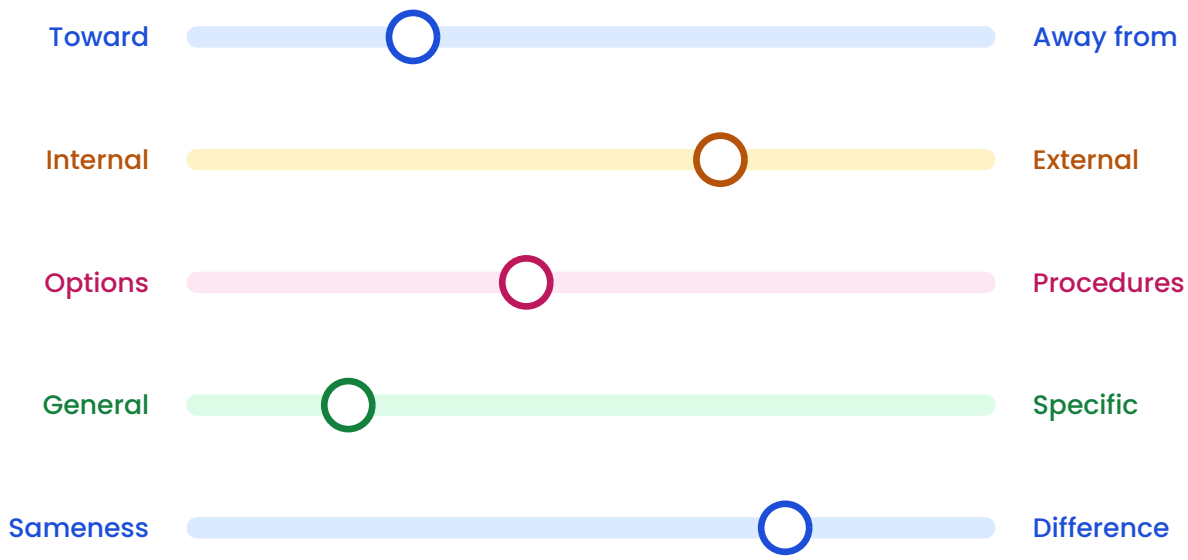
A VISUAL SUMMARY

Meta-Programs

in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)

The habitual filters that shape what people notice, what motivates them and how they decide — and how to speak to each one.



Drawing on the work of Leslie Cameron-Bandler, Rodger Bailey, Shelle Rose Charvet and others.

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SECTION 01

What Are Meta-Programs?

Meta-programs are the habitual, mostly unconscious filters that determine what a person pays attention to and how they process it. They sit "above" the content of thinking — hence *meta* — shaping **how** someone thinks rather than **what** they think about.

Two people can want exactly the same thing yet be motivated in opposite ways: one by the goal they will reach, the other by the problem they will escape. Meta-programs give names to these differences and, crucially, show how to recognise them from everyday language.

14	50+	2	1
categories in the LAB Profile	patterns in some extended lists	kinds: motivation and working traits	core idea: listen to how, not just what

Where meta-programs sit



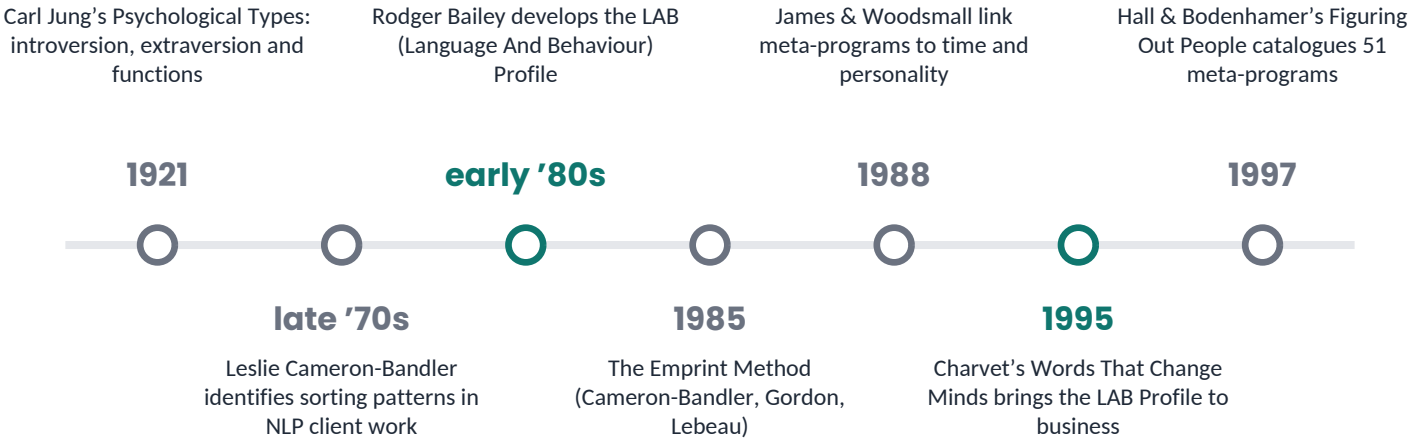
KEY IDEA

Meta-programs describe **patterns of behaviour in a context**, not fixed types of people. Someone can be Toward at work and Away From when buying a car.

