

RAPPORT

The Magazine for NLP Professionals

AUTUMN 2011 / Issue 25

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Business

Using NLP to
Facilitate Groups

James Caan

Passion, Values and
Integrity in Business

Reframing the Frame

Adapting NLP
to use with
Young People

Team NLP
Greater than
the Sum
of its Parts

Shelle Rose Charvet

The Queen
of LAB Profile

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The Relevance of Conferences

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RAPPORT

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Welcome to this special Autumn issue of *Rapport*, "The Magazine for NLP Professionals"

This is the 25th Issue to be published since I took the helm at ANLP in 2005 and the 87th issue to be published since the Association was first established in 1985.

You may notice the subtle and not so subtle changes in this issue, which have been made to reflect the continued success and honed in focus of the Association and following feedback from our valued members.

L.Michael Hall noticed one of these changes in the last issue and commented "I really, really like the new strapline - the emphasis on making NLP a Profession and the journal for NLP Professionals is a great step toward improving the quality of this field. I think that is an excellent choice!"

In line with this renewed laser focus, we have made some further improvements in this issue. *Rapport* is now more clearly organised into three distinct sections. 'Applications in NLP' which covers practical ways NLP is being applied in health, education, business and life in general. The 'NLP for Professionals' section now contains those features which will be of interest to all qualified 'NLPers' and includes our regular debate, 'NLP Legends', as well as more detailed articles about NLP tools and techniques.

Our third section - 'Business Advice for NLP Professionals' consolidates some of our existing regular feature and interviews, some new columnists who will be guiding new and seasoned professionals alike, through some of the subtleties of running an NLP Business.

We have, of course, kept all our regular and successful features in *Rapport*; our applications section includes our regular health and lifestyle features; our celebrity this issue is James Caan who features on **p6**; Chris Matson and Will Thomas, qualified teachers and NLP Professionals explain how to elicit peak performance in staff and pupils in our Education article on **p8** - something which would benefit quite a few in the education system, I suspect, as the novelty of the new academic year starts to wear off and the real work towards SATS, GCSEs and A Levels begins.

Judy Rees interviews business facilitator Kimberley Hare about the impact of using NLP for group facilitation on **p16**; Eve Menezes Cunningham introduces us to the concepts of letting yourself glow through a series of interactive questions on **p14**.

Our NLP Legend this issue is Shelle Rose Charvet - *Rapport* contributor and ANLP member Alison Matthews volunteered to interview Shelle during a training course in the summer and introduces us to the Queen of LAB Profile on **p20**.

Caitlin Collins, another regular member of our editorial team, interviews ANLP member Chris Menlove Platt on **p32** and explores the mindset and attitudes required to succeed in the sport of running - something I will definitely be modelling over the coming months as I attempt to get and then stay fit!

Talking of regular favourites, our 'NLP Professional' debate asks the topical question around the value of conferences in this day and age, especially with the advances in online interaction. 'Topical'

because you may well be reading this issue at (or after) the NLP Conference in November... if you are, you can tell we do endorse the conclusions of the debate and wholeheartedly support the annual NLP Conference event.

Penny Power, founder of Ecademy and author of *Know Me, Like Me, Follow Me* joins Mindy Gibbin-Klein and Bev James, as regular business advisors in this issue. Penny is one of the UK's leading experts on social media and she will continue to share her views and offer advice to readers in future issues. Her first article can be found in our Advice for NLP Professionals section on **p56**.

We also welcome Dr Suzanne Henwood and Dr Paul Tosey as regular columnists in this section, who will be guiding us through the often daunting field of NLP Research over the coming months, with a series of articles designed to shed more light into this particular area of NLP (**p58**).

It would be very remiss if I didn't mention my own book at this point - *The NLP Professional* is published in the Autumn and reflects on many of the values, beliefs and mindset held by myself and shared by many NLP Professionals. Andy Coote, who is one of our valued *Rapport* editorial team has written a generous and positive feature about *The NLP Professional* on **p46**.

I talk about some aspect of our team in every editorial piece and because we have increased the size of *Rapport* this issue we now have enough space to introduce you properly to the ANLP and *Rapport* Teams. Each issue one member of the team will introduce themselves in more detail, starting with our newest member, Jane Lloyd, our Accreditation Manager...

I do hope you enjoy this issue of *Rapport* and we look forward to supporting you, the members of the Association for NLP for many years to come.

Until next time

Karen Moxom



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From Mindset to MINDFLEX:

Eliciting peak performance learning states in staff and students

By Chris Matson and Will Thomas, Education Consultants and Teachers

Speaking to you as teachers, we have often found that the more flexible we have been in the classroom, the better the outcome for learners.

