

Life's Paradox

uncommon reflections of life matters

The Magic of values

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My friend, a successful dentist, and I were sitting over coffee lamenting the desirability of dentistry and its value (or lack of) to his patients. “Our passionate presentations of ideal comprehensive treatment plans can often lose out to a family holiday, a new car, home renovations, new sports shoes, a new outfit. Why do our patients seem to value every other area but their dental health? Despite our enthusiasm, how can we begin to add value when we do not understand what it is our patients really value?”

Good question. That could equally be the challenge of any Marketing Executive attempting to position products and services to his target demographic. Or the HR Manager attempting to create value and satisfaction for his staff to drive them to greater contribution at work (we all know that Life can be a very competitive distractor).

In the first two articles of this series, *The Magic of NLP* and *The Magic of Rapport*, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) was introduced as a soft skills tool to help run, manage or lead you and your business to where you want to go. NLP can be summed up as a behavioural science of excellence modelling top performers of any field as a transferable skill. NLP originated in the USA in the mid-1970's when John Grinder and Richard Bandler modelled outstanding communicators. These methodologies can be applied to business and our daily lives.



One of the NLP applications is simply understanding values and value systems.

What are values?

Values can be defined as deeply seated emotional responses. Presuppositions by which we live. What is important to us. In other words, the actual values may not be obvious, but our reactions to certain situations can be telling of what we truly value.

In the context of doing business, examples of content values could be possessing integrity, being meticulous, freedom to make choices, being organized and orderly, following set procedures, precision, and so on.

For instance, today I was upset with a team member for not putting certain equipment back where it was taken from. Thinking about it, I knew my emotional outburst had less to do with my being an anally retentive “put-it-back-where-you-found-it”-Nazi (I suspect my husband would beg to differ?!) and more to do with my valued expectation of following set procedures.

Emotional intensity of the response is also directly proportional to the gap between “reality” and expectation. For instance, the greater the deviation from following the above set procedures, the greater my wrath! (Which shows that I do not leave my values at work when I get home Look out, kids when you do not put your toys back!)

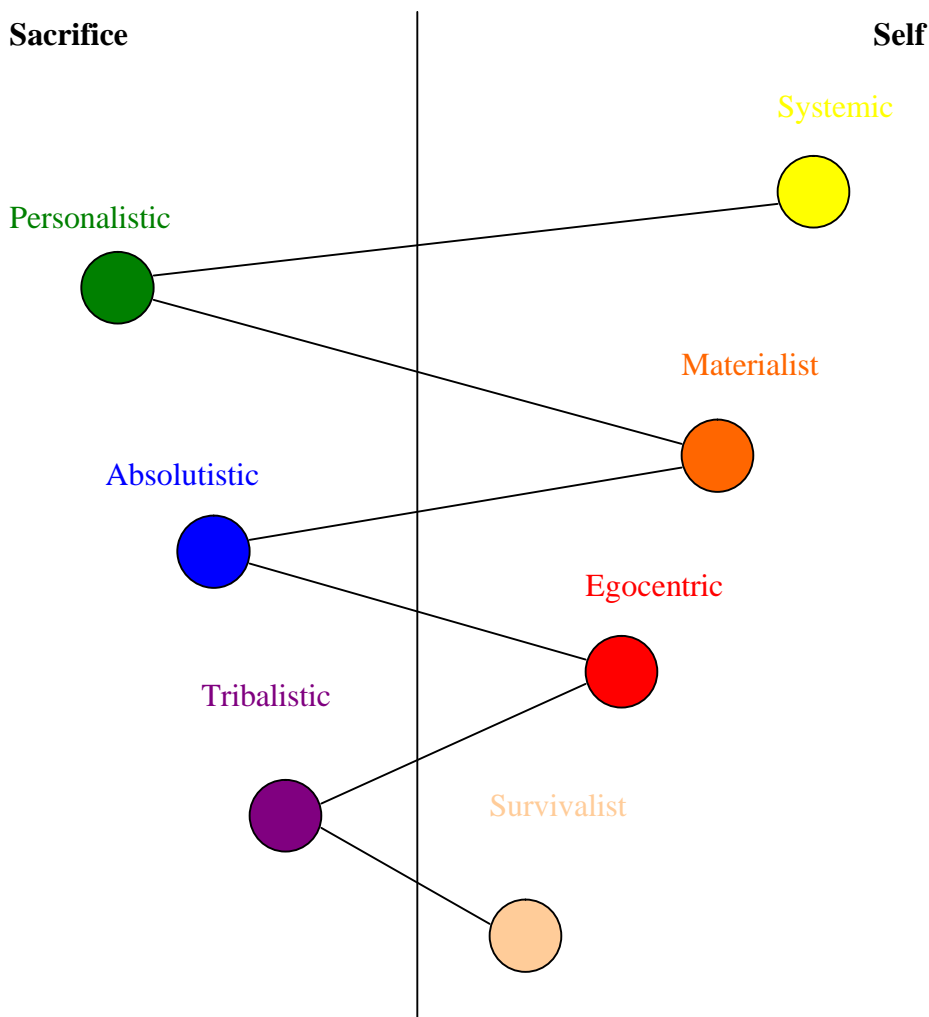
Let’s look at my client, Bob, a successful small business owner, who values *having choices*. An impasse occurred when a certain group coaching plan was presented to Bob. When I recognized Bob valued choices and was not disputing the actual proposal, I suggested a *choice* of phasing the coaching sessions for different groups of his staff over the year or doing it all right now. Furthermore, I launched into various choices of financial arrangements. Bob signed up straight away. Reason: his value for *being at choice* is recognized and acknowledged. So Bob walks away one happy chappy. And I get to perform the ideal coaching plan.

