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Neuro-Linguistic Programming Principles in Marketing Communication and Sales

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis entitled "Neuro-Linguistic Programming Principles in Marketing Communication and Sales". I duly marked out all quotations. The used literature and sources are stated in the attached list of references.

In Prague on .... Signature

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

Primary purpose of this work is to provide information about the concepts of NLP and its practical applications. The work is concerned with the practical application of NLP specifically in marketing. Additionally, it explains the role of NLP in personal selling along with principles used. Moreover, it is determined to identify NLP patterns and tools used in marketing communication and sales through both theory and practice. In addition, it provides wide range of possibilities to use NLP in marketing communications and sales, as well as suggestions how to do it most effectively. Data for the work was obtained from the research books and analysis together with the use of specific case studies on this topic.

The empirical part in form of a case study was conducted during the authors' professional occupation in the year 2013. Its aim was to collect and deliver analysis of the NLP tools used by the real company. It was oriented towards offering the major models, strategies and mechanisms used by the company in question as well as many interesting insights and short tips of how not only to apply stated but also to further modify use of NLP in business, namely marketing communications and sales. This work is an attempt to provide potentials of NLP use in business environment, as well as both possible benefits and shortcomings of such an approach. Clearly, there are many "pro et contra" regarding this issue. The focus of work certainly remains on the attitude to put NLP tools in use for bettering off business but not worsening off anyone else.

Key words: NLP, marketing communication, sales process, Milton, Meta, language, customers' maps

Abstrakt

Hlavním účelem této práce je poskytnout informace o NLP a jeho praktickém využití. Práce se zabývá praktickou aplikací NLP hlavně v oblasti marketingu. Navíc vysvětluje roli NLP v osobním prodeji spolu s používanými principy. Za další je účelem práce identifikace vzorců a nástrojů NLP využívaných v marketingové komunikaci a návrhy, jak je využít co nejefektivněji. Data pro práci byla získána z výzkumných publikací a analýz, společně s využitím specifických případových studií na toto téma.

Empirická část práce ve formě případové studie byla zpracována během autorova zaměstnání v roce 2013. Jejím cílem bylo sesbírat a analyzovat nástroje NLP používané ve skutečné společnosti. Byla orientována na poskytnutí hlavních modelů, strategií a mechanizmů využívaných analyzovanou firmou, stejně jako na získání zajímavých poznatků a krátkých tipů, jak nejen využít výše uvedené, ale jak i dále modifikovat využití NLP v praxi, zejména v marketingové komunikaci a prodeji. Tato práce je pokusem poskytnout informace o potenciálu využití NLP v podnikové praxi, a také představit možné výhody i nevýhody tohoto přístupu. Samozřejmě existuje mnoho „pro a proti" pro toto téma. Zaměření práce je však jednoznačně ve směru, jak využít nástrojů NLP ke zlepšení podnikatelských výsledků, ale bez zhoršení pozice kohokoliv jiného.

Klíčová slova: NLP, marketingová komunikace, prodejní proces, Milton, Meta, jazyk, zákaznická mapa.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

NLP   Neuro-Linguistic Programming

ROI   Return on Investment

Introduction

The purpose of this work will be to provide general information about the concepts of NLP and its practical applications. Furthermore, it will deal with the practical application specifically in marketing communications. Moreover, it will explain the role of NLP in personal selling along with principles used.

The author's goal will be to identify NLP patterns and tools used in marketing communication and sales through both theoretical and practical part of this work. In order to have success in this intention, wide explanation will be given on the NLP in general, explaining in simple and understandable ways basic concepts and approaches. In same way, possibilities to use NLP in marketing communications and sales will be provided, as well as suggestions how to do it most effectively. Moreover, all stated models of NLP use, strategies and author's personal views will be supported by the real company examples which use NLP in its business operations.

Opening chapter will give a short overview of the beginnings of NLP and the most often used theories. Accordingly, author's aim will be to provide more in depth explanations of the mentioned models. Aim will be to introduce readers with the meanings and principles of NLP. In addition, part of this chapter will be oriented towards the controversy issues regarding the use of NLP in general. It will conclude with the explanations of the idea how to use NLP tools in business in order to affect business environment.

Furthermore, chapter two will emphasize the use of NLP in marketing communication and its effective application in accordance with the need for integrated marketing communications. In light of today's globalization, perception of audience is crucial in success of marketing campaigns. Moreover, mass communication includes all types of mass advertisement tools including increased use of NLP principles. At the same time, it's been provided the effect of mapping customers and the way how to make it beneficial.

The work will proceed with both conscious and unconscious effects of the advertising. Through the lenses of language pattern, interesting divisions of language used in advertising will be presented. Correspondingly, Meta and Milton models of the language patterns will be explained in more depth.

The third chapter will give a short insight into the personal selling, discuss different approaches and present the stages of the sales process in personal selling. The work will proceed with an introduction to NLP principals in personal selling. Finally, the remaining of the chapter will focus on language patterns in the sales process.

Role of NLP in sales is to be explored in future. Author's aim will be to suggest a review of how NLP can make the selling process more effective by understanding people's behavior and implementing language patterns. The material available regarding this topic is quite limited and therefore it implies need for improvements in this field.

In addition, the author will govern through potential buying environment and ways how to take the potential buyer in the state when he made the purchasing decision.

To summarize, author will be determined to provide basis for practical application of NLP tools in marketing communications and sales.

Material used in this work is mainly based on published books and researches.

The practical part will deal with implementation of the NLP patterns and tools in the sales process. Furthermore, practical part will be based on the material provided by Marcus Evans management during his training at the company and for the purpose this work. Marcus Evans is a leading global provider of business intelligence.

The author used a chance to co-operate with its management during his traineeship in order to receive valuable data which he will use for the applications of clear guidelines regarding the sales process and the three most crucial processes of the sales.

The objective of the practical part of this work will be to provide analysis of the use of NLP tools by the real example company. Analysis will be based on the major models used, strategies and mechanisms used as well as additional tools that could be used in the sales process. The case will be concluded with the short author's analysis of the interview he conducted during his research.

The examples from sales script of the company were provided in order to support given views and theories.

Even though we are getting more aware of the possible use of NLP anywhere around us, these fields are still unexplored and this work suggests great potential if NLP tools would be applicable in ethical way in marketing communications as well as sales processes.

Moreover, author's opinion clearly states that much more of the research in this field should be conducted. This work will be his attempt to make as much as possible of understanding the idea to use NLP mechanisms in different business fields. Additionally, it will provide the insight in potentials of its use, as well as both possible benefits and shortcomings of such approach. Clearly, there are many "pro et contra" regarding this issue. Emphasis certainly remains on the attitude to put NLP tools in use for bettering off business but not worsening off anyone.

1   Introduction to NLP

1.1   Definition and pillars of NLP

Before stating the definition of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), separate parts of the term have to be defined. Neuro-Linguistic programming stands for (O'Connor, 2001):

- <u>Neuro</u> - how the mind works and the way that people think.
- <u>Linguistic</u> - how the language is used and how it is affecting people.
- <u>Programming</u> - how the actions are sequenced and the way how people achieve their goals.

In a broader way, neuro or neurological is referred to the pattern of thinking and how those patterns are influencing people and their results in life and business. Linguistic is related to process of learning to understand and master the structure of language in order to successfully communicate. Finally, programming represents the set of strategies that people use to achieve results and make choices; choices to perform better or enhance their potential and individual excellence (Knight, 2002).

There are many authors that gave a definition of NLP. According to Bandler (Bandler and Grinder, l979), co-founder of NLP, it is defined as "an attitude which is an insatiable curiosity about human beings with a methodology that leaves behind it a trail of techniques". On the other hand, "an accelerated learning strategy for the detection and utilization of patterns in the world" is the definition of NLP given by Grinder (Grinder and Delozier, 1987).

NLP is studying the way of thinking, behavioral patterns and language used by people to build the sets of strategies that will assist them to make decisions, influence people, negotiate and learn more efficiently (Knight, 2002).

NLP is perceived as a "parts model": metaphorical, positive and extensible more than just a theory (Hoag, 2013). Based on this concept, every person has a non-predefined multitude of identity "parts", some of which are prominent at one time, others prominent at other times. They all interact with each other in certain way.

Another way to present some of the main concepts of NLP is given by George Miller (1956) who delivered the idea that people can consciously take in only a very small amount of

the information that world offers. However, they notice and respond to much more without being aware. The NLP model holds central the notion of conscious and unconscious. It implies that all people have communication and learning skills but NLP will refine the mentioned skills so that people are given more choices and more flexibility about using them.

Another theory to emphasize the importance of communication in NLP is the one given by the concert coach Alix Louisa von Uhde who states the NLP as a systematic study of human communication (O' Connor, 2001). She has been successfully applying the concepts of NLP by providing executive coaching to highest leadership levels including CEOs, CFOs, COOs, executive management levels as well as entrepreneurs and professionals.

To conclude with the wide specter of definitions of NLP, the last one to mention has been given by Robert Dilts. Dilts (1990) stated that NLP is whatever works. It is rather one of the simplest and shortest claims regarding NLP. Nevertheless, it delivers clear message: it is about structure of people's behavior in response to external stimuli.

However, with no regard to any specific definition of NLP, its purpose is to be useful, to increase the choices of human beings and to enhance the quality of their life (O' Connor and Seymour, 1993).

NLP stands on 6 pillars which are also called essential elements of NLP thinking (O' Connor and Seymour, 1993). These are: you; the presuppositions; rapport; outcome; feedback and flexibility. An understanding of each of these elements is essential in order to have the benefits from applying NLP in daily life.

1. You

This pillar is of crucial importance and it states "You" as the center of NLP's activity. Any NLP intervention is focused on you and getting you to achieve the best results.

2. The presuppositions

These are the guidelines of NLP, ideas and beliefs that are taken for granted. Every NLP action is based on them and they are not disputed.

3. Rapport

The relationship which is established should be crucial to achieve the right results. Mutual trust and respect are essential. A good rapport will determine others to feel acknowledged and

be more responsive to one's words. The rapport could be built either instantly or after quite long time period. It is the unconscious sharing of patterns of thinking, feeling and speaking and therefore people in rapport respond more easily to each other (Linder – Pelz, 2010).

4. Outcome

Any NLP intervention focuses on an outcome. The basic thing is that it must be clearly distinguished what a goal to be achieved is. Therefore, every action in NLP will be undertaken so that desired goal is achieved.

5. Feedback

Acquiring information from the other person is also very important. Every step is based on what the previous one has achieved and the feedback reached. Accurate feedback relies on paying attention to all senses: looking at, listening to and feeling what is happening after each of your intervention.

6. Flexibility

Flexibility is necessary in order to go around a problem and find the most precise way to deal with an issue since in most of the cases the first approach is not the right one. Flexibility relies on choices - the more there are, the greater the chances of succeeding are, once the obstacle is faced.

