

THE MAGAZINE FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

# rappoort. <sup>19</sup>

SPRING 2010

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or Spd Rdng?**

**Change, ecology  
& social beliefs**

Stop Wrestling  
with your Problems

**S.U.M.O.**  
them

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WOMAN OF THE YEAR

**Publisher - Karen Moxom**

### Welcome to the new, refreshed Spring issue of Rapport. What a brilliant start to 2010!

There are some real gems in this issue and certainly some features that have had me sitting up and taking notice.

I was lucky enough to meet Kris and Tim Hallbom at the NLP Conference last year and they share their Dynamic Spin Release process with Cait (p10).

What a superb philosophy and reframe we have discovered in SUMO (p18). I have started applying the seven simple questions to great effect.

David Molden draws our attention to social beliefs (p32) and the impact these can have on us as individuals – something to be even more aware of in the future.

In fact, I am going to be really busy applying all the great tips and techniques offered in this issue – it's

a good job I have, at least, learned to read about the more quickly, thanks to Susan Norman and Jan Cisek (p20).

I love the way Robbie Steinhouse has integrated his knowledge and understanding of Qigong and NLP and mapped across the underlying principles (p14).

And thank you, Cait, for sharing an excellent business model for mutual support, which can be adapted to suit most situations (p38). We will certainly be adopting some of these strategies in the future.

And with a General Election on the horizon, Eve's article on politics is both enlightening and timely (p36).

So for now, let's look forward to some lighter evenings and warmer weather.

*Until next time*

**Karen**

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# Kris and Tim Hallbom

## Put a Positive Spin on your Problems

By Caitlin Collins

“There’s a shift from a more mechanical approach in NLP toward a more spiritual one”

Since one of my favourite NLP presuppositions is the one about how we already have all the inner resources we need, it’s no surprise that my favourite NLP methods are those that illustrate this principle particularly well. A simple parts reframe to resolve a problem often reveals hidden treasures, while a Core Transformation session can open a goldmine within, not only releasing the presenting problem but shifting perceptions and deep beliefs to enable profound life changes.

Now NLP trainers, authors and innovators Kris and Tim Hallbom have come up with another way of unwrapping the gift concealed in a problem. Doing my homework for this interview, I’ve been practising their method of Dynamic Spin Release and in the process adding it to my list of favourites. Blending the universal principle of spinning and the psychology of archetypal metaphors with NLP, the Dynamic Spin Release includes many varied methods that can be applied to almost any problem state, limiting thought pattern or physical issue.

Based near San Francisco, Kris and Tim are among the pioneers of NLP, having trained with NLP’s co-developers Bandler and Grinder in the 1980s and worked with Robert Dilts and Steve and Connirae Andreas. When I call Kris for our interview, it’s a grey afternoon here on Exmoor, a few spots of rain rattling against the window; by contrast, I hear, the San Francisco Bay Area is – yes – sunny and warm... Kris’s morning is starting brightly, and her voice over the phone matches the California weather.

### NLP and other disciplines

Like so many other NLP methods, although the Dynamic Spin Release can work as a simple problem-solving technique, it has a much wider application. So it makes sense for our discussion to begin with the interaction of NLP with other disciplines, such as the fields of psychology and spirituality.

‘I guess it was in the early 90s that I started seeing a shift from a more mechanical approach in NLP towards a more spiritual one,’ says Kris. ‘Robert Dilts included spiritual elements early on in his Neurological Levels work, of course. Then Tim and his colleagues were among the first people to use NLP modelling skills to learn from shamans, and shamanic elements spread out into the NLP world. NLP has gone in many directions since then, and to some degree the concepts and terminology are being absorbed into the mainstream; for example ‘reframing’ comes up in ordinary conversation now.

‘In a way, there’s a risk of NLP becoming increasingly marginalized as the trend nowadays is towards mixing things together, and different disciplines are losing their separate identities. For us, our roots are in NLP, so we always reference what we’re doing in terms of NLP. Our mission is to get it out in the world and teach people about human patterning and deep structure, and make a positive difference in people’s lives.’

