

NLP & Coaching by Ken Way: Trainer and Master Practitioner, NLP

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) has arrived in the UK in a big way after being developed in the States by Dr's Richard Bandler and John Grinder (professors of mathematics and English respectively). They decided to tackle the question: what are the essential ingredients of expert communicators? Their research spawned some fascinating approaches that were later encompassed into a body of knowledge called NLP. The 'programming' reference is a computer allusion suggesting that people run unconscious 'mental programmes' - some of which occasionally need updating to cope with new or changing situations. Thus an NLP-based coaching approach focuses on the mental patterns that people use to engage with situations or problems. Since NLP has its historical routes in language and communication, the NLP-based coach will listen intently to the client describe the situation they are facing in order to pick up on any underlying assumptions that are being made at the level of values, beliefs and behaviours. It's not unusual, for example, for a client to know what they want to change, to appreciate why it's important for them to change and yet still somehow not be able to make that change. Changing these hidden, unconscious mental programmes is the area that the NLP-coach works on first.

Although NLP is just one technique of several that I apply in my coaching work, I have found it invaluable in helping individual managers to overcome blocks and to make significant changes in their behaviour.