

## The People Connection: Creating Instant Rapport with Anyone You Meet

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Have you ever wondered why it is we hit it off instantly with some people and never seem to click with others? Why is it that there are some people we feel as if we've known forever and others we can't seem to relate to even after years of contact? When we truly connect with others, we become actively involved in conversations. We become more than nodding heads or worse..."nodding off heads"! Our involvement hinges on our strengthening our abilities to be attentive when conversing with others, particularly in an interviewing situation.

Ever have a situation where you're so excited about presenting an idea to someone else and the response to your idea is less than enthusiastic? What are you saying to yourself at that point? Does it sound something like, "That guy must be nuts. This is the best idea he's ever going to hear?" How about, "Maybe I didn't make myself very clear..." The truth of the matter is when we impose our own expectations onto others, we put others in a win/lose situation: Either our conversational partners respond in ways that are acceptable to us or they don't. If they do, we feel we've connected. If they don't, we think the other person either has a problem or that we only need to restate our idea in order for our partner to be overwhelmed or blown away with our brilliance.

Let's take a break here. When we're attentive to others, we don't impose anything on them. We allow people to be who they are and don't take offense at their responses. In fact, if we're tuned in we have tremendous opportunity to explore what's important to our partners and find ways to meet their needs.

Most people would agree that trust is at the heart of all good relationships. One way to promote trust is to provide attentiveness in ways that are noticeable and welcoming.

I remember a situation a while back when I presented a proposal to a prospect. I had put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into the proposal in the hopes of securing a customer service training contract. My driving time to the prospect's location was two hours each way.

As I handed the proposal to the prospect to review, she failed to stop her work on her computer and didn't even pick the proposal up! I thought at the time this behavior was a little strange but believed she would soon stop her work and look over my offering. She never did! In fact, not only did she continue typing, she fielded questions from people who were simultaneously popping into her office during my visit.

Somehow miraculously I ended up getting the contract but ONLY by realizing the value of my prospect's time. By modifying my approach, I was able to review the proposal out loud and review it quickly. When I finished reading, the prospect turned and said, "Where do I sign?"

By all accounts, the prospect had given me NO attention. In her mind, she was listening to me all along, but unless we're mind readers we run the risk of being perceived as self serving. Forego the risk; if you want to be remembered in a positive light, give others your attention.

**Ask yourself:**

- Do I make eye contact when I'm speaking or listening to others?
- Do I focus less on myself and more on others?
- Do I avoid preoccupation?
- Do I ask for more information when I don't understand?
- Do I put myself in the other person's shoes?

If you can honestly say that whether it's your customer, a boss, or a future employer that you value that individual beyond their title or role, you're on your way to building long-lasting rapport. Giving takes many forms and what others crave from us is the attention, perception, and responsiveness that few others provide.

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