



‘Building Rapport in a hybrid world’

Presented by Nick Thomas
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Welcome and Thankyou

Sixty-minute webinar format. Slides provided post-session

Nick Thomas

- Sector Sales and Sales Leadership specialist
- Widely qualified coach. Coaching, training and consulting – Insurance M&A

Nick Thomas & Associates

- Up to the minute training solutions addressing the challenges of the modern insurance professional
- Technical insurance; sales, communication and soft skills; performance, resilience and health; management and leadership, customer service



Session Objectives

‘Begin with the end in mind’
Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

By the end of the session, you will:

- Understand the pivotal importance of rapport in personal and business interactions to mutually influence and achieve objectives.
- Understand how to build and use rapport.
- Understand how to adjust rapport building to the challenges of virtual and hybrid working

Rapport

Questions:

- *What is Rapport?*
- *Why is Rapport important?*



Rapport – what is it and why?

- *‘Rapport is the ultimate tool for producing results...if you can develop rapport with the right people, you'll be able to fill their needs, and they will be able to fill yours’ Tony Robbins*
- Rapport is the quality of a relationship of **mutual influence and respect**
- The rational and emotional brain – if in conflict emotional wins
- Sales – often won on emotion and justified rationally
- People engage with, buy from and recommend people they trust.
- Rapport feeds into Trust. How?

54% of buyers said that ‘when sellers connect with them and build rapport virtually it has a high level of influence on their purchase decision, yet only 25% of sellers do this well’. RAIN Group study 2020

Keys to Rapport

- **Empathise**
 - Ability to understand and share the feelings of another
 - **Ask** about the other person (activates reward processing area of brain) and use **active listening** to show you are interested
- **Be genuine and authentic** – manipulation loses rapport
- **Shared experience** – collaboration builds psychological ownership and connection to co-collaborators
- **Build common ground**
 - People like people who are similar to them – names, movement,, interests, behaviours
 - See pacing and leading...

'...acts of self disclosure were accompanied by spurts of heightened activity in brain regions belonging to the meso-limbic dopamine system, which is associated with the sense of reward and satisfaction from food, money or sex'

Wall Street Journal – reference research by Harvard neuroscientists Tamir and Mitchell

Rapport – levels

Environment - fairly superficial, correct business attire in a meeting, right office environment

Behaviour - matching another without losing your own identity. 3 aspects at behavioural level:

- **Body language** – breathing pattern, posture, gestures, eye contact
- **Voice tone** – speed of speech, volume, rhythm, tone, timbre, coughs/hesitations etc.
- **Language**
 - Key word and phrases
 - Predicates – auditory, visual, kinaesthetic
 - Types of language – colloquial, swearing



Notice: how very good friends naturally match body language e.g. eye contact as they have developed rapport at a 'higher' level

Rapport – levels

Capabilities - shared skills and interests

- Personal level – hobbies and interests
- Professional – demonstrating competency/expertise

Beliefs and Values

- Respecting and understanding - builds powerful rapport
- Do not have to agree but do not challenge without good rapport

Identity

- Genuine interest in the other as an individual not part of a group. Willing to share your own beliefs and values. No room for manipulation

Beyond Identity – shared culture



Building similarity

- Enter **their** map of the world
- **Pace** - enter the other person's model of the world. *'Build similarity...*
- **Leading** – change someone's experience by changing yours first



Body Language example:

Matching and Mirroring

- Matching – exact copy of posture/movement e.g. lean to left so you do same
- Mirroring – mirror image. The lean left, you mirror on right side
- Cross-over mirroring e.g. tapping foot in rhythm with their breathing
- ...entering their model of world
- *Do not match and mirror inside conscious awareness – mimicking loses rapport*

Building Rapport in the virtual world

Recent RAIN Group study of 528 buyers and sellers across Americas, EMEA, and APAC on virtual selling (2020):

- 88 percent of sellers said **developing relationships** with buyers virtually is challenging
- 87 percent claimed that **connecting with buyers and building rapport** was a top challenge
- Ranked third and fourth of 18 challenges studied

'I'm comfortable moving all aspects of the sales cycle virtually, except for the rapport building you get from face-to-face meetings'

'I find it easier to conduct virtual sales meetings with existing clients and people I already know. First-time meetings are very challenging'

VIRTUAL SELLING CHALLENGES VERY/SOMEWHAT CHALLENGING FOR SELLERS



Rapport on the telephone

Questions:

