

An Interview with Shelle Rose Charvet
By Frank Daniels
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SHELLE ROSE CHARVET is an international keynote speaker, business trainer and consultant, and certified NLP trainer. Although she works extensively on both sides of the Atlantic (living now in Canada), her work and life in Europe has been based primarily in France. So, last year when she presented a workshop at the ANLP conference, her name was unknown to me. Since then, however, her book 'Words That Change Minds' has elicited widespread interest (both within and outside NLP circles) and her name has become well known in association with her work on Meta Programs and the LAB Profile.

Prior to her forthcoming visit to Britain I spoke with Shelle on the telephone to find out more about her views and her work...

Frank: As a bit of background could you explain how you became involved with NLP and/or the LAB Profile?

Shelle: That's a good question. I was working in a training company in Paris and I had a lot of international clients. I was working at places like the OECD, Bank of France and European Parliament and Commission, and I heard about NLP from an acquaintance with whom I was doing therapy. She had gone off to California and she came back with this marvellous thing called NLP. I worked with her for a few months on my own personal development, and then with Josian de Saint Paul, who authored quite a few books in France on NLP. She and a colleague brought NLP to France and I took one of their first Practitioner Courses along with my boss. Then we each took a couple of Practitioner Courses and Master Practitioner Courses and I got very interested. I even did a year's worth of Trainer Training in France. And that's how I learned NLP, which is a very different way of doing it than in the States, because the French had to adapt it to a more Cartesian way of thinking, so they *structured* it. If you look at NLP, it's a very anecdotal kind of culture, like NLP is vehicled by stories. One of the things that was done with NLP in France was to identify a lot of things that at time nobody talked about, things like, "What is behind the Presuppositions?" "What does this frame include?" "What does it not include?" And I learned a lot through that. I had already learnt how to facilitate and how to train in a French way, which is to do with structuring things. Because in North America we start off and start running without saying where we are going and what we are aiming for. Yet in France it is very important to set the framework before you start to do anything. So I had been already marrying those two styles and when I started to learn NLP a lot of us realised that it needed to be changed and adapted to be appropriate to the culture. That's why I did several Practitioner and Master Practitioner courses in France and then I continued when I came back to Canada, in '89.

Frank: You have mentioned the difference in culture between France and North America, the States in particular. From your experience do you know what it is like in Britain?

Shelle: In Britain it's a bit different to France. I come from, and was raised in, an English family, so it's something that I know intimately. And I would say it is different again. The value system is very different from that in North America. Rapport between people is very different. One of the things that England would have in common with France is that it is an older culture so there is much more implicit communication than in the newer North American culture. In Britain people understand things without them having to be said. One of the things that Europeans don't get about Americans is that they *talk* about everything, even 'things that aren't'. There is not all this background that everybody understands, so you *have* to talk about things to know what people are saying. For example, in America, if you need to apologise to somebody for something, let's say you have hurt somebody's feelings, you have to go up to them and say "I am sorry" or orally apologise in another way. Whereas in Europe you can bring somebody a cup of tea or coffee and that would have been an apology. With so much history in Europe, behaviours are more symbolic and more meaningful than words. And where there isn't a long history of culture (it's what's called a low context background) you have to say things to make them clear.

Frank: Are there such things as cultural Meta Programs?

Shelle: Well, there are some cultural presuppositions. One of the beliefs in America is that 'anything is possible, all you have to do is to really want it and it becomes possible'. That is not a very European belief. A lot of American trainers come to Europe and say: "But if you want it you can have it". This conflicts with some people's beliefs. I do some work with people's values and people's criteria in the LAB Profile and one of the things I have them to do is a Hierarchy of Criteria. I ask a question: "If you had to choose between this important things and that important thing, which one attracts you the most?" Someone will often say, "If I'm in this lovely state having this wonderful time, I'm not going to make the right decision, because really life is full of obstacles and burdens. How can I say which one attracts me?" The response I make to them is: "One of the ways we make good decisions, is by unloading the burdens of the world in order to make those good decisions. Secondly, we need to check those decisions to make sure we make them fit the real world. But first of all we need to be unburdened to make those good decisions." And I give them an experience of that.

Frank: Traditionally Meta Programs have been put across as something complex. Is it possible to give an overview of what Meta Programs and the LAB Profile are, and what your particular approach is?

