



Peracto Regional Leader (Tasmania) Suzanne Harper incorporates new technology in the field.

It is a simple fact that information technology has literally changed the way we work and live.

From home and travel, to business and leisure – the advent and extraordinary growth of the sector and its relevance to daily lives is all consuming.

We have moved from Commodore 64s to smartphones; facsimiles to emails; and everyone is now within reach via mobile phones.

IT has sparked innovation across virtually every industry, including agriculture.

IT developers are imagining a world in which everyone involved in farming – from producers to financial advisers – are accessing the same data on the same platforms.

That collaborative approach has been missing in the past according to Matt Powell, founder and chief technical officer of Agworld.

Traditionally, farm data was recorded with different methods by various stakeholders with very little opportunity or means to share information via common avenues.

“It’s about creating applications which are easy to use, practical and reliable in the field,” he said.

“There has been a lot of software brought to farmers – our focus is on a collaborative approach.

“The real focus in the last two to three years has been on field tools - or mobile technology - and how best to capture field data and have it transferable across different platforms to different farm stakeholders.”

Those stakeholders include farmers, suppliers, consultants, accountants and investors.

“So, for example, from any corner of the farm you should be able to bring up what the yield was last year and what the rainfall was,” Mr Powell said.

“It’s about being able to present the information all in the one place which makes decision making far easier for everyone.”

Mr Powell was a guest speaker at Peracto’s Industry Seminar in July.

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Editorial...

Ian Macleod
 Managing Director

In July we hosted our second annual Industry Seminar in Devonport, Tasmania.

Peracto staff were joined by local growers and industry partners for the day long forum, which included guest speaker Matt Powell from Agworld.

A number of other speakers took to the floor providing updates on research and development in areas including poppies, pyrethrum and crop management strategies.

We also heard from the very entertaining Brendan McMahon from the Bureau of Meteorology, and David Russell, who runs the very successful PICSE (Primary Industry Centre for Science Education).

The centre aims to encourage young people to pursue a career in science.

PICSE values the next generation of scientists to help stem the shortfall being experienced by the industry and we do too.

That is why we invest in recruitment and training, aiming to support our staff

by providing professional development opportunities and leadership training.

By all accounts the seminar is proving to be a very successful event.

Survey results and informal feedback from those attending indicate the day is an invaluable opportunity to network.

It was one of our original aims in setting up the forum to provide a platform for staff to catch up with both existing and potential industry contacts.

We also wanted to provide the opportunity for interaction between all delegates.

Positive feedback was also received regarding topic choices and seminar location.

Our investment in training and professional development continues this month when our staff from across Australia and New Zealand will meet in Devonport for our biennial staff conference.

This is an important event for our people to further develop skills and knowledge to assist our clients. 



Catching up at Peracto's Industry Seminar in Devonport were (from left) Doug Green (Serve-Ag), Mark Kable (Harvest Moon) and Ross Bongioletti (Tasmanian Alkaloids).



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Agriculture embraces new technology

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He is a founder of Agworld, an agricultural management platform company employing about 30 staff across Australia and overseas.

His presentation – *Can iPads make agronomists, farmers and researchers more efficient* – looked at how different devices had been adopted by the industry and highlighted where improvements could be made.

He outlined the pros and cons of devices such as PDAs, smartphones and laptops, compared to the tablet with Apple's iPad a clear frontrunner.

Yet, he argued the device is redundant unless the best software is developed.

Mr Powell said cloud syncing technology is one of the most preferred options.

A cloud refers to a collection of centralised servers, services and software which are managed externally and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week according to Mr Powell.

It allows different devices and all farm stakeholders to synchronise to the central information as it is updated and changed.

It is a departure from the old thinking in which data was housed from device to device.

Mr Powell said it still allows people to work offline when they need to.

Most of all, it represents true collaboration.

Here, lab results are instantly available and so too are spray logs, helping to create greater efficiencies and seamless communication across all channels.

