

NLP and the Five Senses

We were all born with five senses, each one helping us to make generalizations about the world. You should engage all five sensations when trying to persuade an audience. However, keep in mind that there are three dominating senses we gravitate toward. They are sight, hearing and feeling, or, visual, auditory and kinesthetic. When we learn, 75 percent of knowledge comes to us visually, 13 percent comes through hearing and 12 percent comes through smell, taste and touch. Most people tend to favor one of these perceptions over the others. As a Master Persuader, you need to identify and use your prospect's dominant perspective on the world. Granted, we generally make use of all five senses, but the point is to find the dominant perception. As you determine the dominant learning mode, consider the size of your audience. If you were speaking to one person, for example, you would want to pinpoint her/his one dominant perception. If you have an audience of one hundred, on the other hand, you would need to employ all three learning styles.

If you were to ask an auditory person to be an eyewitness to a robbery, he would describe the situation in this manner: "I was walking down First Avenue, listening to the singing birds, when I heard a scream for help. The yelling got louder. There was another scream, and then the thief ran off." A visual person might describe the same situation this way: "I was walking down First Avenue, watching the birds playing in the air, when I noticed a large man coming around the corner. I saw him attack the other man, take his wallet and run from the scene." The kinesthetic person would use this description: "I was walking down First Avenue and I felt a lump in my throat because I had a feeling something bad was going to happen. There was a scream then there was tension, and I knew that a man was getting robbed. I felt helpless to do anything."

The most commonly prevalent of the senses is sight, or visual perception. One study showed that those who used visual presentation tools (slides, overheads, etc.) were 43 percent more persuasive than subjects who didn't. Also, those using a computer to present their visual aids were considered more professional, interesting and effective. Visually oriented people understand the world according to how it looks to them. They

notice the details, like an object's shape, color, size and texture. They say things like, "I see what you mean," "From your point of view ...," "How does that look to you?" "I can't picture it," and "Do you see what I mean?" They tend to use words like "see," "show," "view," "look," "watch" and "observe."

Auditory people perceive everything according to sound and rhythm. Phrases you would commonly hear would be, "I hear you," "That sounds good to me," "Can you hear what I'm saying?" "It doesn't ring a bell" and "Let's talk about it." They use words such as "hear," "listen," "sounds," "debate," "silence," "harmony," "rings," "say," "speak," "discuss" and "verbalize."

Kinesthetic people go with what they feel, not only in a tactile way, but also internally. They are very into feelings and emotions. A kinesthetic person would say things like, "That feels right to me," "I will be in touch with you," "Do you feel that?" "I understand how you feel" and "I can sense it." They use words such as "feel," "touch," "hold," "connect," "reach," "unite," "grasp," "tension," "sense," "lift" and "understand."

One last word on visual, auditory and kinesthetic sensations: A general way to tell which type describes a particular person is to watch the movement of her/ his eyes when s/he has to think about a question. Ask her/him a question, watch her/his eyes and make sure the question is difficult enough that s/he has to ponder for a moment. Generally, but not 100 percent of the time, if the person looks up when s/he thinks, s/he is visual. When s/he looks to either side, s/he is usually auditory. When s/he looks down, s/he is kinesthetic. I am simplifying a complicated science, but if you try it, you will be amazed at the accuracy of this technique.