

Must-Do Tips No 52 – Building Rapport

"Professional rapport is about being on the same wavelength as the client, demonstrating that you are there, and then staying there with them"

In these recessionary times, staying close to clients (and getting alongside prospective ones) is more important than ever. Clients want an adviser who is seeing their risks as well as his or her own; who gives them the feeling that they can sit comfortably on the client side of the table; who is tuned in to their issues and problems - *and shows them that they are*. Too bad then that such messages continue to escape a significant number of the professionals that we encounter. Tough too that as a result, they will tend to lose out more in harder times than their more attuned colleagues.

This month we offer three simple messages to help the discordant.

Tip 1 - Matching matters

"Show me that you understand my business" is what clients say often when asked what they want from their advisers, yet some professionals take no account of the potential sensitivities that this entails. So you can get firms serving up rival food products to their own client's or prospect's at lunch (not a wise move) and then wonder why they go ape; or showing up at clients' premises dressed to clash with the company culture that they are serving (one rural client we have heard of deliberately takes visiting advisers who wear posh suits and smart shoes out to meet the pigs in the pig pen!). The guideline is: match or reflect them in what they do as much as you can (but you don't need to wear a pinny...).

Tip 2 - They buy feelings (so give them)

This can be a shock to those pickled in the vinegar of their own technical expertise and self-regard. Most clients don't give a stuff about how clever you are. Moreover, they do not react warmly to the technical or abstract language (facilitate, adjudicate, monitor etc.) that is the stock-in-trade of many professionals. What they do respond to - because it's how they communicate - are simple words or expressions that convey *feelings* (e.g. "my gut feel is that"), *movement* ("when push comes to shove"), the *visual* ("I don't see how that will work"), or *hearing* ("I'm all ears", "I hear what you say"). See how many of these crop up in your conversations outside of work. They are the currency of influence.

Tip 3 - Listen for the subtext

The specific language and words that people use are also vital components in understanding how they perceive the world (and us as their advisers). But the problem with language is that its use is individual-specific. The words that each client contact uses contain meaning based upon their specific experiences. Untuned advisers assume that they know what the client means, based upon **their** experience rather than the client's, and wonder why they don't have clients who feel sympatico with them. Rapport-driven professionals listen hard for words that could contain hidden meaning, and then drill down to get to the bottom of how a particular client sees the meaning of words like "creative" or "value".

People Scope works with professionals to improve their client rapport-building. For more information hit 'Reply' and type **Client Rapport Skills**.

The incentivisation of professionals to build better client relationships will be part of a forthcoming People Scope CRM Resource Paper entitled "**Motivating professionals to succeed**". To pre-register for your free copy, hit 'Reply' and type **Motivating Professionals**.

Of course you could always:

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Best regards.

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