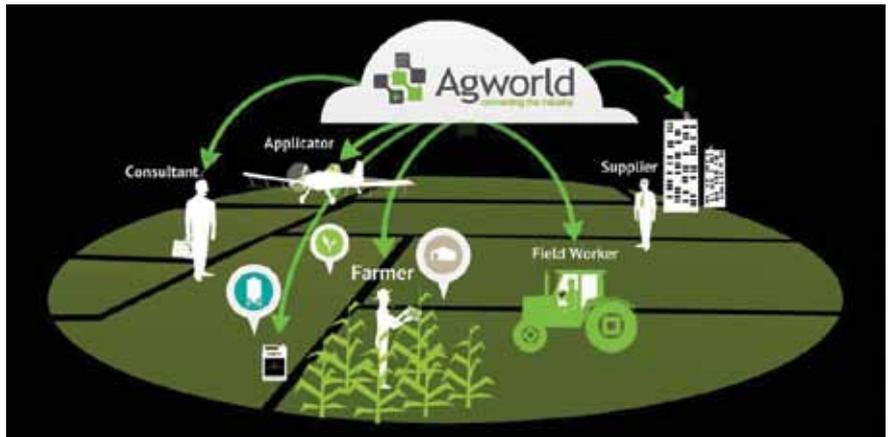
Being mobile and having ready access to information, through devices such as tablets and smartphones, was also a key part of capturing the efficiencies promised by information technology.

Yet the technological advancements do not stop with just iPads and cloud synchronising.

Mr Powell said his company actively worked with organisations in fine tuning software applications where initiatives such as developing particular key strokes which enhance use were being rolled out. 🌿



Guest speaker at this year's Industry Seminar Matt Powell (left) chief technical officer - Agworld, with Will Byrne from Serve-Ag.





New classification system brings global management strategies

Australia is moving a step closer to joining an international scheme with the staged introduction of the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS).

The GHS has already been adopted by many countries worldwide with the framework providing a simple international system of classification for chemicals, labels and safety data sheets.

The system includes the use of easily recognised hazard symbols across the world in a bid to standardise chemical management.

GHS is set to become mandatory in Australia on 1 January, 2017.

“This new system applies to anyone who has anything to do with chemicals, whether it is for sale, use or storage,” Rosemary Henderson of Protech Consulting said.

“From researchers to farmers and sales people – the new system will need to be understood so that everyone can identify the hazards of certain chemicals.”

Mrs Henderson said the system will provide a comprehensive classification of chemicals, offering greater support and advice on correct control measures and identification.

It is also believed to provide trade benefits to industry, as well as improved health and safety outcomes, through the use of internationally consistent hazard communication elements.

“People will start to see changes in labelling over time,” Mrs Henderson said.

“Some companies have already started to use the new labels.”

Its roll out falls into line with the update of new national Work and Health Safety Laws (WHS) earlier this year.

New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland and the ACT have adopted the updated legislation, aimed at providing consistency across Australian states and territories.

Under the GHS the hazardous substances and dangerous goods categories will now fall under the master category of hazardous chemicals.

The category of poisons scheduling will remain unchanged.

Mrs Henderson said some concerns have been raised as to the expense involved in changing labels.

She said work is now underway to educate and inform those who work with chemicals, allowing for a generous transitional period.

"People need to be aware it is still very much in its early days, so there is plenty of time to adopt the new practices," Mrs Henderson said.

Another change under the new framework is the move from MSDS to a standard format of SDS.

The MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) is a document which outlines properties of hazardous chemicals and how they affect health and safety in the workplace.

It includes details on safe handling and storage, health and physicochemical hazards and emergency procedures.

The SDS information on chemical hazards is based in the GHS classification, rather than the hazardous substances and dangerous goods classification.

People interested in more information regarding the changes, or education courses, should contact their state's relevant chemical handling body. 🌿



The Key Facts – the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)

- Single international framework for classification of chemicals, labels and safety data sheets
- GHS is published by the United Nations and is sometimes referred to as the "purple book"
- It includes harmonised criteria for the classification of physical, health and environmental hazards
- Australia to come on line in 2017
- Manufacturers and importers can start using the GHS classification, labelling and safety data sheets (SDS) of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Will affect labelling of hazardous chemicals with a broad range of categories which will include hazardous substances and dangerous goods
- Under the regulations, the manufacturer and importer of hazardous chemicals have a duty to correctly classify a chemical before the chemical is supplied to a workplace
- Education and information courses are available

(Information sourced from <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA/SafetyInYourWorkplace/HazardousSubstancesAndDangerousGoods/FAQs/Pages/FAQs.aspx>)

Communication key to successful operations

Phil Frost's role as Principal Project Manager ensures both staff and clients have a good working relationship

1. How long have you been with Peracto? How has your career progressed?

2012 marks my 15th year with Peracto. I started fresh out of university in a technical officer role. I've worked across various aspects of the business, progressing through different roles including Research Officer and Regional Manager to my current role as Principal Project Manager. Here, I act as a link between the client and Peracto's staff, ensuring all work targets are met and the client's needs are being addressed. Having a central contact for clients creates better forms of communication and greater work efficiencies, where they are only dealing with one person, not five or six. I am based in Hobart and work with clients from all over the world on research conducted in Australia, and sometimes New Zealand.

