The Importance of Neuro-Linguistic Programming in Training Business Negotiators

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Abstract

In a world where the use of persuasion techniques is in a constant increasing trend, in different domains, such as marketing, advertising, media, politics, education and even more in business, it is considered that these skills of persuasion should be continuously improved.

This paper aims at capturing the relationship between Neuro Linguistic Programming techniques and abilities needed, in order to succeed, in the field of business negotiation interactions.

More specifically, the questions that this paper will answer regard to the abilities that a negotiator has to have, how Neuro Linguistic Programming can improve these abilities, how the negotiator's behavior impacts the outcomes and how behavior can be modeled.

Based on a questionnaire, some negotiators' opinions upon the importance of verbal, paraverbal and also nonverbal communication abilities will be identified. Besides these opinions, a number of needs, in terms of developing interpersonal skills will be found.

Keywords: *Neuro-Linguistic Programming, business negotiation, verbal communication, non verbal communication, interpersonal skills*

Introduction

We are all negotiators in our everyday lives. Many of our negotiations not only affect our outcomes, but also other people's outcomes. In most of our everyday bargaining we aim for the best results, where inter-personal skills and training make the difference. Negotiation is a strategy by which individuals or groups find a solution for their differences. It is a procedure by which compromise or agreement is reached, while maintaining a strategic distance from conflict and question.

But what exactly are the skills a good negotiator has to have? How can Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) improve these skills? When bargaining, how does a negotiator must behave for an outstanding outcome? Moreover, how can we model our behavior through NLP? The aim of this paper is to reveal the insights of these questions. More specifically, this paper will focus on the importance of NLP in business negotiations. In doing so, we will use the survey presented below.

The Survey

The survey used in this research is a questionnaire with 15 questions and distributed to a population of 37 employees who were asked to fill in the questionnaire online, through a platform, and whose responses were taken as a basis of deriving the final results. Questions were designed using a variety of

styles. Free form response, single choice, and Likert scale questions. The survey was conducted through the survey tool available online, namely, "www.esurveyspro.com". Questions dealt with the respondents' opinion regarding the importance of inter-personal skills required for a negotiator. The last three questions are related to their awareness of the concept and application of NLP and their interest in this field.

The questionnaire consists of three different parts:

- Bio data: this part, questions 1,2,3,4 and 5, helps at receiving information about the respondents, such as age, gender, business type (s)he activates in, position in the company and the field of negotiation, sales or purchases.
- Negotiation skills: the second part of the questionnaire aims to reveal the negotiator opinion about the importance of interpersonal abilities used in negotiation. This will help the researcher to make a connection between the skills involved into a negotiation and the power of NLP to improve those skills. For this part the Likert scale statements based on agreement of statements were used. The scale has six levels starting with "strongly disagree" followed by "disagree", "disagree somewhat", "agree somewhat", "agree" "strongly agree"
- The last part of the questionnaire is built of three questions. Its main focus is to collect data about the NLP awareness in organizations and to evaluate respondents' inclination to accept, learn and practice NLP.

Data was collected from a sample of employees working in different business fields, having different positions and working either on sales or purchases or both, through a questionnaire filled online after the researcher sent the respondent the link for it. The sample was not selected randomly, but rather conveniently, depending on the fact that the employees approached work in different business fields, have been working as negotiators for some time, are holding different managerial positions and are willing to share their views. 37 persons were selected; these employees are working at different companies in Romania, Denmark, United States of America, Germany, Netherlands and France. The majority respondents come from the same environment, 28 work in services, 3 in merchandising and 6 in manufacturing, on top of that, the respondents represented different age groups and management levels. However, only 35 questionnaires were deemed All the questionnaires were deemed useful, ending with a response rate of 94.59%.

The findings from the present study indicate that NLP training for negotiation skills is an important constituent of the professional negotiators

outcomes.

Businesses around the world are using NLP techniques and methods to assist them to accomplish their corporate objectives. Those projects aim to train individual executives for a better performance and communication. NLP is useful in any circumstance in which two or more individuals must communicate in order to create results.

Results show (Chart 1) that 63.89% (23 out of 36) of the respondents are aware of NLP practices, however only 58.33% (21 out of 36) know that NLP can improve interpersonal skills (Chart 2).

In terms of interest in NLP training, 77.78% (28 out of 36) responded that they would train themselves if they knew that NLP could improve their negotiation skills (Chart 3).

The aforementioned findings, from the last part of the questionnaire, reflect that the NLP community is not facing a lack of awareness or interest in NLP training, but people do not know exactly what NLP is and what impact it can have on their interpersonal skills.

