Cats, Dogs & People Politics
What can these favourite pets teach us about human behaviour?

People are complex. Each person is unique and special. Everyone thinks differently. You can never predict what a person will do – or can you? In fact, you probably make such judgements and predict how others will behave with a fair amount of accuracy. Day to day interactions require being able to assess what kind of moods other people are in, what reactions to expect and whether or not it's a good time to ask that question. What if you could read people better and communicate in ways more likely to gain understanding and agreement? If you could accurately assess non-verbal behaviour, you'd know when you have permission to speak. You'd know what approach to use in different situations. How useful would it be to correctly identify the people politics, the hierarchy of power, so that you respond and satisfy those expectations?

Carl Jung was one of the first to start observing and categorizing Human behaviour. His valuable work formed the basis of what is still widely used today as Myers Briggs Personality Types or MBTI. In the 1980's, NLP psychologist Leslie Cameron Bandler expanded the original 16 categories of Myers Briggs, creating the more numerous and detailed Complex Meta Programmes, which Roger Bailey developed into the LAB Profile, All of this research has contributed extremely valuable insights into identifying patterns of human behaviour, but it can be cumbersome to use.

A quick way to increase understanding & cooperation
According to Michael Grinder, author of *'The Elusive Obvious'*, it's possible to simplify matters by dividing human behaviour into just two metaphorical types: '*CATS*' or '*DOGS*'. Observing these two well-known household pets helps in recognising and clarifying complicated internal processing. Then it's easy to predict what behaviours to expect. If the person you are talking to demonstrates more *CAT* or more *DOG* behaviour, it's best to modify your approach and your objective accordingly. This not only improves rapport, but greatly increases understanding and cooperation.

The *CAT & DOG* metaphor mirrors the natural clustering of different habitual Meta Programme preferences already observed in people worldwide. Consider the body language of *CATS:* aloof, arrogant, quiet, still, in control, focused on their own interests, and quite happy to be alone. Compared to *CATS, DOGS* seem more friendly, gregarious, constantly moving, barking, panting, eager to please and happy to follow a master. You can't teach a *CAT*, punish him or reward him - he just ignores you and carries on doing whatever he chooses to do. A *DOG*, however, responds well to praise, and can be taught lots of tricks. But the sensitive dog typically overreacts to punishment. Fights between the two are usually won by *CATS.*

Credible or Approachable?

Translating *CAT & DOG* non-verbal behaviours across to humans, it's easy to spot the same two attitudes in people around you. People who demonstrate *CAT* behaviour exude power, authority and control. By standing tall, looking serious and speaking with few gestures, they seem cool, confident and credible. Their words command respect. People expect them to be leaders. At the other extreme, people who demonstrate *DOG* behaviour exude friendly, open, approachability. They smile and chat with ease, talking with lots of emotion and frequent gestures. Their natural people skills make them co-operative and good team players.
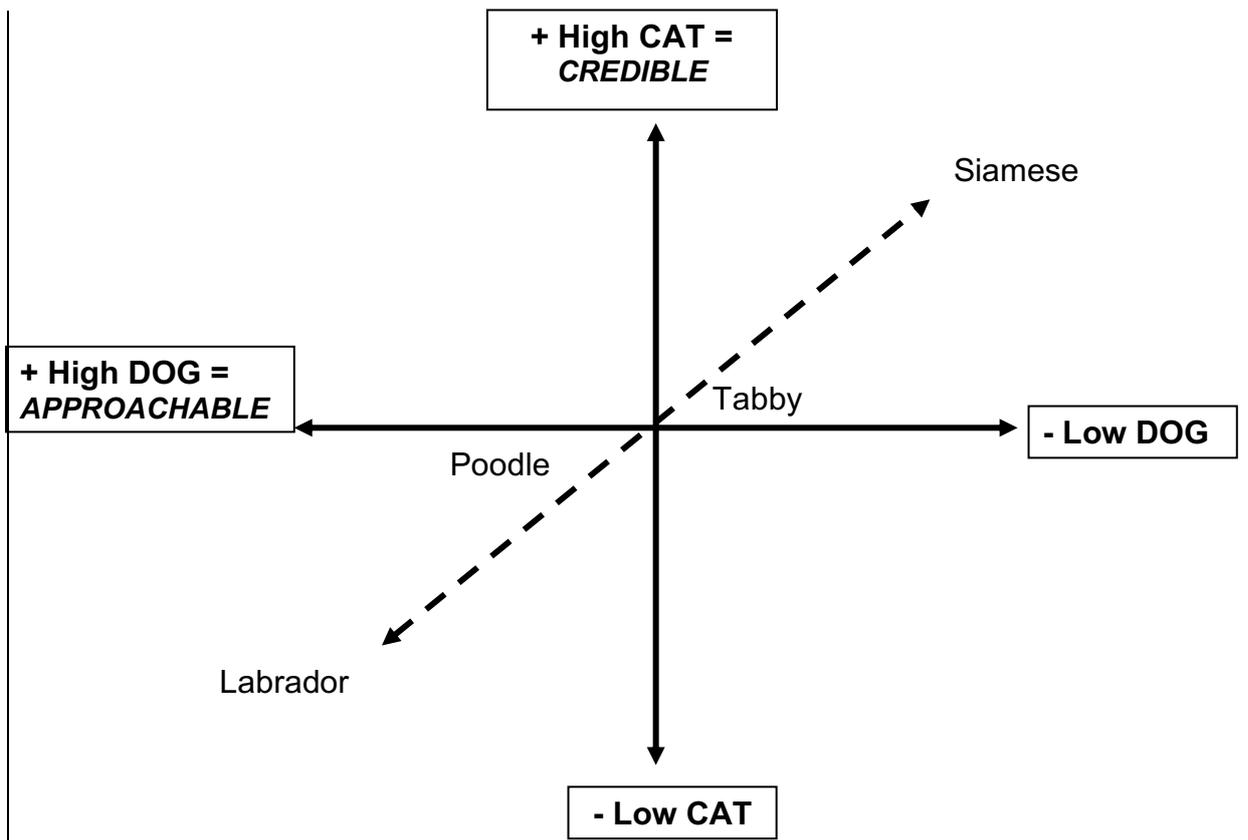

NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOURS

CATS	*DOGS*
Sit and stand erect	Asymmetrical posture
Stillness, few gestures	Movement, frequent gestures
Serious, no smiling	Smiling, nodding, encouraging
Direct gaze, no blinking	Friendly gaze, blinking
Head straight , still	Head tilted, nodding agreement
Command voice tone	Melodious voice tone
Few words, long pauses	Endless words, no pausing
Big Picture with bullet points	Details, examples, stories

You might argue that *CATS & DOGS* demonstrate wide varieties of behaviour. The diagramme below shows that a very friendly Labrador may be at one end of the scale, moving up to a German Shepherd or Poodle towards the centre of the graph. Then the friendliest Tabby cat might be at the bottom end of the *CAT* line, moving all the way up to a cool Siamese at the top right. Of course, just like there are many different types of *CATS & DOGS,* there are different degrees of *CAT* or *DOG* behaviour in humans. The *DOG* end of the scale represents how **Approachable** a person is in their behaviour. The *CAT* end of the scale represents the degree of **Credible** behaviours displayed.

+ High CAT =
CREDIBLE

Siamese

+ High DOG =
APPROACHABLE

Tabby

- Low DOG

Poodle

Labrador

- Low CAT

Simple but not simplistic

These non-verbal behaviours reflect very different internal character traits, values, and attitudes. Consider typical interactions you've had as you translate these *CAT & DOG* stereotypes to people. Although these extreme generalities may seem simplistic at first, keeping it so simple will help you choose the appropriate response. As you look over the following table, listing some of the character traits of *CATS & DOGS*, think about one particular context and tick which behaviours you would typically choose in that situation. Then think about other people you know and assess which habits they appear to demonstrate.

The Two Styles of Behaviour
[Acknowledgement to Michael Grinder]

	Credible CAT	**Approachable DOG**
Confidence VS Competence:	more confident than than competency warrants	more competent than confident
Attitude to Power:	comfortable with it	shies from it
Attitude to Conflict:	rises to it	avoids it
Seeks:	promotion / challenge	comfort
Traits:	ambitious	vulnerable
Likes:	change, risk, new options, difference	tried & trusted ways safety, security
Goal:	the outcome and productivity of group	good relationships: people are important
People:	are held accountable	are highly accepted
Decision style:	decides internally for self	asks others opinion
Decisions:	loves to decide	prefers info gathering
Creativity:	desires new ideas	likes problem solving

Of course, every person has both *CAT & DOG* capability. Most people demonstrate a mixture of the two. But in a specific context or mood, there is often a habitual tendency to act in one way or the other. These habitual choices can be predictable. Both *CAT & DOG* behaviour are useful and appropriate in different situations. So, although people do show consistent preferences for one or the other in certain contexts, it is important to remember not to typecast a person as always behaving like a *CAT* or a *DOG*. Just focus on what behaviour is being demonstrated in each moment. Watching the non-verbals reveals whether *DOG* or *CAT* is favoured.

