

N.L.P Modelling Project for John Seymour Associates Practitioner Training Modelling Managing Meetings -Keeping a Meeting on Track

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Abstract

The title of this small unfinished modelling project: Modelling Managing a Meeting soon had a sub heading: Keeping a meeting on track. I chose to model this skill I have always found difficulty in managing meetings. A friend, also a teacher, said, 'But you manage meetings every day and any one who can manage a classroom of thirteen year olds can manage adults in a meeting ! That may be the case for her but its not the same for me -so what is the missing ingredient? Perhaps I would find out.

I have learnt a great deal from doing this small project: I have begun to put the 'building blocks' of our behaviour and our beliefs together and recognise their extraordinary interrelatedness and I have also recognised why I don't manage adult meetings well-because I don't believe I can! I was very fortunate in having a model of true integrity-and I would like to take the opportunity of thanking him, known as P.R through out-and perhaps he will allow me to come back and inquire further into the how and why of what he does. I see enormous potential in the whole process and would most like to model excellence in the teaching profession or just to be able to get inside the small bits that teachers do so well and then be able to pass them on.

Methodology

Access

It was important to model excellence and I was lucky enough to be able to observe P.R Director of W. S.LRE in Chichester and to sit in on two meetings that he was chairing.

- 29h April -A formal straight forward meeting of the Academic Standards Committee, where there were about twenty people present who were likely to broadly agree the outcome. (this meeting was usually taken by the Deputy Director who was absent)
- 5th May -A meeting that takes place weekly between the Director and the Deans of Faculty that was more likely to include more flexibility and negotiation, due to possible differences in opinion -so different skills might be apparent in the two meetings.

For the meeting of the 29th April I met P.R briefly prior to the meeting to check that he was happy that I was present, although this had been agreed through his P.A on the 27h April. Both were extremely friendly and put me at my ease. I explained that I wanted to be able to focus on P.R and therefore to be as near as possible to him during the meeting. A place on the left hand corner of the table was found; I used a small hand sized tape recorder and made notes during the two hour meeting of P.R's observable physiology and linguistic patterns - a distillation of the transcript can be found in the Appendix. After the meeting I had about fifteen minutes to organise these into categories under heading such as summarising, acknowledging and moving on strategies.

During the interview I used the tape recorder and recorded all our conversation. (only the opening half hour of the meeting was recorded).

I began with the T.O.T.E Elicitation Questions using my knowledge of the meeting to slightly reframe the questions.

I then asked P.R to return to a particular point in the meeting (point 3.4 Section B of the agenda which was concerned with Degree Awarding Powers) where there had been a great deal of discussion. I wanted to apply the Eye Accessing Cues and unpick his strategies as I listened to his replies but two things happened: my question undoubtedly triggered the moment during the meeting but within seconds P. R was giving me background information on the nature of the discussion and I was unable to get him back on track sufficiently to take me through his step by step thinking during those moments of the meeting.

I then moved on to the Multi Level Modelling which I refrained from asking questions as there was no doubt in my mind that I could not physically apply the strategy. However this was rewarding as P.R was very articulate, particularly with regard to his beliefs and values.

I returned on the 5th May to observe a smaller meeting involving the Deans of Faculty who meet on a weekly basis. I only spent about twenty minutes afterwards when my main concern was to access P.R's representation system through Eye Accessing Cues as well as to discuss the main differences of the two meetings. Again the content of the meeting took over and I would need to return with more time, having prepared P.R(perhaps with this document!) and explained that I wanted to access his strategies step by step.

The next thing was to transcribe the tapes and to begin to distil the essence of them. I found this a fascinating and rewarding process -- despite being without the specific representation system through eye accessing cues- which leaves a gap in the information. --and it led on to writing up the results. I ignored the second meeting due to time constraints which meant that I have not taken into consideration the subtle differences in the two meetings. The results therefore are based on the meeting of the 29th April.

Results

- To implicitly model P.R
- Use of predicates
- The meeting outcome
- Meta programmes
- Values Beliefs
- Sorting Categories
- Criteria

I had **identified the specific skill of keeping a meeting on track** and of attempting to unpick the strategies and beliefs of the model by observing two meetings followed by an interview in the case of the first meeting and a short meeting after the second. **These results are based on the findings of the first meeting and interview.**

The first stage was to implicitly model P.R and to use my own intuitions to imagine his reality (to second position him). His emotional state was relaxed, confident calm and humorous; In trying on the model this resourceful state is crucial; His physiology reflected his calm state: he was congruent, his breathing was slow and regular, his gestures were wide, expansive, sure; his voice tone was firm and confident; he established rapport with humour, eye contact and a quality of involved listening throughout the meeting which led to effective pacing.

