

Can Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Be Used As Contemporary and Effective Skill for an Exceptional Manager in an Organization?

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Abstract

As the world of business becomes more competitive because of globalization, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is emerging as an effective tool that helps managers to learn and manage the firm in order that they may increase their competitiveness in the market. It is therefore no surprise that NLP in a business context continues to grow rapidly, as NLP is increasingly becoming acknowledged as one of the best available sources of knowledge on people-skills. This is important, as employees are the most important asset of a firm so using NLP skills to maintain a good relationship with employees is crucial. Hence, the acquisition of NLP skills by the managers would make them successful.

Keywords: Neuro-Linguistic Programming, effective, skills, exceptional manager, organization.

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Introduction

Globalization in recent years has caused rapid changes, especially in management professionals, around the world due to technological advancement. The question of thriving in a competitive market becomes a very critical issue as globalization has brought

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with its new challenges in the field of human resource management. Successful companies realize that people are one of the most important assets they have and they are also aware that human resource has changed from focusing on more physical and mechanistic skills to that of soft skills. It is here that Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) steps in, as it can provide significant improvement in effective communication amongst people, individual and groups, as well as serve as a motivator to employee. Managers and leaders with NLP knowledge and the ability to apply it in their life have an edge over those who do not use NLP. This paper covers the definition of NLP, the techniques of NLP, the significance of NLP skills used by managers, applications of NLP skills in an organization and the strategies to develop NLP skills by managers.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)

The term NLP originated from Richard Bandler (a computer scientist and Gestalt therapist), and Dr. John Grinder (a linguist therapist) in the early 1970s (Gardner, n.d.). NLP is used quite often in the corporate, health and education industry because NLP is an effective interpersonal communication model and an alternative approach to psychotherapy (Tosey & Mathison, 2006). NLP can be an advantageous way of thinking about individual or group communication and has uses in a much broader range of applications to enhance understanding and effectiveness in communication (Biswal & Prusty, 2011). In other words, it can be described as a “manual for the brain” that guides us to obtain the results we want (Biswal & Prusty, 2011). NLP has become increasingly familiar in professional areas such as management training and coaching too where exceptional managers use it to exert influence over people through the use of language (“Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP),” 2003).

Neuro refers to neurology, our nervous systems where the mental activities used to experience the world through our five senses such as sight, sound, touch, taste and smell take place (“Neuro Linguistic Programming,” n.d.). Linguistic refers to individual language ability. For instance, how we construct a sentence by putting together words and phrases to express ourselves coupled with non-verbal communication such as gestures (Stevenson, 2008). Lastly, programming refers to the concept, thoughts, feelings and actions that are programmed in our mind to reach our objectives or acquire immediate improvements in our thinking, feeling, acting and living (Stevenson, 2008). In a nutshell, NLP emphasizes how an individual’s brain connects with the world and how the connections influence behavior (Pulse, 2007).

NLP Techniques

NLP consists of many different powerful sets of techniques to impact change and outcome. Some of the most frequently used techniques are reframing, anchoring, rapport, and pacing and leading.

Reframing

Reframing is the process whereby a component of communication is showed so as to change a person’s perception of the definitions by focusing on the choice of word used (Biswal & Prusty, 2011). This technique functions great when you are in a situation that

makes you angry or upset because it can alter the definition of the situation in a more empowering or positive way (Mills, 1999). In other words, it enables you to put the content of a situation in a different frame (Mills, 1999). As a result, a manager can use reframing when explaining a task to the team members of a task that would usually never be done and reframe it so the task doesn't seem so difficult ("NLP Tools for Effective Management," n.d.). For an instance, a statement of "the glass is half empty" that can be reframed as "the glass is half full", thereby changing the perception of the recipient of this message ("NLP Tools for Effective Management," n.d.). This demonstrates that reframing is a very useful technique for managers to be more effective in communication and it would positively influence behavior and response of employees.

Anchoring

Anchoring technique is a process where it connects an internal response with some external trigger (Krugman et al., 1985). For instance, when you touch a person's shoulder, the person will smile unconsciously. This technique is useful for managers because it can immediately change how a person feels (Rich, 2010). A manager can therefore use the anchoring technique to change a negative feeling to a positive feeling because the emotional state is exposed to the five senses where there are connections between the stimulus and emotional state (Rich, 2010).

Rapport

Rapport technique is a very important and easy skill to learn that allows an individual to get along easily with any kind of people by gaining their trust and confidence (Hayes, 2006). Rapport includes the mirroring process, which is the matching of body language, posture, breathing and tonality through following the person to create a harmonious environment (O'Connor & Seymour, 2002). However, the person needs to identify whether the recipient's main sensory perception is visual, kinesthetic or auditory (Rich, 2010). Different sensory perception uses different types of rapport. For instance, when the recipient's main sensory perception is auditory, the individual can use a statement such as "I hear you"; whereas, for visual types of audience, the individual can use phrases such as "my vision is clear" (Rich, 2010).

