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How Japanese Managers Use NLP in Their Daily Work

Authors:

Yasuhiro Kotera and William Van Gordon
University of Derby, United Kingdom

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Introduction

Although Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) has its origin in America, it is used in numerous countries across the globe (Kotera, Sheffield & Van Gordon, 2018). For example, NLP has been shown to improve occupational stress amongst Iranian nurses (HemmatiMaslakpak, Farhadi & Fereidoni, 2016), reduce perceived stress and time-related pressure in Indian workers (Rao & Kulkarni, 2010), and be a popular technique for improving work effectiveness in Japan. Indeed, the NLP Connection (one of the original NLP organisations founded by Richard Bandler) has certified 1,725 practitioners, 1,321 master practitioners, 373 trainer associates, and 40 trainers since it first started teaching NLP in Japan in 2003 (C. Hall, personal communication, March 15, 2016).

One reason underlying NLP's popularity in Japan is its focus on increasing awareness of mental health problems. Contrary to the fact that people in Okinawa have been described as one of the happiest groups of people in the world (Buettner, 2017), mental illness is a significant public health concern in Japan (Kotera, Gilbert, Asano, Ishimura & Sheffield, 2018). Indeed, despite its fairly stable population levels, the number of depressed people in Japan has increased from 441,000 in 1999 to 1,041,000 in 2008, which corresponds to a 136% increase in less than ten years (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare [MHLW], 2015). The suicide rate among Japanese people has been one of the highest among developed countries for many years such that each year, approximately 30,000 people commit suicide in Japan (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). One third of all suicides in Japan are committed by workers, and in respect of suicides committed by the Japanese worker population, approximately one in three instances are due to problems at work (National Police Agency, 2016). Furthermore,

60% of Japanese people experience high levels of mental distress (MHLW, 2010), and an increasing number of workers are applying for compensation claims for mental health problems (an increase from 200 in 2000 to 1,500 applications in 2015) (MHLW, 2016).

In line with growing awareness of mental health problems in Japan (Kobori et al., 2014), the number of companies that implement mental health support programmes has increased from 23.5% in 2002 to 47.2% in 2012 (MHLW, 2013). Nevertheless, approximately half of all Japanese companies do not offer mental health support, primarily because they do not feel the necessity (MHLW, 2013). If suicides and depression in Japan were eliminated, the yearly benefit is estimated to be approximately 2.7 trillion Japanese yen, amounting to 0.7% of GDP (Kaneko & Sato, 2010).

These reports highlight the need for effective mental health interventions for Japanese workers, and they are likely to constitute one reason underlying the growing popularity of NLP amongst Japanese managers. This chapter draws on the first author's experience as an NLP researcher and practitioner and outlines real and hypothetical examples in order to explicate how Japanese managers use NLP skills in their day-to-day work. The chapter also outlines recommendations for practitioners wishing to introduce and utilise NLP approaches in their own occupational and/or healthcare settings.

Example 1: Position Change

A senior manager in the HR department of a pharmaceutical company had a consultation with one of his team members (pseudonym: Ken). Ken had some conflicts with another member of staff (pseudonym: Naomi). The manager brought two chairs and utilised the 'position change' technique to help Ken understand Naomi's perspective by identifying the goals, positive

intentions, interests and concerns that Naomi might have. By undertaking this exercise, Ken gained insight into why there was conflict and how it might be solved. The feelings he had towards Naomi changed as the exercise unfolded. Indeed, before the intervention, Ken felt stressed, and did not want to see Naomi anymore, but after the intervention, he was more able to see Naomi from an attitude of acceptance and understanding. This is a relatively easy exercise that can be implemented in the following way (Manager as the interventionist, and Ken as a recipient).

1. Position two chairs opposite each other (Figure 1).
2. Ken sits on one of them (1st position) and imagines Naomi sitting on the other. Ken then faces Naomi's chair and the Manager identifies how Ken feels about his relationship with Naomi (e.g., *Now you are facing Naomi, how do you feel, Ken?*). Ken may respond that he is stressed, angry, or upset. Noticing these negative emotions is referred to as 'tasting the poison', and it can foster a desire for change.
3. The Manager then asks Ken to express his feelings in a simple manner to Naomi. Ken may say '*Why do you always wait too long to send our proposals to our clients?*' or '*You always make small errors that degrade the quality of our product*' etc.
4. Once Ken's thoughts are expressed, the Manager asks Ken to stand up from the chair and imagine that he has left his body on the chair while Ken moves to a position that is in-between the two chairs (neutral position). The Manager then asks Ken '*Who sits on this chair?*' pointing to one chair at a time. Verbalising his response (e.g., '*Ken sits on that chair*' and '*Naomi sits on this chair*') from the neutral position can help Ken to imagine the relationship more vividly, and to dissociate from the negative feelings expressed in

the 1st position. The Manager should guide the exercise so that Ken's negative feelings expressed in the 1st position are no longer present in the neutral position. Useful ways to ensure that Ken has transformed any negative feelings harboured during the 1st position are i) guiding Ken to breathe gently but deeply, ii) guiding Ken to walk around the chairs, and iii) asking Ken out-of-context questions such as what the last four digits of his phone number are, or who his favourite comedian is. In the neutral position, the Manager also can ask how the two (imaginary) individuals sitting in the chairs look as they face each other.

