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What is the way forward for NLP?

by Malcolm Nicholson
– iCN Journalist
(United Kingdom)

The vast bulk of developmental work in NLP happened during its most fertile and creative period under Bandler and Grinder on the West Coast in the 1970s.

Even 'New Code of NLP' (as opposed to what is now called 'Classic Code of NLP') has been around since the 1990s. This aimed at putting more emphasis on the subconscious to select the resources required to bring about changes.

However, the work of Robert Dilts, one of the originators of NLP, continues extending its boundaries. He is a leading thinker whose work includes the development of what has become known as 'Systemic NLP.' "Some of his techniques and models include: Reimprinting, Integration of Conflicting Beliefs, Sleight of Mouth Patterns, The Spelling Strategy, The Allergy Technique, Neuro-Logical Levels, The Belief Change Cycle, Generative NLP Patterns, the Unified Field Theory for NLP and many others." (1)

An adherent to the work of Dilts – and someone who now teaches with him - is Robbie Steinhouse, who runs the NLP School based in London in the United Kingdom. He has been building on several Dilts models and has developed a tight integration of these into 'mainstream' coaching.

*In the photo: **Robert Dilts***

Steinhouse has also authored several books, including the excellent 'How to Coach with NLP" (Pearson business, 2010), which manages

to pull off the juggling act of catering for three audiences:-

- Coaches or people who use coaching as part of their job
- People already trained in NLP
- People interested in using NLP or coaching in their personal or professional lives

He achieves this by structuring the book into three sections; 'The sessions' (including contracting, pacing and leading, rapport, client's inner world,) secondly, 'The processes: helping your client with...' (includes toolkits for goals, creativity and life purpose – many familiar but including two of Steinhouse's own) and thirdly, 'NLP coaching contexts' (including when and where).

As no less a luminary than Robert Dilts says in the preface to 'Coaching with NLP' - "I am impressed with the way that Robbie has been able to capture the essence of the discipline with such clarity and simplicity.... In addition, [he] has added his own special insights to make these processes highly accessible to professional coaches."

I met up with Robbie recently at The NLP School course on 'How to coach with NLP, TA and Mindfulness', a three-day workshop presenting a group of coaching processes which build on NLP to teach coaches how to engage with more complex, existential issues and enable clients to bring about deep and lasting change.

The course is very much Steinhouse's show and he presents with a direct and clear style which contains an underlying and a mischievous sense of humour. He aims to demystify NLP and has tightened the integration between coaching and NLP. This includes the introduction of a new model of his, the Leadership Matrix, in which Steinhouse has identified 17 core characteristics, or archetypes. "It's based on the work of Robert Dilts and Stephen Gilligan and the aim is to help people build their own businesses or develop in their career. It also provides coaches and consultants with a comprehensive and sophisticated model to use in leadership coaching."

He provides sufficient space for delegates to practice, with both pragmatic exercises and reflective time to consolidate their learning. "My approach tends to be more semantically based than a lot of NLP approaches" said Robbie, "a good example of this being the use of hypnosis and its induction."

The NLP School is a great example of where to get leading edge accredited NLP Coaching training that goes further than many other organisations.

So where next for NLP?

Interest in NLP is not diminishing. However, the market for learning NLP has become commoditised in many areas. Unlike 40 years ago when NLP burst onto the scene, the subject is still developing, but the changes are more incremental than revolutionary. Both Bandler and Grinder are currently active in the commercial marketplace and have developed their own forms of NLP, including Grinder's New Code NLP, whilst Bandler has a number of new 'human change technologies' available, all with a conspicuous trademark or registered name mark next to them – unlike their initial work! Grinder seems to be marketing to the lucrative business market, whilst Bandler, aims at the rest of us.

Maybe there lies the crux – does there have to be 'new' when what may be needed is a wider impact? The way forward for NLP could be about the 'where' – where it's used, taught and consequently how it has a greater impact on society. Behaviour and behaviourism are sadly lacking in nearly all school curricula for example.

Or it could be that rather than seeing revolutionary new core models, we see the fragmentation of how NLP is applied. Various streams have already emerged, with NLP being applied in a range of careers and settings from medicine to sales to pick up lines. So we are beginning to see the way it is applied and integrated as a big change going forward? Even Grinder said that NLP for 99% of the people in the world has nothing to do with his description of it! This is due to the fact that most people come to NLP as a result of courses or books, which look at the application of NLP techniques in a packaged form.

The NLP School has certainly shown a way ahead – and Robbie Steinhouse's work may be leading the way that NLP morphs as it evolves, into a delivery mechanism where it can continue its impact.

(1) http://www.nlpu.com/NLPU_RBDBio.html

ABOUT MALCOLM NICHOLSON

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