



## HOW NLP COULD HAVE FOUNDED THE COACHING REVOLUTION

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- What first comes to mind when you hear the phrase *coaching skills*?
- Do you know why coaching skills lie at the heart of business success?
- Does it excite you or send your passion scale off the top of the chart?

Probably not. After all, “coaching skills” certainly doesn’t strike me as a particularly sexy phrase. It doesn’t win top billing of the ad wizards. You probably don’t start breathing faster or heavier when you mention the phrase. Yet it should! Why should it? That’s precisely what I want to suggest. That’s because I will here describe a current movement that’s underway, perhaps even a revolution—a very quiet one at this moment, but a revolution nonetheless in the world of business, and a revolution that will certainly get louder and more attention in the years to come. I think it could even be a defining revolution of the twenty-first century!

### **Back to a Moment in History**

Actually to talk about coaching and what has been happening all around us we have to back up . . . we have to back up several decades . . . all the way back to the beginnings of what was called *the third force* as a movement in psychology. We have to move back to the days of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers and the other pioneers who founded what they called *the Human Potential Movement*.

Travel back to the 1950s with me. Those were the years when the two dominate forces in psychology had arrived at the edge the world of where their maps could take people. Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism tried to describe human life and experience—the first by a lot of psycho-geography into one’s past and using Greek myths to understand the true meaning of life. The second, by forgetting the whole “meaning” bit and focusing solely on actions and behaviors that they could

empirically test and experiment with. Yet both paradigms could only take people so far—and neither was primarily focused on what was *right with people*, their potentials, their gifts and skills. Both focused on how people were broken, didn't work well, what needed to be fixed, or reconditioned, and why it needed to be fixed.

Then came along the pioneers of a psychology that began with a very different premise. In *the Human Potential Movement* the idea was given birth that people also have an instinct, hunger, and lust for fulfilling their highest potentials, for becoming the best they could be, for stretching to their potentials, being challenged, actualizing their potentials, cultivating peak experiences, seeking meaning and meaningfulness in their work, and using their talents to make a difference. Along with this was the idea that people are born to grow, develop, and move toward self-actualization came another. It was a radical idea. It was a paradigm shift.

The idea emerged that we should study healthy people, the best performers, the geniuses, the self-actualizing people, the givers and contributors to society, and those with many moments of peak performance rather than the sick. This was a radical idea. No one in psychology had taken that on. So Maslow and others did. This introduced the trans-personal psychology of Roberto Assagioli in his Psycho-Synthesis model.

Richard Bandler picked up on this idea and founded NLP, along with John Grinder upon this very premise. “*People are not broken.*” “*They work perfectly well.*” Whatever a person does has a structure, a form that the person has learned well, become highly skilled in, and can easily replicate. This is true for depression, procrastination, a negative attitude, or a command-and-control manager. A depressed person knows and practices the depression strategy with precision day after day. The person does it systematically, methodically, and regularly. The depressive isn't schizoid one day, manic the next, and cataleptic the third. No. The person works perfectly well in running their patterns. We all do. You can count on this. There's a form and structure to everything that we do with any regularly. Our “habits” indicate that we have developed a mastery about something.

And, if we do in our heads what they do in theirs, if we run the movies that they run in the theater of their mind and send the messages to our bodies that they send to their bodies, we would feel as miserable, messed-up, frustrated, or out-of-sorts as they do. What we usually call “a problem” is actually *a skill*. They have *mastered* a strategy. With this frame and with wanton and curious fascination, Richard Bandler, co-founder of NLP, would ask people what no psychiatrist would even dare to ask them:

“*How do you do that?* If I were to take your place for a day and you got a day off, teach me how you do that.”

In this new paradigm of working with people is not that people are broken, it is rather that we are just running some stupid, ridiculous, and unproductive programs or habits in our mind-body system. We just don't know it. There's structure and a methodology to what we do.

This also holds true for those who are the best expressions of the human race in terms of creativity, inventiveness, expertise, love, adventure, passion, fun, art, wisdom, leadership, productivity,

success, and genius. What they are able to do is not “a gift of the gods,” it is rather a structured way of using their mind-body-emotion system. Their excellence and expertise has structure and form. And with the NLP idea of *modeling* experts was born.