Negotiation, a routine strategy for achieving agreement in business interests, can be stimulated in undergraduate and graduate economic and business courses with NLP methods and techniques. NLP exercises develop a deeper level of understanding of the communication and behavior, which can be utilized in numerous business activities and individual circumstances.

In the first section, results show that the questionnaire was applied on respondents between 25 and 47 years old. The questionnaire was filled by both men and women. A percentage of 62.16% (23 out of 37) are men respondents and 37.84% (14 out of 37) are women. 45.95% (17 out of 37) of the respondents are managers. The results show that the majority, 75.68% (28 out of 37), activates in services area, while 16.22% (6 out of 37) and 8.11% (3 out of 37) activate in manufacturing and respectively in merchandising areas. More than a half, 52.78% (19 out of 36), of the respondents activate in sales, while purchasing negotiations represent only 19.44% (7 out of 36). The rest of 27.75% (10 out of 36) is the result of both sales and purchasing negotiators respondents.

The second part of the questionnaire is related to negotiation skills. This section shows the results related to the respondents' point of view about the negotiation skills needed for a professional negotiator in terms of communication. Statements 2, 5, relate to verbal communication. Statements 3, 4

and 7 relate to nonverbal communication, while 1 and 6 relate to both verbal and nonverbal communication.

The results show that the questioned negotiators are based more on verbal communication than nonverbal communication. Respondents "*strongly agreed*" in proportion of 48.65% (18 out of 37), followed by a percent of 40.54% (15 out of 37) for "*agree*" responses for statement 2 "*Questions are important into a negotiation*" (Chart 4).

For "*The way questions are asked is very important in a negotiation*" the results show almost the same opinion, 54.05% (20 out of 37) "*strongly agree*" and 29.73% (11 out of 37) "*agree*" with the statement (Chart 5).

Statements 1 and 6 are interpreted as having both verbal and nonverbal relevance because rapport, controlling and influence can be established both verbally and nonverbally.

As a result, the respondents *strongly agreed* in proportion of 27.03% (10 out of 37) and *agreed* in proportion of 43.24% (16 out of 37) with the first statement from the second part, "*Rapport is needed in order to understand the other's party*" (Chart 6).

For statement 6, "*Controlling and influencing the other party can help you achieve your goals*", 30.56% (11 out of 36) of the respondents *strongly agreed* and 47.22% (17 out of 37) *agreed* (Chart 7).

"Nonverbal communication had a substantially larger impact on forming impressions of others than speech content" (Ronald E. Riggio, 2005). "Nonverbal communication is critically important to the development of good interpersonal relationships, both at home and at work"(Ronald E. Riggio, 2005, p. 120).

Respondents were given the opportunity to express their opinion about the importance of self confidence, nonverbal communication, controlling and influencing the other party and "reading" the body language into a negotiation. Results show that 43.24% (16 out of 37) of the respondents *strongly agreed*, followed by 48.65% (18 out of 37) of the respondents *agreed* with statement 3, "*Self confidence is important in a negotiation*" (Chart 8).

The statement regarding nonverbal communication, "Nonverbal communication can help you build or break rapport" (Chart 9) had the result that

37.84% (14 out of 37) of the respondents *strongly agreed* and 45.95% (17 out of 37) of the respondents *agreed.*

"Depending on how good you are at influencing and negotiating with others, people will or will not respond positively to your requests, and they will or will not support you when you need it to be successful. Therefore, the skills involved in influencing and negotiation are critical to your success, both internally within your organization, and externally with customers, suppliers, and even in your personal life"(Chang, 2001).

The statement that refers to the importance of controlling and influencing in negotiation is statement 6 (Chart 10), "Controlling and influencing the other party can help you achieve your goals". The respondent's opinions about this statement are the following: 30.56% (11 out of 36) *strongly agreed* and 47.22% (17 out of 37) *agreed*.

Last but not the least, statement 7 (Chart 11)"Reading the other's party body language can help you achieve your goals" had the result that 21.62%(8 out of 37) *strongly agree*, 45.95%(17 out of 37) *agree* and 27.03%(10 out of 37) *agree somewhat*.

Analyzing the aforementioned results regarding the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication skills required into negotiation, we should be aware of the survey's limitations. Even though the sample size is less relevant into qualitative research, the sample quality should be taken into account. This research had a sample of 37 individuals, both men and women, managers and subordinates. It was applied only into business contexts such as sales and purchases. There was no quantitative research to see if negotiation skills are acquired during NLP training. There is a need for future quantitative research on this topic.

