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RAPPORT

The Magazine for
NLP Professionals

Issue 46

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Grant Soosalu

using his multiple brains to do cool stuff

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The Impact of NLP in Leadership Development

By Reb Veale



Reb Veale



As a trainer, facilitator and coach; it is important to me that I consistently consider the *impact* of the frameworks, tools and models that I use on the people with whom I work and on the field in general. Of course, this is an ethical consideration and, just as importantly for my clients, it is also one of the fundamentals factored into the Return On Investment calculation.

In NLP, we are familiar with many ways of checking the immediate and extended ecology in any situation and recently I have been exploring this in relation to my own work in leadership development particularly.

We will presume for now that the success of leadership development activity is particularly linked to three variables:

- 1 Individual learner characteristics including desire, aptitude, opportunity to practice.
- 2 The quality and nature of the development.
- 3 Genuine support from the leader's supervisor and organisation for behavioural and attitudinal change in the leader.

“The rigour applied to evaluating the outcomes of leadership development has increased”

Feedback suggests that much leadership development focuses disproportionately on the first two. Participants may be pre-selected as high potential or through development centres designed to highlight attitude and aptitude, which are both evidently crucial.

Those of us working as external consultants will recognise that the rigour applied to evaluating the quality and outcomes of leadership development has also increased in many organisations over the past few years and appropriately so.

However, my hypothesis is now that the third aspect still represents an opportunity for more focus and closer examination. Rather than supplying what the organisation says it *wants*, I believe there is increasing need, as an ethical and collaborative partner, to test the organisational appetite for *real* change; to

challenge and facilitate an emergent model of what the organisation *needs*.

Many readers of *Rapport* will have experienced multiple roles as NLPers, managers, leaders and also as employees. Using models such as perceptual positioning is NLP bread and butter in terms of ecology-checking and, by extension, planning both individual development and strategic leadership development, such as that necessary for succession planning, talent management and culture change.



A valuable opportunity that has recently presented for my business was based in the nuance that at least a couple of perceptual positions in the above model are most helpfully explored *fully associated*. For example, it is relatively common for organisations to seek to 'walk the customer path' or to 'understand the employee journey' and I believe this is a genuine attempt to plan in an inclusive way, in tune with current best practice.

However, I have observed that whether it is the senior leadership team in an organisation, business partners or internal consultants such as HR, it can be all too easy to consider these multiple perspectives from a distant, dissociated view and hence, inadvertently miss the subtleties of *living* the stakeholder experience, and thereby also miss potential unintended consequences.

I wonder how many of us relate to the manufacturer of our favourite product '*improving*' or reformulating it, only to disappoint or frustrate us because they thought they knew what was best for us.

Truly impactful leadership development not only accounts for what the organisation will require in the future and what will equip the individuals best to acquit themselves competently as leaders in that organisation, it also deeply incorporates what is valuable, resonant and appropriate from each individual leader's perspective. And this involves not only asking them, but also associating into *being* them momentarily and periodically.

It is relatively common in my experience for a coachee's goal to transform through applying the well-formed outcome approach – fairly often, the leader will recognise that either they no longer want what they initially thought, or they are pursuing it for someone else, or less frequently, they never wanted it but assumed it was a necessary precondition of attaining a leadership position in their organisation. On a few occasions, this has led to the coachee's increasing conscious awareness that they wish to move to a different role, organisation or path to continue their leadership development in a way that is congruent for them.

An old view of organisation development now regarded as somewhat dated was that 'we don't want to develop people, only to lose them (and our investment)

“Fairly often, the leader will recognise they no longer want what they initially thought”



to another organisation'. And yet, relatively recently, it became clear that an organisation with whom I was working, using NLP in leadership development programmes had not fully associated into the potential consequences of this transformational activity...and that was partially my responsibility.

As an external consultant, my learning is to calibrate the extent to which the sponsor has *really* considered the initially unintended consequences of the leadership development. What if one or two high calibre leaders choose that their development is best served in another place? What if one decides the organisation's values are not as aligned with their own as they had thought? What if one self-deselects because they don't want to lead, they want to pursue a technical expert role instead? What if they bring their whole self to making transformational decisions? What if a few high potential leaders *stay*, benefit from the development and challenge the existing culture or strategy – is the organisation prepared for that challenge? What is the organisational appetite for the ripples that may arise?