Semantically packed words

Values are not always easy to identify. However, we can pick up some clues by observing the individual’s response.

Imagine listening for words that are marked out stronger in accent or tonality when someone is speaking. These semantically packed words invariably allow us a glimpse of what the individual is emotionally charged about. For example, there was an executive coaching client of mine who used to emphasize all the first person pronouns: “It’s not what *I* said...”, “It’s not about *me*...”, “*I* can’t do that...”. Invariably, it was all about *her*. She was coming from an egocentric world view. When we emphasized this value system by treating her as special in *her* eyes, she simply adored us!

The Clare Graves Value Systems Model



The Gravesian Model

Having a sense of what people value is a whole psychological study in itself. Yet, let's see whether I can simplify it to demonstrate how we can use it in practice.

Briefly, Dr Clare Graves proposed in his value systems model that people respond differently to situations. For instance, when we ask someone to “take responsibility”, we will undoubtedly find different reactions to this task. Vigilante-types could take the law into their own hands and express that as “taking responsibility”. Another person could sit back and wait until told by somebody in authority to act – and that to this person is “taking responsibility”. Yet another may “take responsibility” by forming an action group to lobby and create social change. “Taking responsibility” to a fourth individual could mean observing, reading and then writing a book to create systemic thinking change.

Clare W. Graves – Value Systems

Dr Clare W. Graves developed this *value systems* map (also known as the *Emergent-Cyclical Double-Helix Model of Adult Psycho-Social Behaviour*) which shows us where we are, where we have been, and, with some probability, where we think we are going. This map is not the territory; it simply symbolizes our perceptions of the territory – our “world view”.

These “value systems” or stations reflect the way the individual, organization, or culture copes with the problems that exist within the situation. These are not types of people nor are they categories of behaviour. Instead, they represent ways of thinking; methods of adjusting to the problems of survival; strategies for “making it” in each specific milieu. Each system of values thinks it has “the” answer and is often impatient with other perspectives.

Each “value system” needs to be managed, trained, motivated, or persuaded in a specific way. What people believe is not as important as why they believe, or do, what they do.