### Healing a headache

In true NLP style, the Dynamic Spin Release technique came about through practical experiment. ‘We stumbled on it one day, when I had a headache,’ Kris recalls. ‘When I asked Tim to help, he mimicked the motion of pulling the headache out of my head and asked me to imagine the pain as a three-dimensional image and to describe the submodalities of what it looked like. Well, it looked to me like a reddish-pinkish brain; then I noticed that it was moving, rotating clockwise. And Tim sort of twirled his fingers and suggested I should

## “Spinning our problems away goes back a long time”

spin the image counter-clockwise. So I did, and not only did the image disappear, so did the headache! So we both got interested in what was going on, and started doing the process with our clients, working with all sorts of issues, not just physical pains.'

### Discovering gifts

Along the way, Kris and Tim have refined and improved the process. They discovered that some clients were reporting images of gifts or treasures appearing in place of the old image. 'We were asking clients to spin their image faster and faster until it would just explode and dissolve into space,' explains Kris. 'And then we found that some kind of "gift" would appear in the space, something meaningful for the client that they could bring back into their body with a profoundly healing effect. So now we ask people to look for these metaphorical gifts as an intrinsic part of the process.'

What are these gifts and where do they come from? In NLP terms they might be understood as coming from the unconscious mind of the client, but Kris is able to add to this from her background in Jungian psychology; she sees them as metaphorical archetypes. 'Carl Jung put forward the idea of a collective unconscious to which all humans have access,' she explains. 'He described this collective unconscious as a vast reservoir of images formed throughout the development of humankind. Although these archetypal images are common to humanity, the significance of a particular archetype to the individual person is specific: the archetype often appears as a symbol or metaphor – maybe a diamond, a star, or a rose – which is exactly what you need at that moment in your life. Tuning in to the collective unconscious and gaining access to the archetypes that are relevant to you can transform your life, and the Dynamic Spin Release process is one way of doing that.'

The Hallboms have been enthusiastically sharing their Dynamic Spin Release with clients and with other coaches and therapists, with some spectacular results. 'People love it,' says Kris; 'they find it easy and quick.' There have been good results across a wide range of issues from gambling and addictions through business problems, psychological and emotional issues, as well as physical illnesses.

### Spin is everywhere

All this talk about spinning brings to mind just how ubiquitous



the spiral and circular motion are in our lives and in nature. 'Spin is everywhere,' agrees Kris. 'Our planet is spinning on its axis while simultaneously revolving around the sun. The sun is moving through our star cluster, which is riding on the outer arm of the galaxy, which is itself spinning through the universe; while, at the other extreme, there is spin in the tiny particles of atomic physics. And in our own homes water spirals down a drain, our dogs circle to lie down, we twirl our hands and fingers as we talk – and we talk about how our lives are in a spin, we need to unwind, and we want to turn things around!'

In fact, says Kris, 'The idea of spinning our problems away goes back a long time. Sufi dancing – the marvellous trance-dance ritual of the Whirling Dervishes – goes back at least to the 12th century. The dancer twirls and spins in a precise rhythm, representing the earth revolving on its axis while orbiting the sun, and by dancing becomes emptied of all negative thought and enters a spiritual ecstasy. The word "dervish" literally means "one who opens the doors", and throughout history the dervishes have been associated with wisdom, medicine, poetry, and spiritual enlightenment; the poems of the great poet Rumi were said to have been inspired by his practice of Sufi dancing. And in our own time, Richard Bandler has been spinning negative feelings into positive ones for several years.'

I'm struck by the sense of abundance and generosity that is coming across in our conversation. Not only is this evident in terms of what happens in the Dynamic Spinning process itself – the opportunities underlying problems, treasure in the gaps, magic of the mind; but also in Kris and Tim's enthusiasm and willingness to share. 'Giving and sharing are among our core values,' Kris agrees. 'It's about bringing integrity to what you do and how you treat people. Then everything works out, and you can go to sleep at night and feel good about what you've done that day.'

