

Shifting Focus from "Me" to "You"

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Abstract: For building rapport, it is important not only to analyze the behavior and way of communication of others, but also be mindful of our own way of socializing with people, our manner of speech and non-verbal communication. Certain techniques are immensely valuable while socializing effectively in both personal and professional life. The first technique is that of establishing artificial time constraints, whereby we let our conversation partner know that the end to the conversation is actually close. Paying heed to non-verbal cues makes the other person feel good about himself. Talking slowly makes a person seem more credible. Sympathy or assistance theme is to make a "light", unthreatening request which does not involve cost, but which makes the other person accommodate the request. Another technique is of ego suspension, whereby one gives more priority to the wants, needs and perceptions of reality of the other individual rather than one's own. By validating others, individuals can be made to do what is wanted from them, resulting in 'win-win scenario'. Asking open-ended How? When? Why? questions strengthens emotional connection in relationships. Using minimal encouragers, emotional labeling and asking reflective questions also helps. Connecting with *Quid Pro Quo* is the art of giving introverts some information about yourself in order to make them divulge theirs. Gift giving or reciprocal altruism is about giving the other person the gift of focus. Also, essential is to manage our expectations to reduce potential disappointment. Let's make the world a better place by implementing these techniques!

Key Words: rapport, non-verbal, ego-suspension, reciprocal altruism, managing expectations.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Studies have demonstrated that individuals in the world who have deep and meaningful relationships with their loved ones, friends and acquaintances are happier than those who have considered accumulation of material wealth as their individual goal for happiness. Technology has taken rapid strides and brought the world closer together through various social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. But the one-on-one conversation, which is crucial for building rapport and meaningful interpersonal relationships, is falling prey to the convenience of simply turning off a computer when something annoying or "not right" is said by any of our numerous contacts or friends. There is a dire need to shift from "all about me" mode to "all about them" by truly focusing on others so that those around you thoroughly enjoy your company and are keen to spend more time with you. The key is to demonstrate to the other individual, "it's not all about me" and his needs and wants are of prime concern. What and how we speak to others is crucial as the "true window to our souls is our words [1]. Let your words bespeak the strength within. The following are some of the techniques which can be employed to build rapport with others:

1.1. Technique 1: Establish Artificial Time Constraints:

Whenever a stranger starts a conversation suddenly with a person, the person might feel either awkward or on guard as he instinctively perceives it as a threat, which acts as a barrier to initiate a great conversation. Hence the technique of establishing artificial time constraint is suggested. It is important to lower the threat perception, let him feel safe and comfortable by prolonging the time allotted for commencing the conversation. Grabbing the right moment for initiating a talk with an impressive question or topic in order to capture his attention is important for eliciting information from him and maintaining the flow of conversation. It is quite important to let the other person know that the end to their conversation is not too distant. Some of the artificial time constraints could be:

- I have to leave in a minute or two, my _____ is waiting for me.
- I'm getting late for _____, may I seek your opinion about something?
- I have to get back to my _____, may I ask your opinion about something?

Finally, after engaging in the conversation, the person should walk away feeling great about himself and the conversation.

1.2. Technique 2: Accommodate Non-verbal Cues:

Understanding non-verbal behavior of others and appearing non-threatening in body language and facial expressions, especially while initiating conversation with strangers are fundamental to leaving a good impression on them. Instead of standing toe to toe and seeming intimidating, it is desirable to seem accommodating by having a non-threatening body angle by standing a blade away with a slight body angle. Looking smilingly while starting a conversation grabs the other person's attention and facilitates rapport building. But is smiling enough to have another person's attention? Other methods that can be used together with smiling in order to accentuate rapport to be established. Slightly tilting your head conveys to the other person know that you trust him and have comfort with him. Also, maintaining a slightly lower chin angle can help in creating a good impression on the listener whereas a high chin angle can give the impression of looking down on him. The position of your body and the way you greet a person with handshake also matters quite a lot.

1.3. Technique 3: Slow Down Rate of Speech:

Slower rate of speech while talking determines the credibility of a speaker. Extroverted people are believed to have a higher rate of speech according to the Meyers Briggs Type Indicator based upon the work of psychologist Carl Jung. Paying attention to non-verbal cues of the voice --- pace, tempo, modulation and inclination of voice ---while speaking to others is also very important for building rapport. Speaking clearly and slowly enhances credibility of the speaker. Our personality fundamentals are profoundly impacted by genetics and demographics. But we can modify them when needed and when we choose to. We can modify our rate of speech when we choose and thus exercise our choice about our manner of interaction with the world around us. Slowing down the delivery and taking pauses can not only give time to the speaker to consider what he is going to speak but also give listener time to analyze and absorb the content of what has been told. We can become an excellent speaker regardless of our inborn characteristics that we believe might interfere and affect negatively during our speech, provided we try to modify those "problems" in us.

1.4. Technique 4: Sympathize and Assist:

People, whether they agree or not, have a natural feeling of sympathy and willingness to assist others. But then they decide to use this feeling for people as requests of others for help may threaten themselves or cost much to them. Yet, those who manage to arouse this feeling in others can get even more than just help, including a pleasing conversation. With strangers, sympathy or assistance theme can be effectively used by making a "light", unthreatening request which does not involve cost because then the other person is likely to accommodate the request for assistance as he might also need some sort of assistance later on. Tougher requests can be made only in case of close anchored bonds and relationships.