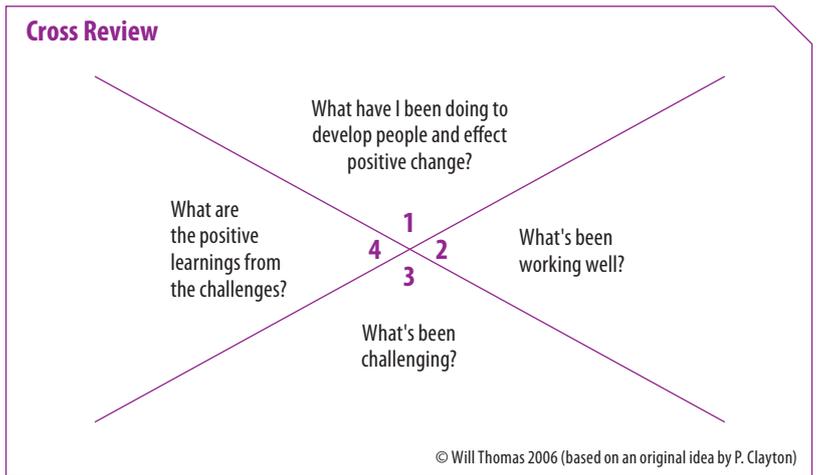
Too much predictability can cause some learners to undermine your learning objectives, through imagining they know what is coming next.

A degree of predictability is comforting to learners – we might refer to this as our ‘expectations’ – that is useful. To get the best out of people though, you have to extend their ‘comfort zone’. That is where a little NLP can help individuals move into ‘stretch zone’; feeling stimulated and enthusiastic, resulting in learning. Greater flexibility in thinking, what Will calls ‘MINDFLEX’, encourages colleagues and learners to learn and develop.

Our brains are plastic, in the sense of being able to change physically by creating new neural pathways, meaning the functionality is extended to more choices, as a result of new, ‘creative’ thinking.

Let us look at an initial evaluation tool, the Cross Review (*1), that enables you to think differently.

Pick a specific scenario where you are feeling ‘stuck’. It could be your relationship with a topic, learner, class, or colleague. Answer each question, in order, as fully as possible. Write down your responses as they come into your mind. Be honest with yourself! The idea is that as you get to number four, you are guiding yourself about how to think differently about the problem, in order to get movement.



Let us take an example through the process of ‘Cross Reviewing’. Find an undisturbed space and time that you can dedicate to reflecting on the questions in each quadrant. We will assume, for the exercise, that there is a ‘difficult learner’, and you find that they consistently drift ‘off-task’ and on intervention, tend to become disruptive and argumentative.

Quadrant One asks, ‘What have you been doing to develop and effect positive change, (in this case) with this learner?’

The reality for most people is that they keep to a set repertoire of behaviours, their ‘comfort zone ways’





Will Thomas



Chris Matson

“It is that predictability that some learners so like to utilise to undermine any learning objectives that you have had when you entered the room”

and never try anything different. We have all seen the child whining for a toy or attention. A person's initial response might be limited to, 'No', or getting angry.

The child however, then employs a series of possible approaches from, 'All my friends get X', or 'It's not fair!' to 'Why?' repeated ad infinitum, or the ultimate emotional blackmail, 'If you really cared you would', or 'Whatever!'

What often happens is that the person, using a limited set of options, gets 'worn down' into giving in, usually justified internally, as being, 'For the sake of peace'.

Back to the question: 'What have you been doing *specifically*, to develop and effect positive change in this young person?'

At first we all tend to give answers that, though true, tend to 'justify' our stance. Keep going! Other points *will* come up as you start to 'dig deeper'.

Once you feel that you have exhausted the responses to that question move to Quadrant Two: 'What has been working well?'

Despite possible initial thoughts, there will have been times when Pupil X *was* on-task and *did* respond well. Notice when those times occurred. Is there a pattern? Is he/she better in the morning or afternoon? Before, or after a break? Is there a difference after food/liquid intake? What type of task/work/subject was going on when Pupil X engaged?

The questions for Quadrants Two to Four are also about getting enough information out, in order to begin to notice patterns that may have eluded you previously. We recommend writing your answers out on paper to also *distance* yourself from the emotional response you have to the situation/individual; which is called *dissociation* in NLP.

Quadrant Three demands, 'What's been challenging?'

This has nothing to do with playing the 'blame game', nor is it about playing the 'glad game'. We are not ignoring issues. This is about honesty. Not only state the challenges, but also acknowledge here, what you have found challenging.

Now to the final Quadrant Four: 'What are the

positive learnings from the challenges.'

Before you say, 'Hang on! I thought you just said we're not playing the "glad game"?' let us reassure you. We most definitely are not. Every situation or event has positive learnings to come out of it, even if it is, 'I'll never do that again!'

