RAPPORT

The Magazine for NLP Professionals

Issue 42
www.rapportmag.com

Paul Tosey

Knowledge – Truth or Utility?

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RAPPORT "The Magazine for NLP Professionals"
Issue 42 - Published December 2014

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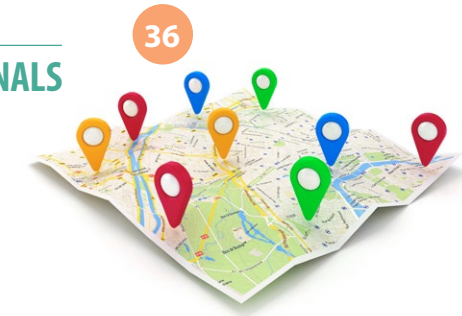

EDITORIAL

RAPPORT
The Magazine for
NLP Professionals

Welcome to the Winter issue of Rapport for 2014...

"The Magazine for NLP Professionals"

It's that time of year where we take stock…reflect on what has passed and contemplate the year to come.

2014 was a year of personal growth for me, and this will continue in 2015, starting with my first of three trips to the States, on New Year's Eve, as part of a training programme I am completing – it will be my first trip to America, so never too old, as they say!

The path to progress is Rasheed's coaching topic in this issue (**page 36**) and is particularly timely as we approach the new year. Equally timely is the publication of the ANLP Green Paper, consulting on a positive future for NLP (**page 40**). As NLP reaches its 40th birthday, we have a great deal to be thankful for and look back on, in terms of what we have achieved so far, as a developing and evolving field of practice.

This was the topic of my keynote presentation at the NLP Conference in November, and we reflected on some great good news stories which have happened in the last few years. Some of these will be featured in more detail throughout Rapport in 2015, so we have something to look forward to. And please do get involved with the discussions on LinkedIn (details can be found within the article), or by searching for our LinkedIn group, Association for NLP (ANLP).

I do have a preference for hibernating as the weather gets colder, so I will be taking note of Eve's advice to bring more warmth and light into my life (**page 5**)…and if I become too challenged over the debate as to whether or not I could hibernate, I will refer to Joe Cheal's article on the Yes/No seesaw (**page 20**) – I can be congruent with incongruence…it certainly helps during moments of indecision!

We have lots of plans percolating for 2015, both for ANLP and personally speaking…I am sure I'll be sharing more as the months pass and Winter turns to Spring.

Please remember if you have an idea for an article, do get in touch by emailing me, **rapport@anlp.org**. We are scheduling Rapport some months ahead, and we always welcome good quality articles on topics that would be of interest to our members. For further information about writing for Rapport, do visit our web page **www.anlp.org/get-published-in-rapport-magazine.**

In the meantime, I hope 2015 brings you everything you wish for…and more.

Until next time

Karen

Winner
HERTFORDSHIRE
BUSINESS AWARDS 09
HERTFORDSHIRE
WOMAN OF THE YEAR

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Publisher: Karen Moxom rapport@anlp.org 020 3051 6740
Company Reg No. 05383959
ANLP International CIC Apsley Mills Cottage, Stationers Place, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP3 9RH
www.anlp.org
Design: Square Eye Design / **www.squareeyedesign.co.uk**

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Beware:

Common sense may not be all that common

By Clive Steeper and Sue Stockdale

Common sense is like deodorant. The people who need it most – never use it.

We all use the phrase 'common sense' but what does it really mean? According to Wikipedia, it is a basic ability to perceive, understand and judge things, which is shared by nearly all people without the need for debate. It can also describe the ability with which animals (including humans) process sense perceptions, memories and imagination in order to reach many types of basic judgments.

In other words, developing common sense is based, to a large degree, on what we have usually experienced before and then extrapolating what might happen in another situation based on this knowledge.

For example, a speaker, who is part of a volunteer team that travels on rescue missions to some of the world's earthquake zones, was explaining that he had got a text telling him to head out for their next mission to 'Tahiti'. Common sense told him that this seemed odd, and when he checked it out, it was in fact 'Haiti'. His common sense was based on experience of where the likely hotspots are for earthquakes, and his geographical knowledge. Therefore, he had made no assumptions and checked it out.

So why is this relevant to NLP? Because sensing is such a key part of the human system of inputs, and we may assume that others have similar methods to us of processing and judging information. However, in our experience that is not always the case.

According to Minsky (*1) we are constantly learning, not only new facts, but also new kinds of ways to think. We learn some from our private experience, some from the teaching of parents and friends, and some from other people we meet. All this makes it hard to distinguish between what each person happens to know and what others regard as obvious. What each person knows (and their ways to apply it) may differ so much that we can't always predict how others will think. So we tend to take common-sense thinking for granted, because we do not often recognise how intricate those processes are.

In the past, many things were common to an individual because they had been handed down through their family. For example, your parents are likely to have taught you to use a knife and fork by using the handles. Then you watched others do this so it was common sense to do the same. So in your particular 'tribe or community' there was certain behaviour that you observed and were told about that was common sense to that group. Yet go over the USA and you will observe a completely different way they use the same implements and that their 'common sense' is different.

