How to develop trust and rapport

Overview

We build rapport when we develop mutual trust, develop friendship and affinity with someone. Building rapport can be incredibly beneficial to us both professionally and personally – it helps us establish good interpersonal relationships, and this can open many doors for us, save us time on needless conflict and give us great peace of mind.

Have you ever known people who have a knack for connecting with others? No matter who they meet, they manage to create a sense of trust and understanding within minutes.

It doesn't matter what industry you're in or what position you hold – knowing how to build rapport can bring you countless opportunities. After all, when you have rapport with someone, he or she will usually want to help you succeed.

By being yourself, genuinely friendly, taking the attention away from yourself, showing real interest, finding common ground and giving genuine compliments are all tried and tested formulas for building trust and rapport.

Building trust can be considered as a state of harmonious understanding with another individual or group. Building rapport is the process of developing that connection.

The process

Let’s start by exploring building an emotional/trust bank account, introduced to us by the late Dr. Stephen Covey. We all know how our regular bank account works. We make deposits, save up money, and when we need that money later, we withdraw it. An emotional bank account is an account of trust instead of money. It’s an account based on how safe you feel with another person. Covey identifies six ways to make deposits (or reduce withdrawals) of trust into the emotional/trust bank account you have with them:

1. Understanding the Individual. This means listening intently to what the other person is saying and empathising with how they may feel. It’s important to care for others and act with kindness toward them. Empathy is different to sympathy. When you give empathy, you listen without any judgement, listen to what they are saying and understand how they are feeling. With sympathy you agree with the other person.
2. Keeping Commitments. How do you feel when someone arrives right on time when you have a meeting? How about when people simply do what they say they will do? You build up an emotional reserve by keeping your commitments.
3. Clarifying Expectations. We are not mind readers, and yet we consistently expect others to know what we expect of them. Communicating our expectations can help create a higher level of trust. When we ask for what we want, and we get it, we can then trust a little more.
4. Attending to the Little Things. Don’t you find that the little things tend to become the BIG things when they do not receive our attention? Doing the little things is how we honour and show respect for others. Small kindnesses, a smile, a little extra effort, a hug, doing something you didn’t “have” to are the things that build trust.
5. Showing Personal Integrity. Integrity is the moral floor upon which trusting relationships are built. When we operate with sound moral character, it makes it so easy for others to trust us.
6. Apologising When We Make a Withdrawal. We will make mistakes, it’s part of life, but when you see you have violated trust, sincerely apologising is how we make a deposit to counteract the damage we have done.

When your trust level is high, because you’ve made lots of deposits, communication is almost effortless. You can be yourself, and others understand and appreciate you. Then, when you make mistakes or offend someone unexpectedly, you draw on that reserve and the relationship still maintains a solid level of trust, albeit a little less.

Let’s also look at some other important things you can consider to build trust. Egoless leadership is based on broad concepts of confidence, trust, and engagement. Its focus is on future capabilities, where management and employee potential, not achievement, is the new performance metric. Egoless leaders put the needs of the team/organisation ahead of their own, and act in a way that will serve the team first and foremost rather than themselves.

Random acts of kindness is something else that is very powerful. Write, draw, make, or buy something encouraging for a colleague who's experiencing difficulties – a hand-written note will work wonders. Get to work early and leave a piece of fruit at each person's desk. Bring a colleague/your team a coffee or tea. Introduce yourself to someone new. Simple compliments, recognition and ‘catching people doing things right’ are simple and effective.

Know when you need to be a ‘giver’, when you need to put yourself first and be a ‘taker’ and when you need to be a ‘matcher’. A matcher is somebody who tries to maintain an even balance of give and take. If I help you, I expect you to help me in return. In some respects’ they keep score of exchanges, so that everything is fair and just.

Research suggests that givers are overrepresented at the top as well as the bottom of most success metrics. The success of givers and the fall of takers is also driven by matchers. A matcher is somebody who really believes in a just world. Of course, a persistent taker violates that belief in a just world. Matchers cannot stand to see takers get ahead by taking advantage of other people. The data on this suggests that matchers will often go around trying to punish them, often by gossiping and spreading negative reputational information.

Break the ice and set a great first impression by using non-threatening and ‘safe topics’ for initial small-talk, avoiding talking too much about yourself, looking for shared experiences or circumstances, using appropriate humour, being conscious of your body language/non-verbal signals, making eye contact and having a **genuine** intent to show real interest in the other person.

The benefits of building trust and rapport

* It opens up employment/promotion opportunities – ‘people buy people’
* It’s a foundation for open, honest communication
* It makes conflict resolution easier
* It creates an environment for mutual understanding
* It helps create a foundation for creative problem solving
* When we have rapport and trust with another person, we can ***value*** differences rather than reject them
* It encourages people to work with you to make change happen
* It reduces stress and anxiety
* It can foster a positive environment
* It earns respect
* It boosts confidence in yourself and others

Key points

* Understand each person you are close to, what is important to **them** and make continual deposits of trust into the emotional bank account you have with them.
* Park your ego and practice endless humility
* Be kind to someone every day for the next 30-days, get into the habit of random acts of kindness
* Know when you need to give, take and match to create a just, fair and harmonious environment around you.
* Don’t take first impressions for granted, over the next 30-days every time you meet a new person, take the attention away from yourself, make eye contact, show real interest in them and relax.
* The best way to ‘come across as being friendly’ is to ‘be friendly’.





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