



Networking Magic – Making Small Talk Count

by Patti Hathaway, Business Advisor & Author

Networking is still a great way to meet potential new customers or connect with people personally. First impressions count and you need to prepare for those events so that you are more comfortable and will leave the impression you desire.

Re-establish Connections

If this is an event where you see people once a year, you may want to drop a postcard in the mail telling the person you are looking forward to catching up with them. It helps build anticipation and re-establishes connections.

Always shake people's hands when you meet. It builds rapport and helps you connect with others. Keep in mind that men will typically wait for women to initiate handshakes. You will leave a more powerful and confident impression when you initiate contact with others.

Connect at a Subconscious Level

The Gallup organization listened to ten million people over the past decade in thousands of studies. They learned, “Customers are emotion-seeking individuals. They make choices to satisfy emotional desires and not merely their rationale needs.” (*Follow This Path*, 2003). What is true for customers is true for people in general. We are emotion-seeking individuals who like people who are just like us. There is an extremely powerful scientific technique that will help you create a strong emotional bond with people. This technique comes from the science of Neuro Linguistics Programming/NLP.

Before I explain the technique, let me give you some background information that will help you see its potential power. One of the biggest barriers to good conversation is the simple fact that we can think 4-5 times faster than the other person talking. A typical person speaks an average of 150 words per minute yet we can listen/process/think at 500 words per minute. Most people don't use their processing speed to build rapport at a subconscious level with others. I'm going to teach you will give you something to do with that extra lag time in your thought/speech ratio.

One last piece of background information: Mehrabian conducted a research study to determine how important the nonverbal aspects of communication are compared to the

actual words we use when communicating one-on-one. If you divide up interpersonal communication into the *Words* we use, the *Tone of Voice* and *Gestures* or Body Language, what percentages would you give to each? The following conclusions were made: Your words are worth 7% of your communication, your tone of voice is worth 38% and your gestures are equivalent to 55% of your total communication.

In short, **NLP**, developed by John Grinder and Richard Bandler, is a strategy that allows you to "read" customers more sensitively and sell and service them more effectively. We are able to establish a positive relationship quickly by incorporating NLP into the way you work with customers. "Neuro" stands for your nervous system or non-verbal behavior. Everything in your nervous system runs subconsciously. Most times, you are not consciously aware of what you are doing nonverbally. The way you typically sit is probably not consciously chosen. You sit the way you always sit. It is subconscious and natural.

"Linguistics" stands for your language. In this case, your nonverbal language.

"Programming" is just like a computer program. Computer programs are put into place to achieve a specific result. With this technique we are looking to BUILD RAPPORT with customers at a subconscious, emotional level.

Mirroring, which is one of several NLP techniques, is the art of copying another person's behavior to create a relaxed communication situation. The reason being is that we like people who are like us. "Birds of a feather flock together". "We like to do business with people we like." If we LOOK nonverbally just like someone, and 93% of that person is nonverbal, they will like us at a subconscious level. They will be thinking to themselves, "I like this person. They are just like me." And, if we like someone, we trust them AND want to do business with them. Think about the potential this has for selling as well as going deeper with your current customers and keeping them loyal to you for life.

Specifically, this is how you mirror:

First, match the other person's voice tone or tempo. If they talk fast, you talk fast. If they talk slowly, you talk slowly. One way to help you match the other person's tempo is to match the other person's breathing rate. Pace yourself to it.

Match the other person's body movements, posture and gestures. If the person you're mirroring crosses his/her legs, you cross your legs. If the other person gestures, you will gesture. Of course, subtlety is everything. You may want to wait several seconds before moving. A very important point about gesturing is that we only gesture when we speak.

The process of mirroring is totally natural. You do it naturally with people you like and have already built rapport with. Have you ever coincidentally noticed that you and a friend simultaneously scratched your noses at the same time? It's mirroring, it's just that you didn't know that is what it is called. It's the most powerful non-verbal technique you

can use to instantly build rapport with people you meet and become more relaxed in social and business settings.

Prepare in Advance

Jot down questions or topics you would like to discuss with people in advance. Sometimes these informal networking sessions are more valuable than the formal sessions. Before your social/business event, make sure you are up-to-date on national news. If all else fails, you can talk about what is happening in the world today.

Remember Names

Many people have difficulty remembering names. You may want to use the **C.A.R.E.** Technique to remember names. **C**oncentrate on the person's name. **A**ssociate the person's first name with someone else you know with that name. Imagine those two people standing together. **R**epeat the person's name three times in your initial conversation. **E**nquire about the name (i.e. spelling, uniqueness, etc.)

Many people dread these events when in fact it can lead to the re-establishment of friendships and provide new, creative ideas for business. Look for ways to make the most of the opportunities you have to make small talk in these settings as it may lead to developing relationships you hadn't anticipated.

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