- *What are the challenges?*
- *How can we mitigate them?*



Rapport - telephone

- Empathy
 - More difficult to pick up feelings and emotions with no body language
 - No natural organic social dialogue (coffee, pre and post meeting) – take the lead and make space
 - Alter active listening techniques – ‘verbal nods’ and allow to finish
 - Language ‘I understand’, ‘I see where you are coming from’
 - Change perceptual position to understand their map of the world



Rapport - telephone

- **Being genuine and authentic**
 - Harder as no body language - people trust more if they see faces.
 - Go 'off script'
 - Smile/body language - affects voice quality
 - Make time for social conversation - warm up



Rapport - telephone

- **Shared experience and collaboration**
 - No F2F with flip carts etc, no video meets with white boards and annotation.
 - Use language to frame the conversation as collaborative.
 - Use questions to deepen other person's understanding as well as yours
- **Build common ground**
 - Lack the possible visual cues of online meetings
 - Lack natural organic social interaction
 - Use questions or volunteer. 'I'm off mountain biking this weekend, what are you up to?'
 - Pace and lead voice tone, volume, words [limitation of language – we assign different meanings] and phrases



Rapport in online meetings

Questions:

- *What are the challenges?*
- *How can we mitigate them?*



Online/virtual meetings - why is online different?

Rapport

- No social coffee/lunch meetings
- No F2F conferences and exhibitions
- No F2F networking
- We lose the natural pre- and post-meeting chat
- Online – only head and shoulders
- Eye contact tough to maintain online
- Micro expressions can be missed in the virtual
- Peripheral vision – tougher to scan photo gallery than F2F. Need to make deliberate effort
- Lose the ability to show our personality, use our charisma and charm and connect at a human level
- In each other's homes...**[can this help?]**

Virtual Rapport – online

Body language loss - overcommunicate/commentate especially around feelings – ‘your comment made me smile’

No natural social interaction [handshakes, business cards] – deliberately create the social interaction

- Start – check in with everyone
- Close with personal question – ‘what is everyone up to at the weekend’?
- Maybe break off with someone after – ‘Could you stay on the call for a moment Jim? Often post meeting discussions can be of greatest value
- Pick up on peoples’ home environment – clues to personality, natural reference points for personal level capability rapport building

No casual meetings [coffee/lunch/drink]

- Request **short** ‘virtual coffee meetings’. Easier for people to schedule in especially in troubled times

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‘Rapport is the ultimate tool for producing results...if you can develop rapport with the right people, you'll be able to fill their needs, and they will be able to fill yours’.*
Tony Robbins

Virtual Rapport – online

- **Keep video on**
 - Address multi-tasking and engagement threshold
 - People make deeper connections when they can see the other person – more personal
 - Allows pacing and leading of body language
 - Reading the room – not as good as F2F, but better than phone
- **30 + 3 rule for engagement** – short interactions/check in regularly
- **Be curious** – ask questions both personal and professional
- **Use colleagues/network contacts** – meeting introductions. Break down barriers, feed off their rapport

‘Trust and rapport are the heartbeat of business, the backbone of high performing teams, and the secret sauce for healthy relationships’

Susan C Young ‘The Art of Connection

Active Listening – how to adjust?

Virtual Rapport – multi-platform

Use social media to build familiarity and ‘humanness’

Social Media [LinkedIn]

- **Empathy** – social conversation/inmail
- **Authenticity** – personality and personal brand. Strong personal profile – include photo. Interests and activities. Video?
- **Similarity** – social conversation and Inmail. Match writing style, words, phrases. Match shared interests, skills – check their LinkedIn profile?
- **Shared experience** – collaboration. Use language to frame shared challenges and problems in Inmail and social conversation. Pick up on their posts and social commentary and align your perspective and experience
- Demonstrate **professional capability level of rapport** – in profile and posts. And bring insight



Virtual Rapport – multi-platform

Email

- **Empathy** – personalise. ‘I hope you had a good holiday in Cornwall; I’m looking forward to hearing about the restaurant you mentioned’ [personal capability level rapport]
- **Authenticity** – get across your personality. Reference your interests and activities. Consider video email
- **Similarity** – Match writing style, words, phrases, signature style. Grammar if important. Match shared interests, skills etc. – check their LinkedIn profile?
- **Shared experience** – collaboration. Use language to frame shared challenges and problems.
- **Demonstrate professional capability level of rapport** – professionalism in how you write, bringing insight and value in the email, consultative approach



