

*the eBook on*

# Building Instant Rapport



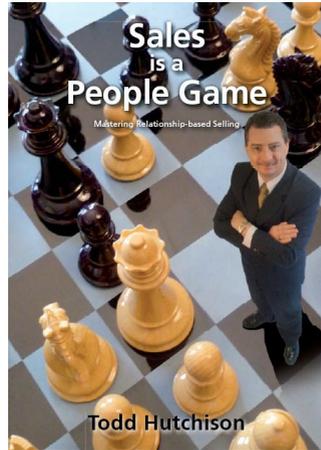
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## Building Instant Rapport

When you make a connection with another human being, we call this 'being in rapport' or 'having good rapport'. 'Rapport' is the word used for representing a harmonious relationship, and reflects our level of likeability and affinity with another person. It is essential for a salesperson to build and sustain rapport with their prospect to create a bond. This will facilitate a relationship that maximises the potential gain for open, direct and honest communication, and most importantly, establish a foundation of trust that is so fundamental for sales.

In 1971, Albert Mehrabian's research concluded that there were three elements in any face-to-face communication: words, tone of voice and body language. He found that our liking for a person who puts the message across is weighted as:

- 7% for the words we use (verbal);
- 38% for the tone of voice we use (vocal); and
- 55% for the body language we convey (visual).

This means that our body language is the dominant factor that impacts on our ability to be liked, and therefore offers a great opportunity for a salesperson to build rapport in a short amount of time by focusing on the posture of their own body and that of the prospect. If our body posture is similar to that of the prospect while we are engaged in conversation, we are regarded at a body language level to be 'in rapport'. When both body postures are distinctly different, there is a chance that the individuals are not in rapport, which could be an indication of their dislike for one another, a difference in opinion or a challenge to the relationship.

You cannot pass judgement on someone's body language from a single gesture. There should be at least three indicators, called a cluster, before it should be assumed that the relationship is positive or negative.

In reviewing body language it is important not to jump to conclusions. Be aware of the context to the discussion, the influences of the environment and the time factor that places pressure on people. Take the following example that shows the important to identifying a cluster of indicators:



A person with crossed arms may just be comfortable, cold, or could be indicating they are closed (to the conversation), aggressive or being protective.

At this stage, the crossed arms are not enough of an indicator of the person's state to be able to make an accurate judgement.

When the arms are crossed and the body is turned and leaning forward the pose becomes more aggressive.

As there are only two bodily indicators, there is still not enough information about the person's state to be able to make an accurate judgement.



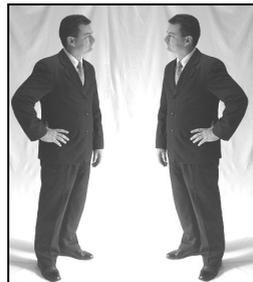


Now the eyes have become squinted (the eye brows are pointed downward and the skin under the eye is lifted), the body is angled and slightly forward, and the arms are crossed, we have a cluster of indicators to suggest this person is potentially hostile.

You already would be instinctively picking up on these signals.

In addition, consciously adjusting your body language to encourage rapport becomes very important when approaching an angry, aggressive or frustrated person, when mediating between two parties whose relationship has broken down, or to speed up the process of assisting someone when the time frame is critical. During other times, you will notice that the following techniques are often applied without any conscious awareness, and that you do this automatically.

To be in rapport with a prospect at a body language level, the salesperson can simply either match or mirror the prospect's body language. The picture on the left in the following diagram is an example of matching and the picture on the right is an example of mirroring.



Matching is where a person copies the posture of the another, so that each side of the body has the same position, either totally or partly. In the previous picture on the left, the body posture of the two people is the same. This is an example of a total match as the person on the left has their left hand on their hip, and the person on the right has their left hand on their hip. Mirroring is similar to matching, but it is positioning oneself as a mirror image of the other person, as opposed to a same limb-to-limb copy. In the previous picture on the right, the person on the left has their right hand on their hip, which is mirrored by the other person's left hand on their hip. It resembles looking at a mirror image.

Sometimes it is not possible to fully match or mirror a person, and therefore a partial match may achieve a similar level of rapport. For example, the salesperson may not be flexible enough to cross their legs in the same way as the prospect, hence by crossing at the ankles a partial match is achieved. Partial matching is when the limbs are basically doing the same thing, but not to the same extent. The next image below shows crossed arms, however the hand positions are different.



