

## When we talk about adoption...

**Bruce Howie, C-Qual Agritelligence**



Jerry Sternin's story about fighting malnutrition in Vietnam in the 1990s is inspirational. Faced with a government ambivalent about his presence and a minimal budget he was given "...six months to make a difference." The challenge seemed insurmountable with the generally held view that malnutrition was the result of complex problems including poverty, poor sanitation, lack of clean water and general ignorance about nutrition. Despite this Jerry and his wife, Monique, discovered that some children living in impoverished conditions were well nourished. Something different was happening in the families of these children.

It turned out that, while these families had no more resources available to them than their neighbours, there were important differences in how their children ate and what they ate. Rather than helping themselves from the communal bowl they were actively fed by the parents. Their regular rice-based diets were supplemented

with freshwater shrimp and crabs, and sweet potato leaves rich in vitamins. Such supplements were freely available but generally scorned as poverty fare.

Armed with this new knowledge and great 'discovery' it must have been very tempting for Sternin to call the villagers together for a major announcement:

"Attention all: We have researched your problem and identified the solution. Based on the data we have, here are Sternin's 5 Rules for Fighting Malnutrition."

There was no such announcement. Sternin claimed, "Knowledge does not change behaviour." Working with the community they designed a program to allow families to practice new ways to prepare their food and to feel confident that they could do it. In fact, they could conquer malnutrition on their own.

As adoption practitioners there is much to learn from Sternin. Firstly, his solution came from within his target audience. To

*"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."*

**Nelson Mandela**

### IN THIS ISSUE

<b>When we talk about adoption</b> <i>Bruce Howie</i>	<b>1-3</b>
<b>From the Editors</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Enabling talk in Extension</b> <i>Sascha Rixon</i>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Body Language</b> <i>David Alssema</i>	<b>6-7</b>
<b>Using discourse analysis 8-9 to promote good decision making in extension</b> <i>Aysha Fleming</i>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>The Price of Poor Communication</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Blogs rather than newsletters</b> <i>Kate Charleston</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>Calculating impacts at the program level</b> <i>Cam Nicholson</i>	<b>11-12</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Technology ideas</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>APEN - Achieving its Purpose</b> <i>Tracey Gianatti</i>	<b>14</b>
<b>New APEN Members</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Contact Details</b>	<b>16</b>

## When we talk about adoption... (continued)

*In the business of adoption we sometimes get too caught up in the knowledge side of things.*

some extent it was 'their' solution. It's not that Sternin didn't bring some value to the situation. Because of his knowledge of nutrition he was able to identify the value derived from the crabs and sweet potato leaves. But, importantly, the families didn't need a lesson on nutrient values of foods. His message was focused on what they needed to **do** in order to reach the goal of improved nutrition, not what they needed to **know**.

Sternin kept the change simple. On the surface the task was complex and huge. But it would take years and millions of dollars to undertake the structural change necessary to solve the underlying problems of poverty, sanitation and clean water supply. In the meantime, thousands of children would die, malnourished. Sternin focused on what could be done with the available resources, based on simple actions matched to the situation and he provided a clearly defined pathway to the goal – wash your hands before preparing food, incorporate crabs and sweet potato leaves, and make sure the children eat adequately.

In the business of adoption we sometimes get too caught up in the knowledge side of things. We expect our target audience to be very rational and if we provide good scientific evidence along with sound knowledge our ideas will sell themselves. It is true that there are some people in our audience who are knowledge hungry and thrive on rationality. But they actually make up a very small part of the target market for adoption.

Sure, providing good, scientifically valid evidence as a reason to adopt is an important part of our job but if we really want to speak the language of adoption we have to go much further. We need to speak to the intuitive minds of our target audience and that means tackling persuasion channels that impact peoples' interests, vision, feelings and emotions. Adoption is about achieving behavioural change through changing attitudes, and attitudes change, not through facts and data, but through what the facts and data mean to each of us as individuals.

The man credited with putting General Motors on the map, Alfred P Sloan advised his executives that when making key decisions, they should... 'review the relevant facts and arguments', then listen to their 'intuitions', where the 'final act of business judgement' takes place. Andy Grove, former head of Intel was more blunt when he advised his teams to 'Drive into the data, then trust your gut.' Unless

we learn to speak to these 'gut' feelings we can largely expect adoption within the mainstream market to be low, or at best slow, so we need to know what it takes to reach our audience at this level.

Rule number 1 is to know your audience and by that we mean knowing what their issues are, where their interests lie and what motivates them. We need to do this at an individual level as much as possible but we can understand these characteristics at the broader group level as well. One thing is for sure, if we want to implement adoption programs that will genuinely change practices we need this understanding of our target audience.

As we found in the experience of Sternin above, we also need to provide the mainstream audience with a simple program, well mapped out and adaptable to their current system. Otherwise the change becomes too hard. Too much information, too much complexity and too many options create confusion and ambiguity. These are the building blocks of decision paralysis, which is a primary barrier to adoption. Albert Einstein said, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler." In other words, we are not about 'dumbing down' the message but we must strip out the complexity and unnecessary knowledge.

Finally, any of us who have completed a traditional sales training course will know that we never complete a sale until we ask for the order. When we set out to sell a new idea for adoption we need to keep the same rule in mind. We have to ask for the order and in adoption that means we must get a decision to act. Don't fall into the trap of allowing an adoption program to simply become an education program. Ask for action. We must have a plan that we can ask people to commit to. Can you do a strip trial? Will you take a soil sample for analysis? Maybe as simple as, Do you think you can get to next month's field day? What we need is a commitment to take some action, the first step along the path to adoption.

Achieving a commitment to act is not trivial in adoption, it is fundamental. Only then do we know that we are genuinely approaching attitudinal change. We then must support that change, whether by observation, provision of resources or access to the knowledge that underpins the decisions made.

