

Trade Mark Points to Leadership Issues

Peter Berg

As noted elsewhere in this issue, the notification that the Institute has been successful in obtaining registration of the trademarks "Registered...." and "...Recognised Forestry Consultant" is an important step forward for the Institute.

We should congratulate Bruce Manley for his perseverance on behalf of NZIF in this respect.

Associated with this achievement is another important aspect, that of responsibility for the proper use of these words. The Constitution identifies the mechanisms of registration, review, consideration of complaints about the performance of registered members and such other matters as use of these words might reasonably require.

For the public it signifies an existing capability on the part of practitioners, and a formal overview of practitioners by the Institute of at least a level provided by other equivalent professional organisations. For members it is tangible

recognition of capability to practice and of course requires close adherence to the codes and standards established from time to time by the Institute.

For both it represents another major step by the NZIF towards providing professional standards for New Zealand forestry, and is further evidence of the NZIF's ability to lead in this regard. Accountability for this rests with our Registration Board, who both maintain formal procedures and closely monitor other organisations to ensure standards are being met and maintained.

Members might well reflect upon the implications and cost of providing such leadership to both the forestry and wider community, and the benefits that flow back to them. I have no doubt that in both respects (ie cost and benefit) these will be significant, I also have no doubt that for the NZIF the roles are appropriate.

"Big Picture" Required by Leadership to Provide Wider View

Peter Clark

The pressure is on. Log prices are half what they were in 1993 in real US\$ terms and listed forestry company share prices are depressed. Log and timber prices are largely outside the control of any NZ forest owner. The only place to go to enhance shareholder returns in the short term is to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

This drive to reduce costs, together with on-going and substantial changes in forest ownership, have created a period of unprecedented disruption for forest management personnel in NZ. The widespread anecdotal evidence is that the main casualty has been a common sense of direction and inadequate staff resources to implement cost efficient process control over operations.

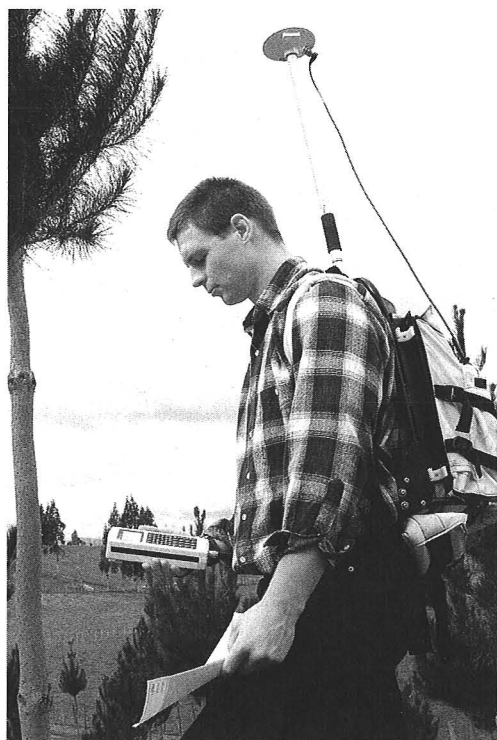
Improved technologies are enabling foresters to get more efficient at their work. We have excellent estate modelling tools, better breeds of trees, E-mail on the desk, laser rangefinders for inventory, real time log stocks data transmission, GIS, and wide area networks to name a few. We have people skilled in using all these tools. What we don't appear to have is leaders able to galvanise their staff into dedicated teams to solve problems and manage risks well. To me that is hardly surprising when staff are subject to

the uncertainties associated with constant restructuring. Why would anyone want to share information or take any initiative that could backfire when the boss's perception of his or her performance was so critical in the next restructure? Adoption of rapidly emerging new information technologies that are not yet bedded down and providing the promised efficiencies is adding to low morale in some quarters.

The forest industry needs a period of stability (and I'm talking 4 to 5 years) for management, staff and contractors to settle into understanding how they can best contribute to the overall company vision, and find their own ways to do it more efficiently. To get this stability would probably necessitate the dismissal of external management consultants and the relegation of Human Resources Departments to clerical support functions for line managers, rather than initiators of change.

