A Useful Guide to

NLP for Coaches

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Pansophix

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NLP for Coaches

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Introduction

Why is this Useful Guide worth your time?

You may have seen many books, ebooks, websites and newsletters on the subjects of coaching and NLP, promising instant results.

You may have experienced many training programs that promised to give you easy answers and foolproof recipes for success.

And while you may have realised that none of this was realistic 'as stated on the tin', you still wondered what parts might work for you.

This Useful Guide is the result of ten years training, coaching and mentoring rising executives and highlights ideas and concepts from using NLP in a coaching and mentoring context that have helped people move towards their ambitions and dreams.

If you are genuinely interested in your own development, in getting the most from your career and life and playing your part in your business and its aspirations then this Useful Guide will be an important step forward on your journey.

This Useful Guide is written for you as both as a rising executive and coach and also recognises that being a coach may also be part of your own personal journey of learning and development.

What could you get from reading this Useful Guide?

- A firm grounding in coaching and NLP

- Ideas that that, when taken on board, will make a genuine and positive difference to and for you

- Perhaps even the start of an exciting new adventure which will result in a step change in your career and enjoyment of life

- Some powerful and pragmatic questions to ask both as coach and client

- While this ebook is titled 'A Useful Guide to NLP as a Coach' many of the skills and techniques apply to mentoring, leadership, sales, managing change and consulting as well as coaching.

What are coaching and mentoring?

In most of the companies we've worked in at various management levels over the past 10 years, different people have very different views and expectations from coaches, mentors and change agents.

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Some of these different views make it harder to establish the benefits and distinctions of these interventions and yet also underline the need for different approaches based on an organisation's varied and changing needs.

An organisation and its managers have a very wide range of needs and in order to serve those needs we have to identify the professional roles that can support organisational development and change.

Change at the individual or organisational level follows the same underlying pattern and what matters are the abilities of the person facilitating that change as a coach, mentor, consultant and leader.

All of these roles perform the task of helping an individual or organisation move from their current situation to something that they aspire to. In a simplified scenario, the client or organisation is in a present condition and wants to move to some other condition. That movement or change requires action, and the role of the coach is to help the client to plan and manage a series of action steps which bring about the desired change.
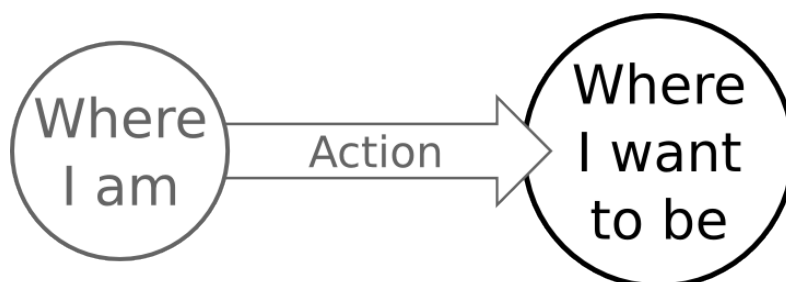
Part of the coach or mentor's role is likely to involve establishing the current situation and true aspirations of the organisation or individual. Often, consultants, coaches and managers assume that the perceived current situation is accurate, when in fact it may not be for many reasons ranging from insufficient information to blind optimism or even the deliberate misreporting of performance data. This is dangerous because in order to accurately navigate to your destination, you need to know exactly where you are now.

An 'ideal world' coaching model is shown in the diagram above. The generic approaches to coaching that are based on it fail not because of a flaw in the coaching process but because the world is not ideal. Clients are not always where they think they are, and what they want is not always what they really want. Any action plan must take this into account.

Imagine that you have satellite navigation in your car and that it is telling you to 'turn right'. You look out of the window and cannot see a right turn. Where is the fault?

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There have been many instances of lorries getting stuck under low bridges because the satellite navigation didn't take that detail into account. The route only makes sense when the present location and destination are accurate, and when the route has a useful relationship to 'reality'.

Individuals and organisations often set goals that are not true to their actual intentions or aspirations because they are based on the expectations of others. For example, someone might pursue a promotion because of his or her perception of what friends, family and managers expect, even if it is not really what they want. Rather than succeeding or failing, the person ends up in between the two, wasting energy that could be directed into real achievement.

Companies often set a direction based on the needs of the market, their customers, stakeholders and competitors and again try to swim against the current of their own true intentions and needs. The result may be moderate success, but in a competitive market, that inevitably leads to failure of the business or venture.

The value of NLP to a coach or mentor is therefore in having a set of tools and techniques for managing the difference between the 'ideal world' coaching model and the 'real world' of the client's situation. Where the client is missing or hiding information that is vital to understanding their current situation, a skilled coach can use NLP to align the client's perceptions with reality so that any action plan is much more effective in achieving the results that the client seeks.
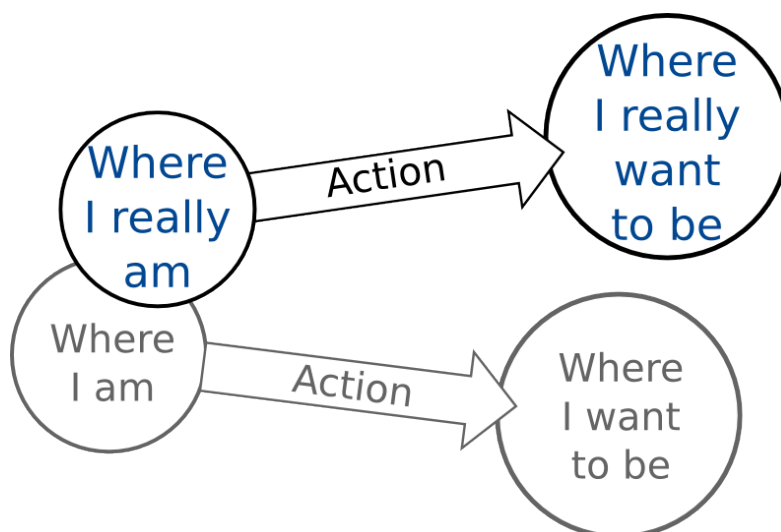
The organisation or individual client is responsible for wanting and choosing the outcome, for making the change, and for taking a view on the value of the intervention. The coach and mentor agent is responsible for facilitating the change; for identifying the steps and putting forward their recommendations.

The client has to take responsibility for implementing those recommendations, otherwise they do not take ownership of the outcome.

How directive or non-directive that facilitation is depends on the context and the individuals involved. In my experience, change is most likely to 'stick' where the individuals concerned have worked out the answers for themselves. However they often need a few missing pieces, ideas or parts of a strategy to make the change work effectively.

I differentiate between coaching, where the focus is more on a single outcome such as increasing sales revenues or customer service scores, and mentoring where there are complex and often competing outcomes such as managing stakeholders' expectations or personal career aspirations.

In his book 'The Element', Sir Ken Robinson suggests that mentors have four key roles. They recognise our talents, they encourage us, they facilitate us and they stretch us.

In my experience the coaching that has the greatest value to an organisation is directed at their high performers and key influencers, and that with the continual 'delayering' of middle management, the coaches, mentors and change agents become an important 'knowledge store' within the organisation.

Coaches are often engaged to support 'high potential' managers who have been identified as having the raw skills and talent to become the leaders of the business in the future. Succession planning and talent management programs help groups of high potential managers to build their support networks and develop the skills, relationships and experience to shape the business and ensure its continuing success.

It is also important to allow the organisation to evolve; to ensure that tomorrow's leaders do not perpetuate today's cultural issues.

Why will coaching become more important?

As organisations become more complex, traditional management hierarchies disappear and the drive for performance accelerates. 'Top down' structures are being replaced with matrix management systems. People move around the organisation more often and there is a greater focus on exploiting tacit knowledge over establishing systems and processes. Relationships rather than roles drive the business and the speed of decision making has increased dramatically thanks to new communication technologies.

Amongst all of this, many people no longer enjoy a consistent management relationship and must look elsewhere for their personal and professional development.

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A coach can support targeted changes in the business such as increasing sales performance or managing change whereas a mentor can be a longer term guide. Both supplement the traditional management structure, enabling a more flexible, more adaptable and more successful business.

In working with hundreds of clients and colleagues in dozens of companies, I have found that people who succeed in the corporate environment …

1. Develop a good relationship with and add value to their managers and manager's peers

2. Develop a good relationship with and add value to their key stakeholders

3. Develop career options and revenue streams that are separate to and non-competitive with their current employer

4. Improve performance in their current role

You may be surprised by point 3, yet when you think about it you may recognise this in yourself or some of your colleagues. What many people do is to 'hedge their bets'. They have one foot in each camp, saying they are committed to their manager yet reading job adverts at lunchtime and accepting calls from recruiters. They dream about what they want to do and resent their manager or employer for not letting them do it.

People who develop non-competitive outside interests are often more fully committed to the success of their current organisation.

When they are at work, they are at work, and will be until they either go home for the day or they resign. The people who hedge their bets are present in body but not in spirit, and this is obvious in their performance. The people who commit to those different ventures are open about it.

Coaching and mentoring can be extremely valuable to the individual and organisation in getting people to commit themselves to the pursuit of their goals.

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What is NLP?

NLP is the exploration of how we think, communicate and change - so that we can model, replicate and improve performance. NLP's core competencies are about …

1. Attitudes that produce results

2. Modelling (An important NLP approach discussed on page 43)

3. Techniques, so we can transfer the results of the above

It's not NLP that's important it's what we do with it.

NLP is different from other personal development approaches in that …

1. It is modelled from individuals who were experts at helping others change

2. It takes into account how we connect to the world through our sensory experience and how we store and change that experience through using our minds and bodies

3. It is highly effective at connecting conscious and unconscious resources, leading to individuals connecting to their 'untapped potential.' NLP combines logical, sensory, emotional and intuitive thinking to enable you and your clients to reach their goals more easily.

