

The secrets of a Psychic

We are all capable of cold reading... Toby McCartney

A NLP Modelling Project, by Toby McCartney

Psychics are said to communicate with the dead, predict the future and supposedly, using their amazing powers, can identify information about people, places and things that is hidden from our normal senses. They are said to have ESP (extrasensory perception) or special spirit animals who clue them in to people's fortunes. All skills which, if they do exist, I wanted to model...

My Grandfather attended a spiritualist church when I was a kid and I often went with him during my school holidays. I was fascinated by the 'Psychic' at the front of the room who would 'connect' into a spiritual world and deliver messages from the dead to the living. Creepy for some, but therapy for others. My Grandfather was always thrilled when a 'message came through' for him - happy in the knowledge that whoever gave him the message was still in some way connecting.

I designed my 2015 modelling project around a simple quest - to learn how those 'Psychics' connected with my Grandfather's dead relatives to give him those messages. My findings were interesting to say the least.

I wish at this point to convey a message to those who, like my Grandfather when he was alive, benefit hugely from the understanding that some psychics may be the real deal... They may actually be able to connect and communicate with the dead and provide you with the messages that you need to hear to help you through challenging times in your life. The results of my project do not disprove a psychics claim to be able to do the amazing things they often say they can, but to show a new model of verbal, and non-verbal communication that carries with it great influence and persuasion. The better part of me believes that a 'professional psychic' perhaps uses the skills I have uncovered in my modelling project, without even knowing they...

If you do benefit from seeing a psychic, please do not read any further...

The project: The secrets of a Psychic

My interest in Psychics was peaked when I first learned about the Milton Model in NLP. The use of some very eloquent language patterns to persuade and influence, originally found to be used in Hypnotherapy. Milton Erickson used language that was artfully vague and deliberately ambiguous in order for his clients to create pictures, sounds and feelings that would send them off into a trance like state. Milton language though, is used by all of us, most of the time. By applying ambiguity and adding in language presuppositions into our language, we can influence our deletion, distortion and generalisation thinking filters. If we are asked "Would you like to pay by Visa or American Express?" at the end of a sales meeting for example, the communicator is providing us with an illusion of choice about how we pay, rather than us asking whether we are going to pay or not. The influence is subtle, but clever.

I wondered whether a psychic might be so good at using the Milton Model language patterns to influence their clients into a slight trance and then somehow applying embedded commands so that clients, like my Grandfather, believed they had heard things they perhaps hadn't. But this seemed a little unrealistic - we all know when we are being influenced don't we?

There was only 1 way of finding out - to get access to a psychic or psychics, and observe their behaviors.

I've spent a little over 12 months, many nights in Travel Lodges and lots of my hard earned cash to visit and attend shows run by the UK's top psychics. No names mentioned, but I believe I have found a model that works and one that this week, I was able to prove to work.

My final model is a mix mash of cunning linguistic techniques together with the art and science of non-verbal communication.

Let me walk you through the stages of what I have observed.

Process:

1. Cold Reading

a. Getting to know you

It is likely that if you go to a Psychic you are a believer and the psychics are of course aware of this. The first thing that a cold reader must do is build a deep rapport with you as soon as they can. Trust must be gained within the first few minutes if you are to believe their messages to be true. We all love someone who puts them self down a little and psychics have got this down to a fine art. I've often hear them say "Throughout the reading there will be a lot of things that make sense to you and some things that won't (*Milton Model embedded command*), and this could be (*Modal operator of possibility*) just down to my misreading the images, sounds and feelings that are transmitted through me for you. Please try and interpret for me the meanings behind what I say. (*Presupposition that there will be meanings*)." This language is cleverly scripted in order to communicate more with your unconscious mind and get a message into your core.

At the beginning of the sessions they will say things like "I would love to be able to predict the future 100%, but no one is perfect. We all make mistakes sometimes don't we?" This question at the end is called a tag questions and used to displace resistance in the statement.

They understand the art of rapport from a physiological stand point as well, often matching and mirroring how you are stood or sat. (See our Rapport section in the book)

b. Observation

A cold reader will look for signs that will help them in their readings. Signs such as wedding rings, or ring marks. The clothes you wear, the colours you choose and even the type of jewelry you have on - a crucifix necklace or a 'Help the Heroes wristband tells a cold reader a lot about you. They will look and see if you are carrying something that might give away what you have been doing that day. Some will even learn and remember the different smells of aftershave or perfume and match them to whatever you are wearing.

