BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND NLP: SUCCESSFUL DRIVERS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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EDITURA UNIVERSITARĂ
Bucureşti, 2018

Colecția FILOLOGIE

Referenți științifici: Prof. univ. dr. Elena Croitoru
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Editură recunoscută de Consiliul Național al Cercetării Științifice (C.N.C.S.) și inclusă de Consiliul Național de Atestare a Titlurilor, Diplomelor și Certificatelor Universitare (C.N.A.T.D.C.U.) în categoria editurilor de prestigiu recunoscut.

Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României
ZAMFIR, CRISTINA-MIHAELA
Business communication and NLP : successful drivers in theory and practice / Cristina Mihaela Zamfir. - Bucureşti : Editura Universitară, 2018
Conține bibliografie. - Index
ISBN 978-606-28-0795-5

159.9

DOI: (Digital Object Identifier): 10.5682/9786062807955

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Editura Universitară
Editor: Vasile Muscalu
B-dul. N. Bălcescu nr. 27-33, Sector 1, Bucureşti
Tel.: 021 – 315.32.47 / 319.67.27
www.editurauniversitara.ro
e-mail: redactia@editurauniversitara.ro

Distribuție: tel.: 021-315.32.47 /319.67.27 / 0744 EDITOR / 07217 CARTE
comenzi@editurauniversitara.ro
O.P. 15, C.P. 35, Bucureşti
www.editurauniversitara.ro

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 9

PART I: **DIFFERENCE DOES COUNT IN CHANGING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT** 11

CHAPTER 1: Generating Business Excellence with NLP 13
1.1. Generating Business Excellence with NLP 13
1.1.1. Getting familiar with NLP is really user-friendly 13
1.1.2. One can accomplish more by using NLP. 14
1.1.3. Reprogramming mind in order to achieve business success 17
1.2. Unblocking the Route to Success 21
1.2.1. Overcoming barriers that prevent you from being successful at work is really possible 21
1.2.2. Outcome – the most important measure for business success 25
1.3. Conclusions 29

CHAPTER 2: Communicating and Building Positive Working Relationships 31
2.1. Building Paths to Making Choices 31
2.2. The NLP Foundations and Their Relation to Mastering Business Communication (BC) 34
2.3. Unconsciously Used Filtering Systems 59
2.4. Conclusions 71

PART II: BUILDING RAPPORT AND DETECTING 'VAK' THINKING PATTERNS FOR INFLUENCING BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS 73

CHAPTER 3: Rapport as „chemistry" in Building Long-Standing Work Relationships and Matching Language To Create Rapport 75
3.1. Recognizing, Achieving and Maintaining Rapport Easily 75
3.2. Matching Language To Create Rapport and Improve Communication..... 78
3.3. Metaphors Used To Communicate in The Business Environment.. 81
3.4. Creating Rapport through 'VAK' Systems. Using Specific Words and Phrases 91
3.5. Conclusions..... 97

CHAPTER 4: Pacing and Leading – The Engines of Strengthening Rapport. 99
4.1. Pacing Used To Strengthen Rapport..... 99
4.2. Leading Used To Influence, Maintain and Strengthen Rapport 100
4.3. Conclusions..... 109

PART III: PINPOINTING PATTERNS OF GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF AND OTHERS IN BUSINESS: METAPROGRAMS, SLEIGHT OF MOUTH AND FRAMES TECHNIQUES 111

CHAPTER 5: Metaprograms in Business English: Perceptual Filters on Communication 113
5.1. Unconscious Filters on Communication..... 113
5.2. Metaprograms and Job Implications..... 114
5.3. Conclusions..... 125

CHAPTER 6: Linguistic Frames in Business Communication 127
6.1. The Concept of Frame 127
6.2. Types of Framing Events in Business Interactions..... 127
6.3. Conclusions..... 132

CHAPTER 7: The Sleight of Mouth Technique..... 133
7.1. The Origins of The Sleight of Mouth Technique 133
7.2. A More Modern Perspective on the Sleight of Mouth Technique based on Alder's *SOM* Model..... 135
7.3. Conclusions..... 137

PART IV: A HANDY SUMMARY OF BUSINESS APPLICATIONS THROUGH NLP PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES 139

