

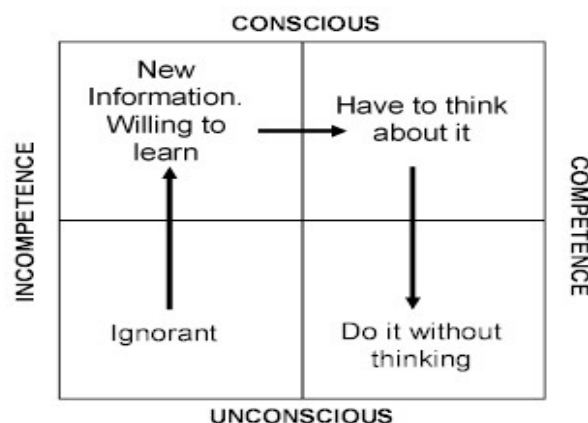
Building rapport

To be the best you can be you need to discover the magic of rapport. The principles and techniques of rapport hold the key to good communication. It is based on the idea that we like to communicate with people who we perceive to be like us. This is because we will only be influenced by people who we think like us as a person. It works best when feelings are authentic – that is you genuinely care about other people and have their interests at heart.

To get the outcome you want, you need to influence others to get the desired effect. This hinges on getting connected with what others want. Seek first to show that you understand and can empathise. Without feeling the respect and trust that comes from rapport, the rest of the conversation and relationship will have little impact.

The Principle of Matching

One sign that rapport is happening is when people in conversation adopt the same or similar physical postures and mannerisms – even their silhouettes suggest the same mirrored profile as they talk. You may not be conscious of this until your awareness is raised and you get a chance to practice it to the point where it becomes a good habit. See Info Notes (5) – Changing a Habit.



Practice is needed because it requires you to mirror facial movements, tone of voice, pace of speech, language used and your active listening demeanor. **MISMATCHING** is a way of bringing a conversation to a close. Matching works just as well in group situations. You find that the person talking will look at you more than other people when you in rapport. This enables you to gain attention and have your contribution listened to. Done well, rapport it is a powerful way of influencing others. Match their behaviour, pace your response and lead a change of rhythm.

When you first start to observe others and see how they use (or fail to use) rapport, note the consequences. If getting rapport feels daunting or embarrassing, start with 'cross over matching'. For example, if someone crosses their arms, cross your legs. If they tap their pen, just twirl yours. Don't worry about the other person noticing. This rarely happens. Just learn to move with the rhythm of the other person, not in an obvious copying way, but by following gently and with sensitivity. Match them to some degree – not in every way.

When you have reached a state of 'flow' then you can start to lead them towards a slower rhythm by changing the pace of your speech for example, but keeping the rapport going.

What is rapport ?

So, building rapport is a lot more than just matching people's behaviour. It involves appealing to styles of communication and people's expectations. Take replying to emails. Rapport is not about commenting on the weather, the family, passing the time of day, etc., unless that is raised in the email you receive. If the tone is aggressive, it's not about replying in an aggressive manner, but being forthright in your tone and style. Seek first to understand.



People like people who are like themselves

Rapport is essential for any meaningful communication to take place, to engage someone's attention. Just because you are telling someone what to do, doesn't mean you are communicating. The more you subtly get into the style of the other person the more you will understand what their motives, attitudes, values, beliefs and feelings are.

Try this. Work in a threesome. One person observes while another talks about something that 'makes their your heart sing' to their partner. They will get into a rapport for a few minutes and then gradually lose interest and break the rapport. After 5 minutes, stop and reflect on how you all felt and what the observer noted. Swap round so you all get a go.

Some questions for the Observer

- ? Did you notice the preferred senses from the words being used ?
- ? Did you identify any values or beliefs ?
- ? Did they tell a story or use metaphors ?
- ? Did you notice what state of mind they were in ?
- ? Did the language appear passive or active ?
- ? Did they change body positions to mirror their partner ?
- ? Did they respond with smiles or gestures to reflect the other person's mood ?
- ? Did they keep eye contact – if so, for how long at a time ?
- ? Did the manner or attitude change when their partner lost interest ?

How to use rapport

There are many applications of using rapport for managers, here are a few that you can try for yourself.

