

Participants empowered by leadership programme

Participants in a pilot course designed to support emerging leaders in the horticulture industry say it has boosted their confidence, as well as their skill base.

Kristine Walsh

Based in the Nelson region, the 23-strong pilot group for the Emerging Leaders Programme was a mix of supervisors, quality controllers, packhouse managers, foremen, research technicians and coolstore managers of varying ages and years of experience.

Of those, 22 completed the programme. Participants reported measurable improvement to their confidence, along with their ability to deal with conflict and "to have the hard conversations" that can arise in a workplace.

Emerge And Transform founder and coach, Sha Perera, initially developed the programme for the dairy sector and tweaked it for horticulture with the input of NZ Apples and Pears capability and development manager, Erin Simpson and GoHort's former team leader, Emma Boase. The trial for the three-month programme began in July 2021.

Sha says that, like others within the primary sector, the horticulture industry is facing big challenges due to labour shortages and it is vital that those working in leadership roles are empowered to work through the resulting changes.

"Emotions underpin all the decisions we make and are the number one driver of human behaviour," she says. "As such, the Emerging Leaders Programme centres on using emotional intelligence to help deal with challenges both in and out of work."

The programme is delivered using bite-sized, app-based learning modules and peer-to-peer workshops for learning and discussion which focus on creating "shifts" in mindset, relationships, perspective, focus, skillset and confidence.

"[It has helped me] to trust myself more and learn different ways of handling situations so I can make my team grow too," said one participant. Another said it had given them the "skills to stop managing and start leading".


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Participants liked the way the course was delivered, too - with individual modules being knocked off in just five to ten minutes a day.

Canterbury GoHort career progression manager, Sarah Cobbold, says she and her colleagues across the regions are now reaching out to growers and orchardists to see who would get most benefit from the next delivery of the programme.

"The programme addresses the gap that existed for upskilling emerging leaders at a grass roots level, who would flourish with further training," says Sarah. "It creates a win-win for employers and employees and serves to retain staff and grow people in the industry." ●




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