



Me, Myself, My Team REVISED EDITION

**How to Become an Effective
Team Player Using NLP**

Angus McLeod, PhD

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Introduction

When I first made the move from academia into industry, I reinvented myself as a go-getting, success-at-any-cost manager. I was bright and self-assured and got things done. People who got in the way of my vision (of the corporate goals) were manoeuvred out. I was operating from a set of ideas and beliefs that, although apparently successful, ignored the benefits that come from real teamwork, or the 'two plus two equals five' phenomenon. What changed me was the catalyst of pain. I rose fast and was cut down twice, in each case my patterns and competencies being out-matched by more politically agile people. With hindsight, it would have been smarter not to fail but instead to make the essential changes in thinking performance for myself. The two essential traits necessary for that to happen are openness (to challenge and new ideas) and flexible thinking – it is not necessary to fail in order to learn!

Each of us is already gifted with phenomenal ability. And some of that ability is invariably trapped in set ideas and beliefs that limit our perception and the chance to perform superbly. The keys to releasing our abilities are those two traits: openness (to challenge and new ideas) and flexible thinking. This book is designed to develop openness and flexibility by offering you and your colleagues a set of tools that may be used to create your own change and success both as an individual and as a Team achiever. The first part of this book investigates the similarities/differences that we have in relation to other people. Then we explore those further to consider the similarities and differences that you have with your Team as a means of introducing some of the flexible-thinking skills that will be used throughout the book. It may be useful to read quickly through Chapter Three (whether you have a current Team or not) and complete the working examples. The book is designed as a working manual and reference work, which refers both backwards and forwards to other work and working examples.

Much of the thinking behind the book comes from current practice and ideas in coaching, learning science, neuro-linguistic programming

(NLP) and coaching. My premise is that individuals operate internally as Teams. For example, I am a leader in directing and compelling myself to take business risks, but there is another part of me (my internal 'follower') that is fearful of doing this! And there may be 'Team communication' going on in my head: 'Go for it!' and 'That's too risky!'

This approach opens up new perceptions and learning for both the person and the Team in which he works. I would further argue that, unless each person has a properly functioning and efficient Internal Team, his performance in real Teams is questionable. My aim in sharing this book is to address the Internal Team and extend that thinking into the real (External) Team. The process is one that encourages both flexible thinking and also unique and individual solutions for each reader. My belief is that readers are more compelled to work through their own solutions than to borrow a standard 'system' from management theory. The best answers will be your own. It is part of this thinking that I bring to my work as a coach in business, catalysing individuals to fly. With luck, the receiving Teams will also embrace this work, and the beating of individual wings will be in harmony, allowing the Team to soar beyond the limitations of other Teams. In my experience, any change in one person leads to change within the Team. Even if only one person is flying, others will quietly practise and adapt themselves for flight! Enough of metaphor! The premise I make is that 'culture' is the result of similar behaviours, but it grows by the dynamics of similarity/difference.

The skills in this book enable you to have more choice about where you have similarity or difference with your Team (or a desired Team that you aspire to work within). When you change your behaviours they create change around you. Where others match this in the Team, you have a changed culture. Matching behaviours constitute Team culture. Your effort can therefore help the success of your organisation and is measurable by you. You can do this by noticing the changes that happen around you and whether or not these changes are in harmony with your own choice of behaviours.

We begin, then, by looking at the similarities and differences that we have when compared with others.

Chapter One

Thinking Preferences

Summary

We think differently and are motivated differently from other people. Only when we understand our own thinking can we make choices about a particular strategy to use in a particular situation. And understanding our own thinking processes leads to realisations about the differences between ourselves and others. These realisations lead to choice and the potential for improved communication, impact, influence and Team performance.

This chapter examines thinking preferences in order to give you insight into your own thinking preferences and how other people are similar to or different from you. It should also provide you with 'reasons' for how some people behave and why they may be effective or dysfunctional in a Team at the moment. Understanding creates opportunity for development and improved performance.

