Hot EA skills for the PA looking to reach the top

Plus

How to Successfully Manage Your Boss
Competency Interviewing
How To Win Friends
Our “Day in the Life of ...” series has been very popular with DeskDemon’s users and we would like to extend it! So, we would like to hear about you and your job and as a thank you we will give you £25 Marks & Spencer vouchers, on publication.

We know from our forum boards at the Hub that networking and support is important to you all. Hearing about each other’s work and offering advice and a helping hand can be invaluable. But not only that, it’s interesting to hear about the experience of others. It puts things in to perspective and offers us the chance to see how others got to where they are, overcoming challenges and what they think of their role. And that’s why our “Day in the Life of...” series is so fascinating.

We are looking for PAs, secretaries and Administrators from a wide range of sectors and from the smallest to the largest organisations, so get in touch if you would like to share your thoughts with us all.

If you would like to be featured on DeskDemon’s “Day in the life of ...” series, please visit:
www.deskdemo.com/pages/uk/career/dayinthelifeof2009
Editor’s Letter

How to Successfully Manage Your Boss (And Increase Your Chances of Promotion)

Fabulous Beauty Tips - Which Cosmetics Create the Perfect Finish?

Competency Interviewing - What Are the Questions?

How To Win Friends And Influence People

Crossed Eyed With Numbers

Interview with UK MSFA Winner, Debbie Neal
Happy New Year and welcome to the first issue of PA Enterprise for 2009! This year I would like to start out with a request to our readers. We are looking for PAs and other office professionals who would like to pass on their skills and knowledge to their peers. You, our readers, have a vast amount of experience and expertise and we want to take advantage of that resource and give our audience a chance to hear about real world workplace topics from their fellow office professionals. We are looking for everything from simple “How To” articles, tips and tricks, or even more in-depth topics like office politics. Do you feel particularly strong in an area, or have a better way to accomplish a task? Let us know! If you are concerned your writing isn’t up to par, send us your draft and our editors will polish it up and refine your work. Don’t be shy, share your expertise! Enter your content at:

http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/panewscentre

Let’s get to what is in store for you in this month’s PA Enterprise. January’s cover story is an interview with our UK Management Support Fellowship Award winner Debbie Neale. Debbie, Executive Administrative Manager and PA to the Group CEO and the Group COO of G4S, lets us know how winning the award has impacted on her and her company and what she is doing now.

It’s an unsettling time in the work force at the moment, with more and more people being made redundant and the job market tougher and more competitive than ever. This month we take a look at Competency Based Interviewing, which is designed to assess a candidate’s abilities, more fully. Talent Acquisition specialist Adam Maurer, gives you low down on the types of questions you are most likely to be asked, in this increasingly popular approach to interviewing candidates. Plus, our feature on How to Win Friends and Influence People will give you tips on how to build rapport quickly, so that people (and interviewers), will regard you more favourably.

Two critical skills for any PA are the ability to influence and persuade. And, that’s not just your team, your peers or subordinates. Just as you need to manage down or sideways, it is just as important that you know how to manage upwards, i.e. your boss. ‘Do it well and you’ll shine’, says Shona Garner, Executive and Business Coach, whose tips and simple rules in, How To Successfully Manage Your Boss (And Increase Your Chance of Promotion) are a must read.

Finally, we have Fabulous Beauty Tips - Which Cosmetics Create the Perfect Finish? This feature is a refresher on how to properly apply makeup, so you look great, where ever you go.

We hope you enjoy this month’s issue of PA Enterprise.

Until next month!

Susan Silva
Managing Editor

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Britain’s first floating budget hotel - guaranteed ‘sea sickness free!"

Buying a barge or joining the Royal Navy are no longer the only ways to sleep on the water, as Premier Inn unveils plans for its innovative ‘Floatel’ (floating budget hotel) - a first for the British budget hotel industry.

Building work is due to start in 2009 at Hartlepool Marina, where there’s a growing demand for additional hotel accommodation, but little viable building space on-land.

It will be the first time a budget hotel has been purpose-built on water. Premier Inn chiefs say that the planned hotel will offer the same quality and value of its other 556 hotels - but with the added benefit of a waterfront view.

As well as having a ‘Good Night Guaranteed’, guests would be sure to avoid sea sickness because the hotel’s special design means it will float vertically with the tide; while the horizontal movement will be restricted by sleeved piles driven into the marina.

The waterfront hotel will be linked to an existing Premier Inn on the quayside by a pedestrian ramp and an external platform lift.

