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## RAPPORT
The Magazine for
NLP Professionals

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# Doug O'Brien
carries his experience with a light touch

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# When it's time to upgrade
# **the classroom software...**

By Nancy Walbank



❝ **Meta-programs need to be understood as a continuum, not in opposition** ❞

Identifying our own preferences and internal 'programming' helps us understand the ways in which we filter and organise the 'input' we get from the outside world. It also enables us to empathise that others will not share our point of view. In the classroom, having the behavioural flexibility to understand some of the programmes children run can improve the quality of teaching and learning as more students will be engaged more of the time.

Meta-programs are the key processes and organisational patterns we use at a level beyond our conscious thinking, our mental operating network. To continue the computer metaphor, they are the 'Windows' or 'iOS' programs that work without our conscious awareness but underpin the whole operation of our system. Like all programmes, they are not fixed and can be changed. They are also context dependent, we may like 'sameness' in many areas of our life but seek 'difference' in others. As such, meta-programs need to be understood as a continuum, not in opposition.

There are many meta-programs people run. What follows are just a few ideas about how to upgrade the meta-programming software in the classroom.

## Sameness and difference

Knowing about this meta-program enables teachers to understand how they react to change and how the students in their class may be motivated around change. A strong sameness pattern suggests a desire for the world to stay just as it is and may lead to a refusal to adapt to new situations or methods, whereas a difference pattern would want constant and major change and a resistance to static situations.

In a classroom, there may often be a tendency to encourage sameness, following rules and schools routines; students who want difference may be labelled as difficult or defiant as they are seeking change or are 'bored'.

This is where it is important to remember that though they may appear polar opposites, it is possible to work

**&&In a classroom, there may often be a tendency to encourage sameness &&**
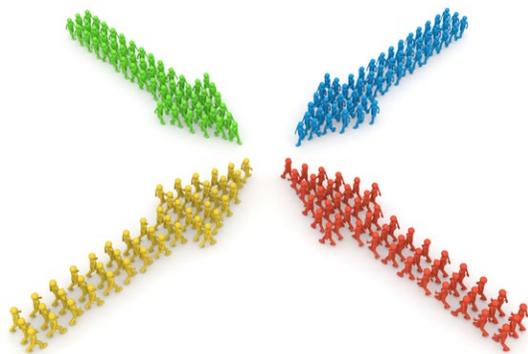
along a continuum. For example, introducing something familiar by saying, 'This is the same, except…' or 'We are going to see how this has got better, what progress has been made.' Or, with younger children, 'When we have done this than you can change to something new or different.' This language nudges sameness towards difference.

**Options and procedures**
This is another meta-program that can help teachers understand how a student approaches completing a task. Students with a strong options preference will be motivated by opportunities or possibilities to do things in a different way and will always be seeking improvements. They will want to 'investigate', 'work out', 'explore' and 'choose' what they do and will be motivated to learn when they have these choices.

Children who have a strong procedural preference will enjoy following a set process or formula and look for a 'right' way to do things and enjoy working through a task from start to finish. In the classroom, a teacher can ensure that procedural lessons, such as completing a reading comprehension, have optional aspects, questions such as 'Why do you think that?' Investigative lessons, such as science, may have a procedural outline and ask students to improve the procedure or find a better way to work things out.

**Towards and away from**
Towards and away from preferences show how people maintain their motivation by focusing their energy towards an outcome or away from something they want to avoid. Some students will be motivated towards an A* grade, others will just want to avoid failure. School reward systems that focus on targets or goals need to be staggered in a way that takes into account an away from preference.

An example of this is using 'must, should and could'. 'Must' is a baseline target that has to be met, 'should' is

things that are a high priority and 'could' is desirable to achieve for maximum improvement.

Students with an away from preference will be motivated when there is a problem to get away from, and those with a towards preference, by a mountain to climb; remembering this can enable teachers to frame their expectations in a way that motivates students.

**Preferred environment**
These meta-programs also influence how we work at our best; independently, in proximity with others or in co-operation with others. Again, it is important to remember we are on a continuum and the most productive way to work may well be to be able to work in all three ways.