*Too much information, too much complexity and too many options create confusion and ambiguity.*

## When we talk about adoption... (continued)

At C-Qual Agritelligence Pty Ltd we call this approach the CaPTuRE Model of Persuasion. We:

- **Consult the Client** to make sure that we understand their situation, gain their perspective and learn from them where their interests and motivations lie.
- **Package the Concept** to simplify the steps to adoption and make sure that it fits the system.
- **Tune the Channels** to match our adoption messages to both the rational and intuitive decision making processes.
- **Remove the Barriers** by stripping out complexity and information overload that cause decision paralysis, and provide motivation to overcome decision inertia.
- **Ensure Commitment** by asking for the order in line with an action plan and provision of support to maintain the decision.

This strategy provides a simple framework that works and boosts potential for adoption by the mainstream. Authors Heath & Heath write, "When change works, it tends to follow a pattern. The people who change have clear direction, ample motivation, and a supportive environment."

In our role as adoption practitioners we can achieve practice change with these steps because they translate into the language of the intuitive mind.

*Bruce Howie created C-Qual Agritelligence Pty Ltd in 2007 with a focus on technology adoption. The business of CQA is to actively support people and organisations conducting R, D & E to develop sound adoption strategies and, through practical workshops, provide adoption practitioners with the key skills to implement effective programs. Contact Bruce at [Bruce.Howie@c-qual.com](mailto:Bruce.Howie@c-qual.com) or visit the website [www.c-qual.com](http://www.c-qual.com).*



## FROM THE EDITORS



Each time we compile ExtensionNet we aim to prompt you and ourselves to think in a way that produces action in what we do. In this edition our prompts are around language and persuasion.

I (Kate) recently attended a 'Persuasion skills' workshop run by Bruce Howie and was so impressed by what I heard that I asked him to write an article for this newsletter. His article on adoption highlights the fact that adoption rarely occurs by presenting knowledge alone – we need to tap more into the intuitive minds of our audiences, not just the rational mind.

As extension practitioners we are professional communicators. So how do we use our communication skills? And, can we improve our communication skills? Language is relevant to both questions and ExtensionNet explores the aspects of language and communication with articles about body language, discourse analysis and the language of facilitation.

With more focus by organisations on using the internet as a communication tool the article about blogs provides some insights into using this tool instead of a newsletter. While most, if not all, of us would be adept at getting our message across, just consider those that failed to do so and the cost to their businesses in the article about poor writing skills.

Often our business is achieving practice change in rural communities, but can we quantify the expected change realistically? Cam Nicholson believes we can and he describes how it is being done and the tools to do so in a Grain and Graze project.

Have fun and find a technique to apply in your own work.

Kate and Gerry



*"Use plain, simple language, short words and brief sentences. That is the way to write English – it is the modern way and the best way. Stick to it; don't let fluff and flowers and verbosity creep in. When you catch an adjective, kill it. No, I don't mean all, but kill most of them – then the rest will be valuable. They weaken when they are close together. They give strength when they are far apart."*

**Mark Twain**



# Enabling talk in Extension

*Sascha Rixon, with inputs and edits by Andrew Rixon of Babel Fish Group*



Natural Resource Management and Extension provide opportunities for facilitation work with groups. A 2007 Australia-wide Delphi study exploring NRM facilitators' perspectives on facilitation underlined the complexity of the tasks that are "facilitation". This article provides a view into the world of facilitation through language.

Drawing from my PhD exploring facilitators' talk-in-interaction, this view explores the notion that facilitation is about enabling talk. And like Marcel Proust, the French novelist, said, "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes".

## **The virtues of following**

In Western societies, we're socialised to lead. Leading is good and following is bad. But there's a lot to be said for following. You could say this was how I began my PhD.

Several years ago, after participating in many unproductive "chaired" meetings in my job at a university, I discovered through attending a meeting of the Victorian Facilitators' Network (VFN) that there was another way, that of facilitation. Being a linguist by training, I wondered, "How is facilitation realised through language?"

We invited facilitators to reflect on the language they used in facilitation. Most respondents equated speaking facilitatively with speaking using questions. Many said that body language was as important if not more important than spoken language. Following these ideas has taken me to spending the last three and a half years researching facilitated workshops.

## **The importance of questioning and non-verbals**

What has emerged? Well, unsurprisingly, like facilitators reported, they do use questions in their facilitation practice, and body language is at times more important than spoken language, particularly in regard to the mundane but often problematic activity of getting the attention of a group.

The following actual example demonstrates the importance of questions and how we ask them.

At a pivotal point in the workshop, where the facilitator was discussing the action plans that the participants had come up with, the facilitator asked "What are you going to do with these?" The response? Silence! After a

few seconds a participant responded jokingly with "Use them as a brief for consultants". Yes, this humour was the beginning of some significant resistance.

What would have happened if the facilitator had instead asked "What could you do with these?" That is, rather than presupposing that the participants would do something with their action plans and asking them to name what they would do, and thereby commit to taking that action in front of the whole group, asking for hypothetical actions that they could take.

How mindful are you of how you construct your questions? Have you ever noticed how changing just one word can make all the difference?

## **Enabling talk by "going second"**

As well as words, facilitation is about timing. A facilitator enables talk by "going second" or following, rather than controlling talk by "going first". That is, they tie what they say to what one or more participants have already said. Speaking follows listening, rather than the other way around. It was the Greek, Epictetus, who said "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."

More recently, Myers (2007) demonstrated that focus group "facilitators" (rather than moderators) embody this by tying their questions to what participants say, and by tying other actions such as changes in topic and task, to participant talk.

But facilitation is not all about following; there is a dynamic tension between knowing when to follow and when to lead. You might say it's about leading by "going second". That is, tying your actions to the participants' actions and responses enabling a different type of leadership to emerge within the group. How aware are you of this tension between leading and following within a group? What have you noticed about opportunities that emerge when following?

## **Enabling talk: Demonstrating empathy**

Demonstrating empathy through talk-in-interaction is a behaviour that can be helpful and enabling for facilitation practitioners and the groups they are working with. Studies of doctor-patient interactions and mediation processes have displayed the benefits of empathic communication.

