mirror to the coachee to enable them to discover this for themselves. This is done with skilful questioning that enables the participant to hear their own excuses and reflect whether they are valid or not. In this project, most participants experienced uncomfortable moments where they became aware of their own excuses for inaction and had to accept them and move on (or not).

4.6.4 Holding people accountable for their actions is vital to achieve change

As farming is often a solitary occupation, farmers are their own bosses and have no one to hold them accountable for their actions. This is both a positive and a negative. In this project, it was vital to hold participants accountable for their actions as otherwise they were apt to find excuses for their inaction. However allowing them to do this does not serve them or help them to move forward.

Holding people accountable does not have to be guilt inducing or difficult, it is simply the process of:

- Setting self-appointed tasks during the coaching session
- Having the participant articulate these tasks in their own words
- Having the participant write and send their agreed tasks to the coach
- Reviewing the tasks at the next coaching session and celebrating achievement
- Redefining uncompleted tasks and setting new ones
- Repeating the process until it becomes second nature.

For most participants, this is a new discipline or one they do not necessarily practice in their farming business. Although it was mentally challenging for the participants, the personal rewards were great when they achieved their tasks and this gave them renewed confidence to make more changes/complete more difficult tasks.

4.6.5 Coaching is a listening, questioning, guiding process

In coaching there is the overriding belief that each individual has the skills and resources to solve their own problems and move forward with their lives, it is just sometimes the (right) questions and the space to do it are lacking. The coachee is the expert in their life and the coach is the expert in the process. Therefore it is enough to just listen to the coachee while they work through their issues out loud rather than jumping in with advice and information to solve it for them.

At the same time, coaching is about asking probing questions that allow the coachee to reflect on their values and beliefs and ways of doing things to help them explore new ways of working through their issues.

All of the participants in this project appreciated the opportunity to talk to an independent outsider who was not there to judge them but to listen and support them and ask reflective questions in a confidential manner as appropriate to the participant. This listening is as

important as providing specific technical support and advice its importance cannot be underestimated. Advice can be ignored as 'not relevant to my situation' and thus not implemented. In contrast, plans made by the farmer themselves based on their own knowledge and skill and articulated to a third party are much more likely to be implemented as they are invested heavily in the process and outcome and to not achieve them would be to lose face (loss of personal integrity). As respect, reputation etc were key values of the farmers, this process was highly successful.

4.6.6 The coaching process does move people forward

Coaching does move people forward as it is a process of continuous planning, action, reflection and review that is adhered to. In this sense, it is an extension of the adult learning and action learning cycles often underpinning well designed extension projects.

In coaching, the focus of change on farm or in the business is entirely the participant's choice and is totally in their control to change at any point. This is the main difference from traditional extension approaches that start with a specific outcome in mind ie shifting farmers from set stocking to rotational grazing and moving everyone towards this outcome whether it is the most appropriate one in their situation or not. In this sense coaching is very bottom up rather than top-down and that is its strength.

There is no place in coaching for 'tyre kickers' or people 'in it for the ride' as they do not move forward and quickly realise they are wasting their time and their coach's time if they do not achieve their actions each session. Thus the need for 'skin in the game' – payment up front for coaching is essential to ensure the participants are committed to getting their money's worth and the most from their investment.

How much to pay is the difficult question as it depends on the individual situation the farmer is in and their own perception of self-worth; "Am I worth spending \$X on?". Some of the participants in this coaching program expressed how important the coaching was to them and revised their view on what it was worth to them after the program finished. Others expressed that it was difficult to justify paying more than \$200 for the program based on personal circumstance and need for the program.

One of the more insightful comments received related to the fact that they participated because they could, not because they had an overwhelming desire to change something big.

Our topic wasn't all that vital to us so we would not pay as much. If you had a really big idea to investigate, you might pay a lot more.

The challenge then becomes how to motivate farmers to see there is worth in doing the work required to move their business to another level when their situation is not that bad and they are getting by.

4.6.7 Final thoughts

Coaching in an extension context is immensely rewarding and rapport building for the coach and farmer. It moves the farmer and coach away from small talk and excuses into defined, purposeful action that achieves goals.

This is the real benefit of coaching, moving forward with purposeful action and achievements. In the words of Nike; "Coaching helps to remove barriers and excuses and allows participants to '*Just do it*'".

5 Recommendations

This project has shown that coaching does have benefits to extension. The final part of this report deals with the question:

How coaching can be incorporated into current Beef Extension?

The results from this pilot show that coaching farmers does move them forward and potentially has a place in extension.

There are many ways coaching could be incorporated into the Victorian DEPI Beef Extension program. Four main options include:

1. Standalone one to one coaching program
2. Group coaching program
3. Add-on to a group discussion or training program
4. As a skill that is added to the group facilitator/consultant kit bag to enable coaching conversations to take place within extension activities.

5.1 Stand alone one-to-one coaching program

This is the most obvious application of coaching to extension but has some major barriers to adoption of its own. These are:

5.1.1 Cost of coaching – who bears the cost?

The coaching program offered to participants in this project had an estimated cost of \$1500 per participating business that included the travel time as well as coaching time. If there were no face-to-face visits or the farmers went to the coach, the cost could be reduced to approximately \$800-\$1000 per farming business.

It is at the coach's discretion what is charged per hour, however industry averages suggest \$200 - \$500 per hour for coaching is at the lower end of the coaching spectrum with high level coaching costing \$10,000 - \$1,000,000 annually.

In comparison to delivery of a group based extension program that can cost between \$200-\$1800 per participant, coaching is more expensive. To expect government agencies and industry R&D corporations to sponsor this activity is to bring the 'private/public' benefit argument into play.

There is no doubt that participants need to pay as a part of gaining commitment to action, the question is how much?

5.1.2 Availability of suitably qualified coaches

Coaching is an unregulated profession and as such, anyone can call themselves a coach, regardless of training and experience. However organisations such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and others have developed rigorous membership and accreditation requirements that ensure its members have a strong ethical foundation in coaching². The recommendation is that anyone undertaking coaching with farmers within a industry/government program demonstrate their credentials to ensure they have a full grasp of the differences between coaching and training, facilitation, counselling and consulting

² ICF Code of Ethics – definitions of coaching <http://www.coachfederation.org/ethics/>

and experience in the business/corporate sectors and delivering effective coaching programs.

There is no shortage of coaches who have the skills to coach farmers; however there is only a handful that are currently working with farmers in Australia.