Common sense and coaching

When we coach clients, often it relates to helping them to solve a problem. These problems may range from 'where do I take my career next?' to 'how can I lead my team more effectively?' and the best way to solve a problem is to already know a solution to it. Sometimes that is the case with a coachee, and the coaching session helps them to identify the common sense approach to addressing it.

"We are constantly learning new kinds of ways to think"

However, when you have a coachee with a problem that you have never seen before, and you lack the knowledge to know what to do, we use common sense to work out how to go forwards. Sometimes we can attribute this to what we might call intuition, insight or being creative, but if we examine more closely the thinking process, we are using common sense to ask ourselves:

- What sort of things is this similar to?
- Have I seen this or anything like it before?
- What else does it remind me of?

Often we have noticed that as a coach, we can help other people to use a similar process to explore more deeply how to address the issue.

For example, one woman had to manage a large project and had no previous experience of doing so, and consequently felt nervous about taking on the job. During the coaching session the coached helped her to explore situations where she had managed complex activities before. She realised that she had been doing an equivalent task in managing her children's activity schedule, but had not equated this experience to the problem at hand. Whilst it might have seemed like common sense to the coach, this was not so for the woman.

So the ability to ask questions to help her connect the two situations together meant that it helped her feel more confident.

Common sense and culture

In organisations, common sense needs to be developed. New employees learn about the culture of the organisation and what the unwritten rules of operating are by observing behaviour.

For example, in some businesses it was an unwritten rule that you only had a real chance of developing your career if you wore a tie, or dressed smartly. Newcomers were quick to use their common sense to realise that, if they wanted to get on in the organisation, they would probably have to conform. In another company, no one spoke in meetings until the person who was most senior, by number of years in the organisation, had made their views known.

Common sense is essential for survival and it's how you use your senses to interpret what you observe that helps you to understand the organisational culture. And if you only are using some of your senses, i.e. you operate in a virtual environment, common sense may drive you to ask more questions and not make assumptions, because you are limited in the data you are receiving.

Being able to use and interpret the information gleaned via all our senses is vital. These days the business environment is very different from when most people interacted on a face-to-face level within their own, often fairly limited locations.

Employees now travel further afield, or are home based. We interact in a virtual manner more than ever before. Hence what is common to everyone may change, and the interpretation we make based on our sensory input can be limited. That's why so many misinterpretations can happen when we send or receive an email. Take away the visual stimulus and we lose some of the meaning.

Common sense in generations

In business we are operating in a more multi-generational environment. The things that Generation X (born 1960–1980) and Baby Boomers (born 1943–1960) notice and perceive as common may be quite different to that of Millennials (born 1980–2000). So whilst Google may be obvious as the first port of call for Millennials brought up in the digital world, it may be quite different for those less tech savvy or from an earlier generation, such as Baby Boomers or Generation X.

So as an NLP professional it is vital not to make assumptions about another person's 'map of the world' and to check out what they do perceive. His or her senses may not be common to everyone else. We can help another person check out what assumptions they may be making about a situation by using powerful questions.

Using powerful questions to check out assumptions

According to the paper by Vogt, Brown and Isaacs, (*2) a powerful question is one in which consideration has been

"We use common sense to work out how to go forwards"

given to the scope, construction and assumptions within it. Developing the skill of asking powerful questions cuts out what we assume to be common sense, by checking out in more detail what is meant. People make assumptions all the time about what others know and the use of three letter acronyms (TLA) is one way that can create misinterpretation.

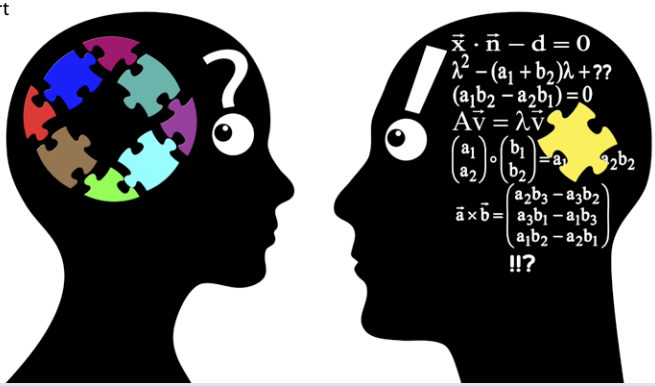
In one business where everyone used TLAs, it was assumed that others knew what they were taking about. Eventually, one person enquired what does SMT mean? The presenter got frustrated and replied 'well, doesn't everyone know that – it's common sense'. The question to consider is common to whom?

Once they explained it meant Senior Management Team, there was a visible sigh of relief in the room and then everyone began to speak in straightforward language, which avoided further misinterpretations.

Common to whom?

Even the term NLP is not 'common' to everyone. Many people don't know what it means so as a practitioner it's important not to make assumptions. It is useful to remind yourself of how some NLP principles are particularly relevant when thinking about NLP and common sense.

- *Map of the world* – other people don't see the world as you do, so checking out what senses they are using is beneficial.
- *Visual–auditory–kinaesthetic preferences* – noticing someone else's learning preferences can help us understand how they take in information so that we can build rapport more quickly with them.
- *Body language* – making judgments about a person based solely on their non-verbal behaviour is not good common sense – it is more effective to observe and then calibrate their behaviour with other data that you take in. ■



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(*1) M Minsky, *The Emotion Machine.*

(*2) E Vogt, J Brown and D Isaacs, *The Art of Powerful Questions*.

