

Masters NLP Modelling Project – Finding my direction

Introduction

This project has evolved during my journey through the Masters NLP course, and I'm sure it will continue to evolve. I have had a fascinating time exploring ideas on this course that have given me the gift of seeing the world in a new and different light, making life so much more pleasurable.

My IT

My IT started with the desire to find the right direction for me and I came on this programme with that as my main aim. My first thought was that I wanted to model how people demonstrated or had clarity of purpose. I admire people who seem to be very clear in what they stand for and their work reflects who they are and what they do best. When I broke this down into a smaller slice I considered looking at how people maintained clarity of purpose when there were so many distractions around them, but then I realised that I knew how to maintain clarity of purpose when something held my attention, so the question became how do people find work which holds their attention – work that they really enjoy or even love? As I explored this question with my exemplars I was fascinated to learn that my presupposition that successful people must have very clear goals to aim for was actually not always the case. In fact, one of the defining moments of my modelling was when my third exemplar said to me that she did not have a major long term goal but rather a way of tuning in to what was right for her at the time. Suddenly my belief that you must have a long term goal in order to be successful was shattered – and I was able to start creating a model of how she tuned into what was right for her at the time. This led to my development of the concept of an internal compass which gives a sense of direction whatever the situation – based on balancing all aspects of what is true for you.

In order to focus my interviews I concentrated on a specific question relating to how people found or maintained their sense of direction; the slice I focussed on was how exemplars made a decision related to a change in direction.

Exemplars

Paula Radcliffe – Olympic Runner

Alex Partridge – Olympic Rower

Sarah Rowett – Freelance Trainer

Sheena Reid - Director of Talent Dynamics – Coach and Talent developer

Alison Lucas – Director of Training and Recruitment IRI Ltd.

Ingrid Uden - Director of Meeting Magic

Susie Armitage – Garden Designer

I chose my exemplars as they all demonstrated in different ways having a clear direction in life and being true to themselves in following that direction. I was sometimes surprised at how my exemplars saw the world, and this gave me an excellent insight into their beliefs and strategies which has helped me to form my model. I chose exemplars who I knew were quite different from me in some aspects of behaviour, and this gave me a lot of material to work with. I found that as I talked to people about what I was doing they expressed interest and so we ended up in a modelling session, hence the large number of exemplars!

I interviewed three of my models of excellence formally and two informally, as these flowed from conversations in the moment. I have also built into my project information I have gathered from two people from Olympic level sport – Paula Radcliffe, marathon runner and Alex Partridge, rower.

Paula Radcliffe

Paula Radcliffe is someone who to me has a very clear sense of direction, as demonstrated by her dedication to her sport and training, her clear view of drugs and cheating in sport and her personal sense of responsibility. I have read her autobiography which gives further substance to these values and beliefs.

Paula's direction is based on a love of running – for its own sake. When things get tough for her she goes for a run to clear her head and she knows that she will always run – whether competitively or not as she gets so much pleasure from the act of running. She also keeps running in perspective:

“Life is like juggling five balls in the air. They are health, family, friends, integrity and career/ achievement. These balls are not the same; the important thing to remember is that the career ball is made of rubber but the others are more fragile. You can take more risks with a rubber ball.....”

Alex Partridge

Alex Partridge is my husband's nephew and I have talked to him socially on several occasions about his rowing and how he motivates himself to train so hard and dedicate himself to his sport when there is little money or broader incentive. Alex demonstrates a huge sense of purpose in his training and commitment to the lifestyle of a rower (no alcohol, few nights out, lots of hard physical training), and yet is totally aligned with his aim of being the best rower he can be. This was particularly evident last year when he went from being a possible Olympic team member, to a member of the top 4 boat with Matthew Pinsent, to being pulled out through injury only 6 weeks before the Olympics. Alex handled these massive emotional events incredibly well, showing a balance between his mind and body and a sense of direction that lasted over many years.

Sarah Rowett

Sarah made a significant decision last year to move house from the town to country in order to make certain lifestyle changes that were right for her and her family. I explored this with her in an interview and then further discussion once I had produced the outline model. My experience of the interview was that as Sarah recounted the story of making the decision to move, and then looking for the right house to move to, the emotional side of the decision was very evident in Sarah's body language, both in terms of using her hands to express herself and her breathing and speed of talking. As I summarised back aspects of the strategy Sarah used, we got into deeper levels of emotion and insights which Sarah had not previously been aware of, and so it was a revealing process for her too.