5.1.3 *Lack of awareness of what coaching is in farming and how it benefits farmers*

As coaching is a relatively new concept in farming, there is little understanding or awareness of what it is and how it can help. Broad scale awareness would need to be developed within sectors of the farming community to ensure there was a ready market for the service. This is probably why coaching has not penetrated the industry yet as individual coaches would need to spend time creating this awareness before they could gain a reasonable number of clients to make the practice sustainable.

5.1.4 *Suggested application of one-to-one coaching in BetterBeef*

Given the constraints of cost, one option for BetterBeef would be to create a finite number of coaching 'scholarships' for farmers considering undertaking coaching but who cannot afford the upfront cost. This could be presented as a competitive process ie farmers must apply and be selected as worthy candidates. In this way farmers with big goals would be selected that are likely to be highly committed to the process and likely to succeed.

Proposal: Fund 10 coaching annual scholarships @ \$1500 each (less participant contribution of \$200) = **\$13,000** (plus some money/time for administration and evaluation)

5.2 Group coaching

One way of overcoming the barrier of cost is to deliver coaching as 'group coaching' with small groups of like-minded farmers (5-6). Group coaching is a concept that has gained favour with clients groups that have low capacity to pay for services i.e. small business, disadvantaged groups etc as it has all the participants meeting for coaching at once. The coaching session would be longer than a normal one to one session but collectively, would be less than individual sessions combined. A disadvantage of group coaching is loss of confidentiality but an advantage is the peer support gained and the multiple accountability to the entire group, not just the coach.

A group coaching program would take on the same process as individual coaching but would involve the participants coming together for the 5 sessions face to face. The only disadvantage of this process is that depending on where the coach is located, the travel involved in visiting the group a number of times may add additional cost to the program that can be reduced when coaching is virtual in a one to one situation.

The added advantage of this approach is that farmers get to experience the benefits of being in a group as well as the individual coaching. The challenge would be finding the people in a close geographical location and with an interest in coaching and working with others.

Proposal: Trial a group coaching process – 5 sessions @ \$500 = **\$2,500 plus travel per group** (\$500 per person if 5 in a group for full cost recovery – less if subsidised as above) (plus some money/time for administration and evaluation)

5.3 Add-on to a group discussion or training program

Coaching has the ability to enhance a group discussion or training program by providing the accountability and follow-up planning and discussion that can be needed to achieve practice change.

5.3.1 Coaching in a discussion group

Coaching can be used in a discussion group program by giving those farmers that are interested in implementing complex concepts and idea, an avenue to plan and follow-up their intended actions. Ideally, the farmer would talk to the coach after each discussion group session to work out what is going to be implemented and how and to set specific actions around this as well as report back and identify barriers to adoption and change.

The coaching component would be at an additional cost and to be cost effective, ideally delivered over the phone or by Skype or other online means. A package of 4-6 sessions could be provided by a coach who may or may not already be the group coordinator.

5.3.2 Coaching in a training program

Coaching after a training program is also an option and provides the opportunity for participants to develop an implementation plan and work through it with their coach for up to 3 months after the training session. The training group would then reconvene for a feedback/reporting day to bring the training to conclusion and report back to the other training participants what they have achieved since the training.

In this context the coaching could consist of shorter, 30 to 45 minute session via phone/internet with the primary focus being implementing the action plan developed during training and exploring any barriers that are coming up. The focus would be having something to report back to the other participants in the short term to get the participants started on implementing a complex program (evidence shows that it is the first step that is often the hardest in undertaking any change and that short term wins motivate participants to keep going and build on their success).

There are resources required to implement both these approaches. They are:

- Development time to plan and pilot the coaching addition to the group or learning program
- Identifying and training coaches to work within the existing programs
- Monitoring and evaluation of the approach to measure the benefits.

<p>Proposal: Develop a coaching approach to use with groups and or training and pilot. Estimate 2-3 days development time as well as additional time to fund coaching.</p>

5.4 Coaching as a skill for group coordinators/facilitators

Coaching could be added to the group facilitator/consultant kit bag to enable coaching conversations to take place and to build accountability into existing programs.

This fourth option is about building in the accountability coaching can provide into existing extension activities and allowing spontaneous coaching conversations to take place within group discussions or training programs.

Accountability is developed through setting up activities to be focused from the beginning on not just acquiring new information and skills but how they will ultimately be implemented on farm. Participants would begin each session doing work around what their needs are, what they need to get out of the session and would end with them setting their own action plan for what they need to do next.

If the participant then discovers that the session did not meet their needs or the concept/information/advice is not practical or relevant, the opportunity arises for the group coordinator to initiate a coaching conversation either one to one or within the group about what that means and if there is anything else they could do with the information and skills they have gained.

Being able to implement coaching skills in a group based program would require the following:

- Group coordinators and facilitators recognising the need for developing these skills themselves
- Introductory coach training for coordinators/facilitators
- Development of an accountability process that can be overlaid the group discussion process without creating extra burden to the group and adds-value from the participant's point of view
- The flexibility for the group coordinators to do some one on one coaching should it be needed.

The negatives of this approach are around identifying group coordinators that have the desire to learn these additional skills and allowing resources to be used to train and develop the approach further.

A simple way of introducing accountability coaching into extension could be achieved by the development of a coaching worksheet for each farmer that is completed at the end of every workshop/group session.

It would outline:

- The goal the farmer wants to achieve
- What action they intend to take and by when
- What resources they need to implement the action i.e. knowledge, skill, equipment, \$
- Any potential barriers and how they could be overcome
- First steps.

Each farmer would be required to report back at the start of the next session as to what happened and could gain feedback from the group as to how to keep moving forward if the goal was not achieved.

<p>Proposal: That a coaching sheet be developed and piloted with BetterBeef groups to monitor change associated with particular activities.</p>
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6. Conclusions

This project showed that using coaching as a means to overcoming barriers to adoption that are related to decision inertia (lack of motivation to change) and decision paralysis (information overwhelm, not knowing where to start etc). All participants that completed the coaching achieve some if not all of their coaching goals show that that coaching moved people closer to their farming goals.

Four possible applications for using coaching in extension emerged that are worth more investigation as to their cost effectiveness.

7. Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the participation of the eight farm businesses that took part in this research.

8. Appendices

8.1 BetterBeef coaching pilot expression of interest

Applicant Information

Full Name: _____ Date _____
 Last First :

Address: _____
 Street Address PO Box
 Town State Postcode

Farm Business name: _____

Phone: () Mobile phone: ()

E-mail Address:

I am currently a member of (mark which applies):

- Upper Murray Cowgirls Mudgegonga BetterBeef group
 Tallangatta Valley BetterBeef Group Not currently a group member

Reasons for participation

Please state what you hope to achieve with your coaching sessions?