1.2   NLP Historical overview - foundation and development

NLP's beginnings are rooted in a mutual work of John Grinder, an Assistant Professor of Linguistics and Richard Bandler, a psychology student who both had interests in psychology, linguistics and psychotherapy (O' Connor and Seymour, 1993). Together they studied work of a number of outstanding therapists with the aim to identify the patterns they used in therapies and pass them on to the others.

`These two researchers had no intention to start a new school of therapy. On contrary, their main concern was to produce models of therapies which turned out to be successful in practice over time and develop pattern how to teach them. Majority of their research was based on the findings of three scientists: Fritz Perls, the innovative psychotherapist; Virginia Satir, the family therapist; and Milton Erickson, the world-famous hypnotherapist. All three

therapists were very different in their personalities but they used quite similar patterns in their therapies.

Grinder and Bandler took already recognized patterns and refined them so that they formed a model which can be used for effective communication, personal change and learning. First publishing of these two researchers' discoveries were in between 1975 and 1977: The Structure of Magic 1 and 2 and Patterns 1 and 2, two books on Erickson's hypnotherapy work.

Huge contribution to their work was delivered by Gregory Bateson, the British anthropologist and writer on communication and Introducing Neuro -Linguistic Programming systems theory. His contribution to NLP has been noted as of central influence. As a prominent scientific figure in epistemology, he took interest in Bandler's and Grinder's work, and significantly helped in their research work.

From these initial models, NLP developed in two complementary directions. First one is in a form of a process to discover the patterns of excellence in any field. Second is the effective way of thinking and communicating used by outstanding people.

The intention of Bandler and Grinder to name all discoveries they made as Neuro - Linguistic Programming was motivated by desire to use the phrase that will cover three quite simple ideas. The ideas are that every human being experiences world through five senses and makes "sense " of the information on which will act later. Moreover, human beings use language to order own thoughts and behavior and to communicate with other human beings. Consequently, every human being chooses a way how to organize own ideas and actions in order to produce results. Their primary intention was to have a title that would reflect the principle that a person is a whole mind-body system, with consistent, patterned connections between neurological processes, language and learned behavioral strategies (Mathinson and Tosey, 2003)

As a result, NLP deals with the structure of human subjective experience; how we organize what we see hear and feel, and how we edit and filter the outside world through our senses. It also explores how we describe it in language and how we act, both intentionally and unintentionally, to produce results (O' Connor and Seymour, 1993).

1.3   Controversy regarding NLP

Since the beginnings, NLP has been the topic of controversy. The main reason is that it consists out of knowledge that has not yet been completely evaluated by scientific community. There are two groups of scientists taking different positions regarding the topic of NLP credibility. One group of scientists and academic community is considering the NLP as pseudo-science with no real benefits. The reason for that claim is that the NLP itself has not yet been completely evaluated and there are not many actual proofs of its practical application. Furthermore, as a discipline, NLP has not been classified accurately within scientific standards.

Opponents of NLP claim wide range of arguments, from those that cannot find place in scientific classifications to those that are claiming that main beliefs of discipline itself are completely false and therefore cannot be taken seriously. Many of those less skeptical ground their claims on the facts that NLP failed to prove consistent level of efficiency in conducted studies. Proven results of NLP therapy were explained as superficial and placebo, not as something that is the treatment with real results. (nlp-center.net, 2013)

In 1988, Druckman published the findings as head of research committee of United States National Research Council. In the journal on the topic of "Enhancing human performance: Issues, theories, and techniques", he stated that committee had two main findings. First was that the committee found very few evidence to support the assumptions of NLP or that it has any efficiency regarding the social influence. On the other hand, committee was impressed by the approach that was used to develop the techniques by observing the work of three experts in the field of psychotherapy (Druckman and Swets, 1988). These results led to the further discussion on the topic and there is still ongoing debate on the validity of theory and techniques used in NLP today.

1.4   NLP in business

NLP can be used in order to improve the influence with aim to achieve more, lead and motivate others, develop a vision for the business, coach others to perform well, handle tricky relationships and make effective change (Cooper, 2008).

To apply NLP in business environment might be more than useful since it brings along an increased chance to become an excellent influencer, as well as acquire the self-awareness entirely in order to achieve personal aspirations.

Every organization forms its own mission, vision, goals and objectives. In order to determine the right direction for organization, it is necessary to understand its current position and the possible avenues through which a certain course of action will be delivered (Mckeown, 2012). Vision is very important and people can connect to the vision and believe in it. Visions are meant to communicate something and metaphors are used all the time when one tries to communicate them. Metaphors have an important role in this case since "something can be explained in terms of something else" (Cooper, 2008). Therefore, communicating an organization's vision through metaphor is quite powerful. The reason is that unconscious minds will absorb metaphors quickly and make own sense of them, even when these are someone else's thinking. When you describe something metaphorically, visions come to life. The idea behind using the metaphors is that the words will simply and quickly communicate something that is quite complex.

However, not every metaphor is valuable and effective. We are all different, therefore in order to have effective vision, one must think about lining up the culture and language behind so that it concerns every member of the considered team. Vision must be talked about all the time as well as communicated in a right way, otherwise it turns out to be useless.

All people involved must understand, believed, and commit to it. In order to effectively communicate the vision there must be clearly set the outcome or goal of what is wanted to happen after the information is passed. Moreover, one must know which member of the organization has to know the vision and who has to know which details in particular. At last, after carefully choosing the audience and the means to communicate it, there must be formulated a clear program of how to proceed with further actions. The key part of the entire above-mentioned process is to use the sensory language once the vision is to be communicated. "A vision makes much more sense if you tell people what they're likely to see, hear and feel" (Cooper, 2008).

When trying to conduct the business, organizations are highly probable to face a challenge of either having a clear vision but no set actions to proceed and apply, or

implementing the action without a clearly set the path and vision of what is meant to be achieved (Mintzberg, 1994). Key is to have both the vision and action in accordance. In addition, this is possible when people are involved which is in turn possible when they are influenced effectively. The use of sensory language is a key aspect to begin with. It is more powerful at engaging people since it triggers senses rather than requires cognitive effort that more abstract or objective talks need. In general, language can make reference to any or all senses by deliberate use of appropriate sensory words. Even though everyone can detect five senses, there is always a tendency to prefer one to the others. As a result, there can be used visual metaphors or sound based ones and so on (Rosenblith, 2012). In order to influence employees, business partners or consumers there is a need for valid and proper assessment of which technique to use.

When trying to use NLP in business, particularly speaking of vision itself, the focus must remain on values and believes. Beliefs and values distinguish organization. They become a part of everyone's thinking and shape the organizational culture. The most importantly, same as personal believes and values, organizational beliefs and values may be outside of conscious awareness (Cooper, 2008).

Goals and therefore a vision of the company is more likely to be accomplished when there is a climate of positive believes. Accordingly, leader of a certain company must communicate positive messages such as "We can do this" or "We are best at what we do" as well as "You are right for this job" etc. This way of communication to the workers will create a picture in their minds that even if something used to seem impossible is indeed achievable. The positive believes are induced in the organization with positive messages as two previously mentioned. Moreover, these messages have to be primarily about capabilities and what people can do.

In addition, values are very significant too. Precisely, what distinguishes values from believes is the fact that former are personal and compared to believes they contain an emotional element. The values give a sense of purpose and the concept of what really matters to employees. These are often, if not always, abstract concepts such as security, freedom, making a difference, happiness fulfillment, love, sense of belonging and so on (Cooper, 2008). If the leader of a company is able to show support for these values and identification of

the company with employees' personal values, the work that will be delivered from employees will be more effective and driven towards success. When there is no accordance in values, the feedback and motivation of people in the organization will turn to be extremely difficult.

The most appropriate way to motivate and not only communicate what should be done in a company is when the words get a shared meaning for every member of the company. This is possible by setting an example delivered by the people at the top who start to create the desired outcome and model it for all employees.

The words which a leader will use to communicate the company's goals, objectives and the vision itself must be carefully chosen. When leaders formulate ideas, analyze information and draw conclusions, they actually do what is known in NLP as the deep structure of experience. The deep structure contains thoughts and ideas that are not related to the language itself. Afterwards, in order to express these thoughts and ideas they are transformed into words, gestures and movements. The biggest concern is to have a wanted message delivered with a surface structure exactly as the leader wants, since what employees see is just this surface structure. Although the deep structure incorporates values, believes, attitudes and emotions, the key of the communication is the surface structure. Surface structure is actually what makes conversation possible. (Cooper, 2008)

When communication is based on surface structure there is a great risk imposed since not all that creates the message is included and many details have been removed. Here, in order to influence the business partners, employees as well as target customers one needs to be careful to use it in the best possible way, and this will in turn provide powerful communication tool.

Exactly this might be the key to successful communication that would lead to the good business operating. The principle can be explained by the Milton Model, which works well when one does not want people to have all of the details. Instead, one wants the listener to make his own sense of what he is being told. Therefore, one speak from the surface structure and others filter what they hear through own personal experiences, beliefs, and patterns. In

this way of business communication words turn to be more appealing since it would engage people emotionally.

This internal communication process between the leader and workers as well as among workers has a large portion of importance in order to successfully motivate everyone employed in the organization. Employee newsletters, briefings and gatherings provide the opportunity to share stories and impact the value creation processes. In this way, one can make suggestions to people how to conduct the business operation, what is the best product or service to buy and so on without getting caught up in the details which people's conscious minds will wish to analyze and discuss.

There are number of patterns that could be used to encourage and motivate the team at work or business partners. They could be influenced by talks where the pattern of leaving out the key information is left out because of the wish to have the listeners ask themselves questions and create their own answers. NLP denotes this way of communication as deletion and there are few different types depending on what is left out. In particular, there can be a statement where something very important is missing and it is up to the listener to decide on the specifics (Cooper, 2008). An example might be the leader of a team saying that the team will succeed, but only that. Anyway, means and time how to do so are not specified. Another way to motivate is by using the comparative deletions. An example to explain this concept is claiming that the product or service one company delivers is better, with no saying comparing to which competitor. In this way point of comparison is given to the customers. Previously mentioned examples are just some of the patterns that are often used to make a significant impact on others not only in business environment.

Another quite effective way to communicate either to the business partners, team members or consumers is by telling the stories. Anecdotes and metaphorical stories are a great way of communicating with the listeners' unconscious minds and influencing how people think. Real life stories about similar experiences are more than influential since they make the listener feels more identified with someone else. In a quite similar manner stories about something that has a similar structure or form as the message one wants to convey, but with a different content are influential too. Business leaders are increasingly using metaphors and anecdotes to communicate especially when they are determined to find a quick way to

describe a complex issue, teach something in a memorable way and change how people are feeling or reduce opposition.

This vagueness implied by Milton Model is useful in communicating with groups or large audiences; in communicating to marketplaces or one to one and lastly in e-mails, letters, reports and in advertising.

