



Transform your leadership with the power to observe human ontology and dynamic change

The Change Leaders Digest

THIS ISSUE

Thinking and working in

Context

We are living in a time of tumultuous change. New economic circumstances can create anxiety, uncertainty and doubt. A changing context has the power to make us see and feel things differently, or cause us to want to act differently.

All behavior is appropriate in some context. As human beings we are all capable of doing the most amazing and tragic things. So take time to invest in yourself, in your ability to overcome fear, face the facts of life and seek new opportunities.

It's also a good time to be flexible and ensure that all your actions have positive intentions. Are you doing your best with the resources you have available to you?

The most important resources for change are authority (*top-down*), environment (*outside-in*), culture (*bottom-up*) and capability (*inside-out*). To find out more go to my new website: www.changezone.uk.com

The focus for this edition is to explore the role that context plays in communication and change leadership.

I hope you enjoy it.

Steve Trivett



Stephen R Covey

Seek First to Understand

“We can rush in to fix things with good intentions, without taking time to diagnose, to really, deeply understand first.”

Stephen R Covey *'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People'* Simon & Schuster 1992

Stephen Covey makes the point that *“the gate of change can only be opened from the inside”* and that *“we cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or emotional appeal”*.

When we know ourselves at a deeper and more meaningful level as human observers, our deepest values and unique capabilities will shape our view of reality.

Knowing how we create our map of the world can empower us to see new possibilities.. Doing something different can open up a different ‘way of seeing’ that can lead us to a happier and more fulfilling life and way of communicating..

It was the philosopher and therapist Paul Watzlawick who observed that *“all behavior is communication”* and that *“we cannot, not communicate”*. Observable patterns of interaction in speech and gestures can be misunderstood if taken out of context. If the mind of the listener knows what they are feeling, looking and listening for, they can reveal more of the personality of the speaker.

It is vitally important to clarify context as it influences our unconscious thoughts and assessments, and for understand things better. But how?

Inside this issue:

Cover Page
 Seek First to Understand

Slicing the Cake 2
An NLP Perspective on Context
 by David Smallwood

A New Way of Seeing 4

Seeing Tome from the Inside Out 5

Communication in Formal and Informal Contexts 6

Reframing 7

Making Connections 8

Seeing within a Dynamic Context 9

Culture in Context 10

Language 11



It is the context of an action not the action itself that gives it meaning. Context determines other people's interpretations, their actions and communication.

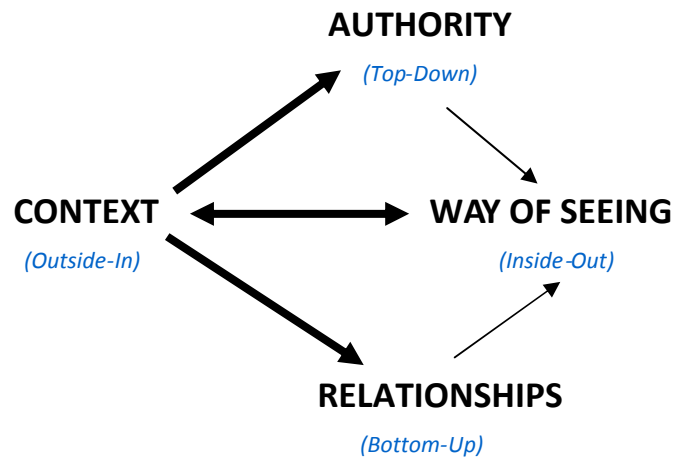
How often have you misinterpreted someone else's intentions, until you have first tried to understand and empathise with the context that gave rise to their 'way of being' at a particular point in time. Such misunderstandings can often be a cause of anger, fear, anxiety, surprise, embarrassment or laughter.

Context can influence how we think and feel. This can affect our body and mood state. Body language alone can reveal all you need to know. This is reinforced by the moods and words we use.

This would suggest that all behaviour is appropriate in some context, but not in all contexts. For example, when people give way to authority (*the top-down dynamic of change*) they can be brainwashed to behave in mysterious, even violent ways.

When the *bottom-up dynamic* is at work we follow the collective will. Context is the *outside-in change dynamic* that influences our 'way of seeing' the world.

Because we have to give the context gives meaning, reality is just our perception. How we perceive it is reflected in our language, mood and body states. As a result, inappropriate behaviour may simply be a misinterpretation of the



data. One person's good choice might be seen as a poor choice by someone else. People usually choose what they believe is in their best interests. Even the road to hell can be paved with good intentions.

The current world recession was created by people simply doing what they thought was in their best interests. The economic environment encouraged risk (*outside-in*), every financial system in relationship (*bottom-up*) as they benefitted leading authorities (*top-down*) around the world. The result was a way of seeing (*inside-out*) that created a new world view.

The same is true of individuals. Context has a big influence on our 'way of seeing'. Even in a network of relationships, some are 'nodes' exerting more authority than others. Multiple perspectives give rise to trends that become new ways of seeing and new ways of relating.

People will see the same things in different ways because they have different maps of the world. Some maps work well in a certain context whilst others don't.

We create our view of context from the *inside-out* and so create our perception of it from the way we interact with the world. We also draw on our own experience as well as those in authority whose views we share.

Sometimes it is helpful to "chunk" a context to get at the bigger picture or understand things in more detail.

To give meaning to a behaviour we have to understand it's context first. This requires us to be curious, to ask questions, to listen and notice which sensory system is being used most, what values and beliefs are important and what goals or intentions are being played out.

Steve Trivett

EDITOR'S NOTE

It is often stated that context is all important. But what is context? How does it influence our actions and reactions?

So many misunderstandings happen when the context is unclear. To have a shared understanding we have to share the same meaning, the same interpretation and make the same distinctions.

But we all see the world differently and have different mental maps. Context is therefore a social construct and a biological necessity. We are structurally coupled with our environment.

Language is used to communicate meaning and create shared environments. Our emotional responses are always stronger when we are associated with the experience.

Steve Trivett

Slicing the cake

An NLP perspective on Context

by David Smallwood

In this article David looks at context from a Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) perspective. His interest in NLP started in the early 1990's, when he came across it on a negotiation skills course. Now as a Master Practitioner and Certified INLPTA Trainer he provides NLP training to suit people with a wide range of interests. Business, social work, personal development, teaching, health, psychotherapy, sales, or just plain curiosity - David's blend of humour and expertise means his courses have a wide appeal.