I think karma comes into it too: if your mission is to make a positive difference in people's lives, and you're true to your mission, then your genuine spirit of giving will bring gifts into your life! ■

### Discovering the Gift: a Dynamic Spin Release Process

- Identify your problem: a physical pain, or limiting belief, or unwanted thought or emotion.
- Notice the physical sensations and / or visual images associated with the problem.
- Imagine removing the problem and placing it outside you, so you can see it floating in front of you in the form of an image or symbol.
- Determine which way it's spinning: is it clockwise or anti-clockwise? If it seems motionless, which way would it turn if it were spinning?
- Reverse the direction of spin, and spin it faster and faster in the new direction, until the image explodes and disappears – and a new, healing image or gift appears in the space in front of you.
- Identify the positive message from the gift. How is it meaningful for you?
- Bring the gift back into your body, and notice all your new feelings and understandings.
- Now look out into your future and see how your gift will positively influence your life.

# Meditate to Integrate

By Robbie Steinhouse

In this piece, I want to look at meditation, consider the general question of whether it has a role in the teaching and application of NLP, then present a specific exercise which combines traditional Chinese meditation with modern NLP.

There are many kinds of meditation. The best known type involves concentrating one's attention on a repeated sound. This is a powerful and proven technique, but for my taste concentrates too much on the Auditory: traditional Chinese meditation works with

all rep systems. The kind I shall discuss forms a part of the broader physical and spiritual discipline called Qigong (pronounced Chee-gong), which is closely related to Tai Chi.

I should say a little about my own experience before setting out. I was a student of meditation before I studied NLP, so have long been interested in the interaction between the two disciplines. I now teach NLP, and make meditation an important part of my teaching. Why?