1.5. Technique 5: Suspend Ego:

One of the main barriers while building a successful rapport in interpersonal relationships is being a self-centered and egocentric. Every human being has this instinct that became natural over a period of time. Our ancient ancestors, due to the demand of harsh environments, had to be self-centered individuals in order to be able to take care of their family, food and their generations. However, today this quality of selfishness causes a lot of problems. Taking control over one's anger and ego opens a way for positive interaction and rapid rapport. Letting go of our ego is probably the hardest thing to do, but it is one of the best techniques which can be utilized for having a positive interaction and attaining rapid rapport. Usually we think that we are right and we need to correct others. This tendency to be judgmental and correct the other person ruins our chances of building rapport. It is important to suspend our ego, give a feeling of importance and comfort to the other person by not correcting him, no matter how different his opinion is from ours.

1.6. Technique 5. Validate Others:

Humans yearn for being connected to others and accepted by them. Validation foddors this need but few give it. Listening to the speaker attentively is one of the most essential factors for effective conversation and a long-lasting relationship. Yet, how we can let the other person know that we are really listening to him or her so that he or she feels encouraged to talk and gets satisfaction from the conversation? In this case, we have to confirm their speech so that they can feel what they are saying is important and that gives them an innate feeling of self-satisfaction. That is called the technique of validating others. It is essential to avoid being critical and judgmental because it makes the other person turn off and he then chooses not to continue the conversation. If a person fails to derive pleasure from what he is doing, he immediately stops doing the action right away, thus obstructing the goal of successful rapport building.

1.7. Technique 7: Ask... How? When? Why?

The emotional connect in any relationship can be solidified by knowing the "art of asking questions" [2]---- the "how, when and why" questions. Great interviewers or conversationalists ask open ended questions which can't have a simple yes or no as answer and require to be answered in more words and thought. Then the content thus provided is utilized to ask open-ended questions further about the same content. Some other beneficial techniques are:

- **Minimal encouragers** that serve as validating tools like simple head nods or verbal and non-verbal confirmations. But one should be cautious of using them excessively, which may show you as a fake and pretending listener.
- **Reflective questioning** is the technique that restates what the speaker said as a question, thus letting him know that he or she is being listened to indeed. Besides that, most people are willing to answer questions as it gives the feeling of importance to the speaker.
- **Emotional labeling** is the technique that is used as the way of showing empathy to a person experiencing some kind of emotions. An individual can make use of such situations by joining the other person's happiness or sadness, in general. In this case, the other person is ready to share what is in his or her soul with people who are ready to listen to them and experience their state together with them. Conveying progression of thought using the "feel/felt/found" [3] strategy proves to be beneficial whereby accepting the feelings expressed by the person, personally identifying with the concern and finally showing how your ideas have undergone a change can diffuse any situation.
- **Pauses** are helpful when a speaker and listener consider what they are going to speak or ask the next. Moreover, pauses allow both parties to analyze what is being told.
- **Paraphrasing and Summarizing** have almost similar roles. Paraphrasing what has been told shows the speaker that the other person has demonstrated enough interest in his speech. Secondly, the listener is also able to retain the matter of the conversation discussions later on. Basically, both the techniques serve as a clarification for the speech as the speaker corrects if there is any kind of confusion in understanding what he meant to say.

1.8. Technique 8: Connect With Quid Pro Quo:

At times you have to offer in order to secure something. Quid pro quo implies making a trade-off between giving a little information about yourself and getting some from others. This technique is usually used only in special cases like when a person figures out that the person he wants to talk to is withdrawn and wary of communicating with others. Then one should give some information about himself so as to show the other person that he is far from the purpose of threatening. Of course, it is hard for such a person to join the conversation easily, but when approached correctly and without abundant actions and talks, one can attract even that person to his conversation for the sake of building effective and long-lasting rapport. Also, this technique can be used when a speaker realizes that he has spoken too much. If he feels embarrassed as he has spoken profusely, he should tend to stop the talk, engage the listener so that he can that it is a dialogue, not a monologue. But this technique should be sparingly and sporadically used because the focus should be on your conversation partner and not on you. As long as you are using quid-pro-quo for them and not you, the conversation will be a success, rapport will be established and then compliance with requests will be easy.

1.9. Technique 9: Give Gifts (Reciprocal Altruism)

The characteristic of a mankind to like receiving gifts can be used proactively to have a pleasing conversation and strong bond of relationship with others. As a form of gratitude after having been presented a gift, most receivers try to reciprocate with gift also or at least they thank the giver and try to show some more interest and attention to him. Offering a small thing like a candy or a sanitizer can prompt a person to get engaged in conversation. Active conversationalists can make an effective use of such human nature in order to create a good reason for having a talk with others and demonstrating their sincere altruism to them. Of course, this technique has greater influence as people are indebted after such favors, hence it will lead them to initiate a talk themselves. Yet, it should be remembered that current technique is also bound with the other techniques like ego suspension.

1.10. Technique 10: Manage Expectations:

Not always do we get what we expect from others. Eventually, unfulfillment of our anticipation might disappoint us, make us feel hurt, angry, resentful and frustrated. All these feelings are not conducive for developing rapport and healthy, long-term relationships and might hinder us from trying harder to get what we want to. However, altering our expectations of particular situation, job, or in our case conversation can lead to far better results. To illustrate, if an individual wants to build a rapport with the other person by having an effective conversation, but in the end fails to do so, he should change his goal of that talk and put interests and needs of the other person atop his own as people are self-centered and they care mostly about their own desires. Understanding this concept and acting accordingly by firstly doing a favor to the person targeted, and then trying to manage his own aim would be somewhat the individual had

expected. Yet, this single technique may turn ineffective in creating a long-lasting rapport if not followed by the other nine techniques. In fact, all the opportunities one has at one's disposal must be used to convey that the conversation is not all about one's own self but about the other. Along with handling our own expectations, it is important to ensure that focal point is on the exigencies of the other person, because actually "it is not all about me" [4]. Implementation of all the above mentioned techniques in our personal and professional lives can definitely improve interpersonal relationships and make the world a better place!

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