

# FARM BUSINESS FACT SHEET

## FAMILY AND BUSINESS

## Making it work with different personalities

**We are all different. Understanding personality types within your family and business can assist considerably in achieving effective communication and management.**

You can avoid a storm by valuing and acknowledging the contribution different personalities make to the group.



### Key points

- Your personality will affect how you communicate with people and how you manage your farm
- By understanding and 'flexing' your personality, you can make better decisions
- Different personalities excel at different things. Create a team with a mix of personalities for optimum farm performance

### PERSONALITY TYPES (IN A NUTSHELL)

Our personality type influences the way we learn, make decisions, organise ourselves and communicate with others. Everyone is different.

There is some debate about what shapes our personality type and while the percentages vary, roughly, our personality is shaped 40 per cent by genetics, 40 per cent by our formative years (up to 14 years) and 20 per cent by socialisation. So, yes, we can change our personality for other people, but

generally we are who we are. However, we can alter how we react to things and communicate with other people.

***Imagine if we could better understand personalities, and use that knowledge to work better with the people around us!***

Before we look at the different personalities, it is important to remember there is no good or bad personality; it's about recognising the differences and understanding how this can affect our behaviour and decisions.

## WHAT IS MY PERSONALITY?

There are ways we can determine our personality type. Below are four of the major personality types, created from a modified version of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

*Take the time to work out which personality type you are, and those of your other family members. Read the descriptions below, have a look at Figure 1, and ask fellow team members to help you identify your personality style. (A full questionnaire is available in the GRDC Grain and Graze Farm Decision Making booklet, pages 29–32.)*

### Pioneers

'Pioneers' will often be the first in the district to try something new, and are good at generating new ideas. They enjoy the start-up phase of a project, but have to concentrate to sustain interest once the project is going.

#### STRENGTHS

- Problem solving.
- Strategic planning.
- Understanding complex systems.
- Innovators of new technology.

#### WEAKNESSES

- Failing to focus on the needs of other people because they are too wrapped-up in the next new thing.

### Team Builders

'Team Builders' tend to focus on the needs of a business or community and make great community leaders. They are genuine people with integrity. They aim to reach their goals without compromising their personal code of ethics. They recognise the differences between genders and work to accommodate these. They support inclusive decision

making and firmly believe the strength of the business lies in its people.

#### STRENGTHS

- Developing a vision and empowering others to join them.
- They avoid conflict and strive for harmony.

#### WEAKNESSES

- Team builders may ignore problems in the hope they will go away.

### Dependables

'Dependables' are careful and reliable. They seek social stability, order, security and loyalty. They value the industry they are in and like the sense of belonging. They will take on new ideas once they have been tried and tested and a guideline developed (usually by the Pioneers). They dislike change for change's sake.

#### STRENGTHS

- Attention to detail.
- Reliability, dependability.
- Capacity to work to a deadline.

#### WEAKNESSES

- Slow to change and take on new ideas, they like to see the evidence.
- Do not like to discuss the hard decisions that will mean major change (such as farm transition and succession).

### Doers

'Doers' value the here and now and get things done. They are at their best in a crisis, have a good sense of timing, and do not mind taking risks. They will do whatever works for a quick and effective

payoff, and prefer facts to theories and abstracts. Doers are often tempted to do it now and fix the details later.

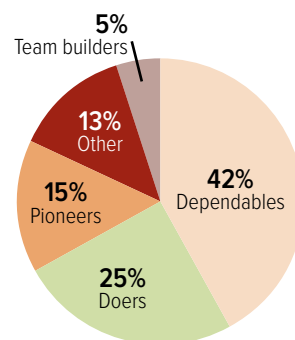
#### STRENGTHS

- Good with detail, realistic, open minded and fairly tolerant.

#### WEAKNESSES

- Impatient with theories and abstractions.
  - Do not tend to finish tasks completely, 'just-enough' to make it work.
- Studies estimate that about 67 per cent of Australian farmers are Doers or Dependables.

