

Building Rapport with the square dance floor - 6 Critical Skills

There are Six Critical Skills for consultative selling. These skills also apply to building rapport with a floor of square dancers because, you are in the business of selling yourself, and the activity. These 6 items are useful skills for rapport building, which is essential in differentiating yourself as part of the group and establishing a personal connection with each and every person that you don't get a chance to talk to individually..

- **Presence:** Ability to project confidence, conviction and interest in body language and voice. Not it is the ability to present, rather than actual. As Hanna says, learn to lie or learn to fake it.
- **Relating:** Ability to use acknowledgement, rapport and empathy to connect. Own your mistakes and accept the mistakes of others (within reason) (the Debra Carroll-Jones example was perfect). The dancers have to know and understand that you acknowledge their value and ability as much as they acknowledge yours. You relate that through your calling and their ability to successfully do what you communicate.
- **Questioning:** Ability to explore needs and create dialogue. Some floors are up and some floors are down. Some you have to feed and some feed you and you give it back. Regardless, you will always have a need to create a dialogue with the dancers to realise what they need, and how to give it.
- **Listening:** Ability to understand the content and emotional message. Communication and active listening is a lot more than words and polite applause. It is listening to the "mood" of the floor and the ability to address it, adapt it, or when necessary counter it. Don said that when he was saying listen to the floor – and adjust accordingly.
- **Positioning:** Ability to leverage client needs to be persuasive in sales. The ability to leverage the dancers needs to be persuasive as well. Give them the "pseudo challenge" (easy to be successful but feel that you worked for it) which builds success and wants to buy into more of the same – the buy more is to "buy you" as a caller and want to buy more
- **Checking:** Ability to elicit feedback. You must be responsive to both the verbal and non-verbal feedback from the dancers. Communication with words is 7% the words, 38% the voice (tone inflection etc) and 55% the physical – body language, mood reactions, long sit outs, unwilling to get up on the floor etc.

The first two skills — Presence and Relating — come into play immediately upon contact. This is the "breaking-the-ice" stage, where showing empathy and reducing tension is key.

The next two — Questioning and Listening — are layered on top when you begin a dialogue. Nonverbal communication plays a key role here, building a connection subconsciously through body language, eye contact, facial expressions and tone of voice.

The last two — Positioning and Checking — reinforce your approach and strengthen rapport. These involve asking open-ended questions, summarising what you've heard, and building on the ideas presented.

The point is: You're building rapport with a person, not an organisation. You're interacting with a human being who is likely more emotional than logical. EQ, or emotional quotient, is more important than IQ in establishing rapport.

Sometimes, acting as if you already have a good rapport is a good starting strategy. Talking as if the other person were a close friend with mutual trust sends subconscious signals to the other person to view you in the same way.