SECTION 02

Origins and Development

Meta-programs emerged from early NLP modelling work. Leslie Cameron-Bandler noticed that clients responded differently to the same interventions depending on consistent patterns in how they sorted information. Her student Rodger Bailey then turned a long list of such patterns into a practical profiling tool, later popularised by Shelle Rose Charvet.



Contributor	Contribution
Leslie Cameron-Bandler	Identified many of the original meta-programs in clinical NLP work
Rodger Bailey	Condensed them into 14 categories with simple elicitation questions (LAB Profile)
Shelle Rose Charvet	Popularised the LAB Profile in business, sales and recruitment
Tad James & Wyatt Woodsmall	Connected meta-programs with values, time and personality
L. Michael Hall & Bob Bodenhamer	Produced an extensive catalogue of meta-programs

SECTION 03

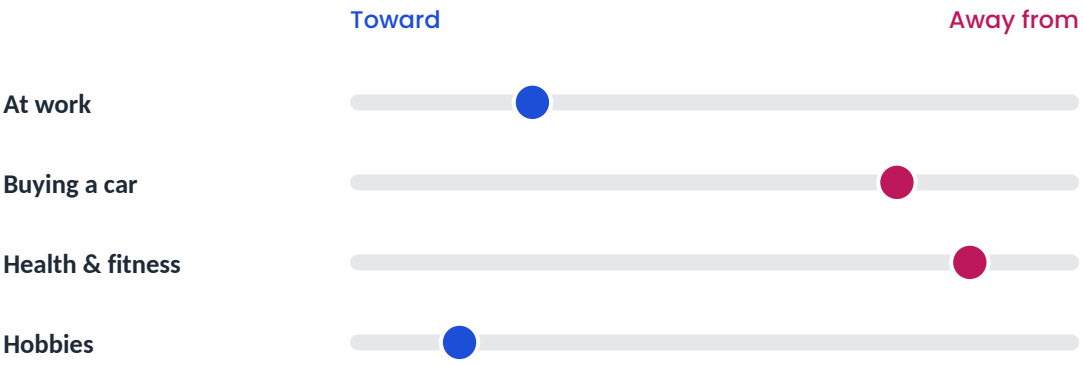
How Meta-Programs Work

Every situation contains far more information than anyone can process. Meta-programs act like filters that decide what gets through. The same event can therefore produce very different reactions, each perfectly logical from inside the person's filter.



Four principles

- **Context-dependent:** patterns can change between work, family, money and health.
- **Continua, not boxes:** most people sit somewhere between the poles, or use both.
- **Neither good nor bad:** each pattern is useful in some contexts and limiting in others.
- **Revealed in language:** the *structure* of how someone answers matters more than the content.



One illustrative person: the same meta-program can shift by context.

SECTION 04

Meta-Programs and Personality

Meta-programs are often compared with personality frameworks. They overlap in places — Jung's introversion and extraversion influenced early NLP — but they work differently.

	Meta-programs (LAB Profile)	MBTI-style types	Big Five (research model)
What it describes	Context-specific language and behaviour patterns	Stable preferences grouped into 16 types	Five broad trait dimensions
Measurement	Conversation, specific questions, listening to structure	Self-report questionnaire	Validated self-report questionnaires
Changes with context?	Yes, by design	Treated as fairly stable	Fairly stable, varies by situation
Main use	Influencing language, recruitment, coaching	Self-awareness, team building	Research, prediction of outcomes
Research base	Limited	Mixed; reliability questioned	Extensive

Rough correspondences

Meta-program	Possible overlap	Strength of link
Toward / Away From	Approach vs avoidance motivation (behavioural activation / inhibition)	Conceptual
Sameness / Difference	Big Five openness to experience	Conceptual
Options / Procedures	Openness vs conscientiousness	Conceptual
Internal / External	Locus of evaluation; self-monitoring	Conceptual
Attention: Self / Other	Social sensitivity; agreeableness	Conceptual

These are plausible conceptual parallels, not established empirical mappings.

SECTION 05

The LAB Profile at a Glance

Rodger Bailey's LAB Profile is the most widely used meta-program set. It groups 14 categories into motivation traits and working traits, each elicited with a short question or by observation.

MOTIVATION TRAITS		WORKING TRAITS	
How a person is triggered and stays motivated		*How a person handles tasks, information and people*	
Level	Proactive ↔ Reactive	**Scope**	Specific ↔ General
Criteria	Their "hot words"	**Attention**	Self ↔ Other
Direction	Toward ↔ Away from	**Stress response**	Feelings · Choice · Thinking
Source	Internal ↔ External	**Style**	Independent · Proximity · Cooperative
Reason	Options ↔ Procedures	**Organization**	Person ↔ Thing
Decision factors	Sameness ↔ Difference	**Rule structure**	My/My · My/. · No/My · My/Your
		Convincer channel	See · Hear · Read · Do
		Convincer mode	Examples · Automatic · Consistent · Time