5. Next, the Manager asks Ken to sit on the other chair (2nd position), while guiding Ken's thoughts using a script such as: *'Now I want you to sit on this chair. You see Naomi here, and as you sit on this chair, you will become Naomi. Sit like Naomi, make a posture like Naomi, make a facial expression of Naomi, and breathe like Naomi. When you get a sense of Naomi, let me know.'*
6. The Manager should wait enough time for Ken to really appreciate what it is like to stand in Naomi's shoes. When Ken is ready, the Manager can ask *'Who are you? (Naomi)'* and *'Who sits in front of you? (Ken)'*. Then the Manager can ask *'How do you feel facing Ken now?'* Naomi (acted by Ken) may say that they are scared, anxious, or threatened.
7. As Naomi (acted by Ken) starts to express her thoughts about Ken, the Manager continues to explore what Naomi thinks about the work relationship with Ken. Naomi (i.e., acted by Ken) may say *'Why can't you trust me?'* or *'If you pressure me like that, I cannot think straight'* etc. Key questions that the Manager can ask include *'How do you want to feel about this work relationship instead?'* and *'What do you want from Ken or other colleagues?'* The Manager may also ask Naomi what her goals, positive intentions,

interests or concerns are, especially when Naomi describes specific issues. Identifying positive intentions is a key objective of NLP and thus effective communication is required. At this stage, the Manager may want to take notes of what Naomi (i.e., acted by Ken) says. Naomi may say that she wants a more relaxed relationship where she feels respected, and that she would like short regular meetings with Ken to review minor errors. Naomi (acted by Ken) may note that her goal and intention are to create a supportive team but that she is concerned about feeling unconfident give that many other colleagues seem confident and capable. Again, it is important that the Manager remains as an interventionist, focusing on listening.

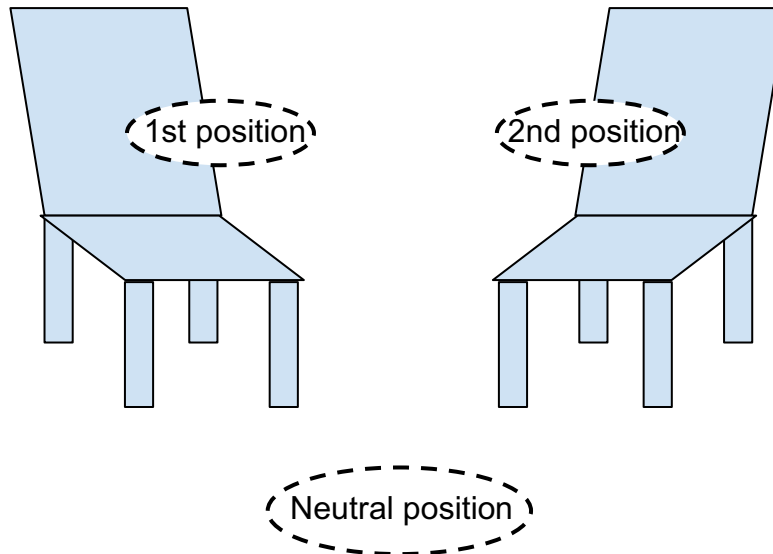
8. Once the above step is complete, the Manager should ask Ken (who was acting the role of Naomi) to stand up, and return to the neutral position. The Manager can again ask who sits on each chair, making sure that the feelings expressed in the 2nd position are dissociated. Use the useful ways given in the step 4 to ensure the feelings in the 2nd position have been relinquished. The Manager once again asks how the relationship between the two looks at this point. Ken may start to report a changed perspective.
9. Having reflected upon Naomi's possible thoughts, the Manager invites Ken to return to his original chair (i.e., the 1st position). The Manager then repeats to Ken what the (imaginary) Naomi reported. Having better understood Naomi's possible thoughts, feelings, goals and positive intentions, the Manager then asks Ken how he feels about his relationship with Naomi now.

If necessary, the above process can be repeated again to further explore the working relationship.

It is also possible to invite the employee to sit in the Manager's chair in order for them to

understand employee conflicts from a managerial position (in NLP, this is called the ‘meta-position’). The position change process can also be used (for example) to better understand a customer or a supplier’s perspective.

Figure 1. Positions used in the position change technique.

