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Framing and Language Patterns for Effective Negotiation

Selling takes place between parties where one party has an interest in exchanging specific resources with another party who has yet to engage in the interest. Negotiation takes place between parties who have an engaged interest in the same resource and the resource can be tangible or intangible, simple or complex. Successful negotiating requires three conditions to be met.

First, know that you are negotiating, not just having a conversation. Second, be clear about your own criteria. Know what you want ideally, what you want it for, the least you will accept and when to withdraw. Third, be clear about what the other party or parties want and what they want it for. These are elaborated below:

It might seem strange to need to know that you are negotiating, as the idea of negotiating is often linked to formal situations, which are framed as negotiations. But every time someone wants something from someone else, unless a definitive refusal is given, a sale is presupposed and negotiating takes place. The informal, apparently inconsequential interactions we have daily are the hardest negotiations to identify as such.

If your partner asks you to make them a cup of tea, is that the opening statement of a negotiation? The answer is in your hands. You anticipate the likely consequences of saying "yes", "no", or "later" and compare them with the consequences to what you were doing when asked to make tea and then you respond. While you consider the consequences, you are negotiating with yourself. When you give an answer, you will

either buy in and negotiate or not buy in and have nothing to negotiate.

Company B offers training courses and services to the public. They publish fees for courses and state in their policies that places will only be available to qualified applicants at the published prices. Company B's administrator knows that fees are not negotiable. Applicants routinely read the published information and policies and then some ask for unpublished discounts. Sometimes they try to intimidate the administrator. Without clear guidance, the administrator could have found himself drawn into negotiation where none was authorised.

To negotiate knowingly and to choose when not to enter negotiation, we can use framing statements and questions. These frames articulate assumptions that may have been presupposed by ourselves or by other parties. In the example of Company B, the administrator has been told explicitly by the directors that fees are not negotiable, to protect him from being drawn into assumed negotiations by opportunistic students. Now he has the company frame for handling discount requests and he knows how to answer them. The skill is to identify frames assumed by others and question them and to be aware of the frames one is setting and have them accepted by others.

The second condition, knowing what you want from a negotiation, or what your party wants, requires you to frame your own criteria and intention for yourself (and your party). You need to know the scope, the context and the extent of your commitment and the specific details, before and during negotiation.

The third condition, knowing what the other party wants and their intention and criteria, requires you to frame your questions to them as productive and non-threatening and to establish the scope, the context and the extent of their commitment and the specific details, during negotiation.

Essential skills for all three conditions are:

- To identify frames assumed by others and question them and to assume frames and have them accepted by others
- To set and question frames explicitly
- To identify and elicit the intentions of parties for having what they want
- To identify and elicit the consequences to parties of having what they want

- To broaden the scope of parties' positions
- To specify all parties' outcomes and agreements

The skill group is observation and information gathering from a congruent stance. This is provided by Grinder's Verbal Package, a product of the New Code of NLP.

NLP stands for neuro (brain/thinking) linguistic (pertaining to language and its use) programming (creating algorithms to run specific processes in response to identified cues). In case it is not obvious, this description refers to processes and process instructions for responding to patterns detected in the world. The content of the detected material does not contribute to the choice of algorithm. The form remains constant through different content expressions on different occasions.

Imagine a sunbeam shining in through a window. If the window is clean and the air is clear, you can see a window-shaped patch of sunlight on the floor. If the room is smoky, you can detect the whole length of the sunbeam from window to floor and see exactly where it starts and ends. To follow the content, we would fixate on the need for smoke to reveal the path of the sunbeam. When we follow form, or pattern, we need something off which the light can reflect, to show where the sunbeam is. We could stick our arms into the light and wave them around, or throw flour into the sunbeam, or drop glitter or dead leaves through the air, or may be stir up dust or talcum powder. Any of these would render the sunbeam visible, which was our outcome in this experiment.

Grinder and Bandler (mostly Grinder) developed neuro-linguistic programs for gathering high quality information in any context and they follow linguistic form. The most comprehensive set of language patterns for information gathering is the Meta Model of Language and it is the first time a comprehensive, form based linguistic model has been developed for this purpose. The meta model applies specific questions, known as "challenges" to 13 linguistic forms or "violations", each of which belongs to the class of linguistic distortions or generalizations or deletions.

