



Martin Goodyer

An introduction to Positive Environmental Neurology

P-E-N

Making work fun!

An Introduction to P-E-N
‘Positive Environmental Neurology’

By Martin Goodyer MBPsS MAC

***It's easier than most people think
to fall into a rut:***

***It happens by creating an
environment that's not bad
enough to be painful or pleasant
enough to be pleasurable, and
very quickly you can find yourself
in a no mans land of inertia.
People don't naturally go stale;
they have to be in an
environment that makes them
that way.***

Why everything around you matters

P-E-N is an all encompassing approach to creating lasting and sustainable change

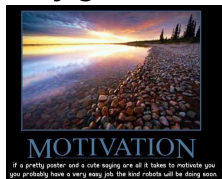


Being in any environment is like being in a bubble; If the bubble is tightly defined then it's easy to see how our behaviour is shaped by it. Even when it's a huge bubble that maybe full of holes, we still are influenced by what we experience. It's just less obvious, that's all.

Have you ever wondered why it is that people can become institutionalised so quickly? TV shows like 'Big Brother' are a great example. It's particularly noticeable in the celebrity shows how 'personalities' who've spent years developing a public image sacrifice everything by getting caught up in the bubble of the 'house'. Their real life foibles can't be hidden and are suddenly on display for all to see. Of course the editing doesn't help them, but no one can edit something that isn't there; what they show the world may only be a snippet of their day, but it was still part of it. They forget the outside world because of the bubble. Talent show contestants like American idol, X factor and the like experience something similar. They describe the experience as being caught up in the

'bubble of the show'. Actors, singers, and anyone else who fast tracks a career in the public eye will describe it as being caught in a bubble. Scientists caught up with an experiment work hour after hour as if nothing else exists and talk about the bubble they were in. All of us when we are caught up in something that takes all of our attention can empathise with the notion of being in some kind of a bubble. A 'Bubble' seems to be the best way of easily describing what's happening. Hence that's a good description of what needs to be created when the goal is to energise and enthuse people.

Why good ideas don't always deliver



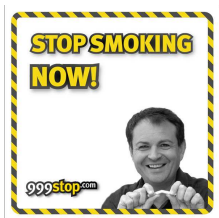
It's frustrating to put good ideas into practice and then have them fail. If you are a business manager then look to your bookshelves and notice just how many seemingly fabulous ideas didn't actually change things

all that much. Clearly each good idea has its supporters and adopters. It would be inaccurate to suggest that nothing had changed for the better; of course it has. But the change has only been marginal in many cases, and in many more hasn't been sustainable. Yet the ideas were sound. They were better than good. There was evidence that they'd

worked elsewhere. It made sense to carry them through. But the reality is that good ideas on their own haven't won through as much as logic might suggest they should.

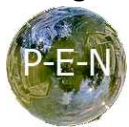
Take smoking as an example:

There aren't many smokers left who pretend that filling their lungs with toxins is good for them. Yet logic doesn't win through. The horrific pictures on the packets and dire warnings of death or horrible disease may have stopped some, but not all. Even the proliferation of quitting techniques and support haven't succeeded with the die-hards even when many of them admit to a desire to quit. Think of them as people who to change their behaviour need to be in a bubble. Their bubble needs to be so intense that it doesn't allow for anything other than quitting. If their bubble has holes in it then all the power of that bubble rushes out through those holes and it collapses. It flops. Their bubble bursts. If however the holes are plugged then the bubble will stay intact. It will do its job and keep enclosed everything within it. In the case of the smoker wanting to quit it means all the holes in their bubble have to be plugged. If their environment



doesn't allow for even the possibility of smoking then their desire to quit will win through.

Using the bubble of P-E-N to get more for less



These days everybody wants more for less. In a complicated world the tendency is to look for complicated ways of achieving that. However it need not necessarily be so.

What is the fastest way of getting something done?

The answer;

...By finding someone who is willing to do it quickly.

What is the cheapest of getting something done?

The answer;

...By finding someone who will do it right **and** do it quickly!

