

## Chapter 1

# Achieving Business Excellence with NLP

---

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Getting familiar with NLP
  - ▶ Discovering NLP business benefits
  - ▶ Achieving more with NLP
  - ▶ Taking charge of your career
  - ▶ Influencing others
- 

**B**uilding a career, getting an interesting job, and finding opportunities to progress are important to most people. After all, you spend a huge amount of time at work. You hope that your career brings personal development, fulfillment, and, of course, the means you need to live a comfortable life. Yet sometimes your working life falls short of your expectations and hopes.

Making a success of your working life and achieving your professional goals and dreams depends on more than your qualifications, experience, and job-related skills. These days, getting on at work relies on exceptional communication skills and the ability to flex and change continually. Understanding the principles and tools of *neuro-linguistic programming*, or *NLP*, can help you become an excellent influencer, as well as acquire the self-awareness and techniques to adapt and change to achieve your aspirations.

If you're ready to take charge of your life at work – and to stop allowing your fortunes to be dictated by bosses, colleagues, employers, customers, or anyone else – then this book is a good place to start. Find out more about the value of NLP in business in this chapter, before moving on to discover dozens of ways to put its principles to use in the rest of the book.

## Reprogramming the Mind for Success

Making change happen at work often seems difficult. Have you ever found that, no matter how much you try, you're still frustrated in your efforts to make things better?

Maybe you've been so determined in the past that you worked harder and harder, yet still didn't get what you wanted. This experience isn't so surprising, certainly if you subscribe to a core NLP premise, explored more in Chapter 3, that:



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

So in order to get a different result, you probably have to make some changes and find alternatives to your tried-and-tested actions and responses to people, situations, and challenges. At the heart of NLP is the idea that if you continually seek new choices and try different things, you achieve what you want.

The fact that you're reading this book suggests that you may well be ready to make some changes. Throughout the book I show you how to use NLP to discover the drivers of your thinking and behaviour. You can discover how to detect the patterns and habits that you hold unconsciously – and realise when these patterns and habits are very useful to you, as well as when they aren't.

Think of your brain as a bespoke computer, programmed to run you. As with any software program, you only notice the bit that comes up on the screen. The detailed and sophisticated program is running behind the scenes, out of your awareness. You may not realise that some of this software can be deleted, installed, or upgraded to get far more effective results. The same can be said of your unconscious mind. After you start paying some attention and observing how your mind is working, you have the choice to delete, upgrade, or install whichever bit of 'thinking software' you desire.

NLP offers you the keys to unlocking your own potential. Reprogramming your mind for success is in your hands. Removing previous limitations is inevitable. Your dreams become your goals, and they're goals you can achieve.



You can't change other people. All you *can* change is yourself and how you respond to other people. When people around you are ready to change, you can use many of the tools and approaches you discover in this book to coach and help them. Turn to Chapter 12 for more on coaching others.

## Defining NLP

One of the first challenges to face when discovering NLP is the name itself. *Neuro-linguistic programming* sure is a mouthful.

When you break the name down into its component parts, however, the relevance of each part becomes clearer:

- ✓ **Neuro** relates to your neurological system: how you use your five senses both to experience the outside world and to create your internal world by remembering and imagining. Your conscious and unconscious thought processes activate your nervous system, which influences your physiology (breathing, posture, movements and so on), how you feel, and what you do and say.
- ✓ **Linguistic** refers to the way people use language to make sense of their experiences, to talk to themselves, and to communicate with others. Everyone has distinct patterns in how they use language, and these patterns provide tremendous insights into people's thinking.
- ✓ **Programming** is just like computer programming, only relating to the human brain. A *program* – for a computer or in your brain – is a succession of steps designed to achieve a particular result. Your personal programs lead to the results you get and the impact you have on yourself and others.

Since its introduction in the 1970's, NLP has been defined in many different ways. The following sections delve into what exactly NLP is – and isn't.