### **The Problem of Packaging**

But NLP had a problem. While it was given birth by modeling three world-class communicators, those top-notch experts in working magic with people in how they talked to them, *they were all therapists*. In this way, NLP was born in the world of therapy, of psychotherapy, and therefore in a world focused on helping those who weren't coping well. In fact, this was also a big part of the problem with the Human Potential Movement. It also arose in the context of therapy and so took on the form of therapy. Sure it was positive and bright and hopeful, but it was still a psychology thing. It wasn't in the “real world” of business, finance, economics, and wealth creation, or in the “dirty world” of politics, leadership, and management. That came later.

Even today in the informed and skeptical twenty-first century, stuff that's *psychological*, or even the EQ stuff (emotional quotient or intelligence), is still the *soft* skills that's tolerated in business and economics and politics, endured for PC (political correctness). It's not the passion or focus of business. The hard and cold world of facts, leadership, politics, and the bottomline only tips its hat at training people, people skills, and all that goes along with working the less than tangible factors of relationships.

### **The Dawning of the New Era**

Coaching as in business coaching, executive coaching, and organizational coaching came to town riding on the back of its metaphor, *athletics* or *sports*. Before top executive and key political leaders (e.g., Bill and Hilary Clinton) discovered the power of a personal coach, world-class athletes who wanted that final edge of expertise, that final honing and refining of a skill knew that they could get it from a world-class coach. Nor were they under any illusion that the coach should be a worthy opponent in his or her own right. They clearly distinguished *the skills of the athlete* from *the skills of the coach*. Each in his own area of expertise were playing different games. One was the game of *performance*, the other of coaching peak performance.

Tim Gallwey, a sports coach in tennis with graduate studies in psychology happened upon the power of coaching as he learned that he could succeed much better with his students if he stopped trying to “teach” them the right way to play and simply step back to let them discover how best to play their way. This led to the publication of *The Inner Game of Tennis* (1972). And with that the modern understanding of *coaching* was given birth.

Gallwey discovered that teaching and lecturing people about tennis only filled their heads with rules, regulations, commands, and prohibitions which had been garnered by those who studied and played tennis over the years. And while many of the “rules” were good, and even excellent, when they were “taught” or imposed, a strange thing happened in people. They paid more attention to the rules, to the right way to play that game, than to the actual experience or game of playing. And as they became more and more aware of the rules, their internal self-chatter grew louder and louder with demands, warnings, and the “shoulds.”

Then, on the court facing an opponent serving a ball—they couldn't even *see* the ball. Distracted by all of the chatter in their heads and by all of the higher level meanings now governing “the ball”—the ball was no longer a ball. It was “a critical serve.” Now their “reputation” was on the line. The ball was now “a threat, a danger.” And with that in mind—their bodies rushed with adrenalin making them less and less capable of playing to their best. So the harder they tried, the worse they would do. Now tennis, golf, running, soccer, football, baseball, etc. became games of “psyching the opponent out.” This was (and is) all too often the inner game that goes on in the background as the outer game plays out.

None of this really helped. It didn't help those first attempting to even learn the game, let alone the top-performers in the field. Yet at that time, tennis coaches and the coaches of all sports did what had always been done—they shouted more rules at the players! More rules, right rules, in the head was also part for the inner game that they thought would help. It didn't.

Very early in his career, Gallwey stumbled upon a “technique” that led to incredible performance results. He discovered that if instead of shouting the rules, *he asked awareness questions*. It also encouraged fun, joy, and play—the “natural learning” programs in the player would somehow find the right way to play, serve, return, ski, golf, etc.

The demandingness, the judgment, the push, the threat, the rules, the ordering, the lecturing, the telling—these are the things that *interfere* with our natural ability to learn and incorporate and turn valuable experiences into performance learnings. So, as another coaching “technique,” Gallwey look into all the ways that he, as a coach, could *get out of the way* and help the player to get out of the way and to *stop the self-interference*. From there Gallwey turned to skiing, then golf, music, and then to business. Yes, to business.

