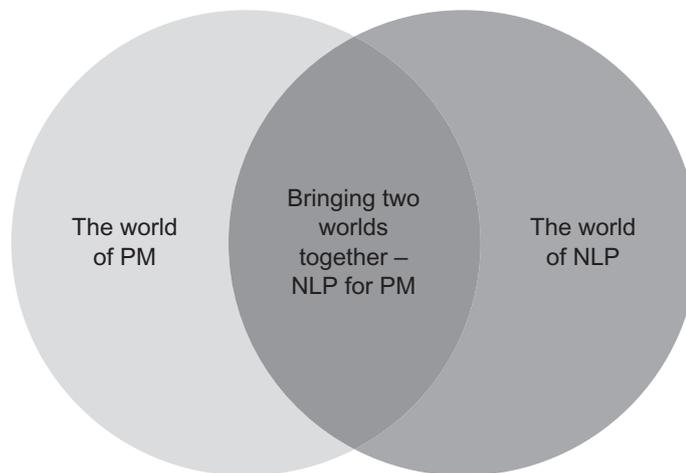


# INTRODUCTION

## STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

Other books attempt to teach you about NLP, or at least support training in it. The domain of NLP is very broad, and since it originated from modelling of successful therapists, guides and courses will generally focus on aspects such as life coaching, wellbeing, relationships, etc. This book is unique in that I will show you how NLP can be directly applied to project management in a competence based approach.

The structure of the book follows an NLP approach itself. At the core of NLP is the presupposition that we all have unique world-views, and we only communicate effectively when we find a way of causing overlap of these distinct worlds. Hence, I will first introduce the world of projects and the world of NLP, before going on to bring the two worlds together and describe the many applications of NLP for soft skills in project management.



The first part of the book gives an overview of where so-called soft skills are relevant to the different aspects of project and program management, classic stages of the project life cycle, and the various bodies of knowledge (BoKs). Key skills and behaviours from the various competence frameworks are compared, and requirements for becoming an effective project professional are discussed,

including those being assessed for a register of project professionals by the Association for Project Management. Now that project management has been recognised as a discipline in its own right, these competences will form the core of any new chartered profession.

The second part lays the foundations for understanding the world of NLP, leaving most of the application for the final part.

The final part of the book brings together the worlds of projects and NLP, and provides a large number of exercises specifically aimed at developing competence against skills and behaviours identified as key requirements for effective leadership and management of projects and programs.

## THE WORLD OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Formal project management had its fiftieth anniversary around 2010. Methods, mainly for managing time, cost and quality, have been codified and form the backbone of the new profession. In the new millennium, however, Dr Martin Barnes CBE, former Executive Director of the Major Projects Association,<sup>1</sup> re-defined project management as 'Getting things done by people'. This innocent remark is striking because it was Barnes who set in stone the basic tenet of the 'iron triangle' for project management by the three dimensions of time, cost and quality.<sup>2</sup>

Our world is changing with increasing frequency, and much of this change is now being delivered through the discipline of project management. Projects themselves are becoming increasingly complex, as we move on from focussing on delivery of assets and technology to management of stakeholders, benefits, and emerging opportunities and risks. Hence requirements for project and program professionals must continue to evolve to meet these increasing expectations.

Without doubt, the structured methods of PRINCE2 and PMI codify good practice and have helped to guide entrants to the profession. They have become *de facto* standards along the way. Hundreds of thousands of people have now been taught, examined and certificated in these methods around the world. As yet, however, we have not seen a resultant increase in project success, especially in IT projects. Maybe this is because for complex projects:

### **Method + Soft Skills + Leadership = Success**

I think so. In other words, as Louis Armstrong sang:

'Tain't what you do, it's the way that cha do it, that's what gets results'

Hence, I see what is introduced in this book as quite complementary to the structured methods. For professional bodies under the International Project Management Association (IPMA), there is certainly a requirement to demonstrate competence in delivery as well as knowledge and experience of method in order

to advance beyond the basic levels of qualification. Chartered status for project managers, as proposed by the Association for Project Management, will certainly require demonstration of competence against a wide range of skills, which are covered in Part 3 of this book.

## THE WORLD OF NLP

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'A model of inter-personal communication chiefly concerned with the relationship between successful patterns of behaviour and the subjective experiences (especially patterns of thought) underlying them.' I prefer to call it the modelling of success.

It originates from early work on cybernetics and systems, and the metaphor of the human mind being like a biological computer, running long established core programs as behaviours. Modelling of world-class therapists led to even greater understanding of the workings of the mind, and tools and techniques for understanding, eliciting and modifying behaviours.

NLP is well established in top level sports and is widespread in the pursuit of personal development, especially for removing limiting beliefs and modelling peak performance. It is increasingly gaining acceptance in training and human resource management. It has been popularised to eliminate phobias, change compulsive behaviours and manage stress. It can be used to deal with inner conflict and manage health issues. In this book I will be constraining myself to a fairly formal approach, but having had personal experience of all of the other areas, I will give pointers in a final part on 'taking things further'.

## WORLD-VIEWS – THE COMPLETE PROJECT MANAGER

'The biggest room in the world is the room for self improvement'

Japanese proverb

I believe that to be a complete project manager you need both hard and soft skills. When BNFL (British Nuclear Fuels) went through an initiative for 'world class performance' for project management in the mid-1990s, it largely abandoned trying to train poorly performing managers and instead set up selection centres based on behaviours of successful project managers. It then invested heavily in the development of those managers. Improvements in hard and soft measures of project delivery were significant, especially in forecast vs out-turn for time and cost.

But if you entered the profession via competence in processes and tools then take hope. It has been established that soft skills can be developed and improved. In Goleman's original book in 1997 *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, he convinced a proportion of the five million readers that EI was important. But the book fell short in not showing how to improve it. This book

*will* provide you with an approach and some useful tools to help to improve your emotional intelligence, even where it might already be considerable.

By the fact that you have picked up this book, I know that you will approach the exercises with an open mind, and trust that you will get good use from the knowledge in your own journey of personal and professional development.

All books are poor substitutes for personal coaching, hence the price difference. Neither can they remain practical and be comprehensive. (The encyclopaedia of NLP is 10 times the length of this book.)<sup>3</sup> This introduction to the topic and its application will stimulate those who are ready to take the next step and do some hands-on training. For the rest, I expect to at least broaden your map of the world.

'No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge'

Kahlil Gibran