



Episode 299: 3 Things You Need To Do To Build Instant Rapport With Your Clients & Athletes

1. Make eye contact

When you make eye contact you're perceived as trustworthy, competent, and confident. Not only that, eye contact is the most basic form of engagement. You can't expect your clients or athletes to give you their attention if you're not looking at them when you speak.

One-on-one: When speaking to one person, you should make direct eye contact with them between 50-70% of the time – *especially when you're listening to them speak*. Making eye contact shows them you're focused on the conversation and will also allow you to read their non-verbal cues, which will clue you into how they feel about what you're saying or gauge their level of understanding.

One-to-group: When you're speaking to a group, look at and speak to individuals within the group for one thought or sentence. When you're done with that thought or sentence, pause in silence and transition your eye contact to a new individual in the group and begin your next thought or sentence. You want to have one-on-one conversations within the group instead of talking to the entire group at one time.

2. Be curiously ignorant when you listen

When interacting with someone, play dumb. Convince yourself that you know nothing about this person and only they can tell you what you want to know. Too often we make assumptions about people based on the little we know about them, and those assumptions prevent us from asking the discovery questions we need to in order to deepen the relationship and make space for that person to share more about themselves.

Make it your goal to learn something new about your client or athlete each time you see them. No human being is uninteresting; you just haven't asked the right questions to make them interesting.

A few example discovery questions:

- *“What was that like?”*
- *“What was going through your head when that happened?”*
- *“What about the situation surprised you?”*
- *“If you had to do it all over again, is there anything you’d do differently?”*
- *“What’s a typical day look like for you?”*
- *“Did you get the response you were expecting?”*
- *“What’s the most challenging thing about that?”*

3. Speak plainly

Your word choices should be easily understood by whomever you’re speaking to. If there’s any chance your word choice will not be understood, either choose a simpler word or go the extra step of explaining the meaning of the word. It’s not patronizing, it’s helpful.

Using words your clients and athletes don’t understand is the equivalent of locking yourself in a room when your ultimate goal is to leave the room. Building rapport with your clients and athletes is rooted in shared understanding. If you deliberately make it difficult for your clients to understand, you’re sabotaging your ability to build rapport.

Try language style matching. When listening to your client or athlete speak, pay close attention to their word choices. When it’s your turn to speak, either work those same words into your own message or use words that are similar in nature. This is an easy, indirect way of demonstrating understanding.

Episode 300: Virtual Communication and Coaching Techniques to Create a Better Experience

1. Turn on your camera.

In communication, people need to ‘see’ you in order for oxytocin to be released – the bonding hormone. If you’re trying to develop rapport and goodwill with the person or people you’re communicating with virtually, turn on your camera. When you keep your camera off, you’re removing the only human element of the communication. If you don’t want to turn your camera on, at the very least have a thumbnail image as a placeholder.

2. Position your camera at eye level.

It's the most flattering angle and mimics a face-to-face conversation.

3. Lighting in front, not behind.

Position yourself in your space with the light in front of you, shining on you. Don't sit with a bright window behind you or in a dimly lit room. If you need to, invest in camera lighting (~\$20 on Amazon). Lighting is important because it helps people see the affect on your face as you speak, which helps them interpret the meaning of your words.

4. Sit back so they can see your gestures.

You're much more engaging when you gesture as you speak. Sit back away from your webcam so when you gesture, those on the other end of the camera can see them. It's boring to watch a talking head; use your hands!

5. Periodically look at and speak directly into the camera lens.

The people you're speaking with are on the other end of the camera. To give them the sense that you're looking and speaking to them, you need to look directly into the camera lens. As a rule, try to spend at least 40% of your time looking at and speaking directly into the camera lens.

6. When coaching a group virtually, use names before giving praise and cues.

You need to have someone's attention if you want them to hear what you have to say. If you want your coaching praise or cues to be heard, say their name *and then* give your praise or cues – not the other way around.

7. Build in time for small talk.

When communicating or coaching virtually, we feel compelled to 'get right to business.' Don't. Think of the amount of small talk you have when communicating or coaching in person. It's what relationships are built on. Save enough time to have friendly conversation either at the start or end of your time together; your relationship depends on it.

Episode 301: How to Get Rid of Filler Words

I like to call filler words the 'guilty pleasure' of communication. We just can't seem to help ourselves even though we know we'd be better without them. So why do we continue to use them?

Because we want people to think we're being thoughtful with our words.