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Carbon Consultancy launches free environmental flight search tool

The Carbon Consultancy claims to have launched the first flight search tool that will allow travel bookers to take carbon efficiency into account when choosing a flight.

Called Carbon Friendly Flight Search, this new web based tool allows bookers to search for information on the best price, agents, airlines, and carbon rankings for airlines based upon fleet efficiency. It also discriminates between direct and indirect flight options and shows the relationship between price and carbon efficiency. The carbon emissions data is based upon the same principle as emissions bands used in the licensing of UK cars. It combines the fleets of major airlines with aircraft fuel consumption data from a database used by DEFRA to support its aviation emissions reporting guidelines.

The tool is available to companies as
a white label widget, without charge.

For more information visit: www.thecarbonconsultancy.co.uk

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Papershow: Revolutionising Meetings

Oxford Papershow is raising the bar and set to become the ultimate tool for meetings, conferences and presentations. This new product combines digital technology and special digital paper to enable the user to make annotations (such as notes, comments etc.) directly onto a PowerPoint presentation. It can then be e-mailed to the participants directly from the PC, at the end of the meeting - so no need for transcribing from flipcharts.

You can use your screen or wall as an electronic flipchart - so no need for flipcharts or other cumbersome equipment - the digital pen, USB key and digital paper is all you’ll require. In addition to making annotations, you can insert shapes, vary the colour of your markings and start audio and video files.

Commenting on the this easy to use, compact and mobile product, Nick Fitzherbert, a trainer at business training company AFLAME commented: “The real difficulty that people have in writing on boards and flipcharts is capturing the information. This is a recurring problem when I train people in brainstorming techniques. Papershow is a highly-portable plug and play product that will provide an answer to these and other issues, including helping to bring a presenter and a PowerPoint presentation together by being able to interact with the screen.”Papershow is available to buy now from selected stationers and retailers, including Amazon and Ryman, and prices for the kit start at £117.49.

For further information visit: www.papershow.com

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IHG opens first Hotel Indigo in the UK

IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group) has opened the doors of Hotel Indigo London Paddington – the first Hotel Indigo outside North America.

Hotel Indigo is IHG’s boutique hotel brand. With 21 hotels open in North America, and 56 hotels in the global development pipeline, the opening of the Hotel Indigo London Paddington marks the start of the global brand roll-out.

The 64-room Hotel Indigo London Paddington, is a row of nine converted Georgian townhouses in London Street just minutes from the station with views over Norfolk Gardens.

Hotel Indigo appeals to both business and leisure travellers who want to stay in a contemporary, unpretentious boutique hotel. Hotel Indigo properties are best suited to capital cities and cultural centres, they tend to be small and have a strong focus on delivering personalised customer service.

Andy Cossett, chief executive, IHG, said: “Hotel Indigo combines the feel of a boutique hotel with the benefits of a large hotel group, including our reservation systems and loyalty programme. The brand has been a success in the Americas and we are confident we can grow it around the world.”

IHG also announced it is to open three more Hotel Indigo properties in London by 2012:

Cannon Street - A 38 room, five storey townhouse with a 70 square metre roof garden, a gym and a restaurant.

Philpot Lane - A 43 room, five floor conversion with a street front restaurant, bar and gym.

Kensington Church Street - A 51 room, four storey conversion with a restaurant and gym.

For more information: http://www.ichotelsgroup.com

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Win a Toyota Prius with Fellowes R-kive System

Fellowes, the leading provider of business machines and storage solutions, is encouraging office workers to “go green” when choosing storage products over the coming months.

From 1 January to 31 March inclusive, every purchase of Fellowes R-Kive System storage boxes (10 pack) or Fellowes R-Kive System transfer files (20 pack) will give you the chance to win a Toyota Prius, the world’s most famous “green” car. Fellowes’ entire R-Kive range of storage solutions is made of 100% recycled cardboard, and is designed with the environmentally-conscious customer in mind.

Fellowes’ R-Kive System range can be purchased from Viking, Office Depot, Lyreco, Corporate Express, Vow and Spicers and most local office suppliers and wholesalers.
Two critical skills which the highest performing managers have in spades are the ability to influence and persuade. The most obvious targets for your powers of persuasion are your team, and sometimes your peers in different departments; but just as you need to manage down or sideways, it’s also critical you know how to manage upwards.

Do it well, and you’ll shine. Do it badly and you could muddy your reputation and find yourself being passed over for advancement.

