

NLP TOOLKIT

RAPPORT BUILDING PROCESS



Establishing and maintaining rapport is essential for relating to others and communicating effectively. Being in rapport means matching others' ways of being by taking on certain aspects of their physiology, their style of doing things – anything we can be aware of through our senses. Movements, voice tone, and posture all impact on how well others relate to us. So, in order to build rapport, we need to change our vocal and behavioural habits. At first this might seem uncomfortable, but as you track the impact of your rapport-building efforts you will probably decide it is worth the effort.

In business settings, rapport-building skills can be used to establish common ground and build trust. Just as in our personal lives we want to be around people who are like us, we also prefer doing business with people who are like us. Here are some practical tips for establishing and maintaining rapport with business clients. Remember that it takes less than one minute to make an impression with a client. So make sure you start out on the right foot!

1. In meetings, match the key decision-maker's voice and body language

During meetings, you should build rapport with the key decision maker. At an unconscious level they will be making decisions based on how well you align with them. So make their job easier by matching posture, gestures, keywords and vocal characteristics.

2. Make eye contact with everyone in the room

This communicates a desire to include everyone in the conversation. If you avoid eye contact, others may perceive you as cold or aloof. So it is important to scan the group frequently, making sure you catch the eyes of everyone involved in a meeting.

3. Capture the spirit of the conversation and match the other person's beliefs

You don't have to agree with someone in order to match their beliefs. Simply repeat back the essence of what they have said, starting your sentence with the words "So to you it is important to..." or "Yes, you believe that..."

4. Be genuinely enthusiastic

People are more easily influenced when they sense that you are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and interested in what you are talking about. So smile, tell others what interests you about the topic under discussion and make positive statements frequently.

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5. Deliberately create a positive state by changing your physiology

If you're not feeling positive before a business meeting, do something about it. Go for a walk or a jog, do breathing exercises or stretch before walking into the room.

6. Dress to match client expectations

You'll be surprised how quickly trust is built when you dress like others do. If you are meeting with someone who wears a suit, dress formally. If your client wears jeans and a t-shirt, choose something closer to that style.

7. Match the handshake of every person you meet

Yes, contrary to popular advice, if you get a "wet fish", then give them a limp handshake right back. Similarly, match a crushing grip with your own strongest hand-masher.