Terms and Conditions Agreement

Terms and conditions

1. During the coaching, I the farmer will:
 - a. Complete all pre-coaching information required
 - b. Keep coaching appointments or reschedule if necessary in advance
 - c. Complete a short evaluation of the coaching sessions, ie achievements well as whether it was useful or not
 - d. Participate in a final evaluation of the outcomes of the coaching and its effectiveness as a tool (this includes attending a meeting with other participants in the coaching project and the sponsors of the project where able)
2. I agree to pay up front the subsidized cost of the coaching for **five** coaching sessions valued at \$1500 but offered to me at the price of **\$200** plus GST.

I agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this offer as outlined above

Signature _____ Date _____
 :

Please return this form to Kristy Howard via email: kristy@inspiringexcellence.com.au or

post to 36 Mellish St. Beechworth, 3747 by **Friday 28th June.**

8.2 Pre-coaching questionnaire

BetterBeef pre-coaching questionnaire

1. Default Section

The following questionnaire is used to prepare both the coach and the client. Please complete all questions as best as you can. The questionnaire should take between 15 & 20 mins of your time

***1. Please enter your personal details**

Name

Preferred phone number for coaching calls

skype name (if relevant)

Number of cattle (cows, heifers, steers, bulls, calves) managed

Number of ha managed

Current situation

***2. Answer these questions as they relate to your farm (select the answers that apply)**

	Yes	Incomplete	No
Do you have an idea or picture of what your life will look like at least 5 years ahead?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a written business plan or list of goals you are working towards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a list of key values that drive your decision making in business and life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a written action plan for the week and month?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you analyse your business returns annually and benchmark them against top performers eg operational expenses, operating surplus, return on asset and equity, growth in net worth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***3. Rate you level of satisfaction with;**

	Very dissatisfied	Not satisfied	Could be better	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied
Your work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***4. What are your greatest challenges at present?**

***5. What is going well at the moment (business and on-farm)?
What are the reasons for this?**

BetterBeef pre-coaching questionnaire

***6. What currently stops you from achieving your goals?**

5

6

***7. Rate your level of business confidence. How confident do you feel in the following areas of the farm business?**

	No confidence	Low confidence	Confident	Very confident	Extremely confident
Managing land, water and livestock resources to achieve productivity and profit in most years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Matching animal performance to align with feed supply and markets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Setting breeding objectives to meet market needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing the breeding herd to optimise throughput of (prime) sale stock	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing animal health and welfare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying and understanding market options or opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

As a way of gauging your current business aspirations, please complete the sentence - "I would like my farming business to....."

5

6

***8. From this coaching program, I would like to achieve the following ...**

5

6

***9. From this coaching program, I would like to address the following issues or challenges...**

5

6

BetterBeef pre-coaching questionnaire

***10. Please indicate how committed you are to:**

	not all		partially committed		fully committed
The coaching process					
Receiving constructive feedback					
Talking about your fears that maybe holding you back					
Putting an end to self-sabotaging behaviours					
Perservering during difficult times					
Challenging your beliefs and attitudes, even if they are deeply held					
Trying out new behaviours					

***11. What tips would you give your coach on how to work most effectively with you?**

8.3 Post-coaching questionnaire

MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program feedback

1.

Please complete the following questionnaire to provide feedback on the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program. Your views enable us to determine the value of the program to participants and its potential for application in the broader beef industry.

*** 1. Name:**

*** 2. Did the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program live up to your expectations?**

No
 Yes
 Yes - exceeded them

Comments? 5

6

*** 3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program?**

Level of satisfaction
 Poor
Average
Excellent

2.

4. What did you most enjoy about the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program?

5

6

*** 5. What did you least like about the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program?**

5

6

3.

MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program feedback

6. Please rate the MAL BetterBeef coaching pilot program in the following areas:

	Low	Medium	High
Ability to understand me and my unique situation			
Ability to challenge me to think and/or act differently			
Support to make changes in my life/business			
Ability to motivate and inspire me to achieve my goals			
Ability to help me overcome/work through barriers or obstacles to making change			
Other			
Please specify			

4.

7. What was the most useful part of the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program for you?

5

6

8. What has happened as a result of the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program? (ie what have you done, changed, achieved?)

5

6

5.

MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program feedback

9. Which of the changes(s) or achievements from Q8 was the most significant or beneficial change or achievement?

5

6

10. Can you attribute any of these changes or achievements to a change in productivity, income or profitability to your business?

	Yes	Not sure	No	Potentially in the future
Productivity				
Income				
Profitability				

Please elaborate on your choice

11. How valuable was the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program in assisting you to manage a more profitable livestock enterprise?

	not applicable	no value	moderate value	highly valuable
Value to your business				

6.

MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program feedback

12. Has your level of farm business confidence altered since commencing the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program? Please indicate any area of farm business where your confidence has altered since the start of the program.

	Improved confidence	Same level of confidence	Decreased confidence	Not relevant in this instance
Managing land, water and livestock resources to achieve productivity and profit in most years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Matching animal performance to align with feed supply and markets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Setting breeding objectives to meet market needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing the breeding herd to optimise throughput of (prime) sale stock	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing animal health and welfare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying and understanding market options or opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making plans and implementing them to improve my business/life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to cope with stress and change in my business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please elaborate on your choice(s)

13. Since commencing the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program, have you:

	Yes	No	Not relevant in this instance
Changed your idea or picture of what you life will look like at least 2 years ahead?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changed your idea or picture of what you life will look like at least 5 years ahead?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Started or updated your business plan or business goals?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identified what is stopping you making change(s) in your farming business that have the potential to contribute to profitability/income/productivity?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Started writing and implementing an action plans for the week or month?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changed or identified your values that drive your decision-making in business and life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Started to, or planning to, analyse your business returns annually and/or improve monitoring of business cash flow?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please elaborate on your choices

MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program feedback

***14. Do you have any tips to improve the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program in the future?**

No

Yes

If yes, please elaborate

5

6

7.

***15. Would you recommend MLA BetterBeef coaching program to other farmers?**

Yes

No

What would you say to other farmers considering undertaking the MLA BetterBeef coaching program?