- ? *Putting a nervous interview candidate at ease. Start by pacing their behaviour, partially at least, then gradually opening your own behaviour as you lead them towards a more relaxed state by reducing the pace. Words of assurance without rapport will not work as well.*
- ? Pacifying an angry boss or colleagues
- ? Persuading a colleague or client who is skeptical
- ? Getting someone to take an issue more seriously or more light-heartedly
- ? Bringing a meeting to order, or to a close without causing offence
- ? Persuading a group on an important matter
- ? Getting someone to be more enthusiastic
- ? Getting a change of mental or emotional state

Facial expression and general demeanor are important in all cases, as it can help to communicate mood. To generate enthusiasm you need to be enthusiastic yourself. Remember, whatever your words might say, the signals in your tone of voice, eye movements and body language will betray your real attitude and intentions.

Think . . . **MATCH – PACE – LEAD** it can work at every level

One of the simplest and most effective appraisal systems I have ever used involved training managers rapport building, active listening, how to be curious - and how to ask four questions.

1. What are your goals ?
2. How well did you do ?
3. What skills would help you develop further ?
4. What actions shall we commit to ?

How to use your senses

You can show that you are like others in the way that you think and behave. For example, some are pessimists and others are optimists. Some are tidy, whilst others are disorganised. Some people think in pictures, whilst others think in words or feelings. This is our preferred way of representing the world. We need to know this because it affects the way we learn and go about listening to others. It also has an impact on how we see the world – our world view or mental map.

Listen to others and get them to listen to you - discover your sensory preferences.

VISUAL PEOPLE – “I see what you mean”, “I have a blind spot on that”, “It appears to me if . . .” “Show me”, “In my mind’s eye . . .” “Shed some light on this for me”, etc.

Visual people also tend to speak quickly at a higher pitch and shallower breathing, tending to look upwards.

AUDITORY PEOPLE – “In a manner of speaking”, “It rings a bell with me”, “Loud and clear”, “On the same wavelength”. “Whose calling the tune?”, “What makes her tick?”, etc.

Auditory people often speak more slowly and resonantly with more rhythmic body movements and looking sideways.

KINAESTHETIC People – “Hold on a second”, “He’s a cool customer”, “She is a warm-hearted person”, “Thick skinned”, “They had a heated argument”, “I feel it in my bones”, “I will be in touch”, etc

Kinaesthetic people tend to speak slowly and ponderously, breathing slowly and looking down more.

To find out values you need to watch and listen. Pay attention to what excites them and what changes their state from interest to curiosity. What do they pay attention to? Pay attention to the smallest of changes so you can trace patterns of body movement associated with a change of thinking. When you know your own values and observe how you react, it becomes easier to see it in others.

Managers who listen with care and skill are in my experience few and far between. Those who have it, generate immense respect and influence over others.

When you listen with rapport you are listening with your whole body attentive and focused on the other person. You not only listening to their words but getting insights into what they are thinking and feeling. You influence the conversation with your non-verbal behaviour more than anything else you do.

Try this. Listen with your whole body and focus 100% on the other person. How do you feel about being with this person? Notice their demeanor, breathing rate, eye movements. Rapport is a state of being with someone so closely that you feel you are entering their world.

When does rapport break down ?

Six of the most common reasons for the loss of rapport are:

Extreme self-consciousness stops you managing the rapport process at both a conscious and unconscious level. As a result you will be led by the other person all the time and find it difficult to break into the conversation fearing that you will not be valued.

An overwhelming need to be liked means you hold back on challenging others. This feeling arises from fear and a lack of self-confidence. We tend to keep profound disagreements to ourselves and therefore select friends because they share our opinions and prejudices.

Judgement often takes the form of toxic waste that we try to bury, but inevitably 'seeps out' in our body language, comments and attitudes.

Imposing our values can overwhelm others, even to the point where they withdraw from the conversation. Placing 'restrictions' on the other person can lead to them doing things to please you to get a favourable response. This can severely damage a relationship.

Preoccupation with your own life's events can make it difficult for others to make a contribution.

Unawareness of getting stuck in particular ways of talking and communicating. For example, asking leading or closed questions. Not matching the other person's energy level or pace of conversation.

Rapport requires a buoyant and sincere wish to understand the other person – see the world as they see it. At the same time you have to be self-aware and self-accepting, letting your own barriers down, free of the need to defend yourself. When you no longer fear others you will not feel the need to protect yourself from 'being different'.

When you want rapport to break down

To end a meeting or change the dynamic in a conversation you can use a number of 'mismatches' to break the rapport. Sometimes a breakdown can lead to a breakthrough. For example . . .