How a profile conversation works

1 Set context
Agree the context: e.g. "at work".

→

2 Ask
Use the standard LAB questions naturally.

→

3 Listen
Notice the structure of the answer, not the content.

→

4 Note
Mark each pattern on a continuum.

→

5 Use
Match your language to their profile.

MOTIVATION TRAIT · PATTERN 01

Level: Proactive and Reactive

Does the person initiate action, or wait, analyse and respond to others?

a continuum, not a box

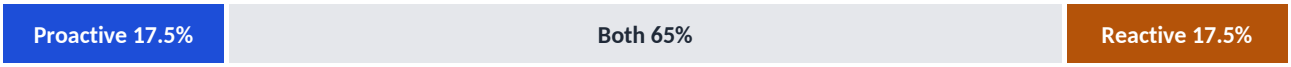
Proactive

Initiates; acts with little deliberation; gets things done, sometimes before thinking it through.

Reactive

Waits for others or for the right moment; thinks, analyses and considers before acting.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

No direct question. Notice sentence structure and body language throughout the conversation.

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Proactive	Short, crisp sentences; active voice; "I will…"; impatience; quick movements	go for it, just do it, take charge, now, don't wait	*"Jump in and get it done."*
Reactive	Long sentences; passive voice; conditionals (could, might); "consider"; patience	think about, consider, understand, analyse, wait	*"Take some time to consider the options."*

TIP

For a mixed group, combine both: "Think about it carefully — then let's get going."

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

MOTIVATION TRAIT · PATTERN 02

Criteria: The Person's Hot Words

Criteria are the words a person uses to label what is important to them in a context. They are not sorted into categories: the exact words themselves are what matter.

QUESTION TO ASK

"What do you want in your work?" (or in a car, a home, a supplier...)

Example answer

*"I want a **challenge**, **good people** to work with, and some **freedom** to decide how I do things. Oh, and **recognition** when it goes well."*

challenge | good people | freedom | recognition

Using criteria

Do	Avoid
Use their exact words: "This role offers real **challenge** and **freedom**."	Paraphrasing: "It's a demanding job with autonomy."
Link your proposal to their criteria	Selling with your own criteria
Notice the tone and emphasis when they say each word	Treating all criteria as equal
Combine with Direction: "Why is **freedom** important?"	Arguing with their criteria

TIP

Criteria often trigger a visible reaction: a smile, a lean forward, a change in voice. Paraphrasing them — even into near-synonyms — can lose that effect.

MOTIVATION TRAIT · PATTERN 03

Direction: Toward and Away From

Is the person motivated by goals to achieve, or by problems to avoid?

a continuum, not a box

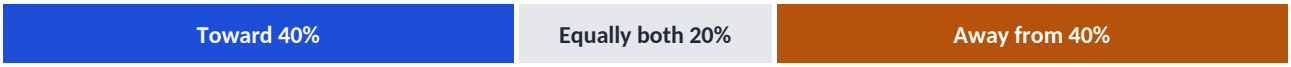
Toward

Focused on goals and what they want; energised by achievement. May overlook risks.

Away From

Focused on problems to avoid; good at spotting what could go wrong. May lose focus on goals.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"Why is that [criterion] important to you?" (ask two or three times)

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Toward	achieve, get, gain, attain, include, have, obtain	accomplish, obtain, benefits, reach, get	*"This will help you reach your target faster."*
Away From	avoid, prevent, get rid of, not, solve, fix, exclude	avoid, prevent, eliminate, fix, steer clear of	*"This will stop the delays that keep hurting you."*

TIP

Away-from people are not negative — they make excellent risk managers, editors and safety officers.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

MOTIVATION TRAIT · PATTERN 04

Source: Internal and External

Does the person judge and decide by their own standards, or need outside feedback?

a continuum, not a box

Internal

Uses own standards; takes information as input, not instruction. Resists being told what to do.

External

Needs outside feedback, data or opinions to know how they are doing. Takes others' views as instruction.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*

Internal 40%	Equally both 20%	External 40%

QUESTION TO ASK

"How do you know you have done a good job?"

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Internal	"I just know"; "I decide"; pauses to check inside; little need for praise	only you can decide, you know best, what do you think?	*"You might want to consider... you decide."*
External	"People tell me"; "the results show"; references to boss, clients, figures	others will notice, feedback shows, experts agree	*"Your team will really appreciate this."*

TIP

Internally referenced people still need information — present it as input for their judgment, not as an order.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

MOTIVATION TRAIT · PATTERN 05

Reason: Options and Procedures

Is the person motivated by alternatives and possibilities, or by following a proven process?

a continuum, not a box

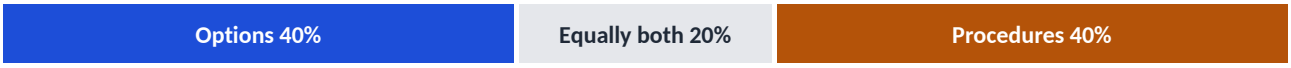
Options

Loves possibilities and developing new ways; may struggle to follow procedures or finish.

Procedures

Likes clear steps and the "right way"; finishes what they start; uneasy without a procedure.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"Why did you choose your current job (or car, or home)?"