> *If animals could speak the dog would be a blundering outspoken fellow, but the cat would have the rare grace of never saying a word too much.*
>
> *Mark Twain*

It's like herding Cats….
In the general population, 70% of people demonstrate *DOG* types of behaviour most of the time. The *CATS*, although a minority of 30%, quickly rise to the top in terms of power, control and leadership. The ambitious *CATS* like being leaders while the friendly *DOGS* feel comfortable following. Anyone can manage *DOGS* because they are innately co-operative and like doing a good job. Managing *CATS* however, requires understanding their motives and mastering different skills to win their respect and compliance. The most effective leaders learn how to attract the willing participation of *CATS*. Then they not only get the *CATS* on board, but also the *DOGS* who follow. Here's where this model can be extremely useful for handling people politics.

First identify whether you are facing a *DOG* or a *CAT* by observing the non-verbals. It's also important to clarify the objective for the conversation. Determine whether this communication would benefit from being more ***Credible*** or more ***Approachable.*** Then vary your style of delivery according to what will achieve the best effect. Beware! Matching or mirroring their style may not be the best choice. You need to respect the hierarchy and expectations within a particular situation. In addition, you must match their internal drivers, motivation and objectives. All these essential factors need to be considered. Plus it's important to retain your own authenticity. Widen your own range of behaviour, rather than adopting some phoney superficial style. The latter won't fool anyone or win trust.

> *Outside of a dog, a man's best friend is a book; inside of a dog, it is very dark.*
> Groucho Marx.

Strategies for Success

In his book, '*Good to Great*', author Jim Collins reveals the fascinating discoveries that he and his team distilled from 15 years of analyzing the success strategies of 11 top companies. Collins talks about the 3 common elements that created success for all these companies. If these same success principles are adapted to individuals, they would be: 1. Be Your Best, 2. Connect with Your Passion, 3. Direct Your Focus Effectively.

SUCCESS STRATEGY

PASSION

Be
Your
BEST

Effective
Focus

'*Being Your Best*' simply means making the most of your innate talents, skills and whatever experience and resources you might have. Whether you tend more towards *CAT* or *DOG*, you have particular qualities that deserve to be valued and developed. Do what you are good at doing. If you can respect the strengths and weaknesses of the other *CATS & DOGS* you know, without wishing they were different, you will be able to get along much better with other people.

'*Passion*' comes naturally from connecting with what excites, fascinates, interests and satisfies you. When these deeper needs are met, your level of passion soars. *CATS & DOGS* seek to satisfy different needs for different reasons. Therefore they get passionate and excited about completely different things. Appreciate that these needs will probably never change, and that's OK. *CATS* will never become *DOGS*. *DOGS* will never become *CATS*. People don't usually alter what needs they value, unless they experience a dramatic life changing event.

'**Directing Your Focus**' requires channelling your energy and passion into consistent action. When you organize and make best use of your time, all you need is perseverance to create inevitable success. Notice that most of your objectives probably involve interacting with both *CATS & DOGS*. Therefore, the better you become at understanding, appreciating, and communicating effectively with each type, the better the cooperation and focus of energy.

Aligning Your Inner CAT & DOG

Because you have both *CAT & DOG* qualities inside yourself, at different times you may express yourself quite differently. Your communication might appear quite incongruent. If you suffer from a lack of alignment between your head and your heart, for example, it's very difficult to hide this inner conflict. Your beliefs, values and expectations, all get revealed through facial expression, voice tone, movement and energy. Speaking with clarity requires sorting the two different attitudes and behaviours. Then match the appropriate style delivery to each one. Expressing *CAT*-like messages with a smiling *DOG* demeanour makes listeners feel uneasy and diminishes trust. Trying to win credibility and respect whilst smiling and nodding with *DOG* style demeanour just won't work.

Case Study:
When a senior manager was promoted to work in a new district, he was surprised and dismayed to receive negative feedback about his aggressive and bullying style. This had never happened in the past, so he was mystified. As he walked into the room for our first meeting, I spotted an obvious problem. Because his hobby was weight lifting, he had such huge muscles bulging out of his shirt, that all his movements were somewhat stiff. Combined with a short neck, upright posture, his head being shaved, and a very serious facial expression, it was easy to imagine that some people might have felt intimidated just looking at him.

Unfortunately, in his desire to do a good job in the new position, he had been taking extra care to seriously focus on the tasks at hand, without paying enough attention to building rapport, chatting or developing good relationships. Unfortunately, his new associates had not had a chance to get to know him and find out what a nice person he really was.

After filming him doing role plays and during meetings, he could see how his style appeared to others. He understood the problem immediately. Luckily, he had a great smile, good sense of humour and genuine caring and liking for his people. All he needed was to let them know that. So he practiced making his delivery style more approachable and friendly. He received no further problem with feedback.