Clive Steeper is an Executive Coach, Facilitator and NLP Practitioner working with corporates and fast growth businesses. His career includes several roles as Managing Director in the UK, USA and Asia, and as Team Manager in motorsport. **www.clivesteeper.com**.

Sue Stockdale is a motivational speaker, executive coach and record-breaking polar explorer. As an NLP Master Practitioner, she uses NLP in her leadership development and coaching work with clients around the world. **www.suestockdale.com**.

Clive and **Sue** are co-authors of *The Personality Workbook, Cope with Change at Work, Motivating People* and a forthcoming title on Risk.

Practice Groups

As part of a mission to enhance the acceptance and reputation of NLP, ANLP encourages the set up of good quality Practice Groups around the UK, so that both new and experienced practitioners can continue to hone their skills and enjoy an opportunity to explore and expand their NLP, as well as build up their CPD (Continuing Professional Development).

ANLP has devised a support pack for Practice Group Facilitators, both experienced and new, with the intention that Practice Groups can be nurtured and helped to flourish around the UK.

The ANLP Practice Group Support Pack includes latest copies of *Rapport*, *Acuity*, *Current Research in NLP* and *The NLP Professional*, so you have some resources to share with your attendees. You will also be given CPD certificates in PDF format, so you can issue ANLP Practice Group CPD certificates to your attendees.

All ANLP Practice Groups will appear on the ANLP website practice group listings. In addition, ANLP will work with you to promote your Practice Group to local ANLP members, via email, so local awareness is raised for your group.

In addition, we have produced a comprehensive Guide to running an ANLP Practice Group which offers guidance and templates you may find useful.

Please be assured that any Practitioner can attend your Practice Group – they do not have to be members of ANLP. All we do ask is that you maintain your own membership of ANLP, as this is one of the many benefits we provide for members.

We would welcome you joining us and promoting quality NLP by hosting an ANLP Practice Group.

For further information please contact Nina via **members@anlp.org**.

Kindle Winner

Congratulations go to Mary Casson, who won the prize draw for a Kindle Fire, having successfully completed the ANLP Conference survey for 2014.

Keep your eyes open for more surveys and prize draws during 2015 – we love to receive members' feedback in this way and it does help ANLP shape the services and support it offers to members.

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Are you hearing **people's words louder than their actions?**

By Eve Menezes Cunningham

I immediately resonated with the idea of actions speaking louder than words when doing my NLP training many years ago. Yet, many of my clients (ok, and me, on occasion) hear words that much louder when the actions aren't congruent with what we want to hear. And when we ignore what we see and feel in favour of the sweet/kind/honest words we wish were true, we're betraying ourselves.

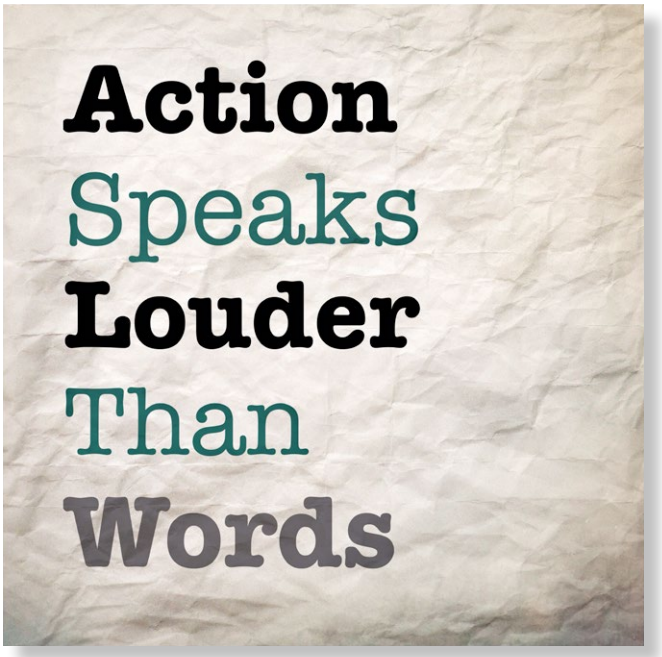
Being honest with ourselves (and recognising when people aren't proving themselves trustworthy) reminds me of another element of the training – that we teach others how to treat us. By paying attention to body language, tone of voice and our general gut feelings about people and things, we can adjust our own behaviour.

When are we most likely to believe someone's words over their actions?

'When we are in deep rapport with them (which is not usual with incongruence),' says INLPTA Master Trainer and Managing Partner of Adamant Consulting, Bob Roberts MBE. Other situations that make it more likely are, 'when they have pre-framed the situation for acceptance, when we are running an unhelpful listening strategy, often with those close to us (strategies again), when our visual attention has been diverted, when there is a certain amount of sensory overload, when the words have special meaning to us (reference experiences), when the speaker is a master influencer (especially metaphors vague language and trance, etc.), in fact, any way that words can be emphasised over actions – and it will of course depend on the receiver's experience and ability.'

Knowing we have a propensity to be misled doesn't make us immune. 'I always believe my wife when she says she will only be 30 minutes shopping in Tesco,' jokes Bob.