4. NLP is as much about 'unlearning' and 'letting go' of what we've previously learned that is now getting in our way, as having to learn a lot of new material. Most NLP is 'natural and 'obvious'. Unfortunately we often have to experience the results ourselves before we realise it

It's worth remembering that while NLP can and does produce immediate 'magical' results, both personally and for business (just look at some of Derren Brown and Paul McKenna's material), many of the best Practitioners have spent many years quietly practising and refining their craft.

You could therefore treat this Useful Guide as the start rather than the whole of your adventure.

What does NLP add to coaching and change?

NLP provides a set of simple and practical tools that will support a coaching relationship. By using NLP's tools to explore your goals, establish plans of action and make necessary changes in your approach, you will have more skills as a coach, greater flexibility and thereby be more effective.

NLP's approach supports the latest research which suggests that there are at least three distinct thinking systems in human beings; the "reptilian (stem) brain", the "mammalian (limbic) brain" and the "human (neocortex) brain." It is

the effective awareness and use of all these thinking systems together that lead to mastery as a coach – and success in almost all areas of life.

NLP addresses the underlying processes for change rather than the superficial symptoms, and it is based on modelling best practice, judged by the achievement of desired results within their own context as opposed to a generalised view of success or high performance.

NLP helps you, your clients and your organisation to adapt more easily and perform more effectively as a balanced system.

What makes a good NLP coach?

The very best coaching depends on the strength of the relationship between the client and the coach, and therefore depends on the specific context. We have found the following list to be a useful guide as to what makes a good coach …

- A curiosity about helping people solve their own problems

- Control of their own goals, not simply serving their clients

- Life experience

- Business experience

- An ability to 'shut up' and give the client room to think

- An ability to suspend ego, albeit temporarily

- Developed their own models from other coaches, mentors and clients

- Formal accreditation

- Practice, practice, practice

- Feedback, feedback, feedback

- Feedback against results, rather than what people say at the time

Good training and coaching enables you to significantly 'build on' and 'amplify' what you're already good at and therefore form an important part in becoming a good coach.

Are there ethical considerations in using NLP?

The more we practice NLP skills the more able we are to influence people. This gives us a responsibility to use our skills to lead both ourselves and those that we interact with in a useful direction, and to be aware of the impact we may have.

The definition of what is a useful direction is of course a very personal decision, and it's worth investing our time in advance to ensure we are congruent with the stance we take.

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It is also worth remembering that we've all learnt at some level to be aware when someone is trying to manipulate us in a way that isn't aligned with our beliefs and values. Normally we resist it strongly.

Anyone who uses these skills in way that isn't ethical is likely to get the full force of that resistance. Conversely, if we use these skills to help people achieve what's important to them we are likely to get their genuine thanks.

Some of the skills in this Useful Guide are simple yet very powerful. Use them wisely!

How do I best use this Useful Guide?

Reading alone is unlikely to help you become a really good mentor, coach or NLP Practitioner, however what a good book can do for you is act as a map and guide that will you on your journey and give you pointers that will significantly speed up your development.

While there are many ways you can use this Useful Guide, the people who get the most value out it are likely to skim through it, do one or two of the suggested exercises, and then work through the same exercises with a colleague and review the results you both get. They're likely to find one or two 'coaching' and 'mentoring' role models and work through the modelling approaches with them, then start the Useful Guide again and read it from cover to cover.

You can download the exercises in MS Word format here.

The other approach is to use some of the coaching questions in the Useful Guide to develop your own 'coaching question set' for either your clients or yourself.

Please be aware that while the Useful Guide asks these questions as questions for the coach to ask his or her client, they can be just as relevant to the coach.

It is the experiential understanding you develop from working through this Useful Guide and exercises that will make the difference.

In this Useful Guide, I will share with you a framework for coaching with NLP which you can use as a guide for further reading or as an approach to coaching in itself.

Within the framework there are a number of elements which cover some of the most important principles and techniques that you would learn during NLP Practitioner training.

By combining the structured framework with the flexibility of the elements, you can learn to coach in a far more effective and rewarding way.

NLP has its own vocabulary which will be explained as it arises. In addition the reference section leads to a complete glossary of NLP terms (page 53).

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A NLP framework for coaching and mentoring

A framework is a guide, enabling you to put your full attention on your client. It serves to remind you where to go next and helps you to keep control of the coaching session and relationship. Improving your ability in just one of these areas can make a significant difference to your impact as a coach or mentor, whilst developing in more areas will have a cumulative effect.

Beginning Frame

The beginning frame is the establishment of the rules for the coaching session, expectations of the coach and client, boundaries and anything which the coach and client may define as an over-arching aspect of the relationship.

State

Ensuring your state is appropriate for coaching will make a huge difference to the goals you set and achieve and the personal resources that you can call upon.

Outcome

Outcomes motivate you to move in a particular direction rather than being a specific end result as in SMART objectives.

Rapport

Rapport is a state of honest, open communication between two or more people and is very important in establishing the client's situation and way forward.

Current Strategy

By accurately understanding how you are currently moving in relation to your goals, you can make any changes necessary to move further, faster.

Technique or Task

What will take you from where you are now to where you want to get to? The coach will have a number of tools and suggested tasks for helping a client fill in any internal and external resources required to achieve his or her outcome.

Future Pace

A future pace is an imagination exercise that develops a detailed connection between the coaching session and action in the real world. It is one of the key determining factors in achieving results.

End Frame

The end frame closes what was started in the beginning frame; it also allows the coach to reinforce the positive elements of the session and the coach and client

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to step back from the session and manage the longer term coaching relationship.

NLP elements for use in the framework

The following NLP elements can fit anywhere in the framework to support you. Elements are key aspects that can be focused on during the coaching process.

Values

A value is a label for what is important to you at a core level. These may be very different to corporate values which can tend to be rather generalised.

Value Rules

Value rules define how your needs are met in the outside world and how you know whether your values are being achieved or not.

Beliefs

A belief is an underlying assumption about the world which either helps or hinders you in achieving some outcome.

Senses and submodalities

All of our knowledge and experiences are acquired and organised through our senses. Understanding how we structure those experiences is key for change. In NLP our senses are sight, hearing, feeling, taste and smell. Submodalities are identifiable qualities of these senses – such as light and dark for sight.

Hypnotic Language

You can unlock creativity and gently influence with the use of language borrowed from the world of hypnotherapy. Hypnotic language enables the coach and client together to create the foundation for personal change and development.

Time

NLP can assist in image-making exercises that help to look at events and experiences from different points in time and perspectives, which is very valuable in planning for the future.

Stories

Stories have a unique structure which conveys complex information very effectively through simulating cause and effect within a given context.

Profiles

In NLP, 'Meta Programs' are used as a way of predicting a person's general preferences for relationships to people and events and can be used to increase rapport, influence and persuade.

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Modelling

The heart of NLP is modelling; the process of systematically coding and transferring knowledge from one person to another; emulating characteristics that successful people have shown in order to get results in defined areas; combining both logical and intuitive approaches.

The framework in more detail

In this section, you will find a more detailed description of each element in the framework together examples of how to use it and example coaching questions which you can explore as you read through the Useful Guide.

The depth of exploring the question is as important as the question itself, and the questions are often more powerful than they may first appear.

You can also use the questions as a guide for a coaching session.

Each step in the framework also contains web links to exercises on our website for you to work through in more detail.

Beginning Frame

The beginning frame incorporates rules for the coaching session, expectations of the coach and client, boundaries and anything which the coach and client may define as an over-arching aspect of the relationship. It establishes the focus of the session. By addressing and aligning the unspoken assumptions between coach and client you can then both work more closely towards achieving a shared set of outcomes.

Some questions that a good coach would insist that the client thinks about may include ...

- **What do I want from this coaching process?**
- **What do I believe that a coach can do for me?**
- **How we can get the very best result for both of us from this coaching session?**
- **Do I trust the person I'm working with?**
- **Am I prepared to be open and honest enough during the interaction to get full value from it?**

The presenter's opening statement, as well as the assumptions of the client creates a frame of reference. Beyond that, two presentations could be identical in content, yet the audience would interpret them differently. E.g. focusing on different pieces information, drawing different conclusions and, most importantly, taking different courses of action.

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The beginning frame also links the individual coaching sessions into a longer journey and ensures that issues are not necessarily neatly 'wrapped up' just to bring the session to a close.

If we cannot agree an acceptable frame with our client at the beginning of the coaching intervention, we may well refuse to continue with the session.

Exercise 1. You can download the exercises in MS Word format here.

State

Ensuring that your state as a coach and the state of your client is appropriate for coaching will make a huge difference to the goals you both set and achieve and the personal resources that you can both call upon. Some questions that it is worth exploring with a client, or as a coach may include …

- **How do I really feel, right now?**
- **Is how I feel appropriate for setting important goals?**
- **How do I feel when I achieve my best?**
- **What are the most useful states for this session and to achieve our goals?**
- **Would a touch of toughness, playfulness and tenderness be useful during the session?**

State is much more than your mood; not only it is part of the set of filters through which you experience the world; it also enables you to access different personal resources deep within you.

The key NLP enablers to change our state are …

1. Using senses and memories to bring back a past state
2. Changing our body posture and breathing
3. Asking questions which lead to useful states
4. Changing our 'belief' or 'meaning' about a situation
5. Learning to 'let go' – helped by many meditation practices

Anyone can experience an infinite variety of states which we generalise into moods or attitudes. Your state is a vital consideration in the success of the coaching relationship.

Imagine how you perform in a situation where you feel tense and nervous compared with a situation where you feel relaxed and confident. In fact, outward behaviour and performance may be very similar, but attention and reflection on how well you performed can be very different.

During coaching, issues may arise which are uncomfortable, contentious and which the client would rather avoid, however the coach understands that it is

avoiding the problem that allows it to persist. It is easy for the client to react to the discomfort and lose sight of the value of the process, and as the coach you have to be in control of your own state.

A person's manager or partner may have a vested interest in a particular solution to a problem, but as their coach you must be neutral. Objectivity and a focus on the process are possibly your greatest assets as a coach and are vital in helping you to stay focused on your client's issue.

This objectivity also means that, as the coach, you can respect the client whilst still maintaining a balanced view of your client's behaviour.