Go to: www.thelearningpath.co.uk

'Context' is one of those words we call a nominalisation. Although presented as a noun, it is in fact a process, and as a 'thing' it does not exist. You can easily test this by trying to put a context in an envelope – noting that the word 'context' written on a piece of paper is no more a 'context' than the word 'steak' written on a menu is something you are likely to eat.

The word can be denominalised into 'somebody contexting'. The point here is that contexts are created and how you create them depends on the perceptual filters you choose to apply. There is no right or wrong way to do this, and some ways will produce more useful results than others.

When we observe a piece of behaviour in a certain place and a certain moment in time, we have two contexts: place and time. When similar behaviours take place in similar places and times, we call it a pattern. Pattern detection is fundamental to choosing appropriate interventions (how to help people). One category of patterns is Metaprograms and one example of this is 'Towards' or 'Away From'.

Metaprogrammes ?
These are filters the mind uses to determine how we perceive the world around us and how we behave in it.

Nominalisations ?
These are verbs that have been turned into nouns. A context does not exist until it is contextualised by the mind and given meaning.

Some people move towards what they want, some people move away from what they don't want. This behaviour is unlikely to be consistent in all contexts. Maybe at work someone's mindset is organised around avoiding losing, whereas when they play sport their mindset is towards winning. The issue is, how far can we generalise these contexts?

For example, they might move towards winning at tennis (by trying to hit winners), but move away from losing at snooker (by trying to keep the cue ball safe). Now suppose they take up badminton – should we predict that they will try to win, or try not to lose?

What will happen when they play tennis against their boss, their wife, their 12 year old daughter? What happens when they play against their wife at the local sports club, and when they are on holiday together? The answer is we don't know.

Values change with context too. You are an honest person. You go out for a romantic dinner with your boyfriend. He is late. The people at the next table are noisy. You argue. You agree to stay and have a meal together. You pay and leave, and as you walk towards your car you check the bill and realise they have forgotten to charge you for the wine. What do you do?

When a good friend and neighbour borrows £10 and later offers to repay you the £20 he borrowed. Now what do you do? There is no such thing as an honest person. Just a person who generally behaves in certain ways in certain contexts.



DAVID SMALLWOOD

“When we observe a piece of behaviour in a certain place and a certain moment in time, we have two contexts: place and time.”



The Learning Path Group was founded by Ellen Bothwick in 1998 to help people achieve life changing behaviour in their personal and professional lives.

David Smallwood is part of The Learning Path Group where he delivers a wide range of NLP training . He has trained people from very different backgrounds including sales, complaints handling, negotiation, social work, personal development, teaching, health, psychotherapy, weight management and forensic psychology.

David is a certified INLPTA Trainer in Business-Focused NLP as well as being a certified NLP Health Practitioner.

David has been practicing since the early 1990's and remains true to the NLP theory developed by Bandler, Grinder and Dilts.

So when we make generalisations about people's behaviour from observing them in different contexts, we must remember that we have created the categories of contexts we have chosen to generalise into, and that these are as much a function of the filters we have chosen to apply as they are a reflection of structures in the real world.

And how long is a generalisation valid for? Only until we make the next set of observations. This is an alarm bell warning against putting people into behavioural categories and calling them a 'Visual', or a 'Towards Person', or a 'Creative Thinker', or an 'Introvert'. People are none of these, but they may exhibit these behaviours in specific contexts.

" All meaning is context dependent "

Presuppositions about Context

Two of the presuppositions of NLP are especially relevant to the issue of Context. The first is that *behaviour in and of itself has no meaning*. An elderly man sides astride a beautiful young lady in a dark alley, his lips forced hard against hers. The beginning of rape, or an off duty paramedic delivering mouth to mouth resuscitation? Only context gives the behaviour meaning.

I approach you at the gym and give you an empty milk bottle, which I insist you hold upside down in your left hand. What does my behaviour mean? In itself, it means nothing. It means I have given you an empty milk bottle, and I have insisted you hold upside down in your left hand. Any other meaning has been created by you, and for themselves by anyone watching.

The other presupposition is that *all behaviour is useful in some context*.

A manager constantly shouts at his staff, swears, abusively criticises them for not doing what he has told them to do, insists on everything being done immediately, has unreasonable expectations about how quickly things can be done. In most contexts this is inappropriate. When the building is on fire, he may be the best person to be stood next to.

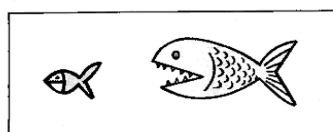
The NLP techniques for Reframing are based on identifying which of these two presuppositions applies in any given situation. A Context Reframe looks for when the behaviour is valuable, and the Content Reframe looks for a different and more useful meaning.

A story about fish

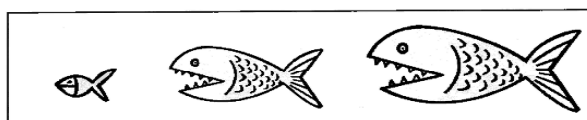
Another technique for Reframing is called 'Change Frame Size'. As the size of the frame changes, so too does the meaning. It dovetails with the Metaprogram of whether someone's behaviour is contextualised or detailed.



At first we see a fish



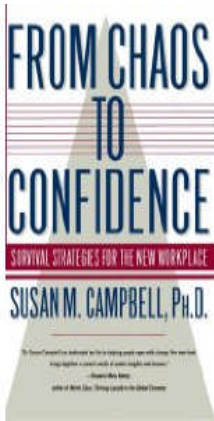
Now we see a small fish being eaten by a big fish.



Finally we see that the big fish was unaware he was going to be eaten by an even bigger fish because he was so concerned with eating the smaller one. Maybe the small fish is safe. Maybe we only see what we are looking for.

Creating your own Context

Not only do our values, beliefs and capabilities influence how we will behave in any context, they also filter the way in which we perceive contexts. As our values, beliefs and capabilities change, they alter the awareness we have of our environment. Context is not a static thing, it is an ongoing process of people contexting. A slice of cake may be comfort food, but slicing the cake is the real thing.



In this book by Susan Campbell offers readers practical tools on how to be and what to do in a world of increasing complexity. Susan explores 'both/and' thinking, systems thinking, paradox, conflict, trust and what she calls 'meta skills' that focus on essential techniques for managing chaos in life and at work.