Some students will enjoy working independently. Their work will suffer if they have to work with others or share responsibility and they may 'lose their thread' if interrupted. Students who enjoy working in proximity will need clearly defined responsibilities and will enjoy having others around or involved with their work. They will still take personal responsibility for their work. Some students will prefer working co-operatively, wanting to share and work with others and do things together.

This has clear implications for organising lessons. Students who want to work independently may find any of the collaborative learning techniques quite disruptive to their learning. However, it may be beneficial to encourage them to finds ways in which they can take responsibility for an aspect of group work that they can then do alone. Similarly, students who enjoy working collaboratively or in proximity with others can find the individual nature of exam preparation and revision work to be challenging. They can be encouraged to find ways to share and discuss what they are learning, or, come together following any period of working alone.

**Finally**
This is a simple overview of how a basic knowledge of meta-programs will enable teachers to discern differences in the students they teach as individual ways of operating according to their internal 'programming'. As with all NLP models, it is a 'map', not a category.

Knowing more about meta-programs supports teachers in planning, teaching and evaluating learning as it offers different filters to understand what went well and why it went well. Lessons which have the greatest flexibility will have the greatest influence. ■

**Dr Nancy Walbank** has been working in education for over 20 years. She uses NLP ideas to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to be the best they can be and specialises in developing literacy skills. Her book *Six Top Tips for Trainee Teachers* is available on the iBookstore. Nancy can be contacted via: **www.ncwconsultancyltd.co.uk**; Twitter: **@nan282**; or Facebook: **NCW Consultancy Ltd**.

# Happiness is not a spectator sport

## By Eve Menezes Cunningham

If you were to create a well-formed outcome around increasing your happiness, you'd have to work quite hard just to break the goal into manageable, measurable elements. The Oxford English Dictionary defines happiness as 'Feeling or showing pleasure or contentment' which makes the idea of 'just wanting to be happy' feel even vaguer.

Fortunately, Positive Psychology offers us some tools which can help. Bridget Glenville-Cleave, author of *Positive Psychology: A Practical Guide*, talks about helping people to take an inventory of their strengths:

*Creativity, perspective, judgment, curiosity, honesty, bravery, fairness, humour, zest, perseverance, teamwork, love, kindness, leadership, social intelligence, love of learning, forgiveness, hope, prudence, appreciation of beauty and excellence, humility, spirituality, self-regulation and gratitude.*

These strengths have been identified as 'universal strengths'. This means that there was no part of the world where any of these qualities would not be considered to be positive attributes.

When you read this list, what stands out for you? Have you been ignoring some of your biggest natural resources?

'There are some new views in positive psychology that say you shouldn't pay any attention to your stories or narratives but pay attention to your experience and to the moment by moment experience by experience, to evaluate how happy you are,' says Bridget. 'I guess it is [similar to mindfulness] so you have to be quite strict with yourself about distraction.

'The latest ideas are about balancing the experience of pleasure against the experience of purpose. We want a balance between the two, not to be veering towards one or the other. The important thing about strengths is to link to your energy. We want to make the best use of available energy that we have. Underusing a strength means not making optimal use of it but, often, people can think more easily of strengths overplayed.

'Honesty often gets overplayed. If someone got himself into a spot of bother with his employer, he might describe it as "honest" but you and I might describe it as tactless or not thinking through repercussions. Self-control often gets underplayed. We go along with our emotions or allow ourselves to be side-tracked in some way, maybe with shopping or eating. Is this going to be a

> **It's pretty straightforward but not that easy so you do need to put some work into it**

good idea in the longer term?

'Happiness is not a spectator sport. A lot of people labour under the misconception that happiness will just arrive. But it requires a lot of work, a lot of hard work. It is possible through doing some relatively small things.'

Bridget talks about 'Paying attention to what you're doing, how you're thinking and how your thinking might not be particularly helpful (I would definitely recommend mindfulness training).'

This fits with the three legs of NLP idea of thinking of your well-formed outcome, noticing whether what you're doing is working and getting you closer to it or whether you need to be more flexible and adapt your approach.

Bridget also recommends, 'Being more sociable and taking the time to build good relationships, being grateful and expressing thankfulness, noticing the small things and being outside in nature. This is very good for your well-being. Also, taking physical exercise. It's not rocket science.