Milton language is commonly used in public speaking, particularly by politicians when some points are left out and given to the listeners to conclude and process. At the same time, it is used in advertising not only to leave it on the consumers to conclude something but also to give a vague comparison and in general terms make consumers feel better about the product in question. (Cooper, 2008)

Another type of application of Milton language is in one-to-one situations when there is a need to motivate colleague or to get a "yes" on agreement. At the same time the use of this model is quite effective when one is willing to coach others in order to improve their performance. "Coaching is highly supportive way of working with others" (Cooper, 2008). Key coaching behavior is questioning and supporting others in order to create solutions to problems and to attain goals. This is something that can happen while chatting while having a coffee or during the official structured sessions. Nowadays coaching is seen as a worthwhile investment. It is time consuming, however there are many examples to support the claim that not every coaching takes a long time. The idea behind coaching in business model is that one can coach anyone - colleagues, those who are supposed to report and the boss they have to report to. Coaching allows building more effective relationship between the team members as well as using every day experiences to help other learn. The most importantly, it creates a more productive working environment for everyone in the organization.

NLP offers a wide range of models to use in coaching governed by philosophy that the role of coach is to support others so that they can grow their self – awareness, identify what they want, build their flexibility and develop more choices to think, act, and react.

In addition, once one devotes time and effort to coach someone else, (s) he can improve own personal effectiveness too. The NLP principles that are of particular importance

when trying to affect someone in form of coaching state that first of all people have all the resources they need; that if what you are doing is not working, you should do something different and that the choice is better than no choice. (Cooper, 2008)

It is very important how to put in use the NLP tools when working in business environment. Moreover, they should be implemented in such a way to help someone else create self – awareness; notice the patterns and build flexibility.

One more way to affect people involved in a business environment other than Milton's one is founded in Meta model so called the meta mirror exercise, which is a useful NLP tool for helping others to assume different perspectives and perceptual positions. This NLP approach encourages people to act as if they are stepping into another person's shoes. It allows people to move between different positions, and makes them aware of what they will do or say next and how it will affect others. This can be seen as significantly important in business communications, in particular in negotiations, customer service, advertising, changes in communication, selling, product and / or service development and labor relations. No matter what, the line of reasoning is that being aware of which position one prefers can be quite useful, especially if moving into another position could help when dealing with certain challenges. (Cooper, 2008)

This exercise suggests that one can take position of self, other and observer so called first, second and third positions respectively. Namely, what is important for doing any kind of business is that Identify a complex work situation that this exercise can be applicable when it involves more than one stakeholder, in which one wants to have more influence.

At the same time very important point to keep in mind is the interpretation of the other side, which is to be influenced. In situation like this, there is a possibility for distortion to occur. It happens when people filter their experiences and notice or remember certain things according to their own map of the world, rather than the reality of what is happening or has happened.

To sum it up, there is a wide specter of choices how to apply some of NLP tools in business environment. What really matters is to start from a clearly stated position in a clearly defined manner towards clearly determined goals to be achieved.

2 NLP in marketing communication

2.1 Definition and role of marketing communication

Marketing communications or promotion is the most visible instrument of marketing mix. Marketing communications "involve all instruments by means of which the company communicates with its target groups and stakeholders to promote its products or the company as a whole." (de Pelsmacker; Geuens; van den Bergh, 2007)

Fill and Jamieson (2006) gave a wider definition and defined marketing communication as a "management process through which an organization engages with its various audiences. By understanding an audience's communications environment, organizations seek to develop and present messages for their identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, they encourage audiences to offer attitudinal and behavioral responses." According to the authors, this wide definition has three parts. The first part is related to the fact that marketing communications has to be used for engagement with audience. The second part is related to the audience, stating that communication process should be based on the behavior and needs of the audience. Third part of this definition is related to the cognitive process. In other words, companies have to measure the result of marketing communication in order to receive the feedback from which they will benefit in the future (Fill and Jamieson, 2006)

Nowadays, marketing communications has to be integrated. When creating the marketing communication strategy, it has to be based on two principles; consistency and synergy (De Pelsmacker; Geuens; Van den Bergh, 2007). In other words, marketing communication strategy has to be consistent. All communication instruments need to be pointed into the same direction without conflicting each other in order to gain maximum effect. Furthermore, all marketing mix instruments have to be designed in the way that they are adding value by supporting each other. That represents the core idea behind integrated marketing communication.

The main reason for the integration of the marketing communications is that the mass communication is becoming less effective nowadays. There is a need for marketing strategy that is directly influencing the customer. That is why, in order to assist the mass

communication, other communication instruments need to work hand in hand to achieve the desired effect.

The role of marketing communications is not related just to the product, it is promoting the organization as well. In today's market, there is a significant role of the organizations in the perception of the audience. In the age of globalization with very large number of products competing for the place in the market, organization's image can make the difference.

2.2 Marketing communication mix

The marketing communication mix consists of tools used in various combinations and different level with the goal to communicate with targeted audience. Fill and Jamieson (2006) recognize five principal marketing tools. Those tools are:

- advertising
- sales promotion
- public relations
- direct marketing
- personal selling

In addition to that, there are four more tools as a part of marketing communication mix: sponsorship, point-of-purchase communication, exhibitions and trade fairs and e-communication (De Pelsmacker; Geuens; Van den Bergh, 2007). These mentioned tools are divided to two groups.

First group is referred to as above-the-line marketing communication and it represents mass communications.

The second group contains personal communication tools and it is referred to as below-the line communications. The differences between the mass and personal communications are presented in the following table.

Figure 1: Personal and mass communication comparison

	Personal communication	Mass communication
Reach of big audience		
Speed	Slow (selling, faster (direct marketing)	Fast
Cost/reached person	High	Low
Influence on individual		
Attention value	High	Low
Selective perception	Relatively lower	High
Comprehension	High	Moderate-low
Feedback		
Direction	Two-way	One-way
Speed of feedback	High	Low
Measuring effectiveness	Accurate	Difficult

Source: De Pelsmacker; Geuens; Van den Bergh, 2007

Mass communication includes all types of mass advertisement tools. On the other hand, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing are included into the personal communication tools.

2.3   Psychology behind communication

To understand how people receive the message it is necessary to analyze how they perceive reality. Bandler and Grinder (1979) gave a basic model of how people perceive the world around them. Authors pointed out that humans create their own model of the world of reality in three different ways.

During the modeling process, people tend to delete one part of their sensory input in order to avoid being overloaded with information from outer world. Most of the time humans do that without being conscious about it; they are doing it subconsciously. However, sometimes deleting the crucial pieces of information can lead to negative results.

Second way of processing the information is trough distortions. This modeling process allows human brain to shift the experience from the sensory input. In other words, through imagining and fantasizing about the past events and the ones that could happen in the future.

The third and final process is generalization. This means that the person is creating their own experience according to their perception of reality and then creates a category from that experience. Generalization is allowing people to operate more efficiently from one context to another. Furthermore, this creates the process of patterning which influence people in terms of relating the experiences that they perceive as similar (Bandler and Grinder, 1979).

During those three processes, people create their own filters which influence on how they perceive the message that they are receiving. Moreover, every experience is individual and although there is only one event that occurs, every person will add some of their own personal meaning to it.

Differences in real facts and human perception of the event, in terms of the language, makes a difference between two structures of natural language. First is the surface structure which represents the actual words or sounds spoken by person or in the case of writing, the words written. This surface representational system has its deeper structure. The deep structure represents the information and our own experience of what observers understood from the message (Bandler and Grinder, 1979).

Looking it from the perspective of one written sentence, it has two meanings. The sentence itself represents the surface structure and the meaning for the observer is incorporated into the deep structure. The process that links the surface and deep structure is called derivation.

Very often the difference between the surface and deep structure can create an issue between the sender and the receiver of the message. This is the reason why marketers are very careful in the creation of the advertising message when communicating with target audience. For example, very often marketers change the text of advertisement when entering the unfamiliar markets; different values can be interpreted differently in different religions and cultures. Therefore, in this case the alignment between the surface and deep structure is crucial.

2.4 Communicating to persuade

There has been noticed high level of difficulties faced by NLP Practitioners once they decide to use their NLP knowledge to make other types of businesses more successful. According to his research, Tom Hoobya (Hoobya 2008) clearly presents the concept of correlation between direct response marketing and NLP claiming that direct response marketing works so well because it fits directly into basic human psychology.

Once one distinguishes between market and a consumer and their correlation, there is a possibility to apply basics of human psychology to the above mentioned correlation.

Taking a look at the market, there must be set a priority to get customers to know customers better than at the current stage of research. The motive behind it is quite simplistic, since every possible customer has own thoughts, memories, recalls, fantasies. In the world of professionals these are called maps. We as possible target consumers all differ at least in minor points of our maps since we do not have completely same maps no matter how similar we are.

The key for successful marketing is to address the communication to the cluster maps of the possible customers only. These maps are in their basis made up of pictures, sounds, feelings, smells and tastes. They are so called "language of the senses" and our brain uses them to record our experiences. The message intended to be communicated must have a power. This power is given once marketers use this kind of language. The key is to cause the reaction coming from the target consumer. It has to be physical or sensory only and it has to use verbs or nouns. These metaphors are highly important since they are very memorable due to their higher sensory nature and associative cues. (Hoobya, 2008)

In addition, one cannot forget to mention that a great part of the effective communication is aimed at the unconscious. It is manipulative and it brings along many discussions.

Key to succeed in effective marketing is to relate to the consumers in emotional way. Universal emotions, needs and values should be linked to the appeal of the marketed product or service.

Direct response marketing must be about both information and persuasion of consumers. Marketer has to bear in mind the idea that communication is not a solo act. It takes place somewhere between the communicator and the receiver. And the receiver is the one who

decides what the meaning is. Therefore, consumers must be very well informed and afterwards persuaded based on the information served to them. (Hoobya, 2008)

2.5 Language in advertisement

From the point of language, advertisement can be defined as „an organization of text that provides information about a product or service along with an anchorage of image that suggest some cohesion or logical linkage leading to some relevance or meaningful interpretation to the target consumers" (Dattamajumdar, 2006). Language patterns in advertisement are modified and shaped according to the goal, product and target group. Except of the conscious message that advertisement delivers, success of the advertisement also depends on the level of unconscious effect that advertisement has on the targeted group. From the perspective of language pattern, advertising text can be divided into the following groups (Dattamajumdar, 2006):

- Message Reduction Ad-text - with the goal to get the attention of audience, these messages in advertisement tend to be short. Those messages are in the forms of slogans, short sentences that are very „catchy" for the one that is listening or reading.

- Discursive Ad-text - this type of advertisement is made in form of discourse, where various social, cultural, political and economic factors are involved. In this type of advertisement text, aimed effect needs to be identified by the audience.

- Allusive Ad-text - this type of advertisement include every-day situations for the targeted audience. It can include events, story or description that is very familiar and audience can easily relate to that situation.

- Prosodic Ad-text - this type use language rhymes, repetitions, songs in order to get the attention of the audience. The goal is to get the audience very familiar with the text and remember it. It often includes popular songs, tunes or poems.

- Declarative/Assertive Ad-text - advertisement in which the specific idea, fact or truth about the product or brand is shown. In this type of advertisement metaphors and personifications are often included.

- Didactic Ad-text - this type is learning oriented. It includes directions or teaching patterns. It also includes connection of this type of product with certain social benefit for the consumer.

