



COURSE 21

FINAL REPORT

BY

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Cotton Research and Development Corporation



Current role, changes and developments in and for your work that have occurred since your midterm report?

My name is Tobin Cherry, I work for Louis Dreyfus Commodities, primarily engaging with the cotton industry as Grower Services Manager. I am involved in purchasing of cotton for ginning and exporting in the Darling Downs area of Queensland.

I have a strong connection with the Australian agricultural industry and my passion for rural Australia is evident in my work ethic and direct involvement in helping farmers and the industry as a whole better improve their productivity, efficiencies and thought processes. I am always looking to use my skills to better enhance the cotton industry and agriculture in general.

There have been some major developments for the cotton industry more so than for my work in general. These changes being the implementation or roll out of Bolgard III cotton and the potential switch to HVI (mechanical classing) from manual classing. Both these developments are huge progressive steps for the cotton industry ones that require involvement from the whole supply chain within the cotton industry.

What was significant in terms of what you learnt about leadership through specific experiences throughout the Program? How has this shaped your leadership contribution to your work/community/industry?

Personal Awareness and Social Responsibility

Through the ARLP and the fantastic opportunity in the Kimberleys and Indonesia I am no doubt now more personally aware and understand the need for balance in my life and the value of family. Before the commencement of this course I was all about work and the bottom line (profitability) and always striving for better results. I now understand the need to be socially responsible and not always be a taker but be prepared to give back to my family and my community. Knowing myself better, my family better has adjusted my focus away from just work life to a more balanced fulfilling life that involves taking more responsibility in my local community and environment. My experience with homelessness in Sydney with the Oasis youth centre really opened my eyes to the bigger picture of leadership and the complexity associated with trying to make a difference with an issue that is so massive. We need to continue to help the youth of Australia and continue to make a difference no matter how small or large the situation. We need to meet the challenge of homelessness, asylum seekers & refugees head on and be prepared to make a difference. We need to influence all these people in a positive way and not get wound up in the red tape associated with the above situations. We need to leave a positive and inspiring footprint so that we can grow as a community and as a nation and embrace the existence of these complex situations and be prepared to change.

Value of Community/Togetherness

Through our overseas trip to Indonesia and furthermore our experience with the Islamic School & the Katata Co-Operative, I now firmly believe that success is inherently linked to commitment to establish an organization with a social conscience, one that works together with people from all backgrounds, with the aim of improving their lives and the place they call their home. Togetherness is thus the value which drives and shapes our corporate culture, encouraging respect towards one another and a thorough commitment to communities, customers, the environment, innovation, and quality. In fact, Togetherness not only maintains a healthy balance, but it strengthens our organizations, sustains and develops the communities in which we operate, and preserves the environment in a world to which we all belong. Togetherness also defines our approach to customer care, whereby our clients and customers are important to the success and are the focus and the core of our operations. Togetherness is ultimately reflected across the Indonesian communities as a whole and is lived and experienced daily in everything they do.

What actually defines a community for me is a sense of cohesiveness among a group of people. Communities serve a vital role in terms of offering camaraderie and acting as a support system. This could not have been more evident in our trip to the Kimberly and Indonesia which both relied heavily on togetherness and community. With society moving at a faster and more detached manner due to technology, busy schedules, it makes it harder to feel any sense of community. The idea of community may simply come down to supporting and interacting positively with other individuals who share a vested interest. Whether your vested interest is in the well-being of your neighbourhood or extends to the well-being of your global community.

Communication

The more time I spend in the agriculture industry and part of ARLP course 21 the more I learn the importance of communication as a leader. I think a team that is on the same page from the top of the chain all the way to the bottom is a more effective and happier team to be a part of. If employees are informed of what is going on with the company or industry they work in they feel more like part of the team and in turn are more likely to contribute, be more effective and the execution of the jobs at hand are performed at a more efficient rate.

Regardless of whether you're talking about business, politics, or sports, the best leaders are great communicators. Their values are clear and solid, and what they say promotes those values. Their teams admire them and follow their lead. Likewise, if we want our companies, communities and industries to reach new benchmarks of achievement, we must possess the ability to clearly communicate.

How have your Program experiences shaped your understanding of the key attributes for sound leadership? Try to provide details around why specific lessons were significant: what happened to create change? How did this help you gain a greater understanding of leadership?