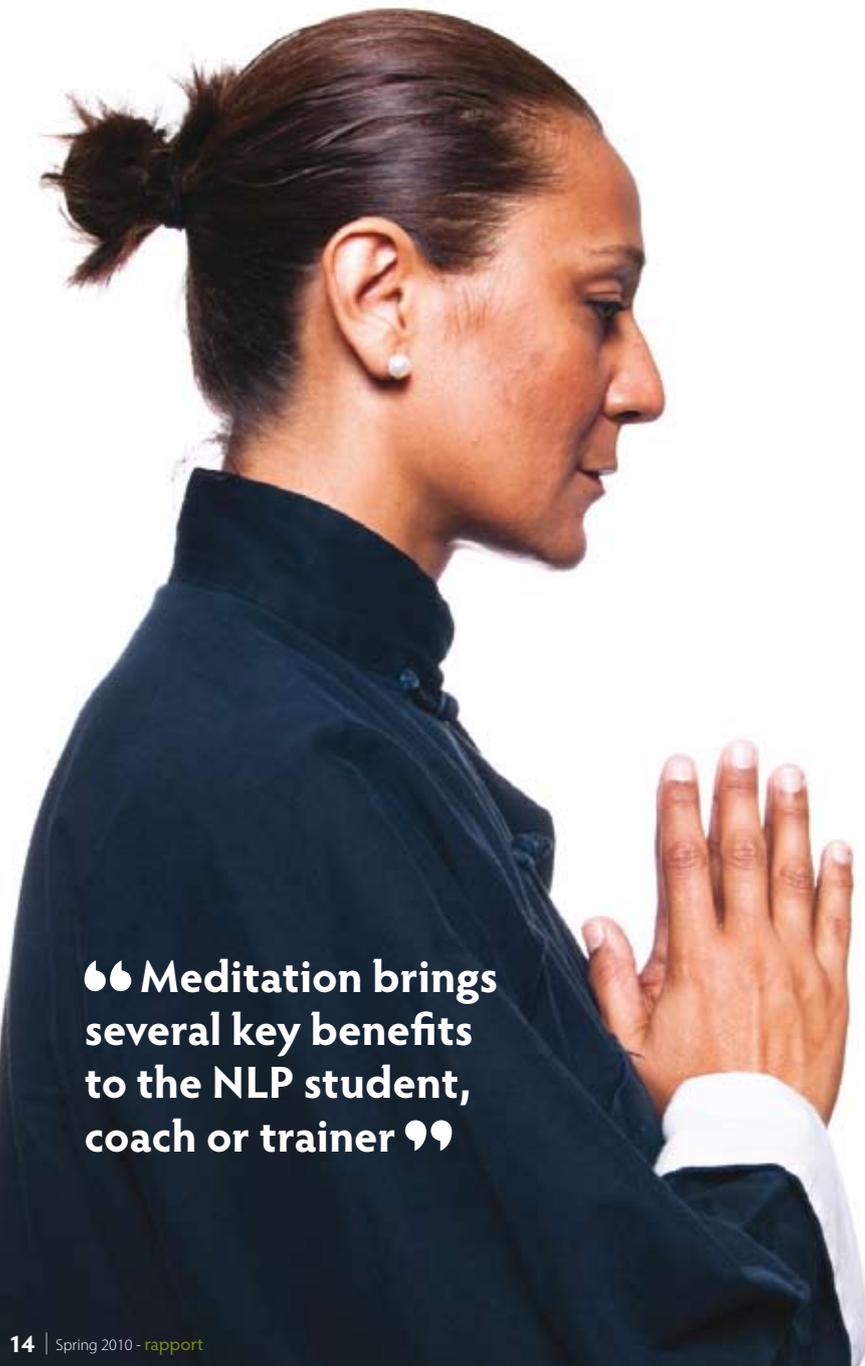
## **Meditation and NLP**

Meditation brings several key benefits to the NLP student, coach or trainer. I start each day of my training with a meditation, and students find this gets their minds into a state of readiness to learn. This is partially an exercise in anchoring; they come to associate the meditative state with subsequent learning. It also acts as an anchor for me, to get me into 'teaching mode'.

I could use other anchors, however – why this one? Meditation is a great way of clearing the mind. In a meditative state, one is able to notice thoughts and feelings arising from inside oneself, but not be bound to connect to them or follow their promptings: the meditator becomes an observer of him- or herself. This seems to be an excellent state in which to learn: put away preconceptions and simply be curious!

I am also a coach, and before coaching, I use meditation as a way of stilling my mind, so I can concentrate on the client. Meditation is, of course, a state: the various techniques (counting the breath, visualisations, mantras and so on) are simply anchors that bring about that state. Experienced meditators can access the state directly, without using the techniques: this skill enables the practitioner to rapidly enter a useful NLP state, of being open and available for clients.

Finally I simply want my students to have the benefits of meditation. We live in a stressful world, and studies have shown the value of countering the effects of



“Meditation brings several key benefits to the NLP student, coach or trainer”



## “Put away preconceptions and simply be curious!”

this by using meditation. One of the key presuppositions of NLP is that the body and mind are one system, and meditation is an excellent way of putting that presupposition to work for us.

### The Qigong approach...

The term Qigong is of quite recent origin, but the practices date back many thousands of years. At the heart of it is the notion of Qi, or vital energy, which flows round the body, more or less freely – the aim of Qigong is to ease the flow to promote physical and spiritual health. From an NLP perspective, one does not have to accept the concept of Qi. However, I personally find it useful, and would also point out that the presupposition “energy follows intention (or attention)” supports the concept. But in the end, NLP is essentially about ‘what works’, and Qigong should be judged against this criterion.

Another central concept in Qigong is that of the Dan Tien (or Dantian) or Centre of Power. We have three of these. The most powerful one is situated three finger widths below the navel and two finger widths inside the body, in the abdomen. This is the seat of life force, and the ‘centre of energetic gravity’ (and almost of physical gravity) in the body. Anyone who has practiced martial arts or Tai Chi will be aware of the attention paid to this part of the body. The next Dan Tien is the heart. This is the seat of emotional energy. The third Dan Tien is in the middle of the forehead, and is the seat of intelligence of all kinds: not just ratiocination but intuition.

