

NEURO LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP) IN MANAGERIAL PRACTICE

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Abstract: *In order to improve the economic system, there is a need to introduce innovative approaches in the managerial structure. One of the most modern methods is neuro-linguistic programming (hereinafter referred to as NLP). In the business world, NLP methods are directly applied to improving interpersonal relationships, creating business relationships based on trust and precise goal setting.*

NLP was first developed in America in the 70s of the twentieth century, as a result of studying the skills of successful people. Today, numerous global companies use NLP methods to increase their productivity, manage human resources, and create as few costs as possible. Some of them are "Sony", "Coca Cola". Research conducted in these companies shows that thanks to the introduction of the NLP method, they managed to reduce the lack of interest of clients by as much as 67%. In the Republic of Serbia, research shows that the most desirable companies (Oil Industry of Serbia, Marbo Company) are companies that operate according to NLP methods. The introduction of the NLP method into the business system in the Republic of Serbia would improve the business of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The paper describes some of the NLP techniques that have found their application in improving managerial skills. The aim of the paper is to show how this important skill affects successful business decision-making, efficient management of the organization and acquisition of a sustainable competitive advantage.

Key words: *neuro-linguistic programming, management, leader, education*

1. INTRODUCTION - DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

The application of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) has spread from psychotherapy to business, sales, marketing, and all segments of business and private life. NLP studies how successful people achieve good results in the fields they deal with and offers numerous techniques to effectively teach success models to anyone interested.

What makes a top manager? In addition to professional knowledge and experience, a manager's focus must be on continuous personal development. A person in the position of manager is expected to make decisions quickly and efficiently, as well as the ability to perform his part of the job and manage others at the same time. Communication skills, influential and effective

negotiation, delegation, follow-up, organization, motivation, solution and goal orientation - these are all skills that are necessary for a successful manager.

In recent years, in the world and in our country, when it comes to the choice of methodology for personal and professional development, NLP occupies a leading position. Regardless of occupation, skills of good communication, negotiation, avoiding conflicts, influencing skills, creating good interpersonal relations are needed in all spheres of business practice.

The demands and challenges for people in management positions are increasing and they often work in stressful situations. NLP offers a set of techniques, by means of which every manager can successfully develop his skills of advanced communication, communication with demanding interlocutors, recognition of different communication personality types and techniques for harmonization, the knowledge of which can largely avoid conflict and stressful situations. Also, for negotiation skills, as well as the skills of efficient and convincing presentation, as well as public speaking, getting rid of nervousness, which is also the subject of NLP, are extremely important for every manager.

Good managers are those who know that they are only as successful as their employees, and they also know that they can only progress if their employees are also progressing. A good manager knows what motivates his employees and moves them to action according to their personal motivation, the so-called motivation without repression, in short, how to influence the development of employees in the most effective way.

2. WHAT IS NEURO LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING - NLP?

Neuro-linguistic programming encompasses a range of skills, techniques and models that use the mind, emotions and body to communicate with exceptional efficiency. NLP studies how successful people achieve exceptional results in a wide variety of fields and teaches other people those skills, techniques and patterns. By changing the way of thinking and behavior, as well as by becoming aware of their potential, every manager can reach the goal faster and easier.

The popularity of the NLP method increased in the seventies of the last century, when it was discovered that it helps in the fight against phobias, anxiety, and also has a positive effect on professional success. NLP uses perceptual, behavioral and communication techniques to help managers change their thinking and behavior (Krzic, 2013).

The term NLP includes three words (Krzic, 2013):

Neuro - refers to the nervous system and how communication with other people is achieved through the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. This is how information is received and reality is created based on it

Linguistic - refers to the way in which language patterns are used in everyday speech and how speech can influence the representations of other people. The words used affect the way of thinking, mood, behavior, attitudes and actions. They also influence the interlocutors.

Programming - refers to internal processes, i.e. programs of thinking, feeling and behavior and the ability to replace certain patterns of behavior that are not useful with more useful ones (in accordance with the values and goals to be achieved).