5

6

16. The MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program was designed to provide 5 coaching sessions over 6 months. How often and how would you have preferred to receive coaching? (Choose all that apply)

fine as it was

once a week

once a fortnight

once a month

'as needed' (issue dependent)

face-to-face (all sessions - coach travels to me)

face-to-face (all sessions - I travel to the coach)

phone/skype for all sessions

mix of face to face and skype/phone sessions

other (please elaborate below)

Please make a comment on your choices

5

6

8.

MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program feedback

***17. With industry support, each participant paid \$200 plus GST for the coaching pilot program. The full cost to provide a similar service is approximately \$1500 per participating business. How much do you think it was worth to you? Please choose your preferred amount (GST exclusive)**

more than \$1500

\$500-\$1000

\$200

\$1000-\$1500

\$200-\$500

less than \$200

Other amount (please specify)

***18. Would you be prepared to pay the amount you chose in Q17 above to receive more coaching?**

Yes

No

Not sure

***19. Would you like to continue with more coaching next year?**

Yes please

Maybe, not sure

Not at this stage

Please make a comment on your choice

20. Do you have any other comments to make about the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program?

Thank you for completing this survey and participating in the MLA BetterBeef coaching pilot program. Your input is much appreciated and valued. The compiled results will be presented to participants at the meeting on Friday 22nd February 2013.

8.4 Literature review

Introduction

There is an overriding assumption in Agricultural Development and Extension organisations that successful extension is:

'Observing and measuring practice change in the majority of farmers to achieve productivity and profitability improvements across the whole industry'.

To achieve this end point, many millions of government and industry research and development dollars are spent designing, implementing and evaluating extension programs to achieve wide spread industry advancement. However there is a great and overriding leap of faith made in this way of thinking. The assumption is:

'Good ideas and practices will be adopted because they are sound and tested'.

Yet the outcomes of this investment is not wholly dependent on whether the technology is sound and tested, but on a complex interaction of human factors associated with other factors that can be beyond the reach of conventional extension programs.

This review explores barriers to adoption in extension and other approaches that can be trialled to overcome these barriers.

Purpose of Literature review

1. To outline previously been identified barriers to adoption in extension
2. To outline how coaching has been shown to be effective in overcoming barriers to making change or taking action.

A review of Barriers to Adoption

The non-adoption of any new practice or idea is often attributed to 'barriers to adoption' that are both tangible and intangible. Vanclay (1992)³ cites many barriers to adoption including the conventionally understood and tangible:

- Complexity of the innovation
- Divisibility of innovation (i.e. can it be partially adopted on a trial before full adoption?)
- Economics
- Risk and uncertainty
- Implementation cost – capital outlay
- Implementation cost – intellectual outlay
- Conflicting information
- Physical infrastructure.

Each of these barriers to adoption can be counteracted with a well thought out extension program including well researched and presented evidence that supports the use of the practice and an effective delivery system. Effective delivery systems currently used in extension are variously described by Coutts⁴ as 'models of extension' and include 'Group Facilitation/Empowerment', 'Technological Development', 'Programmed Learning and Information Access' models of extension. Each of these models of extension are used

³ Vanclay, F (1992) Barriers to adoption: a general overview of the issues. Rural Society 2(2) 47-53.

⁴ Coutts, J (1997) Changes in extension – an Australian perspective: the coming of age of extension (Key note address) in Proceedings of the 2nd APEN conference, Albury NSW Nov 1997 Vol II pp 22-32.

throughout agricultural extension in Australia with much success and have helped to achieve adoption of many new practices and technologies.

However Vanclay (and others) also touch on other barriers, such as congruence – incompatibility with farm and personal objectives; and social infrastructure (networks between producers and the social norms of these networks). These barriers present more of a challenge to extension practitioners to overcome and are coupled with other intangible factors such as lack of motivation, family dynamics, conflicting personal values and individual work styles and habits. With so many different kinds of barriers facing farmers, the challenge facing extension practitioners quickly move beyond the somewhat naive view of:

‘Present a good case for change using best practice extension delivery and diffusion of innovations will do the rest’.

The situation becomes one of balancing the need to build capacity and capability in farmers to solve their own problems and the resources available to do this.

Diffusion of innovations and the adoption chasm

The diffusion of innovations theory has been criticised throughout the literature⁵ as being ‘too simplistic’ and pigeon holes farmers into being ‘innovators’, ‘early adopters’, ‘early majority’, ‘late majority’ and ‘laggards’. These terms carry with them disparaging meanings and condescending attitudes of ‘don’t worry about them, they are the laggards, they never change anything’ as if the farmers in question are the problem rather than the message or technology being foisted upon them. The statement of Vanclay’s below eloquently sums up the often held (but unsaid) view on adoption.

“Scientists and extension officers tend to develop patronising attitudes towards farmers assuming that all products of scientific development are beneficial for farmers. Hostility is particularly directed towards the laggards in the adoption process – those recalcitrant farmers who refuse to adopt the new technologies that scientists consider appropriate”⁶

The transition from one segment of the diffusion of innovations model to another are not smooth and continuous with the biggest gap between the early adopters and the early majority – often called the ‘adoption chasm’. This chasm is the fundamental challenge of adoption and crossing it requires a well-defined strategy⁷. Sometimes it is never breached as there are too many differences in the values early adopters and the early majority espouse making it difficult for the innovation to make the transition from one values system to another.

Sometimes the barriers to adoption in agriculture are determined by the motives of the agency or organisation that is sponsoring the adoption program. When sponsors motivations are different from the motives of the client farmer, non-adoption can be the outcome. After all, farmers have a choice in adoption or non-adoption and maybe success is not how many people chose to adopt a certain practice or technology, but how many are running the type of farming business they aspire to run.

⁵ Stephenson, G (2003) The somewhat flawed theoretical foundation of the extension service. JOE 41(4).

⁶ Vanclay, F (1992) Barriers to adoption: a general overview of the issues. *Rural Society* 2(2).

⁷ Howie, B (2012) How to use persuasion skills to drive technology adoption. C-QUAL Agritelligence Pty Ltd.

If the aim of extension was to enable farmers to run the businesses they aspire to run, then the barriers to adoption are less about whether or not a particular technology or practice is useful to a farmer, but how it can fit with their current farming practice and whether it takes them closer to their own personal goals and aspirations.

This can be in direct conflict with many extension organisations own agendas which are (quite rightly) advancement of the industry as a whole (not the individual) but raises the questions, advancement to where and, for what purpose?

Food security, national economic prosperity, environmental sustainability are all reasons presented to justify the programs directed to farmers. However very few extension programs deliver the message in a way that directly connects with farmer's values and personal goals.