By structuring our thinking through such a tool, we can avoid blind-spots and generate new insights or possibilities.

You may, for instance, now realise that trying to take the bag of crisps from the pupils is like taking a juicy bone from a dog; not a good move. However, you might have given them a choice that they agreed to employ. You both learned something then.

Once you have detailed responses out on paper, whether as notes, mind maps or some other note-taking method, review your comments, thinking about what you might do differently to get a different result.

Having your ideas and comments out on paper allows to you to literally and metaphorically 'get a new perspective' on the issues.

It is also useful to cycle through the same process with the same challenges two or three times, with a short break in-between.

In short we have a new relationship with the issue, we have 'MINDFLEX'.

Having completed the Cross Review to flex your thinking about an issue, we now come to an extension tool, a standard NLP technique called, 'Perceptual Positions'.

'Perceptual Positions' allows you to step into the shoes of another and gain insights as to possible resolutions to the problem. This process is to help you guide another person, or yourself, to a more resourceful state by exploring the Problem through multiple perspectives. With a little preparation you could also take Pupil X through this process, if they are willing.

How to take someone through the 'Perceptual Positions' exercise is detailed on page 12.

'Cross Review' and 'Perceptual Positions' are just two 'tools' to help you move from 'Mindset' to 'MINDFLEX'. Our work in schools and with teachers reaffirms continually the power of flex over set when it comes to responding to young people (and adults) in schools and colleges. As they say...the person with the most flexibility in a situation stimulates the most learning...and that is what education is all about. ■



Will Thomas and Chris Matson will be presenting a much expanded version of this topic at the two day NLP Conference: Becoming a Highly Effective Teacher with NLP, starting on 17 November 2011 in London. For more information: Chris Matson www.amindtolearn.com / Will Thomas www.visionforlearning.co.uk / NLP Teachers' Conference www.nlpconference.co.uk

References

(*1) © Will Thomas 2006. With kind permission 'EduCoach' Home study and INSET Training Resource Pack.

Easy life?

How you can use your NLP skills in facilitating groups

Have you ever wished you could find a way to practice your NLP skills while still plugging away at a nine-to-five job? Quit future-pacing (aka daydreaming) and wake up! You could be missing a great opportunity: group facilitation.

Pretty much every organisation needs great facilitators to fulfil its true potential, according to Kimberley Hare, founder and managing director of Kaizen Training.

She should know. Hertfordshire-based Kaizen has been working in large organisations for 25 years, applying NLP in areas such as leadership development and influencing skills. And increasingly, there's a demand for specific training in facilitation, and for skilled facilitators.

Kimberley explained: 'There's a really strong need for having facilitators around in organisations who are able to get the best out of groups, whether that's a learning group, or a weekly team meeting, or to work with groups solving business issues and come up with creative new ideas.'

'Everybody wants more engagement – and the best way of getting that is to have people in the organisation who are able to act as the catalysts to unlock all that wasted initiative and energy.'

By Judy Rees

“There's a demand for specific training in facilitation, and for skilled facilitators”

'Particularly in these lean, mean, tough times, people are under even more pressure to find creative ways to resolve problems. And with the death of the command and control culture, people want to feel involved and encouraged, to be proud of the organisation they work for.'

At the heart of encouraging staff engagement is facilitation, she says. If you have not come across the concept before, it is all about running meetings in a participative way, so that everybody's viewpoint is heard, and the right people feel included in key decisions.

Hence the frequent requests to train companies' staff in facilitation skills – Kaizen's courses extend from novice

meeting-management to masterclass level, the icing on the cake for people who already facilitate as their day job – and to facilitate workshops and large culture-change programmes.

'Great facilitation helps people have the conversations they need to have, but probably would not have without support,' Kimberley says.

'One of our core beliefs is that the necessary resources are already present – in individuals as well as organizations – to solve their own problems and to create their own futures – provided that we learn together how to bring the individual and collective intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, creativity and inner courage into play.'

'When you unleash that collective wisdom, it really gets things done.'

'It's like that Margaret Mead quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has".'

Here is an example. One of Kaizen's clients, EDF Energy, dramatically improved employees' commitment to equality and diversity with a facilitated culture-change programme. Participants went from never having thought about diversity issues, to showing real commitment to honouring and valuing diversity.

Another client, a manufacturing company, used facilitation to engage staff in improving processes. They ended up saving thousands of pounds with simple, practical ideas – such as using a fan to spot any boxes that had accidentally been left empty in the packaging process, by blowing them off the production line.





Kimberley Hare

Consistently, facilitation has been shown to increase engagement, and reduce the waste of resources that result from unmotivated and uncommitted staff.