The NLP method was designed and developed in the 70s of the 20th century by Richard Bandler - mathematician and psychologist and John Grinder - university professor of linguistics at the University of Santa Cruz in California (USA). They conducted research on the topic - what is the key difference between successful and less successful people. They wondered how they could discover the key elements of success and describe them so that other

people could learn them. They called that process - modeling. They studied how successful people communicate, how they motivate themselves, how they make decisions, how they learn. They believed that it was possible to identify the patterns of thinking and behavior of successful individuals and that it was possible to teach them to others.

Various authors have defined NLP as (Krzic, 2013):

„The ability to master one's own states, using one's own brain” – Richard Bandler

„Studying the extraordinary and how to reproduce it ” – John Grinder

„An attitude (reckless curiosity) and a methodology (modelling) that leave behind a series of techniques” – Richard Bandler

„A way to use the language of the mind to consistently achieve specific and desired goals” – Ted James.

3. NLP IN BUSINESS PRACTICE

Basically, NLP techniques can be summarized in a couple of axioms and postulates that unify this field of psychology into a single thought system, that is, they represent scientific foundations. Some of the reasons for applying NLP techniques are (Okonor, Seymour, 2017):

- It gives great flexibility in behaviour in difficult situations
- Increases learning speed
- It helps in becoming a more influential member of the group
- NLP is a tool that can be used to achieve excellence in any field.

By implementing NLP techniques and methods in the business world, especially their integration into daily activities is what makes the difference between exceptional and average managers. There are several possible ways in which the application of NLP techniques can contribute to better performance (Malesevic, 2019):

- Effective and influential communication;
- Building relationships with employees based on trust and respect;
- Setting clear, unambiguous and practical goals for employees in the organization who are lower in the hierarchical ladder of the organization;
- Counselling and problem solving - thanks to NLP knowledge and skills, successful managers can understand every situation, all inconsistencies and dissatisfaction of employees. A manager who knows NLP techniques will motivate employees in the "right direction" in accordance with the organization's goals.
- Ability to find appropriate solutions for situations that could get out of control;
- Managers who have mastered the techniques and skills of NLP will be able to manage meetings and people;
- Better understanding of those present, understanding of body language and other types of non-verbal communication enables a better assessment of people and their abilities, especially when it comes to staff recruitment or the selection of managers;
- Better negotiation possibilities, especially when using manipulative techniques;
- Better possibility of presenting goals, ideas, business attempts;
- Improved possibility of assessment and judgment during job interviews with candidates, especially in cases where the interview is time-limited;
- Improved professional interviewing techniques.

4. MANAGER COMPETENCES FOR THE XXI CENTURY

Research shows that for employees in the modern business environment, the most important skills are solving complex problems, critical thinking, and creativity. Also, it is predicted that two thirds of children who have yet to enter primary school will work in jobs that do not yet exist. This is not surprising, if we bear in mind that most of today's most sought-after professions did not even exist five or ten years ago, and that "trend" continues. So, unless we have the ability to continuously adapt, opportunities pass us by. We are on the threshold of the so-called fourth industrial revolution and the speed of changes in the world we live in has greatly exceeded the predictions of the eighties.

All predictions of the future of the labor market, education, and business, come down to the fact that the man of the future will need skills that have nothing to do with specialized knowledge, but with the ability to adapt and continuously learn. The application of NLP in business brings numerous benefits and opportunities for development. Whether it is high employee motivation, effective communication or significant productivity improvement, the effects of NLP methodology in the business environment are obvious. Just a few of them are motivating team members more effectively, reducing misunderstandings, and increasing employee satisfaction and productivity.

That is why it is important for a manager to master NLP techniques and dedicate himself to his personal development, because in this way he will contribute to the development of his business. The assumption is that any manager who masters NLP techniques will bring a double benefit to the organization. On the one hand, through personal development, he will become a more valuable member of the collective, and on the other hand, he will learn how to influence his entire team and their success. This is a consequence of improved communication, a realistic understanding of goals and increased awareness of the potential of all team members.

Among the wide range of business applications of NLP methodology, some are singled out:

1. Communication skills - the main characteristic of successful managers

Effective communication is vital for anyone who wants to be an exceptional manager. It is the key to starting and maintaining relationships between people. Poor communication, such as that caused by using the wrong words or phrases, will cause conflict in the workplace. NLP is a safe way to eliminate ineffective and harmful communication.