So, in conclusion, this observation is as much for myself as a consultant as for the organisations with whom I work.

In planning leadership development provision; fully *associate* to consider the impact on the individual leaders concerned, their teams, the organisational strategy, culture, values, senior team and, above all, *be sure you really want this*, because in the words of an attendee at one of my NLP leadership programmes after a while applying it to himself and back in the workplace... 'this stuff really works!' ■

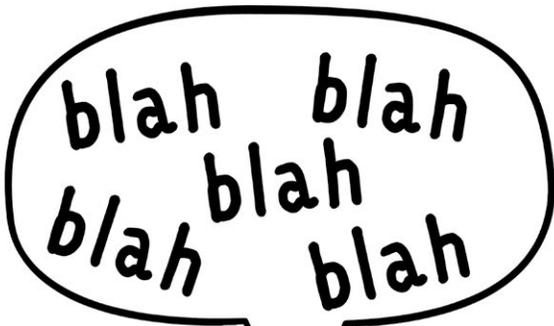
Reb Veale is an NLP Trainer, mBIT Trainer, coach and psychologist who has been facilitating individuals and businesses over 20 years to fulfil their potential. Reb and her partner Mark Deacon run Reveal Solutions, delivering accredited NLP and mBIT training, coaching and facilitating leadership and organisation development. They also publish a range of development products, such as 'Developing Emotional Intelligence' cards and the new 'Successful Appraisal' cards, which can be found at www.revealsolutions.co.uk. Or follow Reveal Solutions on Facebook to receive occasional newsletters and offers.

The Drunken Monkey Mind

Working with your inner chatter

By Caitlin Collins

“The voice was more often critical than encouraging”



Our local NLP practice group recently devoted an evening to the topic of Inner Dialogue: the Voice in Your Head.

Resolutely, if regretfully avoiding the tempting topics of auditory hallucinations and communications from other realms, the group focused on the kind of internal chat that we all experience much of the time. As NLP enthusiasts we were comfortable discussing this in terms of parts of the psyche and other people's internalised voices. For many people the inner chat took the form of a fairly continuous voice that commented on what they were doing (or had done, or were thinking of doing). The voice was more often critical than encouraging, and, unsurprisingly, most people wanted to change it or get rid of it.

NLP-ers are a resourceful bunch and there were lots of suggestions for lovely NLP processes that could be applied to change the inner voice, including Core Transformation, Time Line, Reframing, Pattern Interrupts, Parts Discussions, Changing Submodalities and others.

Many of these processes apply the presupposition that 'underlying all behaviour is a positive intention' and take a constructive approach to change that respects the positive messages of the inner voice however harshly it may be manifesting.

But I want to go a step further. I know NLP is all about change. I like a nice change as much as the next person and I particularly like the constructive approaches to change that NLP offers. However, in this instance I'd like to propose something more radical. Let's stop perceiving the voice in the head as a problem to be changed, eliminated or tinkered with in any way. Instead, let's see how we can learn how to be at ease with it as it is.

Past, present and future

First, consider where your inner voice is located in time. Most of our verbal thoughts are stories we tell ourselves about either the past or future. Those about the past are often to do with our sense of identity, while those about the future are often to do with our hopes and fears. Both are as seductive as any soap opera and we get caught up and absorbed in them. If

“Let’s stop perceiving the voice in the head as a problem to be changed”

we can just bring our attention to the present moment flow of simple, clear awareness, the inner chat loses much its force.

- **Past** – Story: our identity.
- **Present** – Simple, clear awareness.
- **Future** – Story: our hopes and fears.

Try it now for a few seconds. Just notice being present, here and now. You may find it helpful to use a reference point: try resting your attention on your breathing, one breath at a time. What happens to that inner chat when you focus your attention on the present moment flow of simply breathing? This experiment leads us to the next step.

The natural dance of the mind

Next, in true NLP style, I’d like to offer an ‘as if’ belief: just consider how things might be different if you were to act ‘as if’ you believed it. Here it is. ‘The mind is naturally creative: thoughts and feelings are arising and disappearing within it in a continuous dance. This is not a problem and there is no need to do anything about it.’