Suchman et al (1997) observed that patients rarely talked about emotions when interacting

*Most respondents equated speaking facilitatively with speaking using questions*

## Enabling talk in Extension (continued)

with doctors. Rather, they more often say things that imply underlying emotions. While some doctors “did empathy” by acknowledging the patient’s “feelings talk” or asking about “feelings” talk when it was implied, most doctors did not...even when some patients tried to raise their feelings again and again.

Why is “feelings talk” so enabling? Have you ever encountered that tricky situation in a group where a participant says they aren’t being heard or understood? Could it be that what’s missing is their “feelings” talk around the situation? It seems that neglecting the feelings aspects of a process in favour of task progression does not lead to task accomplishment; it often leads to task derailment until the relational aspects are addressed.

### Where to from here?

This paper has explored the view of enabling talk within facilitation. Here are some questions for you to reflect on. How can you enable talk through the design of your questions and other actions? How might you use enabling talk such as empathic responses which allows participants to feel heard and understood? What other questions does this article raise for you? Like Peter Drucker said, “Follow

effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.”

### References

- Myers, G. (2007). Enabling talk: How the facilitator shapes a focus group. *Text & Talk*, 27(1), 79-105.
- Rixon, A., McWaters, V., & Rixon, S. (2006). Exploring the language of facilitation. *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal*, 7, 21-30.
- Rixon, A., Smith, T. F., McKenzie, B. F., Sample, R., Scott, P., & Burn, S. (2007). Perspectives on the art of facilitation: a Delphi study of natural resource management facilitators. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, 14(3), 179-191.
- Suchman, A., Markakis, K., Beckman, H., & Frankel, R. (1997). A model of empathic communication in the medical interview. *JAMA*, 277(8), 678-682.



*But facilitation is not all about following; there is a dynamic tension between knowing when to follow and when to lead.*



From: [www.plainlanguageaustralia.com](http://www.plainlanguageaustralia.com)

*“Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.”*

**Benjamin Franklin**



# Body Language

**David Alssema**

Many people recognise the importance of strong communication skills. A most important skill is using body language effectively.

Body language can account for 55%-80% of the communication depending on culture and other factors. Knowing this, it is imperative that we learn how to communicate with our body and know how to read the signals of others. And remember, all body language must be read for context, congruence and clusters.

## Visual Accessing Signals

If you ask a person a question, they would look either up, left or right, or down depending on what you have asked them. That's what we do when accessing information from our brain. Here are some practical ways to identify what is happening.

If someone looks up left or right they are visualising an image. This means they are either constructing or remembering an image. What if they go horizontally left or right? This means they are doing something auditory, again either constructing or remembering a sound. If the person looks downward left or right they may be feeling something internally or using internal dialogue. This information can help you identify what the other person is doing and thus helps you form your next question.

Sometimes it can also be used to tell if someone is misleading you or constructing answers. To do this you can ask several questions. For example, "What did you do last night?" or "How has your day been"; and you watch what they do with their eyes. They will more than likely go to their side for remembering because they are remembering and not constructing as we usually don't have to construct what we did last night. Then you can ask them another question if you want to work out if they are making it up. If they go to the other side this means they are constructing the answer and possibly trying to mislead. Clustered with hesitant speech and other signals, this may assist in unravelling the truth. But be careful with it!

## Eye Contact

To help people feel comfortable look at them as much as they do to you. Some cultures or types of people do not look you in the eye as it may be offensive. Mirror the other person's eye contact and the length they look at you and you should be right.

## Handshakes

Handshaking is a form of greeting. It's often the very first thing we do to greet and build rapport with people. It shows our strength to

*Body language can account for 55%-80% of the communication depending on culture and other factors.*



**Body language says it all!**

## Body Language (continued)

an issue, our behaviour type and motive for the meeting. So if our handshake is to build a relationship what should we do? Well, in communication the correct way is the way the other person understands. This means to build rapport you need to show and share similarities with the person you are trying to build rapport with. By showing that you are similar, you build a character that the other person can relate to. In other words, by mirroring the other person you will build a relationship with similarities.

You're probably wondering, what does this have to do with a handshake? Well if you shook someone's hand extremely stronger than the other person, do you think this will build or detract from the relationship? Likewise if you go in with a soft handshake and the person you approach has a strong handshake, will this help? No. Ultimately you need to match the other person's behaviour to build a relationship.

To show you on a different level why it is important to mirror the behaviour of your guest, some cultures do not shake hands at all and to do so can have detrimental effects on any meeting. People from different parts of the world will do things differently and if you can help them feel comfortable by greeting them the way they wish to be greeted, you are a step ahead. Even in some places city people will greet differently to country people. Greeting others in the way they greet is a way to show respect and will help you in building rapport.

### Gesturing

Use gestures if the person you are speaking to uses them. This will help the conversation. Only use them to illustrate and convey meanings. Do not have them out there too much as this may confuse the communication. Be careful as some gestures may mean different things to different people. Mirror the other persons gesturing and you will communicate more effectively.

### Negative Body Language Signals

Negativity can be seen in some forms of barriers and body posture. Generally anything across the body is a negative communicator, maybe holding a barrier, folded arms or even maybe a coffee cup placed across the body may be negative. Folded arms at points within a conversation can identify that something is bothering the person or there is something on their mind. The feet will also point to what the person is interested in so if they are not facing you then the person may be closed to what you are saying. Look for open body signals like open arms, palms facing towards you, and also feet being open. Be approachable yourself.

### It's About Building Rapport

The secret to building rapport with people is mirroring their type and style of communication. If you can incorporate the way they speak, the speed, their body language and other verbal communication similarities they are using, you will also communicate with them on their level. This will build rapport and the similarities will help you in your communication. Don't copy accents, personal disabilities etc. Understanding and using body language to build rapport is not about copying. It is about bringing their communication together with yours so they feel comfortable and able to listen to you.

So overall the secret really is to build rapport by mirroring the other person, communicating with them the way they do to you and reading signals to help understand the other person more fully.