To help you make the right impression, here are four simple rules to remember, which will move you in the right direction.

1. Find out what the expectations are - and exceed them.
   Sounds obvious and simple - yet in my experience it’s neither! Try to answer the following questions:

   Do you actually know what your manager’s top priorities are?

   How clear are you about the order of priority your manager has for each area of your performance? How clear do you think your manager is about his/her expectations of you?

   Sometimes expectations are written - but more often than not, they are unwritten expectations, which your boss may never have really clearly articulated to themselves, let alone you!

   Put it this way - if you don’t know for sure what will score you top points with this individual, you may find yourself chasing down the wrong rabbit hole.

   And this is NOT about currying favour, or ingratiating yourself. This is about having a clear understanding on both sides about what is important, so you both know and agree where you should focus most of your...
time and attention. It actually makes your job easier.

So - if you don’t know the answers to the questions above - make a date in your diary to discuss this with your boss! (And before you actually have that meeting, make sure you read technique 4!)

2. Anticipate and address a boss’ concerns.

The trick here is a technique from what we call Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and is about being able to see the different “perceptual positions” around an issue. Put simply this means seeing something through someone else’s eyes, so you understand their thoughts, feelings, worries and perspectives.

An obvious way is to ask them! And we’d definitely encourage you to find the right opportunities to do just that. However, sometimes there’s neither time, nor is it appropriate. So what do you do then? You put yourself in their shoes. And when we say in their shoes - we mean wearing their shoes and looking through their eyes! This is not how you would feel in their shoes. You’re not them!

So, this is easier said than done. But here’s a few killer questions to ask yourself:

What will my boss be anxious about?
What do his bosses expect of him?
How does what I do to help him/her look good?
If I/we do “x”, what might he/she be concerned about?

By answering these questions you’ll be much clearer about what you need to do to both pre-empt and address their concerns. It also significantly increases their perception that you really understand where they are coming from, which in turn significantly strengthens the trust and relationship between you.

3. Consistently look for ways to add value.

This is a really simple rule. Bosses are more likely to listen if you speak in “can-do” language, and you are organised, and sound enthusiastic and eager to deliver results.

Look ahead when discussing a project, rather than dwelling on what’s already occurred. Follow through on promises. And adopt a “no-excuses” policy. Failing to produce results almost guarantees a boss will doubt your abilities. So, if you haven’t quite achieved what you set out to do - rather than saying what you’ve not been able to do, start with what you have achieved; be specific about what barriers there were, and summarise your plans to get back on track.

Your boss has pressures of his own. Don’t add to them.

4. Know your style - and know their style;

and adapt your behaviour to suit their preferences. A great analogy from relationship expert Shay McConnon is that of the “hot chilli trap”. What is this? It’s when someone assumes that, because they love hot chilli, everyone else does too! Patently, some people do not like hot chilli!

If you’re in a foreign country you at least attempt to learn “please” and “thank you” in their language and show respect for their customs. It’s just a courtesy. You adapt your own behaviour to show respect for the differences of perception.

To assume, because we speak the same language, we see things in the same way - is quite clearly erroneous, yet we still persist in believing the mantra “treat others as you’d like to be treated.”

Absolutely not! Treat others as they would like to be treated.

So what does this mean for you in your relationship with your boss? It means the more you get to understand their style and preferences, and tweak your style to match, the more likely they are to warm towards you.

If you lean towards an eye for detail and precision, but your boss just wants the big picture - give it that way. What is their biggest strength? Capitalise on it. What is their central goal? How can you assist? If they are extroverts who like to talk through ideas, provide that opportunity. If they are introverts who like to be able to read through something, and ponder it first, present your proposals in a way which will help them assimilate the information and ask questions.

Respect how they like to be treated. And what if they don’t show the same respect for you? Well, that’s a subject for another article! ■

Shona Garner is an experienced Executive and Business Coach, specialising in helping managers build top performing teams, and increase their own standing in the organisation. For a straight talking, practical guide to the top four secrets of every outstanding manager, visit http://www.increasingmanagerialsuccess.com/freereport.php! www.increasingmanagerialsuccess.com/freereport.php
Interview with UK MSFA Winner, Debbie Neal
By DeskDemon.com

Over the past year and a half almost two million votes were cast worldwide for the UK and US Management Support Fellowship Award programs. DeskDemon users voted for many very exceptional candidates. By your popular vote, Debbie Neale, Executive Administrative Manager and PA to the Group CEO and the Group COO of G4S took home the title and £10,000 in prize money in the UK. This month, Debbie shares her comments about the impact that winning the award has had within the organisation, what she is doing now and gives some key advice to PAs and secretaries on advancing their career.