Because they can soften the blow of what would have otherwise been a curt response.

Because they allow us to maintain control of the 'speaking' role.

Although valid reasons, they aren't compelling enough to continue using filler words. Because filler words make us sound tentative, others may perceive us as lacking confidence, or worse, lacking intelligence.

How can you greatly diminish or completely eliminate using filler words?

1. Observe what filler words you use and where they happen.

The most common filler words are "um," "uh," "like," "you know," "right," and "so."

For most, they happen during transitions between thoughts or sentences or at the start/end of thoughts or sentences.

The best way to objectively observe this habit is by recording yourself speaking candidly about a topic of your choosing, for between 2-3 minutes. With a pen and paper nearby, write down which filler words you use and where they happen.

2. Begin replacing those filler words with a pause in silence.

Having objectively observed your filler word habit, try re-doing that same recording, but this time pause in silence after each complete thought or sentence. You will hold your pause in silence until you're sure about what you'd like to say next. The pause in silence will feel extremely uncomfortable and as if you've been silent for an eternity, but it will 'hear' quickly to the listener.

Watch your new recording and observe what filler words you used (if any) and where you used them.

Repeat steps 1 and 2 until you've completely eliminated your filler words.

Episode 302: The System of Communication

Communication is a system of elements and skills. To improve your communication, you need to understand the elements and skills within that system. Without this understanding, you'll put great effort forward with little result.

How can you write compelling emails if you don't understand the fundamentals of effective written communication, such as readability, tone, and message organization?

How can you get people interested in your ideas if you don't understand the fundamentals of persuasion and delivery?

In this episode of the podcast, I summarized what I believe are the four elements and skills of great communication. In the segments that follow, I will go into detail on each of the four elements and skills.

1. Your ability to assess the situation.

- How well do you 'read the room'? How conscious are you of the social dynamics of any given communication situation? Your ability to see and interpret the context of a communication situation you find yourself in will ultimately determine the success or effectiveness of your communication.

2. Your ability to build a message plan.

- Using what you learned through observational awareness of the communication situation, how will you plan what you'll share and the order in which you'll share it? This includes the topic of your message, the point you want to make, what's need to know versus nice to know, the order in which you'll organize your information, and so on.

3. Your ability to translate your message.

- How do you put your message plan into action? Will you send an email, have a one-on-one conversation, deliver a formal presentation or send a text message? Once you understand the situation and have a message plan in place, you need to be able to determine the most effective carrier for your message and then execute it at the highest standard.

4. Your ability to speak.

- Do you know what to do with your body, your voice, and other supporting physical elements in order to gain the interested attention of the people you're speaking to? This includes what you do with your eyes, hands and posture, how you manage your volume, tone, rate of speech and word choice, and how those physical and vocal skills interact with other supporting physical elements such as a projector screen or notes.

Episode 303: Your Ability to Assess the Situation

Your ability to assess the situation in which you're communicating is also sometimes referred to as 'reading the room' or having situational awareness.

This is an important skill because it gives you the information you need to communicate your message in a way your listeners will understand. After all, the word "communication" comes from a Latin word meaning "to make common."

Think of situational awareness as your 'communication assessment.' It's a series of questions you either reflect on internally or ask externally to understand or learn more about the context of the situation and the people you're speaking to – whether it be emotions and feelings, level of knowledge, attitudes, or relational aspects.

When it comes to situational awareness, you'll need to be able to do it in a moment's notice as well as in advance of planned interactions. I've outlined a communication assessment for each scenario below:

In-The-Moment: To assess the situation in the midst of an interaction, ask these questions.

- Where do I want this relationship to be after this conversation or in the future?
- In one word, how would I describe how this person/people are feeling in this moment?
- What information am I missing and need to ask for?

Planned Interactions: If you have time to prepare, think through these questions.

- In the end, what do I need them to know, do, or believe?
- How will their knowledge or feelings about me as a person impact my message?
- How will their knowledge or feelings about my topic impact my message?
- What are they expecting to hear?
- What might they resist about my message?

The success of your communication depends highly on your ability to understand the context of the situation and the people you're communicating with. The story behind the campaign "[Don't mess with Texas](#)" is a perfect example of that.

Episode 304: Your Ability to Build a Message

How you organize what you're going to say or write is important because it's ultimately what determines whether or not your listener or reader will be able to follow along and understand what your message is. If your message is messy and disjointed, you'll lose your audience's attention because you're asking them to do too much work.