Shelle: When I first learned about Meta Programs it was part of my Master

Practitioner training. There were 60 patterns, and there was no way to figure out who had what, we basically had to guess. I thought the patterns were fascinating, very interesting how people put together their present reality, how they respond to what's going on, how specifically they filter in and out, it was fascinating. I spent a year and a half *guessing* and I thought there's got to be a better way. Then one of the French NLP Institutes wanted to teach Rodger Bailey's material, which was called the Language and Behaviour Profile or LAB Profile for short. What Rodger had done, was reduce it to about 14 things on the theory that we don't need to know 60 things about another human being. And secondly he developed questions that, no matter what the person answered or didn't answer he got their pattern. An thirdly he developed a whole theory of influencing language that would have an impact on a person once you know what their patterns were. I began teaching this with the French Institute. One of the people at that time who had learned this model without Rodger Bailey, learned from his tape sets and from using it at that time in the Eighties. Then, as part of my consulting, I went around using it everywhere, and went "My God this stuff is really easy to use - you don't even need to know any NLP to use this stuff to get really wonderful insights into other people, to understand how to have some kind of influence where you wouldn't have had any before". It was just amazing. I have used it in all kinds of contexts, because it is so easy to use. And the reason I wrote my book is because no-one else wrote a book on this stuff. I thought, "there should be a book on this stuff. Why isn't there one out there?" Eventually I just said, "Well, I better put it together".

Frank: So it's not necessary to have an NLP background to use the LAB Profile?

Shelle: No, I teach it in all kinds of business contexts to people who don't know NLP, but it gets them interested in NLP because they say, "where does this stuff come from? - It's brilliant!" There is a disadvantage to this model, and the disadvantage, in comparison to other psychometric profiles, is: it takes skill to use. You don't just have people fill out a computer form. The reason I choose to work with the LAB Profile in all of the work that I do in businesses, is because this one profile allows you to do so much, it allows you to understand what's going on, it allows you to build better teams, it allows you to hire the right people, it tells you how to manage them, so that they can be at their best for themselves and for their company. It teaches you to understand other people to create deep rapport, because you understand where they are coming from. It teaches you how to market and how to sell. I'm working with companies helping them to design all their marketing material based on the profile of the people they are trying to reach.

Frank One of my hesitations initially, was about the labelling 'psychometric testing' which seems to be opposite to a lot of the NLP presuppositions such as 'every-one is a unique individual'. I found though, in your book, that one is able to use the LAB profile in a more conversational way.

Shelle: Yes, absolutely. One of the things that people absolutely hate is being stuffed into pegs - round pegs into square holes: 'You are an Introvert, you are an Extrovert, you are Neurotic, you are Stable or whatever'. One of the things that I really appreciate about the LAB Profile is that it recognises that we have different behaviours in different situations, different contexts. And just because I behave one way in a particular area of my life does not enable you to predict how I'm going to behave in another area. So it doesn't reduce people to four words or three letters saying you are always going to be like this. Rodger Bailey had a wonderful statement about it, he said: "Meta Programs are basically a status report on how people respond in different contexts. A snapshot of what you do, of what you pay attention to, of how you filter information in a given type of situation." And what's amazing is, we can pick it up from the structure in your language and anybody can learn how to do it.

Frank: I'm curious, do you go into any of the non-verbal indicators as well?

Shelle: Absolutely. For example, you can tell if someone prefers to make decisions based on their own internal standards as opposed to being influenced from the outside by their body language. Someone who at that moment is having more of an internal filter tends to lean back so they can receive information. Then you'll notice that they'll respond after a certain time because what they'll do is process what you said as information and compare it to their own internal standard, and decide whether it's smart, stupid, good idea, bad idea, the right thing or the wrong thing. Whereas someone who has a more external pattern in a given context will immediately respond, because they are responding to the outside. You'll find them looking for feedback. You can see the different behaviours for many of the patterns, before they have even opened their mouths.

Frank: You were saying before about some of the places where you have applied the LAB Profile, could you give us some examples of where you have used it?

Shelle: IBM have been using it for recruitment and selection and team building. Computer Sciences Corporation in the States have been using this for their project consultants. They have realised there is a standard profile for people who buy software and they now can present information in a way that meets what those people are asking for, instead of what people usually do, which is speak from their own profile. I'm using it right now to help a major company hire for senior level positions, and what I've done there is profiled the position. The way you do that is very simple, you get a list of their responsibilities and you go through the check list. Does it take this pattern to do this or that pattern? Or what combination of those two patterns does it take? And you go through the check list. And then I have been telephone interviewing their short-listed candidates. I've even been writing ads to only attract the right people, which reduces their recruitment time by a lot.