Believing people's words over actions 'can come down to not so much what someone says, but external factors,' says NLP trainer and TranceFormational™ Mindset Coach Marilyn Devonish. These include 'their level of influence, their reputation, how well known they are, and who they are seen to know or have been endorsed by. These additional factors can often overcome any seeming incongruence.



"If something doesn't look, sound, seem, or feel right, investigate and find out what is missing for you"

'Bernie Madoff was able to keep going because A-list celebrities were seen to be investing money with him. This encouraged others to go against their initial feelings and doubts and invest with him also.'

Marilyn's experienced similar herself and says, 'There have been a few times when I have gone against my AD (inner analysis), A (what I'm hearing and that it "didn't sound right"), and K (gut feelings). Had I gone by their actions and the perceived incongruence, rather than what I was hearing and seeing, I would have saved myself a heck of a lot of money. We're back to the Bernie Madoff effect again.'

'I've had a few clients over the years where they have said one thing consciously, but the non-conscious wanted something else,' says international trainer, author and farmer, Kevin Laye.

He remembers a client who said she wanted

to overcome her fear of leaving the house. 'I used a number of modalities to get her issue resolved but she said she still had the fear, despite her body language and other sensory clues telling me otherwise.'

As he asked about her life he realised how happy she was with her 'problem' – she loved her house and people visited a lot. 'So what would happen if we cured you of your fear?' he asked. She looked unhappy as she said that her husband would want her to get out more and find a part time job. 'She didn't want to change despite what she said.'

How do our VAKOG preferences impact this?
I wondered if Auditory people were more likely than Visual people to get caught out. Bob says, 'In my experience, yes more than no. And it seems to depend (unsurprisingly) on whether the second preference is Visual – which again, in my experience, is not the greatest second preference for Auditory tonals.

'My own sensory preferences are Kinaesthetic, then Auditory Digital, and so my processing is a bit slower. This seems to give me more of a feeling (intuition) when incongruence is in the air.'

'Because the incongruences often show up in the form of unconscious alarm bells or those gut feelings, I would say this might hinge on individual decision making strategies, and possibly how tuned in someone is to their intuition,' says Marilyn. 'Those factors would probably influence how the incongruent behaviour would be flagged up to them. For me, the eyes often have it. A bit like knowing someone isn't smiling when it doesn't come from their eyes, there is something about seeing behind and through the words or actions.

'If something doesn't look, sound, seem, or feel right, investigate and find out what is missing for you. It could simply be that you don't yet have enough information to go on, and that once you find that missing piece, the seeming incongruence between the words and actions will be resolved. If you have all of the pieces and still something isn't right, that is when you may want to delve deeper.'

'People are like snowflakes, no two are the same,' adds Kevin. 'We are all more than one predicate and I have found the ability to switch a predicate hierarchy quite easily if needed. Avoid putting people in boxes, treat each one as a new journey, which you have never taken before. Don't worry about getting lost. You can never be lost when you are exploring. Learn all you can to improve your sensory acuity, listen to what is said and more so to what is not said.'

What else can we do?
Without wanting to generalise, we can pay attention

"Listen to what is said and more so to what is not said"

to the way people in our lives are treating us and not keep giving certain people the benefit of the doubt over and over. By doing so, we're teaching them that lying or whatever else we don't like is ok. By changing our habitual acceptance, maybe they'll become motivated to change their behaviour. And if they don't, at least we won't be betraying ourselves by endlessly hoping for a different outcome.

You might also want to experiment with trusting yourself more and making a note of the times when you get a strong trustworthy or untrustworthy sense from anyone. Sometimes, you'll find out quickly whether you were 'right' or 'wrong', but other times, it may take time for the truth to become clearer.

Spend more time with the people who don't make you doubt yourself, those you know you can trust. Notice what works in these relationships. What do these people do that's different from that person you have doubts about?

Just by honouring your own senses in this way and paying attention to more than just the words, you might be surprised by how accurate your hearing, seeing and feeling can be. ■

Dr Paul Tosey

Knowledge – Truth or Utility?

Dr Paul Tosey has a background and continuing interest in organisational development. His studies introduced him to Gregory Bateson and to NLP separately, though their compatibilities (and incompatibilities) continue to interest him. As sponsor of the first International Research Conference in NLP in 2008 and co-author of one of the few major academic works on NLP, Paul has been influential in developing the NLP Research community. Now working with Clean Language as an approach to research interviewing, Paul spoke to *Andy Coote* for *Rapport*.

Paul studied Business Administration at the University of Bath with the idea that he would probably go into accountancy. 'Doing a broad based business degree helped me realise that wasn't for me and I was much more interested in the people side, in organisational behaviour.'

After achieving a 2.1 degree, Paul went into post graduate research. 'The freedom and autonomy and the combination of doing some research, doing some teaching, maybe some consultancy, was appealing. Rather than having to focus on just one thing, I like having a variety of activities.'

Paul was part of a group at the University of Bath that was very into a new paradigm research at the time. 'There was a big movement that was talking about doing research that was more with people rather than on people. People there and people in that network were also very involved in a lot of personal development so it was while I was doing my PhD I first got involved in something called co-counselling. That and some other taster activities were my first experience of personal development, being interested in what's going on within the person as well as externally and behaviourally.'