'The things that get in the way include comparing yourself with other people or expecting to earn more and thinking that will make you happier. Most people know from experience that it is not true. It's pretty straightforward but not that easy so you do need to put some work into it.' ■

## Are you overplaying your strengths?

Our strengths can be a wonderful asset but if we overplay them, we're not at our best. For example, curiosity came up as my number one strength. This resonated and it's really useful for my writing *and* Feel Better Every Day work.

And yet I can see that there have been (many) times where I have overplayed curiosity, ending up feeling spread too thin, exhausted and depleted. Just knowing (when I want to sign up for yet another training or take on another project in an already full schedule) that I am acting out of curiosity and that it's positive *up to a point* helps me pause and consider things from a more balanced stance.

Take a look at the list again and see which qualities jump out at you as strengths you may sometimes overplay. When we overplay, our shadows emerge.

So kindness overplayed, for example, might lead to outrage at someone else not living up to our ideals. Overplaying forgiveness may lead to being treated like a doormat. Bravery might become recklessness. Perseverance may become pitiful. Even self-regulation can be overplayed to the point where life ceases to be any fun (especially for our nearest and dearest).

## Which strengths are you underplaying?

Again, our shadow side may be at work when we look at the list and think, 'That's not me' about certain strengths. While some will resonate more than others – we are all different – we have the capacity for everything and we may be living a less fulfilled and balanced life by simply ignoring potential strengths. We may have left school young and dismissed the thought of loving learning when, actually, there's a part of us that craves it. Similarly, we may be going through an overly entitled phase, missing the joys (and well-being benefits) of gratitude. Which qualities stand out for you? How might you play with developing more aptitude for them?

As I type, I'm thinking about colours – I'm very happy with bright, jewel colours and recently had to buy something in a pastel (not me) shade. In doing so, I realised that while definitely out of my comfort zone, it was a version of me (it's the same me whatever I wear). Just as I now have more wardrobe options, playing with our strengths whether learning to stop overplaying or underplaying certain ones, gives us more options when it comes to life.

## Creating your personal Coat of Arms

You'll have insights into others' strengths (when balanced, as well as when over or underplayed) that may surprise you. What springs to mind as you go around your little group and focus on each person in turn? Bridget says she sometimes has people create a 'coat of arms' to anchor their learning and help them make different choices in the future.

You (alone or with friends) might choose to do the same taking one quadrant and decorating it to show strengths you own (the ones you know you have and which resonate fully with you), another quadrant for talents (things you're good at but not strengths unless using them also actually energises you), a third for things you enjoy doing and the final quadrant for things you want to do more of in the future. This could help set you on a path of greater happiness and fulfilment.



❝ Positive Psychology offers us some tools which can help ❞

# First ANLP Regional Conference

As previously announced, the first ANLP Regional Conference will take place on Friday 16 and Saturday 17 October 2015 at Taunton Racecourse Conference Centre.

We are planning for a small number of keynote/plenaries with the bulk of the conference content being delivered in four parallel streams. Sessions can be 45 minutes or 90 minutes long. Those streams will be:

- **Introduction to NLP** – presentations and workshops of interest to anyone whether NLP aware or not.
- **Advanced NLP and related topics** – materials of interest to those who are already NLP Practitioner or above. A chance to bring such people up to speed with developments, ideas or useful practical skills.
- **Applications of NLP** – examples, case studies, proposals of how NLP can be related to specific areas of work or life. These can include Business, Health, Education and Community applications.
- **Running a small business** – with applicability to therapy and coaching businesses. This stream welcomes practical ideas for accounting, legal, marketing, selling, web development, monitoring and managing a small business. If you know someone in the south-west who might be suitable as a speaker (they don't have to be involved with NLP), please let them know or pass us their details.

To submit your proposal, please email **members@anlp.org** and include the following information:
- Your name, business name and contact details (email and phone).
- The title of your session.
- Duration – 45 or 90 minutes.
- Stream it applies to.
- Delivery style – presentation or interactive.
- A short blurb (maximum of 50 words) outlining the session including why people would be interested in attending.

We will be considering the proposals and putting the programme together as soon as possible and need your responses by **close of business (5pm) on Friday 15 May**.

