

Communication Excellence



Using NLP to Supercharge Your Business Skills

Ian R. McLaren

“...a wealth of good ideas”

Judith E. Pearson PhD, Psychotherapist and Certified NLP Trainer/Practitioner

*Communication
Excellence*
*Using NLP To Supercharge
Your Business Skills*

Ian R. McLaren



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Introduction

How excellent is your communicating? Are you always understood fully at home, in the office, talking to a client? What have misunderstandings cost you? Have you lost affection, respect or a contract?

Let me tell you a story. A friend of mine, John, is happily married, with a management job in the City. Early last year, John had a bad day. It all started at breakfast time. Let's hear from his son, Sam.

"I tried to tell Daddy but he wouldn't listen. I had been picked to play for the football team for the first time on Saturday. It was important to me – I hoped he would come to watch. But every time I tried to tell him, he turned away and did something else. All he did was tell me to stop shouting. He doesn't love me any more."

John reached the office, and was discussing the day's appointments with his secretary, Mary. Suddenly, there was another row. This is what she said:

"I had warned John to keep the afternoon free, because his boss, Mr Harold, had scheduled an appraisal interview. It was the only time Mr Harold had free that week. That morning, John told me that he had arranged to visit an important client in Birmingham. I asked him why he hadn't asked if the afternoon was clear: he insisted that he had. He claimed I never kept him in touch. That's my job and I do it well, so I got annoyed. It's difficult to respect someone who acts like that."

Later in the morning, he had a meeting with another client, Henry Jones. They were supposed to agree the details of an important contract between their firms. But the deal wasn't done. Henry Jones put his side of the matter:

"I have dealt with John for some time, and it is always difficult to reach agreement with him. He knows that we need his services, and the contract is always fine in general terms. But there are always details that I need to get right,

and he will never listen. He always thinks that the specific issues can be dealt with later. This time they couldn't, and I told him so. He wouldn't take me seriously, so I refused to sign the contract."

Communicating with other people includes informing them, influencing them, selling to them, leading them and helping them. It also means hearing them, learning from them, loving and respecting them. How much more will you be able to achieve when you have found excellent ways of communicating?

We are all interested in communicating with other people – our family and friends, work colleagues, bosses and officials. We need to talk to them – in person or on the phone – write to them or address them in meetings.

As you read this book and carry out the exercises, you will find new ways to get through to other people, and consolidate your existing skills. We will consider both general principles and detailed techniques such as building rapport and changing beliefs.

Communication excellence is about connecting with other people, finding out their point of view, and convincing them to do something you want them to do. These activities we will call *matching*, *pacing* and *leading*. If you can set your outcomes, put yourself in the right state, believe in what you are doing and have the skills at your fingertips, you will improve your dealings with anyone you come across.

We will be looking at examples at home, at work and at leisure. You may want a clearer insight into your own actions, beliefs and values, or to know more about others. You may want to sell to others or buy from them, teach or understand, attract them or push them away.

We will be approaching new material in small chunks, as well as considering the wider applications. That means that you will be able to build up your understanding in steps that suit you. Don't forget that we all communicate when we are with anyone else, so we have all had years of practice. What this book does is to make you aware of what you are doing, and consider how you might do it more effectively.

Techniques of this type are often called manipulative, implying that they are unethical. Manipulation – teaching, selling or inspiring – is one purpose of communication. What you do with it must fit in with your own ethics and conscience – nothing in this book will encourage you to change them for the worse.

You will, no doubt, have some questions. Let's start with something fairly obvious. Why should you learn more about communicating? There is a common belief that we can always learn more about any subject. By learning more, we can do it better. And we can feel better about knowing more and using new skills. Just take a moment to consider those occasions in the past when you could have communicated better. You might have said something that upset your partner or a friend. Remember the times when you missed a sale or some other advantage by misunderstanding the other person. Think of times when you failed to get your point across clearly. Now look forward to being able to handle those situations with skill and enjoyment.

Let's go back and find out how John coped with the results of his bad day. The first thing he had to sort out was the contract with Henry Jones. John finally realised that when you are leading someone to do something that is important to you, like signing a valuable contract, you have to tell your client what he wants to hear. If it is important for that person, it must also be important for you. John didn't have to concede anything important from a financial or business standpoint. He did have to acknowledge that he was wrong and his client was right.

