

## Building Rapport

It shouldn't be a surprise that the existence of rapport, or chemistry, between a professional and a prospect plays an important role in the prospect's decision-making process.

The power of chemistry is tied up with the human hard-wiring trait called "similarity and liking" – we are designed to be influenced more by those who we perceive to be more like us and who we are like.

The challenge is to develop chemistry within a limited window of opportunity – which is not an uncommon situation in many business development scenarios.

To start the process of building chemistry, it's standard good practice to try and establish some form of commonality with the prospect as early as possible. For instance, using similar social networks, acquaintances, interests, humour, social and educational backgrounds.

Another traditional means of building chemistry is to demonstrate curiosity about the prospect's business or personal interests.

It is helpful to adapt your communication style to your prospect. This involves adapting your demeanour – such as your tone of voice and the language you use.

In my experience you can still influence someone without commonality if you have successfully adapted to the client's communication style, but more often than not, it can be difficult to influence someone if you are out of sync with their style – despite having commonality.

A conversation that is out of sync from a communication style perspective can be quite jarring.

Many people find it challenging to adapt their style – especially if they are feeling under pressure. Adapting to another style demands that you step outside of your comfort zone – and this is something that your mind is designed to resist.

Another reason it can be challenging is that someone's communication style can naturally change throughout a conversation, so a high level of awareness is needed to gauge changes in style and react accordingly.

The diagram below is a simple device to help you recognise various personal demeanour characteristics and to adapt appropriately.



Each of the four different communication styles are represented by a set of descriptive words. Note that these words have either a positive or negative connotation. How you interpret a style may reflect your own style. For instance, if you interpret a direct style as "abrupt", then chances are your preferred style is one that is more laid-back, or casual.

The key concept to help adapt comfortably to another style is that of tempo – or the pace of your voice. Expressive and Brisk are higher tempo, faster-paced styles. Relaxed is a smoother tempo, not jarring and feels effortless. Measured is quite low tempo and can be recognised often by what seem to be long pauses, while the other person gathers their thoughts before talking.

It pays to know your own style and tempo and work on expanding your comfort zone so that you more easily develop chemistry with styles other than your own.

The key take-away's for you from this lesson should be:

1. Warm up your prospects by seeking some form of commonality.
2. Try to fit with your prospects' preferred communication style.
3. Get outside of your own communication comfort zone. It's not about you!