### **The “If only . . .” of NLP**

With hindsight we can now sigh deeply and run an *If only . . .* tape. *If only* NLP had found Gallwey in the 1970s or Gallwey had found NLP in the 1970s, both might have had a very different future. Both operated from the same premises:

- People are natural and fantastic learners.
- People have all the resources within if they just don't interfere with themselves.
- People don't need to be fixed or lectured—they only need to access their resources so they can turn loose and “go for it.”
- The maps people have in their heads is not the reality, they are only guides by which they navigate the territory.

*If only* NLP had not turned hypnosis loose on sales and persuasion and gotten branded as manipulative and mind-controlling. *If only* NLP had not gotten the computer terminology of “programming” in its title which gave the impression of brainwashing or mind-control to many. *If only* NLP leaders had not taken the route of being iconoclastic to the academic powers. *If only . . .*

Yet it did, and now the rest is history. Located mostly in therapy, and secondly in non-academically

accredited programs, NLP did not find or realize the potential in *coaching* as a modality or progress. Hindsight is so clear!

### **Fast Forward to the Future**

From the beginning of Neuro-Semantics in 1994, the higher frames of Neuro-Semantics sought to *live the premises* (presuppositions) of NLP with more congruency. Increasingly this led the field of Neuro-Semantics further and further toward recovering one's natural genius. This gave birth to today's entry trainings in Neuro-Semantics, "Accessing Personal Genius" and "Living Genius." Soon the Meta-States model was translated into *frame* and *games* which then enabled us to articulate in detail the frames of the inner game (1998). Later, in the Matrix model (2002), key ingredients from developmental psychology was used to recapitulate the natural human ability to find a passion and follow it.

New insights began arising that, at the time, unwittingly was fitting in precisely with the world of coaching.

- Welcome and accept emotions as emotions.
- You are more than your emotions, they are just signals of the difference between your mental maps and your experience of the world.
- Never bring negative thoughts-and-emotions against yourself lest you build Dragon States.
- All of the potential is within, get out of your own way and let it happen.
- Don't live your life needing to become a Someone, express yourself as already a Someone.
- Where there's a Game, there's a frame overhead.
- Where there's a Frame, there will be an outer Game revealed.
- Whoever sets the Frame controls the Game.

Neuro-Semantics took NLP to a new and higher level in its focus on personal congruency and its passion for discovering the structure of implementation. How do we close the Knowing—Doing gap? How do we train or coach the body to feel great ideas and principles. This led to the Mind-to-Muscle pattern, Excuse Blow-out and many other installation patterns.

### **Coaching —The Human Potential Movement's Secret Weapon**

Now fast forward some more. Come all the way up to the twenty-first century and to the place where coaching has evolved today. Today coaching is *the tool* that takes training, learnings, teachings, and discoveries and translates them into real life actions that make a difference. Coaching is all about helping men and women find their dreams, create great visions, and live in a way that moves toward fulfilling those dreams. Today coaching is the tool in business for actualizing the best in people, getting peak performance, and unleashing potential.

In other words, what the Human Potential Movement lacked, what took NLP thirty years to find, and what Neuro-Semantics has now discovered, is that *coaching is the essential tool or technology that actualizes human potential that the human potential movement only dreamed about, but never actually was able to facilitate.*

- What in the world is so important, crucial, or revolutionary about coaching?
- What's in coaching that we have been missing?

This is the marvel. Coaching is *not* the same as and should not be confused with teaching, counseling, mentoring, consulting, training, or therapy. Coaching is *none* of that. *Coaching differs from all of those other professional helping styles.* So what is coaching if it's not those things?

*Coaching is facilitating.* It facilitates the excellence, resources, and potentials of another person. It is primarily a conversation that facilitates, a relational conversation. Yet that conversation is like none other. It's a conversation that explores with a curious fascination and non-judgment how a person is doing a task, an emotion, a belief, a relationship, or a life. It's a conversation that gets to the heart of things, to the heart of a person's matrix of frames and meanings and it's a conversation that invites paradigm shifts and transformation because it's so fierce.

Coaching facilitates great questions and listens with eyes as well as ears, and listens for emotion and frames and heart. Coaching offers support to a person without judgment in order to give the cleanest and purest feedback, sensory-based feedback so that a person can see him or herself as if in a mirror, the mirror of the coach's eyes. Coaching sees, detects, and identifies patterns—higher level patterns and then offers insightful questions and explorations so that the person does the discovery to unleash his or her potentials.

