

Sales Success: Three Quick Ways to Build Rapport with Customers

Even in the age of the coronavirus, our body language is just as important as the words we say.

SMART STRATEGIES IN REMODELING & RENOVATION SALES

March/April 2021

Building rapport with the homeowners you meet everyday is critical to your success as a salesperson. An old saying is “people buy you, before they buy anything else” and it highlights the importance building the initial trust and rapport with people. Not effectively selling yourself makes selling your company, products, and price that much more difficult.

After reading *How to Connect with People in Business in 90 Seconds or Less* by Nicholas Boothman, I discovered three keys to creating instant rapport with prospective customers. These three keys are critically important in the world of home improvement sales...because think about it, you're in someone's home, their most prized possession, and your asking for a lot of money to increase the beauty or functionality of that home – establishing rapport and trust is critical. The three keys to instant rapport are a good handshake, solid eye contact, and a smile.

Handshake

Although in today's pandemic environment handshakes are considered unsafe and rightly so, I do believe that eventually we will get back to shaking hands when interacting with people. I believe we can all agree that when meeting somebody for the first time a good, firm handshake is important. But what do you do when the handshake is “missed” – you reach out to shake the hand offered and they close too quickly and catch you out on the end of your fingers? This puts you in a very passive situation – what do you do then? When that happens, grasp the person's forearm, dis-engage your hand and say “Sorry, I missed you”, then grasp their hand correctly and give a firm shake. But until we reach a time when Covid-19 is under control, just settle for a fist or an elbow bump.

Eye Contact

I don't know about you, but when I meet somebody for the first time and they avoid eye contact, my first thought is I don't trust that person. You have a lot going through your mind during a sales interaction – your looking around the house for things to build a personal connection on – kids, sports teams, school etc. You're also trying to get a feel for the person your meeting with and things you observe in and around their home are important. But don't let that keep you from making solid eye contact with all parties. If not, you could be spending valuable time overcoming a trust issue that you don't even know is there.

Smile

There is a famous saying that goes “Smile, and the world will smile with you.” There is a lot of accuracy in that statement. I have found that people will return a smile at least 80% of the time. I call this a front porch reaction; you knock on the door, standing there with your samples in tow, ready to sell something...don't forget to put your smile on. Before even starting the sales call, you have about an 80% chance of putting a smile on the customer's face by merely smiling yourself. This is a much better way of starting the interaction than with a frown, or a neutral facial expression. Remember though, we're rarely smiling as much as we think we are. Try it...put a smile on your face and then look in the mirror. Does the smile you see in the mirror match the smile you thought you had on your face? So, when that door opens, put a beaming, full face smile forward and get that smile in return.

Boothman contends that our body language is just as important as the words we say during communications with others. These three body language examples will help set a solid foundation to build the trust and rapport necessary for a successful sales call.



Brian McCauley is director of sales training for Atrium and Simonton Windows and Doors, both part of the Cornerstone Building Brands family. He has trained thousands of people nationwide and speaks from coast to coast Contact him at brian.mccauley@cornerstone-bb.com or 502-409-1816.