The intent of challenging meta model violations is to bring accuracy to distorted comments, specificity to over generalised comments and restoration of information to deleted comments, regardless of the subject matter. This is designed to give the challenger the information they

need, and/or to train the speaker or writer to think more clearly about the content under discussion.

The meta model is applicable to anything that humans talk or write about. Meta model challenges can be blunt. There are many stories of students learning the meta model and annoying unsuspecting friends when they first use the patterns outside class. Rapport maintaining activity, softeners surrounding the questions, gentle voice tones can all help to keep the subject interested and comfortable while finding the additional information called for by a challenge. Framing (explaining one's intentions and what one is doing) is a great rapport enhancer, as the subject is then included in the process instead of being at the sharp end of it.

The cues for challenging meta model violations include:

- Identifying (hearing or reading and recognising) one or more verbally expressed distortions, generalizations and/or deletions in someone's language
And
- Identifying a need to know more accurately, specifically or exactly and/or to teach clear thinking and articulate description
And
- Identifying and implementing the level of rapport maintenance necessary to achieve the above.

When all of the above are activated, challenge detected meta model violations in the following order: first challenge distortions, then, if necessary challenge generalizations, finally, if necessary, challenge deletions. This is a lot of material to teach in one hour, but is essential for anyone learning comprehensive, generic NLP.

There is a shorter version, the "Precision Model", described in a book of that name by Grinder and McMaster. The precision model covers challenges to generalization and deletion patterns. Like the newer specifier question model below, the precision model applies the questions, "what, specifically" and "how, specifically" to unclear nouns and verbs, describing these challenges as "noun blockbusters" and "verb blockbusters", respectively. The precision model also includes meta model challenges to statements of belief, known as modal operators of possibility (can, may, could and their opposites) and necessity (have to, must, should and their opposites) and to universal quantifiers (all, every, never, no-one).

The precision model was designed to give people in business a shorter skill set than

the meta model, one that would enable them to communicate more effectively and give and receive better quality instruction, but with less training and practice time.

For the many people who want a quick upgrade for giving and receiving information, including informal negotiators, Grinder and Bostic have now pared down the meta model to just two questions. You can use this model straight away, with rapport, after reading this page. The instructions are very simple.

“What, specifically”, is asked in response to nouns, both abstract and concrete that could be clearer.

“How, specifically” is asked in response to unspecified and unclear verbs. Grinder recommends starting with the nouns. As with the meta model, a single question may not be adequate, but with repeated questioning, the desired specificity is obtainable provided the subject knows the answers.

Altering the form weakens the effect of these questions. While you can ask “Which (noun) specifically”, instead of “What (noun) specifically” if you ask “What kind of (noun) specifically” you are eliciting a different class of response and it is not going to produce results. Ask “Which car, specifically” or “What outcome, specifically”. With verbs ask, “Walk, how, specifically” or “Put it down, how, specifically”.

From the meta model, notice that the nouns and verbs being questioned, contain linguistic deletions and remember, the most effective order to challenge meta model violations is distortions first, then generalizations and deletions last. With this specifier model, Grinder proposes using specifier questions on nouns and verbs wherever there is a need to know. This includes nouns and verbs present in distorted and generalized sentences, too.

It is possible and functional to use specifier questions as Grinder proposes, because layered meta model violations occur in a single sentence, so specifying nouns and verbs contributes to clarifying distortions and specifying generalizations as well as restoring deleted material. Not only does every sentence derive from unspoken assumptions, every sentence also includes nouns and verbs that could be more specific, regardless of any overarching distortion or generalization in the larger text.

The cues for challenging non-specific nouns and verbs include:

- Identifying (hearing or reading and recognising) one or more vague or under specified noun and/or verb in someone's language
And
- Identifying a need to know more accurately, specifically or exactly and/or to teach clear thinking and articulate description
And
- Identifying and implementing the level of rapport maintenance necessary to achieve the above.

When all the above conditions are met, ask "What (noun) specifically" and "(Verb) how, specifically". Keep cycling until you reach a satisfactory conclusion. (Satisfactory how, specifically? – That is up to you).

To find more on the specifier question model, follow up Grinder's "Verbal Package" in "Whispering in the Wind" by Grinder and Bostic. The verbal package includes:

Framing (defining the context, conditions, intentions and limits for a conversation or activity), the specifier questions we have discussed and the chain of excellence (changing one's breathing changes physiology or posture, changing physiology changes state, changing state changes performance in the world).