

Creating RAPPORT— *building* relationships

by Donna Messer

Rapport as defined in the dictionary is “a relationship marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity”

RESPECT others, listen carefully, and take the time to learn about them. Relate to their cultural diversity, their interests, hobbies and volunteer activities, these are an important factor in building rapport. Remember whom you know. This might be a great connection for them; perhaps it's a colleague from the same country or a project you are working on through your volunteer organization. Build the bridges... friendship and relationships often happen when each side tries to find common interests.

APPRECIATE the ways in which you are alike. Find the common denominators and build on them. People like people who are like themselves. They buy from them, sell to them, and work with them on joint ventures and strategic alliances. Introduce yourself with information that you want to know about them. Begin your conversation with, “Hello, my name is... I am a Mechanical Engineer with ABC Company.” Chances are, they will tell you what level of education or degree they have attained and where they are employed. The reply could be, “My name is...I got my MBA from...and I worked with a group of engineers on a project in South America.” The rapport has begun; an affinity is developing.

PRIORITIZE your needs and the reasons you want to build the rapport between you and your potential client, customer, or colleague. Make sure your priority is beneficial to the other person. Harmony is part of rapport building. Do you homework; find ways to offer insight and information that will be of importance to your colleague. By prioritizing, you are taking a targeted approach to building the rapport. Suggesting to your client or colleague that you both have the same interest in a volunteer area, an environmental issue, or an educational concern will create an accord between you.

PUBLICIZE your meeting and the results of your discussion; let others know that you have begun to relate to each other and that a rapport is developing. Keep your colleagues informed; rapport creates relationships that can benefit you and those you know. By building rapport, you offer a harmonious connection for others in your network who have similar interests, concerns, or issues.

ORGANIZE your efforts, maximize your opportunities, and find ways that you create a win/win for both parties. Rapport is about both sides benefiting from the relationship. Think about what you will bring to the meeting. Often it is advisable to go over your database in advance, consider your contacts, and rate them on their overall value for this occasion. Think laterally. It isn't just the contacts you work with,

it is also your friends, relatives, and associates that might have a common interest that should be included.

RECOGNIZE your resources; make a list of your key contacts and your special interests. Come to any event prepared to share those resources once the rapport has been established. When building a rapport, often the fact that you ski, scuba, or bike creates the initial interest. Create a brief bio on yourself that includes your education, special interests, hobbies, associations, and your career path—who you know is as important as what you know in some cases.

TAKE TIME really getting to know each other; make an effort to meet several times before making the decision to become a referral. Once you have established the initial rapport, begin the building of that relationship. Ask how best to connect with your new colleague. By e-mail? Ask how you can make sure that your new colleague will recognize your message as legitimate and not another piece of spam e-mail.

By phone? Ask how you can get by the administrative assistant—the office gatekeeper who makes sure one is protected from all those unnecessary phone calls. Establish a method of communication that can work comfortably for both of you. Build the rapport so that each of you want to keep the relationship growing! **SBCM**

Donna Messer is a relationship expert, an inspiring international speaker, trainer, and coach. The author of the best seller “The Art of Effective Networking Strategies,” with a network of over 10,000 in her database that she willingly shares.

Donna has designed an interactive workshop for building rapport. She shows participants how to find the common denominators that make building rapport simple. For a keynote speech or a workshop Donna can be reached at dmesser@connectuscanada.com.



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