The linguistic patterns (predicates) recorded during the meeting gave me clues to his submodalities. For example many of these were kinesthetic 'we agree the main thrust' 'how do we implement?' 'so guide me' 'enlighten me' (K.Visual). and later in the interview I discovered predominantly kinesthetic metaphors: 'if you keep pressing into the ground' 'we are self flagelatory'. 'this bureaucratic trap' 'their views... are built on' 'we're drifting off 'I know where I stand in the pecking order' 'I can't abide it if I come back in twelve

months time and the paint still hasn't dried'(visual) 'I don't want verbage' (auditory)
When P.R talked about the environment of the meeting he made kinesthetic references: 'too claustrophobic' 'hemmed in' and of his behaviour he said, 'I point a bit' 'touch my neighbour' 'a moment of laughter.'

What was the meeting outcome? It is to 'produce a document ... that they feel they own'; he aims to have 'a definite action agenda at the end of every topic 'and by second positioning he asks : 'Has the world changed now since I met you?' His clearly stated goal is to share the thinking of the committee and to arrive at a response that reflects this: 'We've done it. This is our thinking'. His proactive, positive thinking (see Meta Programme below) ensures this: 'so I'm headlining, identifying the problem, keeping them focused, on task...' During the meeting he continually implemented tracking, summarising and sharing strategies which he recalled as 'acknowledging affirming and supporting' 'can we move on?' 'do you agree?' He is also aware of a third party, so recalling a particular moment in the meeting he is able to take the Meta position... 'and I could say to them -supposing you were the University reading this - what would you think from their perspective?'

Studying the interview transcripts it was interesting to note that P.R used very focused language and there was no evidence of Meta Model deletions, distortions or generalisations. The Meta Meta programs (perceptual filters) were deeply influenced by his Belief Patterns. His orientation is towards the positive and can be distilled in these examples:

Proactive: 'I'm fully prepared' 'I'm reinforcing' 'I'm intensely competitive' 'the only way I can get there is to affect the climate' 'consistency and continuity of how I would deal with colleagues' 'one of the skills of being in the chair is to suddenly realise... (make decision)' 'I'm not shy of making decisions' 'I depend a lot on humour'

Towards: 'My thinking is analytical, a 'can do' basic philosophy' 'I'm trying to get people to be confident in themselves' 'I'm task orientated' 'I'm getting us towards the particular solution that we ought to be going for' 'a meeting like this is a collective responsibility ...everybody made a contribution-that is an overall goal' 'creating a virtuous circle' 'a positive climate' 'so we have a definite action agenda' .

Internal Standards: 'set of values I have for how people are treated' 'I'm not aware, but I hope that's because of the integrity of what I do, that is what I believe so it does come from the inner person'

From the out set P.R had spoken of his 'set of values that I have for how people are treated'. So his beliefs and values are fundamental to him, and it will already be clear by reading the Meta Programmes that these profoundly influence his behaviour: 'I believe in an enabling culture, so that people can fulfil their own potential' 'a meeting where we are sharing the experience of the whole group ... their views are valid, can count and may win the day'. This is echoed in what he calls 'the deeper agenda': 'I want whatever I'm doing to succeed so that's the deeper agenda' and again in his sense of identity: 'I'm me' 'I'm a team player, I think a team leader and I want my team to win'.

Listening carefully to the Sorting Categories gives us the same information about the model, emphasising the interconnectedness of the building blocks. In this case the predominant patterns are People, the Place or Organisation and the Activity carried out by the model.

People: 'people feel a part of ' 'getting colleagues to reckon they're in charge of their own work' 'respect for person' 'equality of worth in that person' 'if people are confident ... colleagues ...teachers ...students...' 'to listen intently to what people are saying' 'what I'm trying to get people to say-look be proud of your self...'

Place / Organisation: 'nature of organisation like this' 'a small institution' 'there's a lot of good in this place, and we can stand up with the best in the land if necessary on our particular patch, and say what we do and be proud of it'

Activity : `deal with' `what I do' `sense of engagement' `participating' `actively involved'
`to listen intently' `tone relatively relaxed' `fully prepared' `keep them on track' `I'm
reinforcing' `skills of being in the chair' `I'd use humour' `we should be doing' `I'm
running through' `so that we decided some action'.