While it's important to monitor both your own and your client's state throughout the coaching intervention, your state at the beginning of the intervention is absolutely key to helping your client set a truly motivating outcome.

It is also very important that you do not think of states as being good or bad. They may support or hinder a particular outcome in a particular context but that is a matter of efficiency not right or wrong. Strong states such as anger and fear are very strong motivators – There is a time and a place for such states, but to have them at inappropriate times is may be counterproductive. Therefore, if you were to choose a state for the rest of the day, choose it based on what is useful to you and those around you.

It's worth remembering that there are very few issues that cannot be helped by an appropriate touch of the states 'playfulness', 'toughness' or 'tenderness'.

Exercise 2. You can download the exercises in MS Word format [here](#).

Outcomes

Outcomes motivate you to move in a particular direction rather than having a specific end result as in SMART objectives. Questions it might be worth asking a client to consider might include …

- **What do I really want?**
- **What would I want if I knew there were no limits or expectations?**
- **Is it big and exciting enough to motivate me?**
- **Is it phrased in a positive way? (Not what I want to avoid or stop)**
- **Can I see, hear, feel what it will be like when I've achieved what I want?**
- **Is it under my control? If not totally, what parts or first steps are under my control?**
- **Would getting it be wholly good for me and those closest to me?**
- **What is the smallest next step I will take to achieve my outcome?**

The description of outcomes in NLP have been refined over the last ten or so years. An outcome is an exploration and clarification of your vision or chosen direction. The purpose of an outcome is that it's big and bold enough to motivate you. If it isn't, then it's not an outcome.

It is important that you help your clients set empowering outcomes without any judgement as to whether they are possible – and to do so independently of where they are now. These are both important steps, but tend to use different mental resources to explore – and are best considered separately, as they are likely to cloud setting strong outcomes.

Many clients have issues because they …

1. Do not set bold enough outcomes

2. Are not prepared to change their outcomes, vision or direction as events change

A key role of a coach and mentor is to encourage, tease and chide their clients to set bold outcomes, and change them to equally bold alternative outcomes when necessary.

In NLP a direction or outcome conforms to 5 simple criteria and this is known as a 'Well Formed Outcome'.

Those 5 criteria are …

1. Stated positively as something you do want

2. Under your control

3. Represented through your senses as something you can see, hear, feel, taste and smell

4. Valuable for you as a whole rather than being a partial or temporary 'fix'

5. You know the smallest first step or action that will move you in the direction you want to go and can imagine doing it easily.

We attach all of our senses to every memory or experience, even if they are not often a conscious part of how we remember something. Even seemingly abstract memories can be accessed and reinforced by recalling certain sensations that may not be immediately obvious – Often the recollection of one sense can work like a trigger in bringing back memories of the other senses to form a fuller representation of an experiencing in time. Likewise, a future goal can be strengthened through the association of a taste or smell as well as an image, sound and feeling.

This does not mean that an outcome must conform to these criteria; it simply allows you to understand the consequences and therefore the importance of

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them. In the following table, you will see a comparison of what happens if your outcome meets the 'Well Formed Outcome' criteria or not.

		Meets criteria	Does not meet criteria
Positive	Control	You focus on what you want and head directly towards it	You focus on what you don't want which draws your attention to not getting what you do want.
		You gain maximum effect for the energy you put into achieving your goal	Some of your effort is wasted on people or events that you cannot control
Senses		You know precisely when you have achieved your goal	You end up with something, but it's not quite 'what you had in mind'
Valuable		You achieve a long lasting result which has other positive benefits for you which you may not have anticipated at first	You achieve a temporary result and can quickly fall back into the same cycle of unhelpful behaviour
Action		The first or next smallest step builds momentum	Some people sabotage themselves by setting first steps that are too big and never making progress

SMART objectives work well to set goals and milestones after an overall outcome and direction is set. As a coach, you could set long term outcomes with your clients and then apply the SMART criteria to individual short term steps.

The SMART acronym stands for ...

- **S**pecific (what exactly will happen)
- **M**easurable (how achievement is defined)
- **A**chievable (you can take responsibility for achieving the goal)
- **R**elevant (the goal is appropriate in a broader context and with available resources)
- **T**ime bound (a deadline is agreed upon)

Exercise 3. You can download the exercises in MS Word format here.

Rapport

Rapport is a state of honest, open communication between two or more people and is very important in establishing the client's situation and way forward.

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Within the coach-client relationship it is important for both parties to consider the following questions …

- **Are we being genuinely open and honest with each other?**
- **What do we have in common?**
- **Do we share similar views about the coaching process?**
- **What can we do to make sure we are at the same starting point?**
- **What do we need to do to move forward together?**
- **What signs of rapport are already present between us?**
- **Are there similarities in our posture and body language?**

Before questioning your client about their current situation it is important to establish a relationship of openness and honesty. If you and the client are in rapport, the communication between you can take place on a deeper level of understanding where you are not judging the client from a distance but joining them in their reality and their experiences both consciously and unconsciously. This does not mean that you agree with them, simply that you can join them in their reality for the purpose of developing open communication.

Here are some very practical guidelines to rapport in social and business situations. Whilst they do not apply in all cases, they hold true on most occasions …

1. We like people who are like us, so if you want to increase rapport, focus on what you have in common. If you want to break it, focus on how you differ

2. Strong rapport leads to very powerful two way communication

3. When in strong rapport, we do actually 'become like' the people we are in rapport with. There is truth in the saying we become like our friends and colleagues, or that you become like each other

4. Learning to break rapport is an important skill. There are some situations and some times when we simply do not want good two way communication – for example when somebody wants to influence us to do something that is not in our best interests

5. Also be aware that when you've achieved rapport and break it, many people will then 'follow' you because they want to get back in rapport

6. Curiously, in 'leadership,' 'power' and 'seduction' situations, the guidelines change in that those who demonstrate these qualities tend to expect others to get into rapport with them. For particularly influential people, getting into rapport with others too easily, might be considered a sign of weakness.

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You may have read about 'body language' and learned about 'mirroring' on other training courses. Rapport can be helped by ensuring some similarity between your body posture and voice tone and that of the person you're talking to.

If you sit in a café or bar and watch two people in rapport, you will see them sharing movements, gestures, language patterns, physical and emotional responses, breathing patterns and many other aspects of their behaviour. It is unnatural to forcefully emulate these characteristics and doing so would seem strange and actually break rapport – Ideally you relax into the process of building rapport and allow it to happen. In groups, you will see rapport flowing around its members, and just as with individuals it is a natural process which you can encourage.

As coaches, we need to be on the client's side, not judging them from our own position as this will break rapport.

Equally important, then, is the ability and awareness to control the degree of rapport which you are prepared to enter into, not just to think of rapport as something which is universally 'good'. Certainly, rapport may feel more comfortable, but it may not always be in your or the client's interests.

Rapport is a two way relationship, and sometimes you will need to ensure that the client is not unduly influencing you and drawing you into their 'undesired' situation. You must, therefore, have a strong grounding and be in a constructive state. Leaving a negative state behind causes a certain amount of resistance. Clients will often look for others to join them in their world as opposed to being helped.

When you are in rapport with someone, communication is taking place on both conscious and unconscious levels, and you will find yourself becoming aware of information which you do not fully understand, or you may not be certain as to why you feel a particular way. When the client is close to an area where he or she feels uncomfortable, that discomfort is often communicated to the coach who also backs off, perhaps not fully understanding why. Therefore, a good coach will be aware of how much they are being influenced by the client so that they can give the client the impetus they need to push through that discomfort instead of avoiding it.

When you are able to maintain rapport with the client and yet still have control over your own state, you are making additional resources available to the client to help them to solve their own issues.

At this point in the coaching framework you should confirm that you have a genuine rapport with your client before exploring the next step - their current strategy

Exercise 4. You can download all the exercises in MS Word format here.

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Current strategy

By accurately understanding how you are currently moving in relation to your goals you can make any changes necessary to move further, faster. Questions that you may consider asking your client to think on …

- **What am I currently doing in my life and work?**
- **Where do I spend my time now?**
- **What am I currently doing to achieve the results I now achieve?**
- **What am I currently doing that hinders my progress?**
- **What am I doing in pursuit of my goals?**
- **When I take action on achieving a goal, where do I start?**
- **What do I do next?**
- **How do I know when to finish?**
- **Is my behaviour helping me achieve my outcomes in the most effective, efficient and fun way?**

Asking direct and simple questions about our own behaviour can be a very powerful way of finding out how we produce the results we do, whether or not they are the results we want.

In NLP we are cautious about using 'Why' questions. The answer to a 'Why' tends to lead to an opinion or a belief whereas we're looking for specific fact or sensory experience. As a general rule 'Why' questions become personal and can result in people becoming defensive, where as 'How' questions remain pragmatic and methodological. We will however use 'Why' questions when we're exploring beliefs.

Helping a client to explore what they are actually doing now in relation to a particular goal can be an emotional experience and require a certain amount of courage on the part of the client. However, often several answers will immediately become apparent to them, and they will have found powerful ways to overcome any restrictions that were previously holding them back.

There are many reasons why a client's current strategy may be ineffective. They may be basing their actions on out of date information such as past successes or failures. Equally, they may be avoiding their stated outcomes and they may be unconsciously, yet intentionally, sabotaging their own efforts. They may also be using approaches that work very well in a different situation, but are inappropriate in their current context.

For example, if a client is putting off a particular task, they may be worried about past failure or some imagined undesirable outcome. On the other hand, they may have no intention of completing the task, and so their 'efforts' are designed to give the appearance of work without actually affecting the outcome.

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In NLP, a 'strategy' is the basic building block of any complex behaviour. A typical strategy could be a method for remembering how to spell a particular word, for getting into the right frame of mind for something or for making a decision. Equally, a strategy can produce undesirable effects such as a negative reaction to a colleague's voice or an embarrassing situation.

A series of strategies connect together to underpin our ongoing behaviour.

Once the strategy is triggered, it runs until either it completes or the person can consciously intervene. In between the strategies are decision points where a person can choose a course of action rather than reacting automatically to external events.