Hi Debbie, Congratulations on winning the Management Support Fellowship Award in the UK. How did you feel when you found out you won?

Hi Susan. Thank you! I was so thrilled to find out I’d won the award - it was so very close and I’m sure it went right to the wire. The competition was incredibly strong, and every day the percentage points were shifting closer and closer. I must have chewed my nails to the knuckles the last couple of days!

Though I am sure the day to day tasks you perform haven’t changed, has the recognition you get from your peers or co workers changed?

I’m not sure that the recognition that I get personally has changed a great deal - although I’m certainly more famous in ‘G4S world’ than I was! I get a good deal of comments on my lovely ‘star’ trophy. What I have found amazing though is how the award has raised the profile of the PAs across the company. When the managers talk to me now, they are all really keen to tell me how great their own PA is. I was at a management dinner recently, and two of the Directors were getting really competitive about who’s PA was best. I think it has really been an eye-opener for a lot of people.

I heard you were to speak at the IIR Executive PA conference, what did you talk about and how did it go?

I was invited to speak at the IIR Executive PA conference back in December. I hadn’t done any kind of public speaking since doing drama at college, so I was terrified! I was incredibly lucky in that I spoke on Day Two of the conference and I was present for Carmen MacDougall’s talk on projecting confidence and Judi James’ seminar on Impression Management on Day One, so I did have some expert tips. I started with an ‘ice breaker’ which fell really flat, so I made a joke about how I’d learned nothing from Carmen and Judi, and if I’d slowed down (said sloooowly), breathed properly (inhaled/exhaled) and stood up straight (really straight!), then I’d have been much more successful. Just doing that made me feel better, and towards the end of the talk I was even getting a couple of laughs. So it went ok, but I won’t be over-keen on volunteering to do another!

As a peer to a peer winner, how...
would you advise PAs who wish to advance and climb their individual corporate ladder?

I think the key is to understand what's going on in your boss's work life and what part their role plays in the organisation. Know what the priorities are. Be interested, be pro-active. Read the minutes of meetings, know who the key people are. Ask questions and listen carefully. 'What's important this week?' Your boss does what s/he does because s/ he's good at it and chances are s/he's passionate about it. Be interested and build that relationship. Be their business partner. Be the 'make it happen' person. I think it's also really important to be a nice person to have around. Someone positive, optimistic, friendly and warm is going to get far more opportunities than someone who is maybe equally skilled, but is negative and a drain to have around. Certainly when I interview someone, I feel that the skills are almost "a given" at a senior PA level - the real standout is personality.

As part of the awards nomination process, we asked each candidate "What would you say are the three most important skills you use at work and why?" You answered, relationship building, multi-tasking, and prioritizing and added "Other key skills are the ability to mind read / read upside down / type like lightning / use Google like a pro / have a memory like an elephant / sense of humour (hugely important) and a healthy dose of perspective." How are those added skills going for you? Can we test you on the read upside down? :-) You sure can. Although I sometimes have problems with Nick's handwriting, even the right-way up! I've worked for doctors with better handwriting! Funny that you mentioned the 'mind reading' skill. I've been organising a quarterly management conference and it was only the day before the conference that I realised that I hadn't told any of my PA colleagues (who needed to prepare itineraries for their bosses) anything about the venue, the timings, the dinner arrangements, etc., etc.. I'd done the typical boss 'well I know all about it, so surely you do too' thing. So embarrassing.

Can you tell us about any turning points in your career, how did you get to where you are now?

A key thing for me - a real 'light-bulb moment' was the time I let my old boss read the psychometric profile I'd just had done. Normally with those things I'd have just hidden it away in a drawer, too scared that anyone would see what my "weaknesses" were. He not only read it; he scribbled all over it - exclamation marks, question marks, smiley faces, etc.. He then gave me one of his old profiles that he'd had tucked away in his drawer. I can't tell you how much of a difference this made to our working relationship. Suddenly he understood why I did certain things a certain way and I had a big insight into the way he worked, and the way he liked to work. Some assumptions I made were completely wrong, and some things that completely baffled and infuriated me, suddenly made perfect sense. It was so successful that we decided to do some activities around team dynamics and got the rest of the team involved, which was fun and also incredibly useful. The first thing I did when I started working for Nick was to run through the psychometric profile that I'd done when I'd been recruited, and then I read through his. I really recommend it!