Sarah's strategy for making the decision to move house is summarised as follows:

Gradual awareness of a feeling of wanting to be somewhere else (*Heart*)
Noticing a sense of feeling down on leaving the countryside after holidays (*Heart*)
Wanting a better quality of life (*Heart/ mind*)
Talk through with partner (*Heart/ mind*)
Start considering possibilities, look at whole issue as don't want to change home often, balance between wanting resolution and needing to check out all angles (*Mind*)
Plan finances (*Mind*)
Narrow down options by considering extremes and what feels right, considering fear of moving away from wider family to new social group (*Heart/ mind*)
Know in heart it feels right, and has a sense in her gut too (*Heart*)
Need validation and positive encouragement of partner (*Heart*)
Trigger event – neighbours complaint – brought idea into present and up priority list
Once made decision emotionally then make it happen practically (easier bit!)

Susie Armitage

Susie left a major corporate employer and set up in garden design in 1998. A series of events led her to taking up garden design and this has been the right decision for her over the last few years. I interviewed Susie about this decision and how she knew what direction she wanted to follow as she demonstrates huge enthusiasm for gardening, a real thirst for knowledge and energy for going further with her knowledge of gardens and business. Susie found the discussion fascinating and we are continuing to discuss the model I have created and how it might apply to her next steps.

Susie's strategy for changing direction is outlined below:

Knew it was time to move away from Mars (*Heart/ mind*)
Ready to do something more creative (*Heart*)
Interested in garden design (*Heart/ mind*)
Found a course (*Mind*)
Chatted to a neighbour which confirmed her view (*Heart/ mind*)
Fit with family plan to do up house (*Mind*)
Want to be in jeans and just be me (*Heart*)

This worked successfully for 5 years and now Susie is ready to make the next change which is:

Want to combine new knowledge of horticulture and landscape design with business challenge

Miss the intellectual side and cut and thrust of business

Ready for next stage of evolution

Exploring possibilities with others.

Alison Lucas

Alison works as a senior manager for a market analysis organisation and during a recent company reorganisation created and moved into her ideal role. This was not straightforward as Alison's previous role was being closed down and she did not like the look of the new roles that were being offered to her. Alison's strategy for getting what she wanted out of the reorganisation was as follows:

Preparation:

Analysing her strengths relative to company needs

Knowledge of how she is perceived in the organisation by key decision makers

Knowledge of the business aims for the future

Clear financial target for self

Clear idea of what skills she wants to develop for longer term plans

Decision making meeting

Spoke from a detached viewpoint – what is best for business

Only used logic and facts, no emotion

Confident in her approach – based on solid preparation and supporters in the business

Felt no emotion as detached approach

Knew her personal bottom line in the negotiation

Sense of her long term direction enabled easy decision on what is right to do now – this sense is all based in the head and through analysis.

Feedback from Alison

I fed back to Alison that her approach was very analytical and well prepared and asked how she managed to keep emotion out of a potentially difficult situation. She has a clear strategy to keep emotion out of work as she perceives that it is viewed negatively. Her main driver at work is to achieve a financial target and get balance between family and work life.

She found the discussion fascinating and was particularly interested in how you might use emotion safely at work, and also found it very enlightening in terms of her values and motivators.

Sheena Reid

Sheena left a blue chip corporate role and joined a smaller business to work as a coach and development consultant. Recently she made the decision to leave this business and work on her own. This was a difficult decision as she did not have any guaranteed income to fall back on, but she knew it was the right thing to do. This aspect of how Sheena made her decision fascinated me so we explored it in depth and this gave Sheena valuable insights too into how she made difficult decisions.

Sheena's decision:

This decision built over a long period of time – even when joined the small business she knew that it would be for a few years to gain contacts and experience but business style was not totally in line with her values

Head: Collected evidence on way of how others were treated and why they chose to leave – able to better manage the boss as a result of this. Supported in making the decision by husband although rationally this meant giving up 50% of income. Saw others leave and be successful - knew she could do the same.

Heart: Had vivid dream of sitting on stairs with boss above patting her on head – this was like a wake up call – very strong visual image which won't go away. Knew she had to act. Strong feeling in her core that this was right for her to move on – intuition told her it was right to be leaving. Self doubt about getting other work

Trigger event: Boss looked to issue new contracts with some changes, Sheena refused to sign (only one who did) Easy decision as knew she would be leaving soon – this was the trigger point.

Outcome: left and slowly built up replacement work. Is being authentically herself at work and this is leading to new work taking groups to the edge, and herself to the edge – she doesn't know what will then happen but knows that this is a powerful way to grow. This has enabled her to find her purpose combining a sound foundation with taking others to the edge.

Ingrid Uden

Ingrid is a successful business owner who set up a facilitation business in 2000 which is expanding and gets excellent client feedback. Ingrid has very clear views about what work she is prepared to do and what not, and is driven to succeed. Last year she made the decision to move further away from her own business and establish a new business with her husband which fits in with long term family plans.

I talked to Ingrid about her decision and how she made it and at the end of the discussion I feedback the key aspects that I had noticed. These were that Ingrid has a very thorough approach to decision making, and once she has gone through those steps she is energised to focus on her new plans and make them happen.