In advertising, language patterns are changed in order to have more efficient effect on the audience. In other words, they are made in the way that captures viewer attention, consciously and subconsciously.

2.6   Milton and Meta model - Artfully Vague Language

Inspired by Milton H Erickson, Grinder and Bandler modeled his work into the language patterns. Those patterns are forming the foundation of the Milton model in NLP, the language in which the meaning is vague. In that case, when the language construction is vague, people can selectively use what they want from that language; in other words, take the meaning that is the most appropriate to them (Ready and Burton, 2010).

Milton model represents „a set of language patterns that you can use to take somebody into a trance state, an altered state of consciousness, in which they can access unconscious resources, make changes, and solve their own problems"(Ready and Burton, 2010). The goal of the Milton model is to reduce the number of details in the language. By making it vague; it is more acceptable to the people.

2.6.1   Milton model language patterns

Milton model recognizes three basic kinds of patterns in language. Those language patterns are following (Bandler and Grinder, 1979):
- Deletion
- Generalization
- Distortions

Deletion

In the process of listening and speaking, the brain is filtering one part of the information. That process is happening because of the fact that people receive too many information and it would be impossible for them to consciously process every one of those. That is the reason why brain filters certain part of the information and that process is called deletion.

Deletion represents selective attention, allowing the person to fill the gaps in the information; in other words, to add the pieces of the information to create an image (Ready and Burton, 2010). Regarding the language patterns, it provides the basic information on which the receiver of that information adds details. It basically gives the receiver, the person that is receiving the information, the possibility to insert their own details and create the image that is the most appropriate to their perception of reality.

Related to marketing communications, it allows every person affected by the advertising message to create their own image about the product or service. Furthermore, it will position the product or service in the way that the person will create the perception about how that product satisfies his or her needs. In the following table there are some examples of the deletion language.

Figure 2: Language of Deletion

Type of Deletion	Example of Deletion
Simple deletions - statements that have something important missing	The statement 'We're going to succeed' doesn't specify exactly who is going to succeed, at what, when or where. Listeners are left to decide for themselves what the specifics are.
Comparative deletions - statements in which the point of comparison	The statement 'Our internal systems are better' doesn't point out what the systems are better than. Listeners must identify their own points of comparison.
Nominalisations - statements in which action or process words (those good old *verbs* or 'doing words' from your school days) are used as if they're nouns.	In the observation „Communication isn't good", the word *communication* is a thing (a noun), but it involves a range of activities - none of which you go into detail about. Listeners are required to fill in the gaps for themselves.
Unspecified verbs - create statements	The goal „We're going to delight our customers"

where the details of the action are undefined.	sounds positive – but you aren't saying how specifically you plan to delight them or how your customers' delight may look and sound. Listeners must supply these details.
Unspecified referential indices - basically means the object in a statement isn't specified. Instead of mentioning a specific problem or issue, you substitute *it, them, they*, or *that.*	The statement „It may continue to be challenging" acknowledges that a problem exists – but doesn't outline what the problem specifically is. Identifying the problem is left up to listeners.

Source: Cooper, 2008

Generalization

The second set of language patterns are based on the process of generalization. People tend to generalize from their own experience in order to form opinions and beliefs. Moreover, maintaining those opinions and beliefs are depending on person's generalization process (Cooper, 2008). The ability to generalize helps the person in learning process making it more time and energy saving.

However, although it is very important in learning process, ability of generalization is also limiting. When generalization is related to the bad experience, it is very difficult to change the opinion and influence that experience. Stereotypes represent one of the most frequently used generalizations. In the following table examples of generalization in language will be presented.

Figure 3: Language of Generalization

Type of Generalization	Example of Generalization
Universal quantifiers - words such as *always never, everyone,* and *no one.* Including these words in your statements can make your message seem stronger and more credible.	While you can't prove a statement like „Things always work out for the best", saying this to a discouraged person can be reassuring and positive.
Modal operators - words such as *can't,*	The statement „We must pull together and make

must, should, need, ought, can, and *have to*. These words pump up the intensity of any of your action words.	this happen" is more than merely telling people what to do – it's a call to action and perhaps even dynamic change.
Presuppositions - assumptions or things that can just be taken for granted by the listener	The statement „We'll be celebrating when we hit the target" suggests that there is no doubt that the target will be hit - it's a given.

Source - Cooper, 2008

Distortion

In the process of communication, people distort what they are hearing and seeing by incorporating their own experience. This is very often the process that creates misunderstanding. Furthermore, in those cases, people are not consciously influencing their experience; they are misinterpreting the information they receive (Cooper, 2008).

In other words, people tend to change the information they are receiving according to their own experience. As mentioned, those interpretations of reality do not necessarily represent the truth. Distortion often happens when one part of experience is changed according to the situation in that specific moment. The downside of the distortion process is that, often in combination with generalization, can be undermining. In the following table few examples of the distortion language will be presented.

Figure 4: Language of Distortion

Type of Distortion	**Example of Distortion**
Cause–effect distortions - claim a direct relationship between two events, using words such as 'makes' or 'means'.	„Seeing this month's figures will make you optimistic for the rest of the year" - here there is a suggested direct relationship between seeing one month's results and feeling optimistic for the year. The person is not having attention put on any other feelings, or any of the possible factors that could affect the year's performance.
Implied cause–effect distortions - suggest a cause-and-effect	„As you evaluate the options you can feel confident in our excellent service."

relationship between things when no direct relationship exists. These distortions often include words like *as, when, since, before*, and *after*.	
Simple conjunctions - link otherwise unconnected statements and imply some connection. These distortions use words such as *and, with,* and *plus.*	The statement „This year we're lowering costs and we're improving sales" lumps together two business goals. By joining the statements into one sentence, listeners tend to link the two ideas into one broader, more dynamic initiative.
Complex equivalences - imply that two different experiences are related and even give them the same meaning, however illogical	„We have the support of the CEO. This merger is the best thing that ever happened to the business" is actually two separate bits of information. But stating them close together can make listeners believe that the CEO is fully behind the merger.
Lost performatives - involve value judgements but don't specify who judged or on what basis.	The statement „Our service is highly respected" feels good – but who said it?
Mind reading - happens when you claim to know someone else's internal experience.	When you begin a discussion with „You're probably wondering what I'm going to tell you today", you imply that your message is important to listeners – so important they even start thinking about the conversation before you began to talk.

Source: Cooper, 2008

Much of the successful advertisement language depends on deletion, generalization and distortion. Advertisement slogans seem very positive and inspiring but none of them is very specific. When influencing wide audience, bigger the audience the language is more vogue. When taking into consideration slogan like "We make the things happen", it can be taken for various number of brand. Furthermore, this slogan is full of deletions. Questions like "who makes it happen?", "what is made to happen?" or "why does something need to happen?" (Cooper, 2008). All of those questions are left to the audience to fill up and filter through their own experience and create the picture about the product that suits best to their need.

2.6.2 Meta model

Meta model represents the flip-side of the Milton model (Cooper, 2008). In other words, it has opposite direction from the Milton model. Meta model is used to investigate the core of the issue, objective or suggestion by asking certain set of questions (Bandler and Grinder, 1975).

While Milton model core is about creating vagueness in the language, Meta model is based on exploring the details about certain message. The model works on the same principles like Milton model, principles of generalization, deletion and distortion. Taking that into consideration, this part will focus on the examples and questions related to language patterns in terms of those three principles.

In business communication, Meta model is often used in order to communicate more precisely; especially efficient in discovering the needs and handling objections.

Deletion

To avoid the downside of the deletion process, Meta model uses approach based on specific kind of questions that investigate the deeper meaning of the vogue language. Those questions will be presented in the following table.

Figure 5: Questioning for Deletion - Meta Model

NLP Meta model patterns	Example of patterns	Questions to help gather information
Deletion		
Simple deletion	*I have been on a business trip*	Where specifically have you been
Unspecified verbs	*I had a bad experience with your product/service*	What specifically did you experienced as bad?
Comparison	*X product is better than yours*	Better than our product at what?
Judgments	*Your service is bad*	Who says so and what facts are supporting that statement?

Nominalization	*Changes are hard*	Changing what is hard?

Source: Ready and Burton, 2010

Generalization

Skill to generalize is very important for every human being. It is saving time and effort. However, sometimes generalization has negative effect on certain experience that has been related to previous bad experience (Bandler and Grinder, 1979).

In order to question that experience, marketers and salespersons use the set of question in objection handling. Examples are presented in the following table.

Figure 5: Questioning for Deletion - Meta Model

NLP Meta model patterns	Example of patterns	Questions to help gather information
Generalization		
Modal operators of possibility	*Your company will never be number one on the market*	What stops us from being number one?
Modal operators of necessity	*I have to buy the product X instead of yours*	Why do you have to do that? Why do you say that?
Universal qualifiers	*I always have bad service with your product*	Every time? What are we doing that you perceive as bad?

Ready and Burton, 2010

Distortion

Issues in marketing communication can often be caused by distortion pattern. Distortion is the process by which people tend to change certain meaning of an experience or an event when it comes in alignment with their own reality map. (Ready and Burton, 2010) Issue is that often that personal reality does not represent the truth or the real fact, just a perception of that fact. In following table the examples are presented.

Figure 6: Questioning for Distortion - Meta Model

NLP Meta model patterns	Example of patterns	Questions to help gather information
Distortion		
Complex equivalence	*With that brand, you will never make it*	In what kind of way is our brand affecting our success?
Mind reading	*I am going to hate this presentation*	How do you know that? What makes you say that?
Cause and effect	*Your advertisement is getting on my nerves*	Why is that? What specifically is getting on your nerves?

Source: Ready and Burton, 2010

2.6.3   Additional language patterns

Except for Milton's three basic types of language patterns, NLP provides additional language patterns that are very often used in marketing communication and business. Those patterns represent verbal techniques used to enhance the influence on the listener.

Double binds

Double binds represent the question asked in that manner that gives listener a limited choice. That choice is based on the result that the one that is asking is trying to achieve. Furthermore, double binds "double binds implicitly challenge the client's model by forcing him into an experience which contradicts the impoverishing limitations of his model" (Bandler and Grinder, 1975).

Example: When asking the potential customer about the order in the process of sales with a question: „Do you want your order delivered today or tomorrow?". Although the potential customer has a choice to place his order whenever he or she wants, salesperson is influencing the decision by limiting the answer to two choices.

<u>Embedded commands</u>

Embedded commands are influencing listener by sending the instruction directly to the unconscious mind without explicitly telling the listener to do something. (Cooper, 2008) Embedded commands or questions are constructed in that way that they contain the outcome or goal that the person that is saying them want to accomplish with the listener. (Ready and Burton, 2010)

Example: Embedded command that can be used in marketing communication through the advertising: „As soon as you buy our product and try it, you will immediately feel more confident about yourself. " With this structure of sentence, advertiser is relating the product with the feeling of self-confidence.