The mind naturally generates appearances – visual images, thoughts, memories, dreams, and verbal chatter. It can also be blank for a while – just ask Natalie Bennett of the Green Party, whose mind famously went blank when she was asked a question during a live interview in the run-up to the election! When we go to sleep there’s a period of blankness before our dreams begin. Where do dreams come from? Can we really claim them as our own? They just appear, sometimes influenced by our waking experiences, sometimes not. It’s like that with our thoughts. There’s no need to get involved with them: we can let them come and go, and just enjoy the display.

Of course, our inner dialogue can sometimes be useful. Being able to think things through clearly enables us to review past experiences so we can learn from them, or to imagine future possibilities so we can make plans. Insistent thoughts may be nudging us to take necessary action. Sometimes insights arrive – light bulb moments – and that’s great; it’s an important aspect of learning. But much of our inner chat is just stuff: repetitive stuff. There’s no need to get excited about it, no need to judge it as good or bad, no need to react either for or against it. Grass grows; birds fly; fish swim; minds jump about and chatter!

This repetitive mental activity, especially the jumping about and chattering, is what the Asian meditation traditions are referring to when they talk about the monkey mind. In the Buddhist view, it’s even worse: the monkey appears to be drunk! And, in an early example of what today’s coaches call ‘leveraging the pain’, the Buddha pointed out in detail the troubles that letting a



drunken monkey run one’s life would inevitably lead to, thus motivating his students to want to find a way to do things differently.

Awareness

The Buddha recommended meditation as an essential tool to free ourselves from the drama of events occurring in the mind. Meditation includes a wide range of practices; here I’m referring to the practice of simple, direct awareness. We start by noticing what’s going on; meditation teachers are always pleased when students complain about how their practice is making them madder – it isn’t of course, it’s just that they’re now noticing it! Then, momentarily at first, we become aware of the space of the mind in which the crazy thoughts are dancing. (For some people the words silence or stillness work better than space.) We learn to rest our awareness in that space (or silence or stillness), without being distracted by the chatter of the drunken monkey. This naturally brings us into the present-moment flow of awareness. Gradually, no longer being so intoxicated by the drama of the soap opera, the drunken monkey mind begins to sober up.

The more we can relax, the better. The relaxed mind is open, boundless, immense as the ocean, vast as the sky. Meditation allows us to notice how, when a fascinating thought attracts our attention, the mind tightens. The ocean shrinks to a teacup. Any little ripple in that teacup seems huge, like a storm wave, and we experience it as a problem. So we relax, and the mind expands again. The ripple is no longer a problem; there’s no need to do anything about it.

Simples!

So there you have it. Simples! However, although this practice is simple, that doesn’t mean everyone will find it easy. We’ll still need all those lovely NLP change processes to help people who are struggling with a destructive inner dialogue. But I’d like to hope that learning to manage a drunken monkey could be a useful addition to the wonderful NLP box of resources. ■



A Meditation Practice

Sit comfortably. Relax. Take a couple of deep breaths, breathing all the way down into the belly.

Notice how you feel in your body. If you need to, adjust your posture to be even more comfortable. Relax some more.

Now, gently bring your attention to your breathing, the physical process of breathing, the sensation of breathing in the body. Notice the rise and fall of the belly. If you like, you can continue to use the breathing as a point of reference to help you to bring your attention home to the present moment whenever you notice it wandering off.

