

# Authentically Building Trust and Rapport



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## GETTING STARTED

How often has a sales person “served” you and not engaged with you or said a word? Some sales people barely grunt at customers as they take their money. We have all experienced this, whether it be in a supermarket, service station, or some other sales arena. How many times have you been approached by a sales person who may have smiled but then quickly launched into a sales presentation, without asking what you really need? How do you feel when sales people don’t treat you as a human being with needs and feelings, but treat you purely as their sales \$\$ target?

Taking the time to build rapport with customers and potential customers can contribute to sales and business growth. In fact, we can have an amazing product or service but without rapport we will struggle to connect with people and make sales. Rapport is crucial to the success of any business and while essential for sales, rapport is also vital for in-house employee relationships.

In a technology and social media dominated society, “old school” skills such as rapport building are more important than ever. While new media opportunities are important and should be fully utilized, they do not take the place of using great interpersonal skills. We have witnessed the rise of Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence awareness that both seek to address a deficit in developing face-to-face relationships.

Many sales people simply want to jump to their sales “pitch” and sign a new client, and then are left wondering why they fail. Oftentimes, a sales failure can be traced back to poor rapport building skills, and poor sales training. This training course aims to help you develop great rapport building skills so that you become more effective in sales and more effective in life generally.

Envision yourself as someone with great rapport skills. As Stephen Covey often reminds us, “Begin with the end in mind.” How would you behave with customers and fellow workers if you used well developed rapport building skills? What outcomes would this bring you?

## TRAINING OBJECTIVES

This training course is comprehensive and covers a wide range of rapport building skills. In any given sales conversation, you may not use all these tools and behaviours, however, it is important that you are well equipped to use them as needed.

Research has consistently demonstrated that when clear goals are associated with learning, it occurs more easily and rapidly. With that in mind, let's review our goals for this training workshop.

At the end of this training, participants should be able to:

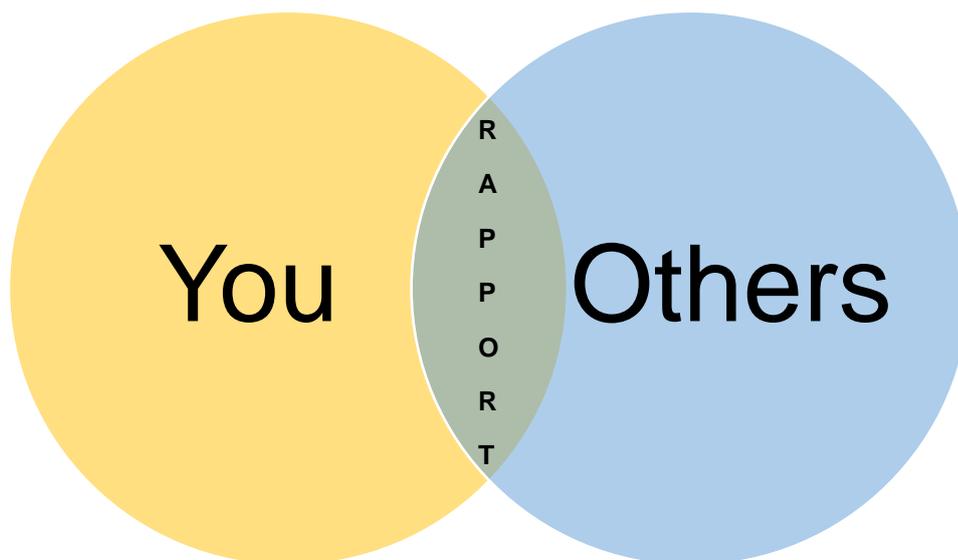
- Accurately define what rapport is.
- Know the steps to building a strong connection with prospective customers through building rapport.
- Know how to prepare for a sales conversation that will result in rapport being established.
- Know how to make a positive first impression.
- Understand and have practiced the skills of effective communication
- Understand the power of authenticity and how to develop an authentic relationship with a client.
- Develop a client centred approach to all sales conversations.
- Appreciate the importance of empathy and be able to be empathic with clients.
- Understand the importance of practicing affirmation.
- Move from rapport building to closing the sale.

## WHAT IS RAPPORT?

Rapport can be the deciding factor between success and failure in business and in all your relationships. So, what is rapport?

Rapport is the “X factor” in relationships, and exists when there is understanding, trust, and a sense of being in “sync” with another person.

When you have rapport with someone, you enter their world to the extent that they feel you understand their perspective and needs. A synonym for rapport is “affinity” - a close relationship characterised by mutual understanding.



If someone is hesitant, closed, uncooperative, and reluctant to communicate with you, it is likely that you have not yet built rapport. Developing a strong sense of rapport with clients or team members ensures you have a high level of trust, confidence and participation.

You can become “unconsciously competent” in the skills of building rapport so these skills become your default behaviour. Like any skills, these skills need to be practiced and honed.

**Myth:** The ability to connect with others is a natural unteachable skill.

**Truth:** Building rapport is something anyone can learn and has a lot to do with developing your EQ and SQ.

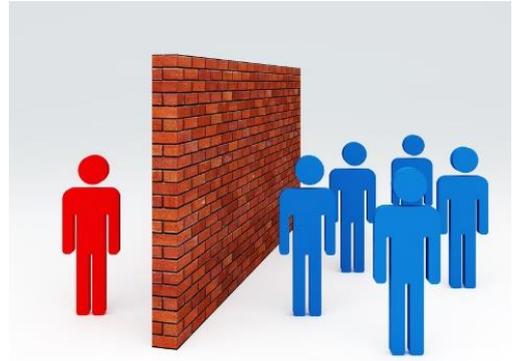
## **The Pareto Principle**

80% of sales are generated by 20% of sales people.  
One of the key differentiators between the 20% and  
the 80% is the skill of rapport building