CHAPTER 8: Perceptual Positions: You...The Other Person's Shoes... Fly on the Wall..... 141
8.1. Perceptual Positions Can Expand Our Level of Awareness 141
8.2. Business Applications and Functions 142
8.3. Conclusions..... 159

PART V: DEVELOPING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH EFFECTIVE APPLICATIONS 161

CHAPTER 9: Meetings 163
9.1. The Importance of the Meeting Process in Achieving Business Communication..... 163
9.2. Types of Meeting..... 164
9.3. The Meeting Specific Steps 165
9.4. Conclusions..... 168

CHAPTER 10: Negotiations 169
10.1. The Basic Steps of Effective Negotiation 170
10.2. The Specific Steps of the Negotiating Process 172
10.3. The Linguistic Characteristics of the Negotiation Process. 179
10.4. Conclusions 183

CHAPTER 11: Presentations 185
11.1. The Presentation Process and the Abilities It Activates 185
11.2. The Essential Elements Appealing to any Presentation 186
11.3. The Presentation Specific Steps 190
11.4. The Linguistic Characteristics of the Presentation Process 191
11.5. The 'Sandwich' Method 198
11.6. Conclusions 200

CHAPTER 12: Sales 203
12.1. Types of Relationships in the Selling Process 203
12.2. The Questioning Technique 204
12.3. The Linguistic Characteristics of the Sales Process 207
12.4. The Aikido Technique 209
12.5. The Use of Selling Idioms to Create a Magical Effect 213
12.6. Conclusions 215

INDEX 217

BIBLIOGRAPHY 223

INTRODUCTION

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Characteristics of Business English

This book facilitates understanding behavioural and organisational change and leadership development. With first-hand experience of getting a PhD in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Perspectives on Negotiating and Selling, I can say that this book reflects the practical capacity I have gained by closely working with business leaders and managers in their struggle to bring about fast change for themselves and their organisations.

This book extensively uses the concept of NLP to help both business students and professionals improve their *communication* skills, develop their *leadership* skills, build *rapport,* make *positive changes*, improve *team working* to boost performance, work *one-to-one* as well as *with groups*, and accomplish their *goals*. Firstly, used in a business context, it demonstrates, with clear and practical examples, the advantage of applying NLP to the workplace in order to overcome barriers towards success and develop a winning mindset. Secondly, it shows how to positively interact with your colleagues and establish better working relationships so as to improve communication skills and create rapport with your team-mates. Thirdly, this book is an engaging guide of how to motivate and inspire through the language you use to lead people to perform. Fourthly, it spells out in detail how to deal with difficult interlocutors to set and achieve ambitious goals in a selling or negotiating process, what the benefits are for using NLP in

business in order to get the best from our everyday performance, expand our NLP knowledge and resources and, moreover, avoid the pitfalls of others.

This book tackles five parts, with each part being parcelled off into bite-sized pieces easy to assimilate. You can either use this book whatever the chapter may be, or make use of the information given in one or more chapters according to your interests and needs.

The book provides students with applications of NLP headed towards favourite areas such as conducting negotiations, closing deals, making sales, taking them through specific linguistic strategies and techniques used as power tools to take control within the workplace.

PART I

DIFFERENCE DOES COUNT
IN
CHANGING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

CHAPTER 1

GENERATING BUSINESS EXCELENCE WITH NLP

1.1. Generating Business Excellence with NLP

1.1.1. Getting familiar with NLP is really user-friendly

Learning in what ways society is capable of change is a big challenge in today's workplaces. Businesses are constantly exploring a world of opportunities to show us what works and what doesn't as well as how to perform at peak levels of energy, focus and effectiveness. They either stand or fall, not because of the quality of their systems and processes, but because of the wisdom, inspiration or talent of their people. Companies are aware of the need for leadership in order to achieve future success. This way, NLP can help us shape a culture of learning, improvement and success. It is a comprehensive set of models and tools for learning and change in response to complex issues confronting the business environment. Searching for ways of getting the best out of people, leaders and managers often resort to various proven NLP techniques that can make a difference between running a team of unmotivated subordinates and turning negative minds into *driving forces for change*.

For the aspiring executive and not only, NLP can bring personal development, since it describes the workings of the mind, how verbal and non-verbal language is used to express our thoughts. Far from being a book of psychology, this study contains an array of techniques, language patterns, strategies and principles easy to grasp. It is a book of first-class learning experience - *practical* and *theoretical* - helping us realize our potential as a useful ”asset” in the world of business, on the one hand, and become an excellent influencer ready to take charge of our career, on the other.

