

# Visual Management

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# E-learning materials delivered under R4D

## Lean Management



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Welcome to this e-learning module on Visual Management. This module will provide a high-level introduction to Visual Management. You will learn about the power of visual management on your farm. You will discover how to visualise your farm's and team's critical information and data to improve communication, decision making, and drive actions. This lean tool can transform your farm business, team and performance.

Key learning objectives:

- Discover what Visual Management is and why it is so important
- Understand what Visual Management looks like on farm
- Discover the benefits Visual Management has for your farm
- Learn about the concept of Visual Management Boards
- Discover the 3 Rules for Visual Management Boards
- Understand why Visual Management Boards are so fundamental to any farm business
- Understand how to implement Visual Management Boards on your farm
- Learn about the criteria to make Visual Management Boards effective

Visual Management is all around us. It is an inherent part of our lives. It helps us to make immediate decisions about certain actions or situations and to navigate through our days as efficiently as possible without chaos and confusion. It makes life simple and easy and it prevents unnecessary communication and rework.

Examples of Visual Management can be seen everywhere: in our supermarkets, at our schools, on our roads, at restaurants, on our flights or at airports, at our petrol stations and even in our homes. Examples of visualisation include:

- Road signs such as stop, give way, motorway number
- Street signs telling us street name/ house number
- Traffic lights telling us when to stop or go
- Toilet signs
- Seat numbers on a plane or train
- Blue/red colours to tell us which water tap is cold or hot
- Labels to tell us which fuel is diesel or petrol
- Emergency signs showing exits
- Supermarket signs telling us which aisle contains which items
- Labels on food telling us what ingredients are in the food and expiry dates



It is all around us

Visual Management is an inherent part of our lives – it is all around us.  
It helps us to make immediate decisions.



**Good Visual Management needs no interpretation and immediately provokes the correct reaction!**

Imagine how difficult everyday life would be if we had no Visual Management to help us? If there were no labels at supermarkets – how difficult would it be to find the grocery items you are searching for? If there were no numbers on a plane seat – how could you find the right seat or even flight departure gate? If there were no road signs – how could you easily find an address you are driving to? Life would be unnecessarily difficult. It would be frustrating and chaotic.

**NO VISUAL MANAGEMENT = CHAOS**

If you can't imagine living your everyday life without visual management to understand what's going on... how can you run your farm without it?



Our farms are fantastic work environments for Visual Management. There are multiple examples of Visual Management that already exist on many of our farms and plenty of other areas where we could benefit from Visual Management. This Visual Management makes our farms easier to understand. It helps us to immediately take actions we need and reduces our frustration and inefficiencies. If you have a team or new people to your farm it also makes it easier to train them and ensure they can operate effectively on your farm. Examples of Visual Management on farm include:

- Marking antibiotic cows red
- Labels on our plant control panels so we know what button is for what
- Labels on our taps and pipes so we can immediately see which tap is for what
- Cow ID tags and Nait tags
- Numbers on our calf pens to help with sorting and managing calves
- Signs on our Vats to clearly indicate which Vat contains what
- Labels on our pumps to identify which pump is operating what
- Safety signs to indicate safety requirements
- Warning signs for chemicals
- Paddock numbers
- Labels on animal medications



# Examples on farm





The other part of Visual Management is the **visual management of information** using a lean system called Visual Management Boards. Visual Management Boards are essentially a central wall, whiteboard or other area that is used to visually display critical information needed to run your farm. These boards or visual areas are used for discussions, decisions, meetings, and to drive actions. Some of the information that should be displayed includes plans, priorities, metrics, problems and actions.

## **VISUAL MANAGEMENT BOARD = RESULTS**

Around 65% of people are visual learners – this means they need to **SEE** information in order to retain it. This reinforces the absolute need of Visual Management of information on any farm. Whether you are a sole operator or a farm with a team, most of us simply cannot function without visual management. It helps us to structure our thoughts, decisions and priorities easily, quickly and more effectively, using real time data, leading to better management of our business and team if you have one.

**Using Visual Management Boards on your farm can transform your farm results. It is an extremely powerful lean tool.**



Visual Management Boards are highly valuable, but they must be used correctly and set up well. There are 3 rules to a good Visual Management board:

**1. Be clear and visual (*crystal clear to anyone!*)**

This means your boards or information needs to be very easily understood by anyone at a glance.

**2. The 3 second rule (*Grasp the situation in 3 seconds*)**

Anyone should be able to understand the current status of your farm in 3 seconds. That is how visual it must be – in 3 seconds they can understand what is the target condition, what is the actual condition, what is the gap and what are the actions, problems needing attention.

**3. Be live and updated**

Your board must always reflect the latest condition – that means it must always have the most recent, relevant and accurate information, data and status on it. This ensures that you are always using current, real-time information to communicate, make decisions, and prioritise.

Visual Management Boards or the visualisation of information is one of the most powerful lean tools your farm should implement. Here are just some of the benefits this tool will have for you, your farm and your staff:

## OWNER OPERATOR FARM

- Improved focus & clarity
- Reduced stress/ clutter in head
- Improved decision making
- Better transparency
- Better time management
- Better organisation and planning
- Better control of business
- Improved prioritisation
- Ability to hand over job to others
- Enables time off/ holidays

## FARM WITH TEAM/ STAFF

- Improved communication
- Aligned team with common focus/ goals
- Clear priorities for everyone
- Engaged team
- Better understanding of business
- Transparency
- Clear actions and responsibilities
- Improved productivity
- Ownership/ accountability of actions
- Better problem solving and decision making



Visual Management Boards have been used on our farm for several years. They have significantly improved our team communication, team engagement, our focus, our productivity, our problem solving and our ability to make more informed, accurate decisions and actions. They are a core part of how we manage our farm business and they provide complete transparency around our operation.