"If the world is to change for the better, so must we. This involves personal learning that enables us to perceive and engage with positive change as it is happening."

Published: Simon & Schuster 1995

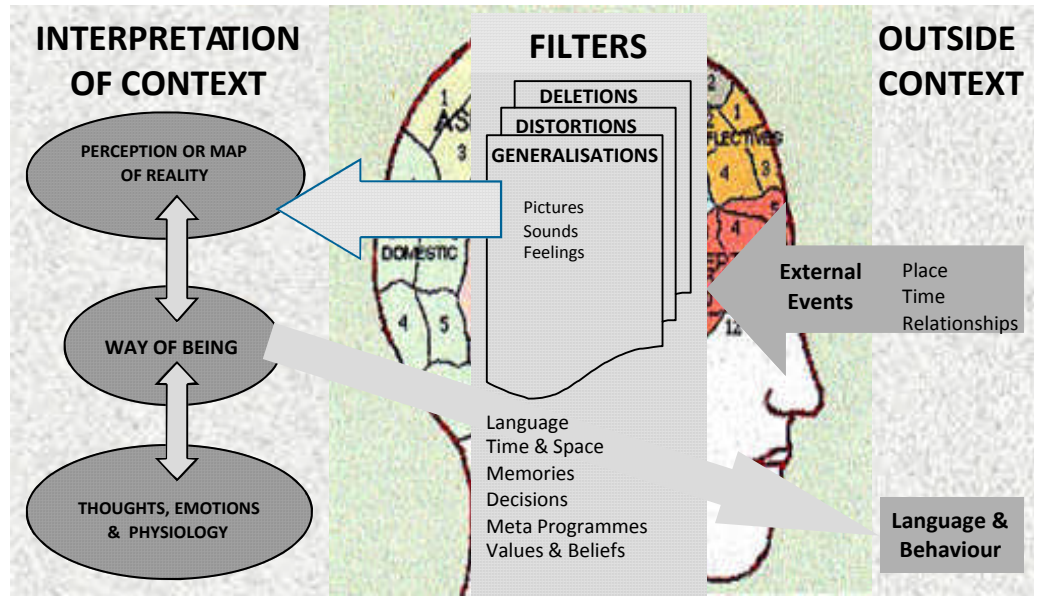
Associated or Dissociated

You can view events from an associated or dissociated position.

To be associated with an experience, you are seeing and feeling the event through your own body. You are 'in the moment'. When you are dissociated you can see yourself having the experience, but not the feelings

These are the different states or 'ways of being' that we can use at will to draw on experiences from the past or to imagine the future.

Dissociating painful memories from the past can be useful as it reduces the emotional content of this memories, thereby enabling us to learn from them and if necessary change them.



A New Way of Seeing

In the words of the late John Lennon . . .

“Reality leaves a lot to the imagination”

How true this is. Our minds take the sights, sounds, feelings, smells and tastes from the outside world and shape them into unique experiences with associated thoughts, emotions and behaviours. They are unique to the individual as we interpret our experiences in slightly different ways. This is because we delete, distort and generalise different bits of the information we take in unconsciously.

The mind stores and organises memories in relation to time and to context. The interpretations and distinctions we make influences our state or 'way of being' in the world.

To change we have to change our language and behaviour, both of which are influenced by our thoughts, moods and physiology.

It is common for people to believe that their context 'makes them' feel, say and do the things they do. We may not be able to change the context, but we can change what it means to us and how we decide to respond. It is the 'way we see' or perceive these events that determines their impact on us and our impact on others.

If we decide to see 'global warming' as a threat to the existence of human life on the planet, it influences how we talk about energy and waste, as well as the choices we make and how we then live our lives. We have to see things differently to do them differently.

It was Albert Einstein that observed that

“we cannot solve problems with the same kind of thinking that created them.”

We interpret what we experience through pictures,

sounds and feelings. We filter much of what we take in so we only experience what we don't filter out. We filter our experiences, reflected in the meaning we give to the words we use to describe them, the way things get done, our conclusions about what's right and wrong and the decisions that have or have not worked for us. We develop feelings and emotions linked to these things and this can create mood states shaped by our beliefs and assumptions.

All these mind processes, our level of consciousness and thoughts determine our choices about the language we use and the behaviours we adopt.

The meaning we give to things is created from a complex interplay of sensory driven experiences—the strongest of which is observation and imagination—our 'Way of Seeing'. We have to see things differently if we are ever to change them for the better.

Steve Trivett

Seeing time from the Inside-Out

In this item Steve draws on the work of Dr Charles M. Savage in “Fifth Generation Management” and Tad James in “Timeline Therapy and the Basis of Personality” to explore how the concept of ‘clock time’ has blinded us to the importance of ‘human time’ in shaping our understanding of context.

We create context. What is inside us creates a map of what is outside us. We perceive context and express it in our own way. We give birth to new arrangements, new patterns or new ways of seeing the same things in a different context.

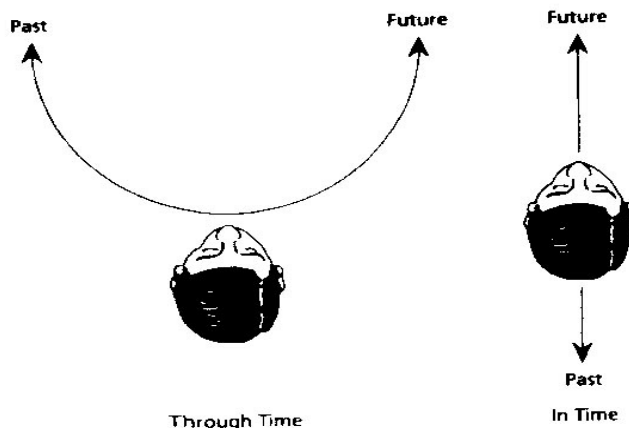
When we see a situation we helped to create we may be inspired or depressed by it, depending on whether it matches our vision of what we wanted (*our top-down perspective*) or creates the relationships we expected (*our bottom-up perspective*).

What’s more, we can observe the impact of the process and the value of the outcome (*our inside-out perspective*). This is really a self-dialogue with ourselves in a given context.