Understanding thinking preferences

Many of us tend to be surprised when other people do not understand something as easily as we do ourselves, or when they fail to grasp fully the importance of an issue. Most often, we project our own thinking preferences onto other people and assume that if they don't 'get it' it's because *they* have a problem. Let's stop right there! We cannot force change on someone else (without their full willingness and participation); it is a hopeless and wasteful task. So let's start with a set of beliefs that are empowering and enabling for you in the Team. Buying into these fully will give you a greater chance of success within all Teams.

- I cannot change what other people do, but I can change what I do.

- People have different thinking styles and preferences.
- If I understand other people's thinking styles and preferences, I can communicate with greater impact.
- I am responsible for getting my message across; it is not the receiver's responsibility.
- The better I communicate with colleagues, the greater our combined productivity.
- Understanding leads to trust.

Now let's look at some different kinds of thinking preferences. (I have drawn on NLP, learning theory and psychometric personality methods, including LAB profiling (Charvet, 1997) in setting these out, as well as aspects taken from my book *Slay that Dragon*.) The list below is not definitive. There are many ways to categorise understanding of people and their preferences. This list offers some insights as to how other people prefer information, how they use it and how they make decisions. The process is illuminating – whether accurate or not – and the benefits for you and your Team are considerable.

Left- and right-brain preference

The concept of *left and right brains* is one of the simplest and most widely known models of human psychology. It was brought to general attention (see, for example, Erdmann, Hubel and Stover, 2000) in 1981, when Roger Sperry shared the Nobel Prize in neurology. He asserted that our cognitive processes are largely split into mental activities on the left or right side of the brain. Thus, logical processing, comparing, organisation, structuring and arithmetic are all thought to be activities that predominate in the left brain. The right brain is concerned with emotional expression, creative inspiration and play. It may be assumed that the commercial, Western world is mainly populated by people with more left-brain skills than right-brain skills. Likewise, we can expect to find more instinct, inspiration and creativity in the East. As Sperry said at the Nobel ceremony, 'The great pleasure and feeling in my right brain is more than my left brain can find the words to tell you.'

Whether correct or not, it is easy to imagine that there are people who have dominating intelligence on one 'side' of the brain rather

than the other. In the USA and Europe there are many working people who are attracted to organisations that operate in logical, left-brain ways. This can occasionally mean that the Teams are perhaps weaker in emotional intelligence, intuitive solutions, creative explorations or the ability to 'play'. It can be very challenging to those with left-brain thinking preference to 'let go', to play and run with the experience. It is only a preference and a determination to improve right-brain skills will result in raised competence in creative thought and intuition. Activities that stimulate the right brain include reading literature and self-questioning: 'What is my gut feeling?' for example. We can also encourage the right brain by opening up to creative expression through art, play and instinctive writing, for example, poetry written directly onto the page without editing during the creative process.

In the fast, changing world of business more managers need to be flexible and creative in their thinking and behaviours. Many managers are locked into reactive firefighting rather than the careful creation of strategy. Stimulating right-brain activity has to be a good way to encourage more flexible thought and creativity. These lead us to new inspirations, new possibilities, more effective strategies and methods.

The right-brain-dominant thinker can enter into a state, similar to trance, called *psychological flow* (about 20 per cent of the population are able to do this), in which words, images and/or feelings flow out and any structuring is left to subconscious processing, free of logical thought. Tim Gallwey (2000) calls this state, 'Self 2 focus'. For example, right-brain writers do very little thinking – they just write and edit afterwards. During the creative flow they create structures (associated in the left brain) as a *subconscioussupport* to their right-brain creativity. When the creative flow has ended, the writer discovers (cognitive, left-brain logic) that their work is already very well structured.

The state of 'flow' can be so captivating that the person will not notice people speaking to him. This can create problems if the trait is not understood and overtly discussed with those who may be affected by it.

Chapter Four

Performance Mindsets

Summary

Performance mindsets are thinking strategies for individual and Team performance. These strategies offer choices for improved performance rather than automatic behaviour patterns that may repeat the errors of the past.