In 1980 or 1981, whilst doing his post-graduate study, Paul met a man called Peter Hawkins who introduced NLP to the group through taster exercises based on *The Structure of Magic*. 'NLP was still relatively new and I got really intrigued, partly because I've always been attracted to language and the idea of a link between our language and our inner worlds, ways of thinking and ways of behaving.'

Paul's PhD explored some of the implicit ideas behind theories and models of organisational change. 'One of the things I did in that was look at NLP as an example of personal change and how some models of personal change related to models of organisational change. I found that some models of personal change were rather more detailed than theories of organisational change.'

In the network around Bath university there was a very strong interest in the works of Gregory Bateson and it was there that Paul read *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. 'I got very intrigued by Bateson's ideas. In my NLP life I've always said it's fundamentally about being intrigued by Bateson's work and NLP was framed in one way at that time as an application of some of Bateson's ideas.'

"NLP was still relatively new and I got really intrigued"

After Bath, Paul began teaching in the business studies department at the University of Edinburgh. 'I was really debating whether the academic world was me. I've always been most drawn to facilitating learning for people who have got experience and wanted to develop that.'

That desire – and the Edinburgh weather – drove Paul to look outside of academia for his next role. 'I decided to have a change and try some practise based around the organisational change and personal development stuff I'd been researching into and reading about. I ended up at Haringey Council in the

late 1980s and very early 1990s. Haringey was a local authority with an intriguing mix of radical politics and a fairly traditional bureaucratic form of organisation. I went to Haringey just after the Bernie Grant era and after Broadwater Farm, and worked there for about five years. Things became more difficult in the local authority sector. It seemed that you didn't have a chance to recover from one round of redundancies and cuts before the next one came along. It was a tough place to be working.'

In the early 1990s Paul was approached by the Human Potential Research Group at University of Surrey founded by John Heron, one of the people in Paul's network at Bath, based on experiential learning and experiential research primarily for post experienced Practitioners. 'That group worked a lot through experiential workshops, taster programmes for psychotherapeutic, modalities of working, all kinds of human potential work and a lot of professional skills development workshops as well, based on humanistic psychology. So it was in a direct lineage from the 1960s and even before, including Esalen, Fritz Perls – some common roots with NLP. It was not a traditional academic group doing traditional academic research. It was that very innovative group based intra-personal kind of work and one that no longer exists and a way of working that now doesn't really exist within many universities.'

Paul's role was to help start up a Masters programme – the MSc in Change Agent Skills and Strategies – for people doing consultancy and training and facilitation. 'It wasn't just about consultancy or just about training. A big chunk of it was actually about coaching but this was the early 1990s and people didn't use the term coaching at that time. This programme was pretty intensive, both for staff and for students. It was based on experiential workshops that lasted four or five days for a group that would be up to about 22 people, sitting round in a circle in a room for four or five days. It was very challenging and a very great programme to be involved in and many people who've done that programme say that they found it transformative, in their practice as well.'

Paul taught an introduction to NLP within the personal development strand of that programme. 'I did my first NLP training course in the late 1980s while I was working in local government and then did Master Practitioner in the early 1990s. I was aware that NLP and academic research rarely had much in the way of meeting points.'

In the early 2000s, Paul began to consider developing publications around his interests in Bateson and NLP. Jane Mathison had come to start a PhD at Surrey broadly in the field of NLP applied to learning and development. 'We found an article in an education journal called the *Curriculum Journal* by someone quite well regarded in that field. The article was descriptive of NLP rather than critical but not terribly deep and with some inaccuracies. We contacted the editor and asked if he would be interested in a response that went into it in a bit more detail. It was published and that was the start of a phase of writing about NLP that led up to the book we published in 2009.'

Paul and Jane wrote *Neuro-Linguistic Programming: A Critical Appreciation for Managers and Developers* partly to bottom out their understanding of NLP – where it came from; what people were saying about it and what evidence base there was in the literature and published research. 'It was our opportunity to pose some of the questions that people pose about NLP. I recently read a review of the book, I think a very good review and they politely ask within it, who is this book written for? Fundamentally, the answer is we wrote it for ourselves.' Nevertheless, the book has been useful to many, as evidenced in a recent interview with Byron Lewis (in *Rapport* issue 38) who showed me his copy stuffed with post-its where he had used it to research the revisions to his own book on NLP.

Paul reflects on the approach taken to researching the book. 'One of the things we decided was that we wanted to concentrate on using published sources rather than interviews with people who were there. We already knew that approach wouldn't yield a definitive "this is what happened in NLP", so we wanted to focus more on weighing up the published evidence than on doing that investigation.'

Meetings in around 2006 with Karen Moxom, Suzanne Henwood and Charles Faulkner led, in July 2008, to the University of Surrey hosting the first NLP International Research Conference. 'The idea was to get together academic researchers working in NLP to see if we could grow that into an international network. In some respects that did work and in some respects it didn't because the number of academics involved in NLP didn't seem to grow. A few people came into the field, a few people went out, but it didn't really start growing.'