### ...and other models

Other ‘triune’ models map elegantly onto the Dan Tiens. The first is the three archetypal energies of strength, softness and humour. The link is quite easy to make: strength is a quality of the first, abdominal Dan Tien, softness a quality of the heart, and humour (and more generally, the capacity for perspective and objectivity) a quality of the upper Dan Tien. A refinement on this model

is the concept of the ‘shadow’; the over- or under-representation of each energy in the psyche. For example, people with too much strength can become savage; people with too much softness can be flooded by emotion; and people with too much humour / intellect can either become manipulative or fundamentalists. On the deficit side, people with too little strength can become victims; with too little softness, excessively stoical; and with too little humour / intelligence, dim-witted.

Readers familiar with New Code NLP will also spot the similarity with the three perceptual positions used in Robert Dilts’ Meta Mirror, with the assertive power of first position linking to the abdomen,

the empathetic power of second position linking to the heart and the objectivity of third position linking to the head.

Breathing itself maps (almost) neatly onto these three energy centres. We have three ways of breathing, abdominal, intercostal and clavicular. Abdominal is the most powerful, and comes from the first Dan Tien. Intercostal ▶



▶ breathing, using the muscles around the rib-cage, comes next, and is anatomically linked to the heart Dan Tien. The third Dan Tien... Okay, we don't do a huge amount of breathing with our forehead, so the mapping isn't perfect, but clavicular or 'upper-body' breathing is often associated with people who are 'too much in their head' and disconnected from their deeper physicality, so there is a meaningful link.

The great thing about the above links is that they enable us to create an exercise that combines quite abstract NLP concepts such as the Meta Mirror with the three archetypal energies, a more emotionally charged model, and with the physicality and spirituality of Qigong breathing – a powerful mixture. Let me take you through it...

### An NLP Qigong meditation

Breathe deeply into and out from your abdomen. Be aware of the power that emanates from this place, and think of a time when you were strong. When you have that clearly in your mind, notice what you feel and where you feel it, and what sounds and

visual images accompany it.

## “Meditation is a great way of clearing the mind”

Now, look inside yourself for the two shadows, times when you have

been overaggressive and times when you have been a victim. As with your memory of strength, locate the VAK concomitants of these shadow states. At this point, it is important not to judge the states, but just 'hold' and accept them, maybe with a touch of curiosity. Having visited both states, too much and too little of the energy, use your abdominal breathing to reconnect with your natural, balanced state of strength – and notice the difference between this and the state that accompanied your two shadows.

Next, repeat the same formula for the intercostal breathing. This time, think of a time when you were gentle and emotional – in the best sense of the word: feeling strong, empowering love. Notice what you feel and where you feel it, plus sounds and images, then visit the two shadows, of over-emotionality and coldness, before returning to your original point of healthy, energized emotion.

Next, do the same for the third Dan Tien, breathing with your upper body, connecting



with your humour and intelligence and describing this connection in VAK terms, then visiting the shadows before returning to your original connection.

The three archetypes, and the three Dan Tien, need to work in harmony, so the next part of the exercise is to integrate them.

Keep breathing deeply and imagine your Qi – or however you visualize your life energy – flowing round you. Imagine it entering with your breath, flowing on through the second Dan Tien down to the first one, deep in your abdomen. Then imagining the energy moving on, up through your spine into your head then out as you exhale. 'Visual' people find it helpful to have an image of this – some kind of white mist is a popular one, or flowing liquid: whatever you need.

Qigong talks of five qualities of breath, and as you do this part of the exercise, it can help to bring these to mind. The qualities are 'long, deep, even, slow and fine' (fine as opposed to coarse). As you feel yourself breathing in and out and as you visualize the energy flowing round you, try saying: "The breath is long. The breath is deep. The breath is even. The breath is slow. The breath is fine." This creates a complete VAK experience.

The outcome of this

exercise should be a greatly improved ability to calibrate our own inner states, and a better balance between those three archetypes (Judith de Lozier once said that "When something is wrong in my life, I know that one of these three energies is out of balance.") If the proponents of Qigong are right, it could also bring health benefits through a better flow of energy through our system.

