IMPACT OF METAPROGRAMS ON THE PURCHASE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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Abstract: *Each of us processes our own experience in a special way. There is no right or wrong way to handle it. Different people have different thinking structures and often do not understand each other. But, on the other hand, exactly that complexity of the human being is one of the biggest challenges in communication as a universal process. Discovering and adapting the identity of individuals becomes the number one priority.*
Consumers are exposed to many stimulants that motivate them to behave positively or negatively, react and decide.
As processes in our mind that clarify the decision-making structure, as well as how individuals are motivated to take action, are metaprograms that are unconscious schemes for ordering information. They act as filters and allow only what is important to the individual to be taken into account.
The main goal of this paper is to emphasize the knowledge about the existence of metaprograms, their understanding, application in terms of motivation to achieve a result by recognizing them allows us to become more influential and more able to touch in a way that is appropriate for people around us.

Keywords*: Meta-programs, Consumer behavior, Buying.*

INTRODUCTION

Neuro-linguistic programming is a methodology that is a leading person development methodology in the world. It considers the subjective experience of the individual and thus explains the way people function. It includes their experience of the world, the way they process or memorize information, the way they plan, make decisions and behave both towards themselves and towards others. Understanding the way people function and structure their experiences increases our empathy potential endlessly, as well as our influence, development and change capabilities. The process of discovering the way successful people function in order to model their behavior was the primary work motivation of the students, Richard Bandler and John Grinder, in the 70s of the 20th century, when they set up the model of excellence or success. Since then, the strategies and techniques known in neuro-linguistic programming have been growing and developing and, today, they are applied in therapy, education, work, sport, supervising, sales, management, etc.

The most modern software in the world exists in the human head, it is our mind. If every computer has an operating system that allows it to communicate with the outside world, the human mind operates similarly. If by a click of the computer mouse an icon is opened, i.e. any program is opened, we can move on toward the interpretation of that operating system without

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which we could not communicate with the computer. Although this comparison is not the most appropriate, it gives a vivid picture of the way the brain works. Leslie Cameron-Bandler, Richard Bandler's wife, one of the "culprits" for the discovery of NLP, in her advisory work wondered if there was anything similar to computers in our brains. Namely, she examined whether there is a certain set of processes that occur on an unconscious level and are automatic, and have a significant impact on the conscious processes. Studying a considerable number of people through her work, Cameron had the unique opportunity to find, identify and discover the meaning of metaprograms in humans. Her work has been further developed by Roger Bailey and Shelly Rose Charvet defining a total of 14 metaprograms, which are currently being studied through the standard part of NLP (Neurolinguistic programming) training.

METAPROGRAMS-THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN BRAIN SOFTWARE

"Learning to recognize the filters which you and others use is the first step towards flexibility development" (Knight 2002/2010)

Metaprograms are the basic "software" of our brain. Regardless of how we consciously process information, deep in our subconsciousness, processes occur outside our will and consciousness and affect our thoughts, feelings, and decisions. Metaprograms resemble glue between values and beliefs, i.e. why something is important and what a person believes about him/herself, about life and everything that happens to him/her, consequently they cause subconscious emotional reactions to environmental stimuli that affect the overall communication. The combination of metaprograms is unique to each person. They provide you with automatic ways to sort and organize your experience, your thinking and your behavior. Although you share your metaprograms with other people, the combination that each individual possesses is unique to that person. That combination influences decision-making and even buying items.

In neurolinguistic programming, metaprograms are the key to the information processing method. In essence, NLP metaprograms mean how you form your mental representations and direct your behaviour.

The knowledge of metaprograms will help you in:
Achieving a pleasant relationship: metaprograms are something through which you can make the interlocutor feel comfortable with you.
Self-awareness: if you are aware of your own metaprogram, i.e. if you know your thinking preferences, you will have a better idea of how to place and sell a certain product and, at the same time, you will use your strengths knowing the interlocutor's meta-program.
Employment: each job has an ideal metaprogram profile. The sales employee, if the metaprograms are known, will be able to better play his role in terms of influencing through verbal speech and intriguing the interlocutor. Namely, you will know how to compose a text about the features of the products or service that will intrigue the counterpart.
Sales: You can help the people in the team or yourselves to present a purchase decision by following the basic metaprograms in the course of the presentation or the interlocutor's program if it is known to us.

Depending on the specific metaprogram, you can detect them by the words people use, the structure of their language patterns and the way they speak, the way they behave, their history, the change of job and so on.