Pacing and leading

This is another technique, which is useful for managers who want to have more effective communication skills. Firstly, pacing works to build trust and support with others by showing understanding towards them (Hott, 2011). The choice of words, for example, can be used to show understanding and appreciation of the other person's point of view and the use of body language can help to create a harmonious environment (Hott, 2011). Effective pacing will therefore help to build understanding and it will enable the manager to lead and influence people. In a nutshell, pacing to build rapport and leading is an essential skill needed to become an exceptional manager because team members will feel recognized and valued, which will lead to more effective management ("NLP Tools for Effective Management," n.d.).

Importance of NLP as an effective skill for an exceptional manager

There are several benefits of obtaining NLP skills in business such as encouraging excellence in team members, lower rates of staff turnover, decrease in misunderstandings and an increase in consumer satisfactions (Butler, 2009). Therefore, it is important for the manager to obtain NLP skills in order to succeed in the workplace.

Communication Skills

Effective communication is vital for anyone who wants to be an exceptional manager and it is the key to starting or maintaining a relationship between people. Miscommunication, such as those caused by the use of the wrong words or phrases or through lack of clarity will cause conflict in the workplace. NLP is one of the ways that can be used to solve conflict but it is one of the few that simultaneously offer a wide range of skills to enhance communication in the workplace (Munro, 1999). NLP techniques enable communication to be more effective, persuasive, clear, confident and precise thereby allowing it to be applied on all levels of employees in an organization (Munro, 1999). Additionally, NLP can also strengthen the ability of a manager to connect with others and develop rapport in order to build relationships and trust. NLP can also be used to improve verbal or non-verbal communication, such as body language, or written communication by using reframing and pacing techniques (Cassidy-Rice, 2014). Furthermore, by using rapport technique to improve communication skills, the manager can communicate with a wide range of people and maintain the relationship (Butler, 2009). To put it simply, the more effective the communication, the more success the manager will achieve, therefore, it is important for an exceptional manager to obtain NLP skills.

Stress Management and Personal Development

Stress is a physical and mental response that is experienced by human beings while reacting to a challenge; and chronic stress will cause all kinds of physical and mental illness (Reevy, Ozer & Ito, 2010). A manager will face plenty of heavy tasks in the workplace, so stress is an inevitable part of a manager's life. It is therefore obvious that stress management is vital for a manager's success. By using NLP skills a manager can learn how to deal with stress easily (Smith, n.d.). One of the NLP techniques that can help to reduce stress quickly and easily is that of anchoring where it can get the person out of frustration and other negative emotional states (Smith, 1999).

Moreover, NLP enables better awareness and control of oneself because it can help managers to control the way they think, feel and act (Patrick, 2005). NLP skills can empower people to reach their full potential and when people grow and develop personally, so does the organization they belong to (Anderson, 2012). For that reason, managers have to coach and develop NLP skills in their subordinates.

Leadership Skills

NLP skills enable the manager to motivate and lead team members effectively. NLP can also help create leaders who are committed to creating something better by knowing

their goals and achieving it by leading and training employees (Wake, 2011). One of the NLP techniques, which is pacing, has the leader showing the importance of his subordinates to the team in order to make them feel acknowledged and allowing trust to be built (Vickers, 2009). When trust is built, the leader can then start to lead effectively and well. This serves to indicate that pacing and leading are one of the NLP techniques and leadership skills that must be inculcated to be an exceptional manager. Furthermore, NLP techniques can get teams to work together and going beyond this, it can help managers to solve difficult problems and manage changes (Yemm, 2006). It becomes apparent at this point that effective leaders need to have principles to guide their behavior and they also need to encourage everyone to work from where they are to where they want to be, whether it is personally or as an organization (Vickers, 2009).

Sales and Negotiation Skills

Managers can use the rapport skill to build a relationship with the consumers and the suppliers (Carter, 2005). During negotiation, by using NLP skills such as perceptual positioning, you will be able to achieve a win-win situation because you put yourself in another person's shoes, and are able to see things from their perspective (Carter, 2005). In addition, learning something about language patterns, such as questioning skills, would be useful during negotiation and it will increase understanding of the issues, concerns and needs of the negotiating party (Yemm, 2006). Sales and negotiation skills are crucial for an exceptional manager because it helps the manager to attain agreements, achieve goals and eventually become more productive and successful on the job (Singh & Abraham, 2008). Lastly, the skill of reframing can be useful when dealing with difficult people and situations as mentioned earlier. As a result, it is important to incorporate NLP techniques in sales and negotiation skills as it can help a manager to increase the chances of success in the negotiation.

Application of NLP in an Organization

The application of NLP is limitless and endless because it has been successfully applied in different areas such as business, health, therapy and law for the last thirty years (Alder, 1992). Managers who want to develop their organizations effectively and successfully can use NLP skills and principles as they can build trust and loyalty among the staff as well as encouraging a channel for the staff to voice out their opinions, so the organization will be able to improve (Singh & Abraham, 2008). Other than that, the management should emphasize on building relationships with the workers in order to keep them thrilled and informed by using NLP techniques such as meta-programs and stress management (Alder, 1992).