Do you have any final comments you would like to say the DeskDemon's readers who voted for you?

I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to read through all the entries and to vote for me. It's been an amazing experience. I've got in touch with people that I worked with years ago, as well as people I've maybe interacted with once, and was completely bowled over by the warmth of the response that I had from everyone. The comments that were left on my page were just amazing - I managed to take a printout of them, and will treasure the comments forever - particularly when I'm having a bad day! For example; one of the PAs that I talk to at our press agency decided unilaterally to send out a note to all her PA contacts, and it was only when a mutual friend asked me how my voting was going, that I knew what she'd done! There are some truly lovely people out there. ■

Next month DeskDemon will share the US winner, Marie Herman's story. Check back next month to read her story!
Fabulous Beauty Tips - Which Cosmetics Create the Perfect Finish?

By Kacy Carr
Why is it so important to have access to makeup and cosmetic advice before use? An honest answer is because some women haven’t got a clue how to apply makeup properly to create the perfect finish. Every beauty product will be tried and tested to an extent where it is given the okay after reaching the final stage to prove that it will do the job for which it was purposely developed. If these products are not used accordingly - then heaven forbid on the result.

Come on girls be honest, have you ever joked at another’s expense because of their lipstick shade or how it was applied? We have more women walking round like Coco the Clown than that of a natural beauty. There is a technique to applying cosmetics and to buying them. Yes; it all begins at the shop counter. Use the wrong beauty product can only result in a wrong you. Ideal beauty products for your skin type and hair colouring are vital.

The first step to being beautiful is to ask yourself, do you really need cosmetics? Natural beauty comes from within. If you feel naked with out lipstick then you owe it to yourself to find out the tricks of the trade.

Check out the useful tips below.

Aloe Vera - Resembling the cactus, it is a plant belonging to the Lily family. Some varieties have valuable medicinal purposes. Much of the plant is water, but the outer leaf contains sap which is included in lotions and gels. Aloe Vera is rich in vitamins/minerals and is also a fabulous source for skin care. It is used for skin conditions like eczema, mild burns and scrapes.

Foundation - Make sure you have removed every trace of makeup from the day before fresh foundation is applied. Makeup should be cleansed off every night. New foundation layered over leftover debris looks unattractive. Never rush any beauty pact with the face as it can have disastrous results. When you apply foundation have the room nice and bright. Dim lighting will promote the colour in a different tone.

Blusher - To get the best affect from blusher is to find one most natural to your skin colouring. The primary object is to choose a colour that matches your cheeks natural colour.

Use a lighter colour during the day and darker for the evening

Eye liner & Eye Shadow
A regular mistake made with eyeliner is to draw a thick black line across the lid, rather than working the pigment into the lash roots. The ideal way is to warm the pencil on the back of your hand first and lining the upper lid, look upwards, and apply from below the lashes to get a subtle blended line. If your eyes are small or deep-set, line the lower lashes, too, applying a dark shadow with a blunt brush for a softer effect. Black is popular and suits everyone, however teach yourself to compliment.

Accentuate blue eyes using warm-toned eye shadows; deep purple and blues work just as well as gold and copper shades, provided a warm undertone is retained. Never be tempted to over add as it can spoil the look altogether. Hazel eyes look fabulous with soft plum, brown and forest greens, while brown eyes just about suit any colour or shade of eye shadow.

Mascara - If you want to maximise volume then simply buy mascara designed for volume. They are clearly marked. More volume in mascara means the more solid in-depth look to your eyes

Lip-liner - There is a knack to applying this beauty asset, one is not to rush and to have a steady hand. Lip-liner should be near to same shade as your lipstick. Ensure your pencil is sharp to get a good line. A blunt lip-liner pencil is a no go.

Draw along the lips, beginning at the centre and working towards the edges, both sides from the middle each time, this gives the best shape and smoothest line. Do not rush. Lip-liner should be applied before lipstick. It makes sense i.e. smudging. Not recommended to cut corners initiating this task.

Laughter lines - All you need to hide laughter lines is a concealer pencil. Draw a few small lines next to the edges of the mouth with pencil, not too much. Use a sponge to blend in to the corner of the mouth - and hey presto you crack a smile without the cracks

Powder - Apply face powder on the lips, it is said to make lipstick last longer and prevent ‘bleeding’.