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Options	lists criteria or reasons; "the opportunity to…"; "possibilities"	opportunity, alternatives, choice, break the rules, flexible	*"There are endless ways to make this work."*
Procedures	tells a story of how it happened; "first… then…"; does not answer "why"	first, then, after which, the right way, step by step, proven	*"Here's the proven, step-by-step process."*

TIP

A common mismatch: Options managers write vague briefs; Procedures staff need the steps spelled out.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

MOTIVATION TRAIT · PATTERN 06

Decision Factors: Sameness and Difference

How does the person respond to change, and how often do they need it?

Sameness

Wants things to stay the same; may resist change. Big change every 15–25 years.

Sameness w/ exception

Likes gradual improvement and evolution. Change every 5–7 years.

Difference

Loves revolution and the new. Major change every 1–2 years.

Sameness w/ exception & difference

Likes evolution and revolution. Change every 3–4 years.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"What is the relationship between your work this year and last year?"

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Sameness	"the same"; "nothing has changed"	same as, as you already know, unchanged, maintain	*"It works exactly as before."*
Sameness w/ exception	"more", "better", "less", comparisons	more, better, improved, upgrade, gradual	*"It's the same tool, only faster."*
Difference	"completely different", "new", "changed"	new, totally different, unique, revolutionary	*"This is completely new."*
Sameness w/ exception & difference	mix of improvement and newness words	new and improved, upgrade and brand-new	*"A better version — and a whole new feature."*

TIP

With a mixed audience, describe change as an evolution with something genuinely new: "better, and with something new."

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 07

Scope: Specific and General

What size of information does the person prefer to work with?

a continuum, not a box

Specific

Works with details and sequences; may lose sight of the overview.

General

Works with the big picture; may skip or lose interest in detail.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

No direct question. Listen to the level of detail in how they describe things.

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Specific	precise details; proper nouns; exact numbers; sequential stories	exactly, specifically, precisely, step 1, details	*"Exactly three changes, starting Monday at 9:00."*
General	overviews; summaries; random order; few specifics	overview, the big picture, essentially, in general, concept	*"Here's the big picture in one sentence."*

TIP

Present the big picture first, then offer details on request — most people are General, but Specifics need the detail.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 08

Attention Direction: Self and Other

Does the person pay attention to their own experience, or respond to other people's behaviour?

a continuum, not a box

Self

Attends to own thoughts and feelings; responds to the content of what is said, not tone or body language.

Other

Responds automatically to others' tone, expressions and body language.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



Self

QUESTION TO ASK

No direct question. Notice whether they respond to your non-verbal signals during conversation.

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Self	few facial expressions; little reaction to yours; focus on content	keep to content; be concise and literal	*"Here are the facts."*
Other	animated expressions; matches your posture; reacts to non-verbals	build rapport; pay attention to tone and warmth	*"I can see this matters to you."*

TIP

Self-attention is not the same as selfishness. These people simply don't pick up non-verbal cues automatically.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 09

Stress Response: Feelings, Choice, Thinking

How does the person react to the normal stresses of work?

Feelings

Goes into emotions and tends to stay there; can be very empathic.

Choice

Has an emotional response, then can choose whether to stay with it.

Thinking

Does not go into feelings; stays calm in high-pressure situations.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"Tell me about a work situation that gave you trouble."

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Feelings	voice and body show strong emotion while recounting	intense, exciting, mind-boggling	*"This will be absolutely thrilling."*
Choice	some emotion, then returns to neutral	appropriate, empathy, makes sense	*"It makes sense to feel that; here's what we'll do."*
Thinking	calm tone; little emotional expression	clear thinking, logical, facts, cool-headed	*"The facts are clear."*

TIP

Thinking-response people make strong crisis managers, but may seem cold to Feelings colleagues.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 10

Style: Independent, Proximity, Cooperative

In what kind of setting is the person most productive?

Independent

Prefers to work alone with sole responsibility.

Proximity

Likes to be in charge of own area with others around.

Cooperative

Prefers to share responsibility and work with others.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"Tell me about a work experience that was [criteria]. What did you like about it?"

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Independent	"I"; "by myself"; "my own"	on your own, alone, total responsibility	*"You'll have full ownership."*
Proximity	"I" plus mentions of others	you'll be in charge, with others involved	*"You lead it; the team supports you."*
Cooperative	"we"; "us"; "the team"	us, we, together, share, all of us	*"We'll do this together."*

TIP

Many roles quietly assume one style. Ask before forcing Independents into constant teamwork or vice versa.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 11

Organization: Person and Thing

Does the person focus on people and feelings, or on tasks, ideas, systems and tools?

a continuum, not a box

Person

Focuses on people's thoughts and feelings; relationships are the task.

Thing

Focuses on tasks, systems, ideas and tools; people may become objects in the process.

QUESTION TO ASK

No specific question. Listen to what fills their stories: people and feelings, or things and tasks.

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Person	names, feelings, "how people felt"	people, feelings, names, relationships	*"The team will feel supported."*
Thing	tasks, processes, systems, things	things, systems, tasks, the process, the goal	*"The system will run smoothly."*

TIP

Many people show a mix. Service roles usually need a Person focus; technical roles often favour Thing.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 12

Rule Structure

Does the person have rules for themselves, and are they comfortable telling others the rules?