If you have found yourself reacting automatically to something and promising yourself not to react next time, or if you have caught yourself saying something that your parents would have said, you have been aware of this automated 'strategy'.

Strategies are vital for our survival because they enable repetitive tasks to be carried out unconsciously, leaving our conscious attention free for information gathering and decision making.

You could think of the mechanism in terms of your computer. When you click the 'print' icon, a whole series of events takes place to carry out your instruction, none of which you need to know about unless something is not working and you need to intervene, such as the printer needing more paper.

In NLP's behavioural model, our complete experience of life is represented in our senses because that is the means by which we acquired that experience. Every fact, feeling and memory exists as a unique combination of sights, sounds, touches, tastes and smells. When a coach needs to 'decode' a particular behaviour or decision, he or she can break it down into its sensory steps, test it and change it so that the client can achieve a desired result more easily.

It is also important to look at larger patterns of behaviour and to offer the client honest and direct feedback on their behaviour in relation to their goals.

Exercise 5. You can download all the exercises in MS Word format here.

Technique or task

The coach will have a number of tools and suggested tasks for helping a client fill in any internal and external resources required to achieve his or her outcome. Some question that a coach should pose to a client may include ...

- **What will take you from where you are now to where you want to get to?**
- **What else do you need to work on?**

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- **What new skills do you need?**
- **What new experiences would help you achieve your goals?**
- **What is stopping you from achieving your goals easily?**
- **What barriers have you put in your own way?**
- **How can you remove them?**

NLP is based on modelling what successful people do and has an almost unlimited number of ways of achieving a result. In the resource section of this Useful Guide we have a number of recommended books that explore a large number of NLP strategies.

NLP contains a wide range of techniques for change which can be applied in coaching and which you can learn about in NLP Practitioner training. NLP techniques are very practical and sometimes counter intuitive, so reading about them in a book can make them easy to discount until you get the opportunity to experience them for yourself.

The right technique depends on the situation or context, so we are outlining a technique that has many applications purely as one example.

'Anchoring' is where the coach makes it easy for the client to access a particularly resourceful state, quickly. All NLP techniques work better when used quickly, and this takes some practice as the timing for anchoring is important.

Anchoring is simply NLP's term for the natural learning process whereby we attach sensory inputs or triggers to emotional or behavioural responses. For example, when you hear a certain tone of voice and react in a consistent way and your reaction happens before you're even aware of it.

We can use this natural process to deliberately attach new triggers or anchors to desirable states which will support the achievement of outcomes. For example, let's say that your client is going to approach a senior executive and discuss their ideas for a new business plan. They have put off asking for a meeting because they are nervous, and so the thought of talking to the executive is itself an anchor for a nervous state, which is hindering their achievement of the goal.

The first, most obvious and most overlooked step for a coach is to check that the goal or task is 'congruent'. For example, at some level, the person may know that their business plan is nonsense and so they are saving themselves the embarrassment of presenting it to the executive, or perhaps they are avoiding the risk of increased exposure of their ideas to their internal 'competitors'.

Let's assume that this is not the case, and the origin of the nervous response is a general lack of confidence in relation to authority figures.

The coach would have the client recall a specific time when they felt relaxed and in control, even in a situation where there were many variables. Once the client

has found a specific instance of this, the coach will guide the client through a process of recalling the memory while simultaneously creating a potential trigger or anchor. Some people use a touch anchor such as a squeeze of the hand, and many people find an internally generated anchor such as a colour or word more effective and unique.

After practising this a few times, the coach then asks the client to test the anchor and they can then build the intensity of the response.

The client now has a very simple way of accessing that relaxed, confident state when approaching the senior executive.

The technique, in short, looks like this …

1. Identify the state to be anchored e.g. 'motivated'

2. Identify the anchor/trigger to be used e.g. the phrase 'let's go!'

3. Recall a specific time when you felt 'motivated'

4. Remember that time in as much detail as possible

5. Make the images bigger and brighter, sounds louder, feelings stronger

6. Break the state by distracting the client e.g. with something in the room

7. Recall the 'motivated' state again and say the anchor phrase at the same time

8. Break the state again

9. Keep repeating the recall and break cycle as the state intensifies

10. Break the state and distract the client completely

11. Test the anchor by saying the phrase and noticing the response

12. If necessary, continue the anchoring cycle to intensify further

Although NLP contains many techniques, the preceding elements of the framework are designed so that the 'right' technique or task tends to emerge naturally and intuitively. It is often counterproductive to consciously choose which technique to use at the start of the process unless it is your intention to specifically practice the use of the techniques.

A coach will also set the client tasks, where the completion of the task overtly or covertly leads the client through a particular experience which is valuable for them in relation to their desired outcome.

For example, the coach may give the client a task to find out about a certain project. In doing so, the client has to talk to a number of people around the business and ask questions. This gets the client to connect more with their colleagues and get to know them.

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Therefore, as a coach, you can think firstly about the experience that will be valuable to the client and secondly about a task within which to embed that experience.

Exercise 6. You can download all the exercises in MS Word format here.

Future Pace

A future pace is an important aspect of goal planning, developing a detailed connection between the current situation, the future outcome and the actions that link the two together. Ideally the exercise is completed when the clients can imagine the first step towards their outcome with a sense of excitement and enjoyment.

Some questions that a coach must insist the client address as part of the exercise …

- **What do I see and hear when I take the next smallest step to achieve my goals?**
- **How can I imagine myself taking this step honestly and enthusiastically?**
- **How do I feel having taken this next step?**

Mentally rehearsing with your client so that they can comfortably imagine themselves carrying out a small action or series of actions that will lead them towards their outcome is a key step in the process to both test the effectiveness of what they have done so far, and to help them to achieve their outcome.

Future pacing involves working through in some detail the immediate steps that the client will take in pursuit of their outcome, and within the exercise, the client can explore many possibilities and alternatives.

It is important to remember that future pacing is not primarily a technique for planning; it is designed to build an experience of success. How do you feel about something that you have never done before versus something that you have done and learned from? The future pace is an opportunity to set the scene for achieving your outcomes.

Of course, it is highly unlikely that the future will be exactly how the client imagined it, especially where other people are involved. Therefore, you need to make sure that the future pace focuses on what is under the client's control.

Exercise 7. You can download all the exercises in MS Word format here.

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End Frame

The end frame allows the coach to reinforce the positive elements of the session and for both coach and client to step back from the session and manage the longer term coaching relationship.

A coach is advised to consider following questions and to pose them openly to their clients in establishing an End Frame to the session …

- **What can we do to support and encourage all the useful learning of the session?**
- **How can I pre-empt any issues that may get in the way of the client's progress?**
- **What did I achieve in this coaching session?**
- **If it was less than what I intended, why was that?**
- **If it was more than I imagined, how can I build on that?**
- **What did I learn from that coaching session?**

End frames can be very different depending on the client, the context, the nature of the coaching relationship and the stage that the client is at in relation to their goals or issues.

Your client is likely to remember what you say at the beginning and end of the session. It is therefore important that what you say at the end of the session totally supports your client's outcomes and connects to a greater journey of self development.

The coach and client can step back from the coaching session itself and reflect on what has been achieved overall, taking time to ensure that the coaching relationship is moving in the expected direction and giving both the coach and client what they want from it.

The end frame also needs to connect to the beginning frame of the next session, bridging the gap between coaching sessions.

Exercise 8. You can download all the exercises in MS Word format here.

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The Elements in more detail

Value and Value rules

A value is a label for what is important to you at a core level. This may be very different to corporate values which can tend to be rather imposed and impersonal.

Value rules are the criteria that have to be met for a particular value to be satisfied in the outside world. Questions a person is advised to ask themselves in order to learn of their own value rules include …

- **What's really important to me?**
- **As I look around my life, what have I prioritised?**
- **Where do I spend most of my time and energy?**
- **What does this tell me about my true values?**
- **Do I focus my time and energy where I would like to?**
- **If not, what do I want to change, and why?**

A values elicitation is particularly useful if the client has been unable to articulate what they want to achieve. Connecting them to what's genuinely important to them makes it much easier for them to articulate what they really want.

When eliciting a set of values it often better to not have any 'understanding' of what the client's words might mean to them as their own words will have a personal bearing that can't necessarily be communicated in a useful way. However when the coach explores the client's 'value rules' they can uncover what has to happen in a real life situation for those values to be met or not met.

Values are what are important to someone in a particular context and often throughout our lives.

We're looking for simple, one word answers that the client understands and which we make no attempt to understand or judge the meaning of.

You can elicit these words asking a client to choose a context such as work, family, relationship, hobbies, etc. and then remember a specific time when they were genuinely at their best in that context. The following questions elicit values …

- What was important about that?
- What did you get from that?
- And what else was important about that?

The questions build on each other and are then asked again to the answers the client gives in order to get deeper into the client's values. A particular question

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we definitely don't ask is 'Why?' because 'Why?' leads back to specific reasons or causes and beliefs rather than down to underlying values.

The test as to whether or not we have elicited a value is that when we repeat the value back to our client and ask 'Is this important to you?' we get a strong, positive, genuine, non-verbal response.

Here is an example of a values elicitation process …

Coach:	Client:
What is important to you in your work?	*To feel like I am being recognised for what I bring to the role*
And what is important to you about being recognised?	*A feeling that I make a difference*
And what does making a difference get you?	*Knowing that my contribution counts*
And what does it mean to you when your contribution counts?	*It means that I am valued by the company*
And what does being valued by someone in the company do for you?	*It makes me feel that what I'm doing is worthwhile*
And what does feeling worthwhile do for you?	*I feel important*
And what do you get from feeling important	*Hmmm… feeling valued, I guess*

You may notice in this example that in two questions, the coach pulls the client's abstract, generalised statements back to personal specifics to keep the process on track and the client's focus on themselves.

The questioning ends when the client reaches a 'dead end' or loops back on themselves, letting the coach know that they have reached the end of that particular line of questioning. The coach may then pursue another value, perhaps in the same context because it is more than likely that the client will have multiple values in the same context. A need for recognition, self worth and importance is not the only driver in the context of work.