A cold reader will analyse how you hold yourself, your body language, whether you are right or left handed. They will work out whether you are an introvert or an extrovert (See the Meta programmes section of our book). They will be interested in where you are from to try and work out what sort of background you have, what type of house you live in and how educated or not you are.

c. Fishing

Most experienced psychic knows that there are seven themes most people will be interested about hearing. Love, health, money, travel, career, education and goals. A cold reader will appear as if he/she is simply chatting and not interrogating a client or gathering information. Professional cold readers learn statistics and local information. Fishing for information can help a cold reader get

what they need in the form of a question which can also be perceived as a statement. If you are wearing a bright colour they may ask about it with a question like “I see you are wearing blue today?” The question if answered “yes” and a reason given, will get a response like “Yes, I thought so.” If you answer “no”, it may just get a response such as “interesting...” and then they will move on.

A cold reader will rely on statistics and one or two of the seven areas of interest above to guess why you are visiting. They will say something like, “I sense you’re here to talk about relationships or a position somewhere, but I’m also sensing some grief?” Notice they won’t say “I’m sensing that you’ve lost a family member through cancer.” But he/she will know that grief is a generalised emotion to fish in. A generalised statement will almost always work and have a client open up to spill some beans, used later in the reading.

2. Language

The language that comes next is my favorite part and I can think of many applications this new model of language can be used for.

The Barnum (or Forer) Effect

Many Psychics go to a ‘psychic’ school to help them develop their psychic abilities... (This was new to me). At those schools, every psychic is made aware of a language model called the Barnum, or Forer, effect. The model is often attributed to P.T.Barnum (1810-1891), or Barnum and Bailey Circus who was considered by many as a ‘master manipulator’. Barnum was said to have claimed that “We have something for everyone.”

Others refer to the model as the Forer Effect, so named after the psychologist Bertram Forer who dies in 2000 (And hasn’t been in touch since...)

Forer found that, as a general rule, people accept vague and generalised distinctions and fit them to themselves - especially when we are emotional - like in times when family and friends have passed away.

Forer explains that “people are vain and optimistic. They often are possessed with wishful thinking and gullibility. What they are concerned with is a desire for claims of the truth rather than empirical evidence.”

Statements that are positive or flattering are very easy for us to accept, Psychics trade on emotions; they bank on uncertainty and hope.

I decided to test the Barnum Effect and the idea that I can ‘read people’ just using the language I have found psychics to use. My quest was simple - could I, without the use of the spirit world, ‘profile’ people, or be perceived to profile them, using simple language patterns taken from the language of psychics. Would they believe that I could tell them more about themselves through an email, than they care to admit to even their best friends.

And so I set up the ‘McCartney profiling Tool and my ’20 questions test’ ...

My 20 questions test:

I sent out the following message on Facebook:

Have 5 minutes spare today?

I have created a personal profiling tool that I would love to test with you if you can spare 5 minutes.

I have designed a '20 questions test' that when you submit your answers will enable me to create a personal profile on you without needing to have you in front of me.

If you are willing to take part, simply follow this link and complete the questions on my form.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/McCartneyProfiling>

After you submit your answers, I will email my personal profile of you as a thank you.

Thank you in advance.

Within 24 hours 347 of my Facebook followers had completed my 20 question test. The questions I asked were the following:

1. Name, Email and Mobile
2. Are you talkative to people you meet for the first time?
3. Do you often find fault in people?
4. Do you pay attention to detail?
5. What colour is 'depressed': Red, Yellow or Blue?
6. Do you handle stress well?
7. Do you have an active imagination?
8. Do you have a forgiving nature?
9. Are you trusting?
10. Can you be moody?
11. What are you best at: Starting, Maintaining or Stopping?
12. Do you like to cooperate with others?
13. Do you see yourself as intelligent, compared to others?
14. Do you get nervous easily?
15. Do you have an assertive personality?
16. What colour is Love: Red, Yellow or Blue?
17. How do you normally think of your life?
18. Are you reliable?
19. Are you full of energy?
20. Are you already bored by my questions?

Each question came with 3 simple answers. Answers like: 'Yes, always', "Sometimes" or "No, Never"

The questions weren't important to me, and actually, neither were the answers to those questions because I then sent everyone who completed the 20 questions **the same profile** below:

<Name>, You have a need for other people to like and admire you, and yet you tend to be critical of yourself. While you have some personality weaknesses you are generally able to compensate for them. You have considerable unused capacity that you have not turned to your advantage. Disciplined and self-controlled on the outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure on the inside. At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing. You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in

by restrictions and limitations. You also pride yourself as an independent thinker; and do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof. But you have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others. At times you are extroverted, affable, and sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary, and reserved. Some of your aspirations tend to be rather unrealistic.