My / My

My rules for me, my rules for you. Comfortable telling others.

My / .

My rules for me; doesn't care about others' rules.

No / My

Unclear rules for self, clear rules for others.

My / Your

My rules for me, your rules for you. Tolerant; may hesitate to tell.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"What is a good way for you to increase your success at work?" then "What is a good way for someone else to?"

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
My / My	same answer to both questions	you know what to do, set clear rules	*"Here's what I expect."*
My / .	no answer for others	do it your way	*"You're free to work as you like."*
No / My	no answer for self, clear for others	here's what the rules are	*"Here's what others need."*
My / Your	"It depends on the person"	everyone is different	*"What works best for you?"*

TIP

My/Your people can be great in customer service but may struggle to give firm direction as managers.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 13

Convincer Channel

What type of sensory information does the person need to become convinced?

See
Needs to see evidence.

Hear
Needs to hear about it or discuss it.

Read
Needs to read about it.

Do
Needs to do it or work with it.

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"How do you know that a colleague is good at their job?"

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
See	"I see them do it"	see, show, look, clear	*"Let me show you."*
Hear	"I hear what they say"	hear, tell, sounds, talk	*"Let's talk it through."*
Read	"I read their reports"	read, written, report	*"Here's the written summary."*
Do	"I work with them"	try, test, do, hands-on	*"Try it yourself."*

TIP

Match the channel: a brilliant written report won't convince someone who needs to try it.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

WORKING TRAIT · PATTERN 14

Convincer Mode

How many times, or over what period, does the person need the information before being convinced?

Number of examples
Needs a set number of examples (e.g. 2, 3, 5).

Automatic
Decides from very little information; slow to change their mind.

Consistent
Never fully convinced; re-evaluates every time.

Period of time
Needs time to pass (e.g. a few weeks).

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION (WORK CONTEXT)*



QUESTION TO ASK

"How often does someone have to demonstrate competence before you're convinced?"

Pattern	Listen for	Words that work	Example
Number of examples	a number	use their number	*"Here are three examples."*
Automatic	"immediately"	assume, right now, benefit of the doubt	*"You'll see right away."*
Consistent	"every time"; "never completely"	each time, every time, consistently	*"Check it every time you use it."*
Period of time	a time span	use their time span	*"After a month you'll know."*

TIP

Consistent people need ongoing evidence: regular updates, not one big presentation.

*Approximate figures reported by Shelle Rose Charvet from her LAB Profile work (Words That Change Minds). They are practitioner estimates, not validated population norms.

SECTION 20

Other Meta-Programs

Beyond the LAB Profile, NLP writers have described many more meta-programs. Some commonly cited ones:

Meta-program	Poles / variants	What it describes
Chunk size	Big chunk ↔ small chunk	Level of abstraction (similar to Scope)
Matching / mismatching	Notices similarities ↔ differences	What a person sorts for when comparing
Time orientation	Past · present · future	Which time frame attention goes to
Time storage	In time ↔ through time	How time is arranged spatially
Perceptual position	Self · other · observer	Viewpoint taken by default
Primary interest	People · places · things · activities · information	What a person talks about first
Association	Associated ↔ dissociated	Experiencing from inside vs outside
Agreement style	Agree first ↔ disagree first	Default response to new ideas
Modal operators	Necessity ↔ possibility	Motivated by “have to” vs “want to”
Introvert / extravert	Recharge alone ↔ with others	Energy source (Jungian roots)

TIP

Long lists are interesting, but the 14 LAB Profile categories cover most practical needs. Learn those first.

SECTION 21

Influencing Language

The practical payoff of meta-programs is choosing words that fit how the other person filters. When you don't know someone's profile — or are addressing a group — cover both poles.

Pattern	Language for pole A	Language for pole B	Covering both
Proactive / Reactive	Go for it; now; just do it	Consider; think about; understand	"Think it through, then go for it."
Toward / Away	Achieve; gain; reach	Avoid; prevent; fix	"Reach your goals and avoid the usual pitfalls."
Internal / External	You decide; only you know	Others will notice; feedback shows	"You'll know it's right, and others will see it too."
Options / Procedures	Opportunity; alternatives	First, then; the right way	"A proven process with room to adapt."
Sameness / Difference	Same as; familiar	New; unique	"Familiar, but better — with something new."
General / Specific	Big picture; overall	Exactly; precisely; details	"The big picture first, then the details."

Example: one message, rewritten

For…	Message
Toward + Internal	"Here's a way to hit your targets sooner. Take a look and decide if it fits."
Away + External	"Many teams use this to stop deadlines slipping — your manager has seen the results."
Options	"There are several ways to use this; pick what works for you."
Procedures	"First open the dashboard, then set your deadline, then share it."