So how did he work to regain the respect of his secretary, Mary? What she wanted was to pass on the information that she had. John needed to pace her. Once they had calmed down, they quickly agreed a new system for keeping each other aware of important information, with written backup in case either of them should forget what they had been told. As John began to acknowledge Mary's skills, her respect for him was rebuilt.

John went to the football match on Saturday, but he was aware that his son wasn't happy. Sam kept saying that his father didn't love him because he wouldn't listen. John was confused. He thought that he was a good listener. He could keep up with all the family

Welcome back. Last time, we looked at some aspects of communication, and at structuring issues and outcomes. I hope you have learned some useful tips about good states for starting a conversation, and some new ways of perceiving others. In this section, we are going to learn some more useful techniques.

● *Communicating*

We are going to start by outlining the structure of communicating with another person. This has three stages: *Matching*, *Pacing* and *Leading*. Matching is getting in touch with the person you want to speak to and drawing some response from him or her. Pacing involves getting information from them to enable you to know what the person wants and values, and how he or she processes information. Leading is putting your message across in terms that the other person will understand, appreciate and value.

The remaining topics for today are about matching physiology and behaviour. How you look and sound to another person will influence how they respond to you. You will find that you can talk to someone who looks and sounds like you more easily than someone 'odd'. Physiology includes the way you are sitting or standing, your expression and breathing patterns. It also includes the tone of voice that you use. Behaviour includes unconscious movements and tics as well as things that you are aware of doing.

● *Rapport*

Rapport is the art of including other people. It is an attitude that includes being aware of them as individuals, listening to what they are saying and observing what they are doing. The most important thing is that you respond – in word and deed – appropriately. You will learn to interpret what people are saying in order to appreciate what it means to them, and phrase what you want to say in their terms. In this session, we are concentrating on the physiology and behaviour of rapport.

A quick way of gaining rapport is to feed back to the other person exactly what you see and hear from them. We will learn how powerful this is, and find out that matching physiology and behaviour is much more important than matching words.

● **Calibrating**

If we can copy someone else's physiology and behaviour, we can also get information from what we see and hear. Some signs are conventional – nodding in agreement, laughing at a joke and shouting in alarm. You will learn to interpret a wider range of signs, particularly about truth and lying, and be aware of their nuances.

On the topic of appearance, Paul has a point that arose out of the outcome-setting exercise last time. Can you tell us how you made your outcome well formed and what you achieved?

“Hi. I'm wearing all my flashiest brand names today. And that was what my outcome was about. Normally, I have to dress very conservatively for work – dark suit, white shirt, that sort of thing. I like smart clothes, but I'd got out of the habit of buying them. So I set myself an outcome of buying a set of clothes for this week's seminar, clothes that I'd feel great wearing, and you'd be able see how good I look. I set myself a budget that I could afford, and took three hours off to buy the clothes. Obviously I knew what to do and when, and the process went smoothly. From an ecology point of view, I knew that I would feel better and that other people would view me more positively: that checks out because I sat here last time and didn't speak, and today I'm the first contributor.”

That certainly sounds like an achievement. Those of you who have tried to achieve a well-formed outcome and not yet succeeded might like to choose a simple example like this to start with.

Communicating

Every conversation has three stages. First, you have to get in touch with the person that you want to talk to. This may be a technical process, such as telephoning them, or shouting to attract their attention. This hasn't really started the conversation, though. Unless the person is prepared to hear what you have to say, you are not communicating. You need to achieve *rapport*. Both of you have to agree to include the other. This stage in communicating is

called *matching*. As we shall find out over the next three sessions, you can achieve matching in terms of physiology and behaviour, thought and language, and feelings and values. Initially, though, physiological matching is the most powerful way of establishing rapport.

The next stage of communicating is *pacing*. This is the information-gathering stage. You find out how the other person behaves and reacts in various situations, how they use language, something about what they know and believe, and what they value. You also learn about the emotional content of the situation. We will cover these aspects of communication on days four, five and six.

The final stage of communicating is *leading*. This is where you put across what you want from the conversation. You may be trying to get the other person to do something, learn something, or value something. Your outcome might be to deepen a friendship, get a subordinate to carry out orders, influence your boss, teach a class or sell something. By putting your message in the terms that are most likely to be understood and appreciated – the ones that you have found by pacing – you stand the best chance of achieving your outcome. The last three days of the course are dedicated to leading.

