

Escalator Graduate

Charmaine O'Shea

A Chartered Accountant with her own practice, Charmaine is also a hands-on equity partner in a dairy farm. Her leading farm-accountancy practice in Northland has clients spread the length and breadth of New Zealand.

Confident in her work environment, Charmaine wanted to do the Escalator programme to challenge herself and break out of her comfort zone, believing that she had missed past opportunities for development. She also wanted to gain personal confidence to move into other directorships.

Charmaine's governance and leadership roles include:

- ❖ Member of the NZICA National Primary Sector Committee for seven years
- ❖ Member of the DairyBase Board until its dis-establishment
- ❖ Chair, Agri-Women's Development Trust
- ❖ Director of her own two companies, Johnston O'Shea Ltd and sos.co Ltd



"I started Escalator with a clear goal to develop governance and leadership skills that would enable me to pursue a directorship in the dairy industry. However the programme delivered much more than simply those two skills.

Being part of an incredible group of women showed me the strength of our combined knowledge and support of each other. The group's willingness to share information was fantastic and revealed that we all share similar same fears and anxieties at the start of our journey and that is part of learning. That learning enabled me to develop my governance theorem, "be yourself with skill."

The programme reinforced the importance of communication and provided clarity around the

difference between governance and management. This enabled me to analyse my own business with new knowledge and reassess my goals for the practice.

Escalator provided the opportunity to learn from experienced directors and connected me with more people in our industry. A better appreciation of how to be an effective director will ensure I am well-prepared to take on future roles. I now have a better understanding of what I need to know and how to channel new knowledge into achieving long-term goals.

I left Escalator so inspired by what the AWDT is providing for Agri women that I joined its Board three months after graduation and became the Chair in 2014."

"There were times on the programme when I felt completely outside my comfort zone; however as the saying goes, life begins at the end of your comfort zone."

- Charmaine O'Shea