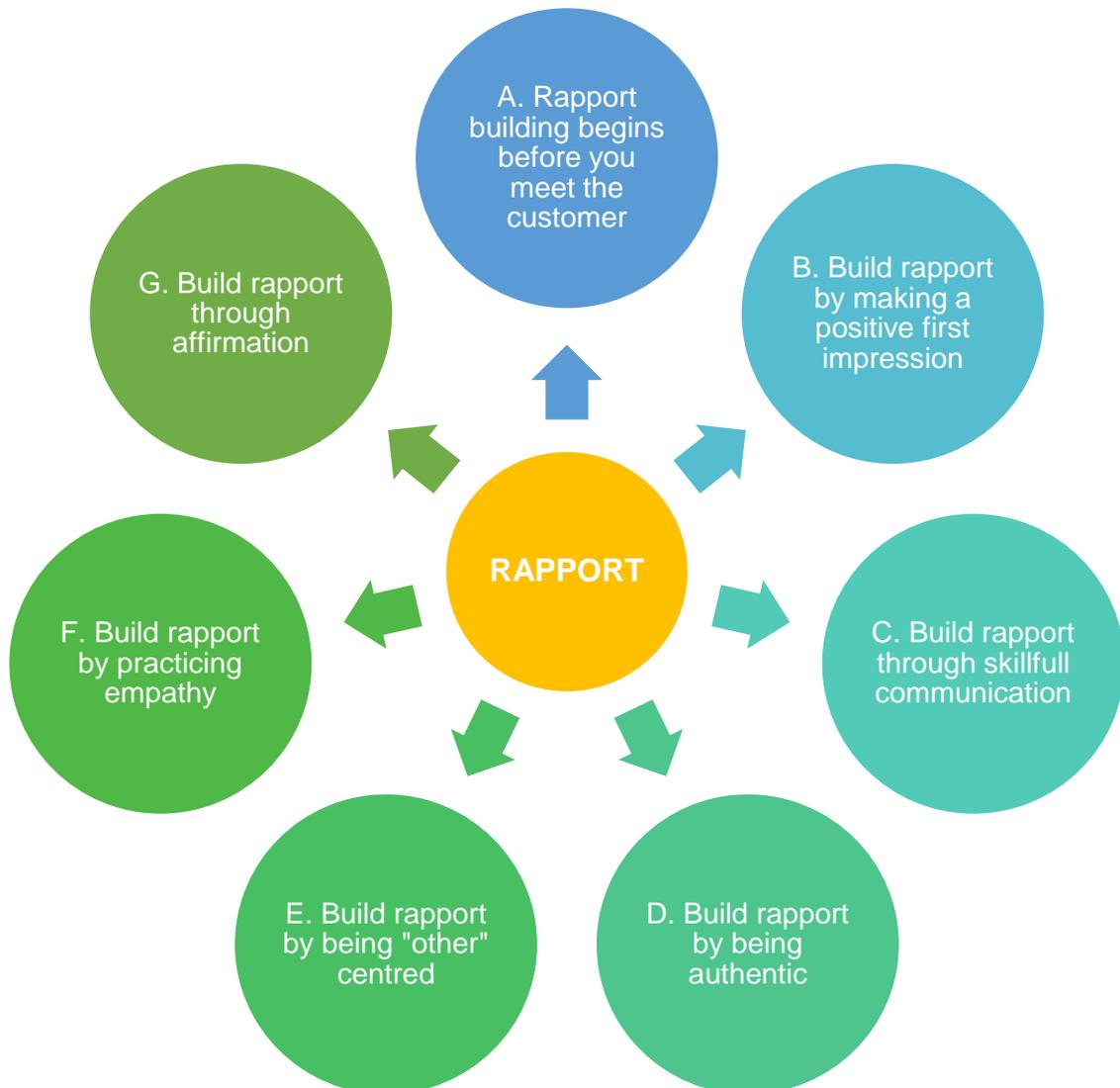
## BARRIERS TO BUILDING RAPPORT

There are many barriers to building rapport that we should be aware of. Some of these include:

- Failure to appreciate that rapport is crucial in the sales process.
- Self-centredness rather than customer-centredness.
- Carelessness with first impressions.
- Insensitivity (e.g., to the client's time constraints).
- Failure to empathize and to understand the client's situation, challenges and pain.
- Closed body language.
- Failure to listen and dominating the sales conversation.
- Insincerity (e.g., spouting a canned presentation).
- Lack of warmth.
- Lack of vulnerability.
- Failure to affirm the client.



## HOW TO BUILD RAPPORT



## THE POWER OF TRUST

*“The process of building trust is an interesting one, but it begins with yourself, with what I call self-trust, and with your own credibility, your own trustworthiness. If you think about it, it's hard to establish trust with others if you can't trust yourself.” Stephen Covey*

*“...one of the fastest ways to restore trust is to make and keep commitments—even very small commitments—to ourselves and to others.” Stephen Covey*

Trust is foundational to society and a crucial element of all business endeavours. The dictionary defines trust as the “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something. One in which confidence is placed.” (Merriam-Webster).

Without such trust, we will falter in business, lose customers, and lose our reputation. Building trust is essential.



### 1. Three great reasons for building trust

**If you want sales, you have to build sales trust**

- 90% of companies only buy from companies they trust

**Sales trust leads to sales referrals**

- Potential customers respond to positive recommendations

**Sales trust affirms your personal integrity**

### 2. Rapport leads to trust

In this training we are studying how to build rapport and as we do so it is important for us to understand that building rapport leads to establishing trust. We can execute the skills and strategies of rapport building all with the aim of establishing ourselves as worthy of trust.

As you practice the powerful skills of rapport building, you will discover that trust will develop and your connections with people will flourish.



## A. RAPPORT BUILDING BEGINS BEFORE YOU MEET THE CUSTOMER

If we want to make a great connection with people, the process begins well before we meet the prospective customer, client, or colleague.

### 1. Adopt an intentional plan to connect

Our goal is to make a genuine connection. We are aiming to help the customer appreciate that we have their best interests at heart.

Connecting with others is as fundamental a human need as food, shelter and water. We are hard wired to be social beings. Maslow's famous "hierarchy of needs" suggests that after food and safety, relationships are the most important need for humans.



**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Given that social connections and relationships are so basic to being human, you would think that it would be easy to connect with everyone you meet. But as we well know, this is not the case.

We get trapped in shyness, reactivity, busyness, competitiveness, treating people as objects, jealousy and arrogance. The pressure to make a sale can override building authentic trust. Perhaps sometimes we are just "lazy" and do not focus on the rapport skills we know are so important.

If we can get over our own baggage, focus and develop our skills, we can make powerful connections with people – even with people who are holding on to their own baggage.

How can we can connect with anybody?

We connect by developing rapport – a relationship of trust and respect.