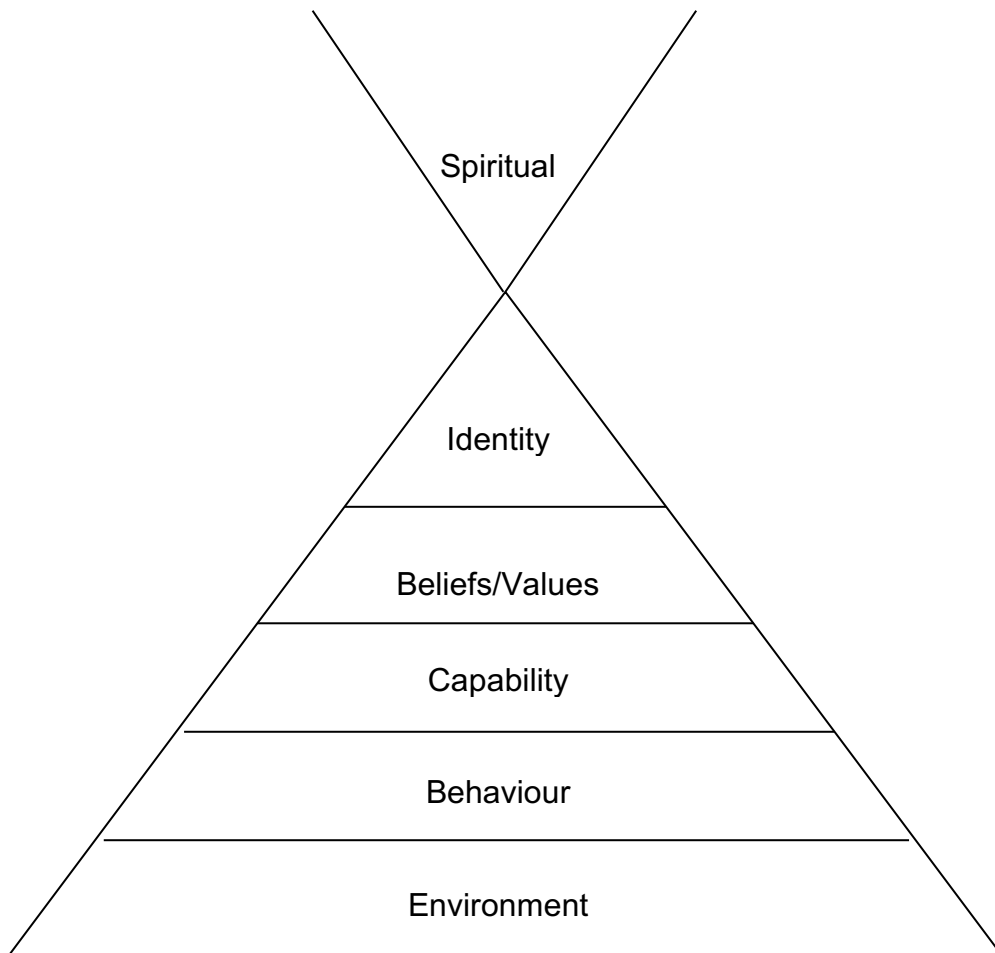


Example 2: Alignment of the Neuro-Logical Levels

Another NLP skill that trained NLP Japanese senior managers sometimes employ is that of alignment with the neuro-logical levels, which were developed by Robert Dilts (Dilts, 1996). This conceptual framework of six different levels was inspired by the theoretical foundations of learning and change (Bateson, 1972). The framework involves organising our experience into the following six levels: environment, behaviours, capabilities, beliefs/values, identify, and spiritual levels. Japanese managers use this framework to facilitate communication with their colleagues, and to create a team vision. The neuro-logical levels are often portrayed in a two-triangle figure; the bottom triangle represents the individual realm and the top triangle represents the social

realm. Though in some cases the lower levels could influence the higher levels, in most cases, the higher levels influence the lower levels. Therefore, it is important to determine ‘for what or whom, you work (spiritual level)’ and ‘who you are (identity)’, as the upper levels can change alter other levels (Yamazaki, 2007).

Figure 2. Neuro-logical levels



Dilts, 1996

Identifying each level is often helpful for creating a congruent individual identify as creating a congruent team identify, which can lead to high performance (Dilts, 1996). For

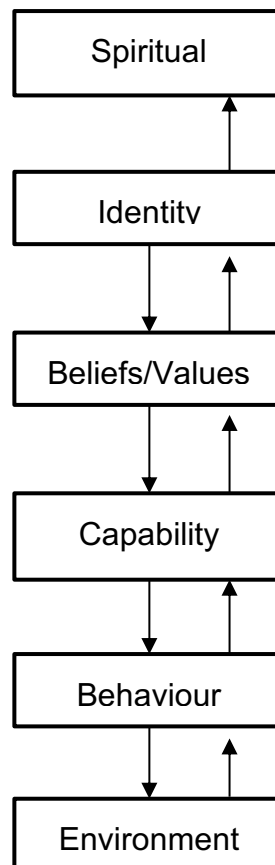
example, imagine a professional pianist or athlete that you know. Probably they are in the environment where they can access their practice facilities relatively easily (environment level), and they practice every day (behavioural level). They are able to play the piano elegantly or play a certain sport very well (capability level), and they probably have deep values-based belief relating to their profession (e.g., '*Music is so important to me*' or '*Baseball is what I live for*' – values/beliefs level). They identify themselves as a 'professional pianist' or 'professional athlete' (identity level). They may also receive pleasure in the social realm, and have some spiritual purposes for playing the piano or sport. The pianist may keep refining their skills even further in order to provide the healing/pleasurable sounds to the audience, and the athlete may keep practicing hard and pushing their limits in order to win the next game for their fans (spiritual level). The congruency they have is an essence of their high performance (Dilts, 1996). This also applies to leadership in organisations. Dilts analysed many notable leaders including Steve Jobs and Mohandas Gandhi, using the neuro-logical levels (Dilts, 1996).

