

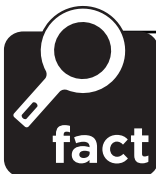


Building Relationships

The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.

—Theodore Roosevelt

The same set of communication skills in body language and vocal quality that is integral when presenting material or facilitating a training session is just as important, if not more so, when communicating socially (often before, during and after your presentation or meeting). Effective social communication is an excellent way to build or strengthen the relationships between you and your audience or listeners.



According to experts, _____ judgments are made about a person within the first 7 seconds of them meeting someone.

Whether meeting a client, a peer, your boss or anyone else in a social setting, effective communication is the only way to build or strengthen that relationship. Business relationships, like all other types of relationships, need to be established, developed and maintained.

In business, many social gatherings act as a means to further the next steps for a business transaction. However, before you can ask for action, you have to earn the right to do so by building on and strengthening your relationship. If the client wants to talk business over drinks, great, but let him bring it up.



Why is it important to continue to engage your participants before and after the session and even during breaks?



Everyone wants to be perceived by other people as an interesting and engaging person, full of charm and wit. People who are more likeable and charismatic can easily attract others who want to be around them or even be like them. But not all people are blessed with equal communication skills when it comes to social situations involving business associates. Certain individuals have personalities that blossom once they leave the structured environment of the office, while others become more withdrawn, almost wilting or fading away altogether.

Checklist for building rapport

Below are the areas to stay focused on when meeting a business associate in a social setting:

1. **Proper greeting.** Stand (if seated) and approach the person you are meeting and smile. Shake hands while maintaining good eye contact. In many circumstances, a proper greeting is your calling card and your first impression.
2. **Use their name.** People generally love to hear their name spoken, so learn the person's name and use it. By sprinkling it in the conversation at various points, you will help draw them in. Also, by repeating their name, it will help you remember it.
3. **Icebreaker.** An effective icebreaker eases the transition from the greeting into the conversation. If you know anything about the person you are meeting, asking him about those things can act as a good icebreaker and serve as an excellent springboard. Be sure to write down and remember important family names or items of interest after your meeting to use as a future icebreaker.
4. **Body language/eye contact.** If you are relaxed, smiling and gesturing naturally, the other person is more likely to mirror this behavior back to you. Remember to maintain eye contact with the person, especially when they are speaking or answering a question. If your eyes are looking somewhere else or wandering, you will be perceived as distracted or disinterested in what is being said.
5. **Vocal quality.** Make sure you speak clearly and articulately so the other person can understand you. In a bar or crowded restaurant, you may need to adjust your volume and pace. And watch your inflections. Remember, downward inflection exhibits confidence and certainty while upward inflection shows doubt and shyness.



6. **Lead the conversation.** Don't interrogate. Remember, you are building a relationship. That involves both individuals learning more about each other. Don't be afraid to insert interesting information about yourself when appropriate. But be careful not to interrupt. If you don't know what to talk about, steer the conversation to a common interest that you will both be comfortable talking about.
7. **Focus on the other person.** When communicating socially, successful interactions often require suspending your own wants and ego. Let the other person speak; be comfortable simply letting them be the focus of attention. Ask open-ended questions to allow them the opportunity to speak.
8. **Active listening.** Be engaged. Over the course of the conversation, you will learn a lot about the other person. Try to remember the important facts or items you take away from the meeting. Write them down in a notebook, address book or contact management system. They will provide great icebreakers for your next meeting.
9. **Be yourself.** We spoke in earlier modules about your "personal stamp." It is important that the real "you" shows up in the social meeting as well. Smile and be sincere. Show your personality. If you are comfortable with humor and can include some, do it. You will be much more engaging if you don't pretend to be someone else.
10. **Closing.** Stand, shake hands, smile, make eye contact and use the person's name, just like in your greeting. Your last impression now supersedes your first impression. Thank them for their time and tell the other party you look forward to your next meeting. If appropriate, ask for action on any outstanding items or next steps that are business related.



Conversation topics for social communication

When meeting someone for the first time, you often don't know what to talk about. If you are leading the conversation, it is your job to steer it to something you both share an interest in.

If the conversation starts to sag or grind to a halt, here are some general topics you can usually use to jumpstart things:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

There are certain questions and topics in every culture that are generally off-limits and best to avoid, such as:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



EXERCISE: Initial Meeting