Values are important in rapport and motivation. If someone's values are not being met in a job they are unlikely to be satisfied, to work to their potential or stay in the same situation for the longer term.

This gives us another method of discovering values, because often a person is more aware of their values when they are not being met than when they are, because in a 'normal' situation, their values can be taken for granted.

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Values cannot be "imposed" on people but they can be encouraged. If senior managers in an organisation live by a series of values they create an atmosphere in which such values are communicated and spread to others. Creating a set of corporate values and distributing them via posters and memos will generally not impact on behaviour, and when organisations want to instil values, what they are generally trying to achieve is changes in behaviour.

The Logical Levels framework, outlined on page 45, is a very useful tool to help you translate more abstract concepts such as values into tangible behaviour and measurable results.

By far the most effective way for senior managers to instil values is to live and breathe those values themselves and to be highly visible as congruent role models – and in the same way it is important for a coach to understand his or her own values as they inevitably leak into their sessions.

Once we have discovered a person's set of values, we can establish the conditions that are required for those values to be met. For example, we can ask, for value 'x' …

- What has to happen for you to feel 'x'?
- Can you think of a time when you felt 'x'?
- Can you think of a time when you did not feel 'x'?
- What is the worst situation you could be in and still feel 'x'?
- What is the first sign that you are not achieving 'x'?

By probing for situations where the person felt and did not feel a certain value was met, we can work out its boundaries and rules – and in comparing the two situations the client may become aware of the differences that separate them. This then gives us a set of conditions that the client can actively seek out and establish in order to ensure their career meets not only their long term aspirations but also their ongoing emotional needs.

Beliefs

Beliefs are assumptions we make about the world normally related to cause, effect and meaning. While beliefs can be 'true' or 'false,' they can also 'empowering' or 'disempowering' in that what you believe about a situation can help or hinder your progress towards achieving your goals. Questions that can help us to establish our own beliefs include …

- **What do I believe about the current situation?**
- **How can I verify my beliefs?**

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- **How much of what I 'know' is assumption?**
- **Are my assumptions useful?**
- **What do I believe about myself or the person I'm working with?**
- **Is that belief empowering or disempowering?"**

Beliefs can change when we receive and evaluate new information, yet even the word 'evaluate' seems to imply that we compare new information to a set of underlying values and from that determine our beliefs.

For example, I believe that it will rain later, and I believe that the sky is blue. Neither of these statements is 'true', they are simply indications of my expectations about the future. I am not saying how much later, or where it will rain, or that the sky isn't blue, it just looks that way.

As a summary of a current situation or future expectation, a belief can support or hinder a client's progress in pursuit of a goal. Since people often confuse what they 'believe' with what they 'know' and what is 'true', a client's success can be determined almost exclusively by their beliefs. Certainly, the objective reality of a situation is rarely the way that the people involved see it.

For example, there are opportunities everywhere and you have to be in the right place at the right time. Both are true, depending on how you view the opportunities that come your way. If you focus on the opportunities that go to someone else, it seems that you're always missing out. If you focus on the opportunities that come your way, it seems that there are plenty. Of course, you can also focus on what you do to create your own opportunities, and you can perhaps admit to yourself that when you miss out, it's because you turned away more opportunities than you might care to admit.

Any of these possibilities are 'true' in that they can explain a set of temporary perceptions and in doing so form the basis of our decisions and actions.

In short, our beliefs aren't true in themselves; we make them true.

Asking a client to explore their empowering and limiting beliefs about an outcome can greatly increase their chances of achieving their outcome with more fun and less effort.

The coach will therefore explore a client's beliefs about a situation or outcome, not as being 'true' or 'false' but merely in terms of their usefulness. If a belief is not useful in achieving an outcome, the coach can explore how the client can reshape that belief to more effectively support their aims.

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Senses and submodalities

NLP's model of how we interact with the world and other people is underpinned by the idea that all of our experience is represented in our primary senses as images, sounds, feelings, tastes and smells. As all of our knowledge and experience is acquired and organised through our senses, understanding how we structure those experiences is vital for understanding and mastering the process of change. A coach needs to open up their sensory experience in watching and listening to a client – an awareness of how the client uses and reacts to different senses and sub modalities is an important part in the coaching process.

A coach would ask the client to think on questions like …

- **Am I watching what's useful to watch, and listening to what's useful to listen to?**
- **Am I aware of the difference between what's happening in my head and what's happening in the world outside?**
- **Am I aware of how I distort my memories and future plans?**
- **How I could choose to change those memories and plans?**

While traditionally we might think of the '5' senses, there are many more in terms of the way our nervous systems relay environmental information to our brains. Furthermore, many of our experiences are combinations of sensory inputs. Many studies have shown these links, for example between sight and sound or sight and touch, where we need to both see a person's lips moving as well as hearing their voice, or to both see and feel a object in order to interpret its location correctly.

Within each separate sensory system are an infinite variety of qualities that for a sensory experience – These are known as Sub modalities. For example, as well as remembering a recent business meeting I can also recall general visual qualities such as whether the room was bright or dark, and whether there was a lot of movement or not.

On top of this, not only do the original experiences contain those finer distinctions, our memory of them is distorted. Much of our language contains overt use of sensory information and submodalities to explain or exaggerate a experience …

It all gets on top of me	She belittles me
I feel brighter today	I feel distant from the decision
He blew it out of all proportion	We need to take a step back
I couldn't hear myself think	It all seems like a blur
You look rattled	He's bitter about the result

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Normally, we hear phrases like this as metaphors but in fact they are usually very literal. When someone says that they shrink in response to criticism that is their literal internal sensory experience. They may see or feel themselves smaller in relation to the person delivering the criticism. In sport, people who expect to lose often imagine their opponents as being physically bigger than them, even if they are not. People with phobias usually imagine something like a spider as being much bigger than it is in reality.

The content of the image is not important in NLP; what is important is the way in which the person distorts it and has an emotional and behavioural response to that distortion. If we can modify that process of distortion, we have the key to modifying the person's perceptions and their subsequent actions.

By mapping out the submodalities of a memory, it is possible to change the meaning of the event, the emotional response to it and the person's behaviour in similar future events.

Here are some examples of submodalities. If you want to map these out for yourself, simply choose two specific memories of very different states such as pride and disappointment and compare the submodalities of the two. Remember that you are comparing the qualities of the overall memory, not any specific items within it. For Read Out Loud Readers: The following table has 3 columns and 7 rows.

Visual (Sight)	Auditory (Sound)	Kinaesthetic (Touch)
Bright or dark	Loud or quiet	Location
Moving or still	Near or far	Temperature
Clear or fuzzy	Location	Changes
Near or far	High or low	Rising or falling
Big or small	Clear or muffled	Moving quickly or slowly
Colourful or dull	Single or multiple sounds	Turning right or left

For Read Out Loud Readers: The table has finished.

Many people will recall 'positive' memories as being bright, colourful and big with clear sounds and warm, rising feelings and 'negative' memories as being dim, dull and small with cool, falling feelings. This is a very broad generalisation though, and you may find it interesting to compare a number of experiences and notice the differences in how you have distorted them.

This is extremely important during the coaching process that we establish the senses and sub modalities of a client's outcomes and current strategy.

Hypnotic Language

You can unlock creativity and gently influence with the use of language borrowed from the world of hypnotherapy. Hypnotic language enables the coach and client

together to create the foundation for transformational change and development. You can communicate clearly so your audience knows exactly what to do now, or you can plant small seeds that will grow and become strong and powerful over time.

Hypnotic language also has the same structure used by poets, advertisers and great orators.

In general, NLP Practitioners do not employ the stereotypical trance but instead use hypnotic language to communicate with a client's conscious and unconscious abilities at the same time, increasing the effectiveness of their work.

Hypnotic language is about influencing people. At a basic level it can help us present better, at an intermediate level it can help us lead, sell and coach better, and at a more advanced level it can help us and others connect to some of our unconscious abilities.

The most important part in the way we speak to influence is often our rate of speech, tonality, breathing and the way we use our own state and physiology to lead our audience. This is why hypnotic language works much better when spoken than when written.

In addition to the way we speak there are five key components of hypnotic language that are important. These are …

1. Getting attention
2. Yes sets
3. Unlocking creativity with vague language
4. Embedded commands
5. Linking ideas with other ideas and/or states

These approaches work well if you already have built rapport and credibility with your audience's attention and at some level they already respect you.

Getting attention

There are two main ways of getting attention quickly, by 'shock, surprise and confusion' or by 'pacing current experience'

With 'shock, surprise and confusion' you simply say something outrageous, pause, and when you have their active attention, continue……

With 'pacing current experience' you say something that is true in the listener's current experience. If someone genuinely is in deep thought, and you say "You're deep in thought", they are likely to acknowledge you and start to listen to you, because what you're saying corresponds to what is going on in their experience, or in their 'map of the world'.

If you're speaking to an audience and they are genuinely concerned about something, and you say "I understand that many of you may be deeply concerned" they are likely to start paying attention.

So once you have their attention you have the potential to lead them somewhere else – onto other ideas or topics that you want them to actively consider. You could then say "I'm hoping by the end of the presentation, when I've explained our approach, that I will have answered your concerns and that at least some of you will begin to have a touch of excitement about what we're planning to achieve."

You have acknowledged where they are now, and started gently to lead them somewhere more useful.

Yes sets

"Yes sets" is based on the idea that if you say four absolutely true things your client is likely to believe the fifth provided it's reasonably plausible.

Anyone who has explored hypnotic phenomena will have realised that this works at a subconscious and deep level. It's as though the 'conscious mind' gets lazy checking the detail and begins to accept what is said. Perhaps as a child you knew when your parents were in an 'agreeable' frame of mind, or you know how to time a request to your manager.

Here is an example ...

- You are reading these words
- You are breathing
- You can hear the sounds around you
- You can notice what you are touching
- You can understand how 'yes sets' work

Unlocking Creativity

To help someone access their creative abilities we use sentences and phrases which give people a process, but very little detail. In order to make sense of what we've said they 'fill in' the missing detail. This often happens at an unconscious level, in the same way that we fill in missing information in optical illusions.