Values, goals and decision making

Why are values considered important to adoption? In the simplest sense, when an individual's personal values align with their business values, they make decisions that are congruent and lasting. When the decisions they make however put their values into conflict they may stall and procrastinate or make decisions they then regret. This then sets up a situation where no decisions are made because they create too much conflict.

Another potential barrier to adoption is alignment of goals and values of the organisation sponsoring the technology or practice change and the goals and values of the farmers. In the case where these values and goals align, the technology or practice is rapidly adopted and the program is deemed successful. In the case where they do not, the adoption is piecemeal and deemed a failure (whose failure is not always evident – client or agency/organisation?).

In the work of Howie⁸ learning from the client is one of the first steps followed by developing a relationship that evolves to the trust level is critical if one is to have any influence in the adoption process. It is not how sound is the technology/practice/message but what is about the understanding of the needs of the farmers and what (values) drive their decision making processes.

Howie proposes that when barriers to adoption are encountered, one must be cognizant of the nature of the barrier.

“Tangible barriers can be described in very real terms such as cost (capital investment and time), knowledge gaps, lack of resources and rapidly evolving technology. We need to be very honest with ourselves because if we identify that any of these or other tangible barriers are too great for our mainstream clients then we must rethink our adoption plans.

We either haven't listened properly to our clients or we haven't yet done enough work on the packaging – the concept is still incomplete and is not adoption ready. That is not to say that we should always expect 100 percent adoption. There might always be some within the mainstream that have legitimate reasons not to adopt or whose needs are beyond our reasonable capacity to meet. But if these tangible barriers exist for a large part of the target market it probably means that we have missed something earlier in the program. Therefore we need to go back over

⁸ Howie, B (2012) How to use persuasion skills to drive technology adoption. C-QUAL Agritelligence Pty Ltd.

previous steps to ensure that the issues, as perceived by the target audience are clarified, and that the package meets the criteria of a 'complete package'."

Howie proposes that the intangible barriers are the ones that "really get in the way of adoption".

What are these intangible barriers? Some of them were mentioned earlier in this text, however they can be more usefully categorised as 'Decision inertia' and 'Decision paralysis' as defined by Howie⁹.

Decision inertia: *Where a person or organisation is stuck in a rut (traditional practices). To overcome inertia requires the appropriate use of force that can be applied two ways – Motivation (push) and/or Shock (pull).*

Decision paralysis: *Confusion and uncertainty through ambiguity or too many options. Decision paralysis can also be thought of as 'paralysis by analysis' when there is an overwhelming amount of information that is both for and against a certain course of action. To overcome decision paralysis requires creation of a clear pathway for adoption that reduces complexity, minimises choice and creates a plan with small achievable steps to change.*

The issues of misalignment of values and goals can fall into the category of tangible barriers but also influence 'decision inertia' as it can be the need to stay congruent with one's past that keeps one in the past.

Removing barriers to adoption using coaching

Removing barriers to adoption is the main game of current agricultural extension programs whether it is by the Group Facilitation/Empowerment, Technological Development, Programmed Learning or Information Access models of extension (the personalised consultant model is considered the domain of the private service provider in extension). However as the complexity of the practice changes increases, it makes sense that the barriers of decision inertia and decision paralysis become more prevalent. In addition, these barriers may be initially wrapped in tangible barriers and thus require 'unwrapping' to get to the heart of why the farmer is not adopting a technology or practice that is potentially beneficial.

How do you know if it is the tangible or intangible barriers that are the reasons for non-adoption? What if values and goals of the practice or technology are not congruent with those of the farmer? Do Coutt's models of extension allow for practitioners to deal with tangible and intangible barriers to adoption in their implementation? What other options exist? The next section explores the use of another method to achieve practice change, business coaching.

Comparing coaching to personalised consultation

To answer the above questions and discover new ways of overcoming barriers to adoption, it is useful to consider the concept of coaching as an additional tool in the extension tool box and compare it to the personalised consultant model¹⁰.

⁹ Howie, B (2012) How to use persuasion skills to drive technology adoption. C-QUAL Agritelligence Pty Ltd.

¹⁰ Coutts, J (1997) Changes in extension – an Australian perspective: the coming of age of extension (Key note address) in Proceedings of the 2nd APEN conference, Albury NSW Nov 1997 Vol II pp 22-32

Coaching is a relatively new concept in the world of professional development outside the sporting arena. The International Coaching Federation ¹¹ defines coaching as:

“Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.”

The process of coaching can be simply described:

“In each meeting, the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action. Coaching accelerates the client's progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. Coaching concentrates on where clients are now and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be in the future, recognizing that results are a matter of the client's intentions, choices and actions, supported by the coach's efforts and application of the coaching process.”¹²

The philosophy of coaching is one that honours' the client as the expert in his/her life and work, and believes that every client is creative, resourceful and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach's responsibility is to:

- Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve
- Encourage client self-discovery
- Elicit client-generated solutions and strategies
- Hold the client responsible and accountable¹³.

It can be seen from these definitions that coaching is less about imparting technical information, facts and opinion and more about discovering what the client (farmer) wants to achieve and encouraging them to generate their own solutions and be accountable.

This is different from traditional farm consulting which is more about the client (farmer) presenting the consultant (or expert) with a problem to solve and waiting for an opinion of what could be done, how and what it will cost. A good consultant will undoubtedly use elements of coaching processes to uncover what the client wants to achieve and will often motivate and inspire the client but ultimately they are being paid to provide advice and support, not build capacity in the client to implement their visions and plans.

How is this information useful? In extension, the focus is often on technical knowledge and skill development and even in the best intentioned program, the overriding culture of extension is to impart information and advice. However if the barrier to adoption is not information and advice but instead decision inertia or decision paralysis, traditional extension will not usually breach these barriers.

The group facilitation and empowerment model has long been held in high regard in extension for its ability to overcome many other barriers to adoption and create change and can be a source of motivation to shift a farmer out of decision inertia and support change. It can also be used to overcome decision paralysis in conjunction with program learning and training to simplify complex issues into plans of action.

However both these models lack a fundamental accountability function in their current implementation. In a group setting, members of the group can 'opt out' of the parts of the

¹¹ ICF code of ethics – definitions of coaching <http://www.coachfederation.org/ethics/> .