A senior Japanese manager working within quality management of a leading automobile manufacturer used this framework as part of his team meetings. One aspect of his company's motto considers contributing to clients' happiness through a quality car life, which refers to the spiritual level of the neuro-logical levels. Based on this, his team discussed who they need to be or what kind of team identity they need to have, in order to provide a quality car life. Given they worked in quality management, they identified themselves as a quality management team that pursues perfect accuracy and foresees potential problems their clients may encounter, and that seeks to implement preventable solutions beforehand (identity level). The team valued attention to detail, and they believed that high quality influences the clients' wellbeing (beliefs/values level). The team have frequent meetings to share best practice, including at international quality

conferences (behavioural level). Their workplace has clear signs with visuals, and each worker's work process is visualised and transparent to their colleagues (environment level). Through this exercise of aligning the neuro-logical levels, the team were more able to acknowledge why they do what they do, and this helped to increase team performance and worker satisfaction.

The following is a method for enacting the alignment of neuro-logical levels. This can be done alone but many people find it easier to do in the presence of somebody who can listen to t each step. The task can be done at a desk, but it is often more powerful to do it spatially using a suitable sized room (see Figure 3; four steps in front of you, and one step behind);

Figure 3. Space to be used for the alignment of the neuro-logical levels



1. Think of your goal in the next few years. Imagine what you would see, hear, and feel when you achieve it. It is important here to experience the pleasure of this achievement, as it can help increase focus upon the following steps. For example, someone may say that they want to be a team leader in three years (let's call this person "Jane"). Jane may imagine herself sitting in a certain place in the office, and leading a team meeting elegantly. She might imagine hearing her team members or clients thanking her for her leadership. She may feel a sense of inner-authority and fulfilment in the role of team leader.
2. Keep feelings positive. When you achieve the goal, what is your self-image? How do you see yourself? Is there a title or nickname you would give yourself upon achieving the goal – a keyword that links to a sense of your identity? When you imagine yourself with this title or nickname, you should be able to more easily remember this positive sensation. In NLP terms, it is called an 'auditory anchor': every time you hear it (externally or internally), you should experience a certain sensation.
3. Make a step forward to the beliefs and values level. Think what you (who have achieved this goal) now value or believe. What would be important to you? What manner of thinking would you have? Ask yourself '*Why do you work?*', because the beliefs and values level is related to our motivation, which can be clarified by asking 'why'. For example, Jane's future-self as the team leader might believe that compassionate leadership is better than pressure-based leadership.
4. Now step forward to the capability level. What capabilities would you have, or would you be utilising predominantly when you achieve your goal? You may

want to describe the proficiency of the capabilities. This process will be useful when you make plans to achieve the goal, as it can illustrate specifically what you need to improve on. For example, Jane as the team leader might be using a high level of management capabilities and assertiveness to lead her team. She may also have a high level of capability in recognising the needs of the entire organisation.

5. Next, proceed to the behaviour level. When you achieve the goal, what will be your behavioural patterns? For example, Jane might be having a regular meeting with her team members as well as with executives. She might be undertaking some management training such as assertiveness skills or team-building skills.
6. At the base of the neuro-logical levels is the environment level. Where will you be once the goal is achieved? Will you be in the same office as you are now? What about other work environment issues? How will your time management be? Will you have more autonomy over your time? In Jane's case, she might be working in the same office, but at a different desk, where she can easily engage with all of her team members. She may be working more flexibly, allowing her to maintain a better work-life balance.
7. Next, revisit each step and then enter into the spiritual level. At this level, you think for what or whom will you be working. This is important because according to NLP, our potential is more fully utilised when we apply sponsorship principles. For example, Gandhi's relentless non-violence movement was for the independence of India. Jane as the team leader might be working in order to make her team members and organisation happy, which would lead to client satisfaction. This would help her to create a clear vision as the team leader.

The above procedure started with the identity level, as that is what many clients find relatively easy to clarify. However, if your colleague has already arrived at clarity in respect of some of the levels, it is acceptable to start from another level. What is important is to clarify the “experience” of the goal at each level, to foster congruent working toward the goal as well as an understanding of what is required in order to achieve it. Table 1 summarises how information can be elicited at each level (questions), what function each level has (targets), and what the role of each level is (role).