## Studying and observing

Leaders in the field of NLP most commonly describe NLP as the study of the structure of subjective experience, which is a very obscure way of saying studying how individuals think and behave. Studying and observing very precisely what human beings think, say, and do is the cornerstone of NLP, giving insights into the internal workings of people's minds. Understanding how someone does what they do well allows you to create a model of that capability so you can replicate their excellence. You can also detect how you, or someone else, is managing to create the results you *don't* want – and then make changes to achieve your aspirations and goals.

NLP gives you skills and tools to find out how others achieve great results. You can build models of others' capabilities and try them out for yourself. In addition, NLP originators Richard Bandler and John Grinder (see the nearby

sidebar “The origins of NLP”), as well as many others in the field, have developed and created a wealth of models and techniques for creating change and influencing effectively.

## *Even more definitions*

The scope of NLP extends beyond business-specific skills and techniques and has led practitioners to develop many other ways of describing NLP’s essence.

Some definitions focus on NLP’s strength in the area of communications and define NLP as:

- ✓ The art and science of communication.
- ✓ A communication model based on working with patterns of thinking, language, and behaviour.
- ✓ The key to successful communication.
- ✓ A set of powerful influencing strategies.

Other definitions are concerned with excellence and define NLP as:

- ✓ A behavioural model of outstanding talent.
- ✓ A methodology for replicating behaviour that generates exceptional results.
- ✓ A user’s manual for the brain.

Still other definitions focus on achieving goals, considering NLP as:

- ✓ A process by which you can achieve what you want in life.
- ✓ An attitude of mind.
- ✓ Skills and techniques for designing and creating your future.
- ✓ The difference that makes the difference.

As you can see, NLP can be many different things to many different people – from a science to an attitude.



In my experience, people who learn about NLP take what they want from the wealth of available insights and techniques. How you define NLP after you begin your journey of discovery is entirely up to you. What’s important is that you explore, experiment, and have fun while finding out what NLP can do to support you to improve your business life.

## The origins of NLP

The seeds of NLP were planted in the early 1970s at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Richard Bandler, a mathematics student, and John Grinder, a professor of linguistics, started the collaboration that led to NLP. The duo studied three leading psychotherapists:

- ✓ Fritz Perls, the creator of the school of therapy known as Gestalt.
- ✓ Virginia Satir, an exceptional family therapist.
- ✓ Milton Erickson, one of the most influential hypnotherapists and psychiatrists of our time.

The success of these therapists intrigued Bandler and Grinder. Their styles and personalities seemed quite different, yet they were each achieving amazing change with clients with very significant problems.

Bandler and Grinder identified that some similar, fundamental patterns underlay all three therapists' work. In the mid-1970s they published their discoveries in *The Structure of Magic, Volumes 1 and 2*, and two volumes of *Patterns of the Hypnotic Technique of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.*

Many other leaders in the fields of communications, systems theory, (the study of complex systems in science, nature, and society), and psychotherapy informed the development of NLP. In particular, Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist with an interest in linguistics, systems theory, communications theory, and psychotherapy, provided a strong influence.

NLP was born out of the originators' development of specific models of excellence, aided by a number of colleagues and students, who themselves have made significant contributions to the field. These include Judith DeLozier, Lesley Cameron-Bandler, Robert Dilts, David Gordon, Stephen Gilligan, and many others. Over the last 30 years, others have developed and contributed new models (using the NLP modelling capabilities evolving in the field) and extended thinking in NLP. The quest to study human excellence continues.

In its very early days NLP was used primarily in personal development and therapy. Before long it began to be used in a much broader range of situations, including business.

## Evaluating NLP for yourself

In the many years I've been using NLP I've come across a few people who are resistant to NLP. They have preconceived ideas from things that they have heard – or indeed they may have just had a bad experience of working with an unskilled or badly trained practitioner.

Those few people I've met who have negative perceptions of NLP have described it as brainwashing or manipulation, pop psychology, even new age mumbo jumbo! Well, everyone is entitled to have their own map of the world (I talk more about maps of the world in Chapter 3).

