

# Neuro-Linguistic Programming The Art & Science of Excellence

By Jeff Tan

Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP, has been described in many ways, among them:

- The art and science of personal excellence
- The subjective study of human nature
- The study of patterns of excellence
- The science of communications brilliance
- An attitude of excellence
- Skills for understanding and influencing people

Regardless of how NLP is described, there is a very strong and positive connection between the tools of NLP and excellence. This is what made NLP an attractive proposition to the millions who call themselves NLP practitioners since the 1970s to today.

## And NLP is?

NLP essentially explains:

- How our brain processes the millions of information bits that can simultaneously hit our five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste and smell
- How our brain filters and codes verbal and non-verbal information, giving our experience a unique meaning
- How we can “program” our minds to achieve our goals through patterns of excellence

## History

Developed in the USA by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the '70s, NLP grew from their interest of psychotherapy and human behavior. Richard was a psychology student while John was a linguistics professor and they studied the three most successful therapists at that time to uncover the structure behind their work. The three were Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy; Virginia Satir, mother of family therapy; and Milton Erickson, the pre-eminent hypnotherapist of the modern era. Richard and John distilled their methods and NLP was born.

## NLP Evolves

From the initial models of therapy, NLP evolved rapidly and powerfully into models of communications excellence and personal excellence. Today, NLP is used by millions of people worldwide as a tool to help them define and achieve excellence in any endeavor. Two of the key NLP tools, and its applications are:

## Communication Skills

One of the most powerful NLP tools is the art of effective communications. Going beyond the basic skill of expressing yourself verbally, NLP describes how to communicate powerfully, coherently, and effectively using your whole body (body language and gestures), tone of voice, and deliberate choice of words. NLP stresses that communicating is about what is said and how it's said which makes all the difference in getting the message across. It's a whole-body, whole-mind communication skill that whispers to the listener's conscious mind while shouting to the more powerful unconscious mind at the same time. Because of this, NLP's communications tools are especially powerful as it can plant hidden messages that make the receiver think and behave in a specific way. Politicians and advertisers are two groups that understand the power of the hidden verbal and non-verbal message (called embedded commands in NLP-speak) and use and abuse it on a daily basis on the unsuspecting public.

“The map is not the territory; Step into the other person's model of the world.”

NLP Presupposition (belief)

Another key communications skill NLP emphasizes is the art of creating rapport. This could be in a parent-child relationship, a buyer-seller situation, or even a first meeting between perfect strangers. By creating rapport, we step into the other person's model of the world, and appreciate and see things from his perspective rather than from just our own. By establishing rapport, we allow ourselves to empathize and understand them and we get to know them at a far deeper level. For relationship building between anyone for any reason, this is the one skill that must be mastered above all. The best salesperson in the world with the best product and best sales pitch cannot make the sale if rapport is not created first.

## Personal Development & Change Skills

‘Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?’

‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the cat.

‘I don't much care where ...’ said Alice.

‘Then it doesn't matter which way you go,’ said the cat.

Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll

NLP emphasizes “stretch” goals that push us to the limits of what

we can or dare achieve. This is also true of a New Year's resolution made under the glazed eye of Jack Daniels or Johnny Walker! But goal setting using NLP techniques offers a far greater chance of success as it emphasizes:

## Outcomes and Goals

NLP repeatedly stresses that success is a function of having a positive outcome or goal first. Without this, the mind will flounder anywhere and everywhere without a purpose, just like with Alice above. Once the goal is well defined, with both the positive and negative consequences fully understood, NLP techniques will implant an attitude of success and install a powerful driving force so that action is taken everyday to achieve the ultimate goal. To do this, the person wanting to make a change must understand himself thoroughly and completely before any change in habit or behavior can take root. This is soul searching to the nth degree.

The power of goal setting goes beyond mere anecdotes of success. In 1990, American industrial psychologists Edwin Locke from the University of Maryland and Gary Latham from the University of Washington published A Theory of Goal Setting & Task Performance after conducting numerous studies. In this groundbreaking book, they reported that:

- People who kept daily records of all the food they consumed but did not set goals to reduce food intake did not alter their eating habits. Only those who set specific goals in addition to keeping records lost weight.
- People who were given feedback during performance appraisals performed no better than those who received no feedback. However, when goal setting took place as a follow on to the feedback, performance improved significantly.
- People who were given specific, hard goals either outperformed people who were trying to do their best or else surpassed their own previous performance when they had already been trying to do their best.
- People who were given feedback on five different dimensions of their performance had goals assigned with respect to only one. Their performance improved significantly only on that one dimension for which the goal had been set.

Countless studies of best business practices show that goal set-



ting improves performance significantly when combined with measuring performance against those goals, providing feedback on goal achievement, and rewarding goal achievement.

## Acuity

NLP training develops our sensory acuity, or our ability to see any change in the external environment or within ourselves. It's this ability to see, hear, and feel the environment that gives anyone the choice to change strategies mid-stream if the path is the fast track to nowhere.

From a business perspective, the term business acuity is slowly entering the business lexicon. The notion of business acuity is well connected with perceptual blind spots that constantly hamper businesses. This is called the “Why didn't I see that coming” syndrome. With well-

honed business acuity developed through NLP, our senses are trained to see, hear and feel more, instantly and constantly to make very fine and precise distinctions of the 11 million bits of information that assault our senses every second!

## Flexibility

The third aspect of NLP that ensures development and success are attainable is the emphasis on flexibility. Any setback is seen as temporary, and NLP encourages changing strategies (and not well-defined goals!) till the correct one is picked. Businesses open to the notion of flexibility will have the luxury of choice, and the one with the most choices controls the environment resulting in a far greater chance of success.

“There is no failure; there is only feedback. All results are achievements.”

NLP Presupposition


## The Final Word on NLP

NLP is often described as the means to any end that is big, bright and beautiful. Unwanted behavior is permanently removed, life-long phobias are cured, powerful beliefs are built, targets are met, communication skills are improved, razor-sharp sensory acuity is developed, and the list of positives goes on. Applied in a business setting or home environment, the results are limitless and exciting!

“The resources an individual needs in order to effect a change are already within them!”

NLP Presupposition





Jeff Tan is the chief coach of eXplorer3 Life. He's passionate about empowering individuals or business owners so that they bring out the best in themselves and their organization.

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