When applied to a work context for example, work is transformative—we become something as we see ourselves in a future context. Work is also reflective and defines how we have developed in a past context. We create these patterns as a continuous dialogue in the context of time.

In today’s workplace time is of major importance. Increasing stress is generated from tighter deadlines and the time it takes to do things when resources are in short supply. It is ‘clock time’ that has created a separation between past and future contexts. In ‘human time’ we assume that past and future are integral to the present context.

In ‘clock time’ the past is left behind and the future has not yet



arrived. This is the mind creating context as a line.

If you ask someone to picture a memorable moment from childhood and ask them where that picture is located in space around them you will get an idea of whether they see time on a line going from side-to-side in front of them or from behind them.

You can read more about timelines in Tad James’ book ‘*Timeline Therapy and the Basics of Personality*’. Meta Publications 1988

Fascinatingly, the memory changes over time as the pictures we hold are subject to changing

interpretations. We modify them by changing the meaning they hold for us now. The past flows with us as a resource and influences what we consider is possible in the future.

The future is not really ‘out there’. Like the past it is very much here in the present. So, how we see ourselves in the past is intrinsically linked to how we see it from today’s perspective.

Clock time then is an important backdrop for human time, but in human time we can grasp patterns that cause us to anticipate what could happen in the future.



Many of us experience habits that have patterns of experience that we can find very difficult to break out of. They generate compulsive behaviour reinforced by how we see the context. One way is to see the answer as being ‘out there’. That is, to reinterpret the context that feeding the habit and rearrange it into new “ways of doing things” in the future. But we know that tomorrow never comes and the future can only be anticipated by taking actions today—which will then change things tomorrow (*which of course is today*). Likewise, the actions we took yesterday (*which of course was today*) will make their contribution to tomorrow (*which becomes today*).

We can envision a future state for ourselves if we can shake off a past state that may be stopping us taking action today. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) works because it focuses on changing the language, thoughts and body states that are not working for us ‘today’ with one that can work for us ‘today’. All parts of us have to work as an integrated whole, even though some parts may be in conflict. This preference comes from the *inside-out*, but is influenced by the context that works on us from the *outside-in*.

By restructuring the way we see context we can greatly influence how we anticipate our ability to act to achieve our goals. We can create what we can imagine (*from the inside-out*) in a given context (*coming from the outside-in*), in association with others (*working from the bottom-up*) towards a vision of what is possible (*viewed from the top-down*).

To explore Steve’s Dynamic Change Model in more detail, go to: www.changezone.uk.com

Cause & Effect

Some people prefer to think sequentially to keep their thoughts and lives 'in time order', whilst others see the world as a series of random yet connected events.

The complex world we now live in makes it rarer than ever to find a predictable environment, yet we expect consistency and fairness in the way we are treated—especially as consumers and citizens.

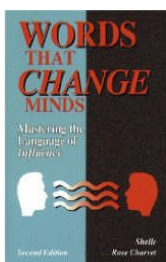
In his book 'Leading with NLP' Joseph O'Connor talks about "everything being equal" as a deadly phrase, because everything is never equal. There are always exceptions or side effects.

The reason why we never really solve problems is that we are always looking for the 'quick fix' and thereby fail to grapple with its deeper and more complex non-linear causes.

This is why we remain in denial about climate change, food production, oil dependency, population growth,

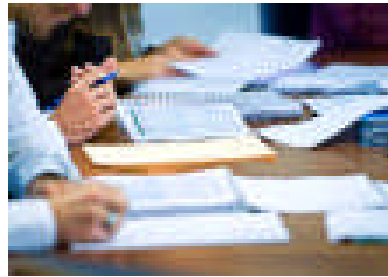
Words, Words . . .

We use language to explain context, by creating meaning, making assessments and assertions, forming declarations of intent, explaining thoughts, emotions and reactions.



In this book Shelle Rose Charvet explores the link between language, behaviour and context.

Published: Kendall/Hunt 1997



Communication in Formal and Informal Contexts

To gain a better understanding of context, leaders process formal and evidenced communication from official channels that give the bare information, and more detailed and subjective information from informal contacts. Both are needed to make sense of a situation.

Informal meetings allow questions to be asked to clarify the official information and apply it better. A balance needs to be struck between structure, creativity and order.

It is possible for us to lose ourselves in the 'outside' world and fail to communicate with ourselves on the 'inside'.

Without consciously realising it we can find ourselves stuck in habits and procedures and fail to consider possibilities. Some "creative disorder" may be needed. You may be living in a chaotic situation, where every decision is made in the context of an impending crisis. In this context you may need to create more order and structure to help you.

We must be careful when judging people from the *outside* as they may seem calm and in a state of 'flow' yet *inside* they may be experiencing turmoil as conflict between their values and judgements.

In organisations, leaders of change search for meaning and evidence to support their visions. They look to make

changes IN the system to maintain stability and control through constant adjustment to what is happening 'out there'. They also see changes OF the system that involves deeper and wider changes to ensure survival in a rapidly changing context.

It is just as important to know what is working and needs to be maintained and what is not working and needs to be renewed.

Individuals and organisations are the same in this regard. They perform best in a state of "inner balance", a state between chaos and order where change is dynamic and responsive to changing environmental conditions.



Effective Change Leaders both formally on behalf of their organisations and informally on behalf of themselves (and those they work with) need to ask four fundamental questions.

1. What is our purpose?
2. How do we stay viable?
3. How do we deliver high performance?
4. How do we cope with continuous rapid change?

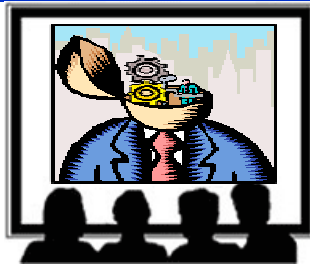
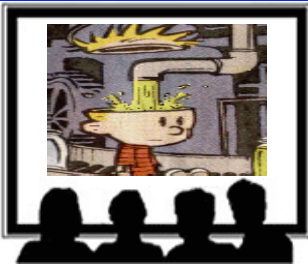
Problems arise when there is too much formality and procedure to respond quickly enough, or there is too much innovation causing people to become confused, disorientated and stressed.

The best way to deal with uncertainty and change is to develop the language and behaviours of change leadership.