In this training, we cover the most important areas for making great connections. Some of these include:

- Leave a great first impression.
- Use positive body language.
- Communicate well – including reflective listening.
- Give the client the gift of your presence and attention. They are the most important person in the world to you for the time you are with them. Remember, “It is not about me.” Our ego and selfishness can easily get in the way of making a good connection. When you consciously focus on the person, they know they matter, that they are important to you. Imagine what it feels like when someone puts you first, when they focus on you and your needs, when they really care about what is important to you. When this happens we feel honoured, respected and important.
- Be vulnerable and reveal something of yourself. Most people stay with safe topics. Be prepared to go a little further.
- Focus on them, not yourself.
- Look for areas to affirm.

Think through the following questions as you prepare. It is useful to write out your answers and to develop the discipline of preparing well.

- Who are you meeting?
- What do you know about them?
- Why do they think you are meeting them?
- What outcomes are you seeking?
- What pain/challenges is the person experiencing?
- What opportunities may be present?
- What are your differentiators?
- What is your plan for the conversation? Visualize the conversation.
- How will you make a positive connection?
- Is your motive to sell or to serve?
- Rehearse what you will say.
- Ensure you have a positive mindset.
- Do you have a good story? What are your sales talking points? What is the great story of your product, are you passionate about it, and how will you share it?
- Be prepared to really listen to the prospective customer.
- Prepare for a dialogue – not your monologue.
- What are the weaknesses of your product?
- How can you make your presentation focussed and on point?

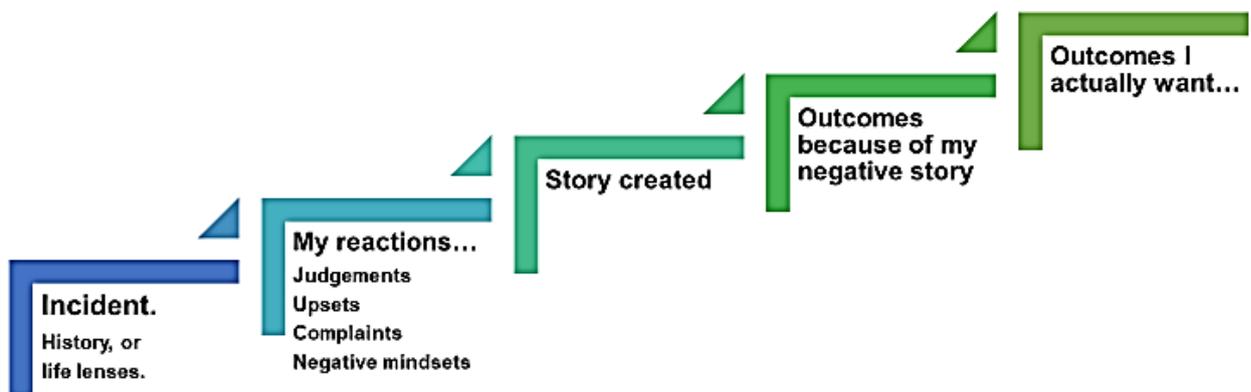
If you have met them before...

- Describe your last conversation.
- What is their behavioural and conversational style?
- What is important for this client?
- What steps can you take to build greater rapport with them?
- What outcome are you seeking in your sales conversation with them?
- How will you present your product or service?
- Who are your competitors and what inroads have they made with your current client?

## 2. Reframe your negative stories

Before you meet people, you may consciously or unconsciously have formed negative stories about them or about the way they will likely respond to you. These negative stories may be based on “similar” people you have met before and will usually produce predictable outcomes.

It is important to reframe our stories, give up our judgements, and look for better outcomes with people. Our connection with people is often jaundiced by negative stories, so it is crucial to reframe these stories and to adopt a positive, empathic story.



### Exercise

What are some typical negative stories you may have regarding a potential client? How can these stories be reframed so they become positive stories about possibilities and potential?

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### **3. Embrace an “abundance mindset”**

Before you approach a prospective customer, remind yourself of your skills, abilities, gifts, and the abundance that you bring to the conversation. You are an amazing person with a heart to make a difference in your potential client’s life. You are well trained, have great people skills, have an attractive personality, are a caring person, you know how to help your client, and you know how to close a sale.

You also have a product that can help them become more successful or can solve some significant problems in their business.

The reality is that you have an abundance to give and you are an amazing person. With this mindset in place you can approach your prospective customers with confidence and a positive attitude.

## B. RAPPORT BUILDING REQUIRES MAKING A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION

*“Never forget that you only have one opportunity to make a first impression – with investors, with customers, with PR, and with marketing.” Natalie Massenet*

### 1. You only have a few seconds – so make them count

Most people decide whether they like you within **the first 7 seconds** of meeting you. They then spend the rest of the conversation internally justifying their initial reaction. One study by researchers at Princeton University determined that first impressions were made in roughly 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a second!



The ability to connect with people instantly gives you some major opportunities. However, if we make a poor first impression, everything we do after that will only serve to reinforce the negative first impression. In sales, our goal is to connect with a potential buyer.

When we meet someone, our inner “auto pilot” seems to instantly put people into 3 possible buckets.



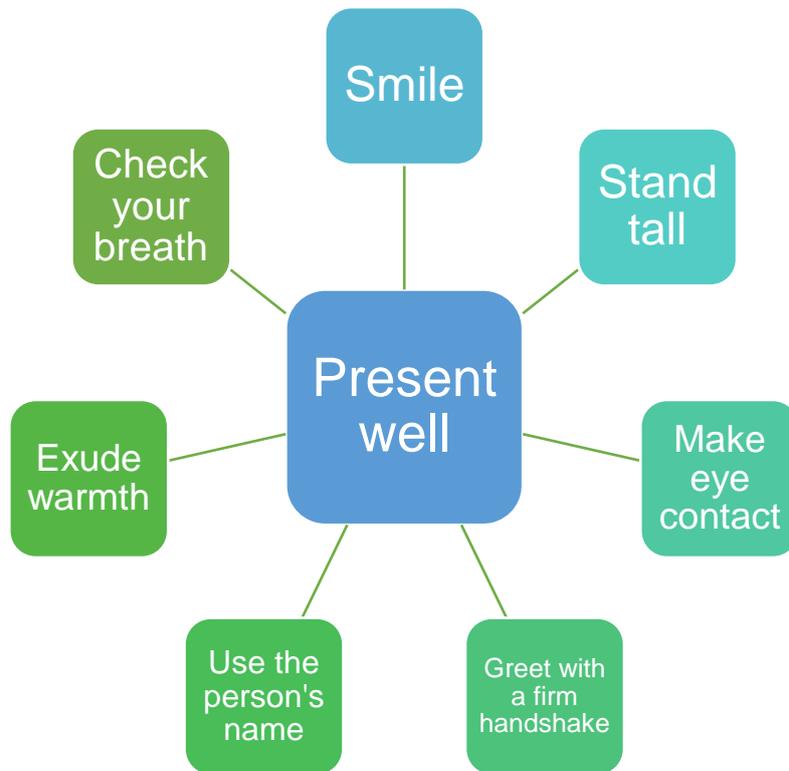
In an increasingly busy and distracted world, the number of buckets may well be reduced to just 2 buckets:

- People we like and who make a great impression on us
- Everyone else

How can we make a positive first impression?

