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## **Why do we need to match and mirror?**

When we meet people for the first time we form very quick judgements about them. We decide that we like them or dislike people within literally a matter of seconds of meeting them. First impressions count. So just how exactly can you always make a good impression every time you meet someone new? People in this industry spend a long time developing and practising scripts, yet words account for just 7% of rapport building skills. The other 93% is made up of physiology (body language) 55% and tonality (how we say it) 38%.

Think about the last time that you met someone new that you just hit it off with instantly. What was being said or done? What was it specifically that made you feel drawn to that person? Matching and mirroring is a subtle rapport building skill. It involves copying the client on many communication levels at the same time. The result is that subconsciously the client just knows that they like you.

## **The theory behind matching and mirroring**

People like people who are like them. Matching and mirroring involves emulating what the client does which sends a signal to their subconscious mind telling them that you are like them. There are many things that we can match and mirror. Like any new skill, choose one thing to match and mirror, and as you become proficient add in the next new area. The great thing about this skill is that it can be practised anywhere. Practise on shop assistants, people in your office, your partners, etc. This is an advanced rapport building skill which will enhance your networking skills as well as assist in building relationships with clients.

Next time you are at a function, notice the number of people talking who have the identical gestures and postures as the people that they are talking to. These people are 'in rapport'. This 'mirroring' is an agreement frame which subconsciously says 'I am in agreement with your thoughts, attitudes and ideas. I think the same as you'.

## **Methods of Matching and Mirroring**

There are five areas to match and mirror:-

- > Modalities
- > Language
- > Physiology
- > Breathing
- > Blinking

## **Modalities**

In most instances we tend to lean to one of our senses (modalities) as a primary modality. Generally people tend to be visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. A Visual

person sees the world around them. They build pictures and they remember through seeing images in their minds. Visual people will commonly use 'visual' types of language, for example, they will use words such as: see, look, appear, picture, view, paint a picture, saw, clear, focus, imagine, eye to eye, a dim view, bright, etc. An Auditory person hears the world around them. They tell themselves what it is that is happening. An Auditory person will commonly use 'auditory' types of language, for example, they will use words such as: hear, tell, sound, rings a bell, resonates with me, listen, silence, sounds good, tune in, I'm all ears, etc. A Kinaesthetic person feels the world around them. They use touch, feelings and emotions to sense what is happening. Kinaesthetic people will commonly use 'kinaesthetic' types of language, for example, they will use words such as: feel, touch, sense, grasp, concrete, solid, touch base, soft, get a handle on, get a feel for, firm foundation, etc

To match and mirror modality, you need to use the same types of words of the primary modality of the client.

For example a client says 'a friend told me about your services. He said you would be able to assist me. He told me about the ABC products and I have to admit that they sound quite good'. This client appears to be auditory. Matching this client's map of the world means using auditory language to respond. Some example responses follow;-

'Excellent. what did he tell you about it?'

'When he told you about it, what was it that you most liked the sound of?'

'Yes they are great products. There is quite a lot of talk about them'.

## Language

In addition to the language of modality there are other clues to how people think and feel from the words that they choose to use. Language acuity is an advanced communication skill and is achieved through great listening skills. Listening skills go far beyond nodding and not interrupting. A great listener can hear what is not said as well as what is said. A great listener understands how a person thinks, how a person makes decisions, etc.

Imagine a line where at the far left is 'vagueness' and at the far right is 'detail or specifics'. We operate at one place on the line. Some people are vague to some extent, some people are detailed to some extent. Consider the two different responses to the question 'What will you do when you retire?'

1) 'Well, I wont have an alarm clock, but I guess I'll still be getting up around 7am. I will go get the morning paper and read it whilst I have my cereal and toast. It will be important to me to stay up to date with what is going on. Then at lunchtime.....'

2) 'Be happy'

The first response is someone who likes details and specifics. The second is someone who operates at a higher overview level. A detailed presentation would not be appreciated or well received by someone who operates at the higher level. An overview would not be well received by someone who operates at the detail level.

Match the client's level on the scale of detail and overview to ensure that you are talking their language.

Repeating client's words is another way of building rapport through language;-

'I just got back from Hong Kong'

'You just got back from Hong Kong?'

## Physiology

Physiology is our body language. Body language gives us a great deal of clues as to what others are thinking or feeling. Physiology is an important aspect for people in sales roles as it provides vital clues as to how the presentation is progressing. A good example is when a client strokes or holds their chin. This means that they are evaluating or deciding. If you were to attempt to close a sale whilst the client is still in the decision phase you would be very unlikely to get the sale. A client moves from 'decision making' (chin stroking) to 'decision'. If the physiology is 'closed'; legs and/or arms crossed, picking imaginary fluff off their clothes, etc, the sale is not likely. At this stage the adviser would be wise to revisit features and benefits before attempting the close. If the physiology is 'open'; leaning forward, hands on knees, picking up a pen, touching documents, nodding, etc, the sale is likely and a close should be made.