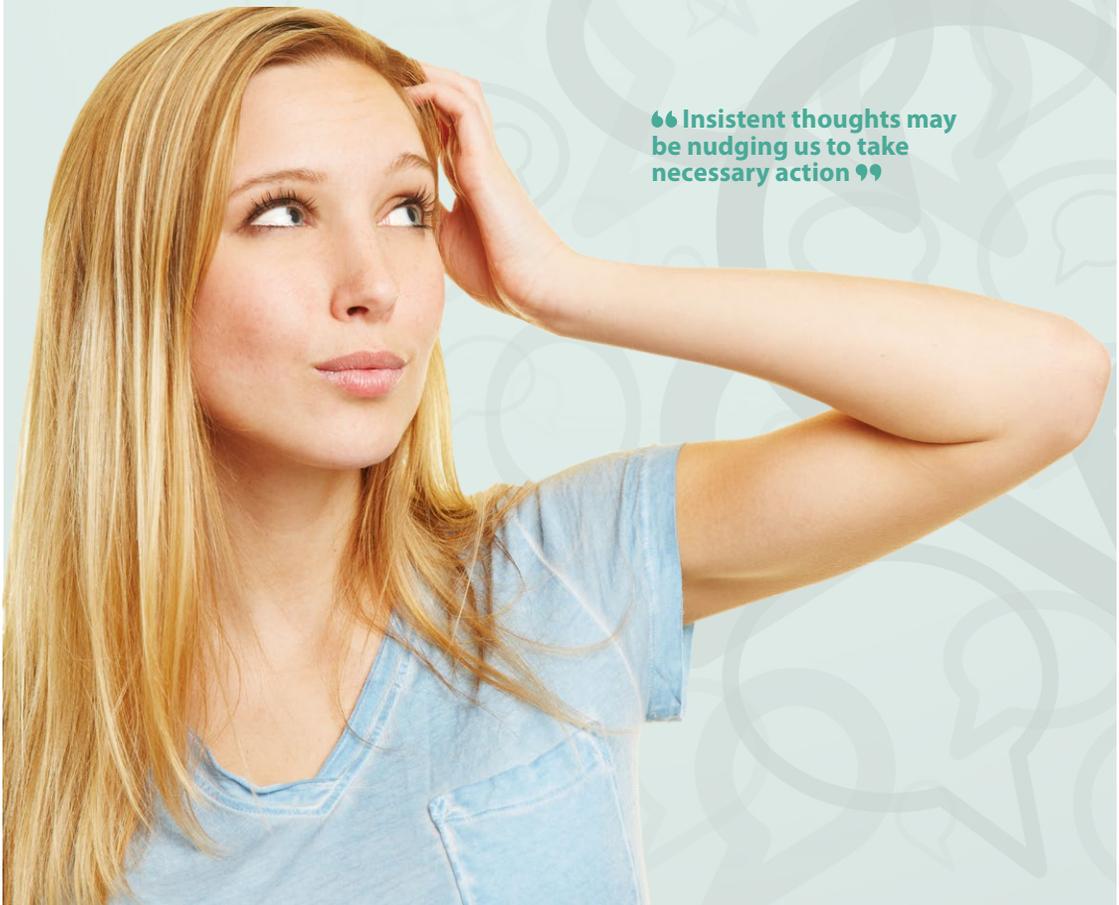
Now, gently bring your attention to what's going on in your mind, meaning your present moment flow of awareness. Notice any thoughts that might be arising, especially any verbal chatter. Just notice the process of these thoughts coming and going; don't get caught up in the content of what they're about.

Very gently, softly, relax some more, and let your mind soften, and open, and expand. Let your attention rest lightly in the space, the stillness, or the silence within which the mental chat is taking

place. Notice how, whenever your attention is distracted by a thought, the mind shrinks and tightens around the thought. Each time that happens, just relax, and soften, and open, and let the mind expand again, and redirect your attention to the space, the stillness, or the silence within which the thoughts are arising. There is no need to do anything about the thoughts; no need to follow the mental chatter. Just let the mind's activities come and go as they dance in the space, the stillness, the silence of the mind, the mind that is vast as the ocean, vast as the sky.

Meditate like this, very gently, very lightly, very simply, noticing what's going on, and relaxing, and opening to spaciousness, stillness, and silence, over and over. Whatever arises in the mind, it's fine, it's ok; the mind is vast as the sky; there's room for anything to arise, and to dance, and dissolve. Be at ease in this natural great space, aware of thoughts and mental chatter but undisturbed by them, just as the ocean is undisturbed by its waves and the sky is undisturbed by its clouds.

“Insistent thoughts may be nudging us to take necessary action”



Diary of a Wannabe Researcher (Part 4)

By Guy Whitmore



Guy Whitmore

Since submitting my last article to *Rapport*, I have spent much of the last few months knee deep – or so it would seem – in research literature.

