

meet face profiler alan stevens

JUSTIN GREY SITS DOWN FOR A CHAT WITH ALAN STEVENS ABOUT THE PIONEERING WORK HE'S DOING WITH HUMAN PATTERN RECOGNITION AND ITS APPLICATION FOR RECRUITING.

Newcastle-based Alan Stevens is an authority in reading people, and his passion, knowledge and expertise in the craft is off the charts. During a 23-year career with Telecom, Alan was put through psychometric testing using the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. He completed the test with the answers he thought his employer wanted to see and the test pegged Alan as extroverted, sensing, thinking, and judging. Many years later he did the same test again – with no pressure and with no consequences weighing on the results – and was assessed as having the complete opposite traits, ie, introverted, intuitive, a people person, and perceptive.

After leaving Telecom in the early 1990s, Alan had a stint teaching currency trading, part of which involved using Myers-Briggs to profile his students. In hindsight, Alan says he was really teaching the students how to understand their personality types, and how to then act in a specific manner that enabled success based on their personality.

Realising he needed a more precise personality assessing tool than what Myers-Briggs offered, and after being prompted by an attendee at one of his workshops, Alan investigated face reading. "The most valuable thing you'll ever learn is the next thing you learn after you think you know everything," Alan deadpans. "So I

went and checked it out. I found Paul Ekman, who is the psychologist behind all the micro expressions research. He's the guy who the *Lie To Me* show on TV is based on."

Ekman, a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California San Francisco, is considered the world's foremost expert on facial expressions. Ekman concluded that the 43 muscles in the human face can produce about 3,000 different expressions, but that there are seven facial expressions that are universal. While training under Ekman in California in 2009, Alan met English expat Naomi Tickle, who herself was conducting groundbreaking research into facial features and character traits.

"Micro expressions tell you somebody's emotional state at the time," Alan explains. "If I say something to you, unconsciously and emotionally you react, then as you think about it consciously, you control it. A micro expression can be 1/5th of a second down to 1/25th of a second, so it's fast. The facial expression tells you how a person unconsciously feels. When I use the Myers-Briggs program, it's affected by the person's emotions. However facial features don't change overnight, so I can look and read – regardless of your emotional state – exactly what your personality is."

HUMAN PATTERN RECOGNITION

Alan combined the knowledge learned from Ekman and Tickle with two other disciplines – reading body language and Neuro Linguistic Programming – and bought them all under the newly created discipline of 'Human Pattern Recognition' (HRP). HRP brings together the major skills of understanding situations and people into the one process and combines the reading of body language, micro and subtle facial expressions, Human Trait Recognition (reading facial features) and Neuro Linguistic Programming.

"Nobody worldwide had bought these things together, and I'm amazed that nobody – Paul Ekman, Naomi Tickle, or anybody else – gelled on the whole lot put together," Alan says. "I realised those four skills had to be put together, because it's not only the pattern of the expressions, or features, or body – it's the pattern between all of them, and the language that we use with it all."

APPLICATIONS FOR RECRUITING

Once learned, Human Pattern Recognition can be employed to greatly improve an employers' success rate in recruiting. Alan says one of the biggest problems in recruitment at the moment is psychometric testing. "When you do a psychometric profile you're wondering what the employer is looking for. So people will try and answer it

in the way that will get them the job. You've got people who could be good for the job who are culled out of it, while other people who are able to guess what's required answer it in a particular way and get the job."

Statistics show that the vast majority of people who resign from their job do so because they either don't like their job or don't like their employer. By being able to read facial features, employers are able to see the aspects of the job that a would-be employee is going to be able to enjoy doing well.

"If you've got somebody who's got all the features that say they like to work on their own, want to get promoted and rise through the organisation, you can't put them in a role where they're just a team member with no way to grow. They're not going to be happy, and if they're unhappy they're not going to be productive. For happy people, performance goes up 34 per cent, for unhappy people it drops 29 per cent. That can either halve or double your revenue, so you've got to have happy people in your organisation. It's not a matter of wrapping them in cotton wool; it's respecting them and making sure they want to be there."

