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# SMART MONEY NETWORK

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Supercharge Your Sales Copy with NLP



***NLP is a set of techniques and principles that allow communication with and influence over another person's subconscious mind. You'll learn enough in the next five minutes to make a measurable impact in your marketing without even knowing it!***

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Let's begin with a mouthful of psycho-babble:

*"Neuro-Linguistic Programming".*

Have you ever heard of it? If not, you're not alone, but you'll soon discover how what some believe to be "psycho-babble" can be one of the most persuasive tools in your marketing arsenal.

## **What is Neuro-Linguistic Programming?**

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a communication and personal development tool developed by psychologists Richard Bandler and John Grinder in California in the 1970's. NLP consultant Robert B. Dilts, NLP, "describes the fundamental dynamics between mind (neuro) and language (linguistic) and how their interplay affects our body and behavior (programming).

"That's all well and good," you might say. "But what does NLP have to do with my marketing, specifically my marketing content?" Great question!

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## **Picking positive frames for stronger headlines.**

*Framing* suggests that how you present information influences the choices people make. Put things in a positive light and your readers (and customers) are more likely to respond.

For example, let's look at the McDonald's® Quarter Pounder® burger. Whoa, that sounds like a lot of beef! You really have to have an appetite to devour one of them, right? Now, would you feel the same if this burger were marketed as four-ounces of beef? Probably not. Four ounces sounds like nothing at all. But a quarter-pounder positively resonates with the target audience, in this case, those with a hearty appetite.

Let's continue with beef. Would you rather eat a steak that's 75% lean, or 25% fat? Even though they're the same, you'd probably choose the "lean" steak. Taking it one step further, would you rather eat a steak that's "marbled" with fat or "contains" fat? Probably marbled.

Although positive framing is most effective in a headline, it can be used throughout the copy to make your case.

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Yet on the other hand, sometimes negative framing works, too.

For example, a framing study showed<sup>1</sup> two groups of women videos about breast cancer and mammography with the aim of persuading them to get themselves screened. The first video was positively framed. It touted the benefits of having a mammogram. The second video was negatively framed, and stressed the risks of not having one.

The results?

The positively framed video led to 51.5% of women booking a mammogram. But the negatively framed video led to 61.2% of women booking a mammogram.

Research by Outbrain also showed that “The average click-through rate on headlines with negative superlatives was a staggering 63% higher than that of their positive counterparts.”

Clearly, both frames can be effective – so how do you decide when to use which?

In general, negative/loss aversion frames convert better when something has a tangible value that prospects might be afraid of losing – like, site traffic, money, or rankings etc.

Unfortunately, there’s no simple answer, which is why research into your customer insights and testing will help you determine whether positive or negative framing will work best.

## **The benefits of a disruptive reframe.**

What if I told you that you could purchase six pens for \$2.00. Meh. But what’s another way to say two dollars? 200 pennies? So what if I told you that you could purchase six pens for 200 pennies—and that’s a real bargain! Wait, what? Pennies? We’ve just disrupted the thought of the reader for a split second and increased the odds that they believe they are getting a bargain.

*Reframing* is extremely useful for reducing the weight of your price. Children and animal charities are extremely effective when using reframing. “Sponsor a child for 35¢ a day, that’s less than the cost of a postage stamp.” Or a donation of just one dollar, less than the price of one can of dog food, can feed 10 dogs for a week.”

The higher the contrast and the greater the disruption caused by reframing, the more appealing your offer can be. After all, when you are purchasing a new car, would you rather pay:

- \$2,920 a year
- \$240 per month

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/7789354>

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- or just two lattes a day (\$8)

By softening the blow of the larger price by using the contrast effect, the offer is perceived as more appealing.

## Ask the loaded question

Interrogation rooms in a police station are a fascinating place to witness *presuppositions* and *adjacency pairs*.

Just watch any police or detective program. The interrogator will lean in and ask, “Where’d you hide the diamonds?” or “John Smith was your accomplice, wasn’t he?”

Loaded questions? You bet. And in the marketing world, they are known as *presuppositions*. Simply by asking these loaded questions, it implies the interviewee possible hid the diamonds, or had an accomplice.

Presuppositions can vary simply by changing one word.

An academic study<sup>2</sup> tested the influence of presumptive questions on eyewitnesses to a car accident. Subjects were shown a film depicting multiple car accidents. After watching, they were asked “About how fast were the cars going when they smashed into each other?” Other subjects were then asked the same question, but with the word “smashed” replaced by:

- contacted
- hit
- bumped
- collided

Researchers found that the more presumptive or “loaded” the verb used, the higher the estimated speed from the witness. In fact, the study found that when using the more presumptive question, more people were more likely to state there was broken glass at the scene—when there was none at all.

## Combine presuppositions with adjacency pairs

Now that you’re using presumptive language, to really get your reader thinking about your product/service, combine those presuppositions with *adjacency pairs*.

An adjacency pair is when the second part of the sentence is functionally dependent on the first part. To answer or complete the thought, you have to answer or understand the first part. Basically, this means that to make sense of what is being said, your brain has to – momentarily – accept the first part as a fact.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://webfiles.uci.edu/eloftus/LoftusPalmer74.pdf>

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So, imagine I were to ask, “How will you use neuro linguistic principles to strengthen your copy?” Knowing what you know about NLP, you probably (and naturally) tried to answer the question. If you knew nothing about NLP, you wouldn’t be able to “play along” and visualize yourself using NLP.

Combining presuppositions with adjacency pairs is a subtle form of persuasion called “self selling.”

## **The Importance of rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration**

Take a page from the poets and power up your prose with rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration. (See what I did there?)

When used in short copy, such as tag lines, headlines, or subheads, rhyme can make you copy more memorable and familiar to your readers. How? The *rhyme as reason effect*, which states the easier something is to understand or do, the more profitable, pleasurable, and safer it is perceived to be.

Think for a moment how many nursery rhymes and tongue twisters you can remember. The reasons? Rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration.

## **Delayed Transitions**

In school, we learned that a conjunction is word or a phrase that connects two words or two phrases or two clauses or two sentences. They also help transition the reader from one thought to the next. Unfortunately, they can also lead to run-on sentences and bloated paragraphs that lose the readers’ interest. For example:

“You know that strong copy is essential for greater conversions, and you know that writing strong copy isn’t easy, so you’ve decided to learn more about neuro-linguistic programming to see if you can write copy that’s stronger.”

How about this instead?

“You know that strong copy is essential for greater conversions. You know that writing strong copy isn’t easy. So, to write stronger copy, you’ve decided to learn more about neuro-linguistic programming.”

*Delayed transitions* make it easier to start the next thought process. They make your copy less predictable. And they allow for shorter sentences, which helps build momentum and keep your copy from becoming sluggish.

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Now that you've learned how to use NLP to get inside the head of your reader, use your new tools to make your copy stronger and lead to greater conversions.