The key parts of Ingrid's strategy are:

Feeling that she was ready to do something different with clear reasons why
Discussing ideas with husband led to idea, started to explore the idea

Trigger event - Close to breakdown, knew something had to give
On holiday wrote down options – included extremes – run away – keep going
Worked out a middle ground – time out – ring colleagues straight away to see if possible

Letting go process – let others carry out work – read, walked
Back to work and it felt like a job, she was no longer the company
Realisation at team day – no longer emotionally involved in company

Very excited about new business – buzz
How does she know its right?

Heart: Feels right inside
Have energy to make it happen
Nervous as might not work, but want to try it to find out

Head: Know that it's right in head
Want to start now (mid December) but know that January is the best time
Right direction as – intellectually challenging, learning and exciting and leading to long term work with husband

Values check: Check vs. values – like solving problems, wants to learn and stretch self
Decision making process – what is right for now? Does it fit with broad general direction she wants?

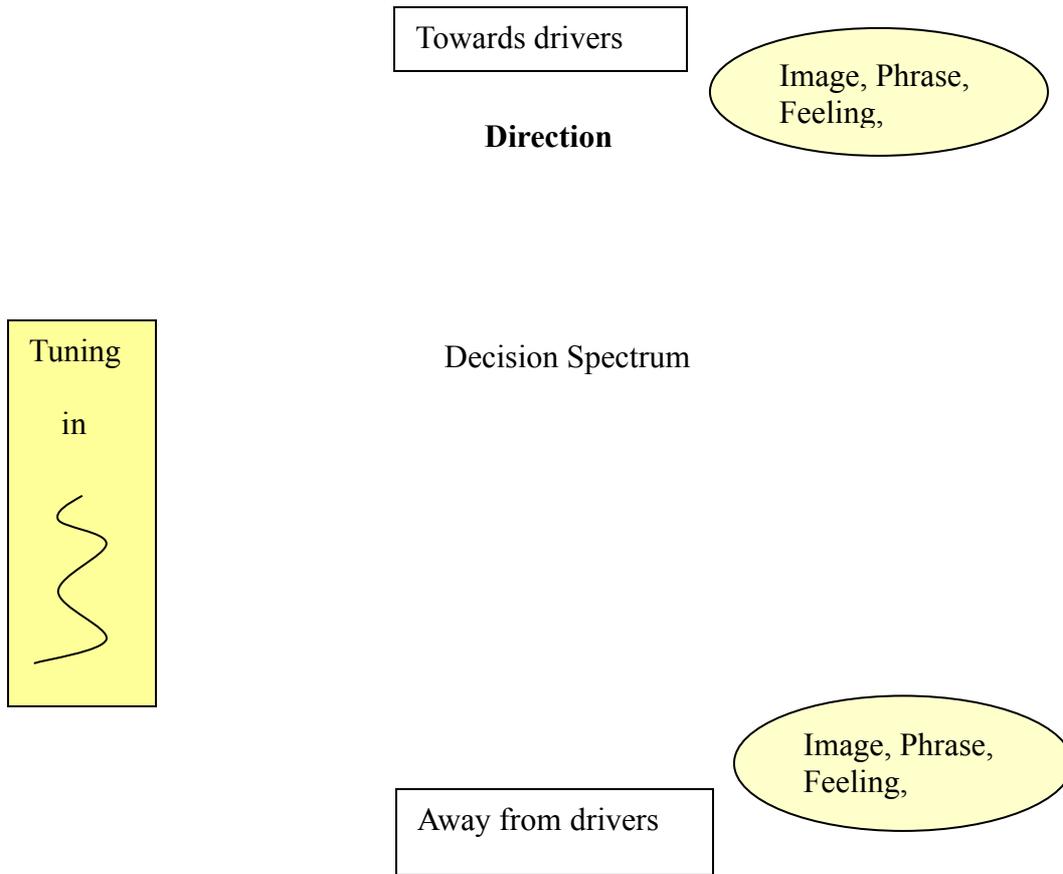
My Learnings

I have found the process of completing this project fascinating and it has helped me to really move on in my own personal development. I have also had to review some of my beliefs which has been both revealing and empowering. These are some of my key learnings:

- It takes time to make these significant directional changes
- The end point is not always clear at the time the decision is made, but if the sense checks are carried out this gives confidence in the decision
- People use a variety of different methods to tune in to what is right for them, most use some sort of balance between head and heart.
- By the time you actually get to the goal it may have changed or you may have moved on
- Letting go can be very powerful!
- There is no one right answer

I have spent many hours looking for the answer to the question what is it I really want to do or be. I now realise that there are lots of answers to that question and that is fine. The key to handling lots of answers is to know which are the most important at the moment. So that by living in the moment and being true to what is right for then you can really be in tune with who you are and what your purpose it.