Organisations and human organisms are living things and need to be treated as such. Change is needed to keep organisations 'alive', which means changing people from the *inside-out*. They must be prepared to embrace uncertainty with curiosity, to replace resistance with an exploration of possibilities and adopt new 'ways of seeing' themselves in a new context, one that is knowledge rich and supports personal learning.

Leadership is first and foremost a journey of self-development, of finding internal and external resources to overcome challenges. Success comes from having clear intentions and paying attention to them in the way we talk and behave.

To tap into the diversity of talent and perceptions people have they must be able to communicate in ways that suspend assumptions and distinguish between opinion based assessments and evidence based assertions.



REFRAMING

You can reframe a belief, behaviour or relationship by putting it in a different context. This gives it another perspective or a different meaning. If the belief or behaviour is limiting our ability to solve a problem or see new possibilities, changing the context can bring new interpretations which enable those possibilities to be seen, felt or heard.

It is often used to help the mind create different context to appear by looking at it from another point of view so that you can feel say relieved or able to deal with the situation better.

For example if your manager criticises you for not being objective enough in your assessment of others, you could see this as being good with people or great at appreciating the creativity of others. You 'reframe' it AS IF it were a positive comment.



If you are in conflict with a part of yourself or someone else, reframing could help you switch the time frame, switch into another body, assume you had the information or resources you needed or consider alternative solutions to a problem.

So, reframing is changing the way an event is perceived, thereby changing its meaning. In a coaching context you can encourage your client to see words in a different way.

This is the basis of many jokes. When comedian Ronnie Barker walked into a shop and asked for "forkandles" the assistant thought he was asking for "four candles" when he actually wanted four handles for his forks.



Reframing is at the root of creative thinking. Just asking a client who is being negative about their own behaviour "in what context would this behaviour be seen as positive" refocuses the mind on an alternative perspective.

Everyone then is entitled to their point of view because that is what it is, just a point of view. The meaning you make seeing things from that position depends on how you make sense of the experience—which is always going to be partly correct. This is because the brain filters the data it draws in through its senses by generalising, distorting or simply deleting it. Our unique experiences cause us to see different consequences from the connections made with other similar experiences.

Even the new science of Quantum Physics allows matter to be seen as waves or particles as your awareness flips from one world view to another.

Coaches can use the discipline of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to help their clients

reframe their view of things by adopting different perceptual positions.

First Position is how you see things in the moment, from the 'inside-out', being yourself and engaging directly in an associated way.

Second Position is when you reframe to think and act as if you were someone else, still associated as if you were taking on a role as an actor might. You are putting yourself into someone else's frame of mind and body, imaging how they might see things and behave as a result. We do this when we hear our parents, boss or godhead talking to us from a position of authority and this is a 'top-down' perspective.

Third Position is you observing yourself or an activity from the 'outside-in'. You have the sense of not being directly engaged and have stepped back from you in the First Position. This is you as a witness just using your senses and being unable to express your judgement or assumptions about what is happening. Here you are dissociated from the experience observing your own behaviour in the picture.

Fourth Position is when you reflect and assess that what you observed in Third Position could have been done differently. Both coach and client need to reflect on how well they are doing and what they could do better in future.

In 1998 Robert Dilts introduced a different understanding of the Fourth Position by describing it in terms of "we". This was because it "involves being associated in the whole system or 'field' relating to a particular interaction. This can be seen as the view that might be adopted by a group of individuals sharing the same culture. In my **Dynamic Change Model** I see this as the 'bottom-up' perspective.

Steve Trivett

Mental Model

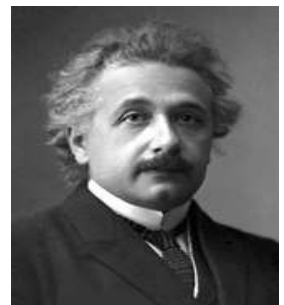
A frame is a mental model, a set of assumptions you carry in your head that helps you negotiate particular territory of experience.

Reframing is the ability to understand and use multiple perspectives in order to see things differently.

New solutions require a reframe of our thinking. Change requires symbols around which a new culture can grow.

In organisations there are political, structural, human and symbolic frames for situations that are ambiguous, generate conflict, or work from the bottom-up. In order to get congruence.

Fifth Position Consciousness



"The most beautiful and deepest experiences a man can have is the sense of the mysterious. It is the underlying principle of religion as well as a serious endeavour in art and science. He who never had this experience seems to me, if not dead, is at least blind. To sense that behind everything that can be explained there is a something that our mind cannot grasp and whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly as a feeble reflection."

Reflecting on these words of Albert Einstein it is possible to imagine a **Fifth Position** of a world beyond the familiar where our mind deals with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Working with Timelines

When considering emotions and the meaning of words we find they are tied with time.

Feelings of guilt or shame often relate to something that happened in the past. Yet, we may be holding on to that guilt today and allow it to influence how you live tomorrow.

Going back in time to picture what was happening say just ten minutes before the event about which you felt guilty took place, we can ask ourselves - Where is the guilt or shame now? From this perspective the memory will be different. Is it still in front of us? Well no, because there were things you didn't know then that you know now, so be gentle on yourself.



This simple exercise can help to destroy the guilt for most people, as it appears unnecessary and no longer important or relevant, especially when we now have subsequent experience and knowledge to draw on. What was unknown to us then is only too apparent today because we have more resources to draw on.

If that event in the past remains in the past, it loses its power over us today. It is a memory of then—not now. When you discover new ways to interpret the event from the reasoning resources you have available to you today, you can let go of the guilt and preserve the learning.

What is happening here is a recognition that a context drawn from the past will be given a meaning different from the way we might assess it today. Our unconscious mind can make more distinctions because it has learned to think and react in more effective ways than it could back then.

However, there may be a part of us that thinks it is still important because it delivers benefits for us today.

We then explore what else we could do to reframe those thoughts enabling us to forget those guilty feelings.

We are dealing here with feelings, not facts. Our feelings reflect how we choose to react to events outside ourselves. The event did not induce the guilt, we did. If our mind created it then we can just as easily eliminate it from our mind.

Holding on to perceptions that no longer serve us is one of the biggest blocks to learning. If we stay in touch with current reality, we need to let go of the guilt, shame and other fantasies and fears that stop us making the most of our present moment.