Levels	Questions	Targets	Role
Spiritual	<i>For what/whom, do you work?</i>	Vision & Purpose	Awakener
Identity	<i>Who are you as a worker?</i>	Role & Mission	Sponsor
Beliefs & Values	<i>Why do you work?</i>	Motivation & Permission	Mentor
Capabilities	<i>How do you work?</i>	Perception & Direction	Teacher
Behaviours	<i>What do you do in your work?</i>	Actions & Reactions	Coach
Environment	<i>When and where do you work?</i>	Constraints & Opportunities	Caretaker & Guide

Example 3: Neuro-Logical Levels in Communication

The discussion above suggests another application of the neuro-logical levels – communication (Yamazaki, 2007). Japanese managers have reported that the neuro-logical levels can help them to analyse their communication, including reviewing the effect that communication at a given level had on the employees. Being criticised at a higher level is often more psychologically painful than being criticised at a low level. The following exercise, that

requires you to read and identify with each of the below statements, explains how the neuro-logical levels apply to communication

1. *'The thing that is front of you is dangerous.'*
2. *'That behaviour you take is dangerous.'*
3. *'The lack of your capabilities is dangerous.'*
4. *'That way of thinking you have is dangerous.'*
5. *'You are dangerous.'*

*Statement 3 states 'the lack of' in order to make sense with the word 'dangerous'.

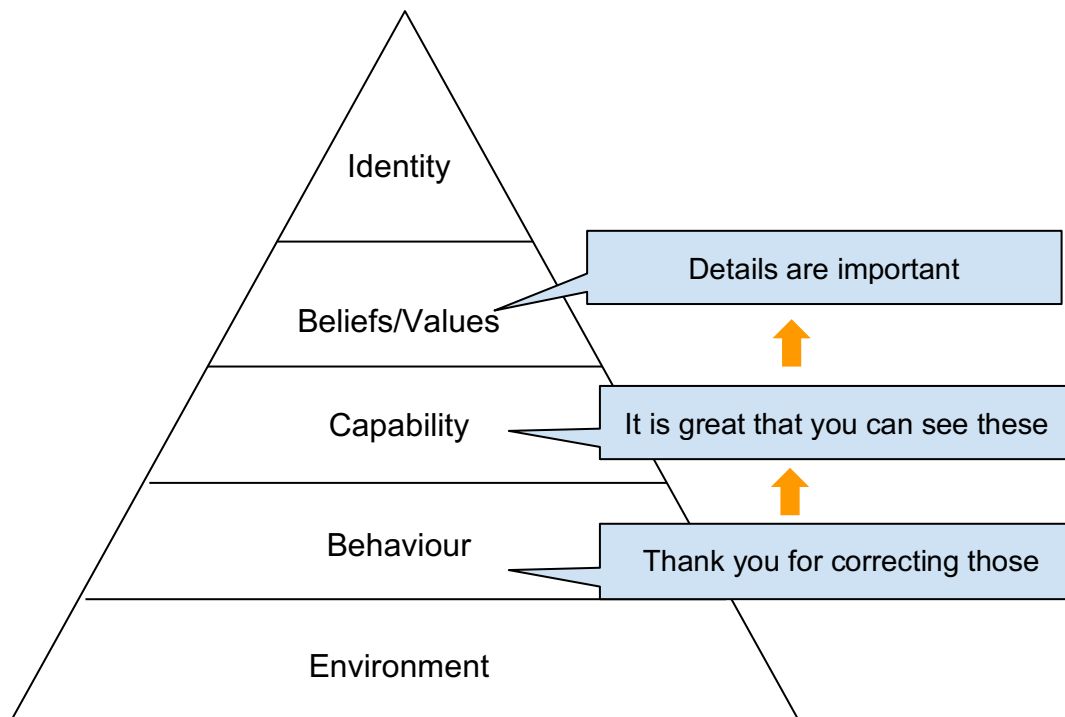
**The word 'dangerous' is just an example: You can change it to 'safe' or other words.

People typically report that while they feel 'danger' externally when they hear Statements 1 and 2, but feel it more internally when they hear the latter statements. Statement 1 relates to the environmental level; Statement 2 relates to the behaviour level; Statement 3 relates to the capability level; Statement 4 relates to the beliefs/values level; and Statement 5 relates to the identity level. Statement 5 normally has the biggest impact on people compared to the other statements. This is because criticism or acknowledgement at the identity level tends to affect person significantly, while communication at the environmental level tends to have less impact.

Accordingly, when a manager gives feedback to their staff, it is prudent to make comments at the appropriate level; most of the times it is at the behavioural level, thus you would comment on their behaviours. For example, if employees did something good (not extremely great, but good) at the behaviour level (e.g., proofreading a document), and the manager praises them at the identity level (e.g., *'You are great!'*), it does not reflect alignment with the neuro-logical levels.

In this case, praise should ideally be given at the behaviour level (e.g., ‘Thank you for correcting those errors’), before (if appropriate) moving up one or two levels (e.g., ‘It is great that you can see these details [capability level]’; ‘Details are really important [beliefs/values level]’).

Figure 4. The neuro-logical levels in communication



Example 4: Well-Formed Outcome

Defining a goal in a way that helps attain it, is important at a workplace. A manager needs to create a personal goal, team goal, and help employees create their own goals. While some frameworks are commonly used (e.g., SMART), NLP provides a comprehensive framework of goal-setting, considering the contexts, five-sensory domains, and required resources, etc. Japanese senior managers who are familiar with a variety of goal-setting methods and frameworks still often find NLP's well-formed outcome to be useful. Here eight NLP questions used to help formulate a well-formed outcome (often referred to as the 'eight-frame outcome'; Yamazaki, 2007).