Adapting the keys to Rapport

4 Keys to Rapport	Virtual challenge	Online Meeting
<p>EMPATHY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to understand and share the feelings of another • Ask about the other person (activates reward processing area of brain) and use active listening to show you are interested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tougher to pick up on feelings and emotions • Active listening challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep video on and encourage others to do so • People make deeper connections when they can see the other person • Greater trust {Zoom survey!} • Allows pacing and leading of body language • Alter active listening...again • Pick up on background objects - cues
<p>AUTHENTICITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be genuine – be nice but do not overdo it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video meetings are inherently less ‘authentic’ than face to face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep video on .. • Smile slowly • Display background objects illustrating interests and personality • Use natural background if professional - authentic
<p>SIMILARITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People like people who are similar to them – names, movement, interests, behaviours • See pacing and leading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack natural organic social interaction – at beginning and end of meetings • Lack coffee meetings and lunches • Lack exhibitions and conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to take the lead and structure in the ‘social’ • Start – check in with everyone • Pick up social at end of meet. Use questions or volunteer. ‘I’m off mountain biking this weekend, what are you up to?’ • Pace and lead voice tone, volume, words etc. • Pace and lead interests and hobbies, family • Maybe break out with someone after. Often post meeting discussions can be of greatest value • Home environment – clues to personality, natural reference points for rapport building
<p>SHARED EXPERIENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration builds psychological ownership and connection to co-collaborators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot sit round a table and work on a document together or get up and brainstorm ideas on a whiteboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use technology tools – whiteboard and annotate to build collaboration • Use language to frame the conversation as collaborative. • Use questions to deepen other person’s understanding as well as yours • Define problems using buyers own words

Adapting Rapport - Levels

	Email and written word	Telephone	Virtual meeting
Environmental - fairly superficial, correct business attire in a meeting, right office environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate medium? • Unsolicited? • Layout of the email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of line/External noise • Set expectations up front – create space and permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per telephone • Backdrop – manage access to personal space. • Dress and presentation
Body Language - breathing pattern, posture, gestures, eye contact	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influences voice tone and quality. • Overcommunicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcommunicate/commentate especially around feelings – ‘your comment made me smile’
Voice tone - speed of speech, volume, rhythm, coughs/hesitations etc	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See – pace and lead as normal • Speed and articulation key to ensure understanding with no body language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See – pace and lead as normal • Speed and articulation key to ensure understanding with no body language
Language - match key words and phrases. Show how a person is thinking or feeling. Be careful – to start just match	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – include style, formality, address, grammar etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – pace key words and phrases, predicates {how they are feeling} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – pace key words and phrases, predicates {how they are feeling}
Capability – Personal Hobbies and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited without prior knowledge – ‘I hope you had a good weekend’ • Social media – display own personality, pace by checking their profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – pace interests and hobbies. Volunteer or through questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced - video access to personal space – both ways. • Pace hobbies/family/books • Build in social interaction
Capability – Professional Demonstrating competency/expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display knowledge • Signpost capability - LinkedIn link, website link, strap line on signature • Professional layout/language • Product and service E-shots/social media • Optimise LinkedIn profile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone manner • Structuring call • Demonstrate ‘technical’ professional capability but only if you have followed consultative process – client need, and built rapport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation process/set up/running meeting/explore areas where you can demonstrate • Involve clients or other professionals – testimonial and credibility building • Demonstrate technical and wider knowledge per telephone

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- Understand how to adjust rapport building to the challenges of virtual and hybrid working

Thank you! Questions?

Contact:

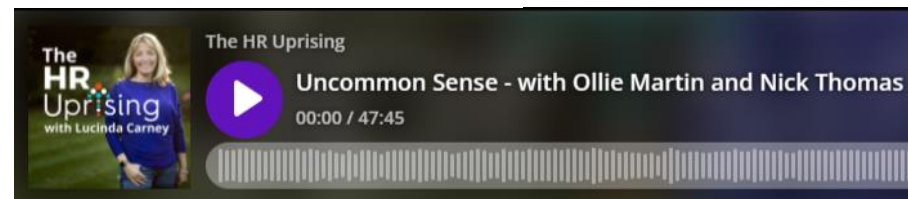
Email: nick@nickthomasassociates.co.uk

Website: www.nickthomasassociates.co.uk

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nick-thomas-64046113/>

LinkedIn Company:
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/nick-thomas-associates/>

'Up to the minute training solutions addressing the challenges of the modern insurance professional'

The logo for HRUprising, with 'HR' in purple and 'Uprising' in a lighter purple, where the 'i' is a colorful dot-matrix character.

[Click here](#) to listen to Nick's latest podcast appearance on 'HR Uprising' talking about workplace performance, resilience and health