Rapport

Today we are going to work on all aspects of getting in touch. This is the first requirement if we are going to communicate. If you want to be in a conversation, you need to listen to the other person, and know that he or she is listening to you. You need to develop what is known as *rapport*. It is part of a process of feeding back interest, or *matching*. If you are writing to someone, or speaking to a large group, you will have to motivate them. This will involve getting to know something about them so that you can feed it back to show you are interested in them. We will call this *pacing*. Only then can you add in your own information or try to get them to do something. This is the process of *leading*.

morning, and appreciated the colours of fields and the buildings as they flickered past the window. As I came out of the station, I tripped on a paving stone and banged my knee...”

Thank you, Ruth. Did you all notice that all the negative predicates were Kinaesthetic – late getting up, rush, tripped, banged my knee – and positive language was Visual – beautiful sunny morning, appreciated the colours? Nothing Auditory even though there was plenty of opportunity to mention what she had heard. So she has two lead systems, one for positive and one for negative experiences. You may find other people who have different preferred systems for business, family and social occasions. Always bear in mind that contexts are important for any kind of communication, and that you may need to use different kinds of language in different situations.

Some of you, I notice, find it easy to track conversations for verbal predicates. It may already have become an unconscious learning. With more practice, it certainly will. Just consider when it would be appropriate just to listen to someone speaking and pick out their predicates – it can be any sort of public speaker, whether live or on the radio or television. Practise listening for predicates – and listen for the content at the same time.

Exercise 3.3 Matching Verbal Predicates

Let's find out how much better we can communicate when we match the verbal predicates of the person we are speaking to. I think it's time to start using this in a business context. Please think of a real situation where you can give business advice, or where you want to make a sale, and write down a few notes on paper.

Get into pairs. One will be the Client, and one the Advisor (or salesperson). The Advisor should brief the Client about the role to be played – the type of business, the post they hold and the situation. Make sure that the Client has enough knowledge to be able to play the role, and that he or she would be interested in the advice or the product in that situation.

Then the Client should talk about the business situation for three minutes. The Advisor should note the verbal predicates on the worksheet, and work out the Client's *lead* and *least* favoured predicate systems in this situation. If you are not sure, ask the Client to go on for a little longer.

Next, the Advisor should give the advice, or try to make the sale. For the first three minutes, use verbal predicates that match the Client's *lead* system. Then for two minutes, use verbal predicates that match the Client's *least favoured* system. Observe what happens to the Client when you start using the new predicates. Finally, spend another two minutes using verbal predicates that match the Client's *lead* system. Notice what happens to the Client when you go back to the preferred words.

Discuss what it was like using, and listening to, predicates in the lead and least preferred systems. Then change over and repeat the exercise in the opposite roles. As the new Advisor, set the scene and brief your Client.

How much more convincing was it when the Advisor used your favourite predicates? Let's have some experiences. Yes, Apricot?

"I was working with Harry, and he was role-playing a Whizzitts customer. The idea was to persuade him to take out a three-year maintenance contract. I found that his most used system is Auditory and his least favoured system is Visual. The first time we did the auditory match, I used mainly his words back to him, which worked fine. When we switched to Visual predicates, he started to look perplexed and bored: so far so good. But when we switched back to Auditory, I used my own words, and I didn't really get much feeling of rapport or interest. When we reviewed the conversation, Harry said that he didn't use a whizzer, and he couldn't get much out of the role-play."

Well, obviously the subject will have had something to do with it. Your lead system is Digital, isn't it Apricot? And you least prefer Auditory? It could be that you didn't sound very convincing. If we are going to use others' preferred predicates, we are going to have

to practise making that sound natural, and have a good list of suitable words and phrases ready to drop into the conversation.

Can I suggest three ideas for homework? First, you could 'borrow' colleagues or friends and repeat the exercise a couple of times. Second, take the handout of verbal predicates, and add to it a list of words and phrases in each lead system, suitable for your business and leisure interests. Third, get your tape recorder and make four five-minute presentations, all on the same subject, one in each predicate system, using the words and phrases that you have just found. The more you practise, the quicker you will become unconsciously competent.

Clean Language

We have just found out that Harry has an Auditory lead system and that his least used predicates are Visual ones. You have found out how much easier it is to sell advice or a product to someone like Harry by using Auditory words rather than Visual ones. This is part of the process of matching.

Let's turn that round. Assume that you want to get some information from Harry, rather than sell him something. Perhaps you want him to describe a situation from memory. What do you ask him?