Occupational psychologists have known for decades that it is the willingness of people that makes for efficiency savings, and not the mechanical management processes. We were all taught at business school about the Hawthorne experiments, where workers were faced with time and motion study experts; white coated clipboard clutching cold and calculated bean counters. You'll remember that as part of the study the lighting levels were increased and the productivity increased, seemingly as a result. You will recall that the lighting levels were increased again,

and yet again productivity moved in an upward direction. Stunned by their achievement, but ever cautious, they turned down the lighting levels so that they were lower than when they started, just to make sure that productivity would decline. How surprised were they when instead they increased again! The truth and the conclusion was that the lighting levels have very little to do with productivity. It was the continued attention paid to the workforce by the experimenters that was having a beneficial effect.

They didn't think about it in terms of environmental neurology at the time. They didn't consider the effect over the long term. They thought about it as merely cause and effect in the moment. But let's look at this from a different perspective. Let's think about the effect over time. Why would continued attention result in cumulative improvements in performance? It doesn't really make sense. If it was just an emotional response to the attention being given then it ought to be a one-time improvement. But it wasn't. Performance continued to improve. It was as if the workforce had learned something new and was building on that new learning.



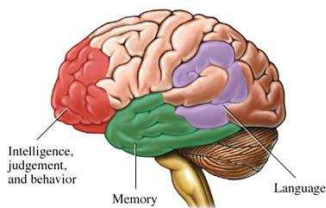
P-E-N actually creates permanent physical changes in the way people think

There are many studies that suggest that learning is going on, and that the external environment a person

finds themselves in has a direct impact on the chemistry inside their brain. It appears that the longer the exposure to an environment, the greater the effect on the nervous

system of the person experiencing it. Occupational and Environmental Neurology is an established branch of science. Complying to the ancient business rule of '*Follow the Money*' it developed out of the desire to claim compensation from unscrupulous employers exposing their workers to damaging environments. Hence most of the work done on environmental neurology has been to do with problems in the workplace:

For example; could it be proved that hazardous gases have had a long-term effect on a person's nervous system? As a result they needed to prove the link between exposure and lasting effects on the nervous system. Could a court of law find in favour of the employee complaining that repetitive actions have caused the nervous system irreparable damage? Is it



true that noise can affect not only someone's hearing but their mood and their ability to navigate the everyday challenges of life? They have concluded that the answer has been 'Yes' to all of these questions. Studies have shown that continued exposure to a particular environment does leave a lasting effect on the nervous system of the person experiencing it.

P-E-N is behavioural not clinical

These studies have centred on medical issues. Not being a doctor but a Behavioural Psychologist, my interest has been on the behaviour implications of the environment.

When coaching people who run or manage businesses there is a responsibility to help them identify behaviours that on the one hand promote success, and on the other hand get in its way.

Environmental neurology, or more accurately 'Positive Environmental Neurology' suggests that ***in the same way a damaging environment inevitably has a damaging effect on the people experiencing it, a supportive, enjoyable, upbeat, healthy and positive environment will have a lasting enhancing effect*** on the people experiencing it.

Flip side of the same coin



P-E-N offers the chance to benefit from the flip side of that coin. We already know that lasting neurological effects are created by workplace experiences so why not harness that for the good?

Almost anyone when asked about their work experiences will respond that their most productive times have been in environments perceived to have been supportive. That doesn't mean they were actually supportive, just that they were perceived and experienced that way. Maybe a person felt challenged and that this was their opportunity to shine; maybe someone else felt supported; and equally another person might reflect on the camaraderie they experienced. One thing is certain; when an environment is perceived as being negative and damaging then it *is* negative and damaging.

Why wait until there is an acute problem?

Positive Environmental Neurology; 'P-E-N', offers the potential to be the fastest way to improve productivity that most business leaders have at their disposal. Just changing the way people think about their environment can be enough to generate the enthusiasm and energy necessary to get the job done. There are ample anecdotal examples of when the boss has given an 'Agincourt style' speech to motivate the troops, or when circumstances have demanded that everyone pulls together in order to survive. The trouble with these examples is that they require the situation to become dire before perceptions change. That's a real problem. It means that when things are going well that motivation is likely to slip; that the environment has more potential to be perceived negatively and as a result performance to deteriorate. Up until now the responsibility for employee behaviour has been laid at the door of management or individual managers; Yet if it were merely the behaviour of management then surely the Hawthorne experiment all those years ago, (turning the lights up and down), wouldn't have delivered performance improvements. ***P-E-N suggests that 'Management' may only be a part of the experience*** and that it is actually the environment as a whole that is the key to real and lasting change.

