

The Art of Connection

Have you ever noticed how some people have an amazing ability to connect with people? Any person, any situation; they have a gift to be able to develop rapport almost instantly and effortlessly. People are attracted to them.

They make people feel good.

They are interested in people.

They ask the right questions.

They listen more than they talk.

They make eye contact and smile.

They are fun.

They are genuine.

They are often cheeky and charismatic.

For some people the connection thing is an in-built gift and for others it is a skill which has to be developed and fine-tuned over time. Both groups understand what a massive advantage it is in all relationships to be able to connect with people. Try and find a successful person who doesn't know how to connect with people... you'll be looking for a long time. I'm always amazed at the amount of people (in both personal and professional situations) who (1) don't understand the importance of connection and (2) don't work at developing it. Some people don't 'get' that using the same communication style day in, day out for every person, every conversation and every situation is ...dumb (and completely ineffective) yet that's what many people do.

Forever.

And then they wonder why they constantly have people problems.

What will engage one person... will dis-engage another.

What might inspire and motivate you... will intimidate someone else.

One person's joke will be another person's insult.

People who get the connection thing read people and situations and then communicate accordingly... (keeping in mind that 93% of communication is non-verbal).

Every day when I'm dealing with people (in a wide range of situations and settings) I ask myself this question: "What is the most effective way to communicate with (connect with) this person in order to create the best outcome?" I spend my life reading, accommodating and working around egos, attitudes, personalities and self esteems.... If I didn't know how to connect with a broad cross-section of people, I would have no business. In the early days of my professional evolution (when I had no business knowledge, experience or skills) I had to rely on my ability to create rapport and build relationships. It's the only thing that enabled me get to the next level. Without doubt, the ability to connect with people is one of the key success skills... and its importance is regularly over-looked in business. In fact, I'm amazed at how many bosses and business owners spend so much time, money and energy focusing on business models, marketing strategies and five year plans.. but zero time developing a great work culture or amazing relationships with their staff ... they train their team in every facet of the business except the important one; connecting with the people who walk through the door or pick up the phone (and I'm not talking about 'sales' training; I'm talking about being able to develop rapport with people).

Sometimes the greatest (and simplest) business strategy is employing friendly staff, people who consistently and effectively find a way to connect. Today I employed a new Trainer, his name is Sam (that makes two). He is knowledgeable, has a degree in Exercise Science, is good looking, is an elite athlete, has good training skills..... but what actually got him the job was none of that. It was his communication skills, his ability to connect. Give me a Trainer with a PhD who can't communicate or connect and you'll give me a dud. I don't want him (or her). On the other hand, give me the charismatic, funny, engaging Trainer with no experience, basic qualifications, great communication skills and an understanding of the art of connection and I have a potential asset for my company. One of my Trainers is a kick-boxer named Christian.

He's hard-core.

Very.

Not in a 'talk about it' kinda way.... but in a 'get the job done' kinda way.

Thirty six fights for thirty five wins, an Australasian title, tattoos on his arms, stomach and neck; I'm glad he's on my side. If I had to go to war, I'd take him with me. While I have trainers who are more qualified, more knowledgeable (in some areas) and perhaps more 'academic'.... nobody is more popular, nobody is more in demand and nobody is a better Trainer. Everybody loves Christian (clients, staff, kids, parents) because he engages everybody. Nobody connects with people better than the cheeky kick-boxer. He makes everyone feel great and he has people in the palm of his hand in thirty seconds. He is an amazing communicator, not because he is incredibly articulate but because he 'gets' people; he makes them laugh, makes them feel special and important, makes them comfortable and confident and he understands the significance of rapport and connection. I've seen him weave his magic with everyone from school kids to professional athletes and from the morbidly obese to the great-grandmother who's just had a hip operation. On the other hand..... I have watched many people make relationships waaaaaaaay harder than they need to be? At work, at home, in romances, with neighbours, with friends... Drama-rama. Something which could and should be easy, becomes a nightmare... and on-going saga. Days of our lives... but for real. Stress, anxiety and catastrophe seem to follow them around. Things which should be simple, straight forward, pain-free, fun and rewarding... become complex, difficult stressors in their life. And incredibly... they never think it's about them! Note: If your life is a constant series

of dramas, you have on-going communication and relationship problems.... and conflict, arguments and differences of opinions seem to hamper your existence... you may want to invest some energy studying and developing the art of connection.Last weekend I got a lesson in communication and connection from a girl at the local store where I buy my newspaper... She engaged me and had me in the palm of her hand in thirty seconds.I walked in to the store, grabbed my paper and milk and headed to the counter without really noticing who was behind it or being particularly aware of anything. I looked up and there she was, staring straight at me with a big, friendly smile."Morning Sweetie, how are you?"

"Err, good thanks" was my dynamic, witty, response.She spoke to me for thirty seconds and I was putty in her hands.Being the super-sharp, discerning (pathetic) Alpha-Male that I am... I was almost in love as I walked out the door. I would have paid twenty bucks for my paper; I didn't care. Such simple beasts us men.All she did was compliment me (called me Sweetie), made eye contact, smiled at me, gave me some attention and took a (momentary) interest in me. The whole process took thirty seconds, made me feel great and was a fantastic example of quality customer service and connection.So, here are my top ten connection tips:1. Be more about listening than talking. Discover people's preferred communication style; what do they respond to? How are they wired?2. Be genuinely interested in people.... even when there's nothing 'in it' for you.3. Go out of your way to make others feel great rather than you look good. Don't bring the conversation back to you.... even though you are amazing!4. Don't talk at people; talk to them.5. Smile, maintain eye contact, have fun.... be a person that people want to be around.6. Remember and use people's names (this is crucial).7. Be generous (not stupid) with your time, your knowledge, your gifts, your skills and your energy.8. Find the good in people. Stop finding a reason to dislike or to criticise.... we all know you're fabulous but stop doing it anyway.9. Make the effort (and not just with the people you like!) and consciously work at developing your connection skills. And don't just do it when you're in a good mood, things are going great and you're a happy little camper... do it irrespective of how you feel.10. Find a reason to genuinely and sincerely compliment people..... Dale Carnegie was talking about this in 1937; nothing's changed.Set yourself a challenge in the next week to connect with someone who you may have struggled with in the past... make the effort.

About the Author

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