



 **Fulton Hogan**

**Mobile
Laboratory**

www.fultonhogan.com

KPN6

October 2020

3 Technicians

No water

No Power

No internet

No accreditation





Jan 2021 The Earthworks Season officially Begins



March 2021: The team has grown to 9





May2021- Lab earthworks starts



June 2021- Concrete slab is down



July 23 Roof shout time



October 2022







The theme for this years conference is resilience.

According to the Oxford dictionary resilience is defined as ‘The capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties and toughness’ . My journey over the past 3 years has presented challenges in both my work and my private life. A balance that many people are juggling in various forms – from new work spaces to changes in relationships, family crisis’s or like those in Tairāwhiti, natural disaster challenges. Life is challenging and how you approach these challenges and what you do to maintain a balance in YOUR life are key.

I feel like this accurately describes my first year as a manager on the Manawatu project so I would like to reflect on this challenging year.

Oct 2020 I left my job of 6 years in the Waikato and moved down to Palmerston North. My partner and I had purchased our first home in November of 2019 and he opted to remain in the Waikato - this was the start of maintaining a long distance relationship with my partner of 8 years.

In Palmerston I met with my 2 new supervisors, who had also shaken up their whole lives and moved down from up north. We were all initially staying in hotel rooms away from our families, trying to find new places to live while finding our feet in our new roles.

Right from the get-go we faced our first major challenge; arriving onsite to a shipping container placed in the middle of a paddock with no power, water or internet and our IANZ audit 5 days away.

Luckily the container was mostly set up on the inside with a decent amount of gear from another project and the prep work I had been doing behind the scenes helped with some of the transition. I had managed to secure a small water tank and ordered some of the testing equipment, but COVID delays meant only half of this equipment turned up and the rest was still in transit.

Other challenges included

- Obtaining a power source
- Acquiring a laptop
- Creating all quality documentation
- Calibrating all the equipment
- Sampling material for IANZ demonstrations from quarries we had no relationship with yet
- Begging & borrowing Credit cards from the commercial team to buy anything as no supplier accounts were set up
- just Printing documents required a 20 minute drive into town

but by Friday we were mostly ready and the auditors were happy with how much we had managed to get done but understandably gave us quite a few corrective actions to work through before we could become officially accredited.

The month was spent ticking off these CARS, sorting our interlab and interstaff testing and waiting for more gear that was delayed by COVID supply issues still in the middle of nowhere with only the builders for company, a port aloo down the road and hot spotting our laptops to get any internet but finally on the 26th November our scope was through, we were accredited and ready for the next hurdle.... Building the new team.

Being an introvert and having never interviewed anyone in my life this process was quite daunting, and the labour shortage didn't help as very few CV's were coming in and finding suitable staff was proving difficult. But in March, after what felt like a million interviews our team had finally grown to 9 and while my supervisors started the training process I could focus on the biggest challenge yet.... Figuring out how the hell to build a lab.

Although the consent process was straightforward it took a long time for the council to approve which delayed the start. While we waited for the consent to come through I focussed on choosing a company to build the shed, ordering all the new equipment and figuring out the layout.

The land the lab was being built on had an old farm house that was going to be used for the lab office and 6 other random structures that had to be demolished. Parts of the house and some of the sheds had asbestos, another delay in waiting for an approved company to come in and demolish these structures but in May this was finally complete and earthworks could begin.

In early June our concrete slab went down and by the 28th Kiwispan were finally set to start building. We booked our IANZ audit for early November, surely we'd be all ready to go by then!

A Roof shout 23 July was a cause to celebrate, things were starting to come together!

26th July the Plumbers and electricians could start and UCOL were all sorted to insulate and line the building with ply.

But just as we were finally starting to see some progress, in August another setback came in the form of another level 4 COVID Lockdown, this led to 2-3 weeks delay and UCOL having to cancel their help which led to us scrambling trying to find an available contractor that could start work ASAP during level 3. Eventually the calls were successful and I finally found one that could start early September.

October came around and it became quite clear we would be cutting it fine with our IANZ audit again.

Finally 1 week before our IANZ audit we were ready to start moving everything from the containers to the new lab building. Luckily we'd been through this before and we had more people on our team this time to get us across the line. COVID restrictions meant our IANZ rep couldn't be there for the audit and we had to do that part over teams but we were adding quite a few tests to our scope so we managed to get a local technical expert to make the trip over to examine us.

Good old COVID holding up the arrival of our gear again lead to us coming away from our audit with a few more CARS but managed to close these out fairly quickly once everything turned up and over 1 year later we were finally set up and ready to go in our new building.

Amongst these challenges my mum was diagnosed with cancer and I was travelling home to the Waikato every second weekend to spend time with her and my partner. Finding the balance between spending enough time at home and not exhausting myself with the 9 hour return journey was a challenge but I found my feet and started to enjoy my time in Palmerston North.

Everyone from an entry level technician to a manager have challenges in their lives and must find a way to balance the stresses associated with those challenges. This may be just talking with a friend regularly to 'clear the air', it might mean getting professional help but a big part is recognising and taking action for yourself. Don't take on mistakes as failures but look at them as a way to learn. Know that each day is not going to be perfect but think of tomorrow as an opportunity to grow and learn.

Surrounding yourself with good people can make or break a new job so I wanted to thank a few people that helped me to grow and find more resilience in myself than I ever imagined Alan and Liam for helping us with all the Asphalt training, Steven who helped us immensely with basically everything and still continues to do so. And Brenden who was with me from the start and was integral in building the team in to what it is today, I'm very happy to see you thriving as the new lab manager down there.