THE MOST IMPORTANT METAPROGRAMS

EXTERNAL/INTERNAL-Metaprograms explain the decision-making structure and how individuals are motivated. If the question arises: "How do you know you did a good job?" some people will respond "by inner feeling" while others will say "based on results, on certain indicators, according to customer satisfaction, when I see their faces, etc." Or when it comes to buying, someone will say, "it is used by everyone around me", while another will state "I bought it because I feel good when I use it, and I came across it by chance". According to this example, one can conclude that some people have the answer inside them, while others find the answer from reactions or indicators from the environment. Those acquiring results outside of NLP are called **EXTERNAL**, while the others are **INTERNAL**. Those who are internal will be guided by the inner feeling when buying a product or service, and this feeling will determine their decision, while the external types will ask for feedback, they will give and receive feedback, they will look for recommendations from others, statistical indicators, maybe certain criteria, etc. When an internal seller and an external buyer meet in the buying and selling process, a misunderstanding can occur in the communication, because one of them is satisfied with the explanation and his/her inner feeling that will motivate him/her to make a decision, while the other searches for feedback. If the buyer is an external type, he/she will need feedback and indicators outside of him/her in order to be able to orient and motivate him/herself to make a decision. Therefore, primarily, it is good for the seller to be aware that there are metaprograms and that by their recognition he/she will be able to harmonize with and motivate the buyer for what is offered. It offers the opportunity to those who know them to be more influential and to be able to motivate co-workers, employees, the team and the like in the right way.

PRIMARY INTEREST-One of the basic metaprograms is the **PRIMARY INTEREST.** Each person has preferences that reveal the focus of attention. This is essential in team forming, especially sales teams, because the knowledge of this metaprogram can aid the creation of a compatible team that will be aimed towards the customers, activities, information, products and location.

TOWARDS/AWAY FROM-This metaprogram deals with the way people are motivated. People with **MP-towards** are motivated by prizes and aims and they move towards them, while people with an **MP-away from** are motivated by moving away from a problem, difficulty or punishment. For example, one salesperson with an MP-AWAY FROM will not motivate by a bonus, he/she will express a cold reaction to it. The bonus causes an opposite reaction with the salesperson with an MP-TOWARDS, hence it will truly motivate him/her. It is extremely easy to recognize this MP in the interlocutor in the course of the conversation-whether they talk about what they want to achieve or which problems they want to avoid.

PRIMARY ATTENTION-this MP primarily refers to caring for oneself and caring for others. Namely, persons with this metaprogram, self-care first, concentrate on themselves, are aware of their needs, can work independently of others. They will strive to find an environment in which they can work and do their best. They are quite sensitive to their needs, but they are not egotistical. This preference in thinking is often very important in professions where results are very important. Individuals with MP-care for others-put other people first. These people are perceived by the environment as careful, empathetic and responsive, but often put their needs last. The well-being of team members or clients is imperative to them. The desire for domination can be found at the core of this MP. Every flight, people learn from the flight attendant that first they must put a mask on themselves so that they can help others around them. If they help themselves, they can help others. In essence, the client who has this MP,

when buying a product or service, will always be guided by what the people he works or operates with would say about it. Thus he will make a decision. Basically, salespersons that are trained and use NLP in their work, most often recognize this MP, and are focused on what the team, organization and so forth gains with what is procured.

SIMILARITIES/DIFFERENCES-this is one of the most important metaprograms and represents the most dominant aspect of our personality. Some people need to find similarities, for example when buying a new product, with an old item they use and it still serves them, while others focus on differences between products. This metaprogram has its advantages and disadvantages. People who have MP-only similarities-see only similarities and almost 10% of the people primarily use this metaprogram. These are people who have been in the same line of work for decades or they have been buying and using a product because "everything is the same". They almost never have a good enough reason to change something. They need something that does not change or changes only if necessary. If the planned changed, they would become nervous or aggressive.

People who use MP-only differences-immediately notice when something is new, they are capable of searching all the information, discovering everything that is different. They rarely stay in one job post for more than two years. It is very difficult to motivate them to make decisions because when you say "I don't know", they say "I know". If you say "if you do that", they will answer "I won't do that anyway..." People who apply the NLP methodology and recognize this metaprogram will often say "I don't know if you are going to do this or not ". They are aware that this "or not" freezes their system and they may reveal their information without much resistance.

REACTION, FOR (CONSENSUS)/AGAINST-this pattern of thinking shows how the person will react to external influences and to what extent he/she is ready to confront. People who are in the MP-for-react by agreeing often, it is natural for them to agree with other people. People with preferences in thinking-against-have a pronounced individuality and independence. Usually, if they repeatedly get the same advice, it can cause an opposite reaction on their part. This preference rarely occurs in pure form (5 to 10% of the population).

