

# Achievement and success a matter of perspective



**Ranjit Sidhu**

Director of ChangeQuest

# Achievement and success

## a matter of perspective

Ever felt you're working really hard and achieving an enormous amount, but somehow not getting the success you deserve? In a competitive world, where the achievement of results is highly valued, it is tempting to take it for granted that if you work hard, then success will follow. This article considers why this may not always be the case and looks at what we, as project and change managers, can do to bring the often divergent qualities of effort and success closer together.

There are plenty of guidelines on how to work effectively to produce results and deliver successful projects, so why are we left in doubt as to how to make ourselves successful? It certainly doesn't always follow that if all the initiatives we're involved in are successful, then we are too! Traditionally, management approaches have focused strongly on systems and processes. But in today's world, it's increasingly recognised that a stronger focus on people skills is essential. Marketing professionals know that to communicate really well, you have to understand the language and perceptions of your target audience before you start. They talk about communication reflecting back the views and priorities of the intended audience, displaying an understanding of their perspective in order to gain trust. As project and change professionals, we understand that communicating information is critical to success, but we sometimes fail to realise the extent to which we need to address the underlying emotions and motivations of all involved. To have our own success recognised, we first have to acknowledge the people whose opinion we value and who we wish to impress. Then we need to become more skilled at understanding their goals and what they would see as 'success'. Does pursuing this seemingly personal agenda run counter to our organisational goals or enhance their chances?

To help explore this further, let's have a look at three perspectives: NLP, Agile and change management.

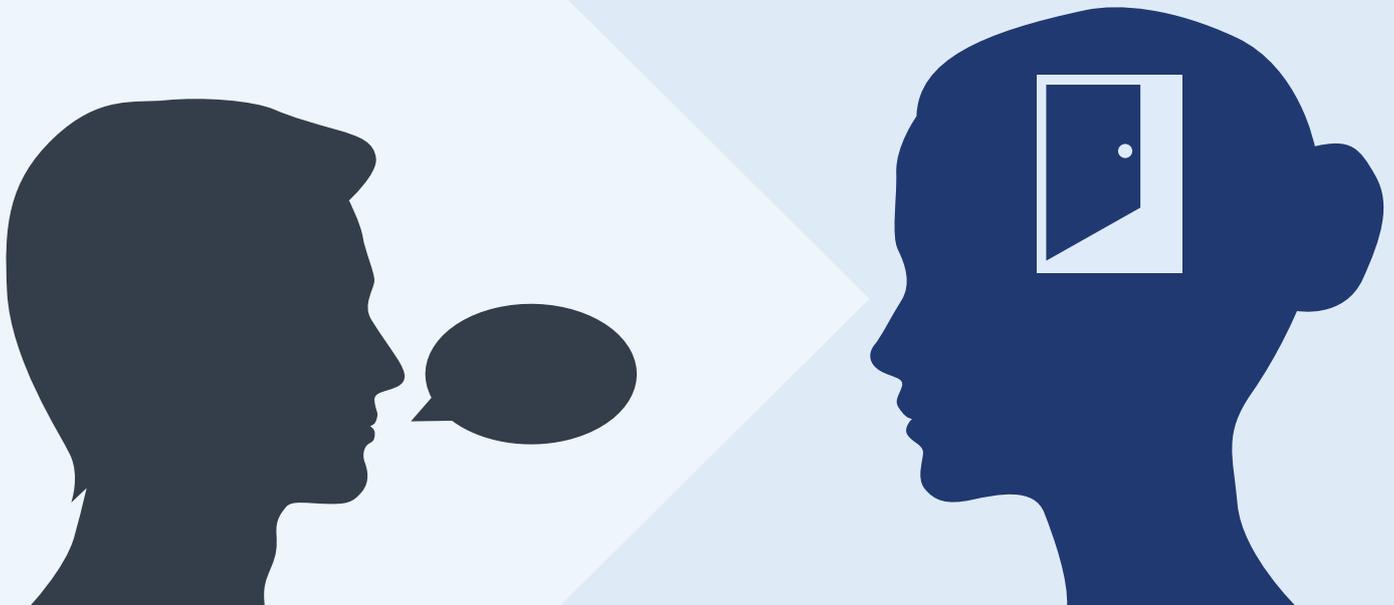
1. NLP – the perspective of communication
2. Agile – the perspective of collaboration
3. Change Management – the perspective of commitment

# 1. NLP

## the perspective of communication

Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), gives project professionals the communication tools needed to both make the project itself successful and to gain recognition for their own successes.