If you think of your information as a puzzle, it's your job to put the puzzle together before your audience shows up.

In this segment, I shared one framework I like to use and my clients have found it easy to remember and apply: PREP.

- **(P) Point:** State your overarching point in a clear, direct way.
- **(R) Reasons:** List between 1-3 reasons you believe this or proving why your point is true.
- **(E) Evidence:** Provide evidence to support each reason you listed. Evidence can come in the form of data, an example, an analogy, quote, or a demonstration.
- **(P) Point:** Restate your main, overarching point. People remember most what they hear last, so hit your point home.

Example – PREP in action: Let's say I'm trying to convince my gym owner to start charging for our initial consultations - which we currently offer for free.

- (Point): "Hi Rachel, can we talk about charging our customers for their initial consultation?"
- (Reasons): "I think adding a fee will reduce last-minute cancellations and we'll convert more client's because we're attracting the clients that can afford our training fees."
- (Evidence): "Just last week, we had 3 people cancel their initial consultation within 3 hours of their scheduled time – without any penalty. And because it was so late, we couldn't fill that spot with a paying client. Also, we've only been able to convert 50% of our initial consultations into paying clients, and many of those people have told us it's because they can't afford our training prices."
- (Point): "So, I think it will save us money and improve our conversion rate if we charge \$25 for our initial consultations. Are you on board?"

Try these three bonus message organization frameworks:

1. **XYZ** (for concise messages)
 - The problem we face or opportunity we have is X
 - I recommend doing Y
 - The cost/benefit ratio is Z*
 - **"Z" is the end of the alphabet, so there's nothing more to say. Stop here.*

2. **SEE** (for impromptu messaging)
 - (S) Statement: Make a statement about the subject
 - (E) Evidence: Give evidence to support your statement
 - (E) Emotion: Tell a story or cite an example

 3. **Speaking with logic** (for longer, problem-based or action-oriented messages)
 - (Problem) The problem is...
 - (Cause and consequence)
 - a. This problem happened because...
 - b. As a result, we're facing / having to...
 - (Solution) To fix this / straighten this out / remedy this we need to...
 - (Implications)
 - a. On the downside...
 - b. On the upside...
 - (Actions) To move this forward we need to...
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Episode 305: Choosing a Medium for Your Message

Message translation is about choosing what you're going to use to share your message and how you're going to use it. Many of us default to whatever communication medium we're most comfortable with – whether it be email, text message, in-person conversation, pre-recorded video, phone call, or maybe social media. This isn't wrong, but you'd see better results if you made it a conscious decision based on your audience and the context of the scenario.

You need to choose the medium that works best for the specific person or people you're communicating with and then know how to execute on that medium to its full potential.

Why is this important?

Because time, place, and medium play a dominant role in how your communication is received. But this isn't new news to you – it's why you don't call your clients at 2am to reschedule a morning session, but you might text them instead. It's why you don't do their intake assessment over email, but instead choose to do it in-person or on a call – because you understand that the communication demands personal interaction.

Text Messaging

Texting is great for sending short messages that aren't urgent and don't involve emotional-based content – such as sharing bad news, giving feedback, or confronting someone about an issue. The big thing with texting is to be sure whoever you're texting with is comfortable with that medium. Some people prefer to do everything over text whereas others see texting as too personal or casual. How do you know – you ask.

Here are a few tips for texting:

- Try to send as few messages as possible. Instead of sending 3 separate texts, combine them into one longer text with formatting. This will limit the annoyance of the pinging and vibrating on the receiver's end.
- Avoid using acronyms and abbreviated language. Unless you're absolutely certain the person will know what you mean, just take the extra few seconds to spell things out.
- Add 'feeling' through the use of emojis and punctuation. Texting lacks all body language and voice tone, so it can be easy for someone to misinterpret the intent of your message. Effectively communicating over text requires you to add emotional clarity.

Emailing

Emails are best for messages that have substantial detail and ones that you want a written record of. Email makes it easy to keep a group of people in-the-know, without having to synchronize schedules. Today, emailing would be considered semi-formal.

Here are a few tips for emails:

- Enter the recipient's email address last, just before you're ready to hit 'send.' This will reduce the chance of you accidentally sending an email that's partially complete or worse, includes things you had planned to edit out.
- Put your main point up front. Write what the point of your email is or what you want the person to do with the information you're sharing in the first 2-3 sentences.
- Read it out loud before you hit send. You'll catch more content and grammar errors reading your emails out loud than you would reading them your head.

