

## Rapport – The Essential Communication Tool

Rapport comes from the French word for “relationship”. Is it any wonder that rapport is *essential* for good communication in the workplace? But what exactly is rapport? What does it do? How does one build rapport?

First off – rapport is all about *trust* and *understanding*. It is not necessarily about agreement. This means people can see each other’s perspective – even acknowledge a dramatically different point of view – and not agree with it. There is trust that each person can be heard and trust that each will be treated with respect.

Think of rapport as greasing the wheels of communication. When we have rapport with another person, we are more likely to freely communicate with them. That communication minimizes problems, or when problems do occur, it helps us reach resolution. Contrast that with relationships lacking rapport. There is little communication or there is even destructive communication.

Building rapport is not a fancy or complicated skill, but it is easier with some people and much more difficult with others. We all probably have some relationships that could benefit from more rapport. Here are some key tips for building rapport:

- Show interest in the other person
  - Ask non-threatening questions
  - Actively listen
  - Rephrase to show understanding
- Uncover commonalities
  - Find things that you share in common
  - Avoid “one-upping”
- Disclose some personal things
  - Go beyond “shop talk”
  - Let others see your humanness
- Watch non-verbal communication
  - Make eye contact
  - Smile!
  - Align your body language

- **Take some time**
  - **Avoid always rushing into business topics**
  - **Make building rapport a part of every day**

**So remember to build rapport in your relationships and you will see it enhance trust, understanding, and communication in the workplace.**

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