## 2. The essentials for a good first impression

### a) Present yourself well



If you want to connect with people in a positive way, smile at them during the conversation and they may unconsciously smile back and have a positive attitude toward you.

It is also important to use their name. We all feel good when people use our name and it is a core skill in building rapport. Ask them to repeat their name if you forget it, and use their name often when talking to them.

*“A good first impression can work wonders.”* J.K. Rowling

## Hand shaking

Touch is one of the quickest and most powerful ways of connecting with people and building rapport. People are much more likely to remember you if you shake their hand. It is wise to shake hands warmly while maintaining eye contact.

It is also important to notice how the other person shakes hands. Are they a “bone crusher,” or “wet fish”? We can mirror their handshake.



### b) Be approachable

In business, there will be times when customers or potential clients approach you. When they do so, the message you want to give them is “you are important, you have my attention, I am here for you.” Being approachable is a gift you give to others.

**Approachability:** when someone looks at you they feel able to talk to you, and that you are someone who will be receptive to their attempts at conversation.



We have all had experiences of trying to talk to someone who is not approachable. Maybe you had a boss who said to you, “approach me anytime,” and then when you did they ignored or dismissed you.

Sometimes, sales people can be busy chatting with other staff or team members, busy on their phones, or otherwise preoccupied.

Being approachable means having a mindset that is always looking to engage with potential customers or new clients. Make sure you are accessible, and then use the connecting skills recommended in this training (smile, have an open body posture, have eye contact, mirror the other person, etc.).

### c) Take the initiative

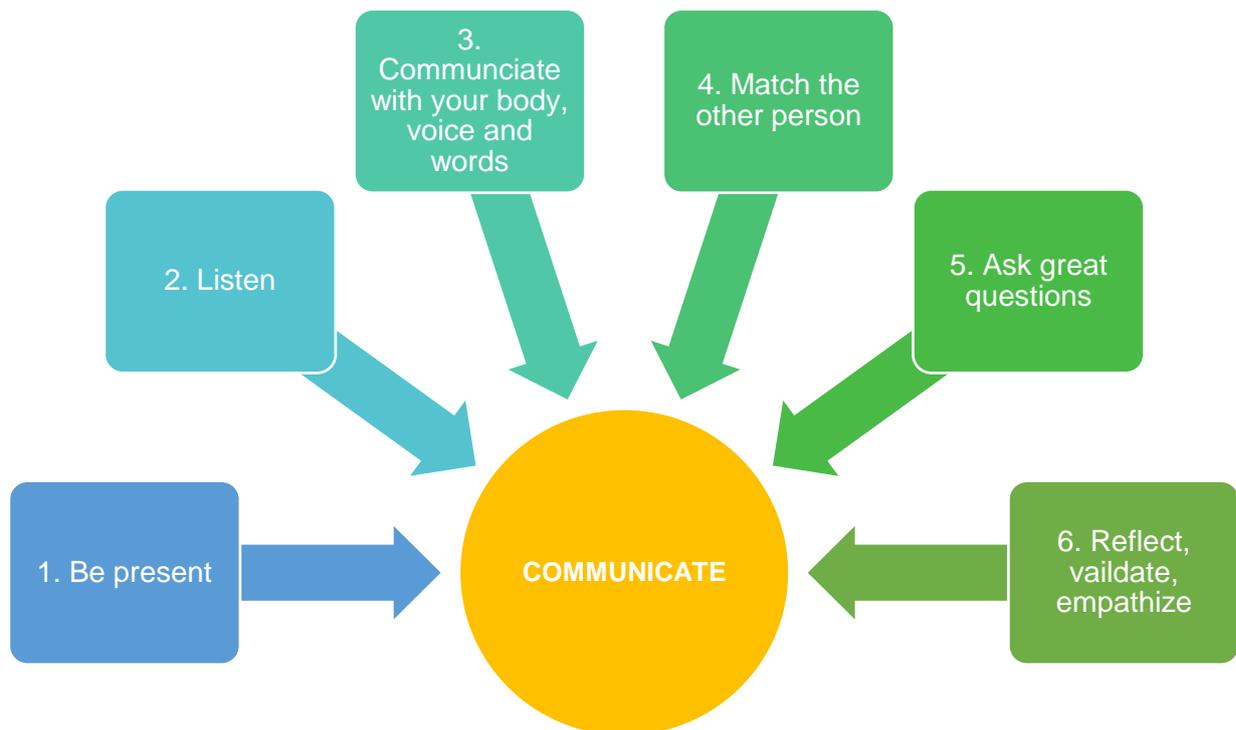
Approach the customer and take the initiative. Don't wait for the customer to initiate a conversation.

Nearly everyone has fears and insecurity when they first meet someone. This is normal and these fears can be overcome through practice. Remember, your customer has probably had bad experiences at the hands of poorly trained sales people from other companies. You can demonstrate a caring, client centred approach that overcomes their defensiveness.



## C. BUILDING RAPPORT THROUGH SKILLFUL COMMUNICATION

*“The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood.”*  
Ralph Nichols



### 1. Be present

We all know how frustrating it is when the people we are having a conversation with zone out of the conversation. They may check their phones, look around the room or start looking at you blankly because they are thinking about something else. It may be that we are getting more used to multitasking and as a result finding it increasingly difficult to focus and to be truly present with people.

Being fully present with someone means focussing your attention, thoughts and feelings, on that person and what they are saying.

Being present is a gift we give to the other person as we show them that what they are saying is important.