My experience in working with NLP in business is that, used wisely and ethically, NLP opens up the opportunity to develop a better life and career for anyone – if that’s what they want. Try it out for yourself and then draw your own conclusions. Everyone is entitled to their own map of the world – including you!

## *Using NLP in Business*

Over the years, the use of NLP tools and techniques has exploded around the world, in every conceivable walk of life. NLP is now applied in counseling, education, parenting, health, personal development, coaching, voluntary service, sport, and, not least, in business. New discoveries, new models, and new ways of thinking are continually emerging from the many people whose talents NLP has unleashed.

Business people now widely use NLP. Forward-thinking organisations embrace NLP because they benefit from its positive effects on individuals, teams, and overall business performance.

As you read this book you discover many ways to apply NLP to business, whether you wish to:

- ✓ Get better results for yourself
- ✓ Support others to achieve better results
- ✓ Drive change in your business

As well as the tools, NLP is also an attitude of mind that incorporates:

- ✓ **An awareness of self:** Noticing and understanding how you habitually think and behave.
- ✓ **A high sensitivity to others:** Paying close attention to others and using what you observe and hear to step into their worlds.
- ✓ **A future outcome focus:** Aspiring to make changes and achieve all that you desire.



Your journey through NLP is a voyage of discovery. With this book – and perhaps other books, workshops, and online resources – you can sail through the wide variety of valuable tools, techniques, and models on offer.

In this book, I introduce many aspects of NLP thinking and approaches that are employed successfully in business. Use as much or as little of this information as you please. I suggest you prioritise and use those parts of NLP that appeal to you most. Then build your skills and add more NLP gems to your tool kit as you’re ready.



This is a book about NLP in relation to your work, career, and business. The book does not deal with NLP as therapy. But if you're suffering from serious personal issues, NLP can help. It has been an effective tool for curing phobias, overcoming post-traumatic stress disorder, and responding to anxiety and other major issues that affect health and happiness. I suggest you contact the Neuro Linguistic Psychotherapy & Counselling Association ([www.nlptca.com](http://www.nlptca.com)) to locate an NLP specialist to help you with your specific issue.

The following sections address key benefits of including NLP tools and techniques in your business life: communicating, leading, and achieving the best results.

## *Enhancing interpersonal effectiveness*

Modern-day business success demands not only good interpersonal skills but also exceptional powers to influence and persuade. The need for communication pervades all business activities:

- ✓ **Within the business.** People need to work together, cooperate, negotiate, influence, inspire, and motivate others to get the job done.
- ✓ **With customers.** Good customer service is critical to keeping competitive advantage. Paying close attention to customers' wishes and communicating in ways that have meaning to customers are essential.
- ✓ **With the market at large.** Getting your message across effectively to prospective buyers and managing communication through broadcast and online media are constant challenges.
- ✓ **With others.** Communicating with and influencing stakeholders, including shareholders, financiers, community groups, and others, is extremely important. Good supplier relationships are also critical for success.

In their early analysis of highly effective therapists (see the sidebar, 'The origins of NLP'), Richard Bandler and John Grinder identified a range of key underlying patterns of communication that are common to success. From this initial research, they developed *models* – representations of what excellent influencers were doing – that generate both personal change and highly influential communications. The models for greater interpersonal influence appear largely in Parts II and III of this book and cover the key themes of:

- ✓ Developing awareness of yourself and others
- ✓ Building rapport
- ✓ Influencing language
- ✓ Handling emotions

The following sections address the communication-based benefits of NLP.

### *Understanding differences between you and others*

The journey to becoming an exceptional communicator starts with discovering and understanding your own patterns of thinking. These patterns drive the way you feel, act, and react. Everything you've experienced in your life – and the way your brain has filtered this information – determines what you think, believe, value, and feel. To find out more about the unconscious mind and its filtering process, head to Chapter 4.



Right now you may not be aware of many of your habitual ways of thinking, evaluating, and making decisions. But your unconscious mind is steering you. Find out how to identify your patterns from the language you use and the things you do in Chapters 5 and 7.