<u>Tag questions</u>

Tag questions are the questions formed in the way that they influence the listener to agree; in other words, tag questions are "are short phrases you add to the end of statements to invite agreement from listeners." (Cooper, 2008) Tag questions are very powerfull tool of influence because they are distracting the concious mind in order for the listener to agree with the stated question.

Example: In the sales process, when salesperson want to convince the potential customer that what he or she offers is the best deal: „You can't get any offer that is better than this one, right?" Tag questions usually end with short phrases like „isn't it?", „right?", you know that's right?", „don't you?"

<u>Qoutes</u>

Using quotes enables the person to influence the listener by relating his or her story to something that somebody else said. When quotes are used, it enhances the meaning and the credibility of the story being told. In other word, quotes can back up the story and encourage the listener to get involved as the other person mentioned in the quote.

Example: When advertising, including the statements such as following can enhance the meaning and give credibility: „This product changed my life!", said one of our recent satisfied customer."

3 NLP in personal selling

3.1 Definition of sales

Before introducing the role of NLP in sales, it is important to define terms such as sales and personal selling. The focus will be on the personal selling because of the fact that NLP is most often applied in this specific type of sales process. According to Oxford dictionary (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013) selling is "the exchange of a commodity for money; the action of selling something". Selling is the process that includes buyer and seller between which the transaction is held.

De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den Bergh (2007) defined personal selling as „two-way, face-to-face communication used to inform, give demonstration to, maintain or establish a long term relationship with, or persuade specific members of a particular audience." The objective of personal selling is to locate and inform potential customers, demonstrate the product and its benefits, develop a relationship and lead the process to a purchase and after-purchase services.

3.2 Approaches in personal selling

In personal selling five different approaches or views on it can be distinguished (Ingram; LaForge; Avila; Schwepker Jr and Williams, 2009). Those approaches to selling are the following:

- Stimulus response selling
- Mental states selling
- Need satisfaction selling
- Problem-solving selling
- Consultative selling

Stimulus response selling

First approach is the stimulus response selling. This approach is the simplest and according to it every impulse can produce predictable reaction. In this approach the salesperson interacts with the customer providing an impulse with different set of actions in

order to influence customer's behavior. One of the methods used in stimulus response selling it the continued affirmation method usually referred to in NLP as a "yes set". Basically it represents the set of statements and various questions that lead the potential buyer to answer with affirmative reply until the deal is closed with positive result (Ingram; LaForge; Avila; Schwepker Jr and Williams, 2009).

This method is based on consistency principle, the need of person to remain consistent in his intention or decision. The limitation of this method is that it has decreased effect when dealing with experienced or professional buyer. Unpredicted reactions of buyer and unexpected interruptions can also be a setback.

Mental states selling

The second approach is called the mental states selling or often referred to as the formula approach. This approach is based on the assumption that in general, most of the buyers respond in the same manner and go through similar stages in the buying process. Those stages are referred to as attention, interest, desire and action (AIDA).

Similar to the first approach, this one is also highly dependent on buyer's reaction to the structured sales script. This force the salesperson to prepare the script before sales process and to pay attention on the timing to determine in which stage of the process the buyer is. On the other hand, to determine the exact mental state of buyer can be an issue and a setback in this approach. Pre-set script can also be an issue because of the lack of flexibility for the salesperson. This approach is based on buyer's mental state rather than the needs (Ingram; LaForge; Avila; Schwepker Jr and Williams, 2009).

Need satisfaction selling

This approach to personal selling is based on the needs of the customer. In this selling process, first objective is to recognize buyer's needs and the second one is to fulfill those identified needs. In difference with *stimulus response* and *mental states* selling, this approach is more focused on customer rather than salesperson.

In the first stage of the selling process, salesperson is flexible with the inquiry about the customer's needs. However, once the needs have been identified, salesperson engages with persuasive techniques to close the deal. This approach is very convenient for the customers and they are usually very open to detailed discussion before identifying their needs. Need satisfaction selling approach usually disengage customer from negative and defensive attitude towards salesperson because the focus is on his or her needs (Ingram; LaForge; Avila; Schwepker Jr and Williams, 2009).

Problem-solving selling

This approach to selling is an extended modification of need satisfaction selling. The objective in problem-solving selling is not just to recognize the customer's needs but also to offer alternative solutions to fulfill those needs. The analysis of competitor's solutions is sometimes included in decision making process. This selling process has few step in the process. Primarily, the salesperson has to identify the problem and provide the customer with set of different solutions to the problem. After the solutions have been presented, together with customer, salesperson is evaluating the presented solutions. Afterwards, when the solution is identified, salesperson continues with the process until the deal is closed.

Challenge regarding this approach is that salesperson has to convince the customer that the problem exists and that they have to proceed in solving that problem. The issue with this approach is that very often it takes a lot of time and the company cannot afford that approach to every potential customer. On the other hand, time can be an issue also from the customer's part. This approach is very applicable to long term negotiations process (Ingram; LaForge; Avila; Schwepker Jr and Williams, 2009).

Consultative selling

Consultative selling is the approach that is used to assist the customer to achieve their strategic goal using the product, service or the knowledge and experience of the salesperson. In difference with all other approaches, the objective of this approach is to meet customer's strategic goal, not just satisfy the needs or solve the problem. In this approach, the salesperson

is identifying the strategic objective of the customer and cooperates with him or her in achieving that objective.

When using consultative selling, the salesperson has three roles. The first role is strategic orchestrator in which the salesperson is using the resources of his or her organization in order to satisfy the buyer's needs. As a business consultant role, the salesperson uses sources, both internal and external, to gain expertize in understanding the buyer's business. The salesperson also educates the buyer on how the product or service that he or she is offering can assist in buyer's business operations and how are those products or services more suitable than competition. The third role of the salesperson is to be a long term ally to the buyer. This includes the support to the buyer no matter if the closing of the deal is not instant and it takes a longer time period (Ingram; LaForge; Avila; Schwepker Jr and Williams, 2006).

3.3   Stages of personal selling process

After elaborating the approaches in personal selling, it is important to distinguish the stages of selling process. Although there are few different approaches to selling process, in general, stages can be identified for all of them with few exceptions. According to De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den Bergh (2007) there are eight stages of the selling process. Every stage has to be executed successfully in order to close the deal. Eight stages of the personal selling process are:

1. Locating and qualifying prospects - this is the first stage of the selling process. Since everything starts here, salesperson has to be very detailed in this stage. This stage consists out of three steps. First one is all about creating the profile of customer suited for the product. Salesperson needs to think about the characteristics that makes a potential customer. Second step is to create a list of identified customers in order to reach them. Salesperson is also choosing the way how to contact them. The third step is to qualify the list of potential customers in order to define who is suiting candidate. This saves time for the salesperson and it is usually done by phone and that creates leads. The leads are the customers that have need, authority and money to buy the product.

2. Pre-call planning - this stage is all about gathering the information. Salesperson needs to collect all the information about the potential customer in order to get the idea how to present the product to the potential buyer. In this stage it is necessary to think about the type of contract or deal that salesperson wants to offer to the customer and the approach for the pitch.

3. The approach - regarding the actual approach, except for the type of the approach there are two steps of this stage. First one is to define how to get in contact with customer. Salesperson has an option to contact using phone, email or set the actual meeting. Second step is really important and that is to establish the rapport. The rapport is related to the first impression to the customer which is sometimes crucial in making the deal. Except for dressing, language and business material, body language is very important.

4. Customer needs analysis - in this stage salesperson has to find out about the real needs of the customer and how to present the benefit for him or her. Active listening and right questions are the crucial factors in this stage. Salesperson has to avoid irritating or in any way being aggressive because that would increase the chances for failure.

5. Presentation - this is one of the most important parts of the process. During the presentation, salesperson has to persuade the potential customer that the product or service is the best way to satisfy his or her needs. There are three general types of presentations:

   - *Tailored presentations* - made especially to satisfy specific customer's needs. Those kinds of presentations are difficult ones but deliver high level of success and they are tailor made for the customer.

   - *Organized presentations* - this type of presentations are well suited for the salesperson without too much experience. They contain pre-made guidelines by the companies in which certain freedom is given to the salesperson. Company wants to make sure that the key points will be covered.

- *Canned presentations* - are those presentations that are prepared completely in advance by companies. This kind of presentations are used by inexperienced salesperson or used in trade shows. When presented to the potential customer, a lot of remarks are received.

6. Handling objections - in this stage of the selling process, salesperson has to deal with remarks and objections regarding the presentation. This requires good preparation and deep knowledge about the product or service. Proactive salesperson will think in front what kind of issues can he or she encounter and prepare them in advance. There are few different techniques in handling the objections such as repeating the question, "agree and counter", "boomerang", "feel, felt, found", etc. (Brassington and Pettitt, 2003).

7. Closing - the deal is closed when the customer agrees on the purchase and fells free to discuss the details. Even when all the stages are executed perfectly, closing the deal is the stage in which salesperson can struggle and therefore he or she must be very cautious. There is a various number of closing techniques depending on the sales process itself. The techniques vary from the nature of the deal and agreement of the parties involved in the process.

8. Follow-up and account management - after closing the deal, salesperson is responsible to handle all post-sales activities with the customer. That includes delivery, quality checking, installation if necessary, training regarding the product and billing of services. Furthermore, salesperson is responsible for relationship with the client in future, which can lead to repeated purchase and feedback about the product. Long-term relationship with the client is very important to the salesperson and the company.

In order to successfully complete the selling process, salesperson has to be successful in every separate stage of this process. There are many mistakes that the salesperson can make during the process and in order to avoid that they need to be well informed about the product and the customer, understand the needs of the customer and successfully pitch the product or service they are selling to the potential customer (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, Van den Bergh, 2007).

3.4 NLP in the sales process

NLP is one of the examples of the new theories that have the application on the sales process. While very often overlooked by sales trainers, new tools and techniques arise with the potential to be implemented in the sales process. Salespersons that have started to use NLP techniques in their sales process have shown the improvement in their results. For years sales trainers have tried to stress the significance of building a rapport and therefore building the trust. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of the language in the sales process (Connell, 1984).

NLP techniques, when used in the sales process can improve the effectiveness of salesperson. It influences the approach and state of mind of salesperson. Using NLP in sales process can help salesperson to (watt-works.com/training/nlp-training-for-sales/, 2013) :

- identify key benefits of potential customer
- learn how to read verbal and non-verbal signs
- know what questions to ask and how to ask them
- help the potential client to make the right decision for them

In the following part of this chapter, the role and principles of NLP in the personal selling will be elaborated more in depth.

3.5 The role and principles of NLP in personal selling

For every salesperson it is not just about the product or the service they are selling, it is also about how they are selling it. Every salesperson has a specific and their own approach to the process but NLP can boost the selling process by understanding the way people behave and react to certain impulses. The point is that the salesperson cannot be in the focus, customer should. In other words, salesperson should not sell the product the way he or she wants to sell but the way that customer wants to buy. NLP is adding the value to the sales process by helping the salesperson to realize the way that people think, behave and communicate.

