

5 Tips for Building Trust and Rapport

By John Boe

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Have you ever had a sale that didn't close and you weren't sure why? Chances are you lost the sale because you didn't establish sufficient trust and rapport with your prospect. Once you have developed trust and rapport you've actually got the hard part behind you and you're probably going to make a sale! For you see, it really doesn't matter how knowledgeable you are about your product or how skilled you might be at closing, unless you have earned your prospects confidence, you are not going to make the sale - period. The bottom line here is that people want to do business with salespeople that they relate to and that they feel understand their needs. Obviously, the challenge and importance of developing trust and rapport will escalate in direct relationship to the price of your product or service.

1. Be mindful of your body language gestures and remember to keep them positive! Unfold your arms, uncross your legs, show your palms and remember to smile. Develop awareness and sensitivity to your prospect's body language. An effective listener notices all aspects of communication and is aware of voice tone, facial expression, repetitive movements, and muscle tension. Watch for inconsistencies between your prospect's spoken word and their nonverbal communication. Rely on the nonverbal as a much more accurate indicator of intent. By understanding your prospect's body language you will minimize perceived sales pressure and know when it is appropriate to close the sale.

2. Create harmony! "Matching and Mirroring" your prospect's body language gestures will psychologically cause them to identify with you. The power behind this principle is firmly grounded in the precept that people trust people that they believe are similar to them. Matching and mirroring is an unconscious mimicry by which one person tells another that he is in agreement with their ideas and attitudes. Likewise, studies have shown that when people disagree they subconsciously mismatch their body language gestures. You want to be careful not to be too obvious when you are consciously matching someone because it will be perceived as manipulative if you don't do it naturally. An effective way to begin matching is to subtly nod your head in agreement when your prospect nods their head.

3. Remember to make eye contact and listen with genuine interest. You are certain to create an unfavorable impression if you give your prospect the idea that you are not fully present in the conversation. Unfortunately, we are often busy game-planning our response instead of truly listening to what is being said. I suggest that you occasionally repeat verbatim what your prospect says - especially their key words or phrases. Restating in your own words serves to clarify communication, but you deepen rapport when you use their words.

4. During your needs analysis interview, I recommend that you ask open-ended, clarifying questions with who, where, what, when and how. Open-ended questions will require your prospect to give in-depth responses. Become an active listener. While it is important to educate your prospect about your product or service, as a general rule you should listen more than you talk. Keep your attention focused on your prospect and avoid the temptation to interrupt and dominate the conversation. The quickest way to destroy trust and rapport is to interrupt another person while they are speaking. If you do interrupt, minimize the damage by apologizing and ask them to please continue.

5. Dress and act professionally. While it may seem unfair, we are judged on our appearance. Research indicates that people form a lasting impression of us within the first five minutes. Be personable but not overly familiar. If appropriate, occasionally call your prospect by their first name. The sweetest sound to the human ear is the sound of our own name.

John Boe, based in Monterey, CA, helps companies recruit, train and motivate top-quality people. To view his online Video Demo or to have John Boe speak at your next event, visit www.johnboe.com or call (831) 375-3668.

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