Phone Calls

Phone calls are a preferable medium of communication if they're an option for you and the receiver. They're preferable because they're much more personal and the person on the other end can use your vocal cues to better interpret your message. Also, they can save time. Why email/text back and forth multiple times when you can accomplish the task with a single quick phone call?

Here are a few tips for phone calls:

- Know what you want to say. Be prepared with your message. Get to your point. Unless it's a personal call, prioritize not wasting the other person's time. They'll let you know if they've got time for small talk.
- Stay focused on the conversation. It's easy to multi-task when you're on a call, but people almost always sense that – either because you're delayed in your responses or your reactions to what they say are muted because you weren't really paying attention.
- Summarize the most important things before you hang up. If you agreed to something, restate that at the end of the call and confirm everyone's in agreement. You can take it one step further and send a recap email after the call if there were multiple next steps.

Social Media

Social media is preferable for content that is educational, entertaining, or motivational in nature, and is focused around a single point. Whatever you post should support your professional image or support your brand's mission – if we're looking at this from a business standpoint.

Here are a few tips for social media:

- Think twice before sharing personal information. It's possible to over-expose yourself on social media. Sharing personal information can negatively impact the impression you make on authority figures, employers, or even strangers.
- Consider keeping a private account for personal content and a business account for professional content.
- Clean up the old content and pictures on your social media channels. Remove or hide images or content that may negatively impact your professional image.

Public Speaking / Presentations

Public speaking and presentations are formal messaging opportunities. They're ideal for educating people on a topic they're interested in or persuading people to take action based on a problem or opportunity you've identified. They're demanding and require a substantial amount of preparation time; but if done well, they can have a long-lasting impact.

Here are a few tips for public speaking and presentations:

- If possible, get to know your audience before deciding on a topic. Once you know their demographics and preferences, you can select a topic they'll be interested in and eager to learn more about.
- Practice, practice, practice. Regardless of the quality of your content, if your voice shakes, your eyes are all over the place, and your words come out of a firehose, your audience will be too distracted or overwhelmed to care.
- At the beginning of your speech or presentation, tell your listeners why the information you're sharing is important to them – what's in it for them if they give you their full attention?

Episode 306: Effectively Deliver Your Message

What does it mean to effectively deliver a message? It means that when you choose to deliver a message verbally, your body language and the elements of your voice don't distract your listeners from the true meaning of your words and intentions.

There isn't a 'right' and 'wrong' way to communicate, but there is 'more effective' and 'less effective'. Effectiveness falls on a spectrum. Your goal is to become aware of where you're at on that spectrum, and then purposely move yourself toward being more effective.

In this segment, we talked about how to manage your eye contact, hands, and posture when speaking so you can be more effective and feel a great sense of calm and confidence.

Eyes

When you speak, make direct eye contact with one person at a time. In a group setting, you should have multiple 1:1 conversations, and should never speak to the entire group at once. The easiest way to do this is to find one person to start looking at. Once your eyes are locked in, share a brief thought or sentence. At the end of that thought or sentence, pause in silence as you physically move your eyes to a new person. Once locked in with that new person, say your next thought or sentence. Repeat this process randomly as you say whatever it is you want to say.

Looking at people while you speak conveys self-confidence, it builds trust, people will know you're focused, and it makes people feel cared about.

Hands

When speaking, people need to see your hands up and active. When you gesture, you help paint a picture of your words for your listeners and you're more interesting to watch. People who don't gesture as they speak are less engaging than those who do.

Posture

Whether you're standing while speaking or sitting down, the trunk of your body should remain still. Movement in the trunk of your body and in your feet is distracting to your listeners (gestures aren't, because they're a complement to your words).

Unless you've got somewhere to go, you should stand balanced with your weight equally distributed between both feet. If possible, avoid rocking into your hips as well.

When seated, keep your feet flat on the floor and limit any rocking or swaying in your chair.

Episode 307: The Power of Stories

Stories hold more power than any other form of communication. They allow us to capture the emotion of the people we're communicating with. And as humans, emotion proceeds logic. No matter how rational and sound your information is, if there's an emotional disconnect – meaning something just doesn't "feel right" for the person receiving your information – that sound logic behind your information won't matter.