After a few years of supporting the conference and editing the journal *Current Research in NLP*, Paul made the decision to shift focus and move on. 'My interest at the moment in NLP from an academic perspective is less about "does NLP work" and "what's the evidence for and against it". I think NLP is interesting because it is used so much in fields such as leadership development, organisation development, training, consultancy and coaching. The issue of whether it's valid knowledge or not is almost secondary. It's interesting because it's a form of knowledge that many Practitioners seem to find accessible and relevant whereas knowledge produced by scholars in universities, that scholars argue is much more valid, is far less accessible and maybe perceived as less relevant. So you have this tension which is written about quite a lot in the management field, particularly, between the perceived rigour of knowledge and its relevance. Can you have both and combine them? A lot of academic knowledge produced by scholars is produced for scholars, written in outlets that are for scholars and to which most Practitioners can't get access or it's difficult

❝ Clean Language offers an enhancement that can be demonstrated ❞

to apply the findings in practice or know how to use them. Very little is clear cut.'

What interests Paul, he tells me, is how Practitioners view this kind of knowledge. 'If you ask academics, they tend to say, broadly speaking, NLP is a load of rubbish, there's no evidence for it. What I'm saying is, well, actually does that matter? If Practitioners are using it, there must be something in it that's helping them. There's a view that knowledge is more useful if it helps a Practitioner to take action than it is if it's accurate and rigorous in an academic sense. A map doesn't have to be completely accurate to be useful. I am interested in exploring what use are Practitioners making of this and is there something different about practical knowledge compared with knowledge you might find written up in journal articles?'

Paul became interested in Clean Language after meeting James Lawley and Penny Tomkins as fellow participants on the NLP Master Practitioner training he did in the early 1990s. 'They went off and did their work on Clean Language which I think is probably one of the most significant modelling projects ever done. Certainly one of the most extensive. I've trained in Clean Language and, as an academic, whilst there are quite significant barriers to publishing things about NLP, I've not found the same problems with Clean Language. It's interesting that in academic publications there are some things that are regarded as a bit dubious for academic publication, but other things that academics like because they're "innovative."'

With James Lawley and others including Wendy Sullivan, Paul worked on a project to look at how to apply Clean Language to research interviewing. 'There was something about it that captured interest rather than attracted scepticism. So Clean Language is certainly one of the research teams I'm working with. Clean Language offers an enhancement that can be demonstrated. Even where researchers think they are being true to another person's inner world, actually there's evidence that they're introducing their own metaphors and constructs through their questions and their interpretations. Clean Language may offer a more rigorous way to be true to another person's inner world and meanings than existing academic approaches. There is depth and great complexity to it but actually the fundamental principles are relatively simple, can be explained and can be picked up simply.'

Paul emphasises that he is not saying that research into NLP is not worth pursuing. It is, however, a difficult task. 'There are some avenues where NLP has potential to make progress. The work that Frank Bourke, Rick Gray and Lisa Wake are doing in the States, particularly around PTSD is one area. There's Megan Arroll and Clare McDermott at Southampton, both doing projects related to NLP and healthcare applications and Richard Churches working in the education field on applications of NLP to teaching. I think those are three areas where NLP has some leeway, is capable of making some progress but it's probably going to be quite slow progress and who knows how long it'll take before those strands could link up, maybe, into something broader. But none of those is my field. I'm content to let those people make that progress and I'll focus on the questions that are of more interest at the moment to me.' ■

NLP – A Positive Future

ANLP published a green paper for the recent NLP Conference which is reproduced in full here.

Introduction

In their (2009) book, *Neuro-Linguistic Programming: a critical appreciation for managers and developers*, Paul Tosey and Jane Mathison suggested that NLP is at a crossroads and has so far failed to become accepted as a mainstream practice.

Five years on from writing that and with the term NLP about to reach its 40th birthday, is NLP still at that crossroads? This paper suggests that it is, sets out some of the reasons that is the case and proposes an approach to finding our way out of that place and on to a better path. We do not have all the answers and will be opening this approach to debate and discussion before creating a proposal for moving forward in the spring of 2015.

Why do we need to do anything? We have a field with 40 years of history and it is still operating successfully for many. Surely if we just go back to the basics, all will be well? We suggest that doing nothing is unlikely to be the right path.

Competition is growing for the attention both of therapists and of their clients. In a recent Linkedin conversation, it became clear that many therapists offer a blend of therapies including but not limited to hypnotherapy, mBraining, EFT, TFT, TA, Havening, Reiki, Energy work as well as NLP. In doing that, they are simply responding to the needs of their clients who have a problem they want resolving or a performance they would like to improve and may not even know, or indeed need to know, what NLP is or what the letters stand for.

Even in an area as basic as ‘what NLP stands for’, there is little agreement. What is NLP? There is no widely accepted definition nor is there agreement on how it is practised or, indeed, who decides on that.

In her book, *The NLP Professional*, ANLP Managing Director Karen Moxom set out three aims -

- Ensuring NLP is the one of the natural solutions chosen by the public when they have a problem.
- Changing the public perception of NLP so they find it easier to make this choice.
- Appreciating the importance of reputation.

In this paper, we ask how can NLP, with its 40-year history, have a 40-year future (taking us out to 2055) or even a 10-year future. Will NLP still be around in 2025, how can it continue to thrive and what is required to ensure that?

