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DEALMAKER SOFT SKILLS

BUILDING RAPPORT



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DEALCLUB

SOFT SKILLS REPORT: AUGUST

Building Rapport and Influence with Sellers

How to Earn Trust, Win Hearts, and Close More Deals

THIS MONTH, you will learn:

- How to build instant rapport with sellers, even on a cold call
- Why influence matters more than persuasion in dealmaking
- Practical tools to create trust quickly
- What to do when rapport breaks down

Introduction: Sellers Don't Sell to Strangers

In the world of business acquisitions, the best deals don't go to the cleverest negotiator or the highest bidder. They go to the buyer the seller trusts.

If a seller doesn't like you, doesn't feel heard, or senses a mismatch in values, the deal rarely closes — no matter how good your offer is.

Building rapport and influence is your soft skill superpower. It's how you shift from *"just another buyer"* to *"the right buyer."*

This month's report gives you practical strategies to build better relationships with sellers — and make yourself the obvious choice.

1. What Is Rapport (And Why Does It Matter)?

Rapport is a sense of connection and trust. It's that feeling of being on the same wavelength as someone.

When you have it:

- Conversations flow more easily
- Sellers open up about fears, goals, and motivations
- Objections soften, and negotiations get smoother

When you don't:

- Calls feel awkward
- Sellers resist your questions
- Deals stall for emotional (not logical) reasons

Rapport isn't about being charming. It's about being *aligned*. That's influence.

2. How Rapport Gets Built

Rapport happens in layers:

Step 1: Familiarity

People trust what feels familiar. That could be shared background, mutual contacts, or even how you speak.

Pro tip: Use LinkedIn to find common ground before a call.

Step 2: Understanding

Ask questions that reveal what the seller really cares about. Then reflect that back.

- "What's important to you in this sale?"
- "What would make this feel like a win for you?"

Step 3: Alignment

Sellers want to know: *Will this buyer protect my staff? Will they run the business well? Do they get what I've built?*

Share your vision for the business in a way that resonates with theirs.

3. The Principles of Influence

Robert Cialdini, author of *Influence*, outlined seven key principles of persuasion. Here are four especially powerful in dealmaking:

1. Liking

We say yes to people we like. Build genuine rapport by showing warmth, being respectful, and finding common interests.

2. Reciprocity

People want to return favours. Be helpful: offer feedback, make an introduction, or compliment their business sincerely.

3. Authority

We trust those who sound confident and credible. Use professional language and refer to your deal team to project competence.

4. Consistency

Sellers value follow-through. Do what you say you'll do. If you promise a call, make it. If you agree to review the accounts, follow up.

Influence isn't about manipulation. It's about creating conditions where trust can grow.

4. Practical Tools to Build Rapport Fast

Tool 1: Mirroring

Repeat the last few words the seller says in a questioning tone. It signals understanding and keeps them talking.

Seller: "We've had a tough few months."

You: "Tough few months?"

Tool 2: Labeling

Name the emotion you sense in the seller.

- "It sounds like this has been stressful."
- "You seem really proud of what you've built."

This creates connection. People want to feel seen.

Tool 3: Storytelling

Instead of diving into numbers, share a quick story:

- "I bought a business last year where the seller was really worried about the staff. We kept everyone, promoted internally, and performance actually improved."

Stories create emotional alignment and show you're not just another buyer.

Tool 4: The Two-Minute Rapport Rule

Spend the first two minutes of any call or meeting building connection.

Ask about something personal or non-threatening:

- "I saw on Companies House that you started the business in 2009 – what made you launch then?"

- "I noticed your reviews are amazing – how have you built such a strong reputation?"

These aren't diversions – they're trust-builders.

5. What to Do When Rapport Breaks

Sometimes you feel rapport slipping. The seller goes cold. You sense irritation or mistrust. What do you do?

1. Acknowledge it

Say: "I sense I might have missed something. Can I check in for a moment?"

This lowers the temperature and gives them a chance to explain.

2. Ask a rapport repair question

- "What would make this process feel smoother for you?"
- "How are you feeling about this conversation so far?"

3. Slow down

If you've pushed too fast, pull back. Build space into the conversation.

Rapport isn't a one-time thing. It's an ongoing calibration.

6. The Role of Empathy in Influence

Empathy is the foundation of influence. You don't need to agree with the seller's views, but you do need to understand them.

Empathy sounds like:

- "I can see how that would feel frustrating."
- "You've put so much into this business, it must be a big decision to let go."

Empathy doesn't weaken your negotiating position. It strengthens it. It turns adversaries into allies.

7. Case Study: Winning Without Being the Highest Bidder

Sarah, a Deal Club member, made an offer on a kitchen refurbishment business. Her bid was lower than two others. But the seller chose her.

Why?

- Sarah listened deeply to the seller's story.
- She framed her acquisition as a continuation of his legacy.
- She was warm, clear, and consistent in every call.

The seller said, *"I just trusted her more than the others."*

That's rapport and influence in action.

Final Word: Rapport Is the Shortest Path to Yes

Sellers don't just want money. They want respect. They want to feel heard. They want to know the buyer understands what this business means to them.

When you build rapport and influence:

- You get more insight
- You negotiate better terms
- You become the natural choice

Don't just buy businesses. Build relationships. The rest follows.

KEY POINTS

- Rapport is connection. Influence is trust. Both are essential.
- Use mirroring, labelling, and storytelling to deepen relationships.
- Trust is built with empathy, follow-through, and professionalism.
- When rapport breaks, slow down and repair it — don't push through.
- Sellers choose people they like and believe in. Be that buyer.