WORK ORIENTATION-RELATIONSHIP/TASK People who are relationship oriented, focus their attention on the people around them. The organizational climate and the well-being of other people are important to them. On the other hand, with persons having a thinking preference-task-their focus is on the goals, tasks. They strive to complete the task, meet all deadlines and sometimes put extra pressure on co-workers. Organizational climate is not always important to them.

GENERAL OVERVIEW/DETAILER-this program plays a vital role in human communication. Everyone has way of processing information. Some prefer a general overview, while others go into detail.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

In the new age, when people deal with changes in the way they work, putting the world to a halt due to the pandemic and when confronted with a rush of existential fears managers "run" after profit, they often forget the most important ones - human resources. The justification of the research arises from the necessity of having adequate support for the employees who need to cope with the changes and the accompanying resistance, which would primarily teach them

about themselves, and then about the people they work with. The research aims to identify the factors that influence the creation of a different approach that will facilitate the decision of the buyer and give communication precision and conciseness. This would increase the influence of the individual, as well as the competitiveness of the organization. The research has been conducted on individuals in our country, as well as in Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia, who work in sales and are trained in NLP, regardless of the fact who was financed by-themselves, the organization or a training team within the organization who applies this methodology.

1. A number of the respondents-The total number of respondents is 51. The survey was distributed in electronic form.
2. Gender structure of the respondents-when determining the respondents, the equal gender structure was taken into consideration.

Figure 1. Number of the respondents
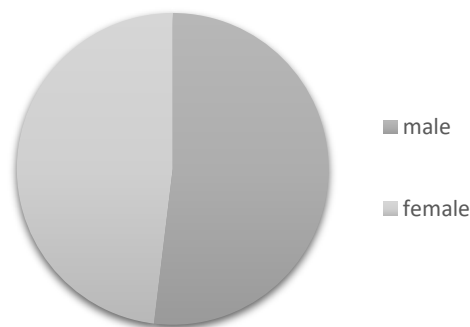
ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY RESPONSES

A) Does your organization support informal education and NLP methodology?-The response to this question has shown that 60% of the respondents state that support of this kind exists in the organization, 17% of the respondents do not know or have not paid attention to that, while 23% of the respondents occasionally face resistance towards informal education.

Figure 2. Does your organization support informal education and NLP methodology?
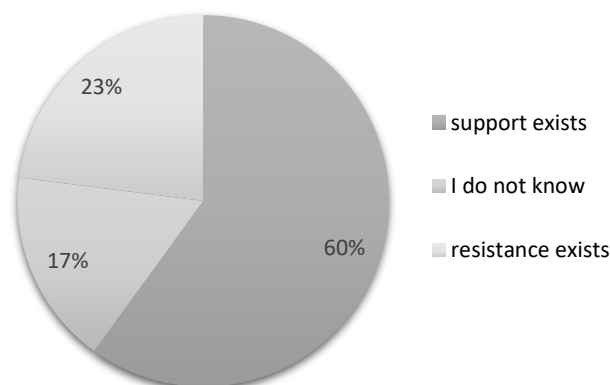
B) Which level of NLP have you completed? -The results from the conducted research have shown that 73% of the respondents have completed NLP practitioner level, the basic level of neurolinguistic programming, 6% of the respondents have already become NLP trainers and

have completed all the levels of training, 7% of the respondents have had only one or two short introductions to the methodology, 12% of the respondents have completed an advanced, master NLP level. Nearly all of them have job posts that include sales and communication with clients.

**Figure 3.** Which level of NLP have you completed?
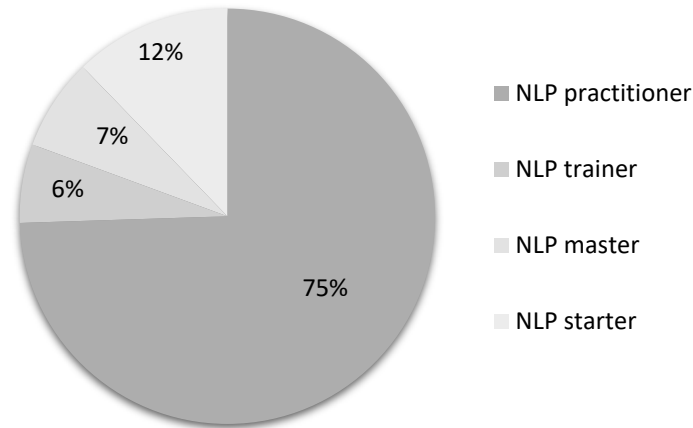
C) How much do you use metaprograms in your line of work? -The results from the conducted research have shown that 76% of the respondents use metaprograms in communication with clients, especially in sales, 13% of the respondents stated they use metaprograms only when necessary and when they have difficulty in communication, while the remaining 11% utilize them as an aid when the client needs to make an important decision.