Where we are – ‘40 years and Thriving’

If we turn the clock back to 1975, we can see how things have changed. No internet, just a little military communications project called Arpanet. Paul Allen and Bill Gates named their new company Micro Soft. Phones were attached to the wall at home and not everyone even had one of those. Margaret Thatcher took over as leader of the UK Conservative Party from Edward Heath. The term Personal Computer was coined for the Altair 8800, a computer you could buy as a kit to make at home. There were no DVD or VHS players, televisions were mostly black and white without remote controls and heavy, no video

games, no food processors, no digital cameras or camcorders. In fact, much of what we take for granted in 2014, would have been unthinkable in 1975.

Many of the things we use today are based on earlier advances in technology which is as it should be. Things evolve and that is OK.

The fact that NLP has been around for 40 years can therefore be seen as a good thing. As subsequent generations of people have come along and worked with the NLP principles and ideas, things have advanced. Today, we have the co-creators of NLP and members of the Meta teams still active in the field and they have been joined by the early adopters (many of them active, too), and at least two, possibly three, subsequent generations of thinkers, trainers and developers.

NLP has advanced and grown in those 40 years and there are some great things happening in NLP today. There are many NLP Practitioners and Master Practitioners as well as Trainers and Master Trainers now operating in the field. Their approaches are as different as they are as individuals whilst they are working with a common core of ideas, principles and tools.

Many more are adopting NLP as a part of a toolbox of therapies or development approaches, using their skills to select the appropriate tool for a presenting issue. As a result NLP is being accepted into more places including sectors such as health, education, dispute resolution, business, military/police, psychology and academia.

There are still many challenges that we face as a field. One of those is that, whilst NLP is more widely accepted and used, it

“In the UK, a number of institutes have come together to agree an approach to NLP Ethics”

is frequently being used without attribution as a tool in a much wider toolbox. Sometimes that is because there would be an issue in introducing NLP by name into the sector. We still have a way to go as a field to find wider acceptance which can lead to a bigger market for those operating in the field.

Some of our challenges are quite basic. We lack common standards and definitions. For some, even considering standards is seen as a bad move. However, standards are different from standardisation. Cars are built to a set of basic standards, many of which are required by regulators in different jurisdictions. Others are simply required to make a car an attractive and functional entity. To date there has been no sign of standardisation creeping into the automotive market. Cars still range from the Fiat 500 to a Rolls Royce in size and from a Citroen 2CV to Ferrari in performance. We need not fear standards, rather we can welcome them along with an ethical framework as providing assurance for clients that they can trust NLP and its practitioners.

As with any field, there are unethical practitioners at all levels and people whose delivery of NLP falls below what most would consider acceptable. It is wise to have ways of dealing with such issues, with an open, transparent complaints system and sanctions that are effective in cleaning up the field. In the UK, in an example of positive collaboration, a number of institutes have come together to agree an approach to NLP Ethics and this approach, the UK Ethics Committee, was announced at the NLP Conference in November, 2014.

In building a market, there are two factors that are

influential – awareness and reputation. We believe that less than 20% of the population know of NLP and some of those have only heard of it through the bad press that is generated from time to time. Individual reputation, which you work hard to build for your own business, can be adversely affected by a wider field reputation as is demonstrated by the Wikipedia entry for NLP. Reputation is hard earned and built over time. It can be destroyed in an instant – and not always by something that is your own fault or responsibility. Again, it is wise to consider how we can maintain a good reputation as a field.

At least, whilst awareness is low, most people are not hearing about the perceived problems of NLP either. We have an opportunity to create a good reputation in their eyes. To do this we could choose to speak and work as one field, keeping our differences away from the public eye and working towards overcoming the confusion, jargon, elitism, acronyms and overwhelm that is currently present in the field.

When clients are looking for solutions in areas where we have a valid and successful offering, we would like them to choose NLP. To help them to choose we can ensure that we clarify and simplify any offer so it is understood. Clients like reassurance that the investment they are being asked to make in money and time will not be wasted. This does not imply that we have to dumb down the field, on the contrary, we choose to make the effort to take the complex and explain it well. We have the opportunity to pace and lead.

The NLP community currently has fragmented leadership. Initiatives such as the Leadership summit, *‘Innovations in NLP’* and *‘The Origins of Neuro Linguistic Programming’* are all intended to contribute to leadership but at present are not joined up in any effective way. As with any field in which there has been 40 years of development, there are divisions and different interpretations. We can overcome those only by accepting other maps of the world and taking a pluralistic view in which it is possible and, indeed, positive, for other approaches to develop and grow. It adds to choice and variety. Leading a diverse field such as ours requires a meta view to be taken, creating a set of values, standards and ethics that encompass all whilst allowing adequate room for variations, flavours and competition.

The need for a broader approach is evidenced, in our view, by the development of new therapies and approaches, some led by NLP People and often with NLP still in their DNA. Some examples might be ‘the 3 Principles’, mBraining and Havening. There are other developments outside of NLP where NLP people are involving themselves such as Positive Psychology,

Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Neuroscience.

An example of a more accepting approach would be for us to note when 'science' finds that NLP tenets are true but without recognising the heritage. The Research and Recognition project under Dr Rick Gray has been finding such references and cross referencing them to the NLP principles that are validated or part validated in this way, thus building our own research base. New developments such as Neuroscience and fMRI offer further opportunities for this to be grown, though some scientific research can be seen as a 'double edged sword' as research questions, methods or rigour can be questioned. We are seeing that just because 'science says' something does not make it true.