In Chapter Two, we spent some time looking at *empowering beliefs*. We also explored how taking these on *as if* they were true makes a major difference to what happens when we interact with other people in the Team. Empowering beliefs help create a positive mindset and allow us to achieve even greater perception. I am going to present these individual empowering beliefs in two parts. The aim of the first part is to construct your individual set of empowering beliefs that are enabling for you. And the aim of the second part is to explore an additional set of beliefs which will make a difference with your Team specifically. Generally, these differentiate easily into two lists, but it is OK if one empowering belief is common to both lists.

Exercise: Beliefs for personal empowerment

I have listed a set of typical beliefs that may be useful. Please strike out or rewrite any that are not right for you. In addition, I have left space for you to add many of your own. Please state these with *positive* words. An example of a *negatively* expressed belief is:

Being shy does not make me weak.

A better (*positive*) way to express this is to write:

Shy people succeed if they choose to, and I can too.

Here are a few suggestions to start you off:

- My resources include both sources of information and people.
- I can accomplish every aspect of my job now (or will do with further training/coaching).
- To ask for help shows strength of character.
- I am in control of my actions and interactions.
- To follow or not to follow is in my field of choice and control.
- I make a useful contribution to my Team.
- To risk is to be brave.
- Mistakes are an opportunity for learning.
- I am largely responsible for whether I get promoted or not.
- Empowering beliefs give new perception and new choices for successful action.
- Most things go smoothly and well.

Go ahead and create some more of your own:

Exercise: Beliefs for team empowerment

I have listed below a set of typical beliefs that may be useful, but please amend them as you wish, and add any others that you think are helpful.

- Both my Team and I are more successful when we all contribute.
- Team performance is much greater than the sum of the individual performances.
- The contribution of 'following' is at least equal to that of leading or facilitating.
- When I follow rather than lead it is my choice to do so.
- Effective communication is the responsibility of the communicator.
- Asking questions achieves understanding and is good.
- Everyone in the Team is better at something than all the others.
- Individual superiority is an affectation, not a reality.

Additional beliefs:

We have already explored the taking on of empowering beliefs and the benefit that comes from new mindsets (however temporary we choose to make them), creating new perspectives, new understanding and improved action. There is another thread to this, which is called *reframing*.

Reframing

To *reframe* an idea, communication or situation means to look openly for other possible meaning or perspectives. The benefit of reframing is in allowing new insights and the possibility of more effective action. Let's look at some examples.

1. My boss has asked me to do something I am uneasy about.

During a meeting, my boss says, 'By the way, I want you to go through that sales plan for the main board again and see if you can shorten it some.' Later, I feel unease. He does not value my work as it is. He has criticised me in front of other colleagues.

The first element of reframing is questioning for greater understanding. This technique is widely employed in transactional analysis (see, for example, Harris, 1973) because the questioning stems from what is called the *adult aspect* of the psyche which encourages rational thinking. Here are some examples:

- What else could be going on here?
- What other possible interpretations could I make?

Me, Myself, My Team

“Angus McLeod’s excellent work is a must have for anyone working in or with a team. It contains powerful tools for both the new team member or experienced team leader.”

Richard Churches

Me, Myself, My Team is a practical book that details new and empowering strategies using the ‘team’ as a model for change. Whether your objective is to influence changes in your workplace, decide on the most career-important focus for your job or understand and influence difficult people, this book has inspiring tools for stimulating change. The emphasis is principally on what we can do to make a difference at work. These learnings are extended to provide practical ideas for developing people and teams as well.

“This one has been sitting on my bookshelf for a while as I found its subtitle, ‘How to become an effective team player using NLP’, somewhat daunting. In fact no prior knowledge of neuro-linguistic programming is required, and whilst this isn’t a book to be skimmed through, the time spent reading it is time well spent. Useful advice is there for the taking, and managers and committed team players are likely to find this book very relevant.”

Business Bookshelf, City Business review, August 2006



Angus McLeod, PhD is a well-known and respected coach through his work with individuals, teams and professional coaches. He is widely published in the United States and Europe on coaching and team development issues. Angus continues to influence the coaching profession through his on-line mentoring service ‘Ask Max’ and leadership of The Coaching Foundation, an organisation that offers career development opportunities to professional coaches.

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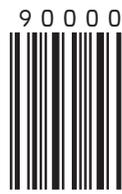
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