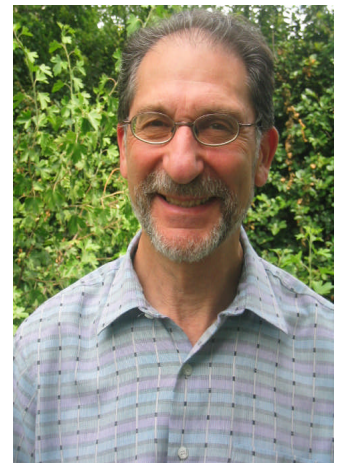
For more information on these techniques read 'Timeline Therapy' by Tad James & Wyatt Woodsmall.

Steve Trivett

Making connections

Warren is an author, counselor, coach, trainer and facilitator. He is the founding member of the Emotional Fitness Institute. He worked in the UK where he lived until 1994 when he moved to practice on Alberta, Canada. He holds a degree in philosophy, social science and psychology, and has authored fifteen books. His latest is called "Recipes for Inner Peace"

For more information go to: <http://www.efitoinstitute.com>



Warren Redman

When people deal with significant events in their past, they actually change their perception of those events. It involves reflecting on real meaning. This way the present can be connected with the past and shape intentions for the future.

For example, John Heimler transformed his experience of NAZI concentration camps into a personal success story. He came to see that it was love that sustained him through the blackness of Auschwitz because it was something that could not be taken away from him and could endure.

It is possible to be happy if we understand that we can anchor it at anytime. It then becomes a resource available to us now and is not dependent on having a happy past.

The past does not have the power to control us today if we do not allow it to. We do not have to blame ourselves or others for our past as we can decide to see it differently today. We can redefine our attitude to the past.

To do this we need to disconnect our feelings *inside* us to events *outside* us that cause us to react negatively or positively. To change our reactions we have to change our choices. It requires inner balancing to realise how we can unlock the things that are holding us back from a better future.

We can discover a new way of being by changing the way we think, feel, act, and talk by bringing them into harmony.

Seeing within a Dynamic Context

In this article Steve Trivett looks at concepts from Complexity Science to tease out the nature of context. It provides the initial conditions for growth, learning and change. Context is structured as systems within systems and has self-organizing and emergent qualities. Context creates space for possibilities and constraints. A context is therefore dynamic, constantly evolving and adapting to how we want to see it.

Whether we are trying to make sense of our lives or our work we have to be sensitive to the opportunities and constraints placed on us by the situation we are in.

The context for most of our actions and interactions is that of a complex adaptive or evolving system. In such a living system there are a huge number of possible states influenced from the *inside-out* or the *outside-in*. People are free to interact locally from the *top-down* or *bottom-up*. How they behave and combine is largely unpredictable and emerges in ways that reflect the conditions and rules prevailing at the time.


In many social, economic and organisational settings, overall behavior emerges from the combined impact of people's interactions. The current world recession and credit crunch was not planned, but it was predicted by those with an understanding of Complexity Science. They could see how significant changes in the nature of banking relationships would have unpredictable consequences to the world economic system. Because these interactions were non-linear they could not be controlled by a system that was just adapting to a changing context.

Context it seems is not stable, it is constantly shifting. It is dynamic, subject to human perception and interpretation. As a result the map they we create is not the territory. There are 'agents' in the living organism that *'push out'* like the tentacles of an octopus seeking opportunities to improve. Others are *'pulling-in'* like a hedgehog to preserve the status quo. Both are survival mechanisms.



Evolving System
Helps a living entity adapt and fit into its environment. It is a survival mechanism.

Autopoietic System
Helps a living entity decide what is 'me' and what is 'not me'. It is a survival mechanism.



Murray Gell-Mann, a Complexity Scientist, observed that . . .

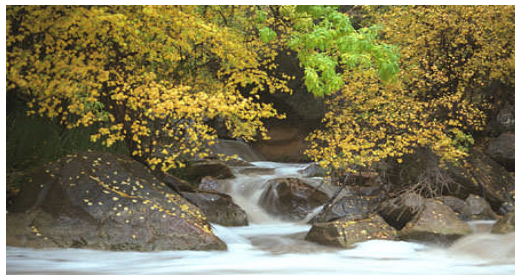
"The common feature of all living processes is that they acquire information about their environment, identify the patterns and condense them into a model or map that determines their behavior."

The behavior that emerges results from a process where local interactions of people, bacteria or ideas (*bottom-up forces*) influence global structures (*top-down forces*) and vice versa. How you see things now is influenced by the way thoughts, feelings and senses have interacted in the past and the resulting structure that gave meaning to them.

To engage with continuous change of increasing complexity is to admit to the possibility that more than one thing can be true at once. Dr Ilfryn Price in his book 'Shifting the Patterns' observed . . .

"Just as rainfall follows established routes, so perception follows established ways of seeing. Even if the light sources which perturb the back of the retina, or the acoustic waves that hit the eardrum, are identical, what will be noticed by different individuals will depend on the perceptual lens through which we give meaning to the world."

We can think of 'landscapes of perception' where patterns in habits and rules of behavior, ways of thinking, systems of language and states of relationship all coalesce like many rivers pouring into a delta that filters them before resulting water reaches the sea.



Initial conditions are important in Complexity Theory. If we have a way of seeing things that works for us it gets embedded over time like rivers in a landscape. Change involves seeing the initial experience differently so that it is given a different meaning. New perspectives will then begin to flow.

Ecology

Everything is connected. Boundaries are fuzzy. In an ecosystem, all actions can potentially affect all other things.

As a result, in a living system we cannot control the interrelationships from *inside*—to get in control. Neither are they *outside* our control. In an ecosystem there is co-control.

Ecology in NLP deals with the relationships between a client and their context, their natural, social and created environments and how they might lose control of their goal or the change might give way to his or her relationships and environment.

It is a frame within which coaching for a desired outcome is checked against the consequences of the client's whole life and mind as context. It treats the client's relationship with self as a system and his or her relationship with others as subsystems that interact, so that when someone considers a change it is important therefore to take into account the context and the consequences it might have on the client achieving the change they want.

As Gregory Bateson observes in 'Steps to an Ecology of Mind'

"For every organism there are limitations and regularities which define what will be learned and under what circumstances this learning will occur."

Clearly what stimulates the brain are changes in context rather than the unchanging aspects of our experience.