Because the listener has filled in the details from their own experience, the overall meaning has a uniquely personal quality.

You're basically seeding their imagination with a few words and letting their creativity fill in the gaps.

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One way of thinking about this is by listening to the scripted speeches of politicians. You may think that the purpose of such language is to influence you, yet on the other hand, when you consider how broad the audience is for any political communication, it is useful that they are able to communicate subjective content to as wide an audience as they can.

You may have heard politicians say things like …

- "The economic climate is very different than it was even a year ago"

- "We have all had to make changes in our standard of living"

- "We know that the next five years will bring a new set of challenges"

- "As the world changes, we all have to work together to ensure our safety"

Some people complain that such phrases are empty, others realise that into each statement you can put your own personal fears and aspirations in order to make sense of what the politician is aiming to communicate.

Embedded commands

When we want someone to do something it's normally best to give them a direct instruction or command, such as, "read this report". In most cultures, commands end with a lower tone of voice at the end of the command whereas questions have a rising tone.

However there are times when a simple command doesn't work, for various reasons. You can embed the command as part of a larger sentence, for example "read this report by the time the team meeting starts", which gives the listener a larger context or justification for the instruction.

Alternatively, if you say, "When are you going to *read this report*?" you have essentially embedded the command inside a question, because in order to consider the question, the listener has to focus on the idea of reading the report. To embed the 'command' further, you might say, "I don't know when you're going to *read this report*, I only know how important it is for our team meeting" or even, "I asked John to *read this report* today, he thinks it's really important. When are you going to *read this report*? Before the team meeting or today?"

Once you have planted the suggestion, you can encourage it to grow……

Linking ideas to other ideas and states

As humans we like to link things together. We do it naturally. And when we use the word 'and' we're linguistically linking ideas and concepts together even though there may be no real relation between them. We can link things that happen at the same time, and we can link events by cause and effect.

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If I say "you're reading this" and "you're learning at a deeper level" or "As you're reading this" "it will connect in some way with your previous learning's" I'm connecting ideas. I can also link ideas and emotional states.

The gentlest linkage is 'and', a stronger linkage is when we say "if X then Y" or "as A is happening so will B", and a stronger linkage still is "Because you have done A, B will happen next"

Advertising is basically about linking or anchoring strong, positive states or emotions to a product. The advertisers aim to create a strong emotional response and then show a picture and play a sound relating to the product. Think about how many products have their own sound, like the old radio 'jingle'. When you hear a certain chime or sequence of notes, you can think of anything from mobile phones to computers, petrol, chocolate, cinema advertising, film studios and personal music players.

In business, it is usually better to ensure that your communication is direct and clear rather than trying to complicate things with the use of hypnotic language. You may have read websites promising instant influence or magnetic charisma, using phrases such as, "You can imagine yourself, easily now, finding new and resourceful ways to achieve your most compelling desires as you move confidently into a bright and exciting future, can't you?"

You will probably make your own mind up about the true effectiveness of language like this.

Presentations are an area where hypnotic language does have an important place in business, because if we listen to great speakers, we can hear patterns in their language which are exactly the same as those occurring naturally for gifted therapists and coaches.

A good coach will have an understanding of hypnotic language in order to create strong emotional responses in their clients through the techniques that we have established. Hypnotic language can act as an amplifier to make you as a coach more effective in almost all situations.

Time

By looking at events and experiences from different points in time you can gain multiple points of view which will enable different choices and paths to become apparent. Some questions which a coach may use to encourage their client to explore issues of time may include ...

- **When do you want to achieve your goals?**
- **By when do you want to have achieved you goals?**
- **When you have achieved your goals, what are important steps can you look back on?**

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- **By the time you have achieved your goals, what will you have learned?**
- **A year after you have achieved your current goal, what will you be working on?**
- **As you look back over the past year, what obstacles have you already overcome?**
- **How much time do you spend looking backwards at what you've done wrong as opposed to looking forward to what you could do right?**

Think about a difficult work task or deadline that takes place sometime in the next few weeks. How do you feel about it?

Now think about a difficult task or deadline that took place sometime in the last few months. How do you feel about it?

We think about the future very differently than we do the past. The past is certain and ordered, whereas the future is uncertain and chaotic. No matter how detailed our plans, someone or something often steps in when we least expect it.

When you think forward to your future goals, that uncertainty is an inherent part of the planning process and if you imagine that achieving the goal will be difficult, it probably will be.

A coach using NLP can apply these same set of principles which are based on the way in which we structure and organise a perception of time.

When people think about problems in the future, they often anticipate difficulty and thereby create a set of beliefs which hinder their progress. Conversely, when they look back on even the most difficult past problems, they know that they were able to find a way round.
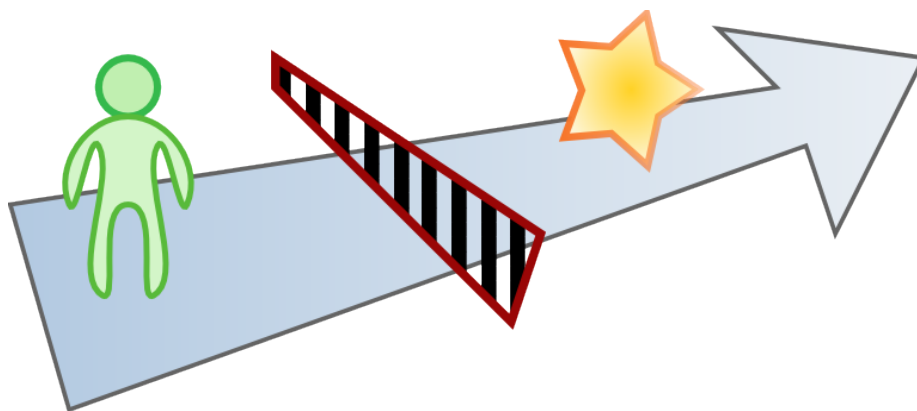
A client may plan an outcome but anticipate barriers in the way of achieving that. For example, the client may want to complete a professional qualification

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but imagines that finding the time for study would be a problem. Without time to study, achieving the qualification becomes impossible. People can rarely imagine how they will find time when they are already busy, yet they also overlook how much time they lose. They need to make time rather than trying to find it.

When the coach asks the client to imagine themselves, having achieved the qualification, looking back to the present, the client will often see very different possibilities because the client's perception of 'reality' is no longer bounded by the problem.
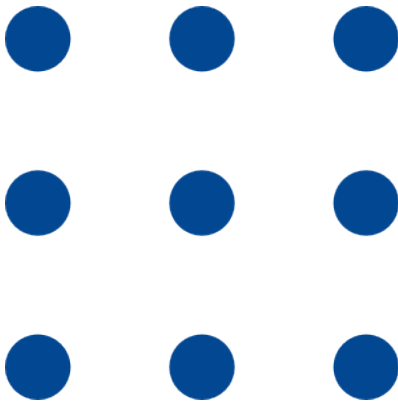
No doubt you have seen this clichéd exercise in 'out of the box' thinking, where you must join all nine dots without taking your pen from the paper and using only four line segments.

The solution only becomes possible when you let go of the illusion of a boundary.
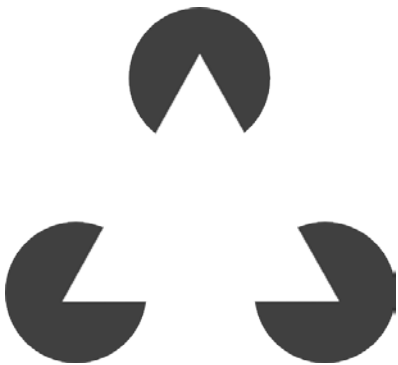
Our visual perception groups objects and creates imaginary boundaries in order to 'make sense' of the outside world.

In the exercise above, your visual perception creates an imaginary boundary around the dots, turning nine unconnected dots into the edges of a box. The box creates a boundary which constrains your thinking and makes drawing a single connecting line impossible.

When the client says that they don't have time to study, what they are in fact saying is that they don't have any free time now. Just take a moment to think about what you did yesterday. Consider every minute from the time you got up to the time you went to bed. Was there a single minute when you were doing literally nothing, just waiting for something to happen? Even if you spent some time daydreaming, you were doing something. You didn't have a moment to spare, let alone find two hours to devote to something else.

The client is considering what is 'true' now, not what can become true in order to support their outcome. The coach can change this perception very easily in a number of ways so that the client's focus shifts from why they can't find the time to how they might find the time.

Time does not exist as a thing in itself but is the way in which we express our concept of change in the world. Therefore, our experience of time underpins our approach to change in ourselves and is one of a skilled coach's most valuable tools.

When planning goals, starting in the present and working forwards can lead to incremental change whereas starting in an imaginary future and working backwards to the present can lead to transformational change. Companies often use this latter approach when planning long term strategy. Instead of asking "Where do we want to be in 5 years time?" they imagine themselves in the future and ask, "What did we do over the past 5 years to achieve our strategy"

Both approaches are important to connect future goals with present action. In NLP, there are a number of techniques known collectively as 'timeline' techniques which give the coach a number of ways to engage the client's natural forward planning and problem solving skills.

Timeline techniques can be physical, using a physical movement to relate to movement through time, or they can be visualisation techniques, or they can be simple questions.

When the client says, "I can't imagine finding the time", there are a number of questions that the coach can ask in return, which will get different responses from the client. It is very important to remember that those different responses arise from completely different perceptions, beliefs and frames of reference which in turn reflect a completely different reality. When the client's responses change it is because their underlying 'reality' has changed which means that their range of available behaviours has changed and they will then take action in pursuit of the outcome.

Here are some of the questions that a good coach would ask, compared with the question which most people would ask in this situation: "Why not?"

Coach	Client
	"I can't imagine finding the time"
Why not?	⟹ Because I'm too busy
What stops you?	⟹ The project I'm working on
What would happen if you did?	⟹ I'd start work an hour earlier and study at lunch time!

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You can see from this that each question focuses the client's attention on a different aspect of the outcome.