Since closing the deal is the main goal in sales process, salespersons must be very skillful in influencing and persuading customer that the product or service they are offering is the best way that the customer will satisfy his or her needs. In other words, that means that the

communication skills have to be perfected. As Grehalva stated (2004), the main difference between winners and losers in sales is in mastering the communication skills. In order to successfully communicate, salesperson has to develop certain communication skills, which are presented in his R5 model. R5 model represents: Rapport, Record, Release, Replace and Remember (Grehalva, 2004). This model is represented in the following table.

Figure 7: R5 model

Rapport	Rapport is the core of the communication because the result of establishing the good rapport is trust. In lack of trust it is very hard to create and maintain a good relationship with the customer.
Record	Listening is one skill that every successful salesperson needs to have. During the sales process it is very important to gather information about customer's needs but also to observe the verbal response and non-verbal reactions.
Release	Before presenting the solution, salesperson first need to know customer's needs and the problem they want to solve. Very often when asked about the problem, customer's response is an answer that do not contain a problem.
Replace	In this stage the salesperson identified the problem and now he or she can present the solution to that problem. For this to be successful, "Release" stage has to be completed in the right way.
Remember	When the deal is done, salesperson has to take all the experience from the sales process and realize what works and what does not. This will help in future sales process.

Source: Grehalva, 2004

As mentioned, except of the product or service that the salesperson is presenting, communication skills are one of the crucial parts of the actual selling process. To elaborate it in more depth, the sales process will be divided into two crucial parts. The first part is establishing the rapport, which is very important in order to identify the baseline of your customer's behavior. The second part is related to communication or in other words - how to communicate and close the deal using various techniques and patterns of NLP. With those two parts combined together, it can increase the salesperson ability to sell the product or service to a potential customer.

3.5.1 Establishing the rapport

When establishing a rapport, salesperson has to identify customer's baseline behavior. In order to do that, customer's representational system has to be identified. Representational system is identified by the set of words that the person is using in order to describe certain situation (Bandler and Grinder, 1979).

Moreover, according to Cooper (2008), there are two more additional sings except of language on base of which you can identify person's representational system. The signs are:

- Eye movements or eye cues - movements of eyes during the process of thinking
- Language - the words and phrases that people use in conversation
- Psychology - body language, tonality, etc.

Before elaborating how to recognize representational systems it is important to identify them. There are 5 different representational systems: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory; usually referred to as an abbreviation VAKOG. However, first three are mist common so the main focus is on visual, auditory and kinesthetic; also referred to as VAK. Now the focus will be on identifying those three.
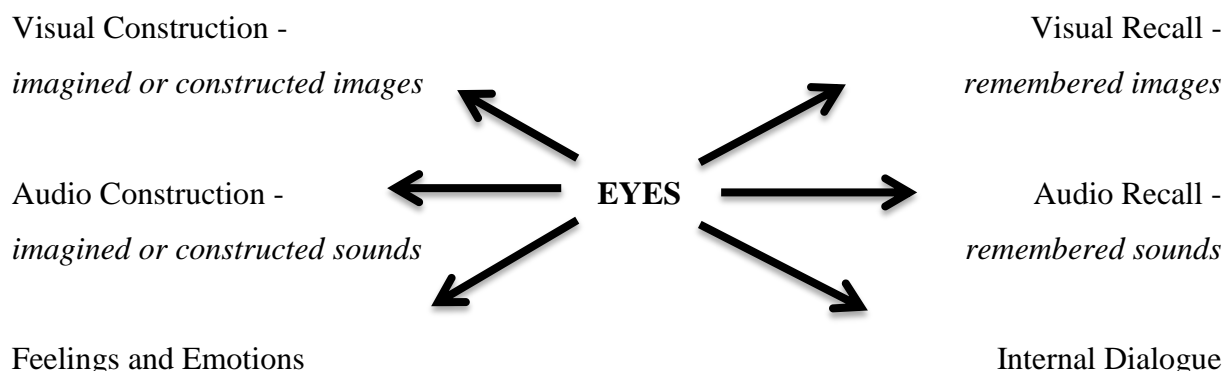
As mentioned, representational system can be recognized with following three signs - eye movements, language and psychology.

Eye movements or eye cues

In early development of NLP, researchers found out that the movement of the eyes during the thinking process is not random, but the result of the representational system that they are using. In continuation of the research, they found out that there is a recognizable pattern of movement in six different directions (Cooper, 2008).

Only small number of people does not respond to these patterns and there is no influence of cultural background on those who respond. The patterns are presented in following graphic.

Figure 8: Eye cues movement

Visual Construction -   Visual Recall -
imagined or constructed images   *remembered images*

Audio Construction -   **EYES**   Audio Recall -
imagined or constructed sounds   *remembered sounds*

Feelings and Emotions   Internal Dialogue

Source: Bandler and Grinder, 1979

First of all, it is important to stress that these patterns are identified from the point of observer, not the person in the thinking process. Movement occurs instantly with the thinking process.

When a person's eye movement is focused in the upper area, that person is in visual thinking process. It means that the person is either remembering some memory by recalling the pictures from that memory or creating and constructing images that do not exist. Upper right represents visual recall and upper left visual constructing.

When the movements are in the middle area, it means that the person is in auditory thinking process; remembering the sounds. Middle left means that the person is constructing sounds and middle right is the area where person is reaching to remember the sounds. Lower right area is also the part of auditory system. It represents inner dialogue or inner thoughts, basically person is referring to himself or herself.

The final, kinesthetic representational system is presented by the eye movements to the lower left area. It means that the person is either experiencing emotions during the thinking process or recalls a felling in the form of sensation; hot, cold, wet, etc.

Language

Language is the main sign of representational system. Depending on the representational system of a person, language patterns vary. One important characteristic of the language is that people do not process the language consciously. They process language at the unconscious level and they are aware of just a small amount of it (Bandler and Grinder, 1979). For example, people that have dominant visual representational system tend to use

words that are visually presenting the matter, no matter of subject. Some of the most common words and phrases used in different representational systems are presented in following table.

Figure 9: Representational systems

Visual	*I see, look out, colorful, enlightening, the vision, graphic, insight, appears to me, outlook, viewpoint, big picture, focus on, etc.*
Auditory	*tell me, listen, let's talk, rings a bell, dialogue, harmony, clear as a bell, strikes a chord, I hear that, that resonates, etc.*
Kinesthetic	*feels like, warm, solid, nice grip, pushed ahead, driving forward, real impact, get a handle on, support, flow, high pressure, etc.*

Source: Ready and Burton, 2010

Although the language is a good indicator of which representational system the person is using, in business conversation it is sometimes challenging. Some of the areas of business rarely include sensory words, for example in legal terms. Moreover, employees in organizations use neutral language which gives no clue about the representational system they are using; words such as introduce, goal, strategy, decision, buy, sell, etc.

Second challenge lies in business jargon. People in organizations often use phrases that are included in company's mission, vision and value statements (Cooper, 2008). However, these words can easily fit in to a certain representational system group; words such as focus, vision, moving forward, etc.

Psychology

There are many characteristics that can give a sign to the observer about people's representational system by observing their breathing, changes in skin color, body posture, etc. Body and the mind are inseparable, how people think is always presented by their body reaction; it is only important to recognize this sings (O'Connor and Seymour, 1993).

Few characteristics differ according to different representational systems. Those differences are presented in following table.

Figure 10: Representational system II

Clue	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Breathing	High and shallow	Through the diaphragm	Deep in abdomen
Voice tempo	Fast	Fluctuating	Slow
Posture	Leaning back, head up	Leaning forward, head cocked	Head and shoulders down
Gestures	Gestures above eye level	Pointing towards ears	Touching chest and stomach

Source: Cooper, 2008

By recognizing and understanding the representational system of person, it is significantly easier to establish trust and relationship. Although it is challenging to identify all signs that can signal the representational system, recognizing few of them can be a good lead in further negotiation and selling process.

After recognizing the system that the potential customer is using, salesperson than can use that information to upgrade the communication. The key to create succesful rapport is to adapt to the customer's behaviour. Salesperson can do that with the set of actions called mirroring.

Mirroring

Mirroring is the mechanizm that enables one person to communicate more efficiently by matching other person's behaviour. Mirroring is an essence of establishing a good rapport. Salesperson can mirror customer's language pattern, body posture, tone and tempo of speaking, breathing, etc (Bandler and Grinder, 1979). When salesperson identifies the representational system, to mirror the language is the first part. By using the same words and phrases in communication with customer, salesperson can enhance the level of other person's understanding of the matter. Moreover, it helps in creating and maintaining the relationship with the potential customer in the selling process.

Next step is to match the body posture, gestures and breathing. This has to be done in discreet manner. It is important to stress that mirroring is not mimicry; it is matching of other's person behavior. Copying the movements of other person is considered aggressive

(O'Connor and Seymour, 1993). On the other hand, mismatching other person's behavior can be a good choice when salesperson wants to end the communication process.

Voice matching is also a part of mirroring process. Salesperson can match customer's tone of voice, pace, rhythm and volume of voice. It is very useful in telesales, where the only tool in communication is salesperson's voice.

In general, ability to establish an efficient rapport depends on two factors. First, how good the salesperson can recognize customer's behavioral patterns and second, how good he or she can match that behavior.

<u>Pacing and leading</u>

After successfully establishing the rapport, it is important to maintain it during the sales process. When rapport is established, salesperson can now change and lead customer's behavior. Pacing is basically creating the bridge with other person through rapport and leading is changing your behavior so that other person follows (O'Connor and Seymour, 1993). In this process, by matching and following other person's behavior, salesperson is gaining trust. When it is established, salesperson can successfully lead potential customer through the sales process.

3.6 NLP language patterns in sales process

Before elaborating the patterns of NLP used in sales process it is important to stress one of the foundations on base of which those patterns are created. Every salesperson is in difficult position considering the fact that they constantly have to persuade the potential customer and look for even smallest opportunity (Jones, 2011).

The foundation that is important to stress is behavioral flexibility. It is important because salesperson is responsible for every action during the sales process. In process of selling those reactions creates an outcome. In order to sell, salesperson has to be flexible; the more flexible he or she is, the more success they have. In other words, if salesperson notices that something is not going well in the process, it has to be changed.

Language patterns can help the salesperson to increase efficiency in the sales process. However, learning the language patterns is not so difficult; to use them practically is a

challenge. On the other hand, when perfected, language patterns are powerful tools of every salesperson.

3.6.1 Language pattern - Redefining

This pattern is used to direct the discussion or conversation in to desired direction; in other words, to change the topic according to your will. It is also used to introduce the new topic if needed. To be able to use this pattern more efficiently, salesperson can introduce the alternative topics in the beginning of the conversation and then shift back to them when needed. This pattern can be used in situations of arguments with the buyer, to go back to the benefits of the product or to redirect the conversation if it goes in to the undesired direction. This pattern functions on the base of following language formula (Jones, 2011):

The issue at hand is not (a), but is actually (b), and this means (c)

(a) - current topic

(b) - the new topic

(c) - continuation of the topic (substance of the topic)

The new topic and its continuation have to be related in order for this pattern to work; if there are not, there is no point. If the pattern does not work at first try, repeating it few times in different manner will bring results. When the topic is an issue, using redefining pattern can present other solutions to the problem.