¹² ICF code of ethics – definitions of coaching <http://www.coachfederation.org/ethics/>

¹³ ICF philosophy of coaching <http://lifetothefullcoaching.files.wordpress.com/2007/09/icf-code-of-ethics.pdf>

program that are not appealing or congruent with their own values and beliefs and hide behind the barrier of 'that won't work in my situation, farm, business' without exploration of the root cause of non-adoption (at this stage it is useful to point out that non-adoption is a valid response in coaching where the client is happy with their own assessment of the situation but not necessarily in extension where the aim is mass adoption). In consulting, the client can also dismiss the advice and recommendations the consultant provides for a myriad of seemingly valid reasons thus avoiding adoption. Similarly, by attending training, farmers only commitment to learning but not necessarily adoption of something they have learnt or application of a new skill.

At no stage of any of these extension models is the farmer truly accountable for their actions (or lack of action). In coaching, accountability is the main game and holding clients accountable to themselves the ultimate test of whether the information they gained was useful and valuable.

When is coaching useful?

Not everybody is coaching able and not every situation requires a coaching approach. For coaching to be a valid tool for extension, the following criteria need to be in place:

- The client desires to make change to some aspect of their farming business ie adoption of a specific practice, change in the way they manage the business and/or themselves
- The client understands they are responsible and need to do the work
- The client is willing to explore their own beliefs, values and goals as part of the process and question the *status quo*.
- The client understands that they drive the process.

Where extension can be often criticised for having a 'top down' approach i.e. farmers are 'done to', coaching is very 'bottom up' and the farmer client is 'done with' i.e. nothing happens that the client does not agree to.

Coaching is not useful when the client has no desire to change and no willingness to do the work. While this might seem obvious and applicable to conventional extension approaches, farmers can participate in extension for other reasons such as to feel connected socially to other farmers, hear the latest research results, observe what others are doing, have their say in what is happening locally. However for coaching to work, it requires a high degree of commitment (time, finances, motivation) from the outset and it is obvious to all in the process when the client is not engaged sufficiently to make the process work.

As a tool in extension, coaching has the potential to:

- help motivate farmers to make change that has previously been difficult (motivational coaching)
- set new goals and action plans to move the business forward to the next level of performance
- review and set goals business goals to be more congruent with life and family goals and values (alignment coaching)
- explore and evaluate new areas of business in a logical process
- increase quality of life and reduce stress related to farming and associated decision making
- improve personal skills such as time and priority management, interpersonal skills, negotiation etc.

There are a plethora of different coaching models throughout the coaching industry. The most common models all have similar elements that start with focusing on the client's

current situation and their desired outcome and the building a pathway to achieving the client's outcome in a stepwise, logical way.

Three of the most commonly used models and approaches are the:

- GROW model
- Solution focused coaching
- Brain based coaching.

The next section provides a brief description of each model.

GROW model

This one of the most popular coaching models in current use and is most commonly attributed to [Max Landsberg](#) who describes GROW in his book *The Tao of Coaching*¹⁴ although many others have contributed to its development and refinement.

The model (Figure 9) is typically a process that takes the coaching client from a topic of discussion where a goal (G) is identified through exploring the reality (R) of the situation, brainstorming the options available (O) and finishing with planning the way forward (W). It has elements in common with the action learning cycle commonly used in adult learning.

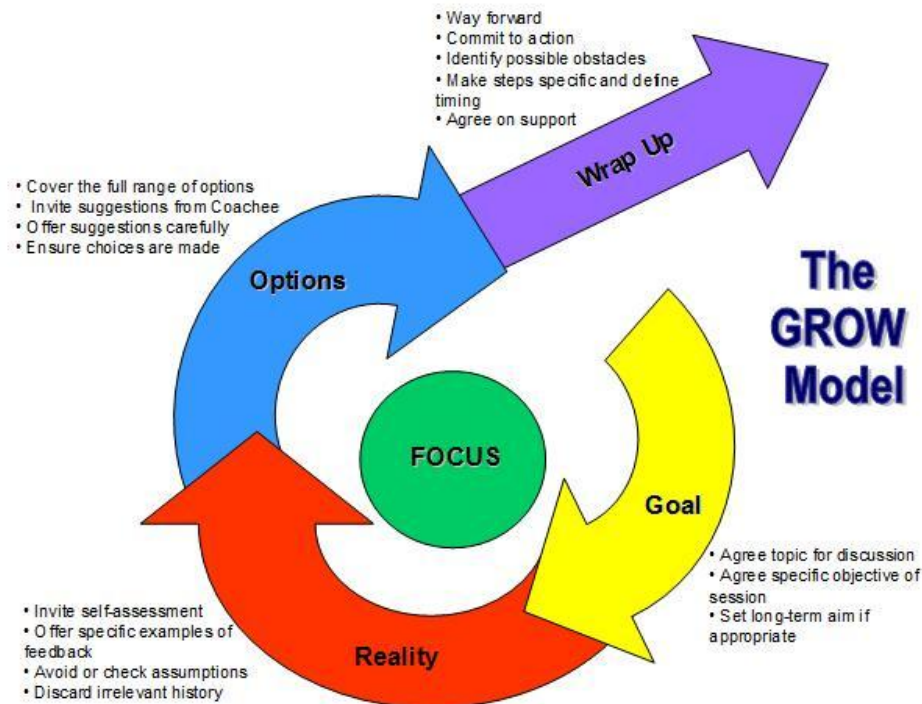


Figure 9: GROW model of coaching¹⁵

¹⁴ Landsberg, Max. *The Tao of Coaching*. ISBN 978-1-86197-650-5

¹⁵ <http://primarydeputy.blogspot.com.au/2012/03/grow-model-of-coaching.html>

Solutions focused coaching

Solutions focused coaching' emphasises the solution rather than the problem, the future rather than the past and a positive focus on what is 'going well' rather than the negative approach of what is 'not working'.

The Philosophy of Solutions Focused Coaching¹⁶ is based on an originally therapy-based application devised by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg.

Solutions Focused Coaching:

- Sees problems as creating the path to the solution. There is no need to analyse the problem and investigate causes, just focus on the solution. In other words, a problem can be solved without its cause being known.
- Focuses on possible solutions that are hidden inside the problems.
- Involves asking useful questions to solve the problem rather than offering predetermined solutions.
- Moves to 'free' the coachee from negative thought systems and beliefs towards the more positive.
- Achieves a more rapid generation of solutions and therefore success
- Provides the coachee with the tools necessary to adopt solutions-focused thinking to problem solving. Thereby, the coachee eventually takes ownership of reaching the solution and can adopt this same approach for future problem solving events.

