



HOW TO MANAGE WITH NLP

DAVID MOLDEN

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Beliefs are very closely linked to identity. In Chapter 1 you considered the labels you use to reinforce who you are. Limiting beliefs act to preserve your current identity and stop you from changing, because there is a certain comfort and security attached to who you are right now. The only way to grow and develop your role is to stretch yourself beyond what is comfortable and familiar to you.

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Identity mismatch

This strategy is saying *I am not the sort of person who does this*. It is protecting you by keeping you safely and securely locked into the thinking and behaviour that is comfortable for you. When you become involved in a task which you do not consider is your responsibility, you may generate signals of incongruence. This is simply your unconscious mind knowing that your behaviour is at odds with what you are thinking.

Quite often these signals will be caused by value conflicts. If the task you are doing has little value for you, why are you doing it? If your results depend upon you completing this task, why have you not attached a high enough value to it? You only exert energy and resources into activities that have value for you.

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If you take a few moments to think of the various tasks that engage you at work, and then attach a commitment indicator to each one, say on a scale of 1–10, how many would you score at ten? For those which may be less than ten, why are you not fully committed to the task? To fully commit yourself to anything requires an alignment of all the levels of learning and change – identity, values, beliefs, capabilities, behaviour and environment. There is a saying that goes, ‘When you commit with yourself fully, the gods go with you.’

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You may be thinking of tasks or activities that are important to you, but where you want to be more confident and accomplished, and which you approach in a higher state of motivation. Perhaps it’s a meeting with your boss or a particular client, or a presentation to the company. A major project could be coming your way, or maybe you have been asked to manage a merger for the first time. Whatever the task ahead, keep it in mind as you progress through the following exercise which invites you to design a sixth strategy state of excellence.

Exercise 4.1: Creating your sixth strategy state

For the purpose of this exercise I will assume the role of a business unit manager who has been asked to manage a major project for a new client. You could choose your own situation and follow the steps in the exercise.

‘I have never before managed a project of this size and importance; in fact I have avoided large projects in the past because project management isn’t something that I want to do, although I am aware that to take my department to more challenging heights in the organisation I will have to take on a large project some time.’

Depending upon the circumstances of the required change, I could use one of many NLP techniques. The technique I will use in this scenario is 'creating a new part', and I will use it to help me redefine my identity and align my belief systems to be successful at project management.

Step 1: What would it be like?

'There is a part of me that has some objection to doing *project management*, and I must first discover, from within, precisely what this objection is. What stops me from plunging enthusiastically into the role of project management? What would have to change for this objecting part of me to be comfortable with project management? I am beginning to imagine myself as a project manager and I become fully associated into the role.'

So I imagine what it will be like performing the role of a project manager as I keep my internal senses alert for signals that explain the reason for the objection.

I am beginning to feel heavy in my stomach area and to feel a frown forming on my forehead. What is it that is making me feel uncomfortable about this? In my mind's eye I see myself at the end of the project. I am in a meeting with the project board and they are discussing the problems with the project. It's all my fault; I didn't manage it in a professional way (this is my internal dialogue cutting in now). I wasn't trained to manage this level of resource and to own this level of responsibility. I failed to notice when things began to go wrong.

Step 2: Assessing the feedback

The feedback from this process tells me that I have issues around skills, responsibility, professionalism and noticing when things

are going wrong. I now ask myself, 'Would it be OK to manage a large project if (i) I were trained, (ii) I could handle the increased responsibility, (iii) I would be perceived by the project board as a professional and (iv) I could remain focused on the work so that I would notice at an early stage when things were likely to go wrong?' I want a response from my objecting part here so I associate again with the role, this time adding these four resources, and check my feelings for signs of agreement.

Step 3: Construct the new part

What will I look like when I am managing a large project with all these added resources? As I am visualising this scenario in the future, I am staying alert to any signals of conflict. How does it feel now that I am becoming a professional project manager? I have read some books on project management, I have sought advice from some of our highly skilled project managers, I have booked myself on to a course to learn about managing projects and I am confident about keeping focused and projecting a professional image of myself.

I run the movie through my mind of exactly what I will be doing to ensure my success as a project manager. 'The image is intensifying now, brighter, more colour, larger, three dimensional. I can hear what I am saying to the people around me and what they are saying to me. I look and feel like a professional. I know how to be a project manager. I have a new part now that *is* a project manager. The part with the original objection no longer objects. I am a project manager!'

Step 4: Check the ecology

So far the exercise has concentrated solely on you. It is important also to consider wider implications of a change of this nature,

particularly with those around you – family, friends, colleagues, the team, the organisation and customers. Check for signals of incongruence as you answer the question, ‘How will this change affect these people and my relationship with them?’ It may not be a good idea to become a superb project manager if by doing so it affects other areas of your life adversely. Also, if you are not fully behind the project, how will this impact the project and its stakeholders? Are you being honest with other people by taking on the role?

This process is all about creating an identity for yourself that is congruent. You still need to acquire skills, but you will be much more eager to acquire them. Having a strong sense of identity with the role from the outset will increase the desire to become a brilliant project manager. Once you have this you’ll be surprised at how easily the skill will come. Confidence and identity can develop with skills training alone, but it takes much longer and often doesn’t identify or deal with limiting beliefs or identity conflicts. The sixth strategy state gets you there faster and in a more resourceful state of mind and body, whether your challenge is to become a brilliant project manager or the next CEO.

Unclear outcomes

Do you ever find it difficult to concentrate on the task in hand? Perhaps at times where something is playing on your mind – either a decision to make or a situation that is begging to be resolved and you haven’t thought of a solution yet? Pick any day of the week and you will probably have a number of these unresolved problems or decisions zapping around your mind.

Problems such as illnesses or financial concerns are likely to distract you from any task, although even these situations can be controlled. Some common distractions take the form

of ‘should I go to the transition meeting next week?’ or ‘who should I include in the email about the new product launch tomorrow?’ or ‘I wonder if Bill is waiting for my report?’ when you are trying to concentrate on something else.

One cause of distraction is having *unclear outcomes*. Sometimes it’s possible to get so involved in detail that you deviate from the main purpose of what you are supposed to be doing. It may be more interesting, or you may perceive it as more important than the task in hand, but if it’s not tied in to your outcomes, it’s not likely to get you very far.

The answer to this was covered in Chapter 3 – well-formed outcomes. If ever you find yourself putting energy into something and being unclear about the outcome – take yourself through the PRIEST list, check your outcomes and make whatever change is necessary to get back on track. Motivation likes to be directed towards a clear outcome. A lack of clarity in your outcomes isn’t the only cause of distraction and lack of focus but it is a common one. Dislike of the task is another.

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Dislike of the task

There is no single reason why you may be either interested or uninterested in any particular task – this strategy tends to be much more deeply embedded in patterns called *metaprogrammes*. You may be able to delegate some tasks which you prefer not to do, but as you make changes to your identity and values, and as you make transitions to new roles, you will discover there are some tasks you would rather leave alone. The reason for this can be found in your metaprogramme profile. The more you attempt a task which requires a certain way of working that you rarely use, the more stressed you will become.