Kimberley explains that old-style command and control 'training' focused primarily on behaviour: 'You must smile and say, "Have a nice day".' But employees' real views inevitably leaked out.

Facilitation, on the other hand, can be about changing things at a more profound level, pulling together a group behind a shared vision, rather than giving 'do this, do not do that' input.

Her view is that at the heart of facilitation are seven key skills – the Elixir of Great Facilitation – which, as an NLP professional, you probably already have.

- 1 Outcome orientation.
- 2 Rapport.
- 3 Sensory Acuity.
- 4 State Management (yours and theirs).
- 5 Intervening Skills, including questioning and non-verbal behaviour.
- 6 Process not Content ('staying vegetarian' in Kaizen's metaphor).
- 7 Flexibility.

It seems the 'NLP spirit' of possibility, curiosity, and trusting in the resourcefulness that people have, fits perfectly with what the best facilitators do.

And that is one reason that facilitation can be a great place for NLPers to use their skills, even if it is just to make a dull meeting they have to go to more productive and interesting. Even if you are not in charge of the meeting, you can use your sensory acuity skills, encourage clear outcomes or help quieter members of the team to contribute.

If your NLP training focused on one-to-one work, rather than work with groups, a little thought will reveal ways in which the underlying skills (rather than specific change techniques) can be applied. To get started, check out the side panel for tips on how you can apply each of these skills with groups in your workplace.

You can make it easy for people to participate, to get behind goals and to get things done. After all, the word 'facilitate' comes from the Latin for 'make



easy'. You can improve productivity, and relationships. Who knows where that will take your career?

And there is another great benefit to you as a practitioner, says Kimberley. 'Doing this kind of work is the best form of personal development I've found.

'It's always edgy, always rich in learning, and not about being in 'control'. It's about being a Guide On The Side not a Sage On The Stage.'

For many managers learning facilitation for the first time, making the switch can be quite scary. They're being asked to give up the very 'boss in control' and 'expert'

behaviours which they may credit with their career success to date. But the rewards are great, says Kimberley.

'It's about them learning to get their joy from awakening the possibilities in others, rather than from being in control.

'It's about raising awareness of what is possible.

'Too many people are going to work, Monday to Friday, and they use 10 to 20 per cent of their potential, sitting waiting for the weekend. What a waste for the person, and for the organisation!' ■

The Elixir of Great Facilitation

NLP SKILL	THINGS TO TRY IN YOUR MEETINGS AT WORK
Outcome Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure everybody in the group has a shared and compelling outcome for the meeting... write this up somewhere visible so that it guides the meeting. ● Use a solutions focus to ensure the group makes progress towards the outcome – challenge the group if it turns into a 'talking shop' or goes off on tangents.
Rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use your pacing and leading skills to create more trust and intimacy in the group. ● If you find somebody in the group challenging to work with, step into their map of the world. Seek first to understand – then to influence.
Sensory Acuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pay attention to patterns of body language – including your own. ● Notice the language patterns people are using.
State Management (yours, theirs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can you influence the state of the whole group with your own energy? ● Use the power of physiology to change state – suggest standing up, or moving around to energise people.
Intervening Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask more open questions. ● Model transparency and authenticity with your own behaviour. ● 'Mirror back' what you see – without judging it.
Process not Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pay attention to group process – what is helping? What is getting in the way? ● Resist the temptation to push for 'your' solution.
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try three new things in every meeting you facilitate or participate in. ● Change the room layout, the furniture, or the location of the meeting. ● Vary roles in the meeting. ● Suggest using a new or different process to reach the meeting outcome.

If you would like to develop your facilitation skills further, check out www.kaizen-training.com for details of Kaizen's open and in-company facilitation masterclasses. Read more from Judy Rees on her blog, www.xraylistening.com

NLP with Sheep

A metaphor for what you thought you could not do

By Clare M Smale



In July I was sitting listening to Robert G. Allen at the National Achievers Conference. As he told us there is an author in all of us, I started scribbling the notes for this article in my conference workbook. Robert, Anthony Robbins and many of the other speakers talked extensively about modelling and strategies. The principle of modelling is to find someone who has already achieved in an area that you would like to experience better results yourself, discover their strategy and then use it. Tad James describes a strategy as ‘an internal and external set of experiences, which consistently produces a specific outcome’. Looking around the room, I wondered how many of the 10,000 people present knew how to put this into practice. Anyone who has been trained to NLP Practitioner level will have learnt the basics of modelling and this leads me nicely to the topic of NLP with sheep.