Brain based coaching

Brain based coaching is based on the idea that in order to achieve success and change for the better we need to look at our thinking processes, not just what we do. It's definition of coaching is 'facilitating positive change by improving thinking'¹⁷.

A brain based coaching approach looks to review the client's current way of thinking. It's less about understanding what the problem is, or why it happens, and much more about the client's current level of thinking about potential solutions.

Brain based coaching includes existing theories including change theory, learning theory, systems theory, positive psychology, solutions focused techniques and other fields.¹⁸

All these coaching models can be applied in many different ways. For a more detailed analysis of what works in coaching and why see Cavanagh *et al*'s "Evidence-Based Coaching"¹⁹

¹⁶ Solutions focused coaching – a definition -

http://www.amazingresults.com.au/downloads/articles/coaching_solutions_focus.html.

¹⁷ Brain based coaching definition - <http://www.barumjeffries.com/success-coaching/what-is-brain-based-coaching/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Cavanagh *et al* (2005) Evidence-based coaching – Volume 1: theory, research and practice from the behavioural sciences. Australian Academic Press.

Measuring the benefits of coaching (ROI)

There are many published studies of coaching, mainly in the area of executive coaching that quote return on investment for coaching. According to the 2009 *ICF Global Coaching Client Study*²⁰, companies that use or have used professional coaching for business reasons have seen a median return on investment of seven times their initial investment. Individual clients reported a median return on investment of 3.44 times their investment.

Individuals who engage in a coaching relationship can expect to experience fresh perspectives on personal challenges and opportunities, enhanced thinking and decision making skills, enhanced interpersonal effectiveness, and increased confidence in carrying out their chosen work and life roles.²¹

Consistent with a commitment to enhancing their personal effectiveness, coaching clients can also expect to see appreciable results in the areas of productivity, personal satisfaction with life and work, and the achievement of personally relevant goals.

Coaching can help with a variety of goal areas. Findings from the 2010 *ICF Global Consumer Awareness Study*, showed that more than two-fifths (42.6 percent) of respondents who had experienced coaching chose "optimize individual and/or team performance" as their motivation for being coached. This reason ranked highest followed by "expand professional career opportunities" at 38.8 percent and "improve business management strategies" at 36.1 percent. Other more personal motivations like "increase self-esteem/self-confidence" and "manage work/life balance" rated fourth and fifth to round out the top five motivation areas.²²

While there has been much criticism of the way ROI is calculated and used to evaluate the success of coaching²³ the literature suggests that coaching does indeed generate returns in social terms as well as profitability and productivity terms. People who have been coached describe being more confident, able to make better decisions, able to tackle difficult relationships, better able to prioritise their time and energy, achieve set goals etc.

Coaching essentially improves the coachees capability and capacity to manage whatever is facing them. This enables the coachee to navigate their own course and feel in control rather than being at the mercy of circumstances. While conventional extension programs have the capacity to do this as well, it is not the main focus of the program but a side benefit that happens outside of the main agenda of imparting information, advice and skills to farmers.

Achieving adoption using coaching can happen quite quickly with short intense bursts of action from the farmer following each coaching session. For some, this change is quite transformational, for others it is incremental but still rapid.

The place of coaching in extension

The place of coaching in extension appears to be in the area of helping farmers to stay motivated, on track and committed to action. While this can be achieved in a well facilitated group, it is more difficult in a group setting to individually cater to a range of different needs and stages of implementation unless everyone is implementing the same change.

²⁰ ICF Global coaching study - <http://www.coachfederation.org/find-a-coach/benefits-of-coaching/>.

²¹ ICF website article - <http://www.coachfederation.org/find-a-coach/benefits-of-coaching/>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Grant, A (2012) ROI is a poor measure of coaching success: towards a more holistic approach using a well-being and engagement framework. *Coaching: An international Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* Vol 5(2) 74-85.

Coaching allows for the individual to be catered for in a way that is both tailored and confidential. Not everyone wants to share their personal struggles with motivation and planning with the whole group, no matter how well they know everyone. This can be especially problematic if their core values are about status and standing in their community. The confidential nature of coaching allows the coach-client relationship to explore issues that many do not necessarily want aired in public.

How can coaching be incorporated into an extension program? There are several possibilities:

1. **As a standalone service – one-on-one:** Farmers would volunteer to receive coaching one-to-one for an agreed time frame to address a particular goal or need of the farmer. The focus of the coaching would be entirely determined by the farmer.
2. **As a standalone group coaching program:** Farmers would be recruited to participate in a group coaching program for an agreed time to address a particular individual. While the participants would form a group, their personal goal would be entirely self-determined (as in one-on-one coaching) but the process would be delivered through groups of 4 or 5 participants in an environment of confidentiality and trust.
3. **As part of a group program:** One or more members of a group would be offered a defined number of one-to-one coaching sessions in between normal group meetings. The focus of coaching would be on implementing information and skills developed as a result of the group activities in the med - long term.
4. **At the completion of a specific training course:** This may involve a small number of sessions from one to three and would only deal with issues relating to the specific course to help implement practice change resulting from the skills and knowledge gained.
5. **As an extra element to a group program:** This application of coaching is more about using the principles of coaching in a group program. This would include getting farmers to set goals for their business, make plans to achieve goals, review their progress, identify what is holding them back and addressing non-technical elements of adoption such as motivation, relationships, non-farming goals etc. Specific coaching conversations may occur during discussion time in a group.

While it is usual that most coaching relationships are totally directed by the client, generally the client is paying the full cost of the service. In an extension context it is likely that coaching would be subsidised, at least initially, to build understanding of what coaching is and what it offers in order to encourage participation. Where there is sponsorship of a coaching program, as in corporate coaching, the sponsor has needs that need to be met by the coaching program and a balance needs to be met between coach, client and sponsor.

Cost of coaching

There is general consensus in the coaching industry that for coaching to be successful, the participants need to contribute towards the cost of delivery. It is similar to the prevailing discussion in extension that concludes that farmers who pay for services obtain more value from that service because they are invested in obtaining value for their money.

However there is a long history in farming of government and industry extension services being free or heavily subsidised. It is only in recent years at the discussion of beneficiaries and funders has crept into extension to determine what services should be subsidised and

how much. This creates a dilemma as the cost of coaching (as with consulting) is high (most coaching starts at \$200 per hour).