What I particularly like about this exercise is that it is an example of NLP at its best. It uses NLP as a springboard to reach out to other cultures and traditions, and to take and use ideas from them, not in the spirit of an intellectual land-grab but as part of humanity's bigger journey towards self-knowledge. It does not tie us into any philosophical systems: we can take or leave the concept of Qi, and just do the exercise and be curious about how it affects us. And, I believe very strongly, it works – practicing it makes you more grounded, more balanced, more clear-headed, more eager to live and learn. That surely is what NLP is all about. ■



# Stop Wrestling with your Problems S.U.M.O. them

Paul McGee is known as the S.U.M.O. man and his deceptively simple philosophy provides powerful tools for dealing with life's problems. As he told Andy Coote, sometimes you just need to 'shut up and move on'.

In Paul McGee's world, SUMO is not Japanese wrestling. It stands for the phrase Shut Up, Move On which we can "say to ourselves (and sometimes others) when we are acting or thinking in a way that is hindering our ability to succeed."

When I spoke to Paul, known as the S.U.M.O. Guy, we talked about his approach to, and long history in, personal development. When he talks about overcoming issues that are holding you back, he speaks from personal experience. For Paul, S.U.M.O. long since moved from being "a bit of a catchphrase" into a life philosophy.

All of the six Principles (see Box 1) are intended to create the question "what do you mean by that?" "People remember the strong visual metaphors and the word play. People find the 7 questions (see Box 2) so useful, I give them out on postcards."

Paul accepts that Shut Up, Move On can be seen as aggressive "but it really doesn't mean 'get over it' or 'pull yourself together' - although there may be occasions when both responses are necessary. S.U.M.O. is meant to be a challenging, thought provoking and memorable message that reminds you to press pause and remember that you can choose how you react."

Paul is "a child of the sixties" and grew up in Sale in Cheshire. He took a vocational degree leading to a qualification as a probation officer or social worker. The course included behavioural and social psychology and work experience as a trainee probation officer and with terminal cancer patients.

On graduation, Paul decided that he didn't want to pursue a career as a probation officer. Instead, he ran a job club in Bradford for a year before joining Unilever as a graduate management trainee in human resources.

It should have been a good move. "I was flying high and then my world came tumbling down. I was diagnosed with ME at a time



**“I need an abundance mentality but with a business head as well”**

when 8 out of 10 doctors still didn't believe it was a real illness. The press helpfully called it 'yuppie flu'. Going from a well-paid job with prospects on to £35 per week Invalidity Benefit was tough both physically and psychologically, so for me it was very real. Nothing quite prepares you for that traumatic shift in your life."

It was challenging in many ways. "Having nothing else to do but eat, I gained weight and people would say 'you look well', meaning 'you look fat'. My own doctor told

me 'we need to check out your mental health' and I was sent to see a psychiatrist in Liverpool. I was fortunate to have family and friends to support me."

Whilst going through the illness, Paul began to get into personal development. "I was lent a set of tapes by Richard Denny, a sales guru. I remember he said something like 'within every adversity there is a seed of equal or greater opportunity'. I was going through some real crap but I began to believe that something good could come from this."

His illness shaped Paul's thinking about the future course of his life. "Trying to get a job was a challenge as my health would fluctuate from day to day, so I started thinking about self-employment. That way, I could work when I was well and take time to recover when not - and I didn't have to lie at a medical."

After 15 months he came off invalidity benefit and began working for the Dale Carnegie Training organisation as a self-employed consultant. "By then I was an evangelist for personal development. I was responsible for promoting and selling their premium training products. It was hard work but I got free training and some great personal development from it. I earned very little but, having been on invalidity benefit, I had low expectations of income."

From 1992, Paul worked in outplacement with former British Coal employees. As well as standard material on CV development, interview techniques and job search, "I was able to try out material that I was learning from the likes of Jim Rohn, Anthony Robbins and Zig Ziglar with people who really needed and benefited from it. It was a tremendous time and I felt I was helping both practically and psychologically. I moved on to Careertrack, where I had to hold an audience from 9am to 4pm as the seminar presenter. There I learnt how to develop and present



### S.U.M.O. Principles

#### Change Your T-Shirt.

Remove the Victim T-shirt and take responsibility for your own life.