I was warned at the off that a review of existing research would be a huge task, something reiterated by the many people who told me there are ‘thousands’ of pieces of research out there relating to anxiety, anger and driving.

Well, it seems they were wrong – it’s hundreds! In fairness though, in the long run, they may actually be proven right as I constantly discover new material.

Whatever the number, it will come as no surprise to learn there is plenty of information on driver behaviour, and its association with anger, anxiety, mood state and age.

What may also come as no surprise, sadly, is that from what I can see, there is scant research into NLP and how it has been used to deal with driving related anger, mood state, anxiety and stress.

There are articles about how NLP has been used to improve teaching techniques in the physical act of driving, but little on using NLP as a tool to overcome negative emotions behind the wheel.

With this in mind if any reader knows of any such information, please do drop me a line, it would be really appreciated.

That aside though, reading previous research papers has been extremely useful.

A single page article isn’t long enough to go into detail, but the point I’m keen to make is that it has been highly informative. I, therefore, cannot emphasise enough the importance of reviewing previous papers carefully and diligently.

Time and time again, I found information that provided new ideas, avenues to consider, or findings that have implications for the research being put together.

An example of this is one paper highlighting that candidates who ‘self report’ can be subject to memory bias, whether intentional or unintentional.



It may be obvious to seasoned researchers, but it was something I hadn’t considered.

I had intended to ask participants to include a driving diary as part of the research. Do I now continue with that as part of the data collection?

At the moment, the jury’s still out on that one, so all thoughts welcome.

As I say, there is too much information to share in one page, but there is one thing I would like to share, mainly because I feel it demonstrates the need to use NLP to help drivers overcome fear and anxiety.

In one paper, the work in 2001 by Garrity and Demick was referred to, which looked at personality traits and driving behaviour. It reported a ‘significant’ relationship between the mood state tension-anxiety, which is strongly related to neuroticism, and negative driving behaviour.

Those in the world of NLP know how effective it is in helping those suffering with tension, anxiety and neuroticism to re-frame into more positive states. While I may be getting ahead of myself here, I believe the statement clearly demonstrates NLP offers massive potential in helping a road user’s state of mind, their behaviour behind the wheel, and ultimately, road safety.

If any reader knows of any research papers they feel would help, be it driving behaviour or emotions generally, please email me on guywhitmore01@gmail.com. ■

66 There is scant research into NLP and how it has been used to deal with driving related anger 99

The NLP Professional (Part 9)

Team NLP

By Karen Moxom

I have always promoted a collaborative approach to life – we all have things we are good at and I believe the best team is one which enhances and plays to the skills of each individual.

I can think of one or two examples where this idea of coalition or collaboration does work well. What about Formula 1 racing, where all the drivers compete for an individual championship, at the same time as representing their team, who have an eye on the constructors' championship.

What about the TV programme, *The Apprentice*? Wouldn't it be true to say whilst all the contestants are competing for one prize, they initially stand the best chance of winning the prize by working as a team, so they can win the challenge every week.

I do think sometimes, like the contestants on *The Apprentice*, the field of NLP is quite inward looking and tends to focus in on the NLP community rather than outwards at the general public. Remember the research – at least 79 per cent of the public have never heard of NLP...so if they haven't even heard of it, then it probably isn't going to be within their range of options when they are facing a particular challenge.

So what could happen, if we started working together from the point of view NLP needs to be noticed and recognised as a viable option first? Let's future pace and imagine, just for a moment, we have reached the stage where everyone in the UK now knows NLP is a credible solution for their particular problem...

Let's assume your ideal business model is to be seeing two clients a day, i.e. 10 clients a week, and you only take four weeks' holiday every year. Let's also

assume the average client likes to have the equivalent of 10 NLP coaching sessions. Now let's be generous and assume even though the whole UK population (currently 60 million, and rising) knows about NLP, only half of them want to hire an NLP Professional for 10 sessions.

Ready for the maths? So how long would it take you to coach half the UK population? It would take you 625,000 years to coach half the UK population (i.e. 30,000,000 people x 10 sessions ÷ [48 weeks x 10 clients per week] = 625,000 years).