3.6.2 Language pattern - The Agreement Frame

In general, people tend to protect their own ideas. Many arguments in sales process comes from the disagreement between the idea of salesperson and potential buyer. The goal of the agreement frame pattern is to eliminate resistance to ides in order to persuade. Salespersons come across many potential buyers that disagree with their idea or arguments when trying to sell a product or service. In order to lower the resistance to the new idea, salesperson can use this pattern. This is the reason why this pattern is very often used together with redefining pattern.

When using this pattern, salesperson must not just be aware of the words said, but also the tone, speed, volume, etc.; in other words, the way it has been said. Confidence of salesperson is also very important. This pattern functions on the basic assumption that people

like agreements; like to hear other person agree with their idea. This pattern is also based on simple language formula (Jones, 2011):

I agree and I would like to add that (a)…

(a) the topic that salesperson wants to listen to

Considering the fact that salesperson agreed with the potential buyer, the basic assumption of this pattern is fulfilled - agreement. The point is that the topic that is continued with have to be in alignment with what buyer said, otherwise it will not have an effect. If the salesperson cannot agree, or the statement does not go in favor with his goal, he or she can agree with one part of the buyers point. If the salesperson totally disagrees with buyer, he will state the agreement, but immediately shift to the topic that will lead the conversation back to where it is wanted.

It is important to stress that when using this pattern, the word "but" should be avoided. In addition to the first statement formula, instead of "I would like to add", salesperson can use "and that means". This will allow the salesperson to add a different perspective to the topic without interrupting agreement frame pattern. Technique called "The Yes Set" is one of the tools used as a part of the agreement frame.

The yes set

The yes set pattern is one of the most frequently used NLP patterns in sales. It is very simple, easy to apply, but very efficient (Jones, 2011). The goal of yes pattern is to lead the other person with the set of questions that will make that person constantly agree. Afterwards, it will be easier to convince that person to accept any idea. This language pattern is used in hypnotic therapy to lead the person into hypnotic state.

3.6.3   NLP pattern - Past Decision Modifying

This pattern is used to justify why product or service that the salesperson is offering to the potential buyer the right thing to purchase. Salesperson is very often faced with the customer that has previous experience in buying similar products or services. No matter what is the past experience of the customer, the salesperson has to persuade that customer that the product that he or she is offering is the best option.

Decision modifying pattern has a two steps in the process. The first step is to refer customer back to the time he made the purchase. Then the second step is to relate that past

experience with the present so the salesperson can present the offer now. The goal is to take the potential buyer in the state when he made the purchasing decision; potential buying environment (Jones, 2011). During that process salesperson identifies the needs of the buyer and can handle the objections with more ease.

4 Case Study - Sales Script

In the following case, sales script will be presented. The sales script was provided to the author during the trainee program in the company. It is the part of training materials provided by Marcus Evans during the training process and marked as "The Sales Process".

The goal of the case will be to identify NLP tools and patterns in the original sales script. Except for identifying existing tools and patterns, the script will be added by additional NLP patterns according to certain step of the sales process in the script.

The case will be concluded with the conclusion of the primary research based on the interviews with the salespersons with different experience in sales. The goal of the interviews was to recognize awareness of the interviewees about the NLP and patterns and tools used in the sales process. Furthermore, secondary goal was to investigate the sales process from the experience of interviewees.

4.1 Sales Script

4.1.1 About the company

Marcus Evans is a leading global provider of business intelligence. Company has a wide range of activities that vary from providing up-to-minute information for professionals and businesses worldwide via summits and conferences. Furthermore, company delivers technical and cultural skills trainings via professional training divisions. Through their THG division, Marcus Evans provides exclusive 5-star hospitality at the world's leading and most popular sport events. (marcusevans.com/, 2013)

4.1.2 About the product

Marcus Evans produces hundreds of strategic conferences worldwide in variety of different industries. Conferences are more strategic focused on more niche targeted topics. All of the speakers at conferences are representatives of end-user companies who are the leaders in specific strategy implementation and technology.

Conferences have the unique value in providing end-used case studies and panel discussions that are tailored to provide the attendees competitive information that they can use in the implementation of their future strategies.

Some of the benefits of the conferences are:

- to learn, access valuable information
- strategic focus on the technology and necessary positioning for competitive advantage
- networking with other companies
- professional education

The final and the most valuable benefit for an end-user is to reduce cost and save time in implementation of the strategy. (Marcus Evans training manual)

4.1.3 The sales process

In general, Marcus Evans is providing clear guidelines regarding the sales process. Considering the fact that the sales process is strictly over the phone, most of the calls is based on the cold calling technique. According to the policy of Marcus Evans, sales process is divided into ten stages. The stages are the following:

- **Introduction** - simply an introduction of a salesperson.

- **Prequalifying** - confirming the job title and the responsibility of the person that is a potential client.

- **Impact Statement** - most efficient way is to ask a question. Purpose is to attract the potential client into conversation.

- **Urgency introduction** - TKD (time kills deals) rule. The goal is to keep the potential client in the high emotional state.

- **General content -** inform the potential client with more details about the conference.

- **Probing and Matching -** the stage when salesperson is looking for the issues that potential client is facing and matching those issues with the potential solutions that are offered**.** In this stage the most of the objection handling is done by salesperson.

- **Trial Closing -** looking for positive signs. The stage when the salesperson is looking for the signs of interest from the potential client.

- **Qualifying -** check point of all the info about the conference. Usually checking if the date is suitable, budget available, authority to make a decision.

- **Callback -** arranging the call-back in order to check on the decision or the feedback on the possibilities offered.

- **Closing -** the final part of the sales process. Setting all the parameters to close the deal if the potential client is interested. Some final objection handling may be in order.

The stages are not to be followed strictly by the mentioned order, rather by the course of the sales pitch. However, salesperson is advised that all of the stages need to be fulfilled in order to increase the success of the sales pitch.

The first four stages are for the purpose of the introduction so those are more rigid in the order. However, remaining stages are combined *ad hoc* according to the respond of the potential client.

The creative part is left to the salesperson in the way of constructing the pitch within these guidelines.

In order to create the value and identify the need of the potential client, salesperson needs to ask the right set of questions and give the right set of answers. Furthermore, uncertainty and doubts of the potential client will be clarified and solved during the objection handling. During that process, salesperson needs to be focused on the issues of the client in order to justify those issues with the right arguments.

For the purpose of this case the focus will be on those three most crucial processes of the sales process:

- qualifying

- questioning
- handling objections

4.1.3.1   Qualifying

Qualifying is the process used to determine how likely the potential client is to buy; it indicates whether or not the potential client is likely to say yes. Qualifying is done for the purposes of:

- time saving - no need to go through the whole pitch only to find that the person is not the right decision maker, not interested in the topic or does not have the budget for purchasing the product.

- deals in front with potential objections - if the decision is not up to the person that salesperson is speaking with, finding out up-front instead of call back reduces the chance of the objections in the future.

- reduces rejections - if the person is fully qualified, there are less reasons/ambiguities for the potential rejection on the call back.

From the perspective of NLP, qualifying is done through Meta model questioning. The goal of the salesperson is to explore the details by asking specific questions. In the process of qualifying, salesperson must avoid general questions in order to avoid ambiguity in the answers.

Example from the script:

Audience related

Q1: Is the main focus of your X solution dealing with the companies from the financial sector?

This question determines if the potential client is dealing with the companies from the financial sector. When the answer is confirmative, salesperson continues with the Q2. When the answer is negative, the example of that will be dealt in the Objection Handling part of this case.

Q2: When speaking with the companies from the financial sector, who is the ideal person for you to speak with?

According to the answer of the potential client, salesperson refers to the job position mentioned as the key audience for the conference. Considering the fact that the potential client already confirmed the industry, job position cannot be off-the-mark for the salesperson.

Decision maker related

Q1: Are you the main person in charge of your X solution for the HR Risk and Control?

With this question, salesperson is determining two facts. Although the main fact is related to the question of decision maker, salesperson is also determining the relation of the solution relevance to the conference topic.

If the answer is YES - positive sign that potential client is the right person to continue the pitch. If the answer is NO - salesperson is continuing with the further questions such as: "Who else is involved in decision making process?"; Is it a joint decision?"; Would you have to make the recommendation?" etc.

Budget related

Q1: How does this fit within your budget?

Q2: So we have X and Y sponsorship package for you. Which one of those would suit you better? (Double Binds)

After elaborating benefits of the product, informing about the price is important in order to present the benefit/cost value. The main goal of this question is eliminate any objection regarding the price/budget in the early stage of the pitch. If the answer is positive, salesperson continues with the pitch. The situation of the negative answer will be presented in Objection Handling part of the case. In the second question, NLP technique Double Binds was used.

Date/location related

Q1: Does the location work for you?

Q2: Are some of your prospective clients in the area?

Q3: Do these dates work for you?

Asking question about the date, location and the companies that client do business with is important to qualify in order to remind the prospect about the location and avoid misunderstanding in the future conversations.

`The key to qualifying is, if possible, to qualify the potential client without his/her conscious recognition that this process is taking hand. In other words, salesperson needs to make the conversation as smooth as possible. During his traineeship, author was advised to keep the track of the qualifying process in order to develop alternative responses and to keep the conversation as smooth as possible.

4.1.3.2   Questioning

Questioning is very important process that helps the salesperson to create the rapport with the potential client. As mentioned in the third chapter of this work, rapport is very important for establishing trust with potential client.

Since all the sales are done over the phone and visual matching is not possible, salesperson needs to focus on the language of the potential client. Using the same words when possible, matching the speed and the tone of the potential client can be very effective.

According to the sales manual of the Marcus Evans training program, except of building a rapport, the main goal of the questioning process is to uncover the needs of the potential client. Other goals are:

- to fully qualify the potential client
- to build the value of the product
- to maintain the control of the conversation
- to gather information that will help in objection handling
- to provide the status update

For questioning, salesperson is using both open and closed questions.

Open questions

The general goal of the open questions is to gain information from the potential client. However, as already mentioned earlier in the case, using the Meta model salesperson can

efficiently create a base for handling objections. That objection handling will be elaborated later in the case.

Examples of broad qualifying questions:

What markets are you currently focusing on?

How do you get in front of your target market?

What challenges do you face in reaching the market?

How do you think you will benefit the best from this conference?

Closed questions

Closed question are the ones that generate one-word answer. Those answers are usually in the form of "yes" or "no". According to the manual, closed questions are used in the stages of introduction, qualifying and trial closing.

From the point of NLP, closed questions can be used in two different ways. First way is to get the potential client in the yes rhythm by using the language pattern "Yes set". The best stage to use yes set is in the introduction and before trial closing stage. In the introduction part it is easier to get the potential client into yes rhythm because he/she is answering simple questions. Salesperson is informed about certain information about the potential client and therefore he can form that information into questions.

Examples:

Good morning, John on the phone?

Are you the Vice President of Sales for the X company?

