



# Transforming leaders with NLP

By Lindsey Agness

The most important question you should ask yourself is 'Am I getting the results that I want as a leader? If you answered 'no' to that question or you believe there's room for improvement then please read on.

In a tough market, Neuro-Linguistic Programming or NLP techniques can be applied to the challenges that today's leaders face — identifying and delivering efficiencies, holding onto clients in the midst of increased competition, improving morale and increasing organisational performance. NLP changes mindsets, focusing and motivating you into a positive state of self-belief, thereby empowering you to face your challenges head-on and transforming the business you are in. We are currently still in the midst of one of the biggest recessions of all time. Then why are some of those businesses still growing whilst others are struggling or even going bankrupt? One of the key factors is that the businesses that are successful have leaders with a mindset that 'Makes Things Happen'.

These leaders:

- Have a vision
- Start with the big picture or the end in mind
- Have a healthy appetite towards risk
- Are driven by the need to make a difference
- Are tenacious when things don't go to plan
- Know 100% about their business
- Are passionate
- Innovate
- Most importantly they are leaders or participants and not followers or spectators

Those organisations with leaders who batten down the hatches

and hope for the best may find that when this storm is over they have been surpassed by their competitors who were prepared to continue 'making things happen' and learning even through the tough times.

## Where are you now?

There are three personal leadership zones that people typically find themselves in. By personal leadership I mean the amount of control and responsibility you are taking currently to become the leader you want to be, have the impact that you want to have and the results that you know you are capable of achieving. You don't even have to be a leader right now. The important question is 'are you personally leading yourself towards where you want to be?' The leadership **Brilliant Zone** is the caretaker of our ambitions and dreams. It's the zone where you know you're heading towards achieving your goals. It feels good to be on that road.

The leadership **Grey Zone** is that place where people all too often get stuck, under-achieving or marking time in careers where they meant to stay for a stop-gap and spend a lifetime instead. It feels comfortably uncomfortable as you know that you are selling out on your potential.

The leadership **Awful Zone** is a place where you don't want to stay for too long. You feel wretched and unhappy. You normally find yourself there because something has happened – maybe you've been made redundant, fired or pressurised into a situation that you don't want to be in. The only good thing about the business **Awful**

**Zone** is that it does make you take action and change.

The important question is where are you right now?

## Thinking differently

So, what is it that really makes the difference? What makes one leader world-class and another mediocre? World-class leaders do not have fewer problems than less successful leaders, but they do deal with problems in a different way. It's not 'luck' that separates world-class leaders from the rest of the pack; they have a very deliberate way of thinking and behaving. It is this that makes the difference. The good news is that we can learn how they think and behave differently.

Consider for a moment. How do you behave as a leader? Do you generally look on the positive side of whatever happens at work or do you focus on the negatives and how to avoid taking the blame when things go wrong? I'm sure you've experienced a 'teflon' manager who appears to get away with things by ensuring that others take the blame. How about you? What is your starting point, your point of view? Some leaders will always see the opportunities in a situation whereas others will only see the problems. Are you someone who takes responsibility for whatever happens to you or are you someone who blames others or circumstances for whatever happens? For example, do you recognise yourself as someone who says 'Yes, let's go for it' or are you the person who says 'Yes, I'd like to but...'. Are you involved, interested and active in what you do; or are you buffeted by events, feeling out of control,

disempowered, a victim?

In NLP this is called being either at cause or at effect of everything that goes on around us. Are you taking responsibility for what you create? This is not the way that most people behave. One of our finest skills as humans is to absolve ourselves of responsibility. When something goes well, we like to take credit for it; when something goes badly, we tend to shift blame. Once you put yourself at 'cause', and take responsibility for everything that happens to you, things will stop simply 'happening' to you, and you actively start to become the leader that you want to be.

### Leading from 'effect'

A leader on the effect side sits around waiting for things to happen without taking responsibility for making anything happen themselves. They blame others when things do not go their way. They make excuses and find reasons why they cannot do what is required of them. It is disempowering not only for them but also for their team members as they know that their manager is not interested in improving the current situation. It's also no fun to be led by someone who is constantly moaning about their problems. These leaders at 'effect' give away their power because they always look to others to find the solution. They believe they have no alternatives. However, the reality is that they have chosen not to take any responsibility for their actions. The only advantage of focusing on excuses is that there is usually somebody else to blame! Often in large businesses, you come across experts at finding reasons why things haven't gone to plan. Sometimes there are entire committees of them.

In NLP it's often said that you get one of two things in life – the result you want or reasons why you didn't get the result. What I find a lot in business is the theory of collective responsibility or management by committee. It appears to me that the role of most committees is to find enough 'reasons' as to why one result or another has not been

achieved. The irony is that if they find enough reasons for failing, those responsible still seem to walk away proudly patting themselves on the back. Is that how you want to behave? Maybe you even recognise some of that behaviour in yourself or you have colluded with that type of behaviour in the past.

### Leading from 'cause'

Those leaders who are 'at cause' operate from a premise that on some level we create everything that happens in our lives. Now I don't know if we do create everything that happens to us, but accepting that we do puts us in a position of power over everything around us. More than anything else, this singular action should help you step up your game. That's because whatever occurs in your life, good or bad, you are focused on what there is to learn from that situation. You feel much more in control of your life because you are taking responsibility. The result is that you keep your own personal power in any situation. Anyone moving from 'effect' to 'cause,' feels empowered and stronger than they did before. Much of NLP is effectively designed to put us back at 'cause'. Those of us on the 'cause' side are always searching inside for a solution and to learn from our mistakes. This can sometimes seem like a tougher journey than the one experienced by those people at effect – and, yet, it is one over which you keep complete control. Those at 'effect' keep their heads in the sand by blaming others for their own shortcomings. I prefer to keep control of my own destiny no matter how tough the lessons can be at times. Leaders at 'cause' are decisive in creating what they want. If they are not getting the results that they want, they learn from their experiences and move on to new possibilities. Above all, they believe they have choices in what they do and how they react to people and events.

If you want to move from the 'effect' to the 'cause' side of the equation, the first step is to remove all of your excuses. To do this, you must ask yourself the following questions

when you don't get the results that you want:

- How have I managed to create this situation and for what purpose?
- What is there for me to learn from this?
- What do I need to do differently next time?

You will notice that by asking yourself these questions you will immediately start to get different results. I often tell my clients that I am their 'tour-guide'. I can assist them to make the changes that they need to make and I'll do whatever it takes to do that. However, in the end they have to take action, to do something differently or risk remaining in the **Grey Zone**. You are responsible for your own success. And, when you begin to take 100 per cent responsibility for your life, amazing things begin to happen. The only benefit of not taking 100% responsibility for achieving your outcome is that you'll always have someone to blame.

If you want to be a leader that transforms their results then move towards the leadership **Brilliant Zone** by being at cause in your situation. I guarantee that within a month you'll notice the difference and those around you will be commenting about you as being someone who really makes things happen!

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