What if you are a trainer? Perhaps your ideal business model is to run four NLP training courses a year, with 250 people on each course (you may as well think big.). It would take you a mere 30,000 years to train half the population (i.e. 30,000,000 people ÷ [250 per course x 4 per year] = 30,000 years)...and this is only to Practitioner level.

Now, unless you have discovered the secret to eternal life, I suspect this isn't going to happen. So, if we really do believe NLP can make a difference then perhaps we do need to work together to get NLP known about, and then we can all take a share in the increased demand for our services.

At least this way, by acknowledging there is plenty of potential business to go around, we could collectively coach half the UK population a little more quickly, because I don't want to wait 625,000 years before the social impact of NLP really does start making a difference to society.



“The best team is one which enhances and plays to the skills of each individual”





“Team NLP could model camaraderie and team spirit to elevate NLP to the next level”

great things. This is often drawn to our attention when there is some sort of disaster, such as an earthquake or hurricane – we experienced this camaraderie for ourselves in 1980, when we were having our family holiday in Barbados, which was rather dramatically interrupted by the arrival of Hurricane Allen.

Even with this abundance reframe, NLP practitioners may still question why would we want to work together? Sometimes, greater things can be achieved as a team.

Think about the ‘Team GB’ relay team who represent us in the Olympics. Our runners, as individuals, do not even reach the final of the 100 metres. But as a team, we can, and do win medals in the 100 metres relay finals because somehow, whatever the four runners put together as a team creates something which is more powerful and successful than each of them as individual runners.

Our Team GB relay runners certainly demonstrate the principle behind one of my favourite quotes by Mattie Stepanek (American poet, 1990–2004):

‘Unity is strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration wonderful things can be achieved.’

Let’s imagine, for a moment, there was a ‘Team NLP’, made up of every person who has ever invested in NLP and bought into the principle of the NLP Profession. So what great things could Team NLP achieve? What parts of the model could we adopt in order to make Team NLP succeed, and in the process, ensure every individual within Team NLP also enjoys success?

For a start, one of the things Team NLP would do is work as a team – just like in the relay, personal differences and squabbles are left behind once the race starts and everyone does work as a team when it counts. There may be squabbles along the way – golly, my brother and I used to fight like cat and dog when we were children. But when he got knocked out at school one day (not by me, I hasten to add), and was rushed to hospital, all those squabbles, disagreements and arguments were forgotten and we really pulled together as a family to make sure he was ok.

If we really need convincing about the value of teamwork, just remember how communities pull together, both in times of adversity, and also to achieve

We didn’t know anyone in the area, and yet everyone worked together to clear roads and ensure everyone in the community had adequate shelter...but they went further than this. They all helped each other rebuild their houses, their businesses and their schools and their communities – it really was ‘one for all and all for one’.

Team NLP could model this camaraderie and team spirit to elevate NLP to the next level.

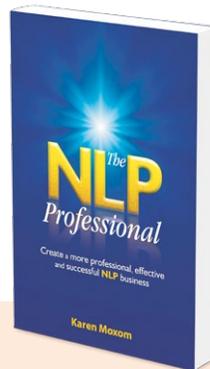
Think about a large corporation for a moment... one which employs thousands of people and has many different departments. It’s a fairly safe bet that on occasions, there is in house squabbling between departments, and there will be times when ‘Sales’ disagrees with ‘Marketing’, ‘Finance’ have an argument with ‘Admin’ and everyone falls out with ‘HR’.

Whatever the internal disagreements, you can be fairly certain as far as the public face of the company is concerned, it presents a united front where everything appears to be harmonious and runs smoothly. The public front of the company is usually what the public will be buying into, so it is important it looks good, from the outside at least.

We all recognise more damage is done to any one of the political parties when they ‘wash their dirty linen in public’, as my grandma used to say. Even if it does amuse us as curious observers, it never seems to do a great deal for their popularity rating.

The same applies to NLP as a profession. As NLP Professionals, we could do our bit to chunk up and ensure NLP, as a whole, is recognised by the public as a viable alternative, at which point we can each step up as individuals and offer to play our part.

So this is my dream...and I will continue to support the NLP Community to create this as reality. ■



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