

FIVE WINNING WAYS TO BUILD NEGOTIATION RAPPORT

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Negotiation

Rapport building is a powerful tool in any negotiation, sales pitch or situation in life where we want to secure a positive outcome.

It involves being intensely interested in the other party and becoming 'just like them.' While this may seem odd, it is an effective way to win people over to our cause. If we want someone to do something for us or concede to our position in a negotiation, the first step is to get them to trust us. Whom do you trust the most? The answer is simply yourself. Consequently, when we meet someone who appears 'just like us' we will, without realizing it, tend to trust that person.

Sales people are taught how to make this happen and it can also be found in stage performers. For instance, the illusionist Derren Brown puts rapport building at the centre of his performance and uses his skills to take a person to the point where they will do anything he wants. This is not some strange magic but simply about matching or pacing ourselves with the other person – gently mirroring their body language, their tone of voice, how they speak and their language patterns. Doing this begins to make us 'just like them' so they see themselves in us without knowing it.

People who appear interested in others and connect well with their situation slip all sorts of subconscious associations into the flow of discussions. Maybe you have experienced a presentation in which someone says "perhaps you're sitting there, wondering where this is going." This is a simple enough and seemingly meaningless statement, yet one that relates directly and subconsciously to anyone who is sitting and wondering - another connection, another bit of rapport building at work.

It is also about empathizing with the way other people represent their world in their minds and recall memories and information. Most people do this visually by pictures in the mind. For some, this is more auditory, where the mind represents things by words and sounds, while for others, it is based around how things feel.

We can build rapport by connecting directly with their representation system. If they use visual language

such as "how does that look to you" or "I'm getting the picture" then this suggests they see the world in visual terms. If we make our language respond with similar visual predicates such as "let's see if we can find a way to make this work" we are, without them realizing, talking straight to their subconscious.

Building rapport puts our opponents at ease and makes them feel we understand them. It creates a connection and makes them feel similar to us and builds trust through our interactions. This trust is built further if we demonstrate consistency in all our engagements and interactions. If we can establish trust, we claim power in the negotiation.

Five winning techniques:

1. BUILD RAPPORT

Rapport is so important because it helps build relationships quickly. It sits at the core of selling and can help with even the most 'value claiming' negotiation, where one party's gain is the other's loss. Use body and verbal language to make yourself appear interested in the other.

2. SMILE TO MAKE THEM LIKE YOU

While negotiations are serious undertakings, don't forget to smile! Smiling and being amiable are part of rapport building and will help win trust and confidence. They also make you more likeable which can help secure a better outcome.

3. USE THEIR NAME

Using a person's name helps you to connect with them and also shows that you are interested in and value them. We all like to hear our own name being spoken so using the name of your opponent in discussions will help build rapport.

4. MIRROR THEM

Adopt a similar posture and position and subtly mirror

their body language. Mirroring gives the other person a subconscious reassurance that you are 'just like them' so they are more likely to trust you. However, make sure you don't make it too obvious as that will have the opposite effect!

5. MAKE EYE CONTACT AND WATCH THEIRS

Eye contact is a key part of rapport building. It allows us to watch eye movement and spot any changes that could indicate, for example, if someone is bluffing. Aim to make eye contact throughout the negotiation (ideally for 70-80% of discussions) and remember to keep your own eye movement in check throughout.

Practice makes perfect! Before your next negotiation take some time to rehearse the rapport building techniques as the more you do this, the better you'll become!

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