

## Building Rapport

Rapport is a relationship of mutual trust and respect that is crucial for healthy social interactions. In sales, a social interaction, quickly building and consistently maintaining rapport engages customers and earns their commitment to continue the interaction and ultimately their commitment to purchase.

How do you build rapport? Since selling is social behavior, we'll start with some guidance from human behavioral science. These are in no particular order:

**Confidence**—people respond to confident people. Not arrogant, but confident. Fear, on the other hand, makes people uncomfortable. It makes sense if you think about it—when a person shows fear, it's a natural reaction to get away from them as fast as possible because there must be something about their situation that is not safe. By the same token, a confident person is probably a good person to stick by.

**Intelligence**—research shows that people value intelligence over other factors like beauty, age, and wealth when choosing friends and partners.

**Honesty and Genuineness**—people are constantly on the lookout for fakes, liars, and cheats for obvious reasons.

**Kindness**—research shows that, like intelligence, kindness is also valued over other factors like beauty, age, and wealth when people chose friends and partners.

**Pleasantness**—people like interacting with people who are just pleasant—as in happy, funny, warm, and easy-going. People don't like irritating people or people who are difficult to deal with.

OK, but now how do you communicate these traits, especially over the phone?

**Know your stuff**—your company, your products, your competition, your industry, the industries you most often sell to, the business world. Read a lot, about everything. To convey intelligence, you kind of have to be intelligent. You're not trying to show off by rattling off facts or statistics, but you'll feel more comfortable and confident in speaking to a business person if you frequently expose yourself to the language and concepts of the business world.

**Use empathy**—it shows kindness. When you hear an objection, always begin your response with an empathy statement such as "I understand..." or "I certainly see how..." And sound genuine, like you mean it.

**Don't lie**—it will only come back around to bite you later anyway. Don't say your product or service will do something it can't. Focus on what your product or service does do. Don't tell the gatekeeper that your cold call isn't a sales call when asked "Is this a sales call?", instead say, "Yes it is" and insist upon the importance of speaking to the decision-maker. Because what you do is important.

**Use your body language**—the majority of information communicated is gathered through visual cues. People don't actually hear as many words as you think they do—they see your ideas, passion, and belief.

What about over the phone, you say? Especially when you're on the phone! No, of course your listener can't see you, but we've evolved over thousands of years to communicate visually, which means, when you're the one speaking, you also have been conditioned to use your body language to communicate successfully to your listener. So even when a listener cannot see you, because of a piece modern technology (the phone), you still need to use your body language for you to effectively communicate.

Your body language is so engrained into how well you speak, that you must continue to use it even when it can't be seen. So stand up to sound confident. Use your hands when you talk. Smile. All of the same things you would do if the person on the phone were sitting in front of you.

**Pay attention**—be a good listener. Good listening skills communicate that you care about what the other person is saying. The best way to make people interested in you is to show interest in them. This is crucial to maintaining rapport as the sales interaction evolves. If you ask a question, listen to the response rather than plan your next statement. Paraphrase your customer's message to communicate that you hear and understand them. Use your client's key words.

**Refine your sound**—especially when selling over the phone, the actual sound of your voice can be a big turn-on or a big turn-off. I'm sure you have found yourself listening to someone just because you like the sound of their voice. And you've probably ended a conversation prematurely because you couldn't stand a person's voice.

You can communicate a good deal of confidence, intelligence, kindness and warmth though the tone of your voice. When you do, it can be magnetic. Practice your presentation out loud. And when you are a consumer yourself, experiment with how the sound of your voice makes people respond differently.

**Be positive**—believe in what you do and don't allow negativity from anywhere sneak in and steal your thunder. Yes, be realistic, especially when evaluating your performance with solid data, but view good criticism and feedback as just another opportunity for you to improve. And pass it along by being a resource of positive thinking for others.

Clients themselves can sometimes be the most negative and cantankerous people—nevertheless, persist with your positive attitude, your confidence, your intelligence, and you will soon have a follower.

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