You cannot use the skill of reflecting, if you have not first heard what they are saying. Being truly present with people requires practice. It also requires us to have a good attitude – a genuine desire to connect with others.

## **2. Listen**

*One of the sincerest forms of respect is listening to what another has to say.*

A massive hindrance keeping us from building authentic trust, is simply not listening. Someone once said, “we don’t listen, we are not listening now, and unless we change we never will listen.” The first rule of conversations is simply: listen.

Often, instead of listening, we are thinking about what we need to say next. If you want to connect, try turning off your inner voice long enough to focus on what the other person is telling you.

Sales people are notorious for talking over people in their enthusiasm to give their presentation. They have a reputation as talkers. It has been suggested that sales people dominate 80-90% of conversations with clients.

Remember the adage, “God gave you two ears and one mouth.” It is good practice to listen twice as much as we speak. When we are talking we are not learning or understanding. We need to learn to listen.

When we listen, we are tuning in to the many different methods people use to communicate.

## **3. Communicate with your body, voice and words**

It is very important that you communicate with your voice, voice tone and tempo, as well as your body language. A famous study highlighted three distinctive parts of communication:

Our body language = 55%  
Our voice tone and tempo = 38%  
Our words = 7%

While these percentages vary, we can see that our body language and voice tone are incredibly important. Your body language and appearance speaks louder than your words.

You need to also be aware of your:

- Gestures
- Facial expressions
- Voice tone and tempo

Are you communicating a positive open message through your body and voice tone?

Examples of positive communication using your body:

- An open body posture
- Not crossing your arms
- Maintaining eye contact
- Leaning towards the other person
- Smiling
- Nodding

These are all used by people with high EQ and will draw people to you.

*“How you say something, is just as important as what you say.”*

#### **4. Match the other person**

Researchers (John Grinder and Richard Bandler), discovered that rapport develops faster with someone when we match or mirror various aspects of their speech and physiology. Matching the speed and tone of your client’s speech is a helpful way of building rapport.

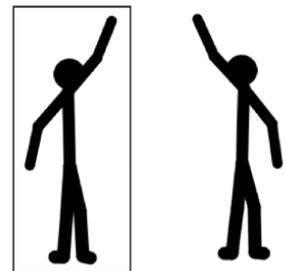
Matching is adopting parts of another person's behaviour to build rapport.

This happens for most people at an unconscious level, e.g., people sitting together in a restaurant, lovers who are connecting with each other, or mates at the pub.

Interestingly, the word rapport stems from the old French verb *rapporter* which means literally to carry something back; and in the sense of how people relate to each other, it means what one person sends out the other sends back.

When we match someone's behaviour we copy it exactly. This matching is not simply mimicking, but **subtly reflecting** the meaningful but unconscious communication we engage in all the time. It shows we are willing to enter the other person's world.

When you mirror someone's gestures back to them, a person's unconscious mind picks up that you've noticed it. You can match:



### Body language

- Breathing
- Posture, including head tilting
- Gestures
- Facial expressions
- Eye contact

### Speech

- Pace
- Tempo
- Tone

Do all of this **subtly**. Wait 30 seconds or so and ease into the new position if you are matching body language. Learn to match your client.

## 5. Ask great questions

Many sales people spend too much time talking and presenting, and not enough time asking questions and listening. Effective sales people become experts in asking appropriate "pain seeking" (i.e., looking for the challenges the person is experiencing), opportunity revealing, and open-ended questions.

Ensure your questions are open-ended questions. Just simply asking, "How is business going" is not nearly as effective as asking, "What are the business challenges you are

facing right now?" Rather than asking, "What do you do," ask, "Why did you choose your profession?" Open ended questions are ones that don't require a simple yes or no answer. They are usually questions that require more words and thought.

Pay attention to the other person's stories. Think about the questions that help you understand the other person, without getting too personal. It may be helpful to ask How? When? Why? questions. Open ended questions help you understand the client's likes and dislikes, their aspirations and business challenges.

As the person shares with you, you can continue to ask open ended questions.

Remember, "It's not  
about you."

## Exercise

1. What are some great open questions you could ask a prospective client?

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## 6. Reflect, validate and empathize

These three steps are important in sales but are for all relationships. Conflict often occurs because we do not accurately hear what the other person is saying.

## Reflect

- When we reflect (sometimes called mirroring), we repeat back what the other person says so they know we have heard them. Listen to what the other person is saying, and then say, “I heard you say...” Or, “I hear you saying...” Or, “Let me see if I got all you said.”
- Then ask, “Did I hear you correctly? If not, ask them to repeat what they said.”

## Validate

- When we validate, we affirm what the person is thinking. You could say to the person, “What you are saying makes sense to me because...”
- Then ask, “Have I understood correctly?” Or, “Did I get that right?”

## Empathize

- When we empathize, we show we are connecting with how the person is feeling. You could say, “I can imagine that you are feeling...”
- Then ask, “Did I get that right?”

## D. BUILD RAPPORT BY BEING AUTHENTIC

*“Authenticity is a collection of choices that we make every day. It’s about the choice to show up and be real. The choice to be honest. The choice to let our true selves be known.” Brene Brown*

### 1. Let others into your world

We tend to be guarded in our first conversation with someone and stick to safe topics – the weather, politics, sport, the stock market, people we know in common. We may be tempted to share only very basic details about ourselves. We tend to create a safe but superficial picture of ourselves.

Building rapport often involves letting others into our world. Connecting effectively accelerates when we reveal a bit more about ourselves. We don’t need to get too personal, but it’s important to let the other person know what we are passionate about. When we are real with others, it invites them to be real with us.

As we authentically share something of ourselves, we potentially move from being superficial to authentic, and as a result we build trust.

When we open-up, often the other person will follow. This builds the relationship and trust grows. There is a delicate balance between managing what we share with others and being “authentic” at the same time.

## 2. Be genuine

Some sales people put on a “sales persona.” They become a different person when they are trying to sell their product or service. People usually see through these personas. To be authentic requires us to drop our facades and pretence, in favour of being real. As we seek to be genuine we can foster these behaviours:

- Be ourselves and not a persona
- Be careful to not exaggerate or overstate in any way
- Be honest
- Be client centred

## 3. Ensure there is congruence between your words and actions

### a) Speak and act with integrity

*“A person has integrity when there is no gap between intent and behaviour... when he or she is whole, seamless, the same—inside and out. I call this “congruence.” And it is congruence—not compliance—that will ultimately create credibility and trust.”* Stephen Covey.