Victor Shklovskij is quoted by Naom Chomsky as saying that

"People living at the seashore grow so accustomed to the murmur of the waves that they never hear it. By the same token we scarcely ever hear the words we utter . . . we look at each other, but we do not see each other any more. What remains is mere context."

Identifying and honouring the power of context ensures that we make sense of things within the constraints of the map we and others create from the world around them.

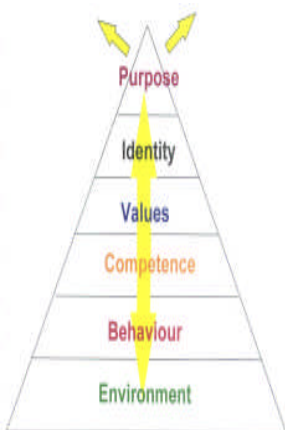
LOGICAL LEVELS OF CHANGE

Based on the work of Robert Dilts and Gregory Bateson, the concept of logical levels can aid our understanding of the change process.

It categorises information according to the way we make important distinctions in our experience. The influence is felt from both the *top-down* and the *bottom-up*.

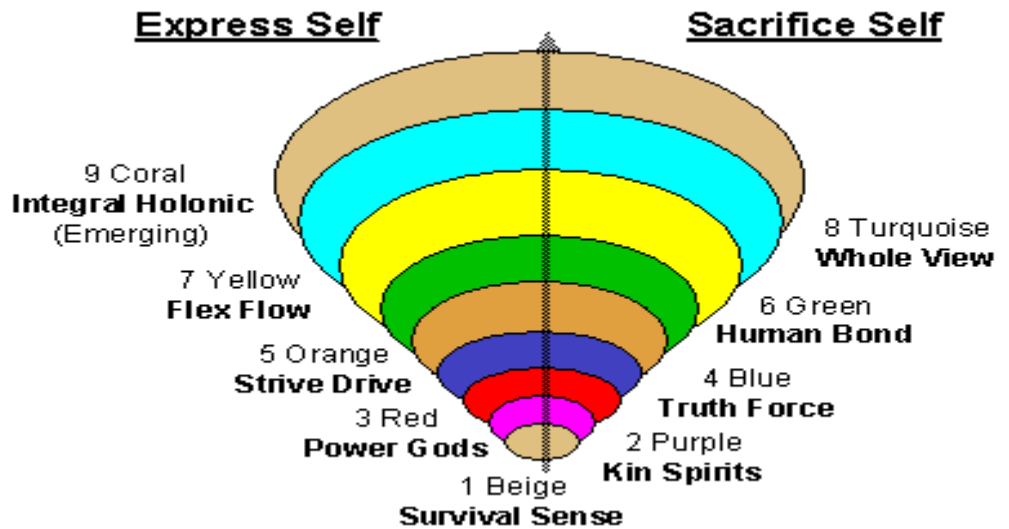
How we see ourselves connected to others and the world around us influences our beliefs and values, and the strategies we use to be successful in different contexts. Likewise, context influences how we behave, which helps create the beliefs that make us who we are.

Our beliefs and our values shape our understanding of why things are possible or impossible for us. They provide us with a rationale and drive our actions in context.



For more information go to: <http://www.renewal.ca/nlp/8.htm>

Culture in Context



Our diverse views, beliefs and identities can be represented by eight memes or value systems, which can be applied to individuals or entire cultures as they develop. They are summarised in the "What is Enlightenment" Magazine (Winter 2002). To get more detailed information go to: www.changezone.co.uk/dynamics/spiraldynamics.html. A deeper analysis can be found in Don Beck and Christopher Cowan's book "Spiral Dynamics". Published by Blackwell in 1996.

How we see, do and feel things in a given context is shaped by our values and beliefs. For example, when youngsters feel vulnerable they join a gang (2). They gain their power through rights of passage and allegiance to the group, to deal with threats and aggression (3). The group gives life meaning and purpose with a strict code of conduct (4). Competition with other gangs and individuals within the gang forces members to take risks and play the game (5). Eventually the gang context is unable to feed the human spirit's need to be freed from cold rationality, dogma and divisiveness (6). Eventually we grow tired of competing and value our

ability to choose and make decisions that enable us to find peace of mind and satisfaction with life (7).

Young people who grow in a different context go through the same stages in life but with different experiences.

You can also see values linked to context in different types of work. For example, in local government you will find the policy people wanting to promote *green values* - the importance of community involvement and putting the customer first. The organisation development people will be pushing *orange values* - striving for excellence and continuous improvement. Elected politicians may be dominated by the egocentric *red values* -

determined to get what they want through domination.

These values emerge in individual behaviour as well, with *blue people* coming across as authoritarian and righteous, *orange people* manipulating relationships and events to influence the direction of change, and *green people* who are sensitive and caring, wanting everyone to share in the benefits of what they can create by working in partnership.

Values influence how we express ourselves on the one hand and what we are prepared to sacrifice to get what we want on the other. Values and beliefs can change drastically when the context changes.

Steve Trivett



Language

No match — No meaning

Most of us want to express things that matter to us. But how those things are presented in language can be influenced by our assessment of the context. What we are talking about could be personal or professional and be relevant to a particular time, place, relationship or event.

By clarifying context we can reduce misunderstandings and the misinterpretations that can lead to misguided action. This happens because we listen to things that matter to us, making an interpretation of what another person has said, reinforced by our own feelings and experiences.

What we say and how we say it will always be interpreted by others according to their context for listening. In other words, the meaning they are listening for. There's the meaning the speaker wants to convey that is important to them, which needs to match the meaning the listener is searching for.

Professor Alan Sieler makes the point in his articles about conversation (go to: newfieldinstitute.com.au) where he states that a useful question to ask is . . .

“What listening am I speaking to? In other words, where are others ‘at’ in their thinking and feeling which will need to be acknowledged if they are to be receptive to the ideas that I

want them to embrace.”

Often there is no match between speaker and listener because the context is not clear enough for a meaningful connection to be made.

What the listener then takes a way and acts on is their own interpretation of what was said using their own internal representation system. The model of the world used by the speaker leads to language that can create different meaning for the listener as they are using a different world view to make sense of the language used.



It cannot be assumed that just because we are using the same language that we mean the same things. What is a “small change” for one person can be a “big issue” for another.