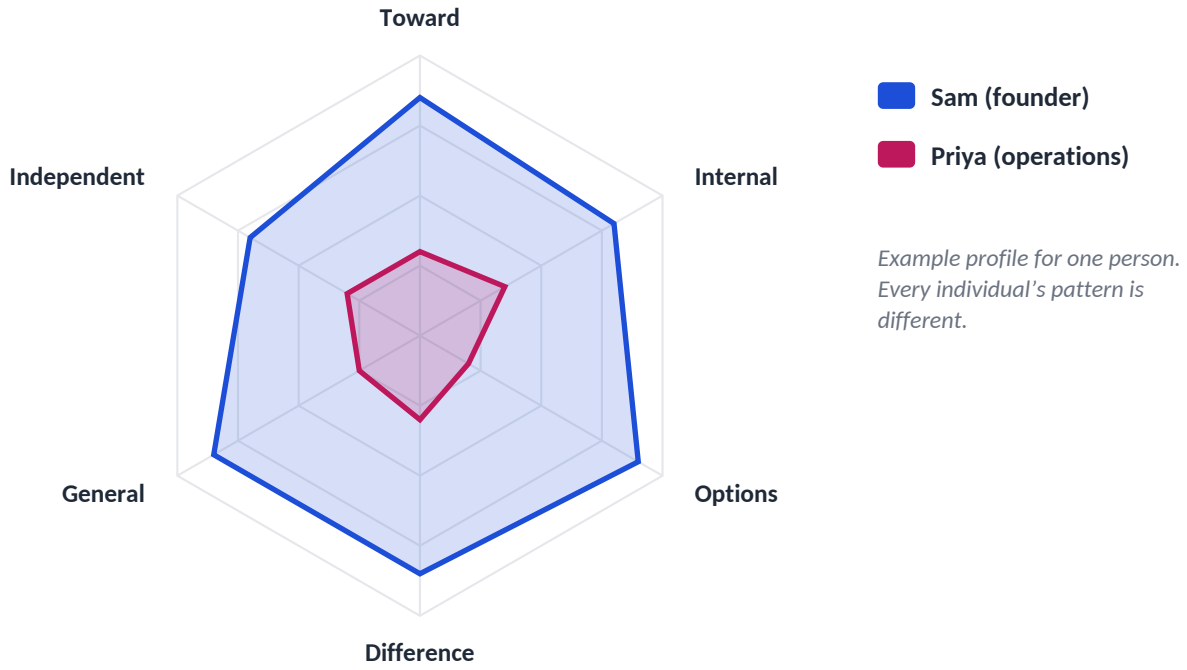
SECTION 22

Recruitment and Teams

Meta-programs are widely used in hiring: first profile what a role actually requires, then listen for matching patterns during interview. The profiles below are illustrative examples.

Role	Helpful patterns (example)	Why
Customer service	Other attention; External; Procedures; Choice stress response	Reads customers; follows policy; stays balanced
Sales prospecting	Proactive; Toward; Internal; Options	Initiates; goal-driven; handles rejection
Auditor / compliance	Away From; Specific; Procedures; Sameness with exception	Spots risks; precise; follows rules
Product innovator	Options; Difference; General; Toward	Generates new ideas; thinks big
Project manager	Proximity; My/My rules; both Specific and General	Leads while others contribute; sets clear rules

Two colleagues compared (illustrative)



Higher values lean to the named pole. Sam and Priya clash on briefs and change — and complement each other: Sam generates direction, Priya makes it work.

SECTION 23

Sales and Marketing

Copywriters use meta-programs to match messages to their audience. Because most audiences are mixed, the strongest copy usually covers both poles of the patterns that matter most.

Pattern	Headline style	Example (for a project tool)
Toward	Benefits and outcomes	“Ship projects on time, every time.”
Away From	Problems avoided	“No more missed deadlines or lost files.”
Internal	Invite judgment	“Try it free — and decide for yourself.”
External	Social proof	“Trusted by teams like yours.”
Options	Flexibility	“Work your way: boards, lists or timelines.”
Procedures	Clear steps	“Sign up, import, and you’re ready in three steps.”
Sameness	Familiarity	“Works just like the tools you already use.”
Difference	Newness	“A completely new way to plan work.”