NLP Meta Programs are mental processes which control, conduct and handle other mental processes such as the way information is perceived and understood differently among individuals (Hoag, n.d.). Moreover, the firm can provide training for the staff to learn NLP. This helps the individuals to have an increase in self-awareness, self-management, communication skills and interpersonal dealings (Yemm, 2006). It can also help to improve their emotional intelligence so the staff can maintain a good relationship between peers and customers (Yemm, 2006).

As a result, applying NLP in an organization will lead the staff to higher working enthusiasm; higher points of capability at all levels of the organization, higher consumer satisfaction and strong positive corporate culture in the firm (Patrick, 2005). Ultimately, this will achieve the organization's objectives and goals that is mainly getting customers and gaining profit.

Strategies to Develop NLP Skills for an Exceptional Managers

NLP is all about interconnection of our thoughts, speech and actions and it connects us with others, the world and to the spiritual dimension (Craft, 2001). The strategies to develop NLP skills for managers are to understand the four main principles in NLP. Firstly, develop the rapport technique with yourself and then with others. Secondly, the person must be sure of what he or she wants to achieve, because without realizing what you want, you definitely cannot succeed (*Understanding NLP; principles and practice, 2d ed.*, 2005). In NLP, this is known as goal or outcome setting.

Thirdly, use the main senses to see, hear and feel what is happening around you; and use feedback to adapt to the situation. Lastly, the concept of NLP is that of behavioral flexibility which includes thoughts and actions. The more choices you have, the more your chances of success (*Understanding NLP; principles and practice, 2d ed.*, 2005).

After the four main principles, it is time to transform the behavior to a skill. The first stage to develop NLP skills is to practice the skill and it needs to take a lot of awareness (O'Connor & McDermott, 2013). The next stage is reaching the capability level and the last stage is to persist in using the skills until the person can apply the skills unintentionally (O'Connor & McDermott, 2013). Simply put, the best way to learn or develop NLP skills for an individual is to experience and practice it regularly until it becomes almost nature and the individual will eventually use it on a daily basis (Vickers, 2009).

Discussion

The major purpose of this paper was to determine whether NLP could be an effective skill for an exceptional manager in a firm as well as the application and strategies to develop the skills. This finding is important because the world has become more competitive and human beings are the main assets of a firm. By gaining loyalty and trust from the workers, managers can use NLP as one of the skills to build and maintain relationships with the staff. For instance, a talented employee needs a great manager because how long the employee stays in the firm as well as how productive they are is determined by their relationship with their supervisor or manager.

NLP helps us to understand how we think and how those thoughts will affect our feelings and behaviors. Moreover, NLP also focuses on empowering people to develop positive thinking and feeling so it can support the firm's goals as well as personal development. The techniques discussed in this paper can help customer service teams, sales staff and managers to perform even better through having better conflict resolution skills and better performance to improve the quality of their working life.

Effective communication is vital and it is describe as the heart of business success. The manager needs to have communication skills first in order to lead the employees in the firm. NLP skills is significant for an exceptional manager because it can be useful at work such as in problem solving, negotiating for a win-win situation, effective communication, persuasive and influencing skills, stress management, personal development and resolving conflicts. In a nutshell, when manager has the method, soft skills and leadership skills, the manager is close to victory.

Managers cannot control people or events, but the manager can manage their response to people and to achieve objectives. Applying NLP skills in an organization will give the managers and staff increased efficiency in the workplace by understanding and motivating the people, either individually or in groups.

Furthermore, applying the principles of NLP in the working environment can develop the NLP skills even further. Hence, it will positively change the patterns of communication and behavior in order to reach the desired results. Strategies to develop NLP skills for managers is to know the goals to achieve, with a clear understanding whether you are moving towards the goals and changing behavior or if the previous ways do not work. Lastly, action is the most crucial part, because actions speak louder than words. While applying NLP skills, practice and action is important to reach certain results. In conclusion, NLP is about thinking, believing, observing and performing to get what you want in life.

Conclusion

People are the most important yet most difficult to manage asset in any organization. NLP is one of the ways that can teach contemporary and effective skills for an exceptional manager to lead and influence the staff to work together and achieve organization's goals and objectives. Managers can use reframing, anchoring, rapport, pacing and leading as techniques to impact change and influence outcomes. NLP is an important skill for the exceptional manager as it can improve communication skills, stress management, personal development, leadership skills and negotiation skills. These skills are vital for a manager to succeed in a business place. The strategy to develop NLP skills is to first develop rapport skills before cultivating the rest. Secondly, the person must be clear what she or he wants to achieve. Thirdly, use the main senses to feel what happened and use feedback to adapt to the situation. Lastly, convert thoughts to actions. Managers have to transform behavior to a skill and this can only be achieved through constant and consistent practice. Firms that implement NLP skills as part of the training for their employees will gain a competitive advantage and this will lead to a successful company as well as successful employees.

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