Guess what? Other people aren't like you! While some people may resemble you, others don't at all. As you can read in Chapter 3, NLP adopts the principle that all people have different maps of the world. Even when two people share an experience, they notice different things, have different responses, and store different memories.

### *Targeting your language*

After you know how to detect patterns, you're likely to start seeing and hearing the patterns of others – and notice those that are different to your own. You can then adapt the way you talk to people so that you make perfect sense in their maps of the world!

Becoming more flexible in how you communicate is the key to developing exceptional influencing skills. Knowing others' patterns gives you the information you need to target your words to them, as if you're speaking their language rather than your own.



Turn to Chapters 4, 5, and 7 to find out how to use words and phrases so that someone whose patterns are dissimilar to yours can understand and respond. You may be amazed by what you can achieve with some subtle shifts in your language.

### *Using rapport*

*Rapport* is that natural connection between people when all conversation seems to be effortless. Discussions flow easily and everyone has a sense of respect and underlying trust.



You no doubt have some colleagues with whom you simply seem to get along well, and business conversations are just plain easy. These people are probably most like you in terms of their patterns, and rapport happens naturally. With others at work, this kind of rapport is much harder to find.

Persuading a colleague and getting him on your side is so much easier when you're in rapport with him. Thanks to the modelling work of NLP pioneers, you can create good rapport in situations where it previously seemed difficult, and influence more effectively. Find out all about rapport in Chapter 6, including how to use body language and words to attain it.

### ***Managing your emotions***

Humans are highly emotional beings. Powerful feelings are wonderful when they work for you. In business, many emotional states can be useful: excitement, interest, calm, and confidence, to name but a few.

In contrast, strong negative feelings don't often help you work to the best advantage. Anger, anxiety, frustration, demotivation, and stress are some of the states I come across in business people, none of which supports best performance.

You may well have worked hard to control your emotions at times. Trying to manage or suppress a strong feeling is often a battle. Yet having the capacity to choose how you feel, rather than have your feelings control your reactions and behaviour, is essential for success in:

- ✓ Leading
- ✓ Influencing
- ✓ Achieving
- ✓ Negotiating

NLP tools and techniques help you find ways to choose your feelings. When you opt to modify your emotional response to a difficult situation, you can alter how you act and react and get a far more positive outcome. Chapters 8 and 9 hold an array of approaches to changing your emotional responses to get the results you want. You can also use these techniques to coach others to change their emotional states when doing so is beneficial to them.

## *Leading peak performance*

For business excellence, you need to get yourself and others working most effectively. This is a leadership job. Regardless of whether you have the job title of leader, you still lead people when you're:

- ✓ Guiding
- ✓ Directing
- ✓ Managing
- ✓ Controlling
- ✓ Influencing

Good performance comes from you, your team, your colleagues, or others on whom you rely, such as suppliers. As you communicate more effectively with yourself and others, you can influence and lead excellence to achieve business success.

### *Leading yourself*

Creating the life you want, including the kind of work and career that you desire, starts with self-leadership. Leading yourself is about taking charge of your working life to get where you want to go. When you lead yourself well, you:

- ✓ Establish your personal goals or outcomes
- ✓ Choose your emotions and state
- ✓ Become aware of your own unconscious patterns
- ✓ Build your behavioural flexibility
- ✓ Reprogram your unconscious for success

Discover all the wonderful ways in which you can make this happen as you read through this book.

### *Inspiring and motivating*

Getting people to listen to you, agree with you, or be inspired by you affects your success, whether you're the CEO or the new kid on the team. Businesses depend on people. People need to be persuaded, motivated, and enthused to back new ideas and put their best into their jobs.

NLP models and approaches for communication in this book are particularly useful if you want to:

- ✓ Gain agreement, approval, or consensus
- ✓ Call others to action
- ✓ Persuade people to join you in your opinions or judgements
- ✓ Encourage and motivate others
- ✓ Pass on information that you believe is important
- ✓ Generate passion or excitement



If inspiring others is what inspires you, I recommend you jump straight to Chapter 10. There you can find out how to choose your words to engage others' emotions positively.

