

NLP and training at your best

by John Seymour



JOHN SEYMOUR has been training NLP for over 15 years. 10 years ago, he co-authored *Training with NLP* (the first NLP training book).

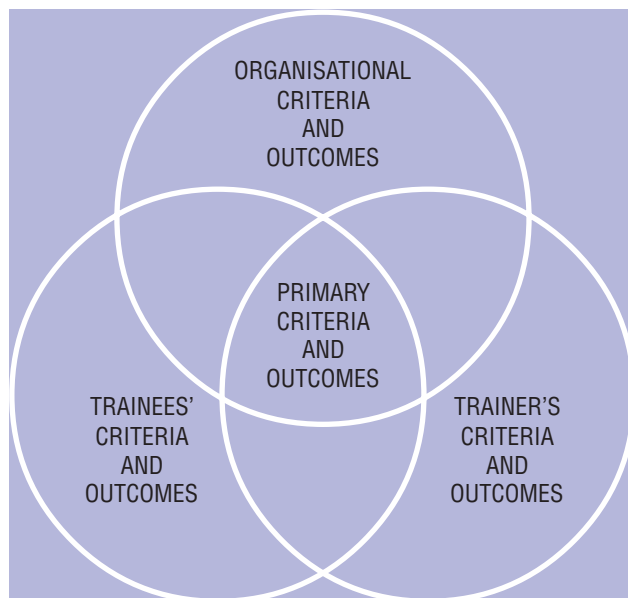
He is acclaimed as being one of the most precise and 'clean' trainers around and regularly runs in-house training in blue chip companies as well as JSA's distinctive trainer training courses.

How has his thinking developed in the 10 years since *Training with NLP*? This article is written for trainers and in particular for people interested in training NLP.

Ways of improving training quality

We all aspire to high quality training, but it is interesting that the best minds in NLP have very different ways of thinking about quality. With this in mind, here are some key points that I have found useful over the years. My intention is not to suggest there is any 'right' way to approach training but to assist the reader in clarifying their own thinking about how to create quality in training.

- 1 Quality from whose viewpoint?** Training needs to be looked at from all of three different positions, trainer, trainee and sponsor organisation. Each of these will have their different criteria.



This field, the overlap of the three sets of criteria, is going to form the central focus of the training.

- 2 Know what they want.** Each person will have their own set of outcomes (conscious and unconscious) for the course, and many of these will be different. Faced with this, what seems to work is being brutally clear about primary outcomes and evidences. This means you will be able to hit the main goals of most people most of the time, whilst still being curious about the wide range of secondary outcomes.
- 3 Which outcome is next.** As you gather information about outcomes, imagine these forming a 3 dimensional outcome array in which the most important outcomes are larger and closer. The less important are smaller and further away. Imagine also that your unconscious mind is constantly updating the outcome field as the course progresses. At any point in the training, you simply look to see which two or three outcomes are now primary and select whichever one feels most appropriate. If you are familiar with training TOTEs make sure you can also zoom up or down to the appropriate level of TOTE.
- 4 Use time effectively.** You have 20 people in a room- ask yourself, 'What can I say or do next to deliver the most value within the next minute (or other time frame)?' E.g. You may want the trainees to future-pace mental rehearsal out into their life more. To do this you may use a 'Milton model' approach by saying: "As you begin to consider what areas of your life will benefit the most from brief mental rehearsal, also notice what's going to remind you to do this? For each different area become aware of what your reminder is". The point is, this only takes 20 seconds and can make a lot of difference in

trainees' lives. This passes the effectiveness of time test ('outcomes per minute' or 'hits per minute').

Then, you may ask them to spend two minutes in pairs discussing what areas of life they are going to do this in. This may or may not pass the time effectiveness test depending on the time you have available.

