

# Adopt a supple approach

Learning tools may be seductive but they don't provide all the answers, says Jonne Ceserani

**Great craftsmen are great because they have imagination, understand the materials they work with and are experts with the tools of their trade.**

The material of commerce is people. If people understand themselves and others, they are more likely to respond flexibly to different situations and to make useful decisions. The tools of business are creative problem-solving, effective meeting skills and leadership. To get the most out of these tools, you need to tap into people's imagination and give them ways to craft solutions. Training and development, therefore, needs to focus on helping individuals and teams become more responsive, flexible and imaginative.

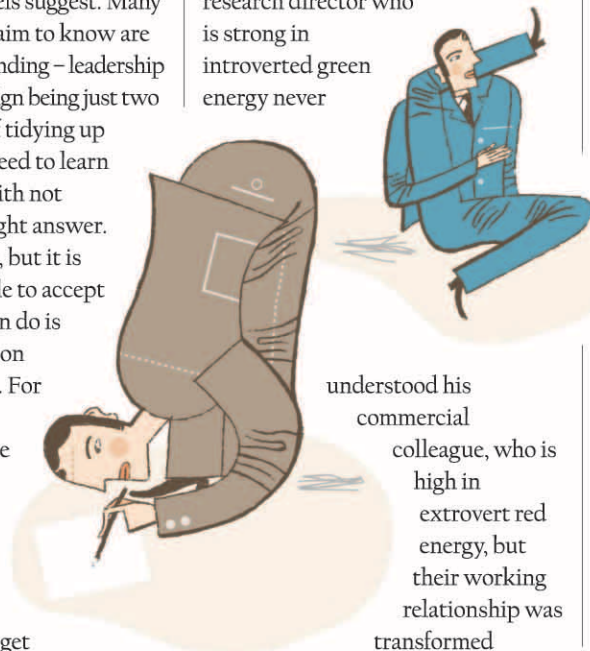
Yet training and development professionals are often seduced by simple processes. These may be useful for communicating ideas and developing shared understanding. Unfortunately, the world is not as simple as these models suggest. Many of the systems we claim to know are beyond our understanding – leadership or organisational design being just two examples. Instead of tidying up complex ideas, we need to learn to be comfortable with not always having the right answer.

It may be difficult, but it is possible to get people to accept that the best they can do is make guesses based on current information. For instance, an HR director once told me how her company was failing but no matter what I suggested the response was always: "We have to get

alignment before proceeding." Finally, I said: "Look, problems exist. Let's try something new anyway." Two years later a successful change programme was completed.

But people are not always willing to respond to change. A director of talent moaned: "It is impossible to motivate people when the board and executive teams keep changing." I pointed out that this will always be the case and she needed to respond to that, or leave. The company continues to lose ground, creating new organisational structures with little effect aside from demotivating staff.

I use a system called Insights Profiling to help to get people and groups into a conversation about self-perception, relationships and adaptability. Based on a Jungian model of types, Insights Profiling uses colour to describe preferences: fiery red, cool blue, earth green and sunshine yellow. For example, a research director who is strong in introverted green energy never



understood his commercial colleague, who is high in extrovert red energy, but their working relationship was transformed

through an awareness of how differently they saw the world.

Synectics' creative problem-solving tools allow groups to design meetings in a more disciplined way and raise the probability of successful outcomes. This methodology presents a simple way of transforming personal and group capability to ensure a team works effectively and creatively. I once worked with a group of national account managers who used to get together for two days every month. These meetings always verged on warfare. There was no clear ownership and decisions were argued over. Restructuring the meeting, and focusing on ownership and planned processes cut it to one day, with savings of £100,000.

Everyone is responsible for their own influence on an organisation through personal leadership, but for those in a hierarchical leadership role, additional skills must be crafted. Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) provides a set of tools for helping individuals and groups to focus on leadership.

By exploring how language and the brain work together, NLP aims to allow people to take control of their lives and help others to do the same.

Tools such as these can be applied in many situations. But if they are used mechanically, their value is lost. Getting experience and maintaining skill levels are what works.

Life can be viewed as a path to mastery, where you keep practising your skills until you become the kind of flexible person most likely to survive – and succeed. **PM**



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#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Jonne Ceserani's book, *Big ideas, putting the zest into creativity and innovation at work*, describes his approach more fully. Email: [jonne@powerandgrace.co.uk](mailto:jonne@powerandgrace.co.uk) or visit the web site at [www.powerandgrace.co.uk](http://www.powerandgrace.co.uk)