

# Building Professional Relationships With Doctors

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Some people think rapport is facilitated with an insincere interest in others, or even 'pretending' to have similar interests. Others may think they are building rapport with a patient, doctor, or co-worker by always agreeing with them, or being a "yes person", and others will define rapport as changing their opinion to match their managers, or being over enthusiastic or pandering to them. None of these notions are correct!

In a word, *rapport* is defined as "harmony in a relationship".

Think of a symphony. In order for the symphony to sound harmonious, they must practice together and work at developing affinity within the group. Without the rapport, or harmony, they are going to sound terrible.

If you don't have harmony in your business relationships, they are not going to lead to your desired end, whether it be increasing your referrals from a particular doctor or getting your patients to get the most out of their therapy sessions.

Let's talk about a real life example. At a recent training program I attended, a participant named Peter pointed out that he always knew right away if he would be doing business with the prospective client based on his "initial relationship" with the prospect. He said, "I just get a feeling that those prospects I get along with will become a client. Those prospects that I don't "click" with, I can be pretty sure I will not be doing business with them." What Peter was really doing was sabotaging his business by not creating the affinity needed for successful business transactions. He was relying on the gods of professional relationships to occasionally send him a prospect that was made to order for him. It's a shame, especially when Peter could have acquired the strategies to create rapport with everyone.

Think of a recent situation where you were introduced to a new coworker, hospital administrator, patient, or a physician, and you immediately felt comfortable with them. You felt like you had known them for many years and you could trust them emphatically. Like a symphony that is experiencing rapport, everything "clicked" together, and the relationship "worked." You were experiencing harmony in the relationship and you have, and will, benefit accordingly.

## How Long Does It Take To Create A Professional Relationship In Rapport?

There aren't any rules or time frames for creating rapport or developing professional relationships. Sometimes creating relationship harmony takes months, or if you get lucky, it can happen quickly. The most important factor in creating rapport is acquiring the strategies so that you control the time frame for rapport to develop, then it can happen immediately. Finding the way to build harmony in a relationship can come in many different forms.

Recently at one COTA class where I spoke about “using magic tricks in therapy”, I achieved rapport with one participant by being argumentative, but not confrontational, with her. By doing this, we came to a common ground where we understood each other, both of us felt our concerns had been heard, and our relationship became harmonious. Our relationship continues to grow to this day as she has even gone on to shadow me from time to time.

This particular relationship building strategy demonstration proves how powerful these tools can be, even in unlikely situations.

### **Relationships In Rapport Are More Important Than Quality, Service Levels, And Fees**

Creating rapport is beneficial in person, or over the telephone. When you are in rapport with another person, both of you find it easy to be understood, and both feel each of your concerns are highly regarded by the other person. In addition, other typical patient concerns such as progress notes, scheduling, etc. become secondary.

I occasionally do consulting for privately owned therapy clinics. One client I worked with did not understand how one of their potential patients could turn down his superior product (new clinic, great location, experienced therapists) as opposed to his competitors. After doing some research, I found the potential customer had experienced a deep rapport with the competition, and even though my client was offering a much better product, the patient wanted to stay with my client's competition. The competition had developed a rapport with this particular customer, and the customer was not willing to put his trust into my client.

This example demonstrates why rapport is particularly important in business. People with whom we experience harmony are the individuals that will go the extra mile for us on completing tasks, make time to speak with us on the phone, make time to see us for an appointment, sign patient notes, and giving us referrals.

### **Why Don't We Always Create Long Term Professional Relationships With Rapport?**

Why not create these types of relationships in each and every interaction? Why not increase the quality of our relationships, while at the same time increasing

the quality of our patient load? The answer may be because we think it is unethical or we don't know how to create mutually beneficial relationships with everyone we come into contact with.

Creating these relationships is certainly not unethical. It can't be unethical, or there isn't harmony. You can never "use" people to accomplish your professional goals as a therapist. Rapport is all about creating a mutually beneficial environment in which we respect, and build relationships with appreciation for our differences, and in spite of them. Rapport always leads to mutually beneficial outcomes and genuine professional relationships. Not acquiring these skills or considering any other types of professional relationships other than those in which both parties experience the harmony of rapport is to bank on a short-term, less productive and less rewarding future than you should.