Well-Formed Outcome (Eight-Frame Outcome)

1. What do you want? (Outcome frame)
2. How do you know when you have achieved it? What would be the visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic information? (Evidence frame)
3. When, where, and with whom would you achieve it? (Context frame)
4. How will other aspects of your life change when you achieve it? (Ecological frame)
5. What resources do you have already that are useful to achieve your goal? (Resource frame)
6. What stops you from achieving it? (Limitation frame)
7. What does achieving it mean to you? (Meta-outcome frame)
8. What is the first action required to achieve it? (Action frame)

It is important here that people state what they *do* want, and not what you do not want. A 'negative goal' refers to a goal that is defined with a negative sentence (i.e., the sentence that

includes ‘not’, ‘never’, ‘no one’ etc.), rather than something commonly regarded as negative in society (e.g., sad, depressed). This is an important distinction to make as NLP does not believe in positive and negative emotions *per se*. If you a colleague can only think of negative sentences, you can help them to convert these into positive ones using the following process.

1. State what you do not want. - e.g., *I don't want to be a manager like Tom.*
2. Why do you not want it? What are the qualities that make you think so? - e.g., *Because he does not listen to his staff, and takes all the credit of what his team has done.*
3. Which of your personal values do they violate? - e.g., *These violate my values of compassion and respect for my staff.*
4. So would you say that [Value 1], [Value 2]... are important to you (as a manager)? - e.g., *Yes, compassion and respect for my staff are important to me as a manager.* (If the answer is no, go back to the question 3, and re-define the values. You don't have to identify multiple values; often one is enough)
5. Based on those values, what do you want? Or who do you want to be? - e.g., *I want to be a manager who cares and respects my staff.*

The second of the eight well-formed outcome questions explores the evidence frame of the achievement, focussing on the five-sensory information. This is a unique aspect of NLP goal-setting – identifying the visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory, and gustatory information relevant to attaining the goal. Goal-setting is typically done with words but introducing sensory information can create a physiological difference that maximises motivation. For example, one can think about faces of one's family when the goal is achieved as well as what they might say and the voice tone they will use to say it. The same applies to the third question where clearly

identifying the context and environment associated with goal achievement can help to induce physiological and psychological responses that aid goal attainment

NLP practitioners often find the fourth question unique too, as it can highlight the ‘negatives’ associated with goal achievement. For example, overly focussing on the professional area of your life might negatively affect other areas of your life. Sometimes the very purpose of working can be sabotaged because the ecology of your goal achievement isn’t evaluated. The fifth question explores the resources to hand that can aid goal achievement. This can be an external object and an internal quality, and it can thus include a mentor, family members, facilities, past experience, and qualities of courage and/or resilience etc. Additionally, one should consider the resources that are lacking (and how they can be obtained) in regard to goal achievement.

The sixth question relates to limitations; what stops you from achieving the goal? It could be lack of experience or ability, but in many cases, limiting self-beliefs are the major obstacle. In this exercise, it is sufficient to just identify one’s limiting beliefs, because often they will be eliminated as one takes actions towards goal achievement. We are not going to describe the details here as it’s not the main purpose of this chapter, however at this point, you could start the process of belief change, which involves identifying the limiting belief, collecting counter-examples, disputing the limiting belief, creating an alternative belief.

The seventh, meta-outcome is about what happens after achieving the goal. A person may not want to achieve their goal *per se*, but there is some deeper meaning and purpose that they want to realise and satisfy. Finally, the eighth question identifies actions required to achieve your goal. By this point in this exercise, a person should have identified key information to help

achieve their goals and should thus be more motivated, wise and confident in respect of identifying actions.

The well-formed outcome can be used at an individual level and an organisational level. Also, it is useful to review and re-define the goal by frequently re-visiting these eight questions. A set of example responses to each of the eight questions is provided below.

Well-Formed Outcome (Eight-Frame Outcome): Example Responses

1. What do you want to achieve? (Outcome frame) - e.g., *I want to receive the manager's awards next year.*
2. How will you know when you have achieved it? What would be the visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic information? (Evidence frame) - e.g., *At the next year's award ceremony event in the department, my name is called, and I see my name on the screen. I see my colleagues celebrating it for me, hear their kind words, and feel joy in my chest. I hear me saying in my mind 'I did it!'*
3. When, where, and with whom will you be when you achieve it? (Context frame) - e.g., *Next December, at the ABC conference arena, with my colleagues.*
4. How will other aspects of your life change when you achieve it? (Ecological frame) - e.g., *It is a competitive award, so I may have to work a bit longer on weekdays. But I will make sure to spend quality time with my family on weekends. That will be my priority on weekends. My health needs to be taken care of. I will go to the gym for 30 minutes three times a week.*
5. What resources do you have already that are useful to achieve your goal? (Resource frame) - e.g., *My family gives me a sense of happiness and safety. I have good colleagues who are willing to contribute to the team's outputs. My company is generally supportive*

of a goof work-life balance. My high work engagement and passion for work are useful to achieve this goal. I am also a good empathetic listener.