Perfume - Choosing perfume is not really quite straightforward. Remember the smell of scent on another person may not be the same on you. Spicy musk is said to arouse sexual emotions and vanilla is believed to be an aphrodisiac. Floral scents are seen as fresh and calming.
Skin types react differently to perfume so bear this in mind when testing.

Never rely on sniffing perfume from the bottle. Spray or dab onto the skin. Leave to settle for 5 minutes. Do not sample more than 4-5 perfumes at once, this will only confuse your judgement. Apply scent to pulse point on the wrist or in the crook of the elbow. Flowery fragrances are more ideal in hot months. Perfume is best applied to pulse points: the inner wrists, behind the ears, and lower neck.

Nail Polish - Apply clear base coat before using coloured polish. Base-coat is important as it helps prevent nail polish staining the nails; it also gives a smooth even finish on which to apply the colour. Best technique for applying nail varnish is to do it in three strokes: one down the centre and one down each side. Keep cotton wool pads and polish remover easily to hand for fear of a slip up. Toenails can be awkward to cover. Sit comfortably resting one foot on a stool in front of you and separate each toe with separators. Use cotton wool or rolled up rags if you have no toe separators. Save time because you don't have to wait for the first coat to dry before second application. The first coat will wet again as soon as the solvent from the second comes in contact. Two thin coats will dry quicker than one thick layer of which can appear unsightly. Wait until this dries and apply top coat to seal.

Some women disagree to the three stroke method. If you have large nails paint the whole nail, if you have short/small nails paint the same. If you have short fingers only apply polish to the centre of the nail. Use pale shades for short stubby hands and dark shades for the delicate look.

The Perfect Pout Lipstick
http://spotthepimple.com/Lipstick.html

Desirable Perfumes
http://www.beautyofmedicine.com/Perfume.html
Competency Interviewing - What Are the Questions?

By Adam Maurer

Competency interviewing is very popular and helps to increase the statistical probability of a company making a successful hire. Data from the Hay Group suggests that traditional interviews result in hiring errors 50% of the time. With these odds, HR managers could gain the same results from flipping a coin! Competency based interviewing or assessment centres increases the chances of success to between 60-70%. This is a very significant increase given that the cost of hiring incorrectly is estimated at 18 months of salary. With the cost of errors so high, many HR managers are asking some of the following questions - during the interview process - to generate new information about candidates.

From the HR manager’s point of view, the generation of new information is the key to interview success. Simply chronologically reviewing a CV does not provide enough information about the candidate or fully allow the interviewer to assess the candidate’s abilities. Competency based interviewing offers a structure in which to find out about how potential employees respond to different situations. The questions are structured to elicit examples and the interviewer usually probes to get a full understanding of how decisions were reached, the ultimate outcomes, when decisions were implemented and what was learned.

The questions below are grouped in functional areas. If you are preparing for interview, review the questions and rehearse examples for each competency. If you are interviewing candidates for a job, review the functional areas and consider which competencies are most important to the role. It takes too long to ask all the questions so you will need to be prioritise and tailor them to the position.

Adaptability
Tell me about a time when you changed your priorities to meet other’s expectations.

Describe a time when you altered your own behaviour to fit the situation.

Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or your plans to take into account new information or changing priorities.

Client Focus
Give an example of how you provided service to a client/stakeholder beyond their expectations. How did you identify the need? How did you respond?

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a client/stakeholder service issue.

Describe a situation in which you acted as an advocate within your organisation for your stakeholder’s needs - where there was some organisational resistance to be overcome.

Communication
Describe a situation you were involved in, which required a multi-dimensional communication strategy.

Give an example of a difficult or sensitive situation that required extensive communication.

Tell me about a time when you really had to pay attention to what someone else was saying, actively seeking to understand their message.

Organisational Awareness
Describe the culture of your organisation and give an example of how you work within this culture to achieve a goal.

Describe the things you consider and the steps you take in assessing the viability of a new idea or initiative.

Tell me about a time when you used your knowledge of the organisation to get what you needed.

Problem Solving and Judgment
Tell me about a time when you had to identify the underlying causes to a problem.

Describe a time when you had to analyse a problem and generate a solution.
Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a problem or make a decision that required careful thought. What did you do?

Results Oriented
Tell me about a time when you set and achieved a goal.

Tell me about a time when you improved the way things were typically done on the job.

Describe something you have done to improve the performance of your work unit.

Describe something you have done to maximize or improve the use of resources beyond your own work unit to achieve improved results.

Teamwork
Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as a member of a team. Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.