Using sheep was a ‘beer mat idea’. With the help of Chris Farnsworth, an experienced shepherd with a deep interest in people, NLP with sheep is a unique experience. Together, we work with groups of between 4 and 12 people and the first task is to round up a small flock of sheep without the help of a dog. A short video clip from sheep dog trials gives participants the opportunity to notice how the dog and shepherd work together and, if they choose to, they can model (or copy) some of the strategies they have viewed. This is a great team building exercise with established teams and it also works brilliantly with groups

of people who have never met before. It draws out many levels of learning around communication, how we filter our world, watching the expert, team working and leadership (or lack of it!). What are our natural tendencies in life – to be the shepherd, the sheep dog or the sheep? These are ‘wild’ animals and are reluctant to be penned – they have plenty of opportunity to escape and run in all directions to test the resilience of the group in achieving the task. Plenty of strategies do not work, the field is re-defined and the approach continually adjusted. Once everyone is committed and at least one person has stepped up to assume the overview of the shepherd, the sheep are finally penned and we then invite everyone to experience turning a sheep over onto its back. This does not involve the strength that you might think is required, but instead a specific mindset and technique that anyone can be taught.

Fire walking and board breaks are powerful tools commonly used on personal development courses to help transform fear and to inspire people to do things they initially did not think possible. Instead of hot coals, we use sheep! Participants often worry about working with the sheep, as for most people it is outside their area of experience. However, by the end of the session, they discover that their limitations may simply be the result of self-limiting beliefs and fears. They can then apply these insights to situations in their lives where they would like to make changes. To date, without exception and whatever the prior level of

fear and apprehension, every participant has demonstrated their new skill and accomplished more than they expected.

We use the TOTE model (George Miller 1960) to give structure to the goal of turning a sheep over.

TOTE model

The TOTE model (Figure 1) starts with a goal in mind. In the case of working with sheep, the goal we present to participants is to turn a sheep on its back. This is one of the most important skills of a shepherd as it is the prerequisite for shearing, checking feet and monitoring health and well-being.

TEST – the trigger – are we ready to start working towards the goal of turning a sheep on its back? There may be visual, auditory or kinesthetic requirements that have to be satisfied.

OPERATE – run the strategy for turning the sheep over successfully. We use NLP tool of neurological levels (see Figure 2) as a structure for finding out everything we need to know.

TEST – has the goal been reached? Is the sheep on its back in a way that enables it to be calm and comfortable so that the shepherd can start his or her work?

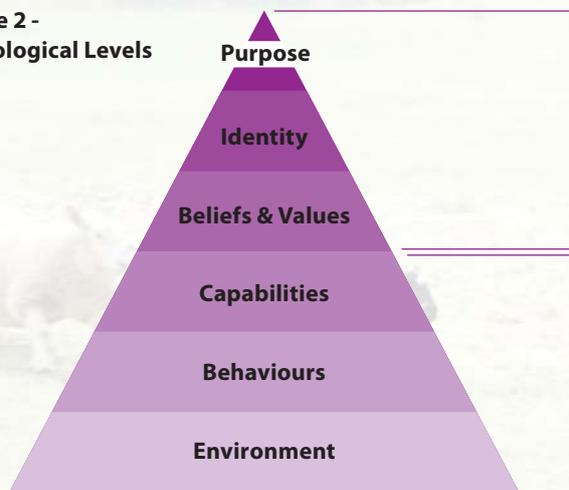
EXIT – the strategy has worked. The next task can begin (e.g. shearing) or the sheep can be released.

We use the very well respected NLP tool of neurological levels (Robert Dilts 1990) to elicit the strategy from the shepherd in order to be able to carry out the operate stage of the TOTE model.

Figure 1 - The TOTE Model



Figure 2 - Neurological Levels



Sources of passionate commitment

Evidence of passionate commitment



Neurological levels

This model breaks information down into different categories and it is most commonly shown as a hierarchy (see Figure 2). When we copy the strategy of another person, we tend to focus on the observable skills and behaviours that they exhibit, plus the environmental conditions that may be needed. In the case of learning to turn a sheep over onto its back, some common questions would be:

Environment – are the sheep in a small enough pen in a safe place?

Behaviour – what do I do next? What do I do with my hands, feet and posture? What order do I do things in?

Skills and capabilities – how exactly do I hold the sheep? How can I do that?

These three levels are observable and external. The real power and motivation to complete the task and overcome anxiety or fear however, comes from the next three levels, which are internal and hidden. By asking really great questions at the next three levels you will gain a much more intimate understanding of the strategy. Sometimes people struggle with the goal of turning a sheep, because although they can observe the skills and behaviours, they do not quite believe they can do it or may even believe the sheep is going to be hurt in some way. Recognising a conflict like this and then adding a more useful belief or identity, can transform the alignment of goal and make it more possible.

Beliefs and values – what do you believe to be true of yourself when turning over a sheep? What do you believe to be true of the situation? What is important to you about this task?

Identity – who are you in this situation?

Purpose – what is the bigger picture?