Handling objections

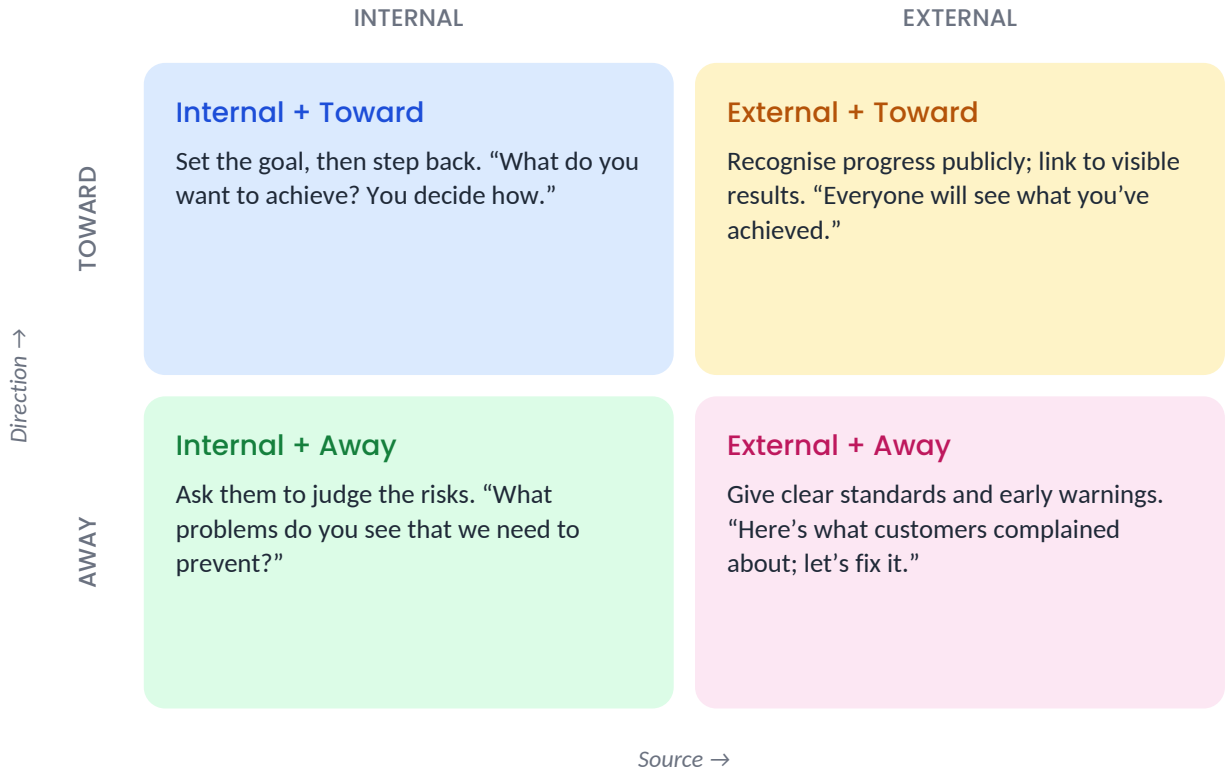
- **Away From** buyers raise risks: address them directly rather than repeating benefits.
- **Internal** buyers dislike pressure: give information and space to decide.
- **Convincer mode** matters: a Number-of-examples buyer may need exactly three case studies; a Period-of-time buyer needs a trial.

> ETHICS
> Influence should serve the other person’s genuine interests. Using profiles to manipulate erodes trust quickly.

SECTION 24

Leadership and Feedback

Two motivation traits — Source and Direction — strongly shape how people respond to feedback and goals. Combining them gives a useful map for managers.



If someone is...	Feedback tends to land best when...
Internal	You ask for their assessment first and offer yours as information
External	It is frequent, specific and includes what others noticed
Specific	It refers to exact examples and steps
General	It starts with the overall picture and the key point
Consistent convincer	It is given regularly, not only at the annual review

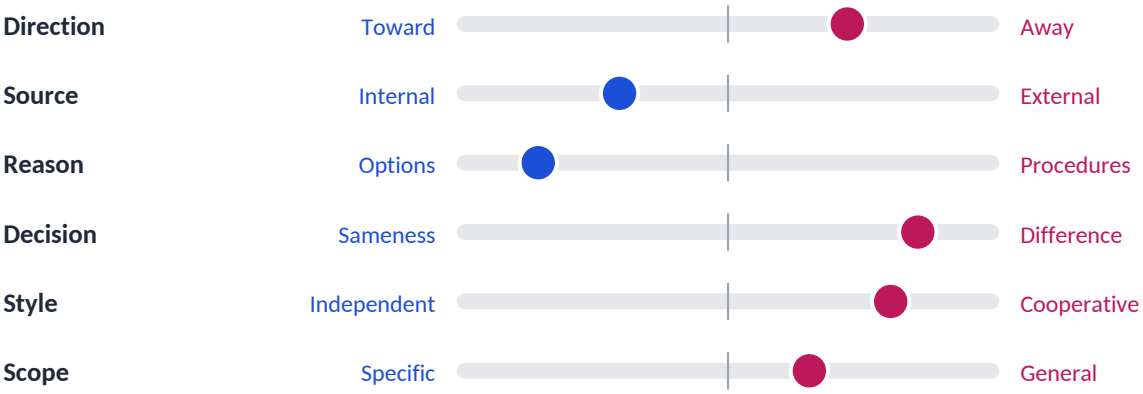
SECTION 25

A Worked Profile

Excerpts from a short profiling conversation with “Alex”, a designer, in the context of work.

Question	Answer	Pattern
What do you want in your work?	“Variety, learning new things and a good team.”	**Criteria: variety, learning, good team**
Why is variety important?	“So I don’t get bored or stuck in a rut.”	**Away From**
How do you know you’ve done a good job?	“I just know. If the client is happy too, great.”	**Mainly Internal**
Why did you choose this job?	“The chance to try different projects and grow.”	**Options**
Your work this year vs last year?	“Totally different — new team, new clients.”	**Difference**
Tell me about a work experience you liked.	“We cracked a big pitch together as a team.”	**Cooperative**
How do you know a colleague is good?	“I see the quality of their work, a couple of times.”	**See; 2 examples**

Alex’s profile (work context)



USING THE PROFILE

To motivate Alex: “Here’s a **completely new** project with **variety** and plenty to **learn**, so you won’t get stuck in a rut. Have a look and **see what you think**.”