Change in value system or movement to a different station occur when the old coping systems no longer solve new problems and there is activation of new coping mechanisms in the brain to do so.

Station Beige : Reactive

Express self now for survival

Perspective: The world is vague, based upon biological imperatives. Living consists of being passive, non-resistant, and compliant to the will of nature.

Goal in Life: Immediate satisfaction of physiological needs to insure continued survival.

Coping mechanism: Reacts to environment to survive.

Life examples: newborn baby, homeless street people, refugees of war-torn countries.

Station Purple: Tribalistic

Sacrifice self now to wishes of tribe

Perspective: The world is mysterious, full of good & evil spirits, threatening. Powerful figures, tokens, clans offer safety & protection from harm.

Goal in Life: Insure security by holding tribal ways, defending clan against danger, willing to sacrifice self for good of tribe or chieftain.

Coping mechanism: Relies on taboos, rituals, omens, spirits. Controlled by chieftain/shaman, finds comfort & protection in family, clan, tribe.

Life examples: Toddler, football fans, cults, third world countries.

Station Red: Egocentric

Express self now impulsively – “to hell” with others

Perspective: The world is filled with aggression, hostility, anger, selfishness, hedonism, is dominated through power.

Goal in Life: Gain power to instantly gratify needs, impulses & desires through willingness to fight against any domination or threat (real or imaginary)

Coping mechanism: Appears tough, assertive, bold, action-orientated. Guiltless tendency: “you should get everything you can get away with” and “might makes right”. Trusts no-one. Depends only on self.

Life examples: Teenager, Rambo, The USA.

Station Blue: Absolutistic

Sacrifice self now to obtain later

Perspective: The world is deterministic, rationally-ordered, rigid categories for ideas, people, objects, events.

Goal in Life: Conform to directive design. Purpose: maintain stability for the present to guarantee future reward earned in the present.

Coping mechanism: Follows “the rules”. Maintain an orderly existence. Pursues what is “right”. Shuns which/who is “wrong”. Supports system & cause through sacrifice & discipline.

Life examples: Bureaucrats, public servants, school & university departments, Australia

Station Orange: Materialist

Express self now calculatedly – not to arouse the ire of others

Perspective: The world is rich in natural & human resources which provide vast opportunities to create for themselves “the good life”. Full of material abundance.

Goal in Life: Achieve politically & materialistically through skillful use of power, popularity, prestige. Enjoy thrills of winning & satisfaction of accomplishment.

Coping mechanism: “Success” – result of competitiveness, investment of time/energy & determination. High achievement motivation needs. Effective game-playing and manipulative skills. Multiplistic thinking & acceptance of risk.

Life examples: Entrepreneurs, Rupert Murdoch, Richard Branson, Kerry Packer, Japan

Station Green: Personalistic

Sacrifice now to obtain now – for self/others

Perspective: The world has been depersonalized through determinism & tarnished through technology, thus creating a spiritual void that can only be filled by rediscovering basic humanity.

Goal in Life: Seek peace with inner self in the belief that people need to be needed.

Coping mechanism: Emergence of true interpersonalism with a focus on “I and Thou” relationships, strive for ideal society through egalitarianism & humanitarianism

Life examples: Environmentalists, Greenpeace, Bill Gates, John Denver.

Station Yellow: Systemic

Express self now – but not at the expense of others – to have a better world

Perspective: A world in danger of collapse because human species misused nature & itself, creating scarcities. Sees life as diverse, paradoxical, and pluralistic experience in which man must restore nature.

Goal in Life: Re-acquaint man & nature & to approach problems of living in a world of scarcity with delicate & diminishing resources.

Coping mechanism: To begin to examine man’s relationship with the world & to begin to explore behaving in systemic terms.

Life examples: Edward de Bono, Gregory Bateson, Dalai Lama

Value systems in business

The practical importance of the value systems is that it gives us a big picture way of noticing where our clients (or team members) are coming from. People value different things because they think differently. The question is not how you motivate people but how you relate what you are doing to their natural motivational flow.

