

[Key Component to Client Development: Developing Rapport](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 15th, 2012

Have you ever met a potential new client representative and really “hit it off” right away? I know that I have and those experiences ended up in the very best client relationships for me. There was just great chemistry between us.

When you have that experience you have established rapport with the client representative. The importance of establishing rapport is frequently overlooked. In a world where lawyers and law firms look alike and your competitors are as qualified as you, establishing rapport can be the tipping point for getting hired and for expanding the relationship with existing clients.



What is rapport? The [Merriam-Webster](#) definition is “relation marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity.” I see it as connecting with another person. There are many scientific studies on how and why rapport occurs. There seems to be three essential components of rapport.

1. Mutual attentiveness, which means having an intense mutual interest in something.
2. Positivity, which means friendliness, caring and warmth. Third is c
3. Coordination, which means balance, harmony and being in sync with one another.

So what do these three components mean to you as a lawyer? To establish mutual attentiveness, you need to have mutual interests. Obviously the potential legal matter creates mutual interests. But, I believe you can gain further rapport by finding common personal interests. It could be your children, an interest in a hobby or activity, being graduates of the same college, or simply having read the same book or seen the same movie.

To establish positivity, you need to be friendly and genuinely care about the client and the client representative. You need to put the client's and client representative's interest ahead of your own. Sometimes this means telling the client representative that you are not the best lawyer to handle a matter, or advising the client representative that they could save money by doing the work in-house and that you would be happy to help out.

More than anything else coordination is about understanding personality types, how your client representative receives information and non-verbal communication. Each personality type is different and it is important for you to know the differences to establish rapport.

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