



Business Planning

James Walker, Camden Park, Longreach QLD

BACKGROUND:

A decision to grow their business led James and Manny Walker from the open plains of Longreach to the corporate offices of Brisbane's CBD to seek out specialist business planning expertise.

The couple own Camden Park, an 8000ha sheep, cattle and baled hay property. They had known for a long time that they wanted to grow their business, and sought out a professional to assist them, taking an innovative step of employing business mentor of 11 years Andrew Roberts to help them map out a path for the future.



Manny and James Walker in Brisbane

"I wanted some higher performance in our business. I approached city-based friends and colleagues to see what they were doing. The commonality was that they were all using business mentors and coaches and I thought 'great idea lets engage them with agriculture'," James said.

APPROACH:

Andrew Roberts has worked with some of Australia's biggest businesses and he applied that same knowledge and expertise to the Walker's farming operation.

He said having clear goals, both long term and short term, and a clear path on how to reach them was vital for any business to succeed.

"As a mentor and business coach one of the biggest problems I find producers have is that you are very busy doing the day-to-day jobs like fencing and stock work and unfortunately – and this is not anyone's fault – you are not taught how to create a strategic plan," Andrew said.

"What strategic planning does is pull you out of your business and put you in a different environment that allows you to stop and look at: Where am I going? What do I really want? And what do I need to do to get me from where I am, to where I want to be?"

“The process is much bigger than just looking at your business. It is also looking at what you want out of your life.

“We start ten years in the future, because if you can visualise that, you can map it all the way back. You can then bring depth into what you would like to achieve in the next 12 months, both in your business and in your life. Then you bring it back into some very high level detail to plan out the next 90 days.



James Walker and Andrew Roberts in Brisbane

STEPS:

Step 1: PRIORITISE

Get a clear idea of what you want in your personal life before thinking about your business, as it is the reason you work. Look at things like:

- relationships
- health
- family
- social priorities
- where you would like to travel
- how many hours you want to work each week
- how many holidays you want off a year

Then look at business goals.

Step 2: LOOK LONG TERM

Look 10 years and five years into the future and think about where you want to be.

Five years is a long way away so you don't have to be very specific. Get some general goals, some general milestones and get them down on paper

Step 3: PLAN SHORTER TERM MILESTONES

Ask yourself, what needs to happen in the next two or three years to ensure that those five years goals will manifest.

Planning for the next 12 months should be specific, looking in detail at income, holidays, time off and other aspects of your personal life. Then do the same for business. Look at what needs to be systemised, what needs to be automated, what needs to be delegated, what are the high value tasks?

What are the strategies that you really need to move your business forward?

The plan for the next 90 days should be extremely detailed.

Write it down. On one side of the page list the projects that you are going to work on. On the other side break down what you need to do to ensure they occur. Put a timeframe on it. Then put down how long it will take, what is the priority? Where should I start?

It can also be worth doing weekly and daily plans to help manage tasks and keep the process tracking along.



Wakefield Station, Longreach QLD

RESULTS

“Taking the time out to think about exactly where you want to go in the future will pay dividends for years to come,” said Andrew.

“Taking a day out to get clarity and alignment with long term goals brings enormous insight and enables you to achieve at a much higher level because it is simple - you know whether a task is taking you closer to a higher goal,” said James.

The way James Walker carries out his day-to-day operations on his farm has completely changed in the two months since he had first met with Andrew.

He now prioritises tasks comprehensively and strictly according to those which will most contribute towards his long term goals.

“With this process it becomes part of your psyche and part of your sub-conscious. It’s quite clear that you are actually working towards your goals.”

“It’s provided a clarity of vision we didn’t have before. If you have clarity, and an opportunity presents itself, you can make a decision very quickly. If you don’t that clarity then that decision making process is very difficult. If you know what you want and where you want to be, it is easier to see opportunities and act powerfully and immediately.”

Directly as a result of the strategic planning, the Walkers made a key decision to sell their 25,000ha Wakefield Station, a beautiful, improved property located south of Longreach which had been in the family for a very long time.

“Wakefield Station is a significantly developed property with 64 km of 75mm poly for livestock water and 40 new troughs constructed in the past 5 years. The recent fortunate season of 19 inches of rainfall left us with an abundance of grass.

“After baling 10,000 bales of hay and receiving rain over the harvested pasture early in 2013, a strategic opportunity presented itself to liquidate the asset and transfer the capital to another property class.

“Due to having distinct clarity with our long term goals, it was simple. In Queensland we had a lot of grass, nobody else did so we achieved a premium and sold the property in eight days from being listed. This move was strategically suitable to the investment cycle presented at the time and has placed us in a position of strength to reinvest when the timing is suitable”

“In the past six to eight weeks we have achieved more than we would have in two years. It has been quite incredible and I guess quite exhilarating to see what clarity and alignment with goals can allow you to achieve so quickly.”

MORE INFORMATION:

If you're interested in speaking from producer to producer about options for planning and coaching, or would like more information on business mentors and professional coaches, James's contact details are:

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