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The Case for Changing Reality: exploring aspects of mental imagery

Introduction

In two previous papers (*NLP World* 3:iii and 4:i), I described how my research into mental imagery had developed from a larger piece of doctoral research into the sales reluctance of professional advisers such as accountants, tax managers, consultants. By this, I mean their unwillingness to involve themselves in a sales situation even when it is imperative for them to do so. Mental imagery seemed to play a part in this. In my first paper, I explored the literature on mental imagery and the participants' ability to describe images. In the second paper, I looked specifically at the participants' ability to describe, using sub-modalities, images associated with good experiences, bad experiences and sales experiences.

The results of all of these had been somewhat inconclusive, especially the work with submodalities. This final paper presents the dramatic results of a piece of action research.

An opportunity for simulated activity

Ten participants who were not available for the mental image interviews were subsequently available for me to explore the mental images they experienced in a simulated sales activity.

Situations in which the researcher attempts to influence reality or encourages participants to become directly involved in the research are often considered as "action research" (Whyte 1984). It differs from an experiment in that action research implies a spontaneous, situational response rather than a premeditated and systematically planned approach.

Patton considered that *creative approaches* are those that are situationally responsive, appropriate, credible and useful (Patton 1990,