



Ontario

Ontario Farm Products
Marketing Commission

Newsletter

May 2003 - Issue #102

Getting to Consensus: Boards Experiment with Technique

“Having the right kind of dialogue,” has a major impact on a board’s ability to get to consensus, according to negotiation experts Frank Handy and Elinor Whitmore.

The point of the Getting to Consensus workshop, led by Handy and Whitmore, was to experiment with a new process for boardroom discussions. A way that boards may avoid decision-diluting compromises and minimize rifts at the board table.

Think of a conscientious board member. They’ll spend time contemplating an issue the board is scheduled to discuss. That’s



Henry Bos of Chicken Farmers of Ontario with Tim Kudroch of Seed Corn Growers of Ontario



Ron Wooddisse & Isabel Dopta from Ontario Cattlemen's Association



Urs Kressibucher, Ian McKillop, Mike McMorris, Cathy Lennon

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good! They come to the meeting prepared. What happens next ... how a board uses that preparation ... was at the heart of the Getting to Consensus workshop.

All too often, the boardroom discussion can be an effort by one or more directors to convince their peers to endorse one opinion. The result is more persuasion than discussion. Handy and Whitmore said they see this phenomena frequently in their legal and consulting practice. They call it

“positional bargaining.” Common? Yes. Desirable? No.

Why? Positional bargaining wears people down. “It’s hard on the people rather than the problem,” says Elinor Whitmore. It results in watered-down

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Getting to Consensus: Boards Experiment with Technique

contrary to the reason why several minds are around the table. It's also contrary to what will motivate good directors to return to the board table, which is to contribute to good decisions through open-minded dialogue. The problem is we engage in positional bargain regularly in our private and business lives. We're used to that style. To break the mold you have to be able to



Paul Karges of Chicken Farmers of Ontario confers with Don Bonter from OFPMC

spot it. Secondly, you have to have an alternative that everyone is willing to try.

In Getting to Consensus, Handy and Whitmore promoted interest-based discussions. A simple overview of the concept suggests, first, you need to get everybody's interests on the table and then, secondly, collectively generate options. In an

"interest-based discussion, directors don't commit to a position" according to Handy, "until the discussion is completed." This is done to help participants avoid the pitfall of

digging into position too early in the discussion.

An interest-based approach to consensus building pays attention to the fabric of the board...relationships and communication. "Communication and relationships so often suffer in important discussions or negotiations," according to Frank Handy.

In the end, board solidarity and effectiveness are the big winners if a board can pattern its board discussions around the Getting to Consensus model. According to Handy and Whitmore, "people must have input into the process and the decision. A successful model for discussions is built on participation."

Frank Handy and Elinor Whitmore represent the Stitt Feld Handy Group from Toronto. ■

Governance Best Practices: A Seasoned Approach

June 17th is an opportunity for marketing boards to discuss governance issues with Mr. Jacques Levesque from Renaud Foster Management Consultants.

This workshop is part course and part discussion with a successful chair and CEO. It's an opportunity for frank dialogue based on firsthand experiences and references.

Prior to joining Renaud Foster, Levesque was the youngest president of

a Bell Canada company. Later, as CEO of Entourage, he guided his company from start-up to 2300 employees in under three years. His board governance experience includes both publicly traded companies and non-profit organizations.

Mr. Levesque's main interests and expertise lie with issues related to corporate governance, strategy development and implementation, leadership and business modeling. He draws on this expertise to provide both management consulting and executive coaching.

Workshop topics will be determined by the registered participants through a survey conducted at the end of May. Possible topics include: stakeholder communications; performance management; board protocol; structure and composition; risk and opportunities management; financial oversight; direction setting; and roles and responsibilities. ■

G o v e r n a n c e B e s t P r a c t i c e s

D i r e c t o r s ' W o r k s h o p S e r i e s

- June 17, 2003 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Sponsored by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission
- Presented for Marketing Board Directors, Senior Staff and Committee People
- \$45 fee includes lunch
- OMAF Conference Centre, 1 Stone Road West, Guelph
- Breakfast will be served 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

About the Workshop

"Governance Best Practices" is the second Director Workshop being offered by OFPMC in 2003.