#### Develop Fruity Thinking.

Thinking affects Emotions, which in turn affect Actions, which always leads to Results. When you change your thinking, you ultimately change your results.

#### Hippo Time is OK.

Understand how setbacks affect you and how to recover from them. We all need time to wallow a little..... just be careful how long it lasts.

#### Remember the Beachball.

What colours you see of a huge beachball depends on your perspective. Increase your understanding and awareness of other people's worlds. This will help to bring about more successful relationships.

#### Learn Latin.

Carpé Diem = seize the day. Change comes through action not intention.

#### Ditch Doris Day.

Forget the attitude 'que sera, sera, whatever will be, will be'. Create your own future rather than leave it to chance.

### The seven simple questions to help you S.U.M.O. in any situation

1. Where is this issue on a scale of one to 10?
2. How important will this be in six months time?
3. Is my response appropriate and effective?
4. How can I influence or improve the situation?
5. What can I learn from this?
6. What will I do differently next time?
7. What can I find that is positive in this situation?

### S.U.M.O. for schools

In the age group 5 - 11 years and for reception classes, Paul has worked with a primary school teacher to develop and road test the program. Nine schools piloted aspects and helped the program to develop and ripples are beginning to happen. This approach is part of SEAL (Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning). "It is a mixture of DVDs and games all weaved into the curriculum" Paul tells me, "The kids love it and I am staggered by how it is working".

In secondary schools, there is a different approach with different material. It is part of the PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) element of the curriculum and also 'Every Child Matters' helping to achieve inclusion and to teach citizenship. "We are training teachers to use the material and training associate coaches to work with the kids, running sessions and assemblies on subjects like managing stress and revision days."

good material."

By 2002, Paul was talking about some of the S.U.M.O. ideas but didn't have the concept or a brand for them. "I was delivering a coaching and counselling skills course and talking about approaches to helping people deal with issues when one delegate said, 'if all else fails you can tell them to S.U.M.O.'. I'd never heard that before but it soon became a bit of a catchphrase. I was already talking about 'faulty and fruity thinking' and began to develop the seven questions. I also began talking about changing your T-Shirt and listening to our inner coach instead of the inner critic."

"The idea of S.U.M.O. was working for people. Someone said 'you should write a book about it'. I thought about it and, despite my doubts, began to see how, like a chef, I could take the ingredients I had and turn them into my 'signature dish'"

"I had most of the principles but something was missing. People challenged me that I was being a bit too glib and that sometimes people can't move on straight away. A friend had just lost a Rugby League match and was talking about how his wife was trying to get him to cheer up but 'sometimes you just need to have a good wallow'. I said to him, 'Steve it's hippo time' and I knew I had the principle I needed. I give people permission to move into Hippo Time and then, when they are ready to move on, they can do so."

When the book was looking as if it might be too short, his publisher suggested that Paul needed to think about the architecture.

"He meant, 'Paul you need one or two more principles'. I chose to talk about goal setting and that became 'no more Que Sera, Sera - you need to Ditch Doris Day'.

Despite the use of metaphor and the reframing inherent in S.U.M.O., Paul didn't consciously base S.U.M.O. on NLP principles. "I've never done an NLP practitioner course but it is difficult to work in the world of personal development for so long and not come into contact with NLP concepts on a regular basis."

Paul is currently developing the S.U.M.O. Academy to allow others access to the material. Companies where S.U.M.O. has been used successfully in training, can license the material for wider use in the company. Paul is also developing an associate programme for other trainers. "I'm not intending to create direct competition; they have to be offering training in a related area where S.U.M.O. would add value. In order to protect the brand, I've decided that I need an abundance

“Within every adversity there is a seed of equal or greater opportunity”

mentality but with a business head as well."