From a similar perspective, *reprogramming the mind for success* means removing past failure-related experiences and making some changes to get different results. That is why, finding alternatives and responses to people and situations can make all the difference between continually seeking new choices and being trapped in what NLP holds as a core premise, namely:

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.

Thus, trying new things and discovering the *drivers of our thinking and behaviour* by observing how our unconscious mind is working becomes, in my opinion, the cornerstone of NLP. Moreover, what matters most is our ability to start the changing process with ourselves and then with the people around us. Training our mind for success can be achieved as long as we avoid being stuck in previous limitations. Further on, dreams become goals we can reach.

1.1.2. One can accomplish more by using NLP

The beliefs we hold about ourselves or others can either limit who we can be or what we can accomplish. Similarly, the beliefs we have can provide a window of opportunity for us where others see no possibility. Based on these beliefs and our perception of the world, all our actions have a purpose. We do not choose them at random; on the contrary, we have a

positive intent in everything we do, even if this intent may or may not be always clear or meaningful according to another person's perspective. We always try to achieve something, although we may not be consciously aware of what it is or how it can benefit us. That is why, the more choices and strategies we have to achieve an outcome, the greater our sense of achievement.

Consequently, by understanding that people filter information differently, have different beliefs, make different value judgements or decisions, we realize that not only do they have different maps of the world, but they also react in various manners to specific events.

The role of NLP is to help us work on ourselves and bring about self-development and change in order to eventually understand the other person and establish a relationship of rapport. All this insightful analysis conducted by NLP experts today (O'Connor 2001; Ellerton 2006; Cooper 2008) stresses that self-direction, self-development, or self-awareness, which can be thought of as features of high achievers, are not possible without metacognitive and affective skills. Metacognitive strategies enable business people to control their cognition through setting and attaining goals, forecasting and planning, self-monitoring, or self-evaluating. Affective skills assist business people with controlling emotions and regulating motivations through making positive statements, understanding one's body (language), sharing feelings, or self - talk. O'Connor (2001: 6-7) explains what NLP can do to bring about self-development and change proposing a five-stage model, which shows our route from working on ourselves, through practice, to becoming the person we really aspire to be so that we can effectively influence others. As he states, NLP is not about "fixing other people and neglecting yourself. Put your own mask on *first*! When you approach change and self-development, you need to be congruent, determined to succeed and believe in what you are doing. [...] do not sabotage yourself. *Secondly*, you need to establish rapport, in other words work within a relationship of trust and mutual influence. *Thirdly*, you

need to establish what you want to achieve in that change. *Then* you can apply one of the many patterns, techniques or combinations of patterns that NLP has developed for change and learning. *Lastly*, you 'future pace', that is you mentally rehearse the new change and learning" (2001: 6-7). He also stresses that, among the basic pillars of NLP, *flexibility* is a key to accomplish an outcome and lead to good results: "NLP encourages choice governed by purpose in a relationship of rapport and awareness" (2001:4). Ellerton (2006:5,7) further explains that, as a communication model and frame of mind based on exploration and curiosity, "NLP is a process of discovering the patterns of excellence of experts, and it makes these effective ways of thinking and communicating available for others to use for their own benefit or to assist others". In line with O'Connor (2001), Ellerton also mentions that one of the biggest benefits of NLP is "becoming aware of the patterns, habits, strategies and programs that you have been running unconsciously and then using NLP techniques to change them in order to achieve the outcomes you desire" (Ellerton 2006:7). Cooper (2008:14-18) further clarifies that the idea of increasing our flexibility to get good results, as well as acquiring self-awareness and techniques to achieve aspirations and goals provides us with the opportunity of becoming excellent influencers and thus, overcoming barriers to success in the workplace. From the point of view of accomplishing more by using NLP in business, Cooper openly advocates for embracing NLP tools and techniques in the essential aspects of business life: communicating, leading, and achieving the best results (Cooper 2008:15).

I consider that a worth mentioning approach related to the business environment is Cooper's remark on targeting our language and adapting our discourse when communicating with our partners so that we closely match their map of the world and build rapport. It is really surprising how far we can reach with subtle shifts in our language and attitude.