How not to get shot

Giving presentations and getting your message across in meetings with people who might be resistant are two situations where appearing **Credible** is essential. Ineffective delivery style not only detracts from the message, but may be perceived as ignorance. Perhaps you've had the experience of sitting through presentations feeling bored or distracted by strange mannerisms, gestures and verbosity. People using too much *DOG* style demeanour can easily make the mistake of trying to be too friendly and likable, talking too much, ant giving too much detail for the audience's needs. Despite a person having high levels of competence, knowledge and preparation, such poor communication habits may risk losing the audience, not being heard, and not being taken seriously.

Conversely, a compelling delivery can give importance and value to the simplest message. People sit up and take notice. The speaker appears intelligent,

confident, competent, and gets the whole room to agree with ease. Simply learning how to master some *CAT* style delivery will improve most presentations and communications. All it takes is a little practice and pre-planning.

Case Study
*A very diligent and competent senior manager who naturally operated from a very friendly DOG style of behaviour, had to regularly report to a Boss who acted with a high degree of CAT. Many of these meetings didn't go very smoothly. After mastering non-verbal theory and practicing more **Credible** behaviours, the manager decided she needed to re-design her whole delivery for the next meeting. She outlined her presentation and pared the report down to simple bullet points. She left out unnecessary detail, explanations and excuses. Instead, knowing what her Boss considered most important, she keyed her delivery to appeal to those values. When her Boss heard how this project satisfied all those key values, he was delighted, and her department became a benchmark for all the others to follow.*

Here, Gentlemen, a dog teaches us a lesson in humanity.
Napoleon Bonaparte

Invite contribution and handle objections
When you need to encourage participation, what works best is to ask powerful questions and then pause, creating a vacuum of silence to suck in contributions, new thinking and creative participation. People need to feel heard. If their ideas are taken seriously, then they feel such input makes a difference. Of course, attributing credit to the right person for a valuable contribution encourages this process too. Remember that *DOGS* particularly believe everyone's opinion counts. So it is essential that everyone is listened to and appreciated. When you want to keep key *CATS* on board, treat them as a 'fellowship of equals', and listen respectfully.

Have you ever wished you could make *'conscientious objectors'* more open minded? Have you ever noticed that the more enthusiasm you show when presenting an idea, the more sceptical and resistant some people become? The more positive you sound, the less **Credible** you seem to them. It's almost as if enthusiasm breeds scepticism. But you've probably also had successful interactions when you did manage to win people over. What made that work? Did you use reason, logic or strong argument to make them see the light? Did you tease, cajole, beg or plead? Different methods work at different times with different people. Mastering these non-verbal skills will help you predict which style will work each time.

The conversation is not about the relationship.
The conversation IS the relationship.
Susan Scott

Making the best use of talent
Inspired leaders draw on the talent, wisdom and diversity of other people. *CATS* need *DOGS* to support them as much as *DOGS* need *CATS* to act as efficient leaders. No one person has all the answers. When the stakes are high, emotions run strong. That's the crucial time when the non-verbal skills help in handling hotly opposing viewpoints. The way these crucial conversations are managed is the most reliable indicator of effectiveness. Successful solutions can best be discovered through encouraging the free-flow of information, honest feedback and brain storming of new ideas.

CATS & DOGS both fall into traps when the stakes are high. *DOGS* jump into 'fix it' mode and think they must come up with all the solutions and present 'fait au complaît' decisions. *CATS* may believe they need to impress everyone with their brilliance, so they talk too much rather than listening. Both think they must have the answer for every problem. Instead of benefiting from the insight, creativity and genius of others, the same old decisions and mistakes get repeated. Learning the artistry of handling *CATS & DOGS* helps in getting the right answers to surface.

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BIO:

Arielle has provided exceptional coaching, facilitating and NLP training for over 15 years, both in the UK and abroad. Her distinctive approach aims to assist leaders who want to increase their charisma, influence and impact, clarify their direction and purpose, advance their career and achieve a balanced and fulfilling life. She specializes in developing non-verbal skills, dealing with interpersonal relationships, conflicts and group dynamics.

After an early career in Advertising, Illustration, Design and Copywriting; Arielle studied medicine and practiced as an Osteopath, Naturopath & Kinesiologist. This evolved into studying Psychology, NLP, Emotional Intelligence and Non-Verbal Communication. In 1995, she set up her own NLP training business (www.PracticalMiracles.com) which has delivered top quality Training & Coaching for over 12 years. Arielle's first book, *'Compassionate Coaching'* shares powerful insights and useful applications of NLP. She also currently writes regular articles and newsletters, as well as delivering talks and workshops internationally.