If you say one thing but act in a different way, it becomes obvious that you are not authentic and customers will struggle to trust you.

Integrity is doing what we said we would do, when we said we would do it, and the way we said we would do it.

When we fail to keep our promises, integrity calls us to own our behaviour and apologise.

## **b) Act with courage**

Being honest, open and sincere, admitting when we make a mistake, are all behaviours that build trust. Therefore, we can say that the key requirement for building trust is courage. The courage to be a person characterised by true integrity, someone who can be trusted, someone who owns their behaviour.

## **c) Show respect**

As you connect with someone, it is also important that you honour the person by respecting what they share with you. If they open-up to you, don't make them regret it. Criticism, sarcasm, or jokes may make the person feel judged for what they have shared with you.

## **d) Be true to your values**

Authenticity also develops when we are true to our core values. If we find ourselves compromising our values or defaulting to shadow or negative values, we lose authenticity.

Everyone has values, but very few people are consciously aware of their values, or of what their most important values are. BCT has an inspiring training course on how to establish what your core values are.

## **e) Be sincere**

Remember, if you are in sales, you are still selling to people, and people tend to buy from people they connect with and trust. Sincerity is a must. You can think of sincerity in terms of honesty, spontaneity, genuineness, which well up from your genuine self. In sales, we seek to be professional and polished, but if we remove sincerity and replace it with overlays of "sales-speak" or patronizing talk, we have lost sincerity, and jeopardized trust.

# **E. BUILD RAPPORT BY BEING "OTHER" (CLIENT) CENTRED**

*"Self-centred people have only one topic to talk about...THEMSELVES". Stef Harder*

## **1. Treat people the way they want to be treated**

The Golden Rule may be "old school," but is an essential element of Social Intelligence. It is important to treat others the way you would like to be treated. An extension of the golden rule is to treat people the way they want to be treated. This shows you have listened to them and have their best interests at heart.

When you treat people authentically and according to their interests, you build trust and rapport is enhanced.

Once again, it is not about you, but about the client. Many sales people are self-focused and fail to build rapport because they are not client focussed. This is a fatal error in sales.

**Exercise**

What are three main ways you prefer to be treated by sales people?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Discuss with several others the types of behaviours by sales people that really turn you off. What are the major “must never do behaviours”?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Show a genuine interest in the person**

It will become obvious very quickly if you are not interested in the client as a person. If you are treating them as a sales target/object, it is unlikely you will make a sale. If you are not genuinely interested, then should you be selling?



Be interested in them as a person. Try to connect with their world, their way of thinking, their struggles and challenges.

**a) Build the relationship**

If our goal is to connect with people, it is important that we become experts in building relationships. It is about creating a dialogue, and not just simply talking at the customer.

**b) Listen and remember**

Genuine interest requires the listening skills taught in this seminar, and remembering the key details the person shares with you.

One way of focussing your interest on the person is to visualize giving a 3-minute talk to an audience about this person.

**c) Seek common ground**

What areas do you have in common with the client? Work? Interests? Hobbies? Sport? Friends? Background? Stage of life?

Rapport can be established as you find this common ground and is a key rapport building skill.

### **3. Share something of yourself**

When we share who we are, it opens the door to others being vulnerable. Intimacy, (here we are not talking about romantic intimacy but relationships that are connected and trusting), involves allowing the person to see into your life. This does not mean gushingly sharing everything with someone. That would be inappropriate and overwhelming. It involves the gradual sharing of yourself. Intimacy is “into-me-you-see.”

**a) Be open to share something of who you are**

We do this carefully, not seeking to dominate the conversation. We can share our experience of similar things the client is experiencing.

**b) Create “safety” for your client to share**

*“Be curious, not judgmental” (Walt Whitman)*

This is a significant factor in building relationships. People usually do not share themselves because they are worried about the consequences. Maybe they fear being judged. We can learn much from John Powell’s famous quote:

*“Why am I afraid to tell you who I am? I am afraid to tell you who I am, because, if I tell you who I am, you may not like who I am, and it’s all I have.” John Powell*

When someone shares with you, validate and accept them.

### **4. Develop the skill of including others**

Inclusivity is the ability to welcome and include others in a conversation. In sales and team work, this sometimes involves including a group of people. We can include people by:



- Our open body language
- Eye contact
- Asking for someone's opinion
- Being assertive and acknowledging the person
- By facilitating others joining in
- Using the communication skills above

### **Body stance and inclusivity.**

By the way we stand, we either include or exclude people in a conversation. When two people are talking and facing each other they usually form a rectangle and a "closed space" between them. By opening our posture, we can acknowledge and include other people in the conversation.

## **5. Be humble**

*"Humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."* C.S. Lewis

*"There is a thin line between confidence and arrogance...it's humility. Confidence smiles, arrogance smirks."*

A humble person does  
not consider themselves  
to be better than others.

A dictionary definition describes humility in terms of "freedom from pride or arrogance." (Merriman-Webster).

Patrick Lencioni in his brilliant book on teamwork (*The Ideal Team Player*), suggests that there are two different types of people who lack humility.

Firstly, there are the brash overly arrogant people who make everything about them. These people tend to be boastful and soak up attention. This kind of person finds it difficult to build genuine rapport because they are not "client centred" but self-centred. It is all about them.

The second type of person who lacks humility tends to downplay their talents and contributions, and on the surface, they may appear to be humble. However, their lack of understanding of their own worth and ability is also a violation of true humility. Such people

in a sales environment may not advocate for their product, or “sell” to the client, and may be rebuffed by the slightest negative response. They are insecure about who they are and about their abilities.

**Being humble involves being willing to learn from the other person.**

When we seek to learn from others, people feel valued and not just an object you are trying to sell something to. It shows the person you are genuinely interested in them and you are not too proud to admit you have a lot to learn. Knowing what they need and how they think helps you create solutions with them.

**a) Why humility can be elusive**

- Believing that to be humble is to be weak.
- Believing that Alpha personalities are necessary for selling
- Believing that type A personalities must have such strong self-belief that there is no room for humility
- Feelings of insecurity and fear.

**b) How to display humility**

- Cultivate a desire to learn from others
- Be client centred
- Take ownership of mistakes
- Admit when you do not have the answer
- Be able to laugh at yourself
- Be real
- Admit that you are not perfect

## Exercises

1. What does humility look like in a sales setting?

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2. Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to your actions when you are with customers.