Frank: Many of the examples of the use of the LAB Profile presented in 'Words That Change Minds' are in a business, sales and marketing context. Do you see these as the main areas where the skills are useful?

Shelle: When I think of all the people in the social services that I have also trained (counsellors, therapists, social workers, everybody who is in the human services field), one of the things I do is for personal development, like understanding yourself. There are typical patterns that counsellors get into, that are not necessarily healthy. One of the things I like people to know is, what are the other patterns that they are not used to doing or are not aware of, so that they can have more choice and they can add those patterns in. It's wonderful as well for counselling because when your clients come in they just deliver their patterns on a silver platter to you. One of the things that I learned at Practitioner level, that I thought was a rigorous tool for counselling, was doing a grid of the present state and the desired state. So as I'm asking outcome frame questions, I'm filling in what's the difference between the present state and the desired state. And one of the things you'll notice is that the Meta Programs are different. This gives you the language you need to talk to the person in, to respond to where they are now in order to be able to help guide them to where they want to be. Secondly it's a way of telling if a change happened. It's the same in corporate culture change. One of the ways you can tell that the message has sunk in, that the person got the changes they wanted, is by the change in their Meta Programs.

Frank: You mentioned to me earlier that you have recently further developed the LAB Profile for use as a diagnostic tool. Is that right?

Shelle: Yeah, I have another book in my head. There have been tons of books and tons of programs on designing and developing corporate visions and mission. What people do not know how to do is how to communicate it within an organisation so that people aren't panicking, fleeing and ducking. Many of the organisations I know that are going through Re-engineering have managed to 'down size' the work force but not make the work go away. And people are living in fear going: "If I put my head up will it get cut off?" And many organisations are not trying to cut off heads. They are trying to build organisations that make sense but they haven't got a clue of how to communicate. One of the problems I have discovered, is the people driving the change inside the organisation often have such a high personal need for change that they are far beyond the vast majority of people in their organisation who can not handle as frequent a number of changes. So the language they use is completely at odds with the population they are trying to influence. So what I have developed is a process using the LAB Profile in a very easy, quick and rigorous manner to diagnose what the culture of the organisation is in Meta Program, or LAB Profile, terms. Then to design how you can communicate your messages, and then how to measure how much of the change took place once you've implemented it. The other thing I want people who are driving the change to be aware of, is to have a way of knowing whether the amount and type of

change is healthy or unhealthy for the organisation.

Frank: That might cover what I was going to ask next. What plans do you have for the future?

Shelle: I can tell you what's happening now. One of the other things I have developed is the Default Profile. The Default Profile is all about what you need to assume about a group of people that you are working with unless your assumptions get disproved. You need to have a rigorous approach to gathering information to find out where people are coming from. But in many groups there is a culture that is operating. The culture can be understood in LAB Profile terms, so in many groups there is a Default Profile, a profile of what you can assume to be true. (Default is a computer term. It is whatever is already standard on your computer.) I have been working with different companies in terms of their client groups to have them better understand their clients. What else? Well, in addition to my corporate training I'm training on NLP Comprehensive's Master Track and also for NLP Chicago, so I'm keeping pretty busy.

Frank: Is there anything more that you would like readers of Rapport to know about?

Shelle: One of my goals on my courses is that each person who comes through the course gets to know their own profile and what it means in the context of work and that of themselves at work, so that they can get a really clear indication of where their unconscious biases are. Secondly, at a personal level, what I want each person to get is a better understanding and experience of people who live their lives completely differently. Many people go: "How can you have a life like that?!" I think that is a very positive response, because it means you finally ran into something that was really different from you and you noticed it. In standard NLP teaching of the Meta Programs (and I teach them fairly differently) in my experience there is often an implicit message that there are certain 'right' programs to have. And I want each person to understand the advantages of *each* pattern, because I think they are *all* useful. For example, we have been teaching the outcome frame for so long that we think anybody with a problem focus, a person who likes to solve problems, is a negative person. Well, I'm sorry - I've run my whole life like that! And I'll tell you, I have solved a lot of problems. And I have got things done! The other thing I want, is for people learning Meta Programs on courses to laugh their heads off and they should know that I have a very bizarre sense of humour!

Frank: Thanks a lot and I look forward to learning more when you visit Britain.