David Alssema is a body language specialist and motivational speaker. For more information on David please visit [www.davidalssema.com](http://www.davidalssema.com) or [www.paramounttraining.com.au](http://www.paramounttraining.com.au)



*In communication  
the correct way  
is the way the  
other person  
understands.*

*“The English language is an arsenal of weapons. If you are going to brandish them without checking to see whether or not they are loaded, you must expect them to have them explode in your face from time to time.”*

**Stephen Fry**



# Using discourse analysis to promote good decision making in extension

Aysha Fleming



When working with people to communicate different ideas, knowing how different people view the world and the different language that they use, can increase understanding, respect and the successful adoption of practice changes. An ideal tool to examine people's different uses of language is discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis is especially useful for extension because it can be applied in different levels, requiring different analysis and yielding different results. Hence, there is a level of discourse analysis to suit every situation and it is now recognised as a valuable method of analysis. The method suggested here comes from my own experience, however, there are others.

Across any application of discourse analysis in extension, there are two important points that are constant:

- Language is used differently by different people in different situations and this is vital to acknowledge for successful communication, and
- Language is very important in shaping how people view the world, themselves and what constitutes good decision making for them.

At the simplest level, discourse analysis is about recognising different uses of language. So, in any given situation, taking note of different vernacular (local or group language), phraseology (choice of words) and recurring themes is a simple form of discourse analysis. This is best done before or after an event, rather than during, to allow time for analysis, reflection and connections to be made. Analysis requires collecting records of language in various forms, such as written notes of observations, feedback sheets or comment slips.

Before events the collected texts could include official documents, letters or newsletters, media stories, websites and so on. The analysis of these texts can be quite simple and involve searching for key words, recurring issues or emotive uses of language. Setting questions and looking in the texts for the answers can uncover underlying assumptions or worldviews. Such questions might include who/what is powerful, who/what is the assumed audience, who/what is left out or forgotten.

At a more advanced level, discourse analysis can use interviews or focus groups around specific questions. These are then analysed using similar methods to those described above, but the answers are grouped together and analysed as clusters. This provides a richer, wider account of the situation. It is generally easier to uncover deeper layers of meaning with this deeper analysis, because world views and assumptions are not always immediately apparent and often only become visible once individual views are removed and a 'social voice' is extracted.

Although discourse analysis is most effective at deeper levels of social study, the principles that underpin it can be used to improve any extension situation. Its use involves recognising the importance of language in shaping perceptions about what makes good decision making and how this is different for everyone. Expecting differences and being aware of language use avoids using the same communication strategies for different groups and expecting the same results.

An example of discourse analysis in use is my study of how the Tasmanian agricultural community views climate change. I interviewed 68 people in the dairy and apple industries in Tasmania. From collating the key words, issues and assumptions, and questioning the data set that I created, I was able to see a distinct pattern in the combined responses. Four types of responses emerged. These were: climate change viewed as an issue of financial concern, an issue of nature, a concern that humans had responsibility for, or as too confusing and controversial to really form any opinion on. These four responses were not directly associated with any one individual, but by combining all of the responses together, and grouping similar 'chunks' of text, the wider picture became clearer.

Knowledge of these four views could then inform strategies of working with target groups. For example you can match extension activity to their focus such as 'finance' with incentives; 'a natural cycle' with sustainability; 'human responsibility' with collective action and networks and confusion with personal climate records. The results showed that concerns about climate change were often driven by ideology, not necessarily acceptance or skepticism of climate science. The main

*Although discourse analysis is most effective at deeper levels of social study, the principles that underpin it can be used to improve any extension situation*



## Using discourse analysis ... (continued)

conclusion to draw from this example is that the best communication requires a significant awareness of the audience. This includes traditionally accepted demographics plus the target group's language and differing ideology.

Frank Vanclay's work on farming styles is an important step in recognising the diversity of farmers (and indeed, relevant to many other social groups), however language should be emphasised as both a central aspect to consider and a practical method of examining the range of perspectives in particular groups.

Ideally, discourse analysis occurs over time, in depth, with the same group. However, small measures can be taken to ascertain effects of language and ideology, even when communicating with a wholly unknown group for the first time on a one-off basis. Techniques such as engaging with audience members informally before beginning a lecture, or asking open questions at the start of a formal presentation, can help provide information to the presenter. Another method is trying

different techniques, such as in the examples for climate change, and observing the group reaction.

Engagement, knowing your audience, and working with a two-way flow of information, rather than inflexibly transferring information, is not a new recommendation. However, a specific focus on language and the specific technique of examining language through discourse analysis is a new area for extension.

Further reading:

Fleming, A & Vanclay, F 2009 'Using discourse analysis to better inform the practice of extension', *Extension farming systems*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp.1-11.

Fleming, A & Vanclay, F 2010, 'Farmer responses to climate change and sustainable agriculture: a review', *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 11-19.

Vanclay, F 2004, 'Social principles for agricultural extension to assist in the promotion of natural resource management', *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 213-223.



## The Price of Poor Communication

Poor communication can be costly in business and according to a survey in Britain, 31 per cent of consumers ended business relationships due to poor communication.

Poor writing also increases the liability and risks of your organization. In "Total Quality Business Writing" published in *The Journal for Quality and Participation* (1995), Michael Egan wrote:

- Computer manufacturer Coleco lost \$35 million in a single quarter in 1983—and eventually went out of business—when customers purchased its new Adam line of computers, found the instruction manuals unreadable, and rushed to return their computers.
- An oil company spent hundreds of thousands of dollars developing a new pesticide... only to discover that the formula had already been worked out five years earlier—by one of the same company's technicians. He wrote his report so poorly that no one had finished reading it.
- A nuclear plant supervisor ordered "ten foot long lengths" of radioactive material. Instead of getting the ten-foot lengths it needed, the plant received ten one-foot lengths, at a cost so great it was later classified.
- Prof. Dorothy Winsor showed "a history of miscommunication" to be one of the root causes of the Challenger disaster in 1986.

Unfortunately the costs of poor communication do not appear on the balance sheet. If they did, more would be done to control them.