NLP methods help people develop the skills needed to raise self-awareness and better understand different angles and points of view). NLP looks at the 'nuts and bolts' of communication and offers a thought provoking framework within which to consider project communications. For instance, the APM Body of Knowledge specifies open mindedness as a requisite skill, allowing managers to take account of the variety of views involved on a project. NLP suggests that the meaning of communication is in the response we get, and demonstrates how we can come to understand the views of others and how they may interpret what we say. While most people recognise that being sensitive to criticism is generally not a management strength, NLP shows us how to learn from the feedback we receive and regards this as important data to show how things might be done differently, and more successfully. It reminds us that regardless of our level of professional expertise, there is no limit to our ability to learn: we can always benefit from mentors who display the skills that we would like to develop.



Initially regarded as a psychology based theory that had no place in the pragmatic and process driven world of project management, NLP has been absorbed into mainstream learning for managers. The skills it offers for understanding and influencing people, and achieving real results, are those that have the power to transform what we deliver into recognised success.

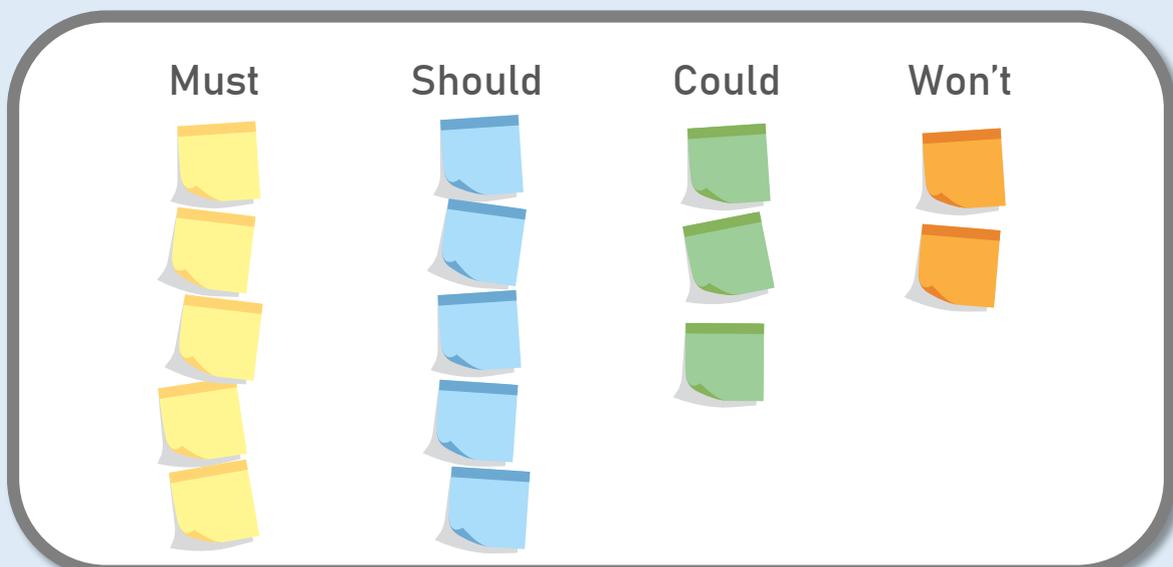
## 2. Agile the perspective of collaboration

For professionals looking for high 'success' ratings, Agile has a lot to offer. The framework of the Agile Project Management (AgilePM®) qualification focuses on the value of collaboration within a process of iterative development. This creates great flexibility so that we can adjust targets and expectations along the way.

Agile ways of working are collaborative, so it is much harder to fall into the trap of pursuing what you perceive to be the obvious priorities, without considering the differing perceptions of stakeholders. It makes sure that a solid foundation is specified for the project, but then checks views and expectations at every step of the way, providing ample opportunity to check both progress against targets, and whether others perceive you are being successful. You then have the chance to adjust both the tasks themselves and your communications style to achieve your aims. Understanding varying perspectives on priority is critical. It is possible to achieve great things, but if these are not considered as a priority for the stakeholders, then business success will not follow.