If you haven't seen the solution to the 'box' problem before, here it is.

As you can see, to solve the problem you have to let go of the illusion.

Timeline techniques help the client to let go of the illusion of reality and create a new reality around the resources needed to achieve their outcome.
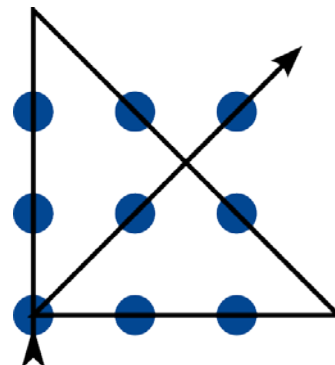
Stories

Stories have a unique structure which conveys complex information very effectively. A good coach, or indeed good leader, would be fully capable of telling stories to communicate important pieces of information to a client – and has most likely asked themselves these questions in order to fully understand the important aspects of a storytelling and the processes of becoming successful in something …

- **What happened the last time I achieved something important?**
- **What stories come to mind when I think about my current objectives?**
- **What recent events have helped my progress towards my goals?**
- **What happened to someone who achieved results beyond their expectations?**

Recently, a client asked "What is the best way to plan my working day so that I am as productive as possible?" Fortunately, the coach was not ready to give easy answers and instead asked the client to think of a particularly productive day. The client thought carefully for a moment and then realised, "Ah! I have to focus on the things that I want to get done, not on being busy". The coach smiled and made a mental note to try this tip out for himself. "If I focus on being busy, I just run round in circles. If I focus on what I want to get done, at first it feels like I'm not doing enough because my task list is so short, but actually when I look back at the end of the day, I realise how much more I have achieved. And I feel like I have more energy at the end of the day too!"

It doesn't matter whether stories are not true or false providing they simply convey a richness and depth of meaning which enables the coach to communicate many different messages very easily. Stories can be used as a means to achieving any of the steps of the framework and can give the client a

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welcome break from what could otherwise seem like relentless questioning. Stories do not require agreement or disagreement, as long as they maintain rapport.

In addition, stories can significantly unlock a client's motivation and creativity by leading them to their own insights and realisations.

The word 'story' often reminds people of childhood stories and they then miss the significant benefits of stories in the business environment.

A story does not have to begin with "Once upon a time…" as it is simply an account of events which follows a sequence of time and meets any of the following criteria …

- The events are not happening to you

- The events are not happening here

- The events are not happening now

In business, you might be more familiar with these examples of the story …

- Case study
- Account review
- Report
- Business case
- Project plan

Just take a moment to look on your company's website and notice how many stories you can find and how they affect you as you read them.

A coach trained in NLP can use stories to communicate a wide range of messages with a client.

Profiles (Metaprograms)

In NLP, 'Meta Programs' are used to understand and profile a person's general preferences for relationships to people and events. They can be explored with question such as …

- **Am I motivated by achieving goals or avoiding problems?**

- **Do I prefer keeping to a plan or coming up with new ideas?**

- **Do I intuitively know what's right or do I need others' views?**

Earlier, we covered NLP's concept of sensory information as the basis for our experience of 'reality'. When we organise those sensory perceptions in predictable ways, the result is a predictable pattern of behaviour. For example, some people will tend to look to their own experience when making decisions whereas others will tend to look to external facts. They weigh up the factors in

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their decisions differently and the result is that any one person's behaviour can be fairly predictable in certain circumstances.

You will find different views on the subject of Metaprograms within the NLP community. Metaprograms are not inherent in the structure of our minds or bodies; they are an abstract concept created by NLP trainers. What is important is how a coach can use the concept to better understand a client's choices and behaviour and help them to achieve their outcomes more easily.

To give you an idea of how Metaprograms work, we will explore three that are probably most valuable in coaching – Motivation Direction, Reference Source and Motivational Choice. It is definitely not useful to label a person as a Metaprogram; they simply describe ways in which you can think and react but do not identify your entire personality.

Metaprograms are tendencies, not absolute rules, and they will be different in different contexts. A good coach will use their knowledge of Metaprograms to identify with and understand the client in real time, not to label the client.

Motivation Direction

Some people tend to focus their attention on moving towards goals and results whereas others focus on moving away from obstacles or problems. Neither is good or bad, positive or negative and both are equally rewarding and important. By understanding where someone's natural focus is, a coach can help them to structure their outcomes in a way which is most motivating for them.

Towards language: have, get, outcome, achieve, result, goal, to.

Away from language: avoid, eliminate, save, prevent, lose, solve, fix.

Question: "Why do you want to reorganise the department?"

Towards: "To get more work done"

Away from: "To save time and effort"

You can use language that appeals both to 'towards' and 'away from':

"When we started this project we wanted to avoid the mistakes of previous projects so we could get the results more efficiently."

Reference Source

Some people tend to value their own internal feelings over external data. Others value external data and feedback. You could think of this as being the location of the trigger to take action; inside the person or outside. Someone with a tendency to rely on an internal reference would get on with a job by themselves but perhaps not check in with colleagues, whereas someone who relies on external references tends to check more often to make sure they are on track.

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Question: How do you know you're good at your job?

Internal: Blank stare, followed by "I just know" (The question doesn't make sense to an internal reference)

External: "I get good feedback" or "I see lots of ticks in boxes"

You can use language that appeals both to internal and external references:

"While you'll make your own mind up we've had great feedback"

Motivation Choice

Some people will tend to base decisions on what they know works from their past experience. Others will tend to explore new options or seek different ways of achieving goals.

Procedures language: The right way, tried and tested, first, second, third, next, before, after. When asked 'Why?' a procedures answer would sound like a story because the person interprets 'Why?' as 'how?'

Options language: Sometimes, opportunities, variety, break the rules, new, change, if, because.

Question: Why did you choose your current job?

Procedures: "Well, I wasn't really looking, and I had a call from my manager who asked me if I'd be interested in a new project, and I thought to myself….."

Options: "Because I wanted more responsibility"

You can use language that appeals both to options and procedures:

"We started with a blank sheet of paper, new ideas and followed a totally proven and reliable methodology to implement the project."

Understanding a persons metaprograms will help the coach to understand a person's motivation and the language that helps motivate them.

Modelling

The origin of NLP is modelling; the process of understanding and replicating intuitive talents. The creators of NLP, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, developed the NLP modelling process in order to distil the talents of exceptional therapists into a set of tools that would be easy to learn and apply.

The original modelling process involves intuitively copying the role model's behaviour as nothing can be ruled out as insignificant until all possibilities have been tested and nothing is overlooked which could make a difference.

The process is very similar to the approach that we could observe in children and the approach that you may have been able to adopt when learning a sport, a dance or martial arts move and there was just too much to think about.

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There are a number of simplified approaches to modelling which may be more acceptable to beginners in the everyday business environment because they are based on rational questioning instead of unconscious emulation. Whilst these approaches may miss some of the depth of the original NLP process, they make up for this in their ease of use in a wide range of situations.

A good coach will always look for good models in the context in which they operate. If they operate in the business world they will seek out influential and successful business leaders, coaches, salespeople, consultants. If they operate in sports, they will find inspiring and successful sportspeople.

And a good coach, as part of a coaching session, will always model parts of their client's behaviour to understand and improve their processes. Taking high performers through the modelling process will often get them to understand their own performance and strategies better and they will intuitively find their own ways to improve them.

Questions

If you look back to the 'Current strategy' step of the framework, you will see the concept of a 'strategy' as a consistent behavioural 'program' which can be refined and transferred. In the coaching framework, we use the concept of strategy elicitation to understand a client's behaviour in relation to an outcome. It is also important for the coach to continue developing their skills and learning new ways of thinking and responding which are more effective. Whilst the client may present an issue that they are struggling with, in doing so they often reveal a number of other important skills and experiences which are extremely valuable for the client.

For example, a client may wish to work on a time management problem, and in exploring the current strategy the coach can discover that the client's time management strategy is effective up to a certain workload. Beyond that, the strategy is literally overloaded and ceases to be effective. As the coach helps the client to modify their prioritisation strategy to be more effective, the coach is at the same time learning a very valuable skill which they can use for themselves.

When you first identify a role model for a particular skill, remember that they may not share your perception of them. Someone who you think is a good leader or negotiator may have the view that they just do what comes naturally and they don't think about what they do. This is one of the hallmarks of a role model, because what you are aiming to model is a natural, intuitive skill which the person cannot easily explain.

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Logical levels

Identity
Beliefs
Capability
Behaviour
Environment

The Logical Levels model (properly known as Neurological Levels) is not strictly part of NLP as it was originally created, however the model is a very valuable addition to NLP's body of knowledge. You can use Logical Levels to think through situations and goals more systematically and create solutions which are more effective because they are fully connected through all levels of your thinking and behaviour.

As a modelling framework, you can use the logical levels hierarchy as a guide for asking questions. This approach works well for skills that are very broad such as 'leadership' or 'conflict resolution' as you can start at a very abstract level and gradually work down until you get to the specific strategies that drive the ability.

Identity

- Do you have a mission or vision when you're doing this?
- What are you trying to achieve when you do this?
- Who are you when you do this?

Beliefs

- What do you believe about yourself when you do this?
- How do you know that you're good at this?
- What do you believe about the other people that you're doing this with?

Capabilities

- What skills do you have that enable you to do this?
- How did you learn how to do this?

Behaviours

- What specifically do you do?
- How could you teach me to do this?
- Do you set any specific outcomes when you do this?
- How do you know when you've achieved them?

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Environment

- Where and when do you do this?

- Who else do you do this with?

- Do you need anything in order to be able to do this?

- What state are you in when you do this?

Putting it together

The following is a checklist of questions throughout the framework that can be used as a reference list during a coaching session – They may be useful as a starter, but ideally, and with practice a good coach will understand that core principles behind them and ask them intuitively.

When starting out it's useful to practice, practice and practice each 'element' separately to develop a high level of competence in it, however when working with clients the focus needs to switch to the client rather than the 'technique'. There is a wise saying; "Let your technique fail but your client succeed."