More information at: <http://www.impact-information.com/impactinfo/costs.htm>

# Blogs rather than newsletters?

**Kate Charleston**  
**Senior Extension Officer, DEEDI, Queensland**



*Blogs have  
one large  
advantage over  
the traditional  
newsletter  
- it allows the  
extension  
officer to deliver  
information  
quickly.*

Blogs have one large advantage over the traditional newsletter - it allows the extension officer to deliver information quickly.

## **Blogs instead of newsletters**

This depends on the type of message and your target audience.

Consider these:

- Is it vital that you communicate your information rapidly? - I manage a blog about pest management which provides us with a quick means to respond to pest outbreaks.
- Do you want to receive feedback from your clients in response to the information you provide on a blog?
- Is your client group sufficiently computer literate and do they want to receive information via a blog?

## **Other advantages and disadvantages of blogs**

Blogs are easy to use and easy to set up. Many sites offer free blogs so it need not cost you anything. Nor do you need to know any codes or other computer language – just write!

Blog writers and readers can ask questions or provide comments and you can share these comments with the rest of the audience if appropriate. Comments posted to the blog are not automatically added to the blog but are first sent to the administrators for approval. You can therefore filter out spam and ensure your blog only deals with relevant issues.

Blogs allow archiving of posts which means your audience can refer to previous postings, either by date or subject matter. This has an advantage over a newsletter which is more easily misplaced.

Blog sites provide statistics of data about blog usage. Some of the statistical data I look at for our blog are; the number of visitors to the site, visitor loyalty, how long they spent on the site and how many pages are viewed per visit.

## **So are there actually any disadvantages to using blogs?**

Yes, there are but in my opinion and through my experience with the entomology blog – they are very minor.

My main issue is the amount of spam mail I receive which takes time to remove. When we originally started this blog three years ago, we used a free Google site which was rarely spammed. Since we purchased our own domain name, spam mail increased significantly and finding 300 spam messages waiting after a weekend was common. Now I blacklist these and receive on average 30 a week. The name of our blog site could also influence the quantity of spam. Our blog is called 'the beatsheet' (a tool used to monitor insects) and, not surprisingly, much of the spam I receive has sexual connotations!

A blog is a low cost/low risk communication tool but remember, you must have something interesting to say and update your message often. Blogs that are not well written and not frequently updated will simply be ignored.

A final observation – the total number of blogs on the internet is thought to be approaching 200 million – most of these are personal blogs. The following quote essentially sums up many of those blogs:

*"Never before have so many people with so little to say said so much to so few".*

ENET

*"Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light."*

**Joseph Pulitzer**

# Calculating impacts at the program level

**Cam Nicholson, Regional co-ordinator, Grain and Graze 2, Southern Victoria**  
(03) 5258 3860, [nicon@pipeline.com.au](mailto:nicon@pipeline.com.au)

I suspect many readers of ExtensionNet have faced the challenge of calculating the impact of large scale program investment.

Increasingly investors want the calculations and assumptions to be consistent and transparent.

Calculating the impact of new practices was the task confronting seven proponents when seeking investment from the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) in the new \$12 million Grain and Graze 2 program.

Proponents, in regions of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland had to calculate the impact of proposed practice changes in a consistent way while using the best available science. This was made more difficult because the desired outcomes had to be estimated at the whole farm or systems level. Which meant the anticipated 'flow on effects' from a practice had to be considered across the rest of the farm. To complicate matters further, environmental as

well as productivity and profitability objectives had to be considered.

But calculating the impact at the farm scale was only part of the task, as regions then had to estimate the extent and speed at which each of the potential practice changes might be adopted.

Two tools developed by a team from CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems and the CRC for Future Farm Industries were used to assist in understanding and quantifying the impacts of potential practice changes for Grain and Graze 2.

## Bio-economic model

The first tool was a bio-economic model, led by Mike Robertson. It was based on a simple conceptual framework that describes the flows of water, biomass (including harvestable product, surface residues and soil biomass) and money in dryland grain and livestock production systems (figure 1).