This brings us to Criteria: P.R's concerns are reflected in the Meta Programmes and sorting categories quoted above. His own identity is confirmed by his proactive approach to his goals: `I'm fully prepared' `I'm not shy of making decisions'; his orientation towards the positive: `a can do philosophy' `I'm trying to get people to be confident in themselves' and he has his own internal standards: `set of values I have' which are connected particularly to his sense of the value of each person within his organisation and the organisation itself of which he's proud.. What he does has impact on the whole organisation: `you get one of those virtuous circles and that's what I'm trying to create', also at the level of a meeting: `We've done it. This is our thinking.' and at the level of the individual himself. `equality of worth of that person'. His criteria for what is worthwhile are deeply connected to his belief system - so that what comes across is a very vital involved person with a strong sense of self, his goals within the institution, the purposes of the institution itself and for the care of the people within the whole organisation: I believe in an enabling culture so that people can fulfil their potential'.

Practical Application

How do I model RR from this? I have not had any opportunity to put it into practice but I have run the model through my mind, put myself in P.R's shoes.

From the outset it would be very important to feel relaxed and confident the meeting is yours; you know the business of the organisation -the bigger picture - intimately and you care about it. You are well prepared for the meeting and you know the agenda. You arrive early and start the meeting on time but you also find time to greet people and introduce humour and / or a light touch. You put your watch on the table and monitor the time through out the meeting.

You have very clear goals. You are democratic; you personally value everyone present and you value their contribution. You intend to cover all items on the agenda and to make sure everyone in the room contributes. You want to come away knowing that the time spent at the meeting has been positive and that you have achieved your outcome. You aim to have an action agenda drawn up at the end of each topic and for everyone to be sure of their roles-who is doing what. You are very focused on keeping the meeting on track. You have a number of skills and strategies for doing this:

- You regulate the time
- You listen intently
- You make eye contact -individually and round the table
- You acknowledge and affirm - You offer encouragement and support
- You summarise clearly before moving on-you reinforce
- You make notes and amendments
- If you are not clear, you ask for guidance
- You see things from another's perspective
- You are sensitive to an individual who thinks a point has been missed or needs further airing
- You are able to move on if the discussion drifts
- You suggest that if there is no obvious resolution, then the problem needs further discussion beyond the meeting and take active steps to organise it
- You are ready to introduce humour to diffuse any signs of conflict
- You are able to take the lead and make a decision

You also have a deeper agenda. You are aiming for excellence. You know that if the people round the table are confident in you and are confident in themselves and feel involved in the organisation they will in turn pass this confidence on to their students. You aim to affect the climate and the culture of the whole organisation. You value the worth of each individual, you are aware of your ultimate responsibility as Director and you believe in an enabling culture so that people can fulfil their potential.

To be able to model P.R I would need to try on his beliefs:

- That everyone in the institution mattered
- That an enabling culture was of paramount importance
- That I was able to affect the climate
- That I had the skills and capabilities to do so

I would therefore need to discover more about how it feels to be confident in his role as team leader;

I would need to have further insight into the strategies behind the capabilities he exercised to achieve his meeting outcomes.

I would be very happy wearing the belief in an enabling culture so that everyone can fulfill their potential.

Appendix

NLP MODELLING PROJECT May 1998-05-98

Identifying the goals, the sensory evidence that provides feedback, the behaviour used by the model to achieve the goal: distilling the evidence-

Phase one.
Professional Development Skills-Managing Meetings
Modelling Excellence
P.R Director
W.S.I.HE
Chichester
Academic Standards Committee
Chair: P.R
Observation of meeting: FN

Environmental

Arrived early in the room, ahead of most others; opened window; relaxed, laughter; sat head of centre, long rectangular table; placed wristwatch in front of him; punctual: started at exactly 2.00 p.m.; approx. 20 committee members;

Physiology

Tall, broad physical build; calm, relaxed, humorous; regular calm breathing; congruent 'in charge' posture; leant back, at ease; good rapport: leant forward to listen; gestures; used fingers to point, eye contact round table; reading agenda aloud; strong firm tone; organised, efficient handling of papers; wide gestures with arms: all inclusive; as meeting progressed, acute listening, looking at speaker, eye contact, nodding, making notes; laughter; continual use of acknowledging comment or gesture

...the word 'thank you' punctuated the whole procedure.