- 5 Optimise your operating metaphor.** Experiment with different operating metaphors (training is like ...) until you find the ones that work best for you. One of my favourites is actually a mixture of two: a) 'Training is like a dance' in that every move you make is influenced by the other person's move. This captures the highly interactive side of training in an enjoyable and energising way; b) 'Training is like playing blues' in that there is the fixed framework (the content and primary outcomes of the course) but there is also the live improvisation that enables you to satisfy as many people's outcomes as you can within the timeframe. This helps to create a real 'buzz' or 'flow' state.
- 6 Staying on track.** Frequently calibrate the group to tell when you are on track. You will know you are doing this often enough when they seem to be always telling you non-verbally how you are doing. Then, proactively look for evidence that you are *off track*. If in doubt check you are *on track* by asking; "Would it be useful if we spend X minutes doing Y?" You calibrate congruence of the response and use that to tell you whether to go ahead or switch to the next best outcome.
- 7 Be a thinker and an actor.** There are two seemingly impossible things to do at once as a trainer. The first is staying in the moment; the second is thinking into the future and planning your next moves. So, you need a part of your mind to be constantly thinking ahead to how you are going to cover the remaining outcomes in the remaining time (thinker); you also need a part of your mind constantly in the moment so that you fully and congruently commit to what you are doing (actor). How do you do both? It is like driving a car; you initially have to believe you can do two things at one. You then need the circuitry that will shunt them from foreground to background as appropriate. These are separate, but learnable skills. This is done by practising the actor in the moment and then the thinker thinking ahead. Before long it feels as though you are doing both simultaneously. Additionally, speed is critical for the large amount of thinking and planning and the fastest way to do this is visual. The auditory channels tend to be freed up for ongoing sentence construction and delivery. The kinaesthetic channels keep the actor in the moment.
- 8 Internal video.** As long as you know the kind of presentation style that you are aiming for (check out your role models), you need to see yourself on real video until you have an internal stabilised image of how you are looking and sounding in real time. For most people, this internal constructed video screen runs best at the top right of your internal visual field. This video shows how the participants are seeing you. As soon as your internal video departs from the presentation style you are after, at that moment a little voice can 'drop in' and coaches you on what to change.
- 9 Frame well.** A common fear of many trainers is losing control of a group. Setting up an 'influence frame' takes care of this. You simply divide the training into sections and label each part. As you are ending one section of training, you frame the next section in. E.g: "Any other questions on this before we move onto X". Never get caught without a frame. Suppose you have just finished fielding questions and someone from the back of the room asks: "What about manipulation?" If you engage

with that, you have lost your influence frame - they have taken from you control over where the group goes next. To deal with this, you flag up when it is appropriate to raise such questions. An 'open frame' is set up to catch the things that are not caught. So then, framing is a question of scope. Sometimes comments live within it, sometimes they do not and you are the one in control of this process except for when you decide to give it away.

- 10 Experiential exercise design.** As we know, most adults learn best by doing. To design an exercise that will deliver the best results, ask: "What experience does this learner have to have that they can't not learn X?" From there, working backwards, figure out the necessary and sufficient elements to the exercise that will make it robust. Knowing your trainees as you do, imagine how it may go wrong for them. Then, figure out how to change the exercise so that it can't go wrong that way. Keep negatively sorting until you're satisfied it will work.
- 11 Multi Level Learning.** Make it multi-level learning environment in order to reach people at different stages of development, with different competencies and different styles of learning. This will up your 'hits per minute' rating or how many 'ah ha's' people get when you are training. People have different styles of learning. For example, some will major on *reflector* (they like to think about things - 'Don't rush in, let me think!) and others may be more *activist* ('Stop talking at me and let me get on with it!'). Creating a multi-level learning environment can be achieved by knowing where the individuals in the group are at - do they need emotional hits, do they seek personal, professional or global applications etc. In turn there can be different 'one-liner' comments that are pitched at different levels.
- 12 On-going development.** This is what learning is about. John Grinder said something to the effect that if the circuitry of learning is not alive in you, how can you reasonably expect it to be alive for your trainees. There either is a learning buzz in the room, or not.

I hope this has been useful for clarifying your thinking about what quality is and how to produce more of it in your own trainings. I am pleased to see that there is a growing demand for trainers who can tailor NLP courses to deliver the quality that organisations now want in live training.

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John Seymour is running a 10-day NLP Trainer Training course July 2002 in Bristol for Master Practitioner who want to become NLP Trainers. Visit www.johnseymour-nlp.co.uk or call 0117 955 7827 for more information.