This tool was favoured over more sophisticated systems models such as

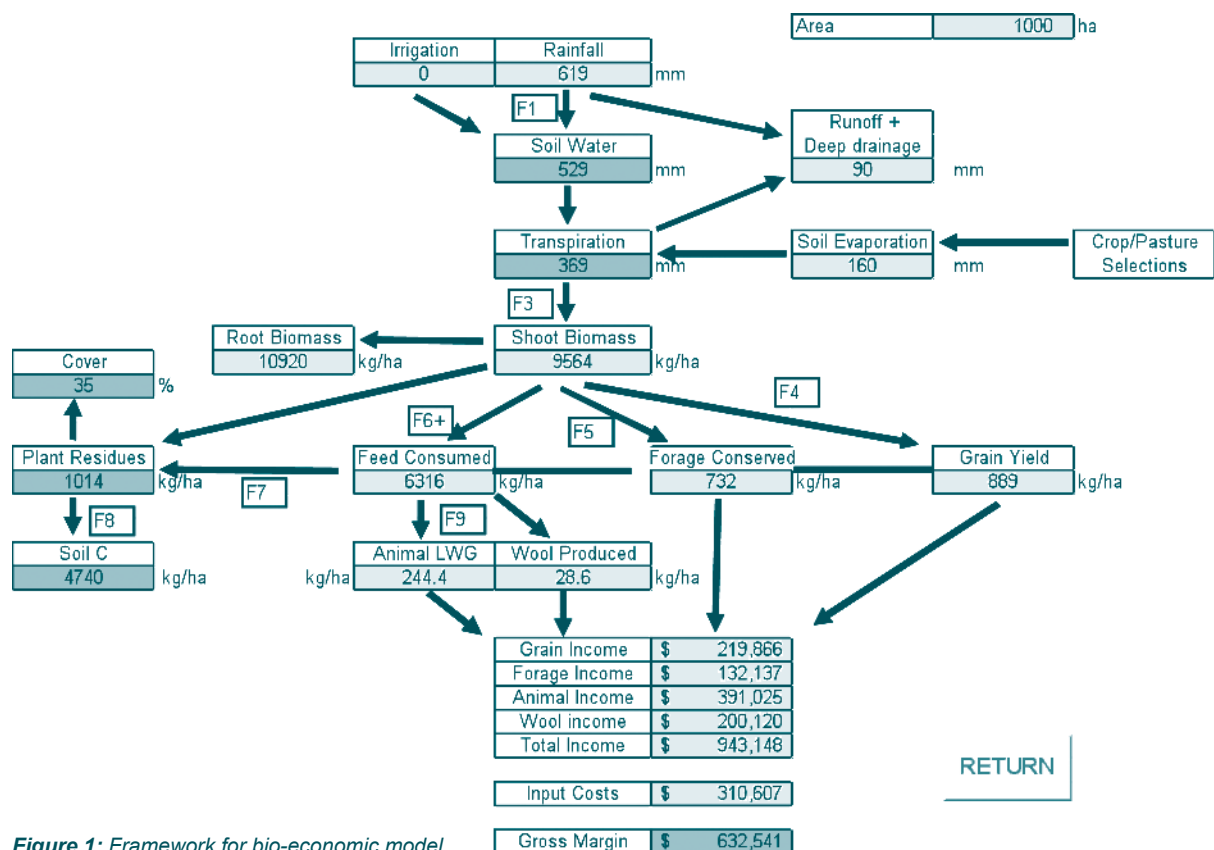


Figure 1: Framework for bio-economic model



# Calculating impacts at the program level (continued)

*The greatest strength of the tools is the combination of rigour and simplicity.*



Figure 2: Framework for factors included in the preliminary adoptability tool

AUSFARM and MIDAS because it used fewer, more 'robust' parameters, was easier to operate and matched the lesser precision surrounding estimates on likely adoption.

Proponents devised a baseline representative farm or farms for their region and then used the framework to evaluate the likely impact of proposed practice changes on grain and livestock production, costs, farm profit, groundcover, soil carbon and water balance. In most cases only a few key parameters were changed to represent the new practice, making the comparisons quick and easy to perform.

Outputs from the tool clearly demonstrated the potential impact certain practices had on the production, financial and the natural resources of the whole farm system. For some practices, financial improvements brought negative environmental consequences such as reductions in groundcover or increases in runoff and deep drainage.

## Adoptability tool

The second tool was developed by a Future Farm Industries team led by Rick Llewellyn and Geoff Kuehne at the CSIRO. Known as the 'adoptability tool', this simple Excel based program calculates the rate of adoption and peak adoption level from the answers to 19 multiple choice questions. The questions encompass the main influences on adoption (figure 2).

Although still in the development stage,

outputs from this tool generated different adoption rates and peak adoption levels for different practices. The tool was able to differentiate between practices that 'gut feel' would suggest would be rapidly adopted, like grazing crops, and those practices that will be slower because of complexity, investment cost and knowledge gaps.

Importantly the use of both tools enabled the methodology to be consistent, it captured the assumptions used and calculated the impacts, including any potential negative consequences. The tools included the latest understanding on bio-economic interactions and the extension theories that are known to influence adoption. The output also provided a baseline to monitor and evaluate against.

## Proponent and investor reaction

While there was plenty of room for improvement, and this was captured in a recent review (Robertson et al, 2010), the consensus from proponents about the use and output of the tools was positive. A favourable response was also received from program investors, who while they recognised there would be limitations and weaknesses in the application of both tools, have greater confidence the outcome will be achieved compared to previous 'sales pitch' type submissions using ad hoc calculation methods and unsubstantiated promises.

Wisely the GRDC did not use the results from the tools to rank projects or

influence budgets in this instance. Instead it was limited to quantifying the impacts and identifying any potential risk. Even unfavourable outputs were submitted, which prompted investors to discuss the results with proponents and devise approaches that incorporate greater scrutiny during development.

The greatest strength of the tools is the combination of rigour and simplicity. They enable calculation of critical outputs with minimum data input, only including formulas and questions that are the main drivers of change. With minimal explanation and trialing, proponents were able to apply the tools and derive outputs that are relevant to discussion about mixed farming systems.

For more information about the tools contact:

## Bio-physical tool:

Mike Robertson (08) 9333 6461,  
Michael.Robertson@csiro.au

## Adoptability tool:

Geoff Kuehne (08) 8303 8410,  
Geoff.Kuehne@csiro.au

## GRDC:

Tanya Robinson (02) 6166 4575,  
t.robinson@grdc.com.au

## References

Robertson M, Nicholson C, Kuehne G, Llewellyn R (2010). Evaluating the prospective impact of changes in management practices on crop-livestock farms. GRDC, Barton ACT.

# References:

- Allan and Barbara Pearce, *The Definitive Book Of Body Language*
- Rowan, L 2001 *Write me in: Inclusive texts in the primary classroom*. Newtown: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Vanclay, F, Howden, P, Mesiti, L & Glyde, S 2006, 'The Social and Intellectual Construction of Farming Styles: Testing Dutch Ideas in Australian Agriculture', *Sociologia Ruralis*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 61-82.
- Wetherell, M, Taylor, S & Yates, S (eds) 2001, *Discourse as data: a guide for analysis*, Sage, London.
- Wodak, R & Meyer, M (eds) 2001, *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, Sage, London.

## Technology ideas

In this edition of EN the tech ideas are for our own or others learning...see what you think.

eLearning sites (platforms) offer much to future extension...try this site to follow a blog on using them well  
<http://www.articulate.com/rapid-elearning/>

Want to know more about how to use social media (SoMe) in your work or own learning? Try <http://c4lpt.co.uk/> where they provide services, education and resources for SoMe.