Describe a situation in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team, and a conflict arose within the team. What did you do?

Developing Others
Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their skills or job performance. What did you do?

Describe a time when you provided feedback to someone about their performance.

Give me an example of a time when you recognised that a member of your team had a performance difficulty/deficiency. What did you do?

Impact and Influence
Describe a recent situation in which you convinced an individual or a group to do something.

Describe a time when you went through a series of steps to influence an individual or a group on an important issue.

Describe a situation in which you needed to influence different stakeholders with differing perspectives.

Innovation
Describe something you have done that was new and different for your organisation that improved performance and/or productivity.

Tell me about a time when you identified a new, unusual or different approach for addressing a problem or task.

Tell me about a recent problem in which old solutions wouldn’t work. How did you solve the problem?

Leadership
Tell me about a time when you had to lead a group to achieve an objective. Describe a situation where you had to ensure that your “actions spoke louder than your words” to a team.

Describe a situation where you inspired others to meet a common goal.

Relationship Building
Describe a situation in which you developed an effective win/win relationship with a stakeholder or client. How did you go about building the relationship?

Tell me about a time when you relied on a contact in your network to help you with a work-related task or problem. Give me an example of a time when you deliberately attempted to build rapport with a co-worker or customer.

Resource Management
Describe a situation in which you took a creative approach to resourcing to achieve a goal.

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a particular resource management issue regarding people, materials or assets.

Describe the options you would consider to resource a project or goal if you did not have the available resources within your own span of control.

Describe a situation in which you established a partnership with another organisation or stakeholder to achieve a mutual goal. What steps did you take to ensure the partnership was effective?

Self-Management
Describe the level of stress in your job and what you do to manage it.

Describe a time when you were in a high pressure situation.

Describe a time when things didn’t turn out as you had planned and you had to analyze the situation to address the issue.

Strategic Thinking
Describe a challenge or opportunity you identified based on your industry knowledge, and how you developed a strategy to respond to it.

Describe a time you created a strategy to achieve a longer term business objective.

Describe a time when you used your business knowledge to understand a specific business situation.

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Perhaps you already find it easy to win friends and influence people? If so, well done you! Of course, everybody learns social and professional skills to make this task possible, but you may have experienced situations with friends, family, work colleagues or even the person you met in the queue at the supermarket checkout when you felt that you weren’t happy with the encounter that you had. Perhaps times when you feel that you could have made a friend out of a stranger you had just met and said goodbye or maybe that you felt that your colleagues would listen more to your viewpoint.

Conversely, how about the times when you have met people and hit it off immediately? And when you say goodbye you feel that you have had a great time. When you experience this type of connection you will have experienced “rapport” between you.

“Rapport is commonality of perspective, being in “sync”, being on the same wavelength as the person you are talking to”

It is further described as “one of the most important features or characteristics of unconscious human interaction”

Various studies have concluded that, depending on the type of behaviour, between 60% and 99% of communication happens through non verbal behaviour. That is communication not contained in words themselves. In other words, how we are thought to say something can be just as important. But also, that we communicate without words.

When you build relationships with others your levels of comfort with them will be influenced by how much you believe the other person is like you or behaves within limits that you find acceptable. This will create the feeling of being on the same wavelength or being in sync. That feeling of having rapport between you.

Creating rapport with another person or group will enhance your prospects of influencing them, having a positive encounter with a stranger and for making new friends. Here are some everyday situations where an awareness of rapport building would be useful:

- Engaging in a team meeting at work
- Talking to customer services about your telephone bill
- Going to a party and not knowing anyone
- Arranging a family get together with your sister
- Dealing with a shop assistant who can’t be bothered
- Checking in at the airport

If you build rapport with people in these situations, they will regard you more favourably and you will have a greater chance of influencing their behaviour towards you.

You do not need to like the person to create rapport with them. However, having rapport with them will be in your interest.
Many businesses send their sales staff on rapport building courses to increase their selling skills. Studies have shown that the rapport skills of doctors will influence the degree to which patients will speak openly. There are articles written for teachers so that they can achieve better results with students.

**Matching and Mirroring**

We are more likely to get on with people who are like us. The scope of “likeness” is wide and includes unconscious similarity. You can create this similarity by using matching or mirroring. Both are effective. When you match somebody, you do exactly the same as they do. When you mirror, you do as they do, but on the opposite side of your body, as though they are looking in the mirror.