Likewise, NLP is one of the few methodologies that simultaneously offers several equally effective approaches to improving communication in the workplace. The result is successful, convincing, clear, and precise communication. In addition, NLP can increase a manager's ability to connect with others to build trust. It is a well-known "compliance technique" with which a manager can communicate with the widest range of people and maintain long-term quality business relationships (Squire, 2018).

2. Stress management and personal development

Stress is a physical and mental reaction that all human beings experience. Originally related to unfavorable and dangerous signals from the environment, it represents a chronic condition in modern business. This is a consequence of people's distorted perception towards new tasks, challenging projects, and a turbulent business environment. Managers in particular face many challenging tasks in the workplace, so stress is an inevitable part of their everyday life. Today, effective management of stress and emotions is a prerequisite for a good psycho-physical condition of every manager. By applying NLP, a manager can learn how to manage his emotions. One of the NLP techniques that can help to reduce stress levels is "anchoring". By

applying this technique, a person can change even the most difficult and undesirable emotional states.

3. Leadership skills and influence

NLP skills enable a leader to effectively motivate and guide team members. NLP techniques can be the main support in creating leaders who are committed to defining goals and creating a clear vision. One of the NLP techniques - "compatibility" represents the state of an established "bridge of trust and harmony" between two or more people. It can be the main support when building trust between managers and team members. Once trust is established, the manager can begin to effectively lead and manage the team. It becomes obvious that effective managers must have well-founded principles of controlling their own behavior in order to encourage employees to move forward, towards the goal, as individuals and as a team.

4. Sales skills

The already mentioned NLP technique - "compatibility" is also important for the development of sales and long-term client relationship maintenance skills. In the first stages of sales, the NLP technique of "perceptual positioning" can be useful (Rensburg, 2022). Seeing the situation from another angle increases the probability of reaching a win-win solution. In addition, language patterns as well as advanced skills in asking the right questions are extremely useful during negotiations. The result of their application is reflected in the understanding of the real problem and needs of the client.

Sales and negotiation skills are key characteristics of a good manager because of the significant role they play in reaching the desired agreement and achieving the goal. NLP techniques are an integral part of any successful sale or negotiation.

5. Time management skills

Time management is the process of planning and controlling the time spent on specific activities. Improving your time management skills at work allows you to improve your performance and achieve your goals with less effort and more effective strategies. NLP uses various tools and techniques to help successful managers get more done in less time. Some of those techniques are the "ABCDE" method, the law of the trinity, color coding...

6. Setting goals

Clearly defining goals is one of the prerequisites for success, but despite this, 95% of people still do not set goals. For whom are these people working? For those 5% of successful managers who set goals!

In addition to the SMART model, NLP has a specific approach to goal setting that goes further, ie. offers a way of "programming" the mind to lead to the desired results. Attention will therefore be directly focused on internal and external resources that help to move from the current to the desired state. NLP also teaches how to translate organizational vision into strategy and action steps.

NLP methodology encourages people to reach their full potential. Therefore, investing in personal development will also affect the development of the organization itself. That is why it is necessary for managers to develop their skills and encourage the same in their employees using NLP methodology.

5. CONCLUSION

The modern business environment has one significant characteristic: an uncontrollably accelerating pace of change with many challenges and uncertainties. The balance between promising situations and dangers for each organization depends on its ability to adapt. That is, the question necessarily arises, if the environment is rapidly changing uncontrollably, at what speed are organizations changing? That is why it is a necessary goal to create organizations that are capable of constant renewal, because any delayed adjustment can lead to great losses.

The qualities of the "new" leader are: integrity, flexibility, respect, trust. Managers of the new generation have a crucial role in encouraging employees to use all resources in the form of knowledge, abilities and skills that they can use in the business process. A tool that can significantly help them in this is NLP. Organizations that appreciate and encourage creativity, quality, and value the execution of tasks and the development and satisfaction of the individual, the constructiveness and active involvement of employees are encouraged, represent organizations dominated by the constructive organizational style. Their employees are characterized by innovation and dedication, and the managers of such organizations are characterized by a culture of employee leadership.

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