# Doug O'Brien

## carries his experience with a light touch

From Carnegie Hall and Studio54 to Sleight of Mouth, by way of Tony Robbins and Robert Dilts, our interviewee this issue carries his experience with a light touch. Doug O'Brien is a quiet and polite man with a wicked sense of humour. He spoke to *Andy Coote* a few weeks after co presenting 'Tales from the Outside Inn' with Nick Kemp in Leeds.

**D**oug O'Brien first came to the UK from New York in the 1970s when he spent a year at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama studying piano and musical composition. After College, Doug's career took him to the Carnegie Hall where he played a concert, then, changing musical genres he pursued a career in rock and roll, playing in punk rock bands. 'I played places like CBGB, Studio 54 and The Red Parrot. So from 1980 until about 1986 I was playing in bands in New York, earning money by playing parties, cocktail lounge piano and teaching piano.'

In 1985, encouraged by a friend, Doug went to his first NLP Seminar with Tony Robbins. 'Tony was not just talking about fire walking and it wasn't just about ra ra stuff. The backbone of it was NLP which absolutely fascinated me. I found I could teach better, make myself a better performer, a better marathon runner. In fact one of my ebooks, *Step up to Mastery with E.A.S.E*, is really based on that process of how to apply NLP skills to learning and mastering anything.'

Doug realised that there was potential to use NLP more widely. 'I started doing little things like helping a guy in my band quit smoking and it worked. People started saying hey, could you help my friend and saying how much do you charge? I realised I could actually earn money doing this thing.'

And earning was important. Moving from being a musician into developing a career in NLP was, Doug suggests, easier than for some other transitions. 'I was kind of blessed as far as building a career in NLP is concerned that I started off as a musician – which is to say I was poor, and replacing my musical career with an NLP career wasn't a step down. I had a student once who was a legal secretary who hated her job. As soon as she got her NLP diploma she quit her job and hung out the shingle as an NLP Practitioner and within about six months had used up her savings and went back to being a legal secretary, because it's not that easy. I was used to being poor for a long time so I had the time to let it build.'

### ❝ From 1980 until about 1986 I was playing in bands in New York ❞

Whilst getting his Practitioner certification from Tony Robbins, Doug met, and was trained by, Wyatt Woodsmall, Robert Dilts and Richard Bandler. Richard Bandler and Robert Dilts led Doug to one of his key areas of study and teaching. 'Sleight of Mouth is Robert Dilts's model of Richard Bandler's persuasion skills. Wyatt introduced a teaser of what sleight of mouth could be at a Tony Robbins Trainer session and I was fascinated by it. Then a close friend of mine took a Robert Dilts seminar and came back and was amazingly changed in her persuasiveness. I took my Master Practitioner training from Robert and from his partner and co-developer Todd Epstein. On my return, I taught Sleight of Mouth to the Tony Robbins trainers who had had the Wyatt teaser session. It was such a successful little weekend that I developed it into the seminar that I still teach to this day. You don't have to know anything about NLP to become very persuasive with Sleight of Mouth – and life is about persuasion.'

Meeting Dr Dave Dobson – again through Tony Robbins – led Doug into Hypnosis and then into Ericksonian Hypnosis. 'He was a bearded burly guy and had a slow way of talking. He was funny but he was very different. His stories were hilarious and the points they were making were really interesting. I felt bad for him because everybody in the audience kept falling asleep during the seminar and then it occurred to me that he was doing that on purpose. He did a trance induction he called the Beach Trip with the whole group. I was impressed because I remember him starting talking and then half an hour later or so I woke up and like, where was I? That got my attention.'

Doug heard from others about what Dobson called his 'fun shops'. 'My NLP skills were enhanced because I went out and was in trance with this guy for a couple of weeks. Dobson and Erickson were sort