Good. So you are in charge of your solution X?

Are you the person who can provide me with more information about the product X?

Second way is to use tag questions. Tag question are formed in the way that provides usually just one word answer which is most of the time a confirmation of the question. It is an addition that can be helpful in creating a yes rhythm.

Examples:

This sounds good, right?

So the ROI would be much higher than you expected, right?

It is the right deal for you, isn't it?

So, you agree with me, don't you?

Additional pattern that can be used when questioning is Double Binds. It basically limits the choice of the potential client and enables the salesperson to direct an answer.

Example:

So, is it more suitable to call you tomorrow morning or in the afternoon?

What sponsorship package would you prefer, gold or platinum?

4.1.3.3   Objection Handling

Instinctively, most of the salespersons do not handle objections well. They tend to panic or become defensive when faced with objection. There are few ways to articulate the objections and it is important to view them as a key part of all sales cycle/processes. Moreover, salesperson should not view them as negative factor when communicating with a potential client (The Sales Process, Marcus Evans Training Manual).

Every salesperson should realize the difference between objection and the rejection. A rejection is final, while an objection requires specific detail as to why the opposition exists. Therefore, when faced with the objection, salesperson should investigate specific nature of an objection.

During his training, author was suggested with two ways of dealing with an objection. The first one is through the system of Identify, Clarify/Isolate and Overcome. Second approach is called Empathy.

Identify, Clarify/Isolate and Overcome

This system is made out of three stages. Every stage will be presented with an example:

1. Identify

Potential Client: *"I'll take pass on sponsoring this event…"*

Salesperson: *"What is the specific reason for not wanting to access your target audience?"*

Potential Client: *"The investment is just too expensive…"*

2. Clarify/Isolate

Salesperson: *"Is the price only variable keeping you from moving forward?"*

Potential Client: *"No, we don't have enough staff to attend the event as well…"*

3. Overcome

Salesperson: *"If we can work with the lower investment level that reduces the number of staff you will take to the conference, would that be the position to move forward with the investment?"*

Potential Client: *"Yes, that does make sense…"*

In this system, it is crucial to use specific questions that will give the salesperson exact information. Furthermore, salesperson should continue with the process of clarifying until all the details are discovered. Than the salesperson proceed with the possible solution if available.

<u>Empathy</u>

During the training process, empathy was a term for the one way of handling objections. It helps the salesperson to keep the conversation going and create more opportunity to ask isolating questions. Empathy is an action of understanding/ being aware of/ being sensitive to the feelings, thoughts and experience of another.

From the perspective of NLP, this process is called The Agreement Frame, explained in the previous chapter.

Example:

Potential Client: *"I really want to sponsor this event but I really don't have the money in my budget…"*

Salesperson: *"I understand your concern and I know how you feel, a few of my clients have been in the same situation and they have found that spreading the investment across business development, sales and marketing budget was an effective solution for them."*

Potential Client: *"That is a good idea…"*

NLP pattern that can be effective in handling objections is also defined in the previous chapter. It is called Redefining. It can be used as shown in the following example:

Potential Client: *"The cost of sponsorship is too high…"*

Salesperson: *"We are not speaking about the cost here. We have 40 to 60 companies that paid 3000 EUR to attend the conference, what shows their interest in the solutions offered. All that being said, you should consider this as an investment and opportunity to earn profit…"*

Another NLP pattern can be used when handling objections related to the bad past experience. Bad experience can be related to the product or the company. The pattern is called Past Decision Modifying.

Example:

Potential Client: *"I attended the last conference and I was disappointed. It was a waste of money…"*

Salesperson: *"I know what you mean, Marcus Evans produces more than 2000 conferences per year and to be quite honest 70 percent of them are good, but 30 percent are bad. Last year we had 80 companies attending this conference topic and it was a big success. This time there is a proven track record…"*

Two additional tools that can be used in the sales process are previously mentioned in second chapter of this work. Those tools are embedded commands and quotes.

<u>Embedded commands</u>

Using the embedded commands during the sales pitch can be very effective. The reason for that is that salesperson can relate value or benefit of the product to certain emotion. Moreover, with embedded commands salesperson is keeping the potential client on the emotional peak. As explained in the following example, salesperson is relating the success of making a deal with the feeling of personal accomplishment. In that way, potential client is starting to realize the emotional value of making a deal.

Example:

Salesperson: *"With taking the opportunity we are offering you, you will get high ROI. Considering the fact that this will be your decision, all the credits will pointed towards you and that means that you will be more appreciated in the company. You can even get promoted."*

<u>Quotes</u>

Quotes are powerful tools of persuasion because people easily relate to them. In other words, they are more trustful. Especially when the person quoted is relevant and well known to them or already experienced the product. Quotes are very effective in building a rapport.

Example:

Salesperson: *"During our research on the topic we spoke with the Head of Sales of renowned X company and he expressed a great concern with this particular issue. All that being said, he was eager to find a solution provider that would help him to overcome that issue."*

or

Salesperson: *"Last week I spoke with our client that attended the same conference last year and he said that he is overwhelmed with the results after the conference"*

All the tools mentioned in this case are used in the sales process of the Marcus Evans company. Furthermore, when used in the right way, they increase the chance of making a successful deal.

This case will be concluded with short review of the interviews that author conducted during his research on the topic. The questionnaire according to which the conclusion was made is added in the appendix of the thesis. The interviewees vary from two to five years of experience in sales and telesales.

Regarding their opinion about the sales process, they all consider that it is not just important what you are selling but also how you sell it. Furthermore, interviewees consider that salesperson's use of language and approach is very crucial in making the difference.

From the sales process perspective, all of the interviewees consider that all of the stages of selling process are equally important. In other words, they consider the sales process as a chain; breaking one link will break the chain. However, when asked to pinpoint any specific stage, answers varied between impact statement, objection handling and closing stage.

Considering interviewees opinion on what is the key to persuasion, they expressed the attitude and getting the potential buyer in the right emotional state as the most crucial.

All interviewees agreed that the knowledge about human psychology is very important for every salesperson. They agree that discovering the needs of potential buyer is very important. Furthermore, showing the right benefits to the potential buyer is the goal of every salesperson and if they succeed in that, success should be an expected outcome.

Regarding NLP, answers varied. Interviewees that had less experience were not familiar with NLP and the role of NLP in sales. They considered the sales techniques used in the sales process more like the common sense and less as specific technique. On the other hand, interviewees with more experience in sales are aware of the NLP role in the selling process. Moreover, NLP was the part of their training and helped them to improve their results in the future.

All the interviewees that are familiar with NLP stressed that the most valuable knowledge learned was about creating a rapport and language patterns. When asked about the specific techniques they are using, they mentioned "yes set", "double binds" and "tag questions".

Regarding manipulation in the sales process, most of the interviewees agreed that the sales process is manipulative. On the other hand, they did not consider that manipulation

should not be tagged as something negative. Furthermore, they stressed that people are being manipulated with in every-day life; in positive and in negative way.

To conclude, NLP is getting more attention is sales. During his research for this case, author concluded that NLP is introduced to salesperson at certain stage of his/her professional development. In other words, the more the person is in the sales business, more he/she is aware of NLP presence in the sales process. Training managers in the successful companies realize the value of the NLP and therefore conduct the training on this topic for the experienced sales manager.

Although NLP is still a topic of debate in the scientific community, in the practical way it is already recognized as a significant value to every salesperson.

Conclusion

Major concern in any context of NLP use is to use and teach NLP in an ethically and ecologically sound way remaining in the framework of win-win-thinking. Author suggests many applications of NLP in business environment in order to maximize result. However, this work states all proposals in clearly ethical ways with no harm for anyone.

Users of NLP must be committed to the protection of human dignity, conscious use of own knowledge about NLP in the best interest of all human beings and to ensure that NLP tools are represented fairly and accurately to the general public (nlp-institutes.net, 2013).

In this thesis, author's goal was to identify NLP patterns and tools used in marketing communication and sales through both theoretical and practical part of this work.

The beginning of work was dedicated to the general overview of the principles and concept of NLP. What, why and how were provided in a clear manner so that reader can understand the concepts fully. Same chapter continues with detailed explanation how the NLP came to use and its origins. Approaching the end of the first chapter, the idea how to possibly use NLP tools in business was provided.

In chapter two, above mentioned idea of NLP tools in business was elaborated. Details were provided for the use of NLP in marketing communications. After defining marketing communication, chapter proceeded with psychological aspect of the communication and language of advertisement. Finally, chapter presented Milton and Meta model, as well as additional language patterns of NLP.

Specifically, nowadays marketing is getting increasingly integrated and NLP is a perfect aspect to include in such a way of marketing. Correspondingly, sales processes have become the arena for fight in times of free trade and globalization. With decreasing obstacles to the sales all over the world, the only way to attract customers is to offer brand new way of selling the services or goods.

Third chapter briefly presented personal selling and continues with different approaches to it. Then, the stages of the personal selling were elaborated. Afterwards, mostly used language patterns were provided through development of this chapter with interesting and useful examples.

Practical core of this work was based on provided sales script from the global provider of business intelligence Markus Evans, which provided this data for purpose of this work. The objective was to provide analysis of the use of NLP tools by the real example company, offering the major models used, strategies and mechanisms used as well as many interesting insights and short tips. The examples from sales script of the company were provided in order to give an insight into the practical application of NLP. Finally, author concluded the practical part with an insight in the research he did with several salesperson regarding the sales process and NLP awareness.

As previously mentioned, lack of resources turned out to be a problematic issue during the composition of this work. However, its delivery was possible due to author's personal experience of coaching and his personal interests. In accordance with that, many useful suggestions were provided with a personal desire to dedicate more time in near future to this topic and orient his career orientation towards this interesting and still not sufficiently explored field.

In this moment, NLP is still the topic of many discussions in the scientific community. Although from the theoretical point of view it is still a question mark, NLP has already found its application in practice. Marketing and sales professionals are recognizing the benefits of its use and soon enough it will be a major part of the way they do business. There will always be a discussion about the ethical side of NLP, but as long as it is used with positive intention, benefits for both seller and buyer will be present.

Appendix

Questionnaire

University of Economics, Prague

International Business - Central European Business Realities

Subject: Thesis research

Student: Igor Tadić

Topic: NLP in Marketing Communications and Sales

Name of the interviewee:

<u>Questions:</u>

1. In brief, what is your professional background in sales (job position/s, years of experience, short description of job position)?

2. From your experience, how significant is difference between „what you say" and „how you say it" in the sales process?

3. Which stage/s of the sales process is/are the most crucial, from your experience?

4. By your experience in sales process, what are the key techniques for successful persuasion?

5. Are you familiar with NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming)? If yes, in which extent are you familiar?

6. If you are familiar with NLP, what techniques from NLP have you used in the sales process?

7. In your opinion, in which extent is the sales process manipulative?

8. How important is psychology in terms of human behavior in the sales process?

9. Considering the fact that NLP techniques are based on analysis of human behavior, in which extent would you implement those techniques in your sales process?

Thank you for your effort!

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