

Communicating with Different Primary Rep Systems

One of the best-known pieces of NLP is the body of work around sensory preferences, known in the jargon as Primary Rep Systems – your primary rep system being the one you use most often.

It's often very entertaining to work out the preferences of people you interact with every day because you begin to appreciate why they do some of the things they do and why certain things matter to particular individuals. Some people are content with that insight.

I believe that's only part of the story. Once you've figured out a person's preferences, you can begin to adapt your communication so that it really works.

Some people will ask, "*Why should I adapt my style to suit other people? Do I have to do all the work?*"

The purpose of adapting your style to suit the person you're talking to is so that you achieve your outcome. If you are conversing with no outcome in mind, it doesn't matter how you communicate. But if there's something you want to achieve, adapting to the other person's sensory preferences will make it easier to get what you want.

Below is a list of communication strategies for each preference. Some relate to your preparation before a meeting or conversation, some are tips to follow during the dialogue. I encourage you to experiment with these and notice what differences you can make to the success of your meetings.

Visual - How it looks is important:

- Prepare notes before a meeting rather than scribble on the board as you go along
- Maintain a clean and tidy environment
- Make sure that documents are well formatted and look professional
- Include pictures, diagrams, charts and models
- A picture is worth a thousand words!
- Cut to the chase, and keep the pace lively
- Give written as well as verbal feedback and recognition

Auditory - How it sounds is important

- Choose meeting locations that are quiet and do not have distracting background noise
- Keep your tone friendly and pleasant
- Avoid meetings/phone calls when you are irritated or impatient – they will be able to tell
- Allow time for questions and discussion
- Give verbal as well as written feedback and recognition

Kinaesthetic - How it feels is important:

- Explain your plans a few days before a formal meeting and outline the involvement you want
- Take time to set the scene before turning to specific business
- Check that the environment is suitable for the purpose
- Allow time for decisions to be made – don't try to rush the process
- Do NOT finish their sentences
- Give feedback in person

Digital - How it makes sense is important:

- Check your facts and figures
- Check your facts and figures again
- Use an agenda that progresses logically through the business
- Keep your comments relevant
- Do NOT finish their sentences
- Give specific, factual feedback

...and of course, now that you've recognised your own preferences you can improve your meetings immensely if you resolve not to have a tantrum when other people don't pander to your preferences!

Dianne Lowther
Master Trainer of NLP

Dianne Lowther is a Master Trainer of NLP and Principal of Brilliant Minds. She specialises in applications of NLP for leadership and business results.

Brilliant Minds
Suite 440, 99 Warwick Street
Leamington Spa, CV32 4RB
01926 435609
www.brilliantminds.co.uk