

NLP AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE IN BUSINESS

By Nick Kemp of Tranceforming NLP

You have probably heard of the term NLP because it's been around for over 30 years, but in my experience few businesses have discovered how this toolkit can dramatically improve staff performance.

NLP is short for Neuro Linguistic Programming and was created in the early 1970s by Dr Richard Bandler, a student of psychology at the university of California Santa Cruz, and John Grinder, the then assistant professor of linguistics. Neuro refers to how we organise our mental activity; linguistic is how we use language and how language affects us and programming relates to our behaviour in different situations.

Are you speaking the same language as your customers?

One of the most fascinating aspects of NLP is discovering how to harness the power of language to develop greater rapport with clients. When we use language we represent our ideas in some fashion and each of us do this in different ways, from our own unique perspectives.



There are three main ways in which we represent our thinking when we communicate with others and although we will all use a combination of these terms, each person will tend to have a bias to one particular mode of expression, which are as follows:

- Visually - "I see"
- Auditory - "I hear"
- Kinaesthetically - "I feel"

Examples of visual language:

"Let's see what we can do"
 "We need to focus on what is ahead"
 "I'm clear about what we discussed"

Examples of auditory language:

"I hear what you are saying"
 "That sounds good to me"
 "This really strikes a chord"

Examples of kinaesthetic language:

"That feels right"

"I sense this is going to work out fine"
 "That's a real weight off my shoulders"

It's worth remembering that in daily conversation the words and phrases we choose to select are indicators of our thinking and our intentions. By speaking 'the same language' as our clients, we increase the chance of building rapport and avoiding miscommunications. If a client is speaking in predominantly visual language, then as a salesperson you will build better rapport if you switch to using visual language as well.

The art of language in persuasion

If you run a business where most communication takes place over the phone, it's worth remembering that your staff are working primarily in an auditory medium and the following elements then determine the outcome of each interaction:

- Content – what you say
- Tonality – how you phrase what you say
- Volume

- Pace – the speed and rhythm of what you say

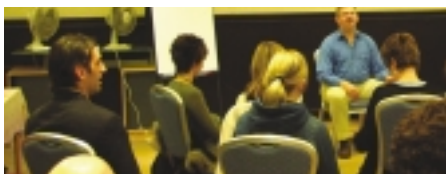
In any training group, there is always at least one person who speaks too quickly or does not appreciate how to use tonality correctly to maintain the listener's interest during the conversation. The reason why you may not remember many sales calls is because they are not that memorable; because the person in question failed to get and maintain your interest. The voice tone on the phone is sometimes far more important than the content of the communication.

Another type of language pattern in NLP is the 'suggestive predicate'. These phrases are also excellent resources in developing our ability to influence others. Each phrase makes the listener anticipate what will follow in the conversation.

Examples of suggestive predicates include:

- "I don't know how soon you will notice..."
- "Imagine if..."
- "Would it be like to..."
- "I don't know how soon..."

Such patterns are also invaluable in business presentations where it is important to maintain client interest. Interestingly one sales member in a recruitment agency increased his success rate by 300 per cent, simply by using these patterns in his interactions with customers.



Language in customer service situations

There is an old saying 'The meaning of what you say is what people hear'. Sometimes the communicator is not fully aware that particular phrases do not convey the original intention of the communication. I had a managing director who repeatedly used the phrase 'I'll try to', which is one of many phrases that suggest that the intended action is not going to occur. The result of doing this was that many of his staff were wholly unconvinced that he would do what he said he was going to do.

Other examples are:

- "Hopefully"
- "All being well"
- "We'll try to"
- "All things being equal"
- "We'll aim to"

Language is just one part of how we communicate and there are many more patterns of language in NLP. As we open up our ears, we open up our minds to new and interesting possibilities in all areas of life.

Nick Kemp is a trainer with The Society of NLP and previously worked in recruitment from 1986 to 1997. He now runs bespoke training for recruitment companies and other businesses on an international basis as well as seminars on NLP and persuasion for the public.

Nick is running a one day 'Introduction to NLP' seminar at the Queens Hotel, Leeds, on November 13, 2004. We are offering the first two readers who call in on 01274 734906 a free place at the all day event, worth £95 each.