Matching and mirroring involves copying the client's body language initially to build rapport and then gradually moving the client's physiology into a more receptive frame.

Initially the matching and mirroring serves to build trust and to create the relationship. Once the client begins to like you, they will then subconsciously start to match and mirror your movements. This enables you to move into a receptive posture which the client will then match and adopt for themselves. An example of how this works follows; The client is seated, leaning slightly to the side with his arms folded and legs crossed at the ankle.

Seat yourself in exactly the same position. Be subtle. If the client is leaning at a forty degree angle you should lean at a 10 degree angle. Engage the client by matching the modality – using words that appeal to his primary modality and by mirroring his language.

The client makes circle gestures with his hands whilst talking to you.

Make circle gestures with your hands whilst you respond to the client's comments. Be subtle. Make smaller movements than the client.

The client takes a sip of his drink while you are speaking.

Take a sip of your drink whilst the client is speaking.

The client begins to warm to you. You notice his face 'warming' as he speaks. Uncross your ankles as you are talking to the client. If the client has sufficiently warmed to you, he will also uncross his ankles when he next begins speaking.

Cross your ankles again, if the client doesn't follow your move within about sixty seconds. Keep warming the client through modality and language and uncross your ankles again after a few more minutes. Once the client has matched your feet position get into the 'readiness' position. Sit up straight. Lean forward. Palms open or one hand on one knee.

Once the client adopts the readiness posture, you are ready to begin business discussions. Keep matching and mirroring modality, language and physiology throughout. Rapport building is not something that you do for ten minutes at the beginning and then stop. It must be maintained throughout each and every contact with the client.

## Breathing

Some people breathe from high in the chest, some people breathe from low in the stomach. Some breathe fast, some breathe slow. Breathing exactly as your client does is an advanced rapport skill. Once you have mastered modalities, language and physiology take your rapport building skills to the next level by matching breathing patterns.

People who are very close can often breathe at the same pace and at the same time when they are together.

## Blinking

The final piece in mastering rapport building skills is to match the client's blinking patterns. Blink in the same way and at the same time.

## Case Study

You meet with Sarah, a new client. In your initial discussion you ask her to tell you about herself and what she wants to achieve by meeting with you.

Sarah is sitting forward. Her hands are by her side holding onto the seat of the chair. She keeps looking upwards as she speaks. She rocks backwards and forwards as she speaks. She takes shallow breaths from the top of her lungs. She says 'I am a graphic designer. I work for a media company just off the main city road near the library. I've been there for 3 years and 7 months. I don't see myself staying there much longer. It looks like the company might be downsizing soon, so I might start looking around. I'm married with 2 children. That's a picture of them there. My friend Elizabeth said that she saw you 6 weeks ago and that you were able to help her to see what she was doing with her finances. I am hoping you will help me get a clearer picture on my investments.'

1) What is 'Sarah's primary modality?

Answer: Visual. Words: see, looks, looking, picture, saw. Other modality clues: looks upwards as she speaks and takes shallow breaths from the top of her lungs.

2) Where does Sarah operate in terms of vague v's specific?

Answer: Sarah appears more detailed than vague at this stage. She gave the exact location of her work. She gave her friend's name and how long ago the friend met with you.

3) What position would you sit in?

Answer: Sitting upright, slightly leaning forward. Hands holding the seat of the chair.

4) What gestures would you make and when?

Answer: Rocking slightly whilst speaking.

5) What would be a good response to her comments?

Answer: 'Great, I'm getting a good picture. So you're a graphic designer in the city. You may look for new work soon. You are married with 2 children. Your friend Elizabeth recommended me after she saw me. You want to get a clearer picture on your investments?'

This repeats Sarah's language and utilises visual words.

6) How could you start to move Sarah's physiology into a position of readiness?

Put one open palm in front of you next time you speak. Return it to holding the chair seat when you finish talking. If Sarah copies you leave your open palm on the table and then do the same with the other hand.

## Summary

Clients will make very quick decisions about whether or not they like you. Your success depends on your ability to get clients to form an immediate like towards you. Rapport building is a skill which can be developed through regular practice. Rapport building means developing and *maintaining* relationships. It is not something that you can do for just the first five or ten minutes of meeting someone new.

Above everything else, success is determined by your ability to communicate with others.