For what or to whom does this relate?

By uncovering these areas of the strategy it is possible to create a better alignment with the new skills and behaviours that are required and your inner self. Confidence and motivation for the task grows and the ‘can do’ mindset also grows. Stepping through all of these levels before operating the strategy allows participants to gather the practical information, self belief and motivation they need.

The goal becomes clearer, more compelling and achievable. Now you are ready to start applying the TOTE model. It fascinates me to notice that women tend to be much more successful at men in achieving this particular goal. I think perhaps many women know they cannot rely as much on brute force or strength to operate the strategy and therefore they listen and watch very carefully. They often complete the task quicker and more elegantly than the men as they more effectively execute the specific hold and sequence of movements required.

The photos speak for themselves and those participants who are initially most reticent, experience a huge sense

of achieving something new. When we succeed in doing something we believed to be very difficult or actually impossible, it shows we have learned to break through our limiting beliefs.

There have been additional and unexpected benefits of participating in NLP with sheep. Suzan has since used the same structure to model a local bee-keeper and has been so inspired that she has since been on a course in order to produce honey of her own. She is even talking about adding a couple of sheep to her menagerie! Russell has used neurological levels to model a professional rock guitarist in order to be able to gig for the first time himself and Sam has discovered the secrets of painting religious icons.

We recently used this process with a group of ward sisters in the NHS. They are all aspiring to be matron and as part of their leadership and management programme with inspired2learn they were asked to model high performing matrons in their local hospitals using the process described in this article. This had a huge impact on their development, revealing unexpected values, beliefs and identities that were of great importance in making a successful transition from sister to matron.

Modelling and strategies is one of most useful aspects of NLP. It does not need to be complex to be powerful and neurological levels provide a simple yet effective structure for getting going. ■

Clare Smale is an NLP master practitioner, trainer and coach. She works extensively within the public and private sectors. Clare will be presenting at the NLP Conference in London (17–18 November 2011) on ‘Reaching your goals by developing alignment between values and vision’. For more information about Clare’s events (including NLP with sheep), the Devizes NLP Practice group and other interests visit www.inspired2learn.co.uk or www.whitehorsenlp.com

Research in Practice:

A New Series on Research for *Rapport*

By Suzanne Henwood

Welcome to a new series of articles on research in NLP. Over the coming issues we will be exploring the area of research; from what it is, what constitutes evidence, to how we can develop skills to read and conduct research to get most value from it. As series editor, I will be liaising with academics and researchers in the field, who will share their experience and knowledge with the intention of raising the profile of research in NLP. As a community of practice, I hope that together we can set a direction of where we would like to see the field of research going in the future. I would encourage you to get involved, so that together we can evolve the debate about research in NLP through this series and through the ANLP web based research forum, <http://bit.ly/qOW2cA> and the ANLP Linked In Group, <http://linkd.in/op1U4R>. Let us know what you would like to see in future articles and do let us know your thoughts and anything you would like to share.

As an emerging profession, it seems timely that we look at the place of research in NLP and the more people involved in that discussion and development the better, so that we ensure we meet the needs of all those interested in researching and developing NLP.

By way of introduction, I am qualified as an NLP Trainer and employed as a senior academic in a Faculty of Social and Health Sciences, teaching (in relation to research) research methods and supervising Masters theses across the health field. I use NLP regularly in my teaching and supervising and am involved personally in a project exploring the use of NLP in leadership development of Consultant Radiographers in the UK. I have been involved in the Research Conference (<http://www.anlp.org/the-international-nlp-research-conference>) from its inception and am also on the editorial board of the Research Journal (<http://www.anlp.org/nlp-research-journal>). I offer my background and my experience to set the debate in motion and I look forward to learning with you, and all those who get involved in this series, as we explore research in NLP together in new and exciting ways.

I look forward to hearing from you
Suzanne Henwood

“ Together we can set a direction of where we would like to see the field of research going in the future ”

Research in practice: reflecting back and projecting forward

This then is the first of a series of articles exploring research in NLP. We will be setting the scene, marking where we believe research is currently at, and talking about some of the key themes which have impacted on research practice to date. From there, we will be looking at various aspects of research practice to develop and grow research awareness in the NLP community. We will be offering some development articles over the next few issues to help those new to research and we hope to open up a conversation about 'Where to from here?'

Let us open with a series of excerpts from a conversation between two researchers (and academics): Dr Paul Tosey, University of Surrey, UK and Associate Professor Suzanne Henwood, Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, as they consider three issues that have emerged in the past decade that are impacting on NLP:

1 EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Suzanne: Research is in my view becoming more and more important in order to provide evidence for what we do as professionals and as educators. In the past we would have been more willing to go with trial and error and not worried about having rigorous proof that our interventions worked. We would trust our inner judgement regarding whether techniques worked or not. In some fields however, including my own field in health and social care, it is imperative now that we show that something works to demonstrate its effectiveness, in order to get funding and support for its wider use.