As there is perceived to be a lot of individual business gain from coaching compared to industry and public benefit, it therefore fits that farmers wishing to take up coaching should bear the cost themselves. However there is also the counter culture of farmers in the grazing industries being less inclined to pay for private agribusiness services (such as consulting and coaching) compared to other industry sectors ie dairy, cropping and horticulture²⁴. It therefore makes sense that if coaching is perceived to have public and private benefits to farmers in the grazing industries, that initially, government and industry may need to support and/or subsidise its use in order to promote the benefits. This approach is supported by a report by Coutts et al²⁵ citing that 'Resistance to paying for advice was perceived to be the main barrier to more producers using consultants' and recommended that:

'Steps should be taken to educate agricultural enterprise managers across Australia about the potential benefits of using consultants, how to use their inputs most effectively and how to locate consultants appropriate to their needs and businesses. This should be a key role for professional organisations supporting consultants as well as Research and Development Corporations and Companies who have a vested interest in having R&D results effectively integrated into individual farming enterprises.'

If coaching is deemed to be of benefit to farmers in supporting practice change and overcoming barriers to adoption, a similar recommendation would fit to promote its use.

Skills of a good coach

Coaching is an unregulated industry and there are many courses and training available to the aspiring coach. For this reason, professional affiliation with recognised association is one way of identifying coaches that have a commitment to their own development and that of their coaching practice.

In addition, the farming sector is notoriously shy of 'snake oil salesmen' and people 'ripping them off'. For these reasons, it is recommended that any coach engaged to deliver change through an extension program have the following:

- History of satisfied coaching clients, both paid and pro bono
- Appropriate training and qualifications
- Professional affiliation with a recognised coaching association, preferably one that has membership standards such as the International Coaching Federation
- Good interpersonal skills and ability to create rapport
- Ability to understand and grasp the nuances of the industry they are coaching in so that the coaching sessions are contexted within the realms of that industry. Coaches do not have to be experts in Agriculture but it is of benefit if they have some understanding and appreciation of the issues in the industry.

The ICF provides guidelines and a referral service on their website for identifying a suitable coach²⁶ and recommend you use a credentialed coach. ICF has also recently developed coaching guidelines for coaching in organisations that have been registered with the

²⁴ Stone, G (2005) Agribusiness Role in Extension and Training – A case study. A report for the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building. RIRDC Publication NO 05/086.

²⁵ Coutts et al (2007) Making the most of Agricultural Consultants in your Farm Business – RIRDC A report for the Cooperative Venture For Capacity Building RIRDC Publication No. 07/073.

²⁶ ICF website – guidelines for selecting a coach <http://www.coachfederation.org/clients/crs/>

Standards Australia. The handbook is designed to be used by all key stakeholders in the field of coaching to inform the development of coaching programs and coach training, professional development of coaches, ethics, governance, delivery and evaluation of coaching²⁷.

For the benefit of the coaching industry and in order to promote a strong ethical process, coaches used in an agricultural context are ideally associated with ICF and have experience coaching a variety of clients.

Conclusions

This literature review shows there is a case for trialling the use of coaching to overcome barriers to adoption that are of an intangible nature. In particular, coaching can be of benefit in assisting clients (farmers) make change in areas that have previously been difficult as it allows the client to:

- Work on goals that are important to them (and fit within their values)
- Develop action plans that they are held accountable to
- Work through their barriers to moving forward
- Track what is working for them
- Review and reflect on their achievements.

This approach offers a number of applications to extension beyond the conventional use of one-to-one coaching such as group coaching and incorporating elements of coaching into discussion and training programs. The important elements of coaching of enabling the client to work on what is important to them and holding them accountable for their actions are thought to be the key elements of coaching that will add value to existing extension approaches.

The assumptions in this literature review were tested and reported in “B.COM.1075 Barriers to Adoption Final Report”.

²⁷ Standards Australia publication – Standards for Coaching in Organisations.
<http://infostore.saiglobal.com/store/downloadFile.aspx?path=Previews%%205cas%%205cmisc%%205chandbook%%205cHB332-2011.pdf>.

ICF description of coaching and comparison to other professions

Source: <http://www.coachfederation.org/about-icf/overview/>

How is coaching distinct from other service professions? Professional coaching is a distinct service which focuses on an individual's life as it relates to goal setting, outcome creation and personal change management. In an effort to understand what a coach is, it can be helpful to distinguish coaching from other professions that provide personal or organizational support.

Therapy: Coaching can be distinguished from therapy in a number of ways. First, coaching is a profession that supports personal and professional growth and development based on individual-initiated change in pursuit of specific actionable outcomes. These outcomes are linked to personal or professional success. Coaching is forward moving and future focused. Therapy, on the other hand, deals with healing pain, dysfunction and conflict within an individual or a relationship between two or more individuals. The focus is often on resolving difficulties arising from the past which hamper an individual's emotional functioning in the present, improving overall psychological functioning, and dealing with present life and work circumstances in more emotionally healthy ways. Therapy outcomes often include improved emotional/feeling states. While positive feelings/emotions may be a natural outcome of coaching, the primary focus is on creating actionable strategies for achieving specific goals in one's work or personal life. The emphasis in a coaching relationship is on action, accountability and follow through.

Consulting: Consultants may be retained by individuals or organizations for the purpose of accessing specialized expertise. While consulting approaches vary widely, there is often an assumption that the consultant diagnoses problems and prescribes and sometimes implements solutions. In general, the assumption with coaching is that individuals or teams are capable of generating their own solutions, with the coach supplying supportive, discovery-based approaches and frameworks.

Mentoring: Mentoring, which can be thought of as guiding from one's own experience or sharing of experience in a specific area of industry or career development, is sometimes confused with coaching. Although some coaches provide mentoring as part of their coaching, such as in mentor coaching new coaches, coaches are not typically mentors to those they coach.

Training: Training programs are based on the acquisition of certain learning objectives as set out by the trainer or instructor. Though objectives are clarified in the coaching process, they are set by the individual or team being coached with guidance provided by the coach. Training also assumes a linear learning path which coincides with an established curriculum. Coaching is less linear without a set curriculum plan.

Athletic Development: Though sports metaphors are often used, professional coaching is different from the traditional sports coach. The athletic coach is often seen as an expert who guides and directs the behavior of individuals or teams based on his or her greater experience and knowledge. Professional coaches possess these qualities, but it is the experience and knowledge of the individual or team that determines the direction. Additionally, professional coaching, unlike athletic development, does not focus on behaviors that are being executed poorly or incorrectly. Instead, the focus is on identifying opportunity for development based on individual strengths and capabilities.