SECTION 26

Self-Profile Worksheet

Answer quickly, in the context of your work. Then notice the structure of your answers, as well as their content.

Pattern	Question to answer	Your answer	Mark your position
Direction	Why is [your top criterion] important to you?		Toward ——————— Away
Source	How do you know you've done a good job?		Internal ——————— External
Reason	Why did you choose your current role?		Options ——————— Procedures
Decision	How is this year different from last year?		Sameness ——————— Difference
Scope	Do you prefer overview or detail?		General ——————— Specific
Style	Do you work best alone, in charge, or as a team?		Independent ——————— Cooperative
Convincer	How do you know a colleague is good?		See / Hear ——————— Read / Do

Reflection prompts

- Which patterns differ between your work and home life?
- Whose profile frustrates you most? Which meta-program might explain it?
- How could you adjust your language for your manager, team or clients?

SECTION 27

Pitfalls and Ethics

Pitfall	What it looks like	Better approach
Labelling people	“She’s an Away person.”	Describe patterns in a context
Over-reading one answer	Profiling from a single sentence	Look for consistent patterns across questions
Ignoring context	Assuming work patterns apply at home	Always set and check the context
Judging patterns	Seeing Away From or Procedures as weaknesses	Each pattern has strengths
Manipulation	Using profiles to push unwanted decisions	Use profiles to communicate, not exploit
Unfair hiring	Rejecting candidates on one profile result	Combine with job-relevant, validated methods

Ethical guidelines

- **Transparency:** where possible, explain what you are doing and why.
- **Respect:** patterns describe preferences, not worth or ability.
- **Fairness:** in recruitment, meta-programs should never be the sole basis of a decision; ensure compliance with employment law.
- **Purpose:** aim for mutual understanding and better outcomes for both sides.

SECTION 28

Evidence and Critique

NLP as a whole has received substantial scientific criticism. Reviews (e.g. Witkowski, 2010; Sturt et al., 2012) found little rigorous evidence for its core claims, and many researchers class it as pseudoscience.

Meta-programs have attracted less independent research than mainstream personality models. The LAB Profile has been studied mainly by practitioners, and its distributions are estimates. Some patterns echo well-researched constructs — approach and avoidance motivation, openness, conscientiousness — but the specific categories and elicitation questions have not been widely validated.



Reasonable to say	Not supported to say
People differ in what they notice and how they are motivated	Profiles reliably predict job performance
Matching language can improve rapport and clarity	Meta-programs are fixed personality types
Patterns vary across contexts	The distribution figures are validated norms
Some patterns resemble researched constructs	Profiling reveals hidden truths about a person

RESPONSIBLE USE

Treat meta-programs as a lens for curiosity and clearer communication, and pair them with validated methods for any high-stakes decision.

SECTION 29

Quick Reference Card

All 14 LAB Profile categories on one page.

Category	Question / cue	Patterns
Level	Observe sentence structure	Proactive · Reactive
Criteria	What do you want in…?	Their exact words
Direction	Why is that important?	Toward · Away From
Source	How do you know you've done a good job?	Internal · External
Reason	Why did you choose…?	Options · Procedures
Decision factors	Relationship between this year and last?	Sameness · SwE · Difference · SwE&D;
Scope	Listen for detail level	Specific · General
Attention	Observe non-verbal response	Self · Other
Stress response	Tell me about a situation that gave you trouble	Feelings · Choice · Thinking
Style	Tell me about a work experience you liked	Independent · Proximity · Cooperative
Organization	Listen for people vs things	Person · Thing
Rule structure	Good way for you / someone else to succeed?	My/My · My/. · No/My · My/Your
Convincer channel	How do you know someone is good at their job?	See · Hear · Read · Do
Convincer mode	How often before you're convinced?	Examples · Automatic · Consistent · Time

SECTION 30

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Away From	Motivated by problems to avoid.
Context	The situation in which a pattern is elicited (work, home, buying).
Convincer	The channel and mode by which a person becomes convinced.
Criteria	A person's own words for what matters to them.
Elicitation	Using questions and observation to identify patterns.
External	Relies on outside feedback to evaluate.
Internal	Uses own standards to evaluate.
LAB Profile	Language And Behaviour Profile, developed by Rodger Bailey.
Meta-program	A habitual filter shaping attention and processing.
Motivation traits	LAB categories on how a person gets and stays motivated.
Options	Motivated by possibilities and alternatives.
Procedures	Motivated by clear steps and processes.
Proactive	Tends to initiate action.
Reactive	Tends to wait, analyse and respond.
Sameness / Difference	Response to change and how often it is wanted.
Toward	Motivated by goals and achievement.
Working traits	LAB categories on how a person handles tasks and people.

SECTION 31

Further Reading

Primary sources

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ONE LAST THING

Remember the core idea: listen to *how* people answer, not just *what* they say — then meet them in their own language.