- ? fiddling with your watch or pen, even wagging your foot may suggest impatience
- ? sitting with crossed arms or sitting back in your chair when the other person isn't
- ? turning your chair and your body away from the other person
- ? touching your face while talking implies timidity and suggests you are withdrawing
- ? scowling, frowning or losing eye contact suggests disapproval or lack of interest

Taking Action

Try this simple self-test yourself and ask your team members to do it too. It will stimulate conversation about what you and your colleagues can do to develop their ability to establish a good rapport with each other.

Rapport requires you to think about and make an effort to understand others before asking for what you want. We are all driven by our own wants, but to connect with others we need to get close enough to find out what their wants actually are. This provides insights into what might motivate them to act.

For example, if you want to get support from a boss who is primarily concerned about how much things cost and how it will make them look, then selling it to them on the basis of what you want, say improved training for staff, will not work. You have to answer the questions that make your boss feel that their wants have been taken into account when you advocate your training ideas. See Info Notes 5 - 'Using Powerful Questions'.

Answer each question truthfully with a simple YES or NO. Try not to dwell on the questions, as your first and instinctive response is probably the most accurate !

QUESTION	YES	NO
Are the majority of people you meet pleased to see you ?		
Do your social groups say they miss you when you are not around ?		
Do you find it easy to communicate with people you have just met ?		
Do people turn to you for help ?		
Do people find you approachable ?		
Do people immediately understand what you say and mean ?		
Do you usually get your own way ?		
Do people willingly do what you ask of them ?		
Do you have a wide and varied circle of friends ?		
Do you have an even wider set of acquaintances ?		
Would you describe yourself as persuasive ?		
Do people readily accept your ideas ?		
Are you able to remove the heat from an argument ?		
At meetings, are you usually invited to contribute your arguments ?		
Do you find it easy to sustain eye contact with someone ?		

If you answer YES to more than half of these questions, you already have a good, instinctive sense of rapport. If you answered NO to more than half of these questions, you may need a greater conscious awareness of the importance and relevance of rapport in building relationships with people.

How would YOU have replied ?

Email message to Jane from Wendy

Jane

Have been looking further at the issue of your fees – which as you know, we are very concerned about. Your day rates are 15% higher than your nearest rival, and investigations among my contacts have shown that they have increased by over 30% since 2001. I attach a comparison of your fees today compared with those charged in a similar work that you did for us only a year ago.

Can you please justify to me:

1. Why you feel you can charge over the market rate for this type of work ?
2. Why there has been such a large upward movement in fees over the last 3 years ?

I feel very concerned about this

Wendy

Email reply from Jane to Wendy

Wendy

I have discussed the issue that you raised with our finance people internally. Please find attached a detailed explanation on both of the points you have mentioned which I hope will serve to clarify our position on rates and illustrate that our rate increases are quite different to those you have indicated. Once you have had a chance to read this through I think it might be sensible for us to speak or even meet to discuss the next stage

I look forward to hearing from you

Regards

Jane

If you were Wendy, with an understanding of the principles of rapport – compose a reply to Jane ?

Rapport Exercise

Stage 1

Think of some people who you feel attracted to, perhaps family, friends, partners or even colleagues. Try and identify in specific terms, why it is you feel attracted to, or like these particular people

Stage 2

Think of some people who have come into your life who you are not attracted to or didn't like. Try and identify in specific terms, why it is you didn't like or feel attracted to these particular people.

Stage 3

Share the outcomes of your experiences with your nearest neighbour.

Stage 4

What can we learn from these experiences?

- ? People like people who are like themselves*
- ? To establish rapport we must try and be as much like the other person as we can be*
- ? To establish rapport is not to mimic, or pretend to be someone we are not, but rather we are trying to make it easier for that person to like you or be attracted to you.*

What Makes Your Heart Sing Exercise

Ask the individuals in the group to think what is it in their lives that make their 'hearts sing.' What makes them get out of bed in the morning, what is the most important thing in their lives? This could be family, hobbies, experience, a place, home, pets, beliefs and etc. etc.

Each person writes a short sentence to describe this.

In groups of three, one person acts as an observer and the other two having a conversation. Each person gets a turn having a conversation and acting as an observer.

Person A relates what it is that makes their 'heart sing' to person B. For about 30 seconds or so person B listens actively, with positive and encouraging questions and body language, after 30 seconds person B 'switches off' and becomes disinterested and detached from the conversation and this is echoed in their body language and general demeanor. Person C observing then feeds back on the conversation and the process is discussed. The pattern is repeated until all have had their turn.