> **I decided I really wanted to delve into Ericksonian hypnosis**

of contemporaries. Dobson was a bit younger and developed his style of doing hypnosis separately and in parallel with Erickson. There was a lot of storytelling, a lot of what Dave calls "other than conscious" communication. I asked Dave if there were any good books and he said no. He was very protective of his stuff and worried that people were stealing it from him. It seemed like everybody in the NLP world who was really good at NLP could also do Ericksonian hypnosis, like Woodsmall and Bandler and those guys. Bandler talked about Erickson all the time. So I decided I really wanted to delve into Ericksonian hypnosis and that's what I did. Within Ericksonian hypnosis you're going to get a wide variety of approaches to it. Milton Erickson taught without ever directly answering a question. If somebody said "well how about how do you do this Dr Erickson" he'd say, "well, you know, when I was a young boy I used to ride horses". And he'd tell a story. All these Ericksonians came away from there with very

different viewpoints of what it was that he was doing. So if you study Ericksonian with Gilligan you get a Gilligan approach, with Steve Langton you get a Langton approach, with O'Hanlan you get an O'Hanlan approach. Frankly, when I teach it now I call it neo-Ericksonian hypnosis because it think it's more accurate. Erickson's been dead for, what … 40 years now? I learned it from his pupils and from a variety of sources.'

I asked Doug about the importance of stories. Allow them to be told or intervene? 'One of the things that I learned from Dave Dobson is not let them get stuck in their story and to use humour to interrupt the story. That's something that Frank Farrelly and Dave Dobson both did brilliantly. We think in stories and we dream that way, too. Stories are something we can understand. We put ourselves in the place of the lead character and we see it from their viewpoint. If I just said to you something like "well that's just sour grapes". You would know what I am talking about. Aesop's fables were teaching tales

some 2,500 years ago and are still with us – teaching people how to live day to day through the stories that they remember.'

Working in NLP since the 1980s has allowed Doug to develop what he describes as a respect for the individual's own personal process. 'It really bothers me when I hear people say, I did an NLP process and I fixed them. You do not fix them. You're giving them an opportunity to fix themselves, to change something about themselves, but you're never actually fixing somebody else. A story gives them an opportunity to think differently and if they're moving even just a little bit differently at the end of the session, down the road that can be a huge change. When I'm doing a session with someone, there are things that they can put their finger on and say, this is what we did today and while they're doing this worksheet or whatever it might be, part of their mind is, subconsciously, still playing with that story that I told them.'

The power of physical positioning and perceptual positions is an area the Doug uses in his training and in his personal life. 'I regularly do what my late friend and co-trainer Kevin Creedon called the self-coaching strategy. It's a triangle of positions. The first position you're in yourself and you ask yourself, this week, or this job or whatever, how did I do? What did I do that was good? What did I do that was productive? And how can I make it better? Then you step out of yourself and go to a second position and look back at yourself and say okay, what did he do this week that was really good? What can he do to make it better? Then you'd move to the third position, a mentor position. You step into somebody else's body who again is looking at you from their perspective and saying what did he do that was good? How can he make it better? Same questions, but now you're standing in the body of Milton Erickson or Tony Robbins or whoever you want it to be that particular day. I do this self-coaching strategy every week and often with the same mentor and I always learn from them.'

Having knowledge products is clearly a good strategy from a business point of view. People can learn at their own speed and, as a teacher, you are freed from the limitations of selling your time. 'In a business you need to have more than one channel of making money. So I do teaching of seminars, I do product creation, I do on the telephone coaching and I do one-to-one sessions. NLP is a communication skill so it's very difficult to really get that from just a book. But books are great enhancements once you've had an experience. You learn face-to-face, you learn from a group situation. In a group situation I think you often learn as much from the others in the group as you do from the teacher up front.'

It can be, however, hard to master the complexities of producing good products. 'When I first taught Sleight of

## ❝ Working in NLP allowed Doug to develop a respect for the individual's own personal process ❞

Mouth I had it audio and videotaped. I had those audios available as a set of cassette tapes, but they never really worked that well because during the seminar somebody would ask a question without the microphone or something else would happen that was not clear on the tapes. So, finally, I went into a studio and imagined that I was teaching the seminar to a person sitting there at the desk with me and taught the course into the microphone. That took me I don't know how many years to finally get done into that form. Then after that was done, I thought why don't I make a book out of this, it would be very simple. I'll just have the CDs transcribed and put the illustrations from the workbook in there and I'd have a book. It was not that simple. I discovered I don't speak in full sentences. The way I talk, makes a lot of sense when I say it out loud, but not when it's in the written word. So I had to completely redo that thing. It took me a year or more to finally get that thing done. I moved things around, David Gordon gave me some invaluable advice for it and he actually almost re-edited the thing for me.'