Scale:

3 = Usually   2 = Sometimes   1 = Rarely

My customers/clients would say:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. I am genuinely interested in them and their business

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. I compliment or praise them without hesitation

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. I listen and I am responsive to what they say

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. I give them credit for their successes

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. I readily admit my mistakes and apologise graciously

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. I serve them ahead of serving myself

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. I actively seek to learn something from each client

3. In which of these areas would you most likely want to improve?

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## F. BUILD RAPPORT BY PRACTICING EMPATHY

*“Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eye for an instant?” Henry David Thoreau*

*“Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality.” Ian McEwan*

We have already seen that empathy is a central aspect of rapport building. It is such an important topic we need to take time to study it in a little more depth.

The Oxford Dictionary defines empathy as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.” When we empathize, we show that we connect with how the other person is feeling. This helps the other person feel understood. The focus is on understanding the other person’s feelings from their point of view. Empathy is often confused with sympathy, a feeling of pity or compassion for someone.



Empathy is the doorway to connection. As we empathize with the customer’s situation, problems and challenges, we build trust.

Empathic communication, as Steven Covey argues, is central to improving our relationships. The good news is that we can become more empathic. Our brains are surprisingly malleable or “plastic,” enabling us to revive our neural circuitry.

There are two types of empathy we should keep in mind.

- |                   |   |  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Cognitive empathy | { | • Seeing the world from someone else's perspective |
| Affective empathy | { | • Sharing or mirroring another person's emotions   |

Both aspects of empathy are important.

How can you become more empathic?

## 1. Appreciate that empathy is central to being human

Neuro-scientists have identified a ten-section empathy circuit in the brain that makes it possible for us to see other people's perspectives and connect to their feelings. This circuitry may be undeveloped but can be brought to life.



To be empathic, is to be truly human.

## 2. Step into the other person's shoes

To empathize, we need to firstly listen to the other person so that we know what the other person's situation really is. Listening opens the door to then imagining ourselves as the other person in their situation.

The way to put yourself in someone else's shoes is firstly to listen, and then to imagine.

When you are with clients, try to put yourself in their shoes. What are the business challenges they are facing? What would it feel like if you were managing their business? What would it feel like to be in their shoes? When we empathize we acknowledge someone's humanity, individuality and perspectives.

## 3. Practice curiosity

We can foster curiosity by listening, asking great questions, and taking off our emotional masks. As we practice seeking to understand where people come from we begin to understand what makes them tick. Earlier assumptions we have made about them may well be overturned as we listen.

## 4. Consider the benefits of empathy

- We enjoy true connections with people
- Trust grows
- Possibility of friendship emerges
- Research shows that if we care about others we are more likely to be happy
- Empathy often results in creative thinking, enabling you to see challenges and perspectives that would otherwise remain hidden.

## Exercise

How could you use empathy to bridge the divide between yourself and your customers?

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## G. BUILD RAPPORT THROUGH GENUINE AFFIRMATION

*“The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. I had noticed how the humblest, and at the same time most balanced and capacious minds, praised most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised least.” C.S. Lewis*

It is easy to be cynical and to spot the faults in others. (Someone has called this the lowest gift of discernment). Yet, genuinely affirming the positive qualities and contribution of others is a powerful way to develop trust and strengthen relationships.

When you affirm, people don't use flattery, but be genuine, sincere and authentic. Affirm the positive qualities you see in the person or their business. Find something you can genuinely complement them on.

*No one receives enough encouragement or affirmation.*

### Exercise

1. What is the difference between authentic affirmation and flattery?

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2. How can you make affirmation a priority on your team and as part of every sales conversation?

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## **BUILD RAPPORT AND THEN SELL TO YOUR CLIENT**

Some sales people may spend all their time building rapport and then fail to present their product or service and close a sale.

Great sales people develop a finely tuned sense of when rapport has been established sufficiently so they can then move to the next stage of telling their amazing sales story, and showing the customer how their product can meet a need, solve a problem, and add value to their business.

If all we do is build rapport, we have only completed the foundational stage of a sales conversation.

The time frame for rapport building is often dictated by the customer. If you only have five minutes with a client, you will need to quickly establish basic rapport, ask great questions to establish their needs, and then make your presentation (your sales story, the challenge or problem your product can address, the value you add, what differentiates your product).

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

- A. The first step toward building rapport begins **before you meet** your customer and involves planning and preparation.
- B. The second step involves creating **a good first impression**.
- C. The third step involves **skilful communication so you truly connect** with your customer.
- D. The next step is to **be authentic** and true to who you are.
- E. The fifth step in building rapport is learning to **be “other centred” or “client centred.”**
- F. The sixth step in building rapport is to **practice empathy** that leads to a deeper connection of trust.
- G. The last step is to **always affirm** your customers.

## AUTHENTICALLY BUILDING TRUST AND RAPPORT WORKSHOP REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is rapport
  - a) Something you are born with
  - b) A skill only for people in sales
  - c) Something you can learn
  - d) None of the above
  
2. Communication with written or spoken words is known as which of the following?
  - a) Verbal
  - b) Nonverbal
  - c) Oral
  - d) None of the above
  
3. Humans communicate in which of the following ways?
  - a) With words
  - b) Through body language
  - c) All of these
  - d) Through art
  
4. Approximately how much of our communication is nonverbal?
  - a) 10%
  - b) 70%
  - c) 50%
  - d) 90%
  
5. Which of the following communicates that a person is listening?
  - a) Leaning away from the speaker
  - b) Crossing arms across the chest
  - c) Looking away from the speaker
  - d) Leaning forward towards the speaker
  
6. Rephrasing and repeating back to a speaker what you understand her to have said is known as which of the following?
  - a) Projection
  - b) Matching or mirroring
  - c) Feedback
  - d) None of these