We use visual management boards alongside our technology platforms for our team and management communication, our animal health management and our maintenance management.

Regardless of how much technology and electronic systems for capturing data you have on your farm – do not underestimate the power of visualising this information on a wall. It is more powerful than people looking into a screen. Our farm is highly technology focused – we use some very sophisticated technology on our cows, equipment and dairy parlour to capture information on cows, animal health, feed, grazing, pasture and more 24/7. Despite this we still utilise our visual boards as our key central management and communication tool.



# Farm examples

Clockwise from left to bottom right: one of our farm's visual management boards; our farm visualises graphs for key metrics showing target line and actual trends weekly; example of another farm's visual board; visual board for calf management





# What information can you visualise?

Farms have a lot of important information that usually sits inside someone's head that would benefit from being visualised:

- Safety risks/ incidents
- Key Metrics
- Production
- Quality
- Maintenance required
- Materials/ supplies needed
- Grazing plans
- Feed plans
- Animal treatments/ health status
- Problems/ risks
- Priorities
- Actions for day/ week
- Holiday plan/ leave
- Special projects
- Calving information
- Mating information

Visual Management boards are extremely powerful but they must be developed and used in the right way. Here are some key criteria for making your visual board a successful farm management tool:

1. If you have a team, involve them in developing the board
2. Make the board relevant – only display information that is used
3. If you have staff ensure Roles & Responsibilities around managing the board are clear
4. Define how the board will be updated - the frequency, process, and who will do it (if there is more than one person you can use a rotating roster)
5. Ensure the information on your board is always live and updated (real time)
6. Make it VISUAL – use graphs, pictures, colour
7. **KEEP IT SIMPLE** – don't overcomplicate it, do what you can to make a start - it doesn't have to be perfect first time as it will evolve over time
8. **ACTIONS!!! & FOLLOW UP** – ensure you are tracking actions to get things done
9. **USE IT** – set a clear process around using the board and information regularly for example by having a set meeting around it every Monday morning. If you have a team, all team meetings should be run around this board, and discussions/ decisions/ planning should take place here too



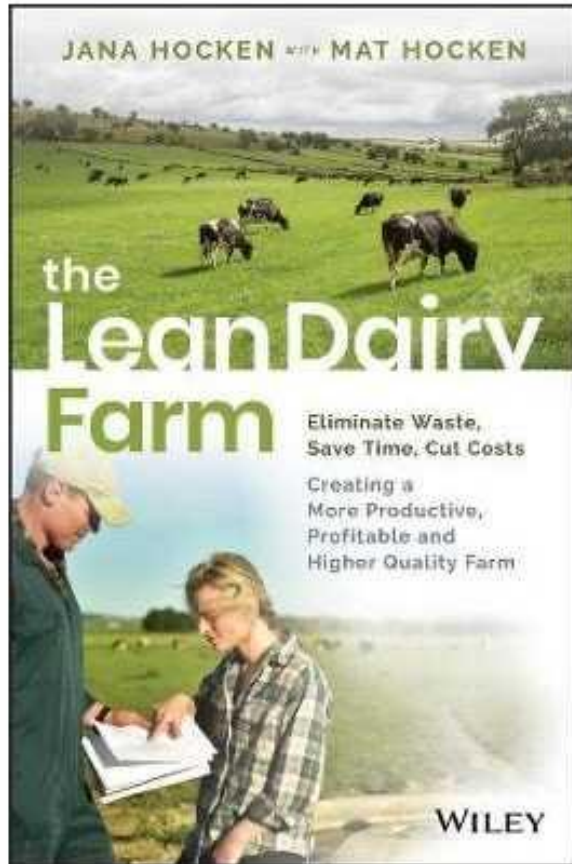
- Visual Management is an inherent part of our lives – we need it
- Good visual management needs no interpretation
- It helps us to visualise important information so that we can make informed decisions and take actions quickly and accurately
- It helps to create a transparent farm
- Visual Management boards help farmers and their staff to have better clarity of their farm situation and improves communication, focus, prioritisation, decision making and planning
- Visual management achieves better results and performance for your farm
- **Remember it's a management system – not just a board!**
- **If you have a team your Visual Management Board should be owned by all the team members**



1. Discuss Visual Management with your family or staff
2. What benefits could this tool have for your farm business?
3. Identify at least 3 things on your farm that you could visualise better
4. Implement at least 3 forms of visualisation on your farm
5. Think about what information you currently have in your head
6. What information would benefit from being visualised?
7. Design and set up a Visual Management Board
8. Start to record information on your board
9. Agree the system for updating and reviewing your board including team meetings and frequency



# Do you want to know more?



If you are inspired to implement Lean management on your farm, there are many additional resources you can use including our book The Lean Dairy Farm which is a practical step by step guide to implementation of several key lean tools. You can also visit our website for more comprehensive online training, videos, examples and other helpful resources.

Visit us at [www.leanfarm.nz](http://www.leanfarm.nz)



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Thank you