6. What stops you from achieving it? (Limitation frame) - e.g., *I don't have enough experience in designing strategic sales plans, because my main background is in quality management, not in sales. This needs to be learned from training, mentoring, and on-the-job training.*
7. What does it mean to achieve the goal? (Meta-outcome frame) - e.g., *Achieving this goal would give me a sense of self-efficacy that I can do something. I would tell this to my family, and they would be proud of my effort at work. We would probably go on a nice vacation to celebrate this.*
8. What would be the first action? (Action frame) - e.g., *For the most part, I will just keep doing what I have been doing. But as highlighted in this exercise, strategic skills need to be learned. I will send an email to HR and my mentor about this, exploring training or study materials. Also, I will have some time tonight to think about fun things to do with my family on weekends.*

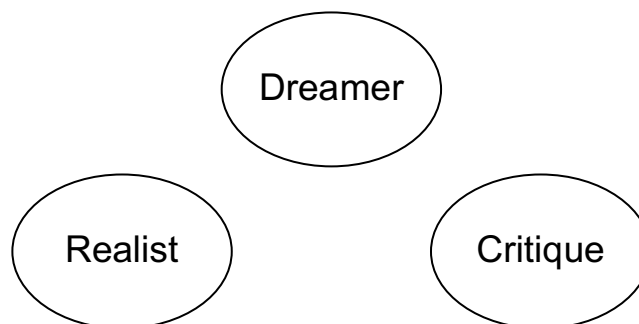
Example 5: Disney Strategy

The Disney Strategy was developed by Robert Dilts and is based on an analysis of how Walt Disney achieved his dreams (Dilts, 1998). One salient feature of NLP is modelling through thorough analysis (Bandler & Grinder, 1979). Dilts collected literature about Walt Disney and identified a common pattern in his dream-achieving, which is the development of the Disney Strategy. Japanese managers have reported that this strategy is enjoyable, and relatively easily to implement as it has only three positions to be explored. In one intervention study (Kotera &

Sheffield, 2017), participants reported that the strategy was particularly useful for them in terms of feeling intrinsic motivation and confidence. The Disney Strategy has also been reported as one of the most useful NLP skills by qualified career consultants in Japan (Kotera, 2018).

The Disney Strategy involves the three perceptual positions of dreamer, realist and critique (spoiler) positions. Walt Disney often envisioned his dreams with his business partners, one of whom was good at creating realistic plans, and the other was good at finding obstacles in the business' functioning. Each of the three individuals had a different role and function, yet working collaboratively they realised Walt Disney's dreams. In the Disney Strategy, one steps into each of the three positions shown in Figure 5.

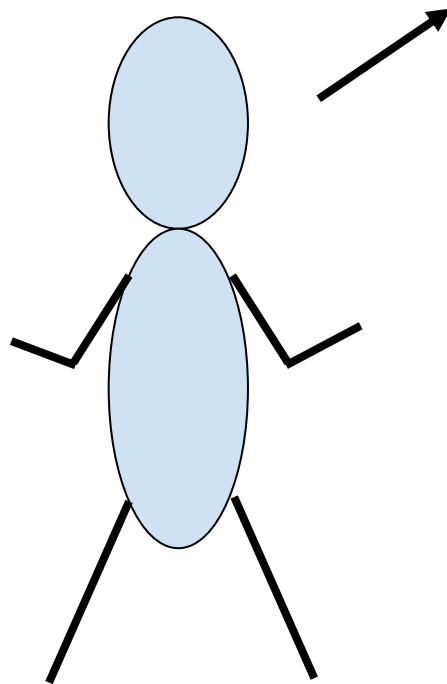
Figure 5. Three positions in the Disney Strategy



In the first position of dreamer, the focus is on creating a vision, based on what you want to do. The dreamer believes that anything is possible. The body posture of the dreamer is to set your head and eyes upward, and often it is helpful to open your arms and put your palms up. It's a symmetrical and relaxed posture. You think what you want in this position with a belief and

attitude of 'anything is possible'. You also want to identify the five-sensory information and context of achieving the dream, as well as the positive impact of doing so. The function of this position is to experience the pleasure of achieving the goal in advance. Remember in this position, you only focus on the dreamer, nothing else.

Figure 6. The Dreamer Posture



Useful Questions to Ask in the Dreamer Position

What do you want to do? (as opposed to what you don't want)

Why do you want to do it?

What will you see, hear, and feel when you have attained it?

What will you say to yourself?

When, where, and with whom will you be?

What are the benefits of achieving this?

