

## Member's Quarterly

Fall 2021 Edition

## Feature

# Building Rapport in the Workplace

*Make a great first impression and keep it*

**W**e all have experienced it: we meet someone and feel an instant rapport, and at the second or third meeting, we feel let down. Something in those later meetings did not fulfill the promise from that first meeting where you formed your first impression. The rapport was not the same and this affects the relationship.

To me, rapport is about connection.

We connect with people on all levels, even if we are unaware of these invisible ties to each other. We have connections with people whether they are standing next to us or are on the other side of the world. For example, have you ever thought about someone and picked up the phone to call, only find them already connected to you even though your phone never rang?

It is these connections that feed rapport. They start forming at that first meeting when impressions are forged. So, rapport is based on continual connections that reaffirm a first impression. They are interconnected and they overlap.

The quality of the connection starts when people form an impression of someone they have just met. A study by Harvard University psychologists found that the opinions students formed toward new teachers in only two seconds were mostly unchanged as they held after sitting through the whole course. Making a good first impression is an important step toward building rapport.

None of this means you are likely to become everyone's best friend in a few seconds. Still, if you make the right first impression, one based upon showing your genuine, authentic self and your values, you can initiate the building of a lasting rapport within 90 seconds.

Making a good first impression is influenced by your attitude because your attitude sets the quality and mood of your thoughts. Your moods and thoughts influence the tone of your voice, the words you use, your facial expressions and your body language.

In many ways, your attitude sets the quality of your relationships.

When you cast a "beneficial attitude," one that is optimistic, interested and cooperative, other people will want to be around you. When you project the opposite position, you will have a reverse reaction.

You choose your attitude, which means you are at least 50 percent in charge of building rapport with each person you meet.

Start building rapport right away.

## 1. Make sure your words, tone of voice and gestures are all consistent.

When faced with contradiction amongst the tone of your voice, the words you use, your facial expression and your body language, people pay the most attention to body language. They are next influenced by the tone of voice — and surprisingly little to the actual words being said.

## 2. We like people who are like us. Show strangers your similarities.

Deliberately control your behaviour to meet them on common ground in terms of how you speak and relate, at least for a short time. Look around a restaurant, especially on Valentine's Day or any other public place where people meet and socialize and compare those couples who are in rapport with those who are not.



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The ones who are in rapport lean toward one another, adopt similar arm and leg positions, talk in the same tones of voice. In short, they seem to be synchronized.

The quickest way to establish rapport with people you meet is to synchronize with them. Synchronizing does not mean you are phony or insincere. Its purpose is to help you put the other person at ease and speed up the rapport that would otherwise take longer to develop.

Don't make your movements, tone and voice mimic the other person's, but act with them the same way you would if you were already friends.

### 3. Make a positive first impression.

Five stages of a strong first impression:

- ◇ Use open body language. Open hand gestures and face the other person.
- ◇ Be first with eye contact. Look the other person straight in the eye.
- ◇ Beam a smile.
- ◇ Be the first to identify yourself with a pleasant, "Hi! I'm Monika!"
- ◇ Lean subtly toward the other person to show your interest and openness, and begin to show how you are similar.

### 4. Tune in to the person you are meeting.

Pick up on the other person's feelings and identify with them by synchronizing your breathing patterns.

Use your voice to reflect the mood conveyed by your facial expressions. Please do not copy them clumsily, but notice their posture, gestures, head and body movements and facial expressions and use your body language to show that you accept them.

Encourage the other person to start talking so you can find out what matters to them. Do these things also matter to you? Do their interests somehow feed into yours? Tell them. Ask them questions that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" but instead prompts open dialogue to reveal themselves.

### 5. Maintain the rapport

Rapport is the condition of being in sync, in tune, on the same wavelength. If you fall out of synch, discord happens and rapport will erode over time.

Why do we all need to focus on rapport?

I have heard it said that with enough rapport, anything is possible. Without rapport, almost nothing is possible.

In business, rapport is critical to coordinating action and exchanging information. It is at the foundation of all our relationships.

When rapport is in place, it helps to maintain an open channel of communication with another person. It enables you to meet them where they are. You do not need to agree with them, but rather be open and willing to accept their point of view. Let them know you are there with them.

Ironically, most business decisions are based on rapport, not on technical merit or the best idea. It makes or breaks most aspects of getting what you want.

The purpose of building rapport (i.e., matching and aligning with the other person) with someone is to get fully in step with them so that the next step you take is more likely to be followed.

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When you start by matching and meeting them (not expecting them to come to you), you can take immediate control of the situation and move with greater confidence that they will stay with you. Worst case, matching gives you something to do when you get bored during staff meetings.

Try it out — it's fun and rewarding.

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