For years the environment has been toyed with but never looked at a whole

From years workplaces have been festooned with framed mission statements, signage indicating staff were now 'On stage' when entering a customer area, or office walls laden with posters extolling the virtues of perseverance or the values of success. All were intended to positively influence the workforce. They are good but not good enough. On their own they offer up the opportunity for ridicule. It is plainly ridiculous to extol the virtues of teamwork if something else in the workplace jars with it or pulls in an opposite direction. P-E-N requires that the workplace be looked at as an entirety. Each element is a piece of the puzzle that when combined either meets the criteria for P-E-N or not. There is no middle ground. The environment is like an on/off switch. It's either supportive or it is not; one or the other. Hence a lone poster is not sufficient. A single attempt at team building won't work or a one-off experiment in employee participation.

No well-intended 'Good Deed' goes unpunished if the whole environment isn't adapted to support it

MISSION STATEMENT

"We will provide branded products and services of superior quality and value that improve the lives of the world's consumers. As a result, consumers will reward us with leadership sales, profit, and value creation, allowing our people, our shareholders, and the communities in which we live and work to prosper."

"Our goal is to be the leader in every market we serve, to the benefit of our customers and our shareholders."

"To be America's best run, most profitable _____ company."

"Our goal is to provide the best _____ in the industry."

"The purpose of _____ company is to earn money for its shareholders and increase the value of their investment. We will do that through growing the company, controlling assets and properly structuring the balance sheet, thereby increasing EFD, cash flow, and return on invested capital."

Human programming



Imagine programming a computer with only one element of a complicated series of tasks. It just wouldn't work to 'Hope' that it picks up the rest. In fact a single omission in the programming will

bring the whole thing crashing down. Why then would anyone expect human programming to be any different?

Untidiness, grubby or badly maintained premises programme just as effectively as a motivational poster. They shout a message loud and clear. They carry a meaning that goes far beyond the actuality. They speak directly to the unconscious without the benefit of any logical filter. Intent has nothing to do with it. Interpretation happens anyway. Everything has to make 'sense' to the human mind. In the absence of fact the brain makes up whatever is the easiest to think. The process called cognitive dissonance describes how the brain jumps to any conclusion that's easiest to access. Over billions of years we've evolved to analyse environments rapidly so as not to impede

survival. The answers our brain supplies need not be accurate; just useful enough to allow the negotiation of whatever we come across. On the evolutionary scale of priorities the ability to act quickly rates higher than any need for accuracy of interpretation.

Scientists have been able to study and measure the effect of discourteous behaviour as easily as measuring the results of mixing chemicals in a test tube. Allowable or excusable poor behaviour is another programming menace. Logically it shouldn't matter what another person is able to get away with, but emotionally it can be explosive: Backbiting, gossip or poor manners also act as a programming device.

Humans are recording devices that are permanently 'on'

Human beings are like a scanning and recording device that's constantly tuned in to their environment. Unlike a mere device however they have an ego. All human beings are ego-centric to some extent. Even well grounded and results-oriented individual still interpret events in terms of the likely effect on themselves first. It's just part of evolution. People don't choose to have egos, they are born with them. These egos are responsible for unconscious interpretations

of other people's behaviour that lead directly to predictable responses.



Under hypnosis patients were able to recall almost word for word what the doctors had said about them during an operation. If it's true that even under anesthetic a person unconsciously processes all that's going on around

them, then how much else is going on that isn't consciously seen? What else is being recorded and used? Students have known for years that sleeping with headphones droning away with course notes is helpful when it's time to take exams. There is no doubt that human beings keep on using their senses even when they don't know they are doing it. It's as if the constant waves of information that come crashing onto the shores of awareness leave traces whether anyone is there to see them or not.