Conclusions

NLP investigates people's experiences that affect all parts of somebody's life later on. Science states that human experience is made through the five senses. NLP shows how one uses these senses, furthermore, in what sequence. The order in which individuals handle things and the associations that they make originate from their abilities and their limitations.

Often theories and methods of negotiation constitute a rapport within two

or more parties. Resources are limited and their distribution inevitably produces a loss-win situation. The unique winner temptation is the central fantasy in negotiation, regardless of the manner in which resources can distributed within a negotiation. Even if it starts from a "win-win" situation, it is done in order to preserve one's own win. The negotiator is therefore the one that uses its own communication skills to solve and discuss the different needs of the parties involved and to distribute resources as conveniently as possible from their own perspective.

As reviewed in the literature and in conformity with NLP, individuals travel through life not by reacting to the world around them, but by reacting to their map of this world. Therefore, individuals' experiences and perceptions are assembled through their senses. They filter and translate their experiences taking into account their interest, beliefs, childhood memories and state of mind, in order to fit in with what they know.

This paper has explored the potential for using the NLP methods to improve negotiation skills. While there remains considerable criticism of the methods in the business community, it is clear that many negotiators in the fields of business and NLP trainers see the methods as both pragmatic and having impact.

The principles of NLP cover modeling methods, belief systems, neurological levels, deletions, distortions and generalizations. In the case of research discussed in this paper there was a direct relationship between business negotiation skills and NLP theories. As the findings show, there is a critical need of communication skills in order to succeed in negotiations. The reviewed literature combined with the interviewees' opinions, regarding their own proficiency, can lead to important interpretations.

Given that 68.89% (23 out of 36) know NLP as a general coaching practice, only 58.33% of respondents know that this practice has techniques for the development and optimization of interpersonal skills. However, 77.78% of respondents believe that they would apply for NLP trainings if this practice would give them the opportunity to know and use their communication skills better. From the above results we can conclude that there is a demand for auxiliary education for training courses in the field of NLP and therefore a request for trainers who can offer these courses. We should also take into consideration the limitation of the sample of interviewees, the questionnaire was created only for the business field, in the negotiation sector.

As a multiplier effect of this study, given that the questionnaire was applied to one area of business activity, namely negotiation, and a total of 37 subjects, it is preferable in the future that this studio to be reapplied to several

activity areas with a larger sample. Also, a larger study would need a specialized team to do research in this area. Possibly a team of coaches is needed in order to create a training program for subjects interested in optimizing communication and interrelation skills, in various fields. Moreover, it would be practical to carry out a test after carrying the training to determine the effectiveness of these courses.

It is important to note that people in general, as demonstrated in this study as well, focus more on the informational content that they transmit through words in the detriment of the ability of exchanging information at the nonverbal level. Respondents' perception is flawed because research shows that nonverbal elements represent 55% compared to verbal elements which charged a rate of 7% and the rest of 38% which represents paralinguistic elements. Through NLP trainings those beliefs could be changed in favor of developing nonverbal communication skills. However, to question number 7 on the importance of decoding the nonverbal language of the business partner, the subjects responded in proportions of 21.62% (8 out of 37) as *strongly agreeing*, 45.95% (17 out of 37) *agreeing* and 27.03% (10 out of 37) *agreeing somewhat*, which shows that they use the information provided by the body language of the other but do not pay as much attention to the nonverbal message sent by themselves.

On the one hand, subjects of this study *strongly agree* in proportion of 48.65% followed by *agreeing* with 40.54% with the statement that relates that questions are important in the negotiation procedure, but on the other hand a great attention results ("strongly agree" 54.05% and "agree" 29.73%) for the way those questions are asked. We can conclude that in order to identify and also meet our business partner's needs, we need both the content of pertinent questions and, especially, an appropriate way in which we ask those questions.

The Meta-Model and Milton Model meet the needs regarding effective questioning resulted from the analysis questions 2 and 5 in the questionnaire.

The result of communication is streamlined by the rapport established between individuals since the subjects' responses to the questionnaire statement that emphasize the need of rapport for understanding the other party were "strongly agree" in proportion of 27.03% (10 out of 37) and "agree" in proportion of 43.24% (16 out of 37).

Control and influence over the business partners or customers are important in achieving objectives. Subjects responded in proportion of 30.56% (11 out of 36) as "strongly agreeing" and 47.22% (17 out of 37) as "agreeing".

By inference, the need and the openness of the people for the NLP techniques is demonstrated. This method should be better promoted and expanded in other fields. As a multiplier effect of this study, the reapplication of

it in a quantitative form is required to prove that if businessmen would use these techniques consciously, they would have better results in their business field.

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