



Horses for training courses

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CORPORATE training has taken a new tack in Wellington after about 250 business-people gathered to watch horse whisperer Andrew Froggatt put Rock through his paces in Frank Kitts Park.

Mr Froggatt and partner Janine Sudbury run corporate training courses called Talkinghorses at their stables in Te Horo, on the Kapiti Coast.

The idea, as Ms Sudbury told the assembled crowd last week, is simple: "If you can't train horses, you can't train people." Just as with people, try to force a horse and you might get a reaction you're not expecting.

During training courses, people are allocated a horse

and spend half a day taking them through ground exercises.

The idea was to build trust till the horse was happier doing what you wanted than what it wanted, Mr Froggatt said.

Clients learned about how to be head of the herd while also learning about themselves. "It's about energy, about trust and about winning them over to your side."

Highly strung, loud or aggressive people tend to get an "uptight" reaction from horses; timid people with little natural energy can find it hard to get a reaction at all.

He describes horses as a mirror to people's personalities. "Like with people, you have to have enough energy to get your message across, but be relaxed in doing it."

Ilse Sheehan, a leadership development expert at New Zealand Post, said it took her three hours to build up enough trust to persuade her horse to walk over a bridge. "But the sense of achievement at the end of it was amazing."

Like all corporate training, it has to be for the right set of people at the right time, but she said it was a useful "experiential" teaching tool.

The horses are all fully broken and trained, and Mr Froggatt is on hand to take people through the exercises.

Ms Sheehan said: "I've been a manager for 10 years, and this translates directly into being a manager — how you make yourself head of the team, but in a subtle and powerful way."



Talk to me: Horse whisperer Andrew Froggatt demonstrates his technique with Rock during a corporate demonstration at Frank Kitts Park in Wellington, where he said training a horse was much like training people. Picture: CRAIG SIMCOX