



There is Only One Boss: The Customer

by Patti Hathaway, CSP

In business today, there is only one boss - the customer. Sh/e can fire everybody from the CEO down simply by spending his/her money elsewhere. One of the best techniques that will help us overcome our tendency to fake attention with customers is a cutting-edge technique that will improve our listening as well as help us gain rapport with our customers. This technique is extremely powerful for in-person contacts and it comes from the science of Neuro Linguistics Programming/NLP.

First, let's talk about the background information that will help you see the technique's power. One thing we know is that one of the barriers to customer service is the fact that we sometimes FAKE ATTENTION. This is due in part to our THOUGHT/SPEECH RATIO. We can think 4-5 times faster than the other person talking. The NLP technique gives us something to do with that extra lag time in our thought/speech.

Mehrabian conducted a research study to determine how important the nonverbal aspects of communication are compared to the actual words we use when communicating one-on-one. If you divide up interpersonal communication into the *Words* we use, the *Tone of Voice* and *Gestures or Body Language*, what percentages would you give to each? The following conclusions were made: Your words are with 7% of your communication, your tone of voice comes out to 38% and your gestures are equivalent to 55% of your total communication.

It is surprising to find that most customer service training centers around the use of words. Since the nonverbal component is so important, that is what we need to concentrate on. Let's talk about what Neuro Linguistics Programming is and why it is so powerful.

In short, **NLP**, developed by John Grinder and Richard Bandler, is a system that allows us to "read" people more sensitively and respond to them more effectively. We are able to establish a positive relationship quickly by incorporating NLP into the way we work with people.

Neuro stands for your nervous system or non-verbal behavior. Everything in your nervous system runs subconsciously. Most times, you are not consciously aware of what you are doing nonverbally. The way you typically sit is probably not consciously chosen. You sit the way you've always sat. It is subconscious and natural.

Linguistics stands for your language. In this case, your non verbal language.

Programming is just like a computer program. It is a program you put into place to achieve a specific result. With this technique we are looking to BUILD RAPPORT with other people.

Let's look at the specifics of how to apply NeuroLinguistics Programming to working with customers.

Mirroring, which is one of several Neuro Linguistics Programming/NLP techniques, is the art of copying another person's behavior to create a relaxed communication situation. The reason being is that we like people who are like us. "Birds of a feather flock together." If we LOOK nonverbally just like someone, and 93% of how that person communicates is nonverbal, they will like us at a subconscious level. And be saying to themselves, "I like this person. They are just like me." And, if we like someone, we trust them AND want to do business with them (or have them service our equipment).

Specifically, this is how you mirror:

First, match the other person's voice tone or tempo. If they talk fast, you talk fast. If they talk slowly, you talk slowly. When I speak in New York, I can't speak quickly enough. If I'm in southern Texas, I slow my pace down to match their pace. One way to help you match the other person's tempo is to match the other person's breathing rate. Pace yourself to it.

Match the other person's body movements, posture and gestures. If the person you're mirroring crosses his/her legs, you cross your legs. If the other person gestures, you will gesture. Of course, subtlety is everything. You may want to wait several seconds before moving. A very important point about gesturing is that we only gesture when we speak. This won't make much sense to you until you go out and observe other people speaking to each other.

The process of mirroring is totally natural. You do it naturally with people you like and have built rapport with. Have you ever coincidentally noticed that you and a friend simultaneously scratched your noses at the same time. It's mirroring, it's just that you didn't know that is what it is called.

Morton Kelsey said it well when he said, "Listening is being silent in an active way." If you think of it, if you rearrange the letters in the word listen, it is equivalent to silent. How much more effective would we be in customer service if we would listen more and talk less?

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