I asked all 347 people who received a profile to score me on a level of 1 to 5, where 1=Not an accurate profile to 5=A spot on profile.

The results were outstanding. 324 people submitted a rating. 82% (266 people) rated a 5 as their profile being spot on. Just 6 people rated it as a 1 or a 2 out of 5.

Language Analysis

Let's analyse the 'profile' I sent out to everyone to find out how the Barnum Effect really worked.

<Name>,

I copied their first name into the language patterns at the beginning to personalise my message. My learnings from the psychics tell me that the more I use someones name when delivering a 'personal' message, the more it is accepted.

You have a need for other people to like and admire you, and yet you tend to be critical of yourself. Most of us have a need for people to like us, especially those of us that opt in to be profiled. Most of us also can also be critical of ourselves. These statements, although vague, are taken personally by most and mapped into the life of the reader.

While you have some personality weaknesses you are generally able to compensate for them. This sentence again is vague. As long as I make it conscious that there are *some personality weaknesses* the focus of the readers attention goes onto the *compensation* of them. The adverb *generally* is important here too.

You have considerable unused capacity that you have not turned to your advantage. Capacity of what? This could mean anything to anyone. Because capacity is seen as a positive word, I can change the *generally* in the sentence above, to say *considerable*. I'm looking to pile up the positives.

Disciplined and self-controlled on the outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure on the inside. I took a little risk with this sentence because I used the words '*tend to be*', rather than you '*can*' be. I'm using the deletion of a comparison here too - *self-controlled* and *worrisome* compared to whom or what? The reader thinks of times when he or she has been those things...

At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing.

Haven't we all? And it may be just a few times.

You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.

I love this line - *a certain amount of change and variety* - I don't say how much the certain amount is, and am going on the fact that we all like some change and variety in our lives.

You also pride yourself as an independent thinker; and do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof.

an independent thinker - as opposed to someone who is reliant on someone else to think?

But you have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others. At times you are extroverted, affable, and sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary, and reserved. We are all at times extroverted and introverted, but the reader reads into this as a match to their own life. affable, and sociable mean many things to many people.

Some of your aspirations tend to be rather unrealistic.

This line is the only risky line in my profile and I was looking for feedback from some on whether this was true for them or not. I got that feedback from two people who marked me down on my score because they didn't like me using 'unrealistic'. Perhaps if I had used the words "Some of your aspirations may seem to some as unreachable."

I was also going to add in "Security is one of your major goals in life." as this sentence follows the rules above and is artfully vague in every way.

Conclusions

I think it's our human nature to look for praise and the more flattering the description, the more likely it is to succeed and be accepted. I do believe that the source and context are important too. If you have trust in the person delivering the script or you have a great rapport with them, the language is accepted.

The Barnum language patterns contain a number of clever linguistic elements, like the ones above, and I have found that peoples inclination is to notice the parts of the language that seem to fit into their life, more than items that seem inappropriate. Accepted, positive parts of the language are remembered, often with vividly created visual, auditory and kinesthetic representations, whereas the negative stuff is forgotten. Since the language is general enough to relate to anyone, it's difficult to identify any parts of the description that are wrong. As we hear or read the language, we select what to pay attention to.

These language patterns can be used to build up someone's self image and self worth or even unite a nation of people (<https://youtu.be/416oyZmugEc>) and... They can also be used to convince people that the spirits are calling or influence them to buy into products and policies. Whether through horoscopes or Psychics, politicians or coaches my conclusion is that we can all be powerfully persuaded by the language (written and spoken, both verbal and non-verbal) that is used unintentionally and intentionally by others.

My work and research continue as I find more 'secrets of a psychic' to bring to you.

And as an aside, did you know that if you read out loud O R A N G E S really slowly, it sounds like *Gullible...*

This is a transcript from psychic reading by a well known psychic - as transcribed by Denis Dutton

“Good evening, Betty.”

“Good evening, Maureen.”

“Do you hear anything from my Mum?”

[Though Maureen has spoken but ten words, Betty — or any listener — can already surmise that she is upwards of 55 years old, might have been raised in Ireland, and is a generally jovial person or at least tonight is in a happy mood. As distinct from other categories of caller, she does not sound recently bereaved, or as though she is seeking advice on a personal problem.]