1.1.3. Reprogramming mind in order to achieve business success

As mentioned previously (see 1.1.2.), creating strong values and solid beliefs helps us to get what we want when they are stated in the positive and become self-fulfilling. Throughout our life and professional career we are constantly refining them until they empower us to put our knowledge and drive into a goal. Once they serve us well and our behaviour is aligned with our thinking, we will immediately achieve better results and a strong sense of purpose.

The terms which are most frequently used in eliciting a strategy are ”programming” and ”reprogramming”/ ”debugging” by means of NLP methods and techniques (Dilts and DeLozier 2000; Molden and Hutchinson 2006; Cooper 2008).

The former refers to the NLP perspective that there is a close relationship between mental processes and computer software programs since, historically, the notion of *programming* in NLP derives from artificial intelligence and information theory. According to Dilts and DeLozier (2000), ”Much of the NLP approach to the mind is based on viewing the brain as functioning similar to a computer in some ways. The NLP notion of a cognitive ’strategy’ is derived from thinking about mental processes as if they were like software programs in a computer” (Dilts and DeLozier 2000:1013).

The latter consists in giving up ineffective strategies, i.e. strategies that do not work to our advantage and prevent us from achieving positive results. It makes us aware of the possibility to offer ourselves choices which bring us closer to the things we want to accomplish. To put it differently, *reprogramming* (’debugging’) works best when we step down limiting/unproductive beliefs and, instead, upgrade and redesign strategies and cognitive processes that function appropriately and ecologically. In Dilts and DeLozier’s opinion, ”NLP methods allow us to *reprogram* or

debug those strategies which have become obsolete or ineffective in our lives [...]. Many people have tried to 're-program' themselves by visualizing themselves being successful. For all the people who naturally use this as a strategy, it will work fine" (Dilts and DeLozier 2000:1014, 1059).

In my opinion, debugging programs that hold us back is particularly important in the business environment when communicating with ourselves, and with others. I consider that motivating ourselves, finding inner resources and visualizing success in the experience that we are facing allow us to clarify the structure of our programs and enrich our strategies in the pursuit of success.

The purpose of NLP is to find out "the programming language" of the brain, by helping us "listen" to our internal language when we visualize our most successful previous experiences. Thus, in the journey of achievement, it is more positive, insightful and less constraining if our internal language is in the past tense, for example, how we *composed* ourselves before a key moment in our life or career, what we *did* compared to what we *have to do*.

The best-known discussion of programming and reprogramming in NLP stems from the works of Dilts (1994), Dilts and DeLozier (2000) and Molden and Hutchinson (2006) who draw an analogy between human programs / strategies and computer programs. As Dilts and DeLozier (2000) remark, although our powerful personal "computer", i.e. the *brain*, does not come with a user's manual, our role, as "software wizards", is to encode other people's software by applying their structure (inner programming) to our own experiences: "The cognitive strategies identified by NLP are the *mental software* used by the *bio-computer* of the brain. The problem with it is that sometimes the software *isn't very user-friendly*. The goal of NLP is to discover the *programming language* of the brain so that we can help get ours and others' brains to do what we want them to do more elegantly and effectively " (my emphases) (Dilts and DeLozier 2000: 1014). Similarly, Cooper (2008) argues that reprogramming our mind is really user-friendly,