Good science though, is important as part of our intention to find acceptance for NLP in areas where good evidence based validation is required. The Research & Recognition Project is working on building evidence in areas such as NLP interventions for PTSD and ANLP actively encourages research projects through our Research Conferences and the research stream at the 2014 NLP Conference. We would like to see more research programmes containing NLP and recognise that there is a virtuous cycle here. More research leads to more acceptance which leads to more research. Integrating that research into the mainstream is important and so it is essential to find mechanisms for that to happen.

Being innovative and helping NLP in the wider world can be chunked up or down. As well as creating a field level collaboration to move things forward in a strategic way, each individual and small firm in NLP can also make a difference. Doing what you can, within your own span of control to further NLP, as our members do by, for example:

- Taking NLP onto the High Street.
- Being shortlisted and winning industry awards.
- Winning awards for NLP training in an NHS Trust.

Proposed direction of NLP Development

How might we go about making changes to the field of NLP in order to build on 40 years of development and achievement, to meet and overcome the challenges, to create a field that will be respected?

We recognise that there will be those who wish to be early adopters and shapers of this approach and others who will prefer to wait and see where this goes. Initially, we will seek to work with others – institutes, trainers and professionals – who have similar aims to our own and extend it to others as they choose to become involved. The process will always be inclusive and will seek to involve as many in the field as possible.

At the heart of our proposed approach would be a stable qualification and standards structure with a change management process similar to that set out in Appendix 1. This will allow us to keep the field relevant and up to date and connect research with development in a way that maximises benefits for all. It will also allow for applications to be developed that use NLP as part of their delivery. As Intel developed the 'Intel inside' approach, our approach could be considered to be 'NLP inside'. We can actively encourage recognition of NLP rather than hide it.

To ensure that there is an economic as well as content sustainability, we will actively search for ways of reaching out to more people who will be able to use the benefits of an NLP based approach. Applied NLP is a way to engage with more people, both at a delivery level and as clients. Once engaged, there may be other ways in which we can work with them.

One of the key issues with any initiative is where the leadership comes from and how that leadership is accepted by others in the field. We are clear that we wish this whole approach to be inclusive, so will seek to involve as many institutes, trainers and professionals as possible. Leadership is not a function of age or experience in NLP, though both will be respected. We welcome a blend of leaders from across the generations in NLP. When working in this process they must

“The fact that NLP has been around for 40 years can therefore be seen as a good thing”

be prepared to work impartially and independently of their commercial affiliations and in the best interests of the field as a whole.

We would like to proceed by consensus but without becoming a talking shop where decisions are never quite arrived at or implemented. A small leadership group is therefore proposed, with a larger, more representative advisory group available for consultation and counsel. A series of objectives should be quickly arrived at, structures such as Working Groups and approval groups set up and action taken.

The leadership group can then, through the working groups, address the development and marketing of NLP as a field, building awareness, highlighting application areas and promoting case studies of success in specific areas. We can then guide potential NLP users who arrive from many different starting points with the following:

- a specific problem to resolve.
- a need or want to perform something better.
- they've heard about NLP or met an NLP professional and want to find out more.
- they've read an NLP book or seen a video and want more.

There will be plenty of room and opportunity for members to produce their own marketing materials that allow them to compete. The competition/collaboration balance is about finding the common ground and promoting that whilst celebrating differences and allowing plenty of space to compete. It is a balance that ANLP already strives to achieve, generally successfully.

This approach will allow for both continuity and sustainability in NLP and give good prospects for the field to have a 10-year, 40-year future and beyond by being able to adapt and develop from a stable base.

Next steps

We would like your feedback on these ideas and proposals. We are more than happy to talk at the NLP Conference – where Karen Moxom presented some of these ideas in her keynote on Friday 21 November. There is also a Linkedin discussion which you can join in the ANLP group at **https://www.linkedin.com/groupItem?view=&gid=2464853&type=member&item=5941158856410300420&trk=groups_most_recent-0-b-ttl&goback=.gmr_2464853**.

That discussion, plus emails which we receive at **future@anlp.org** will be included in our final draft of this proposal which we intend to issue in late Spring 2015 along with a timetable and the names of those who are on board with us for the initial phase of this development. If you wish to support and be part of this initiative, please let us know how you wish to be involved.

Appendix 1 - Model of an evolving field

There are many fields where standards are required and generated. This section sets out an approach that is successfully used in a number of sectors.

Requirements	Change Requests Standards Review Industry feedback Working Groups
Research and Develop Solutions	Academic Practical
Standards and Qualifications Development	Standards NOT standardization
Adoption Assumes a standards body (or bodies)	Acceptance of new ideas, approaches, techniques Putting them into place in ongoing delivery
Product Development	Traditional Innovative
Delivery	Traditional certification creating more practitioners and trainers Applications • Basic Skills • Everyday use • Advanced Uses

The ANLP Green Paper can be downloaded at **www.anlp.org/2014-nlp-conference-keynote-resources**. This web page also contains a video recording of **Karen Moxom's** keynote presentation at the NLP Conference, and further information about the case studies she refers to within the presentation.

RAPPORT

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