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TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE FARM MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY  
A FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING BEHAVIOURIAL CHANGE

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## ABSTRACT

A commercial management consultancy service (M<sup>c</sup>SS) is used by horticultural consultants to support kiwifruit grower clients' needs in the Bay of Plenty. This commercial environment provided an opportunity to explore an action research application that attempted to enhance consultancy services by integrating cognitive analyses with conventional technical and financial services provided by the consultant. Case studies, involving the elicitation and spatial representation of concepts associated with profitable kiwifruit management, were used to analyse modelled changes in clients' attitudes and beliefs. Objectives were defined using preliminary information on clients' attitudes, beliefs and learning styles. Change strategies, consistent with clients' objectives, were compiled by the client and consultant. Attitudes and beliefs were predicted to move in accordance with clients' unique objectives. Case study observations confirmed consultants can identify and manage clients' attitudes and beliefs towards predicted outcomes using action research. Consultants were expected to become more aligned with profitable kiwifruit management, following the use of cognitive information to design client change strategies. However, consultants associated themselves less with kiwifruit management and believed their input to client management systems decreased in value over the period of the study. Two dimensional graphs, representing changes in overall and evaluative attitudes and principal beliefs, provided more useful images of cognitive changes than multidimensional maps. Recommended developments to MSS include completion of learning style inventories and pairwise comparison questionnaires by clients during needs analyses. Pairwise comparisons could also assist service evaluation procedures. Job satisfaction was identified as a significant concept to clients and consultants during the study. Further studies of job satisfaction could explore the development of an index to predict grower stability within the industry. Clients and consultants believed the use of a whole farm/systems approach became a more critical input to profitable kiwifruit management. Consequently, undergraduates considering a consultancy career, will benefit from using a systems approach in their farm management studies.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRI - Crown Research Institute

LSI - Learning Style Inventory

MAFTech - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries  
(Technology)

MBO - Management by Objectives

MCS - Management Consultancy Services

MDA - Multidimensional Analysis

MSS - Management Support Services

NZKMB - New Zealand Kiwifruit Marketing Board