Model for tuning in to choosing the right direction to take



The Modelling Process – using your internal compass

Introduction

The process of following the model is literally one of tuning in. So the model starts with an idea or feeling which may initially be quite small, until your awareness gradually increases and you start to tune into it.

At this early stage it is quite likely that the feeling is quite vague – like it's time for a change or I'm ready to take on new challenges – and that through discussion and exploration this idea builds over time. The driver for this feeling may be one of seeking to get away from the current situation (away from driver) or of wanting to do something new (towards driver). For some people this takes the shape of a visual image or phrase that spurs them into action.

Gathering Evidence

The process you then go through is one of gathering evidence in order to feel ready to make a decision on your direction. The three key ways of doing this are:

Feeling – consider how your body reacts to certain events or experiences. This sense is often quite vague or blurred in the beginning, but becomes stronger as you tune in to how your body reacts to the forming idea. Notice your breathing rate and body temperature as you explore the idea, what happens in the pit of your stomach and in your heart, how intense are these feelings? The stronger the reaction the more likely it is that this is an area for you to focus on.

Seeing - you may find that you start to notice things that you simply had not noticed before or that you become aware of a different perspective by looking at things from a different angle. Often things look brighter or clearer and bigger when you get closer to finding the right direction for you. Be aware of your own reaction when you watch events around you, and be aware of whether you feel part of what is going on, and want to be part of it, or not.

Listening – the most critical aspect of what you hear is likely to be the clarity with which someone speaks and how far away they sound. The clearer the voice and the closer it is to you, the more likely it is that this is relevant to your next step. Does what is being said resonate with you – do you find yourself nodding your head in agreement? Listen as you explore your ideas with others and ask them to feedback on where you sound most energised as this will highlight what is important for you

This process is iterative so you may go through each method of gathering evidence several times before you become clear that you ready to move on.

Overall be aware of changes in yourself, in your behaviour and how you interact with others to give you information that this is the time to make a change.

Some of the process above is work that you go through and process alone, noticing what you notice and how you feel about situations. Other aspects of the process are best explored with someone else who provides a neutral sounding board, allowing you to explore and clarify your thoughts and feelings.

Once you have been through the process of gathering evidence several times, and have a sense of what direction you might take, you move into the checking phase.

Checking Phase

The first of these checks is to test out your own instinctive reaction to this new direction by rating your readiness to go with it. If you had all the resources you needed how likely are you to follow this new direction? This will give you an idea of your own emotional reaction to the plan with the logical part coming in later to deal with any resource issues.

Another check is to create a spectrum of responses to your idea, from doing nothing to the extreme of going full on for what you are looking for, and then working back from this to find the point of balance for you.

The final aspect is to sense check the idea against your values and beliefs in order to feel that you have fully tuned in to all aspects of the idea and its impact on you.

This process takes place over time, and steps may need to be repeated as new ideas come to light. Major decisions may take several months to progress.

Trigger Event/ Making the decision

The time that the decision is actually made is when a trigger event happens – usually an external event that highlights aspects of why you thought of the idea in the first place, and then the decision appears to be made very quickly in the light of this external event, as all the thoughts and feelings have already been processed.

Once the decision has been made the change in direction is readily made as it feels right and energy can then be put into creating the change in direction rather than worrying about whether or not it is the right direction. It's a means of creating simplicity in a complex world.

Beliefs that go with the model

You make the best decision available to you at the time

You have all the resources you need

A direction can be about how things are done – not just about achieving an end result

Life is not linear, it is OK to meander

Mind and body are one system

My experience of the model

As I started forming my model, I noticed many examples of aspects of the model being used around me. The guest speaker on the course who showed a very clear sense of direction was Heston Blumenthal, in terms of his vision for his restaurant and where he wanted to go with it. It was also clear that there were distractions preventing him from achieving his direction currently which was enlightening for me as I could identify with this.

I really enjoyed presenting this model and getting the feedback from the group on the impact it had on them. I realised that by living the model and demonstrating a clear sense of direction myself this gave space and permission for others to try that feeling on for themselves to see how powerful it was for them. When I followed the model I had a sense that I had all the time in the world to do what was needed, and that this meant I could clearly explain the concept, and give others an experience of it in a very simple yet effective way. For me I get into this zone through being outside and noticing a small part of nature which gives me a completely different sense of perspective to the intellectual or business world, and enables me to clear my head and focus on what I need to do next. I know that this strategy works for others too who have tried it.

Over the last two weeks I have had very positive feedback on my new state and one of my coaching clients is keen to find out more about NLP so he too can have some of what I've got! I look forward to working with this model and sharing it further with others in the future.

Jenny Partridge

11th February 2005