**FIGURE 2 THE PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES IN THE AUSTRALIAN FARMING COMMUNITY**



SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM STRACHAN, 2011

*Teams, families and businesses work well with a mix of personality types and can function extremely well when these differences are valued and acknowledged for the contribution they make to the group.*

**FIGURE 1 DETERMINING YOUR PERSONALITY STYLE.**

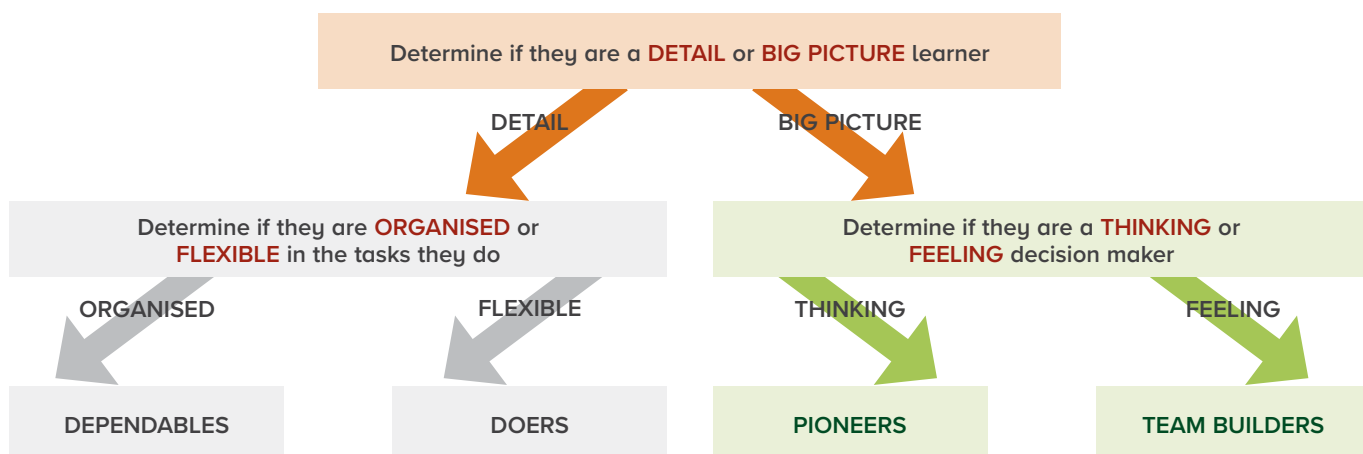




PHOTO: LIZ WELLS

## Dependables

- Give them clear instructions and guidelines or processes for each task.
- They have great attention to detail and will ensure tasks are done correctly.
- They need purpose in the task, so link the tasks to the big-picture or overall farm goal.
- Let them test things on a small scale to see if it works before putting it in place over the whole farm.
- Structure on-farm change (or new tasks) incrementally.
- Reflect on each task and discuss with them how it went.

### JOBS THEY LIKE

- Give them tasks and let them complete them to their satisfaction.
- They enjoy jobs that are practical and those that appear repetitive to other personality types (for example, seeding, shearing, harvest, hay making, spraying, etc.).
- They are often good with machinery maintenance and/or weed control strategies.
- They tend to be excellent bookkeepers and work health and safety officers.
- Any jobs where guidelines or policies are provided.

## Doers

- Give them clear instructions and guidelines or processes for each task (like the Dependables).
- They have great attention to detail and will ensure tasks are done correctly (like the Dependables).
- They need purpose in the task, so link the tasks to the big-picture or overall farm goal (like the Dependables).
- Give them 'bolder' tasks, make them sound a bit risky.
- They enjoy paddock-scale trials; "it works or it doesn't".
- Encourage them to tell their story.
- Discuss what else on the farm may need to change and support them to make that change.
- Let them visit other farmers and join a farm management discussion group.

### JOBS THEY LIKE

- They are task oriented, but relish finding new ways to make it happen.
- "It's about right" rather than completely finished.
- They are good in times of crisis, rising to the challenge and finding ways to keep going.
- They work well under the pressure of busy times on the farm.
- Give them tasks that are time-critical.

Understanding that different personalities can excel at different things can help to optimise farm performance.