People become slaves to the environment they live in. A famous personality with no need to steal gets caught shoplifting for no other reason than taking things just felt like an 'OK' thing to do. There is no

logic, no need, no rhyme or reason to their actions but they steal stuff all the same. Why? It doesn't make sense. In fact it doesn't even make sense to them. When caught of course they are contrite, and are quick to apologise unreservedly. They say they don't know why they did it. It was a moment of madness they claim, even when security footage shows them doing it again and again. The truth is that they are just as vulnerable to becoming a slave to their environment as any of us. In their case they are often surrounded by people and situations who support the notion that they can have, and deserve, anything they desire. Sycophantic hangers-on make up many of their entourage who will say anything and everything they hope stands them in good stead. The celebrities' poor brain doesn't stand a chance of distinguishing what's real from the fantastic bubble that surrounds them. Why then are we surprised when they act in ways consistent with what to them is a normal situation?

Not everybody helps themselves to whatever they fancy but then again not everyone lives the life of a pampered provider of cheap newspaper interest. However what's true for them is just as applicable to everyone; ***whatever becomes normal becomes the normal way of behaving***. The spouse beating partner

who grows to learn it is OK to hit out in anger and apologise at leisure is really not that different. The issue is not whether what they do is right or wrong but if the environment they live in is either the cause or a major contributor to it.

Let's be clear; P-E-N does not suggest that behaviour can be excused by pointing to the environment and absolving oneself of blame. Ultimately everyone must take responsibility for their own actions. If it is desirable to change the way a person acts then ignoring the environment is like trying to walk across a beach barefoot hoping that no sand gets between our toes. It's a losing scenario from the outset. No matter how strong our desire or how committed we are to winning. If the reality of the environment doesn't allow it, it won't happen.



People CARE about the environment they surround themselves with

Evidence to support this is all around us: Take for example the home improvement industry. It is worth in excess

of 26 billion pounds in the UK alone. Yet have you stopped to think why improving the environment we spend time in is so important? Clearly it's not a fad, after all the Romans had people on hands and knees with tweezers laying intricate mosaics long before B&Q opened their doors. The reality is simply that having a pleasant environment makes life more pleasant.

Why 'mood boards' work

Visualisation is a common tool. Athletes will imagine themselves winning a race. Sports teams will sit together with eyes closed and visualize holding the cup aloft. Business strategies can be built on the creative vision of their leaders. So this is not anything new.

I have a client who was very skeptical about mood boards. We met as fellow judges for a business award and she hired me afterwards to help make some significant changes in her life. One of which was that she wanted more international travel and assignments abroad. Even though she raised an eyebrow at producing a mood board complete with images of the kinds of places she wanted to visit, she did it anyway. Two years later she's had to take them all down because she's now doing too much travel! Her change

of focus worked so well that she's now very careful what she wishes for. Such examples are commonplace. Psychologists even know which part of the brain is altered by the effect of consistently seeing images that are important. This is not new, but what is different about thinking of things in terms of P-E-N is that instead of being isolated examples of mental manipulation, it is possible to align the whole environment toward a desired change.

The facts are this:
human actions are driven by emotion. Emotion is created as a means of fundamental communication by the unconscious mind. The unique mind is a



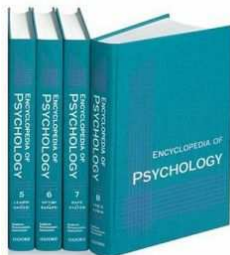
creation of the experiences it has recorded. Repeated patterns are forced higher up a hierarchy of awareness and flag a response when recognised... and it all happens without our being conscious of it. It happens quickly. Surround someone with bright intelligent people and their scores on an IQ test will improve. Put the same person with a group of infantile dullards and their score will plummet. You only have to imagine what might happen if you exposed them to

the same day after day. Very soon they'd come to believe they were either very bright or not so bright. The truth however is that they had the potential to be either.

Seeing things as a whole

'P-E-N' pulls together the vast and often amazing array of positive psychology studies, experiments and experiences. Seen individually they can sometimes appear irrelevant even if interesting. It's easy to dismiss something as just the latest fad. But when seen as a whole it's a little like looking at one of those fuzzy 3-d picture puzzles. Close up its just patterns of shapes and colours, but by standing back a little and altering your focus it takes shape; and it becomes a recognisable picture. It also offers an explanation as to the lack of success of some seemingly great ideas that in practice haven't worked. For example, why

didn't employees all start behaving in a similar way to 'Disney' staff even though their best practice processes had been copied? Why didn't city-wide zero tolerance and clean up campaigns fix the problems permanently? Why, even after endless rounds of training



campaigns is customer service as bad as it ever was? The answer lies in what was missing and not what was done. The problem has been that issues were targeted for change, whereas P-E-N provides a structure within which change is allowed to occur.