A common thinking pattern in ‘coaching for change’ is that small changes sustained over a long period are more likely to succeed than big changes over the short term.

This may work if the context stays pretty well the same, but if the context shifts, as it would if you take on a new job, new relationship or new responsibilities, then misunderstandings can occur.

What might initially be welcomed on the basis of the

language used by the speaker drawn from their perception of the context is experienced as something very different in the mind of the listener. What challenges one person is a nightmare scenario for another.

It is important therefore to speak with the listeners needs in mind. This involves paying more attention to and checking out how our language we choose to use is received by the listener in terms of ensuring that there is a match between the meaning intended and the meaning interpreted.

One way to do this is to ask for feedback with the interests of the listener in mind, with questions like . . .

How do you see it ?

What would you say is important to remember from what you have heard ?

How do you feel about that?

Is there anything that you would like to clarify that is of concern to you ?



How the listener responds to such questions can provide useful insights into how they may be interpreting what you are saying from their own interpretation of the context.

Steve Trivett

Mind in Context

In their book ‘Mind in Context’, Robert Steinberg and Richard Wagner seek to bring the gap between those who believe that cognition depends on interaction with the *outside* world, and those who feel it resides *inside* the mind.

This is an attempt at arguing that there is a dynamic balance where both perspectives can be true at the same time.

Parrot Fashion

Many scientists, biologists and animal intelligence researchers are reluctant to admit that parrots can use context and speak in some form of conversational language.



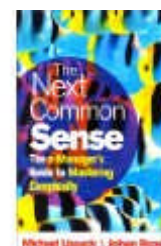
Some people who have had exceptional talking parrots thought they were speaking in context, but were never believed. But parrots it

seems do learn to talk in context and can even understand sophisticated conversational language.

Go to: <http://budgieresearch.homestead.com/>

Metaphor

In “The Next Common Sense” Michael Lissack & Johan Roos use landscape metaphors to contextualise the way leaders of change can manage complexity in modern corporate life during times of rapid change.



They refer to “situatedness” where context drives the rules.

Published by Nicholas Brealey 1999

Steve Trivett
 Personal & Professional Change Coach
 2 Thatched Cottages
 Broadway Lane, Fladbury,
 Worcestershire. WR10 2QF

Office: 01386-861-841
 Email: steve@changezone.co.uk
 Mobile: 07866-731-231



How do we go about leading ontological change in our selves and in the bigger system ? To lead change we have to see it and then agitate, motivate and activate it to make it happen? So, what is involved ? How is it done ? What resources do we need ? How do we know if it's right? Who needs to be involved ?

The new 'Leaders Digest' provides a vehicle for you to tell your story and share your experience of what holds the key to ontological / sustainable change. Perhaps you are a coach, mentor, educator, business leader, service manager, community leader, politician, change professional or someone trying to make change happen for themselves.

If you would like to share your stories, thoughts, experiences, articles, websites, change tools, leadership techniques, books, theories, favourite DVD's, etc., that demonstrate ontological or dynamic change—get in touch.

As Change Leaders we have an important role to play in making the world a better place. To some this may sound egotistical, even arrogant, but we all need to really listen to others, seeking to understand their way of seeing and how this shapes their way of being. We must adopt an attitude of openness, curiosity and eagerness to learn.

It seems that when Change Leaders act as Ontological Coaches they can change the context that then influences the way people interact and behave. They pay attention to the impact language, mood and body state have on creating the conditions for change both within and between people.

Coaches bring various people into contact, enhancing their ability to communicate and foster the circulation of positive energy. This creates a context (*of outside-in energy*) for unleashing the vision (*top-down energy*), the capabilities (*inside-out energy*) and the culture (*bottom-up energy*) that needs to be changed for the better.

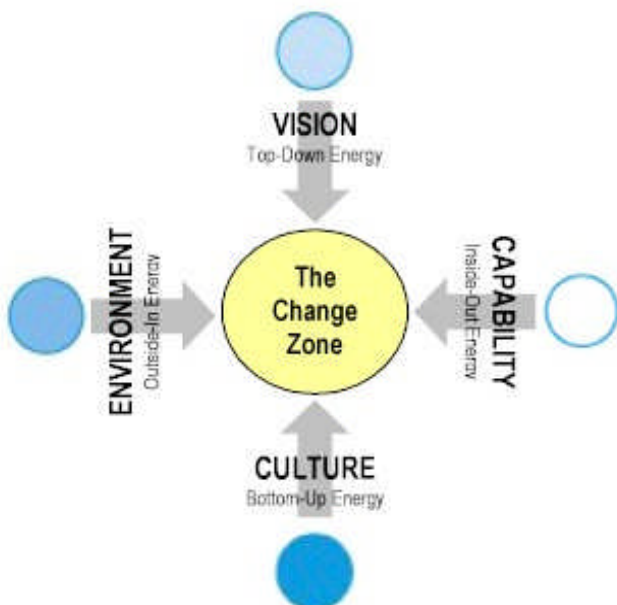
We are living in an age where we are only six relationships away from connecting everyone on the planet. We need to create shared visions, sustainable environments, combine our capabilities and value cultural diversity, all vital if we really want to coach people to create a more peaceful and viable world order.



Coaches work to help change the world one person at a time. Not by coercion or instruction, but by helping people connect with the more noble aspects of their humanity and to live life to the full—in ways that benefit themselves and those around them. Like a virus, the 'self-organising' nature of coaching has the effect of bringing ideas, cultures, people and desires together for mutual benefit. Remember Spinoza's notion that *"desire is the very essence of man"*.

Change Leaders are doing today what they want to have happen in the future. They are synthesising the talents and conditions that will lead to a more sustainable world.

For this to happen the main sources of energy for change must be balanced (see my Dynamic Change Model) to be sustained in a dynamic relationship. Changes in one dimension can lead to changes in another. Change Coaching works to make those changes more positive and help the client to see that there is always a solution for them in a given context. The coach facilitates the interaction of the external world (the territory) and their internal representation of it (the map). As the poet David Whyte observed in 'The Heart Aroused' . . . *"difficulties can fall away when we make our inner territory larger, while simplifying our outer work"*.



STEVE'S DYNAMIC CHANGE MODEL

It is important that leaders of change adopt a multi-dimensional views of change that accepts and integrates situations, people, dreams and human needs of all types.

Steve Trivett