Adequate staff resourcing must be provided for. The losses being experienced now through logistical problems associated with logging, log tracking, transport and ship loading are big. These types of losses are management issues, and they have an overall cost greater than the cost of well-trained and motivated staff working as a team to avoid them. Electronic data capture and in-

formation systems cannot completely replace staff. The systems we have now are a big leap forward in process control. On-going enhancements will give managers better information on which to base important decisions. But these tools are still useless to manage many of the issues picked up by staff



Courtesy PF Olsen Ltd

Future leadership is in the hands of our young people.

Peter Clark, Chief Executive Officer,
PF Olsen & Company Ltd.

on the ground. Until computers can measure worker fatigue, the skill and attitude of a MARVL plot worker, or customer body language, that will always be the case.

Big-picture forest management is essential. We are becoming more specialised and compartmentalised in our tasks but to optimise value, someone has to piece it all together in their brain. For very large estates this is an impossible task. There is a strong case to optimise management across all functions within regional geographic units, where all the forest dynamics, regulatory authority, community, customer and contractor interrelationships can be overseen by a single brain.

Professional foresters have a wide responsibility to their employers, their staff, the environment and the communities we live in. Forest owner Boards of Directors have a responsibility to enhance returns to shareholders. The two groups of stakeholders are not the same and conflicts are inevitable. Professional foresters must point out to their bosses the impacts of decisions on wider stakeholders so that the final decision is made in an informed way. This is a tough call for foresters who may perceive their next career move as subject to "not rocking the boat". The real leader will create an atmosphere of sufficient trust and support for individual initiatives that staff do not feel inhibited to voice opinions strongly. Yes we must all row in the same direction – but let's get the direction worked out first. A staff buy-in to that direction will get them rowing harder.

Forestry leadership skills in the near future will increasingly be measured in terms of improving our international competitiveness in a way that impacts positively on employees and the broader communities at home. The industry, under NZFOA coordination, did a fantastic job recently in dealing with the truck rollover risk. Other examples are the Forest Industries Council (FIC) initiatives on trade liberalisation within APEC/WTO, resolution of the APHIS case that was restricting access to US markets and NZFOA/FIC lobbying on RMA changes and roading reform. The next big leadership test will be ACC reform. Contractors will need all the help they can get to avoid paying crippling levies that could force some out of business.

Attention to community interests and education is the only sure route to public and political support for our industry. With increasing urbanisation in NZ there is less and less voter

support for any rural industry that is perceived as dangerous, environmentally damaging or not a good employer, irrespective of the economic contribution it may be making. There are groups of "en-lightened planet savers" out there who would have us close all pulp mills, stop clearfelling and be mandated to plant only native species if they had their way. Unless the forestry profession elects to provide teachers with the resources and information to counter these views, they and the next generation may be unduly influenced by the views of a vocal minority.

Forest Industries Training has demonstrated mature leadership in this regard by funding a web site for the upper secondary school Forestry Insights forestry module. NZFOA and FIC have also shown joint leadership by running forestry field tours for politicians during 1998. At Olsens we seek regular dialogue with local mayors and councillors and will be continuing to run field days that help their understanding of our industry.

According to FIC Chief Executive, James Griffiths, who visited US companies in January, "Forest owners in the US have learnt much about

educational materials." Timberlands West Coast has shown sound leadership in this regard. How do the rest of us rank and what part can we play to improve the public perception of our industry?

So what does the future hold for our graduate forestry students? There will always be good jobs for generalist foresters, but fewer of them. While times are tough in the job market, the first few years after graduation could be usefully spent by working in contract gangs and picking up on technical, health and safety, people management and business management skills.

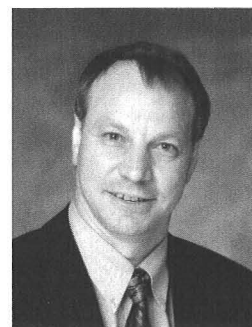
Working in a bush crew or running your own contracting business is as essential to setting up a career in forest management as the lecture room. Another option is overseas travel – also a valuable learning experience. If the student loan balance can stand it, a second degree with a technology focus would be valuable. As more of our logs get processed in NZ, the forest industry will need process engineers, environmental auditors, IT specialists, and chemical and mechanical engineers.

Foresters must work with communities and clients.



Courtesy PF Olsen Ltd

community relations since the Spotted Owl debate. Considerable resources are now applied to building strong relationships with communities affected by forestry activity. This extends to staff training in community relations, teacher training and provision of high quality teaching resources. Efforts are put into building partnership type relationships with labour unions and environmental NGOs through co-production of



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