So what? How can P-E-N be of practical use?

P-E-N starts with two fixed points;

Point A – the reality of the current situation

Point B – the practical details of a desired reality

Then instead of coming up with ideas about what might be done to get from point A to B it looks at the current environment as if it were a supportive bubble and identifies where there are ‘holes’.

Let's take training courses as an example. They are a necessary and important aspect of doing business. People need to be trained. People need to know what they are doing. People need to grow and develop. P-E-N starts with the question; “Are you providing a training ‘bubble’ within which the people are energized, excited and willing to learn quickly and effectively?” In most cases all but the most ‘interesting’ training is thought of as a chore. People do not queue up to go on health and safety courses or the like. Even corporate ‘induction’ programmes can poorly attended

because the need to be 'on the job' over-rides the desire to be properly trained.

From boring drudgery to exciting achievement

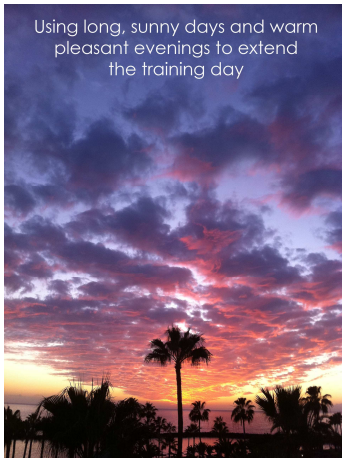
We are currently experimenting with training courses that normally take 6 days to complete. Typically these require delegates to attend residential training for two days at a time repeated 3 times over a year. By just changing the environment, their ability and willingness to learn for 12 hours a day rather than 8 means that their time away from work is reduced by up to a third.

We know that smart environments support smarter thinking, that performance rises to meet perceived expectation: mix a random group of people with others they perceive to be 'bright' and then test their IQ and you'll see it score higher than expected. Mix a similar group with people they imagine to be dullards, test their IQ and it will be lower than your expectations. Why? It's because they have been stimulated by their environment. That stimulation has mixed with their previous experiences and understanding; the result is an emotional perception that predicates their own actions.

Just as we know we can irreparably damage people by exposing them to awful environments we can just

as surely know that we can do them immeasurable good by doing the opposite; and by doing so, help ourselves too. Hence our use of training and teaching facilities on the Canarian island of Tenerife.

Tenerife Corporate Events: **Save cash, save time and have an altogether more successful event**



Using long, sunny days and warm pleasant evenings to extend the training day

Earlier starts, later finishes. Sun filled days by the Atlantic Ocean make it easier to do more in less time. Ask any participant if they'd rather do an 8 hour day under cloudy skies in a conference suite or spend longer in one where sunlight and sea breeze make up a big part of the working day;

sunshine wins out every time! By doing more in less time reductions in lost production time more than compensate for any time and cost of travel.

Last minute cancellations of events that have taken months to organise are a thing of the past. Expensive training courses only partially attended don't happen

when delegates see attendance as a benefit rather than a chore.

How does it work?

We facilitate corporate events on the island of Tenerife. Long established as a holiday destination, Tenerife is also an important centre for international trade, linking the coast of Africa with both Europe and the Americas. State of the art communications and information technology structures provide the island with everything a modern corporate event might require. South Tenerife's unique geography provides the backdrop for year round sunshine and long warm days. Scheduling events to start at 7.30am with a meeting over breakfast gives organisers at least a two and a half hour window in a plenary or meeting situation before providing opportunities to make use of the sun filled environment. Often groups are given tasks to perform either individually or with colleagues that fill the day. By 5pm they are ready to regroup. Running a second in- room session until around 7.30pm is an excellent way of cementing learning or maintaining momentum before a well earned dinner.

P-E-N doesn't just apply to training. It can be applied to any consulting issue and it can be applied to the implementation of any organizational change.

To speak to Martin about P-E-N call 00 44 8452300443