S.U.M.O. continues to develop. Paul is developing S.U.M.O. for schools (see Box 3), has an ongoing relationship with Africa through a friend and S.U.M.O. is extending internationally. "The principles behind S.U.M.O. seem to apply across cultures and age groups and so far have been relevant in every country on the planet where it has been tried out. The idea of 'broken records' and victim T-shirts have delegates nodding in agreement. The visual ideas, such as the beach ball, are also readily accepted. No matter where they are and no matter what the issues they face, people seem to function in the same way." ■

### Books

**S.U.M.O. (Shut Up, Move On): The Straight-Talking Guide to Creating and Enjoying a Brilliant Life** (Capstone 2006) (ISBN: 978-1841127118) Paperback: 212 pages £7.99

**S.U.M.O. Your Relationships: How to Handle Not Strangle the People You Live and Work With** (Capstone 2007) (ISBN: 978-1841127439) Paperback: 278 pages £12.99

**Self-confidence: The Remarkable Truth of Why a Small Change Can Make a Big Difference** (Capstone Dec 2009) (ISBN-13: 978-1906465827) Paperback: 248 pages

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# May I Have Your Attention, Please?

By Mindy Gibbins-Klein

**A**ll human beings have a basic need for attention. We are hard-wired to want others to listen to us and care about us. We need it in our business lives as much as in our personal lives; in fact, it is only by customers or clients paying attention to us that we have any business. And from experience, I can only see one main way of attracting attention to ourselves: communication with others.

Communication for business is often expressed as direct: writing and publishing books, articles, blogs and papers; putting content onto the web for clients to read, see and hear; and speaking to individuals, small groups or even large groups. Increasingly I am seeing savvy marketing colleagues include indirect communications in the mix: word-of-mouth, public relations, and branding which is essential for the former two.

It may help to consider your clients' attention as a commodity, much in the same way their time and money are a commodity. By definition, this means that people have a limited amount of attention that they are willing or able to give, and this needs to be shared amongst all of the people competing for it. Just think about your Inbox for a second. Does it fill up with unwanted emails, newsletters and other demands on your attention as well as your time? Of course it does, and it is the same for your clients.

My friend and progressive thinker Ron Wopereis has proposed a kind of 'attention bank' where you pay in and make withdrawals of attention when you need to. If someone has spent their time and attention with you, you will be more likely to spend time and attention listening to them when they need it. And vice versa. You get the idea.



## “It may help to consider your clients' attention as a commodity”

Let's assume for a moment that people are not paying the right amount of attention to you and your business. You have several choices. Firstly, you can shout louder. This is the knee-jerk reaction that most business owners make. They begin to bombard their market with more articles, more newsletters and emails. They put more and more emphatic and dramatic wording into those communication tools and chuck them at the market at an accelerated rate.

The problem with just doing more is that you are adding to the information overload which is already a problem for your clients. So approach number two is to be cleverer.

I'm sure you can think of some television adverts which really broke the mould and got your attention. But can you name the brand from every advert? Not many people can, and that is because the message is not always relevant to us at that time.

So there has got to be more to your communication than quantity, drama and pizzazz. The answer, I believe, has to do with your commitment to real engagement. I wrote about engagement in the last issue, and I am convinced that it is the key to real connection with your clients and hence more business. You want to consider writing and speaking in a more intimate way, and share more of yourself in every communication. And yes, we're still talking business!

Apparently only eight percent of all Twitter posts get 'retweeted' or forwarded to others. It confirms my point that attention is by nature limited and people have become picky about where they spend it. I have been using Twitter for about a year now and generally I get a few retweets from my posts. Two posts, however, were retweeted about ten times more than the others. When I looked at the titles and the content, both were much more engaging than my average ones. Maybe I should have just sent those and not all the others. Isn't hindsight great?

In the end of the day, though, there may be people with whom you wish to engage, but they still don't want to pay attention. In those cases, instead of banging your head against the wall, I would advise you to consider turning your attention to those people who are receptive, and the attention bank could make you wealthy. ■

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An international speaker, trainer and consultant with 20 years in marketing, training and coaching, and over 300 clients who have written and published excellent books and articles quickly using the Book Midwife methodology, Mindy writes and speaks to thousands of executives, business leaders and entrepreneurs each year about how to become a thought leader and turning expertise into enhanced credibility and more business.