This does not mean that you have to copy every move. Only one form of gesture or behaviour can be acted upon and should the other person become aware of what you are doing, they can become offended or angry, so if you decide to use it, wait for a short time before you match or mirror.

Here are some examples:

- crossing one leg over another while sitting
- sitting with hands locked behind the head
- smiling or nodding
- head tilted to the side
- breathing at the same rate, inhaling and exhaling at the same time
- eye blinking rate
- hand gestures while talking
- body space and eye contact

The distance people need between them is governed by lots of factors. But to have rapport, you need to allow enough space for comfort. If you are standing chatting to somebody who repeatedly steps away, they will feel uncomfortable if you repeatedly move closer. If you don’t respect their boundaries they will not feel rapport with you.

It’s similar with eye contact. People have different levels of comfort with different levels or intensity of eye contact. Too much may feel intimidating, and not enough can seem suspicious or insincere. The amount of eye contact you have from somebody is a good indicator of what they are comfortable with (though of course, you will in turn have your own responses to it).

In addition, eye contact has an interesting correlation to body
space. An intensely intimate context allows complete physical contact and prolonged eye contact to be comfortable.

However, consider what happens when you are in a crowded lift? Body space is forcibly reduced and everybody avoids eye contact to compensate for the enforced physical proximity.

Have you ever been chatted up by somebody who you are not keen on? What happens? You become uncomfortable with the body space and amount of eye contact? On the other hand I know people who have used this in a business context to win contracts or facilitate a good business relationship. They maintain rapport at the level that the other person wants, mainly by allowing the body space that the other person wants and reciprocating eye contact. Should you want to make clear that you do not like this attention you may choose to break rapport deliberately, moving away, breaking eye contact, letting the other person know that you don’t appreciate their attention. You may break rapport in other ways, for example, in your tone of voice and facial expression.

Mood
Matching the mood will help you to stay in rapport. For example:

You join a group of friends who are having a cozy quiet drink in a wine bar. They are all quite comfortable, tired after work. If you match the mood, sit down and join the conversation you will blend in well and be welcomed into the group. What would they think if you strode up, hovered on the edge of the group and said “come on you boring lot, lets go party at the club next door”. By not matching the mood, you will break rapport and maybe irritate your friends who are up for a quiet night.

However, had you been with them a while and noticed a restless energy in the group, maybe a few murmurs of wanting to go on somewhere else, you may catch the new mood (and stay in rapport) by jumping up and suggesting the party. You will stay in rapport (with those who want to move on) by matching the change. There are times when you may want to break rapport deliberately, changing the direction of communication and the mood. For example, with a friend who is feeling negative and miserable. You meet your friend who is gloomy and crying. You may decide that following the initial tea and sympathy, you need to move to a different mood. In which case you may temporarily come out of rapport, jump up and say “ok, time to move on, let’s go out”. If successful, they then jump back into rapport with you by joining you on your feet and saying, “yeah come on then, I’m up for it now...” Can you think of other situations where you may need to break rapport temporarily?

Language
Although we have been discussing non verbal rapport building techniques, let’s look briefly at some aspects of language that are worth considering when trying to build rapport.

You can create a positive impression by using the same vocabulary as your companion, as long as you give the impression that you are using it naturally. Watch out for expressions that may seem critical or challenging if you want to maintain rapport. In these situations avoid expressions like:

- You are not listening to me
- Don’t be silly
- You’ve got it wrong
- You have misunderstood me
- You are being oversensitive

Remember that the chances are that your companion is listening to you but what you have said means something different to what you have intended. If somebody has not understood your intention, say what you mean in a different way until you have conveyed the meaning you want.

Describing a person as “oversensitive” is an attack on their perceptions and emotional reaction. They are clearly seeing a situation differently from you and reacting in a way that they know best.

Use alternative, less challenging expressions like:

- Let me try to explain what I mean
- Oh, why do you say that?
- OK, that’s interesting, but this is the way I see it

Summary
This article has touched on a few ways in which you can become aware of your interactions with others and how you may use different communication and rapport building skills to positively influence your relationships.

Think of situations where you would benefit from using these techniques, even with people who you may not like. They can be used to influence both intimate and professional relationships. Even a friendly interaction with a stranger can make your day so much better.
Crossed Eyed With Numbers

Fit these numbers into the grid:

25  10585  77594  902102
98  14684  88792  958672
444 23929  97855  5869371
484 30000 122064  6335502
1654 040409 242409 33987456
1985 048867 252525 566554413
3439 68404 774824
8531
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