The following questions taken from the coaching framework give you a starting point for a coaching process which you can add to and explore from. They are designed for you to ask of someone who you want to coach, and remember that each question gives you a point to explore from, so do spend time exploring each question rather than treating the session as an interview. Finally, the questions do serve as a guide to keep on track, so make sure you don't wander too far away from the framework and that you allow enough time to explore the client's issues and goals properly.

Beginning Frame

- What do we want from this coaching process?

- What do you believe that a coach can do for you?

- How we can get the very best result for both of us from this coaching session?

- Do we trust each other?

- Are we prepared to be open and honest during the interaction?

State

- How do you really feel, right now?

- Is how you feel appropriate for setting important goals?

- How do you feel when you achieve your best?

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- What are the most useful states for this session and to achieve our goals?

- Would a touch of toughness, playfulness and tenderness be useful?

Outcome

- What do you really want?

- What would you want if you knew there were no limits or expectations?

- Is it big and exciting enough to motivate you?

- Is it something you actually want? (not what you want to avoid or stop)

- Can you see, hear, feel what it will be like when you've achieved what you want?

- Is it under your control?

- If not totally, what parts or first step are under your control?

- Would getting it be wholly good for you and those closest to you?

- What is the smallest next step you will take to achieve your outcome?

Rapport

- Are we being genuinely open and honest with each other?

- Do we share similar views about the coaching process?

- What can we do to make sure we are at the same starting point?

- What do we need to do to move forward together?

- What signs of rapport are already present between us?

Current Strategy

- What are you currently doing in your life and work?

- Where do you spend your time now?

- What are you currently doing to achieve the results you now achieve?

- What are you currently doing that hinders your progress?

- What are you doing in pursuit of your goals?

- When you take action on achieving a goal, where do you start?

- What do you do next?

- How do you know when to finish?

- Is your behaviour helping you achieve your outcomes in the most effective, efficient and fun way?

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Technique or Task

- What will take you from where you are now to where you want to get to?

- What else do you need to work on?

- What new skills do you need?

- What new experiences would help you achieve your goals?

- What is stopping you achieving your goals easily?

- What barriers have you put in your own way?

- How can we remove them?

Elements

Whilst the elements of the NLP coaching framework can be applied at any point, they are grouped here within 'technique or task' as that is the point at which you will be focusing more on the process of change itself and where the majority of NLP techniques will be used.

Value and Value rules

- What is really important to you?

- As you look around your life, what have you prioritised?

- Where do you spend most of your time and energy?

- What does this tell you about your true values?

- Do you focus your time and energy where you would like to?

- If not, what do you want to change, and why?

Beliefs

- What do you believe about the current situation?

- How can you verify your beliefs?

- How much of what you 'know' is assumption?

- Are your assumptions useful?

- What do you believe about myself or the person you're working with?

- Is that belief empowering or disempowering?"

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Senses and submodalities

- Are you watching what's useful to watch, and listening to what's useful to listen to?

- Are you aware of the difference between what's happening in my head and what's happening in the world outside?

- Are you aware of how I distort my memories and future plans?

- How could you choose to change those memories and plans?

Time

- When do you want to achieve your goals?

- By when do you want to have achieved your goals?

- When you have achieved your goals, what are important steps can you look back on?

- By the time you have achieved your goals, what will you have learned?

- A year after you have achieved your current goal, what will you be working on?

- As you look back over the past year, what obstacles have you already overcome?

Stories

- Stories have a unique structure which conveys complex information very effectively.

- What happened the last time you achieved something important?

- What stories come to mind when you think about your current objectives?

- What recent events have helped your progress towards your goals?

- What happened to someone who achieved results beyond their expectations?

Profiles (Metaprograms)

- Are you motivated by achieving goals or avoiding problems?

- Do you prefer a keeping to a plan or coming up with new ideas?

- Do you automatically know what's right or do you need others' views?

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Future Pace

- What do you see and hear when you take the next step to achieve your goals?

- How can you imagine yourself taking this step honestly and enthusiastically?

- How do you feel having taken this next step?

End Frame

- What can we do to support and encourage all the useful learnings of the session?

- How can we pre-empt any issues that may get in the way of progress?

- What did we achieve in that coaching session?

- If it was less than what we intended, why was that?

- If it was more than we imagined, how can we build on that?

- What did we learn from that coaching session?

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Taking it further

Choosing a trainer

If you want to pursue NLP training then it is important to understand that no two Practitioner courses are the same. The lengths, content and approach vary greatly around the core NLP Practitioner syllabus. The style of the trainer and their target market denotes the audience that they will attract and you can choose to train with people who you see as like minded or people who you feel will have very different experiences to your own.

Always attend a trainers' taster sessions or practice group to make sure you are comfortable with your decision first. You may choose a trainer who you feel has personally learned some of the lessons that you are seeking rather than someone who portrays themselves as a 'guru', and above all else choose a trainer who you can in some way relate to and learn from.

We do recommend that you choose an NLP trainer accredited by one or both the NLP Co-creators Richard Bandler and John Grinder. They created NLP and have continually developed it over the past 35 years. If you're going to develop your NLP skills you owe it to yourself to train with those that have chosen to train with the best themselves.

Choosing a coach

Clients need to understand how to choose a coach, basing their decision on criteria which partly relate to the coach and partly to the client.

It is often important to give clients what they need versus what they want, which may ultimately be challenging and uncomfortable if that is in the clients' best interests. Above all else, remember that the coach doesn't give you the answers – you have to find them.

Choosing a mentor or an expert to model

Mentors and role models can be people with skills or experience that you feel would be a valuable addition to your own. It is important to look not only at your perception of that person but to use their relationships and results as a guide too. Judge the person's effectiveness by their influence on the real world around them rather than on the impression that they themselves create.

Learning from Clients

The coach can potentially learn more from the client than anyone else. The client gives real feedback via the results they achieve and the coach and client experience the whole journey together.

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A coach would generally not ask a client for feedback about their coaching performance because of the inherent bias, however the coach can assess their effectiveness through a number of means such as comparing the client's progress to their own assessment of where the client would be without the support of a coach.

A good coach will continually model from clients which strategies work in what context, to build his or her library of tools and new ideas. When Bandler and Grinder first began the research that became NLP, they looked not for people who had a particular problem but for people who had recovered from it or made some transformational change in their lives.

As a coach, you will meet and work with many people who have overcome significant obstacles in their lives in order to achieve their dreams. By seeking to understand specifically how this process has taken place, you learn more skills in a wider variety of situations to support the clients you work with in the future.

Every success you have as a coach gives you a new experience to build into your coaching work. Similarly, every experience that you may think of as a failure informs your future work. In NLP's view of the world, there is no failure, only feedback, because thinking in terms of failure and success reveal that you are pre-judging what will happen for a client. Ultimately, the end result is not under your control.

What is under your control is to be open and honest, to give the client what they need instead of what they want, to trust them to embrace the change and growth that is available to them and finally to keep learning from every new experience that you have.

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Resources

We hope that this Useful Guide has given you some ideas as to what NLP can offer – The way to continue developing as an NLP coach is through reading, watching DVD's, listening to CD's and podcasts, taking part in forum debates, accredited NLP training and being coached as well as coaching your clients..

Here are some resources that we recommend:

Recommended NLP Books

We particularly recommend Richard Bandler's 'Get the Life you Want' and TRANCE-formation, and Joseph O'Connor's NLP Workbook.

Recommended Hypnosis Books

NLP Glossary of terms

NLP CD, DVD, and downloads

NLP Forum

NLP Training

NLP Training Dates

And for professional Executive Coaching Services

Executive and Business Coaching Network (EBCN)

The full hyperlink for the exercises in MS Word format is …

www.pansophix.com/resources/a-useful-guide-to-nlp-for-coaches-exercises.doc

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Acknowledgements

While this guide is a reflection of what has worked well for me in over ten years of NLP training and business coaching there are a number of people whose contribution I particularly recognise:

Richard Bandler and John Grinder for co-creating the field of NLP (Neuro-linguistic Programming) and specifically Richard Bandler for the major part of my NLP training and for creating some of the exercises outlined in the links from this Useful Guide.

Robert Dilts for developing the 'Logical Levels' approach to individual and organisational change.

Garner Thomson for his work for the Society of Medical NLP, and his contribution to our appendix of NLP terms.

And a huge thanks to all the participants on PPI Business NLP's Practitioner, Master Practitioner and Business Practitioner courses who have shared and developed their views of communication and change best practice enabling me to test and develop the concepts outlined in this Useful Guide.

About the author

Michael Beale is one of the UK's foremost NLP practitioners and trainers. He has over 20 years of business experience, working with companies like BT, 3M and B&Q. For the past 10 years, he has specialised in helping individuals, businesses and organisations to grow and develop through the application of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP).

Michael is a 'First Institute' SNLP-licensed NLP expert, receiving his training directly from Bandler and Grinder. Michael does not see himself as a trainer as such, but rather a facilitator and coach, assisting others to get results for themselves, proving the value of their training by the success they achieve.

Michael is the founder of PPI Business NLP, a company dedicated to unlocking people's potential. The goal of PPI Business NLP is to serve as a pragmatic NLP resource for achieving business excellence. For Michael, NLP has two core applications - as a personal development tool and as a modelling tool, helping businesses to replicate excellence.

Michael Beale's philosophy is simple - if we can develop an empowering view of where we want to go and if we can fully understand and appreciate where we are now, the steps from one to the other are likely to be successful and highly enjoyable. An honest appraisal of our current situation allows us to generate a powerful point of departure and propel us towards our goals.

Michael offers Open and In-House NLP and Business Courses and training, and Individual and Business Coaching delivered face to face or by telephone and even Skype.

He has worked with many high profile clients including: Abbey, ACCA, Accenture, Argos, Astra Zeneca, Bank of Scotland, Barclays, BAe, British Sugar, BP, BT, Burlington, Centrica, HBOS, Oracle, Zurich Insurance, the PM's strategy unit, the managements of local Government, Central Government, Health, Police and The Ambulance Service and leading consultancy and training companies across the UK and Europe.

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