Let's look at some every day examples.

In my previous incarnation as a dentist, I had a faithful patient, John, who works for the public sector. He respects the rules in my office yet does not like coming in. He does so regularly to have “no problems with my teeth in future”. John's motto: “Sacrifice myself now for a better dental tomorrow”. John loyally returns as “you are a good dentist who does things by the book”. He was initially referred by a colleague at work who has himself been coming to my practice for a long time. John operates from *Station Blue (Absolutistic)* value system. To relate to John, I present treatments to him by assuring him “It is the right thing to do now so you will have no problems in the future”. Preventive home care and regular hygiene visits are right up John's alley. Tell him the rules and he will follow them diligently. Do the “right” thing in his eyes, and he will remain an avid advocate. Do “wrong” by him and he will be devastated and betrayed.

A contrasting example is George: a successful entrepreneur who breezes into my coaching practice in designer clothes and a flashy sports car. He overtly expresses his success and demands to be treated as special. George comes to me because he considers my style suits him - we met at a breakfast meeting - and believes that my coaching sessions will help him “make things happen”. To relate to George whose world view is at *Station Orange (Materialist)*, I present sessions that are “totally custom designed” for him. (No off-the-rack stock programs, thank you very much!) Price is no option to George – in fact, he revels in the luxury of knowing that I am one of the most expensive in town. The fact that many celebrities retain coaches also helps my case. (Naturally, due to confidentiality of my clients, one cannot reveal if any of them could be on my books....) He continues to work with me and has referred his business associates to me because he expects results – and gets it.

Another example: Danielle manages her own successful business, and schedules time to volunteer at children's shelters and to raise money in aid of them. She comes to my



coaching practice because she met me through my volunteering as a facilitator for a Teenage Leadership and Life Skills program for a not-for-profit organization, *Discovery Australia*. To relate to Danielle who is at *Station Green (Personalistic)*, I hold the space for her during the coaching sessions by assuring her that “everything we do here is ecological” – including the goals and outcomes that she sets for herself. It is useful to set tasks for Danielle with some community activity in mind since personalistics really thrive in collaborative environments with a bigger picture outcome.

It is important to highlight what John, George and Danielle each perceives as valuable to motivate each of them to first accept my proposals, and for the ongoing relationship I cultivate with them from then on. Constantly pacing their value systems determines their buy-in or not.

You can also apply the value systems with your team members. Knowing where they are coming from, you can tailor what needs to be done by coaching them through their values.

For instance, you may have Mary, a staff member coming from the *Station Red (Egocentric)*. Because of her belief of “Might is Right”, it is useful to assert more power than Mary in areas where she is not pulling her weight. Be aware that Mary thrives on not following rules. It would be useful to invite Mary into a project where she can create her own rules. Give her a sense of being in control without disrupting the business.

Another team member, Jo, is conscientiously looking at your systems and taking the initiative to improve your Office Policy Manual. She feels that the work environment, people and its systems are inter-related. Support Jo who is at *Station Yellow (Systemic)* and you may well find yourself with a better business.

Values can change

Remember that values can change. Values shift say, after a significant life experience, such as marriage, childbirth, education, travel, trauma, personal crises, betrayal or death. For example, I was a woman who held as her highest content value: career advancement in the context of personal contribution, prior to childbirth. Postpartum, yours truly finds herself valuing above everything else: time with family.

People should not be taken for granted once you have identified their values and value systems. Alert your senses to invite each experience with each person as ever changing in every interaction. I remember being told to say goodbye to my children when I kiss them goodnight and tuck them into bed, for the morning after they emerge totally new people.

The more you implement these ideas day to day, the more quickly you will notice the transformation in the direction of your ideal way of running your business and managing your life. I am curious to know how understanding values can be useful and helpful in relating to acquaintances, friends, family and all those meaningful people in both your personal and professional life. I know that life is certainly easier.

And that is the magic of understanding people's values.

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