

## **People Skills: Your Key to Rock-Solid Rapport**

This principle may seem overly obvious, but it's another one of those skill areas that we think we've mastered when we definitely have not. We found that a full 96 percent of those surveyed rate themselves as much better in their people skills than they actually are. Remember, more jobs are lost due to an inability to work well with others than any other factor. Conversely, the numerous studies show that only 15 percent of employment and management success is due to intelligence or technical training, while the other 85 percent is due to the ability to deal with people successfully. Roger Ailes, Public Relations advisor to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Sr., had this to say on the matter: "If you could master one element of personal communication that is more powerful than anything . . . it is the quality of being likeable. I call it the magic bullet, because if your audience likes you, they'll forgive just about everything else you do wrong. If they don't like you, you can hit every rule right on target and it doesn't matter."

Whole books have been dedicated to this topic, so here I'd like to focus on just a few of the essentials mastered by great persuaders.

1. *Show concern.* Showing concern means exhibiting genuine friendliness and goodwill for the other person's best interest. It means acting with consideration, politeness, and civility. It is the foundation for all interactions and it creates a mood of concern in return.
2. *Be positive.* People want to be around those who are positive and optimistic. Focus on the positive and bring hope to your audience. Hopeful messages bring out the best in people and create a positive image about you and your position.
3. *Remember names.* One of the quickest ways to form an immediate bond with people is by remembering their names. Try to use your audience's name within the first ten seconds of the conversation. Using his or her name tells your audience that you care and value him or her as a person. Research also shows that it increases your persuasiveness.

4. *Smile.* A smile helps make a great first impression and demonstrates happiness, acceptance, and confidence. Your smile shows that you are pleased to be right where you are, meeting this person. As a result, your audience in turn becomes more interested in meeting you.

5. *Build respect.* The more your audience respects you, the more persuasive you will be. Building respect often takes time, but there are things you can do to facilitate it. Remember that how someone feels about you is often influenced by how you make her feel about herself.

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