

Closer to the heart

LEO ARGENT

PEOPLE MAY forget what you said, or what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Such is the power of emotional intelligence, more commonly known as EQ (emotional quotient), which

inspired leadership coach Sita Perera to establish *Emerge and Transform*. In 2017, to create tailor-made programmes for the dairy and horticulture sector about how to front a team with confidence.

With over 20 years experience in business, education and communications, Perera believes

it isn't just technical know-how that determines whether a business leader soars or flops, but their ability to communicate with, influence and inspire others.

"We have seen many leaders that are in senior positions because of their technical know-how but are unable to get the

buy-in from their team because they lack human understanding. It's widely recognised these days that the soft skills are the most vital skills when it comes to leading a team."

The *Emerging Leaders Programme* was started in 2020 as a DairyNZ workplace design initiative and is now widely



Leadership coach Sita Perera set up *Emerge and Transform* in 2017.

used in the dairy and horticulture industries. It has also attracted attention from overseas, reinforcing the integral role interpersonal skills play in successful leadership.

The course appeals to a wide range of leaders from the dairy sector, with participants being farm managers, second in

Having previously taken many farming related courses, she was surprised that the course was about people rather than farms, but she still found the lessons learnt exceptional.

"I really enjoyed it. Most of the time we worked in a group and a few times just personally

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commands (2ICs), herd managers and others stepping up into leadership roles.

Focusing on building awareness and self-management skills on a personal and social level, plus the confidence to make decisions, participants consistently reported improved confidence, mindset, resilience and focus after completing the course. A feedback survey from 35 successful participants shows an average approval rating of 8.7 stars out of 10.

"We use bite-sized, app-based learning modules and peer-to-peer workshops to deliver the programme," Perera says. "Participants tell us it has helped them gain more confidence and taught them the tools needed to tackle situations such as resolving conflict and increasing communication effectiveness."

Claudia Rodriguez, currently 2IC at Rakata Island dairy farm in Southbridge, graduated from the course in March.

with Sita, who I could tell everything I was thinking of. Sometimes our mind can be in different places when we have any problem or any situation. Before, I couldn't manage that, but I learnt that from the course."

Since graduating from the course in May, Rodriguez has kept in touch with several of the others she met during the course, expanding their knowledge together. She also remains in contact with Perera.

Perera says that the programme bridges the gap in many businesses between recognising talent at a grassroots level and upskilling them into leaders.

It recognises the equal importance of personal development as well as skill development – a "win-win for retaining staff and grow people within the industry".

Applications are now open for the next intake for the *Emerging Leaders Programme* in November 2022.



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