The next image shows one person crossing their hands and the other has their arms crossed. This is a less obvious partial match.



Partial matching may also include only one half of the body, such as the example below where only the top half of their bodies is matching (although their hands are in different positions).



In the example below, one person has their legs crossed at the ankle level, whereas the other person has them crossed at the knees.



You will also notice that in all the previous sitting positions that the general body postures angle are copying one another and they are both in a good position to allow eye contact. Crossed arms and legs are still indicators that would be best avoided to favour more of an open posture. The example below shows only the hands crossing in a more open posture.



Leading is the term used for testing the level of rapport that may exist. For example, if two people were automatically matching or mirroring one another, it would be assumed that they are connecting at a body language level. To test this, if one person changes their position, then the other person would follow suit (such as both of the people folding their arms, and then one drops their arms and the other soon follows). You would then have proof of evidence of good rapport. You have also effectively led the person to a new position.

This is demonstrated in there steps on the next page.

**Stage 1:** this is where two people are either in a mirroring or matching position.



**Stage 2:** where one person changes position. In this example, the person on the right has dropped their arms into a crossed hand pose.



**Stage 3:** when the other person soon changes their position (an automatic response to try and match or mirror to keep rapport). In this case they have again adopted a matching or mirroring position denoting a high rapport exists.



Breaking rapport is also possible by doing the reverse to matching and mirroring. You may have noticed when you are in conversation with someone and they break eye contact and watch something else around you, you instantly know you have lost them (at some level). A more subtle approach would be to change body language to be in a different pose to them to break the rapport, or turning the body away from them.

Some people may be of the opinion that matching and mirroring is a form of manipulation, however it should be realised that when you are automatically in rapport with someone you instinctively and unconsciously do the same thing. Furthermore, these techniques will generally only be required when you are in a potentially hostile situation or where the rapport is lost in a selling session and the salesperson has to take action to provide a stronger basis for re-establishing a healthy relationship.

Now imagine if a person had to deal with an angry individual who is demonstrating multiple negative body language gestures. They are best to adopt a matching or mirroring position and then, on creating rapport, test it by changing positions, leading the person to a more neutral body language posture.

They can effectively influence the angry person's emotional state by changing their own physiology and leading the person into a positive body language position that is likely to result in a more positive emotional state.

The same applies for the speed of voice, which can be sped up or slowed down in the same way. Simply speak at the same speed as the prospect and then gradually alter the speed of your voice. The prospect should automatically follow your lead if you are in rapport. This explains how a therapist can bring the state of a fast speaking, anxiety-based person down to a calmer demeanour by matching their style and then changing the speed of their own voice and breathing pattern where the client does the same.

In summary, there is no greater way to build personal relationships than spending quality face-to-face time with them. When rapport naturally exists, our body language will match or mirror, however taking proactive action on establishing similar body language can speed the process of likeability.

It is the authenticity of the person who sincerely wants to brighten the life and experiences of another that will become evident not only through their body language, but reflective in the intent of their conversations and bodily actions.

## Todd Hutchison

Todd Hutchison is an international business consultant and behavioural specialist. He is an accredited trainer, certified speaking professional and certified Master Coach..

Recognised as a pre-eminent leader by the Western Australia Business News, Todd was awarded the Rising Star award from the National Speakers Association of Australia and is a Fellow of the Leadership Western Australia program.



He has sixteen qualifications, including a Masters in Business and Administration from Deakin University, and a Masters in Commerce from Curtin University of Technology. In addition, he is a certified Master Coach, Master Project Coach, Project Management Professional, Master Project Director and Master Practitioner of Neuro Linguistics Programming.

While working as an academic Director of a health technology research centre, he began his passionate pursuit of understanding human dynamics. Todd continues his studies in neuroscience, psychology and coaching to expand the understanding of human behaviour and its relevance to personal and team performance. He is a founding Director of the 'Institute of Mind and Behavioural Sciences'.

Having successfully established a number of businesses, achieved awards for his performance, Todd has demonstrated that success starts with your thinking, and is a living example of how you can follow your dreams.