Conversely, if you can accurately read an employee's facial features you'll be able to assign to them tasks that they'll jump at. Says Alan, "You can look at what tasks you don't like doing. Well, guess what? There's a person who has got different traits to you who will love those jobs. So if you're able to recognise them you can go, 'Would you like to do this?'. You've gotten rid of that lousy job, and they're over there going, 'Great, I've got this fantastic job!'. That's how you build teams."

"I tell people to understand their strengths and develop those further and recognise their weaknesses. Not so much to say, 'I'm not good at that', but to go, 'That's where I need support from somebody else. Who can I bring into my team to actually achieve that?'"

The other key aspect of hiring successfully is trust – during a face-to-face interview with a candidate, how can you best evaluate whether or not someone is answering your questions honestly? Body language and micro expressions – if you're able to read them – are dead giveaways if someone is lying.

"When you're asking the curly questions – 'do you work well within teams?' or 'tell me about the things you've done before?' – you can tell their initial reaction to the question, then how they respond verbally, and then you can tell whether they're telling you the truth. Do they believe in what they're talking about? Or are they just trying to get a job? That's where you can catch the ones who fit into the psychopath role."

A MAN ON A MISSION

To truly appreciate how much Alan believes in HPR and its potential to change society for the better on so many levels, consider his current focus. Turning 63 this month with grandchild number five born earlier this year, Alan is currently completing an Undergraduate Degree in Psychology, which he'll follow back to back with a Masters and possibly a Doctorate. This will consume the next decade of his life, and he's primarily undertaking these studies because the qualifications will strengthen his case for having his work formally recognised (and supported financially) by government and universities.

Alan hopes that his work will eventually be integrated into psychology programs at universities, but despite his tireless efforts he doesn't believe he'll live long enough to see that happen. He does, however, hope to establish a college where people can come to study HPR so that the practice can continue to gain traction and a following beyond his lifetime.

"There isn't anywhere where you can't use it," he says with palpable passion. "If you want to understand yourself, you can use it. Wherever two people are interacting, you can use it. Anywhere where you connect with people, you can use it. It is simple, and it's supposed to be simple. This is not about ego, this is about making it so that anybody and everybody can use it."

HOW TO START PROFILING?

If you're interested in learning more about face profiling, then your first move should be to download Alan's two apps, Profile Me and Profile Match. Both apps are available in both the Apple App Store (for both iPhones and iPads) and via Google Play for Android devices for a mere few dollars. These apps are no mere toys – Alan has designed them as education tools to teach the user how to become a Face Reader. And the more you use them, the more adept you'll become at it.

Both apps are based around explaining how to identify in others (and in yourself) the seven major traits (Confidence, Friendliness, Tolerance, Humour, Generosity, How people view their world, and Personal magnetism) that are clearly recognisable in the face of any person you meet. Like their names suggest, Profile Me is an app for profiling one face (yours or someone else's), while Profile Match allows the user to profile their face against someone else's.

"Whoever you profile, you'll be able to understand that person's personality, or know more about yourself if it's you you're profiling," Alan explains. "People have used it for understanding who they're going to go and talk to and to get a better idea of a person. People have been

using it to profile their spouse, their kids. I had one young fella who takes it to the pub on Friday nights.

"With Profile Match, if you've got one trait and the other person has the opposite trait, and you go and try and talk to them the way you would prefer to be spoken to, the end result is you don't connect. But if you know how that person prefers to be spoken to, you can actually connect with them."

And while you're at it, go out and track down Season 1 of *Lie To Me* on DVD, which Alan says is grounded in a lot of truths. If you'd like to delve deeper into Human Pattern Recognition and the education and research that Alan is pioneering, visit www.alanstevens.com.au or email Alan at Alan@alanstevens.com.au.