Ethical Decision Making

Decision making can be hard enough but when we have to consider ethics and decision making we can tie ourselves up so tight we stop making decisions entirely. We have experienced ethical decision making whilst in the Kimberleys when travelling in our teams also in Canberra around our learnings of politics and finally our overseas trip to Indonesia. All of these aspects of the program involved difficult decision making whether it be for the betterment of the team, for the country or for community. Learning about ethical decision making has been significant to me as I feel that previously I have not taken all ethical aspects into account when trying to make the correct decision. I think being with C21 on this journey and being with a diverse group of people has opened my eyes to what is right or wrong but not only that they have taught me to think more critically about every situation that I now encounter.

Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs or political beliefs. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. Diversity was prevalent throughout the whole program including the diversity with the people on C21. We have a great range of diverse people all who have taught me something different whilst on this journey. This program has taught me to take everyone on their merits and respect their decisions, comments and values regardless if I believe they are right or wrong. I have a new found respect for having a diverse group of people when it comes to business and especially when it comes to difficult situations and difficult decision making.

Collaboration

In collaboration, there is an increase in the understanding of diverse perspectives. Through collaborative efforts of many we can accomplish more than just the efforts of an individual. As a group on this course we have had to collaborate as a group over many stages namely the Kimberlys but also within the course we have experienced many aspects of collaboration especially in Indonesia with the Katata Co Operative and also with the use of the Indonesian Universities in putting the trip together as they say two heads are better than one. All these experiences have taught me to trust and to involve my team more in the decision making processes of my company and value their diverse perspectives.

How have you, or do you intend to, apply what you have learnt in your workplace or community? Provide specific examples of what you will do new or differently. You might want to consider leadership development that is still to come ... What do you intend to do with your leadership?)

Show More Positive Attitude

I want to keep my team motivated towards the continued success of the company and the industry, and keep the energy levels up. The best way to do this is to maintain a positive attitude to all situation and scenarios that we encounter. My goal before I started the ARLP C21 was about patience and not flying off the handle in difficult situations. I think I am finally coming to grips with what it takes to be patient and composed but just as importantly the aspects and traits that are needed to show patience and composure. These traits I have outlined above and below including possessing a positive attitude.

Be More Creative

Some decisions are not always so clear and concise. I am forced at times to deviate from my usual course and make an on the spot decision. This is where creativity can prove to be vital. It is during these critical situations that my team will look to me for guidance and I may be forced to make a quick decision. As a leader, it's important to learn to think outside the box and to choose what the best thing to do is. Sometimes it's best to give all issues, scenarios and outcomes some thought, and even turn to my team for guidance. By utilizing all possible options and outcomes before making a rash decision, I can reach the end conclusion I and my team are aiming for.

Be more Intuitive

When leading a team through uncharted waters, there is no given directive on what to do. Everything is uncertain, and the higher the risk, the higher the pressure. That is where my natural intuition has to be initiated. When something unexpected occurs, or I am thrown into a new scenario, my team will look to me for guidance. Drawing on past experience is a good reflex, as is reaching out to my mentors for support. Eventually though, the tough decisions will be up to me to decide and I will need to depend on my gut instinct and leadership experiences for answers. Learning to trust myself and my team is as important as my team learning to trust me.

Inspire

Creating a business like my grain business Dalgrains Pty Ltd. often involves a bit of forecasting. Especially in the beginning stages of start-up of Dalgrains, inspiring my team to see the vision of the successes to come was vital. I need to make my team feel invested in the accomplishments of the company and make them feel like it is their own. Generating enthusiasm through the hard work me and my team are all putting in is so important. Being able to inspire my team is great for focusing on the future goals, but it is also important for the current issues. When we are all deep in work,

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morale is low, and energy levels are fading, I need to recognize that and continue to try to inspire and lead by example to keep morale and energy levels up and continue to instill a positive attitude. I need to continue to acknowledge the work that everyone has dedicated and commend the team on each of their efforts. It is my job to keep spirits up, and that begins with an appreciation for the hard work.

What is the value of the ARLP (to yourself and your sponsor) in developing effective leaders for rural, regional and remote Australia?

The ARLP has an integral part to play in developing effective and capable future leaders not only for myself personally but also the industries in which we all work. This course has made me a more rounded, controlled and composed as a leader and is and will continue to be a valued program for me and the cotton industry for years to come. I would recommend this course to anyone who wants to further their careers and see substantial growth in themselves as future leaders of rural and remote Australia. I cannot think of another program that creates the opportunities and experiences that the ARLP does.

Tobin Cherry
26th August, 2015



Graduates of ARLP Course 21, 2015