

THE NLP MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

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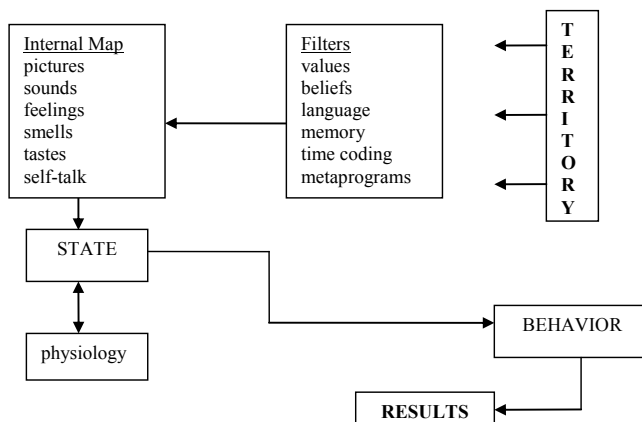
Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to offer a simplified version of the NLP communication model which I will use to reveal more about how we communicate, generate ideas, make decisions and produce behaviour. I will first explain the mechanism of the model to give an overall understanding of how it works; then, I will analyze the implications of the relationship between communication and language which acts as a filter on the world.*

Keywords: *calibration, filters, internal representations, language, map of reality, territory*

1. Introduction

The world around us represents the *territory* and we can make sense of it by *filtering out* information. The result will be our own *map of reality*. According to Molden (1996:31), this map of reality “does not necessarily represent the *territory* from which we gathered the information to construct our map[...]A territory is always much more detailed than any map created to represent it” (my emphasis). The filters we use to sort out important information are our assumptions, perceptions, values, beliefs, language, memories, and the so-called “meta programs”, i.e. the habitual filters. This filtered information makes up our internal map, which consists of pictures, sounds, feelings, smells and tastes.

I agree with Molden (1996) in that we are curious to explore the differences found in management thinking and behaviour. Perspective and difference in thinking are at the root of all behaviour, and at the basis of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), which is a science of perspective and difference. Consequently, our experience of and response to the world are achieved through our representational systems and our behaviour is determined by our ‘neuro-linguistic’ maps of reality.



(Source: Molden 1996:32)

As it is obvious in the diagram, Molden's further explanation is that "our internal map and our physiology together create a state of being" (1996:32) which guides our behaviour.

Ten years later, Molden and Hutchinson (2006:26) considered that we "represent our unique version of reality - through pictures, sounds, internal dialogue and feelings, and sometimes smell and taste. We capture our personal understanding of reality through a combination of our external senses and our inner thoughts... This unique perspective of events is called our *internal representation* or *map of reality*" (my emphasis).

Comparing Molden's diagram (1996) to Molden and Hutchinson's explanation (2006), one can see that self-talk in the diagram is replaced by internal dialogue, and that smells and tastes are not given so much significance. Moreover, Molden and Hutchinson lay emphasis on understanding reality by a combination of external senses, from pictures to tastes, and inner thoughts representing "self-talk".

The way in which the functioning of visual, auditory and kinesthetic receptors is triggered by the various stimuli coming from the outside environment has already been pointed out. When referring to the business field, one should find ways of holding the attention of potential customers, as each individual has a variety of sensory inputs at their disposal. I consider that one of the best ways to manage an effective relationship with a customer is to learn how to listen to him and to create a favourable atmosphere. The client should *feel* positive about doing business with you, and maintaining a customer-oriented approach *shows* that you care about him/her, and *are looking out for him/her*. Most salespeople concentrate only on the respective sale and adopt a sales-oriented approach by saying: "From now on s/he must buy only from me". In this case, the seller would not stoop to earning more. His objective is to get the order on the spot, because the store must rise its monthly turnover. Conversely, a good approaching strategy along with values of opening and interrupting in case of a negotiation, the arguments and answers appropriate to overcoming objections, and certainly a complete list of questions make up the necessary 'tools' of a business encounter.