AgilePM highlights the value of the MoSCoW prioritisation method – Must have, Should have, Could have, Won't have this time – and encourages us to assess our own effort and use of resources against the importance of the results. This helps us to keep in our minds what is likely to be recognised as a success. Agile emphasises the importance of clear and continuous communication between team members and stakeholders. The approach builds in both regular facilitated workshops for the project team, and 'daily standups' where team members have a chance to talk about what they have achieved, what they plan to do next, and what they perceive may be blocking their progress – an ideal chance to keep achievements on the path of success.

### MoSCoW Method



# 3. Change Management

## the perspective of commitment

When change of any kind occurs, it impacts us and the culture in which we exist. Change frequently has the effect of making people feel that things are out of their control and this can be unsettling. At times like this, it's tempting to 'bury your head in the sand' and keep really busy, 'achieving' more of what you have always done. But this won't bring success. You need to allow yourself to acknowledge what is changing and precisely what will be lost. You need to work out what this means for you and what the new world order will look like, assessing the part you can play in this and the new community that will result. Only when you identify what you can contribute to the 'new way of things' and make the emotional commitment to do this, can you begin to marry up achievement and success, by identifying what your achievements offer to the wider community.

Success is much more likely to result from an understanding of what motivates people and an understanding of how to tap into that motivation to gain commitment in an environment of change. William Bridges' distinction between change and transition is important – you can implement change, but you probably won't be viewed as successful unless you focus on transition and consider the underlying emotions of those affected by the change, and their problems in adapting to the new way of things. Achievements can be gained through singlemindedness, effort and focus, but success only follows where a much broader view is taken – one that can take account of a variety of perspectives. Any single perspective is affected by an individual's history, the organisation's history, and the personality types involved.



### A final thought

These three approaches all offer a wealth of tools and knowledge that will help us make that critical distinction between achievement (things 'being done') and success (things 'being done' and my gaining recognition for my achievements). I have explored just a few elements in this article. It seems clear that considering whether we will be seen as successful requires us to think more widely about the world of emotion and motivation, helping us to understand perspectives other than our own. Good for us and good for our organisations.

## Further resources and development

### Resources

ChangeQuest resources <https://www.changequest.co.uk/resources/>

Agile Business Consortium <https://www.agilebusiness.org/>

APM <https://www.apm.org.uk/>

APMG International <https://apmg-international.com/product/clca>

### Development programmes

#### Communicating and Influencing Skills



Communication and engagement are at the heart of any successful project or change initiative. Learn how to tap into people's motivations and build strong connections to help projects run smoothly rather than be an uphill struggle.

Find more information [here](#)

#### Change Management Certification



The definitive Practitioner qualification for professionals in organisational change, transition and transformation roles covers a wide range of best-practice tools and approaches. You will gain fresh skills to successfully deal with all aspects of change. Find more information [here](#)

#### Agile Project Management Certification



Project teams need to keep pace and respond quickly whilst at the same time demonstrating control and reliability. AgilePM offers a practical and repeatable methodology, combining a disciplined process across the whole project lifecycle with a flexible and collaborative approach. Find more information [here](#)

#### Developing Resilience and Change Readiness



Learn the skills of 'transformative resilience' and develop a change-ready mindset that transforms challenges into opportunity. It's not about bouncing back – it's springing forward! Find more information [here](#)

## Helping you and your organisation learn and grow

Working in project and change management across different continents and with diverse cultures, I became fascinated by what makes people tick. I found I was continually bridging the gap between the process side of delivering projects and the need to bring people along on the journey so they would embrace what was delivered.

This experience, combined with a deep heart-felt desire to support others to learn and grow led me to set up ChangeQuest 10 years ago. We provide training and support to help people manage projects and change more effectively and with less stress.

On my own quest for learning and growth, gaining qualifications aside, I co-edited the Change Management Body of Knowledge and The Effective Change Manager's Handbook, which is the source text for APMG International's Change Management Practitioner certification and wrote the handbook Titanic Lessons in Project Leadership.



We offer accredited and bespoke training and coaching in:

Change management

Project management

People skills

**Please call** or email us to learn more about how we can support you in managing people, projects and change more effectively.

 +44 (0)1276 34480

 [ranjit@changequest.co.uk](mailto:ranjit@changequest.co.uk)

 [www.changequest.co.uk](http://www.changequest.co.uk)

 ChangeQuest

 @ChangeQuestLtd

