



## Rapport Building and why it is important?

Among the key areas that differentiate top performers from average performers is an individual's ability – leader, sales person, employee, frontline or back-office – to apply Connecting Skills. Quite simply, Connecting Skills is the ability to build rapport and to establish a common connection with another person.

Most frontline employees especially in the retail or hospitality business are often trained to begin their conversations with potential customers with "small talk". The intention here is to engage another human being at a deeper level of conversation, with the goal of establishing a 'trusting' relationship. This is wonderful and righteous but unfortunately some, if not most, of the frontline employees are not interested to establish authentic relationships. Most are in a hurry to just get past the motion of things or put a tick on "Step One" done! Try this the next time a frontline employee asks "Good afternoon, how are you?" when you walk into the outlet – You respond with a frown or downcast look, sigh, and then say "I am having a really lousy day!" Observe the employee's reaction! My observations:

- Pretend they didn't hear me, so no response
- "Oh!" ... pause, silence ... "Is there something you are looking for?"
- Discomfort, uneasiness and not knowing how to react whilst trying to maintain a smile

All is not completely lost. Occasionally, you find a gem, someone who genuinely empathizes and connects with you. "Oh dear, I'm sorry to hear that! What happened?"

People open up to share their inner thoughts and emotions only when they are comfortable with the other person. If employees or customers do not open up, how can you tell what is hindering their performance or what are they looking for in the product or service. Without such deep intention information, how can the leader be effective in coaching and supporting, how can the sales person become a problem-solver?

Top performers use information gathered from these "small talks" to identify employees' root issues or to understand customers' unique preferences, enabling them to connect at personal levels with their charges before offering any solutions. Only when employees are willing to listen, will they hear. Only when customers are willing to buy, will the sale be closed.

Employees and customers do not really care how much you know until they know how much you truly care for them.

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