### ***Coaching others***

Coaching others to improve performance is considered increasingly important in business these days. The days of managers telling staff what to do, rather than coaching them to develop skills, may well be limited.

Many business leaders believe that NLP offers the most powerful coaching tool kit available today. Throughout this book you can discover insights and techniques for improved communication, as well as tools for personal change. All of these, including the specialist coaching models I present in Chapter 12, provide a wide array of approaches to incorporate in your coaching.

### ***Giving feedback***

If performance improvement is important to you, then giving and receiving quality feedback is essential. In many organisations, feedback is still sparse and too infrequent. Feedback is all too often used only when bad news needs to be delivered, while praise and encouragement for a job well done are often overlooked.

Chapter 11 outlines how to use NLP thinking to direct meaningful and actionable feedback, so that others truly understand what they're doing well, where they need to improve, and what those improvements may look and sound like in order to increase their personal effectiveness.

### *Handling difficult relationships*

Most people find certain situations or individuals at work challenging to handle and seriously detrimental to progress. To get the best business performance, people need to be able to work well together and overcome difficulties and differences.

Getting past the problems caused by relationships that just don't seem to work or situations that seem complex and stuck becomes easier with NLP. The NLP models of master communicators identify what those with exceptional influencing skills do to change such relationships positively, and you can use their techniques to influence others.

Explore how to gain new insights into difficult relationships and build your flexibility to get the results you want in Chapter 13.

## *Improving business results*

Although the early NLP models were based on the study of individual excellence, they apply equally well to achieving great results across a business. If you want to maximise business performance, this book offers many NLP tools that can serve you well.

### *Creating vision, values, and goals*

All businesses have goals. Some have a vision. All have values, although they may not be the ones they say they have! I spend a lot of time in organisations of all sizes, and I rarely find an employee who's bang up to date with the company vision and values, and often not even the goals. After all, the vision is so often just a bunch of words that aren't easy to remember. Much the same can be said for the values. And the goals are a bunch of numbers that aren't really going to change the way anyone does his job.

Applying NLP to the process of crafting vision, values, and goals brings a whole new perspective.

- ✔ NLP focuses on sensory experience – what you see, hear, and feel. When a sensory description brings vision, values, and goals to life, people start to understand, anticipate, and align with them. To find out how to develop a compelling vision, meaningful values, and inspiring goals, look up Chapter 14.
- ✔ The NLP model for goal setting is known as a *well-formed outcome*, which you can find out more about in Chapter 16. This kind of goal is far more motivating to people within a business than is a brief description of financial targets.

### *Effecting change*

If one constant exists in business, it's the need to make changes, small or large, in order to be competitive, generate the desired results, and adapt to the rapidly changing environment in which the business operates. Business leaders frequently find major change difficult. Changes to structure, processes and systems are often complex and slow, and many don't achieve the hoped-for outcome.



Much of NLP has been modelled from successful personal transformation. These models, when used to support organisational change – which of course depends largely on individual change – are equally powerful. Using NLP to create change within a business involves:

- ✓ Influencing and motivating people to make changes more effectively.
- ✓ Setting well-formed outcomes and meaningful action plans that people buy into.
- ✓ Developing more flexible individuals as a result of greater awareness of self and others.
- ✓ Making changes at the right level of thinking.

The NLP *logical levels* model (more on this in Chapter 15) determines the kind of changes individuals should make in order to achieve their goal. Changing the right things is the difference that makes the difference.

### *Modelling best performance*

Modelling is the essence of NLP. Understanding how you or someone else intuitively does something exceptionally well is a valuable skill in business.

You can model exceptional performers in any discipline to determine precisely what they do that gets great results. You can then transfer this model to other people and other areas.

Modelling is a very different approach to attempting to improve performance through standard skills training. Very often good performers aren't aware of what they do to get results that's different to what others do. Modelling identifies subtle thinking and behavioural processes that separate average and exceptional performances.

Think of all the things you'd like to do well if you only could. If you want to raise standards and do even more things well, find out how in Chapter 17.