This raises some interesting questions.

- How long, for example, does any data or evidence based practice stay current?
- At what point is a technique next tested to ensure the most up to date and most effective practice is still being used?

- How do practitioners find out what new research has been done, to then weigh up their current practice against that new evidence?

Paul: The move towards evidence-based practice has several dimensions. While it is justified as introducing greater certainty and standardisation, it may also restrict or constrain creative practice and can work as an obstacle to innovation. The question of what specifically constitutes evidence is also by no means straightforward. It raises the catch-22 that NLP is often in – criticised for having no evidence base, no empirical evidence to prove its effectiveness, but seen as not being worthy of research – because there's no evidence. Nevertheless the need to test and evaluate practice, and to challenge the view that practitioners can be satisfied with 'just knowing' that NLP works, seems useful.

Suzanne: One question then, for people in NLP who are coming from a non-research background, is 'how do you get underway with research?'

2 WHAT CONSTITUTES RESEARCH?

Suzanne: That brings me on to the second issue. In different disciplines, different levels and styles of research are valued differently. In health care for example, Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) are often deemed to be the 'Gold Standard' and any other, so called, less objective data is discounted by many.

Paul: In my view this is unfortunate. We should look at a wide range of styles and methodologies. What remains constant is to undertake all studies systematically and rigorously, ensuring that concepts such as bias, validity and reliability are considered and fully discussed, to enable the reader to assess the trustworthiness of the data reported.



Dr Suzanne Henwood



Dr Paul Tosey

Suzanne: My own view is that qualitative data exploring deeper understanding of a concept, or a study to explore people's perceptions of impact of an intervention, can be hugely valuable when done well. I do believe there are still more 'grey' areas, like case studies on single participants, which may bring into question, whether that alone constitutes research in the truest sense of the word. It certainly fulfils the search for knowledge and understanding often outlined in any definition of research, and may even fulfil the systematic requirement of data collection often quoted as required, yet somehow in isolation, makes me question the level of that work due to the extremely small and focused sampling. For me the line would then be drawn by the nature of the data collection and analysis undertaken, rather than the number of participants involved, but greater effort may be required to justify its place in the research paradigm and to have that data accepted as evidence which might be applied in practice.

Paul: As someone who concentrates on qualitative research, and who has done single case studies in the past, I both agree and disagree. The pressures on NLP are to provide a 'quick fix' of evidence from 'Gold Standard' research, yet that is probably the most difficult type to initiate. Among other things, it needs to be done by experts in that style of research if it is going to be credible and be published in the top international journals that really count for those purposes. I often find it strange that people still question the legitimacy of qualitative research – it has a long track record, especially in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and management. In the medium to long term, I think that building up a body of evidence based on case studies and the like is going to be to NLP's benefit. The issue with qualitative research is sometimes understanding that different, but still rigorous, principles of validity and generalisability apply.

Suzanne: Clearly as the series progresses there will be a need to explore the range of methodologies available and to look again at which best fit NLP. Alongside

“The more people involved in that discussion and development the better, so that we ensure we meet the needs of all those interested in researching and developing NLP”

that we will be exploring the aspects of validity, reliability and rigour within each of those methodologies, to help NLPers to understand, use and conduct research for themselves.

3 HOW CAN RESEARCH BE MORE ACCESSIBLE TO PRACTITIONERS, WITHOUT PRETENDING THAT IT IS SIMPLER THAN IT IS?

Suzanne: This brings us to equipping an emerging profession to be more involved in research. There are a number of people involved in NLP who have academic or clinical research backgrounds, who are providing mechanisms to discuss and disseminate research findings. This makes it easier for other practitioners to keep up to date with work being undertaken. However, there is an assumption that practitioners can read reports critically, understand research terminology and make sense of data presented (both quantitative and qualitative). This may be difficult for the layperson – including the average NLPer. It is through doing, teaching and disseminating my own work that I have learnt the skills to understand research at a deeper level. For me it is the formal taught components of academic courses undertaken - and especially the teaching of research methods to academic students - which have grown my own skills. It is reviewing written and presented material for peer review processes, which has made me explore my own ability to critique and make judgements about the quality of data

presented. I am not clear how this happens for many outside of an academic context – therefore I am excited about the possibility, at least in small way, of contributing to raising that discussion through this series of articles.

Paul: That sounds a useful theme. NLPers sometimes insist that people can't understand or use NLP effectively without undergoing training; should the same apply to research?