For your own learning using google learn how to refine your searches very well at <http://www.googleguide.com/> and learn more by taking the test at <http://www.plentysmart.com/comp/google/google.php> which for some reason requires you to put your cursor at the end of the URL and click Return to get past the error it displays

## Some useful references to improve your communication with clients

- Kaplan B. 2003, *Editing made easy*. Penguin Books Australia Limited. Camberwell, Victoria.
- Grammar Girl has tips and grammar exercises to help you learn and remember all the grammar rules on punctuation, word choice, and more.  
<http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>
- Writing Exercises for Engineers and Scientists  
<http://www.writing.engr.psu.edu/exercises/>
- Plain English: the story so far [http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/publications/plain\\_en/sofar.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/publications/plain_en/sofar.htm)
- The Guide to Grammar and Writing  
[www.grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/](http://www.grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/)
- For oral presentation  
Gratuitous advice on giving a talk - This site contains advice on how to tweak the content and aesthetics of slides so that your audience doesn't fall asleep or leave despising you.  
<http://www.swarthmore.edu/NatSci/cpurrrin1/powerpointadvice.htm>

# APEN - Achieving its Purposes

**Tracey Gianatti, APEN President**

In 1993 a group of extensionists from all sectors of agriculture in Australia and the Pacific got together at an Extension Conference held on Queensland's Gold Coast. The aim was to share the methods used in performing their work in extension and raise the profile of this important aspect of any agricultural research project. The conference became the springboard to the establishment of APEN and its vision of becoming the peak body for professionals working with people to manage change in agricultural and natural resource management communities.

Over the years, many people have generously donated their time to be part of APEN's voluntary Management Committee. Each member has brought their own styles with them and there has been much discussion on that word "Extension".

Seventeen years later, we thought it would be a good idea to see whether we have been successful in achieving the nine listed purposes from the constitution. Comments from the 58 participants who attended our recent webinar (a new technique for APEN) on the value of the event could be used as a guide to see how we are progressing ... I think we're doing pretty well!

## APEN's Purpose

The purposes for which the proposed incorporated association is established are:

- 1) *To improve the practice and profession of extension through the training and education of extension practitioners, researchers and educators;*
  - Listening to the similarities and challenges that different industries face in getting traction through extension. Possible delivery methods that might assist my future projects.
  - Really enjoyed Lauren's talk, first time in a while that an APEN event has directly related to my work
  - It was a comfortable environment for asking questions, as there was a feeling of anonymity. It was convenient hearing a far away located speaker in my backyard. It's a cheap and easy way to get speakers from far away to speak.
  - Enjoyed the more theoretical presentation
- 2) *To act as an information resource by sharing, pooling and accessing skills, knowledge and experiences of members and others;*
  - Good networking, sharing experiences
  - Good to interact as a local group as well as listen to the presentations
  - Speaking to other groups from other regions went well
  - Hearing the experience of others with farmer groups helps put my own experiences in context
- 3) *To provide communication, reduce isolation, establish linkages and form networks*
  - Great way to network with other extension professionals and webinar presenters
  - Meeting one of the other participants in Melbourne - I may contact him again, in relation to an upcoming project
  - Good opportunity to engage with presenters all over the country
  - Interaction at the local level - i.e. all Tasmanian people were in the same location, plus the interstate programs discussed
  - Networking, content of presentation in the first two webinar sessions, plus local presentations
  - Listening to people from industries different to mine
- 4) *To contribute to improved extension practices, projects and proposals through publications, workshops, conferences, networking and other means;*
  - Sharing techniques and methods across different industries and regions and finding commonalities. Enjoyed the presentation with accompanying webcam of speaker.
  - Insight into extension methodologies used by other extensionists
  - Advice from leaders in the game of agricultural extension work. i.e., what works well, what doesn't work well. Coping strategies. Reading isn't the most efficient learning method, too much self discipline required, often too little spare time as a grower... plenty of useful tips!
  - Lauren's work really impressed me
- 5) *Promote use of new extension methodologies & approaches, and support the development of innovations in extension;*
  - Having never been to a 'webinar' I found this a very interesting and

- relevant way to interact with others
- Quality speakers and didn't have to leave the office!
- Ability to see and hear the session, interact, and not travel hundreds of kilometres to participate
- 6) *Increased awareness of new issues and trends effecting extension;*
  - Updates on the activities and attitudes of people working in the extension field, the things that worked and the things that don't
  - The evolution of extension in a region (sugar industry) that has undergone some extensive changes to the systems

In addition to the webinar, APEN is also working to achieve its purposes of :

- 7) *Raising the public profile of extension by lobbying governments, universities, industry organisations and other non-government groups;*
- 8) *Raising the public profile of extension to contribute to a wider debate in areas where extension can make a contribution;*
- 9) *Contributing to a common understanding of extension and its functions.*

This is currently occurring through our involvement with the Extension Working Group as part of the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) R&D Sub Committee. The Committee has asked for "a model for extension and adoption of research and knowledge that boosts the productivity, sustainability and competitiveness of Australia's primary industries through:

- A visual depiction of Australia's primary industries innovation system
- A set of guiding principles
- The development of skills and capabilities
- Monitoring and evaluation of extension
- An IT based knowledge system
- A national extension network."

On 15 – 16th September a national facilitated workshop was held to begin the development of this model. Forty people from all the major rural R&D corporations, state and territory departments of agriculture, and myself as President of APEN attended. It is hoped the model will be finalised by February 2011 and endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council in April next year.

Event



# New APEN members

If you've recently joined APEN, welcome! You'll reap plenty of professional and personal rewards. If you've been in APEN for a few seasons now, be sure to say hello to the new members.

## Susan Maas



Susan Maas has been a contributor to the cotton industry since commencing work as an extension officer with Agri-Science Queensland in the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation in 2004. Based at Emerald, Qld, Susan is the National Cotton Extension Team lead for farm hygiene and disease. Susan was involved in the industry response to Solenopsis Mealy Bugs in early 2010.

Susan is a recent graduate of the second Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program and was recently awarded 2010 Bayer CropScience Chris Lehmann Trust Young Achiever of the Year Award. Susan has found working in a collaborative industry alongside world class researchers and innovative growers and agronomists incredibly rewarding.