“Yes, I can, *[Betty gushes.]* because I have the most smiling lady here beside me! You know, Maureen, she used to put her hands together in glee, didn't she?”

“Yes.” *[A note of hesitation.]*

“And she almost jumped up and down!”

“That's right” *[With more confidence.]*

“That's what she's doing at the moment! *[Betty's voice reaches a peak of excitement, and then becomes more serious.]* Now, just as I was saying that, she was giving me a feeling — in the abdomen, not in the stomach — and it's all tight. It feels emaciated but blown up. And she's having trouble breathing — it must have been that way at the end”

“That's right.” *[Betty's spirits usually identify themselves by recounting their deathbed symptoms: vague complaints in the thorax region, difficulties in breathing, weakness, and occasionally head pains. Auto accident victims tell of “chest pains.”]*

“Yes, yes, I was overseas when she died at home.” *[It is now clearer that Maureen is Irish and closer perhaps to 65 or 70 years old.]*

“Gosh, there is a crowd of people around her!”

“Is there? *[Maureen is astonished.]* Is Mum's sister with her?”

“Yes, exactly.” *[Betty replies with casual confidence.]*

“And my father?” *[Maureen almost shouts with excitement.]*

“Yes, he's there too.”

“And is my brother there?” *[The eager client supplies the reader with all the material required.]*

“Yes, your brother is there too. And look *[Betty's voice is almost embarrassed.]*, I know this sounds funny, but there are *five* grandparents here! *[Betty often suggests a family friend, aunt, or uncle who was important in childhood.]*

“Oh...*[Maureen hesitates.]* Oh! That could be my Mum's English friend!

“And going back to that time, can we talk about a donkey cart?”

“Oh, yes!” [*A donkey cart would be a memorable feature for almost any person of Maureen's age and Irish childhood. Such a reference exemplifies Betty's broad knowledge of ethnic associations and general population stereotypes; but note the caution — not “your family's” cart, but just “a donkey cart.” It is left to Maureen to remember which particular cart Betty must “mean.”*]

“And the times that were associated with it — you can really feel the pleasure of that time.”

“That's right.” [*Maureen is emphatic.*]

“Now look — I'm being shown a row of houses, and they're apartment houses.”

“Yes...” [*Maureen hesitates.*]

“And there are about four of them...”

[*Silence from Maureen, indicating puzzlement.*]

“Now bear with me here — and I've got a sort of red brick.”

[*Longer silence — it must come as a surprise that an elderly Irish lady cannot relate some memory to a description of common brick row houses, but even the best utilized population stereotypes will occasionally fail.*]

“Now, Maureen, this *isn't* where you lived!” [*Betty speaks firmly.*]

“No...no, it's not.” [*Of course it isn't; but an awkward miss is being cleverly converted to a hit.*]

“But it's where...ah...[*Betty is groping.*]...ah...a dear friend lived! Can you understand that?”

“Yes.” [*Maureen speaks without conviction: she is trying to figure who the friend might be. Betty quickly changes the subject.*]

“Also, I'm being handed a little posy of flowers. They're almost like forget-me-nots, but I'm not sure that they are — and she's handing those to you.”

“My mother is?”

“Yes, *it is* your mother.”

“Oh, how nice!”

“And you know, Maureen, there's an anniversary coming up soon — a time of memory. It was somebody's birthday.” [*With Maureen's many relatives, somebody, living or dead, must have a birthday soon.*]

“Oh, yes...”

“And that one sends their love to you too.” [*The ungrammatical “their” doubles the possibilities of either “his” or “her,” but this hardly seems necessary, as by now it clear that Maureen will accept anything that Betty says, making, as Larsen so aptly put it, the reading fit herself.*]

“And my brother [*Maureen's voice takes on a melancholy tone.*], is he happy?”

“He's happy *now*, he's telling me, and he's stressing the word *now*. He says, “She'll know — you don't have to ask me more — she'll know.”

“Oh, I know...I know.” [*Maureen sighs.*]

“I’m having trouble keeping up with all of them here — they’re all crowding in — and they’re all happy.”

“Here’s one — a prickly one. Is my mother-in-law about?”

“Yes, she is.”

“Is *she* happy?”

“Yes, she is. She was a little bit of a discontented lady, she tells me. [*To the contrary, it was Maureen who told her that with the “prickly” characterization.*]

“Yes! [*Amazed.*] That’s right!”

“But she says, “Well, you’ve got to learn contentment, and there’s no reason we can’t have contentment here, because we have everything we need.”

“Isn’t that marvelous!”