## WORKING WITH DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES

By changing your language, you can direct your message to the different personalities of the team.

### Pioneers

- Prefer to see the bigger goals or outcomes first.
- Link the task with the purpose before outlining the task.
- Enjoy learning new things and working out things for themselves.
- Talk in big-picture ideas, not details.
- Explain the problem to them, not the solution (let them find the solution).
- They do not like to be given instructions and told to follow them.
- Their strength is in designing and developing the process.

### JOBS THEY LIKE

- Planning – long-term and seasonal.
- Investigating and implementing new technologies (for example, GPS, new tractor, farm management computer program). Or designing new ways of doing things.

### Team Builders

- Talk in big-picture ideas, not details (like the Pioneer team members).
- Link the task with the purpose before outlining the task (like the Pioneer team members).
- Enjoy learning new things and working out things for themselves (like the Pioneer team members).
- Explain the moral and ethical dimensions of the task.
- Include other people in the task, especially in the decision-making process.
- Talk about the people and environmental dimensions of the task.
- Explain the problem to them, not the solution (let them find the solution).

### JOBS THEY LIKE

- Great people managers. They make sure staff and family members are happy working in the business.
- Environmental managers for the business.
- Jobs with other people (including meetings, farm management discussion groups).

## IMPROVING ON-FARM MANAGEMENT

### Ways in which understanding personality can improve on-farm management

#### Team Builders

- Get someone on the team who likes detail to make sure the i's are dotted and the t's crossed.
- Continue to revisit the fundamentals of the farming business, and get them right.
- Get clarity around the beliefs, goals and values of those working in the business.
- Discuss your business's transfer – and your retirement plans.

#### Pioneers

- Get someone on your team that is good at managing and rewarding people (as inadvertently you can make people feel unloved).
- Get people/technologies to help cope with the detail as it will help reduce possible failures that occur because of the lack of attention to detail.

#### Dependables

- Interact with people to feed in the new ideas and challenge your long-term direction (e.g. attend events, field days).
- Be prepared to challenge your rules-of-thumb (because your decisions tend

to be intuition-based).

#### Doers

- Surround yourself with people and technologies that keep you on track, especially around finishing off jobs and timing of tasks (partners, advisers and Dependables are good at that).
- Take time out to look at the big picture (facilitated sessions, advisory boards, travel).
- Say 'NO'.

Your personality will affect the way the farm is managed. By recognising our personality, we can flex the way we communicate and approach tasks. We can also partner with other personalities to make sure the timely tasks are done (and everyone is happy).

### Useful resources

**GRDC Grain & Graze: Farm Decision Making – The interaction of personality, farm business and risk to make more informed decisions (2015).** <https://grdc.com.au/Resources/Publications/2016/04/Farm-decision-making>

**Understanding farmer decision making and adoption behaviour** – <https://grdc.com.au/Research-and-Development/GRDC-Update-Papers/2013/02/Understanding-farmer-decision-making-and-adoption-behaviour>

**GRDC Fact Sheet: Farm Business Management: Making effective business decisions** – <https://grdc.com.au/Resources/Factsheets/2013/07/ORM-FBM-Making-effective-business-decisions>

### Project code

ORM00017

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How can we make better decisions in our farm business?

Our personality type will affect how we make decisions. Each personality type has a preferred style of operation and can bring different ideas into the decision-making process. Most farmers have the Dependable or Doer personality style. Doers like to 'get the job done', while Dependables rely on trusted processes to make decisions. You need to mix these personalities with the Team Builders (who make sure everyone is happy) and the Pioneers (always first to take on new ideas) to ensure business decisions consider all possible aspects.

### I find it hard to get the best out of some people – what can I do?

By recognising that everyone has a different personality, you can change the way you communicate with people to get the best out of them. For example, if you recognise a colleague is a Dependable, work with them from a base of knowledge (what they do now) to influence change. If they are a Doer, talk in facts (not theories); give them the reason for the change.

Content prepared and edited by ORM on behalf of the GRDC – western region.  
Acknowledgement: Danielle England, Jeanette Long and Cam Nicholson.

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