2. What has been some of the most exciting changes to the company?

My current role means I am helping clients across Peracto's offices nationwide and it is this growth and expansion which I think has been one of the most exciting aspects to the business. I started with Peracto when it was a division of Serve-Ag in Tasmania. We are now an independent company with a 50-strong workforce serving offices across Australia and New Zealand. It has been incredible to be a part of that expansion. The company's Graduate Development Program is another hallmark of Peracto's ongoing success. The program allows the company to attract candidates and provide opportunities for career progression. Graduates take part in on-the-job experience, formal training and development initiatives.



3. What has been the biggest challenge?

One of the biggest challenges is trying to attract good staff in agriculture. It's not just a challenge Peracto faces, it is industry wide. Getting young people interested in a career in agriculture is a real issue, and it is initiatives such as Peracto's Graduate Development Program which is trying to encourage and support young people to the industry. There are plenty of opportunities for a really successful career in agriculture and there is certainly demand for what we do, it's just a matter of getting that message out there.

4. What do you think Peracto truly excels in?

For mine, it really comes down to our relationships with our clients and

industry and our focus on working with them in solving problems. We strive to provide practical solutions and outcomes which are commercially relevant. We wouldn't be able to achieve this if not for our people too. Their knowledge, experience and commitment ensure our standard of work remains high. Some examples of Peracto working with industries and delivering outcomes that I have been involved in include our agronomic research for the poppy and pyrethrum industries, looking at aspects such as weed and disease management and plant growth regulators to increase yield. I find working with local industries such as these very interesting and enjoyable. On the national front, I worked with a team on the management of lettuce aphid when it first arrived from New Zealand in 2004.



Peracto Principal Project Manager Phil Frost (left) with the company's Regional Manager (Victoria) Tom Loveless.

5. Where to from here? What does the future look like for the company?

It is looking very positive for Peracto and the industry in general. I think clients will continue to look for companies such as Peracto to assist them to develop new technologies for agriculture which will solve problems and help growers to become more efficient. A major focus at this point is how we can use technology to create greater efficiencies in our work. We are looking at how we can harness the best possible applications for our researchers and business operation. We will also continue to invest in recruitment and staff development and training to ensure a sustainable future for Peracto and the best possible service for our clients. 🌿



South East Queensland welcomes new Peracto office



Peracto has opened a new office in the Queensland agricultural hub of Toowoomba.

The office will be based at the satellite town of Grantham and be headed up by Peracto research officer Levon Cookson.

“The Darling Downs and Lockyer Valley represent a brilliant opportunity to grow the business,” Mr Cookson said.

“The spectrum of crops here ensures work year round with the area also offering good conditions for many common pests and diseases.”

The new office, in the heart of the Darling Downs, is the third for Queensland, joining Bowen in the north and Bundaberg in the Burnett/Wide Bay area.

Toowoomba and its surrounds are home to a host of primary industries from horticulture in the Lockyer Valley, through to widespread grain fibre and beef production into western Queensland.

There is also a range of other farming types, including wineries, tree crops and protected cropping.

Mr Cookson moved to Toowoomba with his young family after two and a half years at the Bowen office.

He was originally from northern New South Wales and studied Agricultural Science (Honours) at the University of New England.

In Bowen, Mr Cookson worked in research and technical officer roles, conducting pest and disease trials and managing farm research.



Mr Cookson said the outlook for both farming and Peracto in the region was bright.

“The region has had a good start to the year,” he said. “It is just starting to dry off now.”

“Although there is still evidence of drought which has hit the area hard in recent years.”

Mr Cookson said the region supplied both summer and winter crops in broad acre and horticultural farming systems.

He said this would result in work for the company year round.

“We have been building up a good relationship with growers and agronomists and have a solid workload at the moment,” he said.

“There’s a massive opportunity for growth here for Peracto with such a range of crops.” 