Remember that all communicating has to start from a base of matching. When we are trying to match someone, our aim is to avoid adding anything of our own. We are trying to get the other person's description of a scene. We want to hear it in their words, not in ours – we weren't there to witness it. There is a danger that our feelings about the situation will pollute the recall. We want to be as neutral as possible, and use *Clean Language*, as it is called.

We start by establishing rapport, using physiological matching, as we found out last week. Then, when we start to use language, one obvious matching technique is to use Harry's own words back to him. You might get the information you need spontaneously. Consider this conversation:

In this last session, we are going to find out more about leading *internal states* – values, feelings, emotions, ethics, morality, ideals and the spirit. Here's a summary of what we are going to cover:

- ***Leading Values***

If you can change what people value, you have a very powerful tool for *selling* to them. We have already seen that values tend to drive behaviours and beliefs.

- ***Training Moods***

If you can *pace* the elements of a person's feelings, the physiology and behaviours, the language and beliefs that go with them, then you can *train* them to be in the right mood to carry out a task.

- ***Providing Motives***

How often have you changed the way you *feel* about someone when you learned more about that person? Perhaps you have improved the way you *value* a job when you are told that the payment for it has been doubled. Information is a key to *motivation*. *Reframing* is one way of providing this new information.

- ***Giving Inspiration***

Some things are very important to you. Others, which seem similar to an outsider, do not move you at all. You will learn how to use the *hierarchy of values* to make things more important for other people and *propulsion systems* to find things that drive them to accept new states of affairs.

- ***Excellent Communicating***

We will recap the course by running through the process by which we all learnt to communicate. When we were babies we could only *lead* by demanding food and attention. As children we developed the skills of *spacing*, to learn from others. Finally, as adults, we have become aware of the importance of *matching* others in order to get closer to them. Now we can use all these techniques *consciously*. You should also be aware of how you can lead others' behaviours, beliefs and values by what you do, say and feel yourself.

● **For the Future**

You have built up some skills for communicating and solving interpersonal problems. Now you can add to them with practice, further courses and reading.

To start today's session, does anyone want to update us on an issue from earlier in the course? Yes, John, you had some more ideas about how to stop your son being afraid of being bullied?

“Last week, I worked on his dislike of wearing glasses, and gave him some role models who wore glasses. I did some brainstorming and came up with a few more. Then I asked him to walk through the situation wondering how it would be if he were all these people. That had some effect. There still seemed to be something wrong, so I talked to him again, and this time the most important thing was that he thought that he was too puny. We did a short exercise to find out how to overcome that. The best outcomes seemed to be more role models, ways of growing stronger and ways of believing that he was strong enough. We went through the Disney pattern together with all these ideas and came up with a role model who is a martial arts teacher who could help him to get stronger. I booked him an initial lesson.”

This sort of example shows us that we should lead from within the other person's map. If the outcome isn't right for your son, he won't achieve it. Changes may be constrained by *internal* capabilities, beliefs and values, whether they are internal to the individual or to the organisation. They can also be stopped by *external* limits – scientific and political laws, or the lack of physical, mental or financial resources.

Leading Values

Potentially, if we can get others to accept our feelings and values, we will also drive their behaviour and beliefs. If we are selling something, and can lead our customers to say “I only feel right buying this brand”, then we know that their behaviour and beliefs

**How good are your communication skills?
Do you always convey the correct message, or do you
sometimes feel that you are not fully understood?**

**What this book provides is a
ten-lesson course that will transform you into
a consistently excellent communicator.**

Drawing on psychology, linguistics and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), it teaches you how best to interact with colleagues, bosses, officials, family and friends, and become adept at new and effective communication techniques.

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- anchoring
- changing beliefs
- calibrating
- matching, pacing and leading

These techniques will increase your ability to:

- manage
- market
- sell
- influence
- inspire
- innovate

Communicating its own insights in a crystal-clear manner, *Communication Excellence* is an invaluable tool for all those in business who need to communicate effectively. Essential advice for everyone wishing to convey the correct message!

Ian R. McLaren is a registered INLPTA Trainer of NLP with a background in financial and general management. As Investment Controller and Planner with the Canada Life Assurance Company, he has worked in London, New York and Toronto, gaining a wide range of senior management experience. During his varied and successful career, Ian has also worked as a finance director, consultant, author, business coach and trainer.

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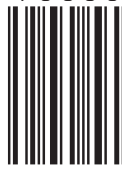
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