This seminar will focus on the key elements that a board of directors must keep front and centre while governing a business organization. The session will be led by a board 'practitioner'. A person who knows the realities of boards firsthand.

"Governance Best Practices" can deliver valuable insights to both new directors and those who have enough experience to know exactly what they want to improve on their board, but want advice on how to make change happen.

Marketing Board/Association _____

Address _____

Registration Contact Person _____ Telephone # (____) _____

Directors and Senior Staff	Directors(✓)	Senior Staff(✓)	Phone #	Fax #
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
1.				
2.				

* Please make your cheque payable to **Hospitality Services, University of Guelph**
(your registration fee is applied directly to catering expenses for this seminar)

Forward registration and payment no later than June 6, 2003 to: Doreen Hardie, Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission,
1 Stone Road West, 5th Floor SE, Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2 Phone: (519) 826-3437 Fax: (519) 826-3400

Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission

Second Anniversary for Ontario's Newest Association



This spring marks the second anniversary of Ontario's newest representative association, the Ontario Ginseng Growers' Association. With 250 commercial growers located within Brant and Haldimand-Norfolk Counties, the industry typically harvests around \$70 million of root each year from 4,957 acres.

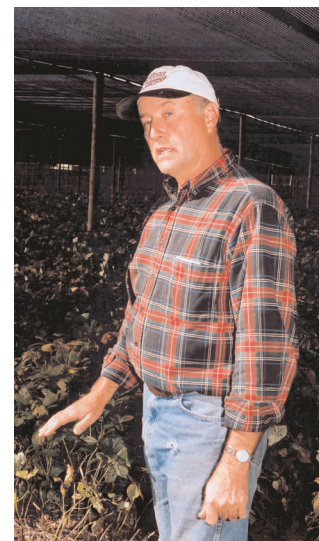
Frost damage in 2002 reduced last year's production by 25% and the impact may be felt for the next couple of years. The frost also sent seed into short supply driving its price up to \$100/lb from the norm of \$10/lb.

Preliminary, clinical studies at the University of Toronto have favourably linked ginseng to the stabilization of blood sugar in diabetics. As the study enters its next phase, the impact could open up a huge domestic market. Currently 95% of ginseng is exported to the Pacific Rim.

In recent months, the Ontario Ginseng Growers' Association moved forward with the Ontario Asparagus Growers' Marketing Board to hire a joint General Manager, Denton Hoffman, and share office space in a new Simcoe location. ■



Commission members and staff toured the ginseng farm of Bill Huffman during harvest last fall



Upcoming Annual Meetings and Conventions 2003

Date	Organization	Location	Telephone
June 8 - 10	Ontario Dairy Council - Annual Meeting	Huntsville	(905) 542-3620
June 13	Ontario Flour Millers Association - Annual Meeting	Grand Bend	(519) 653-6267
June 23 - 24	Ontario Agri-Business Association - Grain Conference	Huntsville	(519) 822-3004
July 10	Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board - Annual Meeting	Delhi	(519) 842-3661
August 26	Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board - Annual Meeting	Stratford	(519) 767-6537
Sept. 3 - 4	Ontario Agri-Business Association - Fertilizer Conference	Alliston	(519) 822-3004
Oct. 26-28	Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers - Grocery Innovations Canada	Toronto	(416) 492-2311

This information is provided strictly for our readers' convenience. Please note that organizations may restrict attendance to some or all of their agenda items. Please contact each organization for more information on programs, agenda items open to non-members, and location. While the Commission endeavours to ensure this information is correct, readers are responsible for confirming its accuracy with individual organizations before making any plans to attend.

Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission

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For more information about this newsletter please email us at graham.howe@omaf.gov.on.ca

This newsletter is available on our website <www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/farmproducts/index.html>