7. A listening technique in which the listener stays focused on the present and reflects back what the speaker has said is known as which of the following?
- a) Reactive listening
  - b) Engaged listening
  - c) Rapport listening
  - d) Active listening
8. Which of the following is true of effective communication?
- a) All of these
  - b) It creates trust
  - c) It helps to create new business
  - d) It enhances workplace relationships
9. Which of the following is NOT true of authentic communication?
- a) It builds trust
  - b) It allows you to choose how much personal information you disclose
  - c) It requires you to disclose all your personal details
  - d) All of the above
10. Empathy is best described as:
- a) Something we show at funerals
  - b) Analysis of what the other person is thinking
  - c) Seeing things through the other person's eyes
  - d) Being overly emotional
11. Which of the following are aspects of showing empathy?
- a) Stepping into the other person's shoes
  - b) The ability to see the other person's perspective
  - c) Pushing for a sale regardless of what the person is telling us
  - d) The ability to connect with the other person's feelings
12. Which of the following are elements of being authentic?
- a) Being true to my values
  - b) Sharing who I am with people
  - c) Being honest and real
  - d) Exaggerating the benefits of a product in order to get a sale
13. Being humble involves:
- a) Letting people walk over me

- b) Putting myself down
- c) Being client centred and focused on their needs
- d) Having low self esteem

14. Which of the following is true of affirmation?

- a) Saying anything to make the other person feel good
- b) Affirmation is the same as flattery
- c) False affirmation is better than no affirmation
- d) Praising good things that you see in the other person or in their behaviour

15. Which of the following is NOT true of being client centred?

- a) Being client centred involves understanding the interests of the other person
- b) Being client centred means not enthusiastically selling your product or service
- c) Your interests must come first
- d) Being client centred is a skill reserved for therapists

## BUILDING RAPPORT THROUGH PHONE CALLS

Most sales people will need to make calls as part of sourcing new customers. It is common today to hear sales people say that the day of “cold calling” potential customers by phone, is over. The opposite is true, and making great phone calls is a skill we can all acquire.



Some sales people would rather speak in front of thousands than make a phone call to a prospective client. We can market, use SEO technology, blog, podcast, advertise, and any number of other great tools, but the telephone call remains a central tool for all who wish to sell. How can we build rapport through phone calls?

### 1. Reframe

We need to change our mindset, our “negative stories” about calling prospective customers. What runs through your mind when you think about making these calls?

Reframe: You are offering the potential client a product or service that can help them succeed. You can help this prospective client. You have something of real value. As one expert says, “once we see ourselves as professional problem solvers, this perspective should make us want to call target customers.” With a positive mindset we can build rapport over the phone.

### 2. Be aware of your voice tone, tempo, and breathing

It starts with the right mindset. It is impossible to make an effective phone call if you are anxious, uncomfortable, embarrassed or pushy. How you sound is crucial to effective phone calls. The other person cannot see your facial expressions, how you are dressed, your impressive office, or your sales products, all they hear is the sound of your voice, and the few words you speak.

Avoid the temptation to put on a “sales voice” and to not be yourself. It is best to be yourself, and use a comfortable, casual style as you speak. Be as authentic as possible.

Remember: You have an important problem-solving product or service that can add value and profitability to the potential customer.

### Exercise

Practice making a sales call and have a friend critique you. You will need three people for this exercise. One-person calls, another receives the call, a third person critiques. The role play scenario: You are calling a prospective client about the “Whiz Bang Water Filter”

you are selling. Firstly, construct a story and think through how you would present, then make a practice phone call while your friend critiques you. Change roles and practice with other pretend products such as, cardboard boxes, office lighting, bathroom supplies, coffee, etc.

### **3. Develop a basic “run sheet” for phone calls**

What are your major talking points and what is a helpful flow for a conversation? How can you ensure that you remain “client focussed” and address the real needs of the customer?

Writing up a phone call brief can be a big help, but it is not a script to be read to the customer.

Think about why you are making the call? What is the goal? What are the best outcomes? How can you build rapport? If we know where we are going we can create a road map that will guide us. A great goal is to be able to set up a face to face sales meeting.

### **4. Think about your opening sentences**

The first few sentences are very important and can be very awkward for sales people. Many people open with “how are you today,” others say, “Have I caught you at a good time.” One seasoned sales professional uses the phrase, Hi \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_, let me steal a minute.” Then he says, “I am the head of \_\_\_\_\_.” This helps the person position who you are.

### **5. Have a great short story to share**

The next phase of the phone conversation should contain a well-crafted statement covering a few aspects of - problems solved, opportunities gained, results achieved, by your product or service. Maybe include a differentiator or two.

The key is to keep this focussed and short. You will not have time to say much so it must be powerful.

### **6. Ask for a face to face meeting**

One famous salesman, Mike Weinberg, suggests that we should be prepared to ask for this meeting three times. He also suggests that we use the words “visit,” “fit” and “value.” “I would like to visit you and see if our business is a good fit for you and whether we can add some real value to your business.”

## 7. Rapport and Voice Mail

Another important way of building rapport is through using voice mail in an effective way. A large percentage of sales calls may go to voice mail and it is important to leave a great message.

- Prepare what you will say
- Have a positive attitude
- Be warm
- Smile as you speak
- Watch your voice tone and pace
- Introduce yourself and an aspect of your “story”
- Keep it short
- Ask them to call back and leave your number

## BUILD ON RAPPORT WITH SALES ESSENTIALS

Why do some sales people fail?

- Is it because they don't have the latest technology?
- Is it because there is a lot of competition?
- Is it because of domestic economic factors? Or,
- Is it because they don't pay attention to the essential principles and practices of successful selling?

Often, sales people fail because they failed to build rapport. Without rapport, it is difficult to sell. While paying attention to rapport building we should also keep in mind some of the sales essentials. We do want to sell and we do want to find new business and to also increase our business with existing clients. We will not just build rapport, we also will encourage the customer to buy from us.

Sales essentials include:

- Undertaking due diligence. Discovery always precedes presentation; you must do your homework.
- The ability to connect with customers and build authentic trust. Selling in its simplest form is about recognising the needs of a prospective client and then demonstrating how the salesperson's product or service meets the customer's needs.
- Appreciating the necessity of being curious, asking questions, and listening.
- The ability to find a problem to solve, or an opportunity to add value.
- The ability to see the potential sale through the eyes of the customer.
- The understanding that the client or potential customer owes you nothing. You are there to serve them.
- Having a compelling sales story and presentation. A compelling, differentiating and engaging story is essential if a sales person is to win new business.
- Understanding the importance of gaining permission each step of the way during the sales conversation.
- The ability to close the sale.
- Appreciating that there are numerous prospective customers who have needs that the salesperson's business/product/solution can meet.
- Knowing how to identify new customers and target the right businesses. The ability to engage new customers through proactive sales strategies.