



## Plant & Food Research

*Case study*

***The response from the group was consistently positive, people were delighted to be offered individualised career development attention.***

*Mark McSherry, OD Leader*



# Plant & Food Research

## Engaging critical talent case study

**800**  
*Number of employees*

**Science and technology**  
*Industry vertical*

**Global**  
*Region*

**Engage critical talent**  
*Solution basis*

**2015**  
*Year joined Fuel50*

Plant & Food Research is a New Zealand-based science company providing research and development that adds value to fruit, vegetable, crop and food products.

**With over 800 people based at sites globally, at the heart of Plant & Food Research is a goal to underpin the growth of plant and marine-based industry through the successful application and commercialisation of research-based innovation.**

A review of Plant & Food's workforce demographics demonstrated that a significant proportion of their senior science leaders can be expected to transition to retirement within the next decade. It became critical to develop people at the organisation's mid-level, so that they are well prepared for more senior roles now and ensure they have the leadership capabilities required for the future.

Understanding and articulating personal ambitions, desires and possible career pathways is typically challenging for people, requiring a shift in thinking from the immediacy of day-to-day activities to a one that is more holistic, complex and longer term.

On piloting Fuel50, Plant & Food have found that it served as an excellent platform for individual coaching, with people using their coaching sessions to explore and better understand their values, drivers and aspirations.

**"It became critical to develop people at the organisation's mid-level, so that they are well prepared for more senior roles now and ensure they have the leadership capabilities required for the future."**



## Overview of the initiative

Plant & Food undertook this critical talent project with the following objectives in mind:

1. To assist each person to gain greater clarity about their career desires, ambition, and possible career pathways.
2. For each person to create a development plan that aligns with career ambition, their career values, and greatest sources of motivation for their work.
3. To ensure that each persons' development experiences continue to be robust, and best prepare them for the future.
4. For each of the group to increase their sense of connection with the organisation.

The process started with a meeting and an invitation to complete the Fuel50 on-line career development tool. This was followed by a second meeting where the Fuel50 analysis was used as a basis for an in-depth career coaching discussion.

During this coaching session people began to understand the connection between their Fuel50 Personal Values, Career Values and primary Motivators and gain clarity on how they can work to increase the alignment between the things they hold important.

A photograph of a man and a woman in high-visibility yellow vests and dark jackets, smiling and looking towards the camera. They are outdoors, possibly in a field or orchard, with trees and foliage in the background.

***Identified a group of  
48 high potential people***

*People who are important  
to us now, and will only  
become more so in the  
future...*

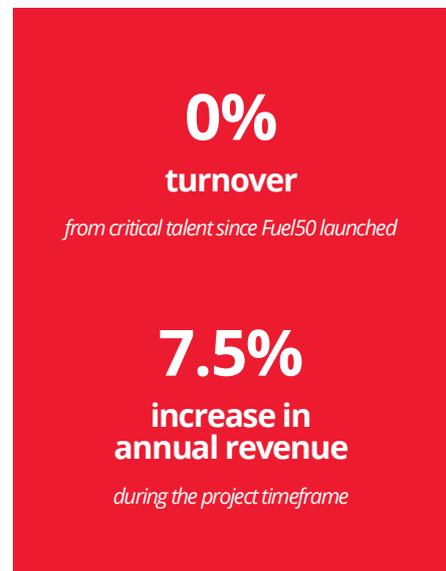


## The results

The response from the group was consistently positive, people were delighted to be offered individualised career development attention.

A common outcome for the group was a better understanding of how their work links to their Values and Motivators. For many there has been a strong validation of career choice, and further understanding that Plant & Food Research provides the best possible environment for them to realise what is important to them in their career.

After coaching, many people were motivated to revisit their development plans. For most of the group, an approach based on aligning development activities with career values and motivators has resonated strongly.



**“The response from the group was consistently positive, people were delighted to be offered individualised career development attention.”**

People found benefit in working through how their contributions and priorities in terms of meaningful work could be aligned to Plant & Food Research’s strategic plan and how they could align some of their work to their important motivators. The focus then shifted to their future career pathway at Plant & Food Research.

As the coaching initiative has progressed, it has confirmed initial expectations that the identified group would see this as an important initiative, and they have found it very useful to consider the ‘bigger picture’ in terms of their career.

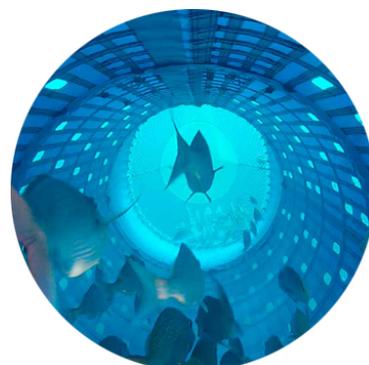
Within the identified group there have been instances where a manager and a direct report have both completed the career tool and coaching, and have decided to share their insights on career values and motivators with each other. These have proved to be positive experiences, with each party supporting the other as they review their career development, based around a shared understanding of the coaching tool and associated concepts.

The aggregate data of this group also provided Plant & Food with very interesting high level data on the group. This included understanding Leader / Expert pathways, relocation desires, acceleration needs and commonly shared Fuel50 Career Values and Motivators.



***First discussion***

- Invitation to use the career tool
- 46 out of 48 said **yes**
- Delighted to be involved



***Coaching***

- 90-120mins with each person
- Exploring how work connects and aligns to personal values, career values and motivators



***Involving managers***

- By invitation from participant
- Powerful when managers and direct reports participate fully



***Partnered development***

- Leading to values-based development
- Aligned to our strengths-based approach



## Next steps

The next stage of the project will see Plant & Food integrate Science Group Leaders and General Managers into the relevant individual's development efforts.

The most effective way to do this is to invite them to complete their Fuel50 Personal Values, Career Values and Motivators so that they can better understand the career insights their direct reports have gained. We expect that this will create further momentum, with each level of leadership involved in the development of what is a key group of people for the future of Plant & Food Research.

Further work with the identified group will also involve group coaching around generic leadership roles (Science Group Leader, Team Leader or Programme Leader) to foster supportive development networks.

*My Career analysis online has helped me develop my own understanding about my personal drivers and then build a meaningful development plan for myself. That has led me to question my people a lot more closely about what they add to their plans, to make sure it's meaningful to them. If they add a future job role to their plan, I am taking the time to explore "is this something you actually care about or is it just something you think you should put down on your plan?"*

**Development planning**  
**Now more aligned with**  
**career values and**  
**motivators.**

*Creating opportunities to do  
work that has the greatest  
meaning...*