Linguistic Patterns

Continual use of 'tracking', summarising and sharing strategies: 'we'll come back to that' 'we'll see it later' 'can we move on?' 'do you agree?' 'could I just guide you a little?' 'could you have a look?' 'so guide me, what do you think?' 'how could we help them?' 'any other points ...I don't want to rush you' 'what this sums up...' 'can I summarise where we are?' 'anything else missing?' 'is there anything else I need to say?' 'I think we fundamentally need to re- think...' 'moving on to item ...' 'underline that point' 'who takes that forward...?' 'who can do that?' 'enlighten me' 'any questions or comments?' 'the convention is that we go through and say who is going to be responsible for...' 'can we raise that as a detail?' 'is the committee saying that we drop this practice...?V 'why are we doing it?T 'indebted to you again' 'who ought to be doing the checking?' 'we agree the main thrust?' 'what you say resonates very strongly...' 'do we endorse ...?T 'how do we implement...?' 'how do we need to take this forward...?T 'we've effectively covered...' 'Andrew introduce it' 'is there anything that people read here that may be contentious?T 'we'll sort this one out of the meeting'

Tape 1: April 29th P.R
Interview: FN (from transcript)
Multilevel Modelling Strategy

Environment

'Its appropriate' 'I don't much like the room' 'claustrophobic- opened a window- current of air'
For a largish committee we're too hemmed in' 'I'd prefer a circular table rather than a
rectangle' 'I start spot on time -we're guardians of each others time'

Behaviour

I gesticulate ... point a bit... touch my neighbours ... a moment of humour, laughter' 'I lean
forward while listening, encouraging ... I'm giving signals that I'm actively involved,
acknowledging others, grunting, looking at them... affirming generally supporting'

Capabilities

'Fully prepared in the material' 'headlining' 'keep them on track-this is the issue we're meant
to be focusing on' 'so the lines I'm reinforcing are the lines I'm getting us towards ...the
particular solution that we ought to be going for' 'I depend on humour to bring people back to
where we are, to diffuse conflict - I think its my style' 'one of the skills of being in the chair is
to suddenly realise that maybe at this point actually we can't go any further we're not going to
resolve anything... you've got to say ...there are problems we need to solve outside the
committee, we need to do some work seek some new evidence ... further advice and then we'll
have another go' 'I'm running through my agenda' 'my thinking is analytical driven by
that 'I can do' basic philosophy' 'I'm saying we're here together we all agree what the
problem is -Now what are we going to do? When are we going to do it and who's going to do it?
That's it. I can't abide it if I come back in twelve months time and the paint still hasn't dried.'
Task orientated' 'I do know intimately what this business is all about'

Beliefs / Values

'how people are treated' 'respect for person is absolutely paramount' 'people have their own
integrity' 'consistency and continuity' 'integrity of what I do -what I believe ... comes from the
inner person' 'Just because I'm the Director, gives me responsibilities but it doesn't mean that I'
m right, I need to be able to take on the views of other people, so I believe in an enabling
culture, so that people can fulfil their own potential' 'equality of worth of each person' 'a
meeting where we are sharing the experience and the collective wisdom of the group ... their
views are valid can count are built on and may win the day' 'let's share this basically' 'we're
here together'

Identity

'I'm me. I'm P.R. Yes I don't think I'm any different when I'm here or when I'm at home' 'I'm
intensely competitive so I'm a team player, I think a team leader and I want my team to win.

Spiritual / Mission

'I want whatever I'm doing to succeed so that's the deeper agenda. I want this to be the best
possible college and the best possible place and doing better than anywhere else' 'If people are
confident themselves, if they feel they are engaged in this institution then we are stronger
because of it...

At the end of the day, quality depends on the individual interaction of my teachers in classrooms that I can't control and can't see, so that the only way is to affect the climate and the culture and if they're in a place that they feel knows where its going, feels positive about itself, that is the collective view, then they are the better more confident teachers ... they'll be more positive in the way they interact with students-students then feel more confident about themselves. You get one of those virtuous circles and that's what I'm trying to create. A positive climate where we are all valued , treated with respect' ` what we're all here for is to enrich the students' learning experience... so the quality of the learning environment is of the essence and so everything that we do must focus on that particular end . So the whole purpose of Academic Standards, academic quality and the whole of Validation is that we're giving students the best possible experience.' `in a sense we're the guardian of each other, because the glorious thing of working in a little place like this is that we by and large create our own work -we're accountable outside but the way in which external auditors and people look at us is really with an agenda which says if you're confident in what you're doing we're happy- if you don't know what you're doing, we suggest you do it the following way and if you don't do it that way then we ought to close you down. I think its self -confidence that is at the heart. I'm proud to be in the place.

Meeting Outcome

I get frustrated if we get talked round this bureaucratic trap where we can all go away and say, `we've all been so busy today, we had Academic Standards for two hours when actually what did we do? Has the world changed now since I met you? So I'm headlining identifying the problem, keeping them focused, on task, trying to solve sets so we have a definite action agenda at the end of every topic and we know who is doing what. I will now be able , as a result of this meeting to send this back to the QAA that will be a document with something that they feel they own- so if people come round and say did you make a response on the agenda for quality, we can turn round and say yes we did and here it is. We've done it This is our thinking.