

How NLP and the phone changed my life



by David Festenstein

I WAS IN A RUT, stuck doing the same thing day in day out, working for a software company setting up appointments for their sales people. I was in my fifth year and the thought of doing it for another year just overwhelmed me with dread.

I have a family, a wonderful supportive wife and two lovely girls, so running off to the Greek Islands was not an option.

By coincidence, I saw two newspaper articles in short succession, which I related to as if they had been written especially for me. The first one was in the Financial Times, about how it is not uncommon for young people to test different career paths over a number of years, find out what really interests them and what they are really good at. The article said that this voyage of discovery could continue into the early forties until one found one's true vocation. "That must be me"! I shrieked to the top of the house and felt duly heartened that I was not alone in this.

The second article was about those people who left university and went from job to job and then got stuck in a job which although provided material comfort was deeply unsatisfying. Again this reflected very much my own situation.

I duly contacted the authors of these articles and one of them recommended that I took an NLP course. The other recommended me to a skills expert at the London Business School. I enrolled in an NLP course and began regular sessions with the skills expert to embark upon this voyage of discovery.

The combination of these activities lead me along a path which I would have never in a million years believed possible.

In the NLP course I began this process of self audit which was reinforced by the skills expert. I began to look at what I was doing, what I had achieved to date and how these building blocks could be used potentially to create a much more desirable and satisfying life. The NLP course soon introduced me to the concept of modelling. "Anything you are really good at"? asked the trainer, "Cold calling", I muttered grudgingly, as if that was something I even wanted to admit.

I then discovered that what I had was a process, my own unique way of using the phone to reach very senior people within new business areas.

I hated doing it but I was very good at it. The conclusion of the modelling exercise was that here was a very powerful process for marketing a product or service. I broke down my process into a number of modules and got others to try them for themselves. Soon I found that they could also be me, by following my process and feeling much more comfortable about cold calling. The commercial model was born.

I discussed this with my skills expert and he was absolutely adamant that I had the basic skills to set up my business. This sounded beyond my wildest dream but how? I had not got a clue!

In the true spirit of modelling, I found a couple of companies in the US who had set up similar operations to the one I wanted to establish here in the UK.

As I was no potential threat, they agreed to explain what their approach had been, the pitfalls, their pricing structure and all the essential information I needed regarding starting up. I was truly amazed that the daily rate both were charging was 3-4 times what I was being paid by my employer.

I then got this very light candy floss feeling that this really was going to work.

Bit by bit I started to do my market research and sure enough there was more than a strong market for this type of approach. I could demonstrate to potential prospects that it worked, prove the concept and then train and coach them how to do it for themselves. This was so exciting, I kept running the film of myself doing this, until one day, I got the opportunity of a three month consulting contract, which gave me the financial backing to leave my current employer and set up my own company. It actually got better as my current employer too, decided to become a client, so I truly was able to launch my venture.

Eighteen months down the line, I have turned over what it would have taken me 4-5 years to earn. I have so much passion in my method, that I see it not only being a way of opening doors in a marketing context, but being an approach which people can use to get their own jobs, structure their jobs and make their own careers. Before I set up on my own, most of my career path had been moulded by recruitment companies, not by me.

So my work with the phone helped me, not only examine the way in which I communicate with others but also the way I communicate with myself. I was able to reframe or change a lot of the programmes I was running to get myself out of this soul destroying rut and set up my own business. The NLP concept of modelling gave me the structure to do this, by copying the way in which someone else had made this change, from an employee to running one's business.

Now I get others to model me by copying my cold calling strategy. In my work, I not only improve the way in which people develop new business but have also been able to help with some significant personal issues. One lady who had not flown for 15 years and a Kings Cross fire survivor, who got deeply traumatised everytime he travelled on the underground.

I find my new work very satisfying and am very excited about my new goals on the horizon.

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