Hearing, sight and touch are the three important communication senses for both the salesperson and the customer. Knowing how to question in order to identify customer needs is the lead to overstating the product's merits. The salesperson should put himself/herself into his interlocutor's position and imagine what kind of benefits could be relevant. The client needs to *hear* as quickly as possible the advantages that the product brings to him/her, otherwise s/he will not accept an appointment. Moreover, the use of samples enhances the purchaser's *visual* curiosity, especially if there are attractive products which also generate the customer's sudden impulse to *touch* them. One can easily make sense of a product through the *tactile* experience, thus opening doors for a *firm* commitment to place an order. The impulses set up by the three receptors (sight, sound, feeling) are transmitted to the brain for possible responses. Thus, the question may arise: *How do the brain and nervous system handle incoming and outgoing signals?* As NLP theorists consider, we experience and respond to the outside world through our sensory representational systems.

From the seller's viewpoint, delivering the presentation into detail (without concentrating on it more than 50 per cent however) and modulating the *tone of his voice* so as to allow the listener to assess, consciously or unconsciously, the extent to which the salesperson believes what s/he says, should be a constant preoccupation throughout the selling process.

The sales agent should *keep a watchful eye* for everything that comes and *listen* carefully to his interlocutor. The latter will almost certainly bring about stimulus variation. Since the conversational marketing process involves human contact, and hence persuasion, NLP strongly advocates the necessity of *calibrating verbal and non-verbal language and mind reading the other person's thoughts*. When *the bell rings* for the last round of product negotiation, one should concentrate on uncovering objections. During this stage, the salesperson keeps *a cool head* focusing on the interlocutor's buying signals and *feeling* when the time is right to shake hands and clinch the deal.

2. Language as a filter

In the construction of reality, language plays its decisive part as it itself construes reality (Halliday 1992:65) and is modelled according to the needs of the communicators.

According to the Sapir (1929) - Whorf (1956) Hypothesis, on the one hand, language actually determines the way the language user thinks (the *strong version* of the hypothesis being shared by Halliday 1992:65). On the other hand, language is one of the factors that influences our understanding of reality (the *weak version* shared by Hatim and Mason 1990:105).

Moreover, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has implications for the international businessperson as expressed by Ferraro (2006:58):

The hypothesis states that linguistically different people not only communicate differently but also think and perceive the world differently. Thus, by learning the local language, the international businessperson will acquire a vehicle of communication as well as a better understanding of why people think and behave as they do.

Our sensory and linguistic filters have the capacity to sort the environment, i.e. the *territory*, and operate on the variety of sense impressions sent from the outside world. NLP regards these *filters* as "*lenses on reality*", coming out of the relation between *I, me, my* and the things *beyond our experience*. Besides, Dilts and DeLozier (2000) point out the role of the *linguistic filter*, namely that of shaping and stabilizing our experience of the world.

By using language, we add meaning to the world around us. However, language is often not a true representation of our experience.

Generally speaking, language helps us generalize, distort and delete much information from our experience. The words we use give a very poor or oversimplified account of our experience. Our perception is selective and permanently gets more stimuli than we can filter. This leads to our misinterpretation or distortion of reality, as a result of changing or misplacing words.

Of course, this depends to a large extent on someone's *internal map*. If we want to change someone else's reactions and behaviour, s/he must be offered choices of different maps. For example, in business English, in general, and in negotiating and selling, in particular, oppositeness of behavioural profiles is extremely frequent, arousing *territory disputes*. The essential thing in these fields is *owning the territory*, because this can help you organize the territory as you like. In addition, there must be *respect for the other person's internal map*. According to Molden and Hutchinson (2006:99), a state of curiosity must be developed; this "will allow you to gain information *about the other person's map, which will help*

you to build rapport, communicate and influence... It does not mean you have to agree, but it is useful to understand” (my emphasis). Generally, it is only people that have worked in large organizations for a long time who can feel that they own certain parts of the territory. It has already been mentioned that the map is not the territory. We create our mental representation of the world which is not the reality. We do this by filtering information through our senses (our representational systems, abbreviated to VAKOG), the language we use in making generalizations, distortions and deletions.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to give an overview of a fascinating, relatively new field called Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which is more than a model of communication. It is a way of thinking and a *frame of mind* based on the curiosity to find out each person’s *map* of the world, and on the exploration of the *territory* from which we form our impressions about reality. The role of the sensory systems and the meta-programs were approached, as they represent an unconscious filter in the communication process. A person’s *internal representation* was also analyzed, when similar filters and language patterns were used. This is one of the reasons why I introduced meta programs and internal representations in the same NLP model of communication, because I consider that our internal representation, just like our meta program patterns, are unique and act as filters on the world.

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