I've had the pleasure of learning with and from Doug O'Brien. He is a very influential man and a great storyteller yet always approachable and keen to help and support. I hope I've done him justice here. ■

# The NLP Professional (Part 7)

## Chunking up...

By Karen Moxom

It seems some NLP practitioners are keen to divide our community based upon our training lineage. The training lineage division has evolved for a number of reasons, one of which is based upon the number of hours you have trained in order to obtain your NLP Practitioner certificate (which ultimately relates back to who you trained with and which certification you obtained).

As long as I have been involved in NLP, there has been a debate around the number of hours one can train – 'full length' courses are around 20 days (125 hours) and 'shorter' courses are around 7 days (about 50 hours).

It is now possible to obtain an NLP Practitioner certificate without any face to face training at all. I am often asked to comment on the different lengths of courses, and I have been involved in many a debate about the quality, value and merit of short courses when compared with a longer length course.

I think both types of courses have their place within the NLP community and both can bring great value to the public and play a part in creating a positive impact within society. One of the presuppositions of NLP is all about respecting another person's model of the world – so couldn't this diversity mean we have found more than one way of delivering our NLP and this just emphasises our flexibility?

I do agree it is confusing someone who trains for 50 hours can obtain a Practitioner certificate, when someone else can train for 125 hours to also obtain a Practitioner certificate. There is currently no discernible difference between the two certifications, given both people have qualified as NLP Practitioners.

This diverse practice is not unique to the field of NLP – it is the same at university. For one thing the most prestigious universities in the UK offer the same first degree qualification as one of the lesser universities... and now they can even charge the same tuition fees. It's not necessarily fair and it is what happens in the university system.

**❝ Some NLP practitioners are keen to divide our community based upon training lineage ❞**

**❝ Put yourself in the shoes of a potential client for a moment ❞**

So yes, the current system for NLP can be misleading and unfair, and there is potential for further improvement, as my geography teacher would often write in my school report. This happens in every evolving field of study, and the fact we are in a position to contribute to this continuing evolution is a cause for celebration. We can contribute because the NLP community is a lot smaller than the education system, and currently our fate is more in our own hands.

NLP is subjective – we all agree on this. So learning about NLP is subjective too and presumably, only a part of this learning boils down to the number of hours we are taught. I have met many NLP practitioners from all lineages and I really do believe a good NLP practitioner is about so much more than the number of hours they were taught in the first place.

Put yourself in the shoes of a potential client for a moment…imagine you are looking for a NLP practitioner to help you with a particular challenge you are facing (content isn't important here).

What are you looking for in this practitioner? As a member of the public, are you really interested in whether they have qualified through the International NLP Trainers Association (INLPTA) or the Society of NLP (SNLP) or the International Training Association (ITA) or the American Board of NLP (ABNLP) or the Professional Guild? In fact, do you, as a potential client, understand anything about the different lineages, never mind know the difference between INLPTA, SNLP, ITA and ABNLP?

Or are there other things which concern you more than from where your practitioner obtained their certification? I choose my GP based on many criteria, including recommendation, reputation, location and possibly even their appearance (!), but I have never chosen my GP based upon which college they attended.

As a member of the NLP community, you may be interested in where your colleagues trained – and what interests you within the NLP community is completely different to what interests a potential client…so use this information to tailor your marketing wisely, by considering how you present yourself to your potential clients, rather than to other members of the NLP Community.

It may be true within the GP community, the information about original training college is significant, and I am sure there is qualification snobbery in their profession, just as there is with universities and NLP… and as time goes on, our experience and our ability to apply our learnings (as a GP, a graduate or an NLP Professional) do take on more significance than where we trained. ◼

**Tip:** Think about what your potential clients really want to know about you – they may be more interested in how you can help them solve their problem.

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## RAPPORT
The Magazine for
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Tim Ferriss
Modelling
the Four-Hour Way

Lucy

Robert
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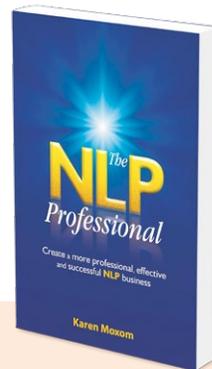
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