To tap into the power of story, it's important that you understand how stories are structured. When you know how a story is structured, you'll be able to more easily craft information into a narrative format and move people in the direction you want – to get a hesitant client to commit to a regular training schedule, to help your athlete understand

the importance of eating nutritious foods, or to convert more prospective clients into paying clients.

How are stories structured? They all have a beginning, middle, and an end.

All stories are told in this format, some just longer than others.

The beginning: Used to grab attention and paint a picture of a current reality. In it you talk about who the main character is or characters are, and then you provide details about the situation or challenge the character(s) face.

Before you transition to the middle of your story, you want to foreshadow the hurdles the character(s) faced or where the story might end. When you hint at the challenges or the ending, you expose a gap between where things are and where they could be. Your listener or reader is now interested in hearing how the character(s) will overcome the hurdles.

The middle: In the middle, you more clearly define the hurdles faced and how the character(s) overcomes those hurdles.

The end: Paint a detailed picture of what life was like after overcoming the hurdles. The end might describe how the character(s) felt or behaved as a result of overcoming the hurdles, or it might be a 'lesson learned.' The end is the payoff. It makes your listener or reader think about what this story has to do with their own life. They can see themselves in the story.

What can you do with the framework?

Use it. Start writing down stories. Stories you can tell to your clients, athletes, stories you can use at your staff meetings or in your presentations.

Stories are all around you. You hear other people tell stories, you're living a story, and you read stories. Stories don't have to be your own. Go out looking for them, and when you find one you like, use it. Keep a notebook of stories or have a folder on your desktop that houses stories you like, but haven't found a place for yet.

Episode 308: How To Apologize When You Make a Public Mistake

In early March, the NCAA received national attention for the equipment they failed to provide to the women's basketball teams during the National tournament as compared to the men's teams.

After the initial photos of the women's set up went public, the VP of Women's Basketball at the NCAA, Liz Holzman, made an official statement:

"We acknowledge that some of the amenities teams would typically have access to have not been as available inside the controlled environment. In part, this is due to the limited space and the original plan was to expand the workout area once additional space was available later in the tournament. However, we want to be responsive to the needs of our participating teams, and we are actively working to enhance existing resources at practice courts, including additional weight training equipment."

There are two issues with this statement:

1. There was no apology – no admission a mistake was made. The words "we're sorry" weren't included.
2. It laden with jargon. She used the words "acknowledge, In part, responsive, enhance." These words are impersonal, and if an apology needs to be anything, it needs to be personal.

There's a lesson in this for all of us – we need to know how to apologize. Having the humility and the ability to apologize is a superpower. It's the one thing that can save our butt when we make a mistake – which we will.

Three-step apology process:

1. Think
2. Apologize
3. Act

(1) Think

When you make a mistake, you need to do some detective work on why and how it happened. Ask yourself:

- What led you to make the mistake – bad information, insufficient information, external or internal pressure, an unexpected emotional event?
- Is it possible the mistake, or one like it, could happen again?
- If so, what can you do right now, what measures can you put into place, to reduce the chances of it happening again?

When reflecting on your mistake, you want to look for the signposts you failed to see the first time. When you can find the signposts, the next time you're walking the same path, or one just like it, you can stop yourself and say "this looks familiar."

(2) Apologize

Apologies are best done face-to-face. That way, the person or people you're apologizing to get the added benefit of seeing you and feeling your physical presence, which can help them judge your sincerity.

A complete apology includes:

- Admitting that you made a mistake.
- Explaining what that mistake was (be specific) – what did you or didn't you do?
- An "I'm sorry." Not "I apologize, or "my bad," but "I'm sorry."
 - "I'm sorry for the harm/damage/confusion my mistake caused."
- Explaining what you've learned from your mistake.
- Statement about your plan to prevent the mistake from happening again.

(3) Act

Do whatever you can to undo choices you made that caused hurt or damage, and begin taking the action steps you committed to in your apology. Taking immediate action after apologizing gives traction to your words. It's how you begin to rebuild your reputation and credibility in the eyes of the people your mistake impacted.

We're all going to make mistakes – we're human. We can't expect ourselves or others to be perfect. But we can expect an apology. And our apologies need to reek of integrity. Our apologies need to prove to the person or people we give them to that we ARE the person they thought we were.

So, what the NCAA's statement should have said is:

"We made a terrible mistake when we chose not to give our Women's teams access to the same amenities as our Men's teams. We're sorry for the hurt we've caused and will correct our mistake immediately. This mistake is a reflection of the culture of the NCAA; a culture we need, and will change."