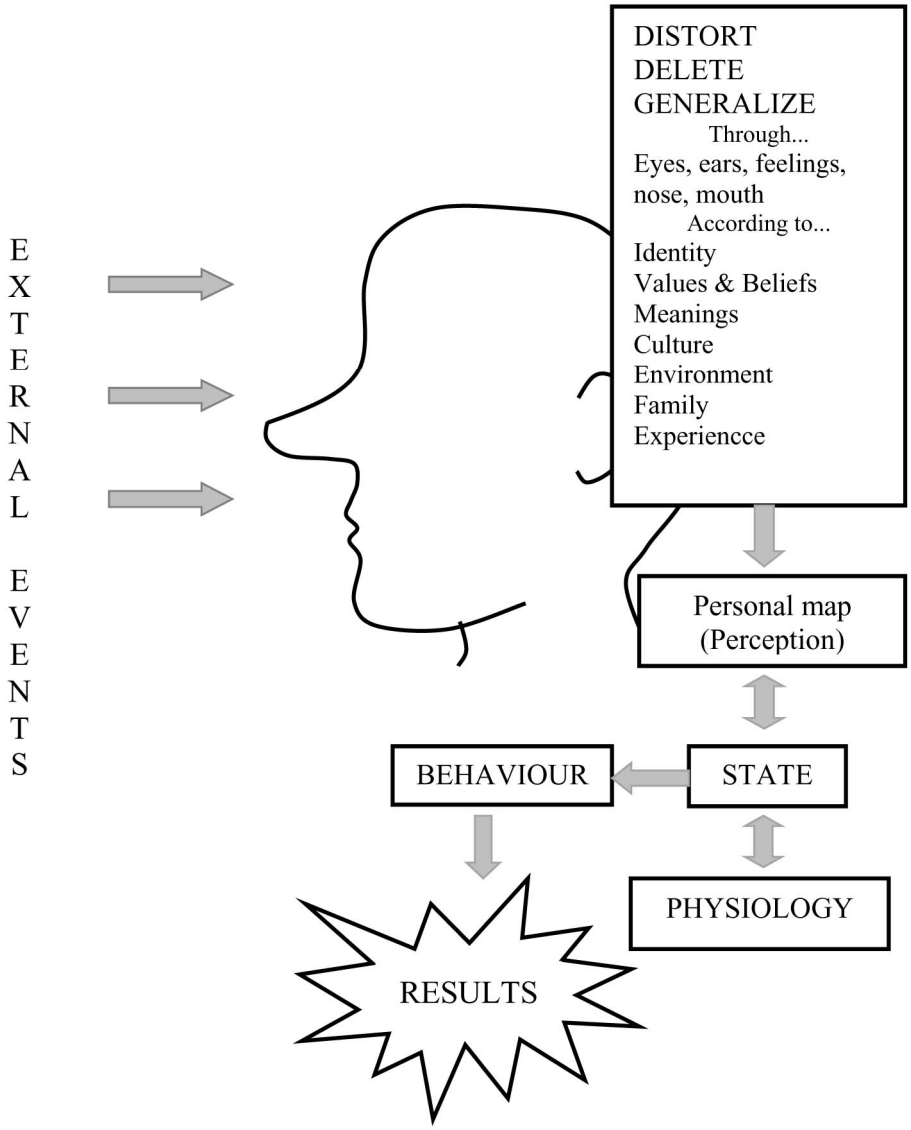
or ”in your hands” and proposes to ”think of your brain as a bespoke computer, programmed to run you” (Cooper 2008: 10). He adds that by detecting unconsciously held patterns and habits, our mental software can *delete* old programs and *install* and *upgrade* new thinking ones: ”After you start paying attention and observing how your mind is working, you have the choice to delete, upgrade or install whichever bit of ’thinking software’ you desire” (2008: 10).

In accordance with the two approaches considered above, a similar argument is put forward by Molden and Hutchinson (2006) who provide a diagram on how programs are formed.

As they explain, ”through generalizing, deleting and distorting information you create a state, which drives your behaviour” (2006:83).
At work, we often use programs or strategies which function more powerfully for accomplishing certain types of activities than others. We apply certain programs and set well-formed outcomes for just about everything we do: selling products, negotiating contracts, running projects, delegating tasks, agreeing budgets, setting targets, or making organizational changes.

In summary, the aspect of inner programming is based upon the idea that our own understanding of reality (*personal map*) is made through a combination of *external stimuli* and *inner thoughts*, and ”it is this captured version that we use to make decisions and form judgements” (Molden and Hutchinson 2006:26).

External events and experiences are most likely to generate *feelings* which, in turn, are automatically *anchored to thoughts* by our unconscious mind. This results in a ’state’(of mind and body). Seen differently, as Molden and Hutchinson point out, ”This programming consists of a sequence of thoughts and behaviour which are triggered by a stimulus. In NLP this is called a ’strategy’ for achieving an outcome [...] The key is in the knowing the beginning and end of each strategy, so that you can change it” (2006:85).



(Molden and Hutchinson 2006:83)

Thus, reprogramming our mind involves the process of uprooting ourselves from limiting beliefs until they fade out and generating new, empowering thinking styles able to support us in achieving positive outcomes (see 1.2.2.).