

The value of branding



Staff recruitment and your personal or farm brand could be more closely linked than you thought. Rural Directions director and owner, Brent Paterson, says brand awareness is key, and potential employees are likely to have done their homework by not only asking around but in the form of an online search these days. “One of the most important things for farmers is understanding your brand and protecting it, that goes for both farmers and employees. Develop your brand into something others want to be part of.”

Paterson says it is a competitive market and gone are the days of prospective shepherds lining up at the door. Having a clear brand proposition in the market includes focusing on what you excel at – it could be that you’re talented with dogs or have a strong interest in sheep genetics. People are looking for areas to leverage and excel in. He points out that 20 years ago you would never have seen branded shirts, caps or Swanndris. Now, many farms have logos and branded gear that staff wear with pride, which is a massive shift in becoming brand conscious.

Farms or farmers personally increasingly have social media accounts, where this branding is also on display. “It’s evolved to more of a visual sector. It used to be hidden down that back country road.

“People will, whether you like it or not, research you as part of due diligence, likely online. That’s where your brand is important. Who you work for is who your brand will be attached to.”

Promotion used to come in the form of old-fashioned credibility,

and that still exists, Paterson says, but there are new ways to promote yourself, and communication is critical. Communication used to be via an advertisement in the paper now, people live in an online space.

At its heart though, employment is a trade for cash and experience, and that part still needs to be done right, he says.

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As an employer, authenticity is key. “Kiwis love authenticity, they like warts and all. Recruitment used to be a sales document, now it’s what can you offer the employee, and vice versa. If you go for a job interview, ask how you can add value to the employer’s bottom line.”

While many farmers still struggle when it comes to promoting themselves, it’s worth keeping track of what you have done well. “I don’t think employees go somewhere expecting perfection, but be open about your aspirations.”

Paterson says it is worth investing time in the recruitment process to make sure you get the right person. Good employers don’t take shortcuts, they place value on human capital and they get a better outcome.

If you have a good relationship with

staff, and understand their goals, you are more likely to get a good notice period if they plan to move on and, chances are, it won’t have come as a surprise to you.

“If you get a three month notice period because you are part of their life, know their family and understand their aspirations and goals, like a good rugby coach, then you have time to go to the

market, right size the job and get the right person because you’re not rushed.”

Paterson says it is now well understood that using an human resources company, like Rural Directions, demonstrates that a farmer is willing to invest in the recruitment process, and get the right person. Paterson uses the C-suite analogy. C-suite is a widely used term referring to an organisation’s senior executives. Where a farmer used to be the Chief Operating Officer, they are now expected to also be the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Executive and the Chief Technology Officer (among other things).

“That’s the expectation of a farm manager now and that’s tough. It’s hard and demanding being a modern professional farmer. Sometimes the smart thing to do is outsource.” 