*Coaching awakens* a person to his or her potentials and challenges— pushing and confronting the person with life as it now is as it explores raw and blinding current reality. Coaching provokes and teases to get a person ready, really ready for transformation, for playing a new inner game and then it probes, really probes the person's current Matrix to expose it for what it is—to the eyes of the person ... all the way holding and respecting and celebrating the person. Coaching then co-creates with the client a new inner game of frames—of meanings, visions, dreams, strategies, plans, outcomes and then actualizes, tests, challenges, and celebrates the translation into real life, into performance, into the outer game.

That's *the conversational dance* of coaching, the dance that enables a coach to move through the three kinds of coaching—performance, developmental, and transformational coaching. That's the dance that coach and client experience together on the journey, the adventure into the client's inner space.

### **Coaching— The Twenty-First Centuries New Source of Energy**

If coaching unleashes the potentials that's within individuals, turning them free and joyous and curiously fascinated about life, others, activities . . . vitally alive with their passions, then coaching is to this century. what the discovery of the atom's power was to the Twentieth century.

Business leaders are now awakening to this power. Today 60% of all books and articles written on coaching are written to and for the business manager, supervisor, and/or CEO. Having entered into the information age, business experts now know that for most businesses, the true asset of the business walks out the door every evening. *As the people* that create the new ideas, innovate the new products, and deliver the services—wealth is not created out of stuff, but from human ideas about how to use stuff. It's about human awareness, consciousness, and heart to *add value* through

the management of stuff and services.

The day has come that the gadgets from Company A and B and Z are hardly differentiated at all. It's even true of big purchase items from computers to cars. There's not that much difference anymore. Where business experts and top companies *differentiate* themselves are in other ways: who can come up with new ideas first, catch or create a wave before it crests, who can package and deliver it with the most appeal and charm to customers, and the quality of life at the business—the sense of loyalty, commitment, passion, and fun that the employees have in doing things. These are the differentiating qualities.

This is where coaching offers the power to unleash the kind of human potential so as to create such cutting-edge organizations. So why should every business owner, trainer, communicator, and entrepreneur develop coaching skills? To unleash the potential in themselves and in all of those around them.

Coaching and Neuro-Semantics are both focused on actually translating great ideas into actual practice—embodying our learnings and getting out of our own way. This means that the Neuro-Semantic passion of translating great meaningful principles (semantics) in any field so that they are felt and experienced in the body (neurology). Both also are focused on “apply to self.” In Meta-States, self-application is built into the model in terms of “reflexivity.” We use our self-reflexive awareness and *apply* resourceful states to ourselves to set higher frames of mind. In the field of Coaching this is called self-coaching—the art of coaching oneself.

### **Coaching Skills — Success Power**

Consider the essential coaching skills in terms of successfully reaching your goals. There are seven key ones: active and focused listening and supporting, questioning and meta-questioning, inducing states, and the giving and receiving of feedback.

- Are not these the very foundational skills that enable us to beautifully get along with people and build the kind of business relationships that support our success?
- Are these also not the very skills for effective leadership and management?
- And are they not the core competencies for effective sales, negotiations, and influence?

Why then should every leader and entrepreneur, every manager and professional communicator develop these *coaching skills*? To become more successful. Perhaps there is something sexy about the phrase “coaching skills.” And if you thought about it in that way, how would you be feeling?

### **Author:**

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### **References:**

For more on the Neuro-Semantics of implementation, see the book, See *Make It So!* (2002), Articles on closing the Knowing-Doing Gap and the Mind-to-Muscle pattern are on the website. [www.neurosemantics.com](http://www.neurosemantics.com) as well as [www.meta-coaching.org](http://www.meta-coaching.org).

*Frame Games* (2000) is the first book in the series of *Frame Game* books; *The Matrix Model* (2003) is the latest model in Neuro-Semantics that brings all of the patterns and processes of NLP and Neuro-Semantics together.

*Coaching Change, Meta-Coaching, Volume I* (2005).  
*Coaching Conversations, Meta-Coaching Volume II* (2004)

“*Self-Coaching*” was the subject of the Workshop presentation that Michelle Duval made at the ICF Australasia Conference in Sydney, August, 2003.