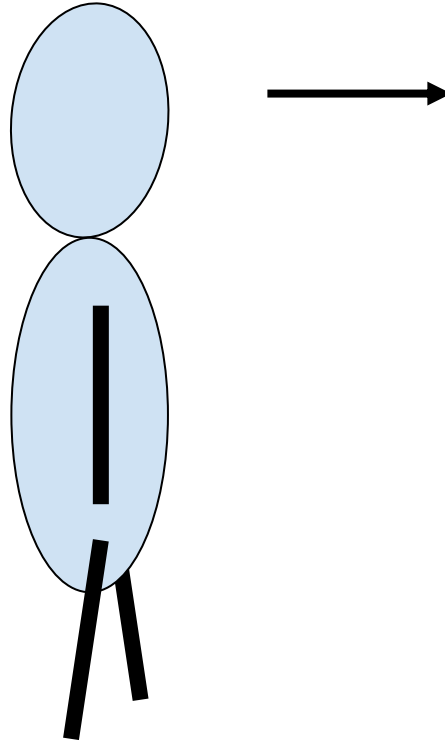
Where do you want this to take you in the future?

What's the meaning of achieving this dream?

Who do you want to be or be like in relation to manifesting this idea?

Once you have identified your dream, you move to the realist position. Your focus here is on planning – thinking about how (steps) to make the dream come true. The realist acts as if the dream is achievable, and thinks about what steps are required in order to achieve it. In the realist position, you keep your head and eyes straight or slightly forward. Again, it is a symmetrical posture. Clients sometimes prefer to adopt this position while walking on the spot, in order to facilitate their planning. In the realist position, you establish timeframes and milestones for progress. It is helpful to make testable measures to know whether you are moving toward the goal or away from it.

Figure 7. The Realist Posture



Useful Questions to Ask in the Realist Position

When will the overall goal be completed?

What will be the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd steps?

Who will be involved? (Assign responsibility and secure commitment from the people who will be carrying out the plan).

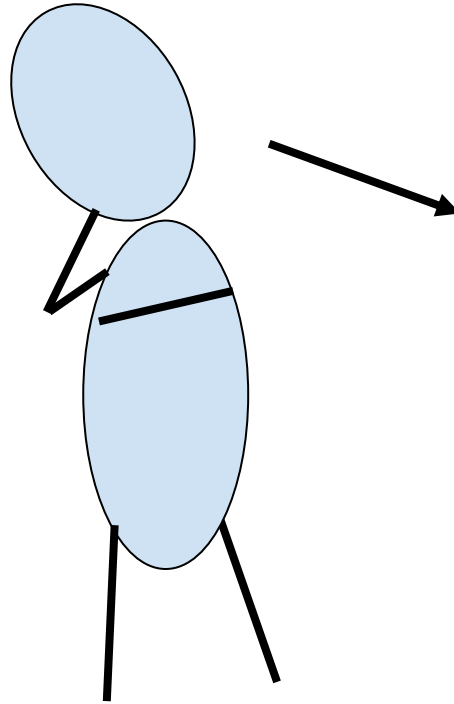
What will be your ongoing feedback to show whether you are moving toward or away from the goal?

How will you know that the goal is achieved?

Lastly, you step into the critique position, where you review the dream and plans. Your focus here is on finding what is missing so that you can prevent problems in the future. Your attitude is to consider what to do if problems occur. As you identify the potential obstacles, if

necessary, you can go back to the realist position to think about how to deal with those problems. The useful posture to take in this position is an angular posture with your head and eyes down and tilted. This posture helps you find out what is missing and needed.

Figure 8. The Critique Posture



Useful Questions to Ask in the Realist Position

Is there anything missing in this planning? If so, what can be done?

Will your work-life balance be okay? If not, what can be done?

Will there be anybody who may object to this plan?

What are their needs?

What are the positive gains of the present plan?

Do you think you will need a reviewing or break point? If so, when and how will you review/take a break?

What do you need to be careful of, while following through with the plan?

Sometimes it is also useful to take a meta-position, which is located outside of the triangle of these three positions. In an intervention study focussing on the Disney Strategy

(Kotera & Sheffield, 2017), participants reported that adopting the aforementioned order (i.e., first the dreamer, then the realist, and the critique) was most useful, and half of the participants felt most familiar with the dreamer position.

The Disney Strategy appears to integrate the eight well-formed outcome questions in one way or another. For example, in the dreamer position, you identify what you want, your sensory experience, context associated with goal attainment, and what happens after achieving the goal. These are similar to the outcome, evidence, context, and meta-outcome frames. The realist explores steps to be taken and resources to be used and needed, which are similar to the action and resource outcomes. The critique position considers what may be missing in the dream and plans, which is similar to the limiting and ecological frames.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have introduced specific examples of NLP skills used by Japanese senior managers in their day-to-day work. NLP has been utilised in organisational settings in Japan and is widely reported to foster promising results. However, a scarcity of credible empirical evidence for NLP has been criticised by academia for years, yet this does not mean that NLP-active workers should stop doing what works. Indeed, an absence of evidence of effectiveness does not necessarily equate to evidence of ineffectiveness. Furthermore, NLP researchers are currently working to bolster the evidence base by conducting more methodological rigorous NLP studies that can help to refine NLP practices. It is the present authors' hope that the specific NLP skills introduced in this chapter may help individuals seeking to maximise their effectiveness at work, as well as contribute to a healthy life outlook more generally.

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