Throughout this series we will be looking at making use of research. Reading articles and reports critically and making a judgement about whether or not the study and the results are valid, rigorous or trustworthy. We will be looking at issues around bias, and how you might place limitations on any results due to the nature of the sample, or the data collection method for example. Being able to read and critique research is, we believe, the first step to getting involved in the field of research in practice.

This brings me right back to our introduction – do get in touch and let us know what you would like to see in the series. And if you have an area of expertise or passion you want to share, get in touch and we will look to include your thoughts in future issues. In the meantime, we will plan to look in the next issue at reading research critically and sharing some tips for what to look for as you make a judgement about results as you read them. ■



The Journey of being understood, liked and followed through Social Media

By Penny Power



Penny Power

Throughout history people have networked to achieve their goals and needs. There is no doubt that the term 'networking' has become a business skill in this century that no one can ignore. Offline Networking is extremely powerful when executed with the right mindset and attitude, but networking is now on steroids by online Social Networking such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Ecademy, to name a few of the networks that encourage you to connect openly, randomly and supportively.

I do fear that the 'social' technology is in danger of replacing an important culture and behaviour that should exist within any 'networking activity' and that is the power of reciprocity and relationship building. It is now almost too easy to connect and never re-connect. The desire for quantity of 'followers' is taking over from the desire to actually 'Know' and 'Like' someone.

Most of us have learned our business skills of sales and marketing during a transactional period of history when business was based purely on a trading relationship and the 'Suspect, Prospect, Customer' funnel model worked well in our marketing strategies.

The subtle change we are experiencing in the new

Digital World can be very hard to adapt to for this reason. In all my speaking at events and conferences, training courses I have run, workshops I have been privileged to deliver it is never the technology of the social media world that throws people, it is the new culture and philosophy of attracting 'Friends and Followers'.

We have now moved into a world that is social. With this social world comes the expectation that you should connect without the desire to transact, but rather to openly support and inspire others. Think about this, business now needs to be about delivering support and customer care *before* you transact, not only after.

The business model for this is extraordinary, we now have to build a cost of supporting our prospects as well as supporting our customers. We now need to replace our 'hunter' feelings and desires to more of a 'farmer' seeking to develop and nourish the fertile grounds in the hope that the connection may one day create a mutual benefit. I now like to think of creating a funnel of 'Strangers, who become friends and then those friends may choose to follow me'.

To clarify – this concept is the 'social way'. An attitude of Suspects, Prospects and Customers are a too targeted, almost manipulative way of utilising the opportunity to connect. We now have to consider 'strangers who may become friends through some interest and who may choose to follow you because you inspire them'.

This new world places us all in a position of being a 'leader'.

Throughout history people have networked to achieve their goals and needs

To have followers, you need to be leading something; a movement, a belief, a cause, a desire. Something that others can embrace and want to keep in continual contact with. Leadership in this age is not one of 'do as I say' but rather 'do as I do'. Your sentiment should be, 'Allow me to lead you into a better world through my knowledge and my connections'.

When I consider my journey with people that I follow, I first learn what they are 'Known' for, I then observe and see if I 'Like' their values and their thoughts and then I chose to 'follow'.

Finally, I ask you to consider that the people you surround yourself with are a new form of asset in your life. You have created Human Capital, I hope

that you have some Financial Capital, and now you have the opportunity to build your Social Capital; achieving things through the people you know and who like and believe in you.

So, perhaps as you think about your time online you could seek to give and support and inspire and very soon you too will have followers, and those people will be your greatest asset, as my belief online connecting is forever unless you proactively chose to block a connection, I wrote a Blog called 'till death us do part' to illustrate that we are connected 'in sickness and in health, through richer and poorer', that is a long time and one that requires to look after one another and of course look after our reputation. ■



Penny founded Ecademy, the UK's first social network for business, in 1998 at the age of 33 with her husband Thomas Power. Since then, Penny has successfully grown Ecademy into the global operation it is today.

The Ecademy community currently has over half a million members with an average of 15,000 new members joining each month. Ecademy is present all over the world with UK, USA, Europe, Asia and the Pacific Rim playing a part in contributing to the

tremendously diverse business conversations on Ecademy's Blog <http://www.ecademy.com/module.php?mod=blog&op=liste> page which was launched in 2002.

Penny is a published author, one of the UK's most inspirational female entrepreneurs and a highly engaging and sought after speaker.

Penny has authored a think-tank Manifesto, called Digital Business Britain to achieve a focus on the need

to inspire Small Businesses to change their mindset and exploit the web in a different way. Since the launch in March 2011, Penny has conducted extensive research to provide a solution and will be announcing her findings and offering seven key solutions in her White paper to be delivered to the market in September 2011.

To follow Penny on Twitter @pennypower / www.pennypower.co.uk / Know Me, Like Me, Follow Me is available on Amazon.

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