

Selling and Persuasion – The Power of Rapport

Why is rapport so powerful in the persuasion process? Because most key choices that we make are ultimately based on personal criteria. Feelings, beliefs, values are the basis of our decisions. But these are personal issues! We prefer to keep them to ourselves, only talking about them with people that we feel comfortable with. They tend to be the people who empathise with us, or who we instinctively feel are like us. Rapport is that kind of relationship.

What is the secret of effective rapport building? The mind processes information through conscious and subconscious channels. The former happens to be more analytical and questioning and the latter more creative and imaginative. It also happens to be highly sensitive to external sensory stimuli, particularly images and sounds. What this means is that obvious “exaggerated” attempts to build rapport will be consciously seen and questioned. Whereas **subtle, moderated technique** will access via the subconscious channel, and create instinctive, intuitive feelings of rapport. **That is the secret!**

These are the essential skills and techniques that will achieve rapport for you:

Body language mirroring Remembering that the secret is subtle similarity not exaggerated mimicking, observe and respond to: Posture, is it relaxed or “on guard?” Sitting forward or reclining back? Head and shoulders are they animated or still? Hands are they gesturing or resting? Eye contact is it constant or indirect?

Voice Matching Again with subtle harmony as the aim. Is the voice excited and agitated or calm and unemotional? Loudly or softly spoken? Talking fast or slow? Using lengthy phrases or short punchy ones? Breathing slow and easy or quickly?

Behaviour Matching Are they sociable people who want to chat or are they “go getters” who want to crack on? Do they enjoy asking questions and developing answers or do they prefer to make statements and swap opinions.

Language harmony Do they have favourite ways of phrasing that you can subtly adopt? Such as they make a point then add the benefit or give the benefit then explain how to achieve it? Do their responses show a clear preference to “see” or “hear” or “feel” when they think? Do they have a pet word or phrase you could borrow and use?

Harmony of thought and decision making As you discuss matters are they concerned about the detail workings or happy with the bigger picture? Do they want to see research and facts or simply be told what the benefits are? Are they interested in solving problems and cutting costs or more interested in adding value and selling more? Do 3rd party opinions matter to them or is it just their own opinion that counts?

Active Listening The non-verbal techniques we have discussed will establish rapport and your active listening skills are especially crucial in retaining it. Show you are listening with good eye contact; by nodding as you acknowledge responses; by smiling at appropriate times; by leaning forward to encourage deeper responses. Also, say that you are listening. Let them hear that you understand, empathise, appreciate, enjoy, sympathise and agree with what they are saying.

Creating rapport is an essential precursor to questioning and qualifying the personal criteria that are at the heart of choice. Once in rapport people are happy to share these with you. Excellence in rapport building will see you often bring about a decision with little or no persuasion as people think “if it is right by you then it must be right by me too!”

Copyright C) Bob Howard-Spink

Bob Howard-Spink is a partner in *Persuadability*. For more tips and advice on persuasive communication please visit www.persuadability.co.uk