**Figure 4.** How much do you use metaprograms in your line of work?
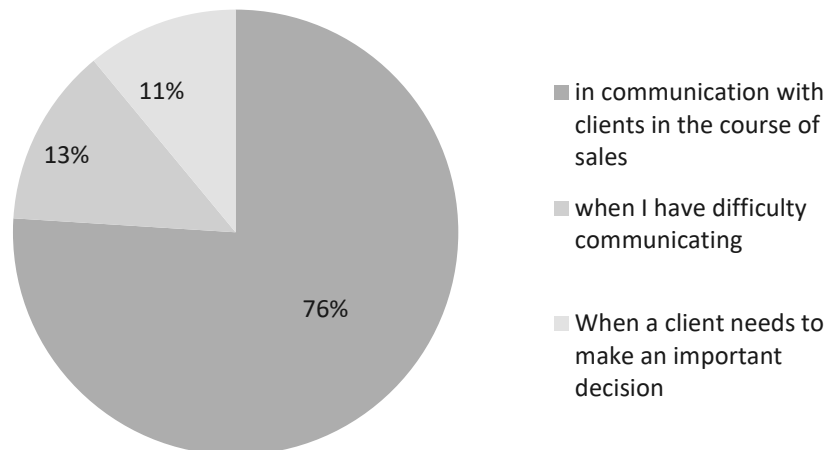
D) When you adapt the communication to the metaprogram of the interlocutor, what benefits do you gain? 69% of the respondents answered that clients make purchase decisions more easily, 15% of the respondents stated that it shortens the negotiation time and they gain on clarity, 16% chose other, of which mostly relating to communication support.

Figure 5. When you adapt the communication to the metaprogram of the interlocutor, what benefits do you gain?
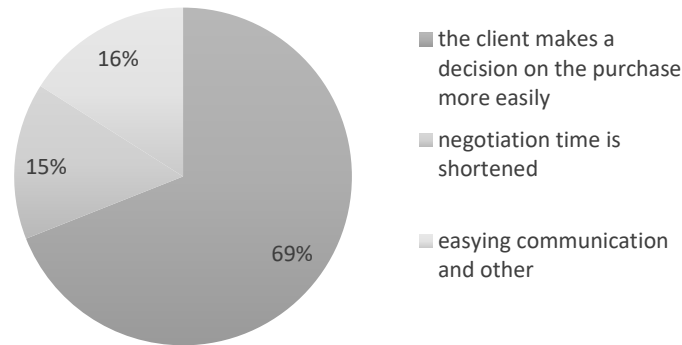
F) Which metaprogram contributes clients' decision making the most?-The results from the conducted research have shown that 42% of the respondents stated it is the internal/external metaprogram, 33% of the respondents that it is towards/away from, 16% similarities/differences and the remaining 9%-other.

Figure 6. Which metaprogram contributes clients' decision making the most?
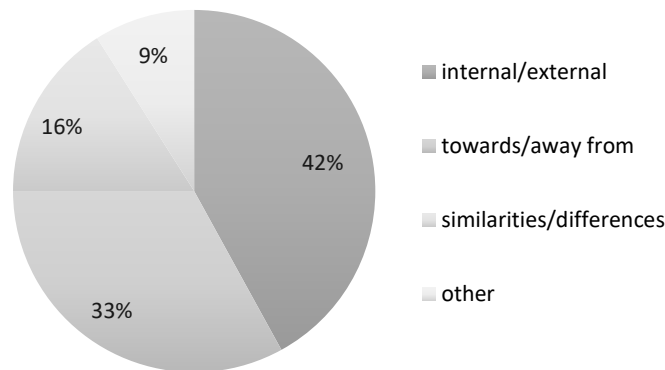
CONCLUSION

Although through formal education we earn a degree that should provide us with a job, the fact is that informal education is what facilitates our work process. In this regard, in order to create opportunities to become more influential in our work, especially to facilitate communication that leads to better results, achieving goals, as well as decisions making, it is obvious that informal education is more than necessary. Nevertheless, the practice also shows that it is insufficient only to attend training without applying the acquired knowledge. This research has shown the importance of theoretical soundness concerning metaprograms, and their usefulness in the application. Respondents confirmed that decision making by customers as well as facilitating communication are some of the benefits of applying the NLP methodology, which is the world-leading methodology for personality development. However, much needs to be done about raising the awareness of employers and employees, especially in the sales sector, about informal education and its contribution to work and, ultimately, about raising the results to a higher level.

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