Susan attended her first APEN activity in 2005 and has had APEN membership on the to-do-list ever since. Recently inspired by opportunities to meet with Dairy extension, Susan is looking forward to many more networking opportunities. Away from work, Susan and husband, Michael are kept busy with their children, Joseph and Sophie.

Welcome to these new members who have joined since last edition. We're glad to have you all on board.

<b>Melissa Henry</b>	<i>NSW</i>
<b>Heather Field</b>	<i>Vic</i>
<b>Benita Kelsall</b>	<i>Vic</i>
<b>Julie Williams</b>	<i>Vic</i>
<b>Rachael Ward</b>	<i>Vic</i>
<b>Kate Peake</b>	<i>NT</i>
<b>Marion Titterton</b>	<i>Tas</i>
<b>Michael Coleman</b>	<i>NSW</i>
<b>Nathan Heath</b>	<i>NSW</i>
<b>Liz Alexander</b>	<i>Qld</i>
<b>Rosie James</b>	<i>Tas</i>

## Julie Williams



Julie Williams is a Dairy Extension Officer in Farm Services Victoria, Department of Primary Industries. Her current work is managing the Farm Water Solutions project which aims to support farmers to improve the management of available water resources in a changing policy environment. The project concentrates on the issues for farms depending on water from unregulated sources such as streams, groundwater and rainfall captured into farm dams, and is in response to changes in rainfall patterns and the resulting water policies on accounting for and licensing of water.

Julie has been involved in a variety of DPI extension programs over the last 15 years including business planning, environmental management systems and group facilitation.

## Heather Field



Heather has worked with the Department of Primary Industries for 14 years in various roles and in a number of locations in both northern and southern Victoria. Heather spent the first 11 years of her career working with the horticultural industry promoting best practices in irrigation, soils and nutrient management.

More recently Heather has been working with the dryland grazing industry delivering whole farm planning workshops to farmers. She is currently working on a farm water solutions project. Working with service and training providers, water authorities, retailers and farm communities, Heather is developing up to date information and resources, building capability and designing and delivering extension programs to improve on farm water security.

## WHERE TO CONTACT APEN:

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Tracey Gianatti** (President)

Ph: 0427 344 722

president@apen.org.au

**Alison Medhurst**

(Vice-President and Vic RC)

Ph: 03 9210 9246

Alison.Medhurst@dpi.vic.gov.au

**Greg Mills** (Treasurer & NSW RC)

Ph 02 6750 6312

greg.mills@industry.nsw.gov.au

**Austin McLennan**

(Secretary & NT RC)

Ph 08 8973 9762

austin.mclennan@nt.gov.au

**Neale Price** (Past President)

Ph 07 3893 3358

nealeprice@carbongrazing.com.au

**Kate Charleston** (Editor)

Ph 07 4688 1314

kate.charleston@deedi.qld.gov.au

**Gerry Roberts** (Editor)

Ph 07 4658 4410

gerry.roberts@deedi.qld.gov.au

### Regional Coordinators

QUEENSLAND

**Derek Foster,**

Ph: 07 5448 5025

derek@fosterfacilitations.com

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**Lauren Thompson**

Ph 08 8373 2488

lauren@srhs.com.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**Kate Ambrose**

Ph: 08 9368 3650

kate.ambrose@agric.wa.gov.au

TASMANIA

**Sophie Folder**

Ph: 0407 367 909

sfolder@serve-ag.com.au

NEW ZEALAND/OVERSEAS

**Denise Bewsell,**

Ph: 64 3 321 8651

denise.bewsell@agresearch.co.nz

### CLUSTER COORDINATORS

Far North Queensland

**Peter Holden** Ph 07 4048 4600

peter.holden@deedi.qld.gov.au

SE Queensland & N NSW

**Warwick Waters**

Ph 07 4698 7839

watersw@internode.on.net

Western Queensland

**Gerry Roberts** Ph 07 4658 4410

gerry.roberts@deedi.qld.gov.au

Sydney

**Vacant**

Northern Territory

**Vacant**

SA

**Vacant**

ACT

**Vacant**

TAS

**Sally Murfet**

Ph 03 6257 5234

sally@ruralconnections.com.au

Melbourne

**Vacant**

Rutherglen (Victoria)

**Carole Hollier** Ph 02 6030 4500

carole.hollier@dpi.vic.gov.au

Western Australia (Agriculture)

**Pamela I'Anson** Ph 08 9690 2201

pamela.ianson@agric.wa.gov.au

Western Australia (NRM)

**Amrit Kendrick** Ph 08 9383 4438

amrit@westnet.com.au

Policy

**Greg Leach** (Qld)

Ph 07 3211 4404

gleach@seqcatchments.com.au

### APEN SECRETARIAT

Rosemary Currie, PO Box 1239,

WODONGA VIC 3689, AUSTRALIA

Ph: 02 6024 5349, Fax: 02 6056 1967, info@apen.org.au

**APEN Website** www.apen.org.au

**The Sixteenth Annual General Meeting of the  
Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (Inc) will be held on  
11 November 2010 by teleconference at 1pm EST.  
Details will be sent to members in the October monthly eBulletin.**

### Guidelines and deadlines

*Submissions should be made in MS Word 6.0 with minimal formatting. A portrait photograph of the author is required. All photographs, figures and/or tables ought to be provided as separate files (preferably TIF or JPEG; photos scanned at 300 dpi). Feature articles should be around 1000 words and minor articles 500 words. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted material to meet space restrictions. Letters to the editor or general items of news of interest to the network are welcome. Articles should be submitted at least four weeks prior to publication.*

*Preference is given to articles that are grounded in some form of project or event.*

**Editing: Kate Charleston and Gerry Roberts**

**Layout: Ross Tasker, Snap Printing Wodonga, Victoria.**

**Production management: Rosemary Currie, APEN Secretariat, Wodonga, Victoria.**

*Opinions expressed in ExtensionNet are not necessarily those of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (Inc.) unless otherwise stated.*

**Stories and photos (next edition) due to Editor 26 November 2010**