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# EVALUATING TRUST & RAPPORT: A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

In Lina Hillner's article (pages 6-7) she lays out the differences between rapport and trust and argues the case for further research to disentangle the two. This article discusses the concepts from a practitioner's perspective and demonstrates how CREST's Eliciting Information Framework can help.

As Hillner says, the concepts of trust and rapport have become conflated, not only by researchers, but also by practitioners. Trust and rapport are separate but related concepts, and it is possible to have one without the other. For example, we all have interactions with people we do not entirely trust (perhaps with certain colleagues), yet our interactions may demonstrate good rapport. Equally, we can have a dreadful interaction, devoid of rapport, with someone we trust deeply.

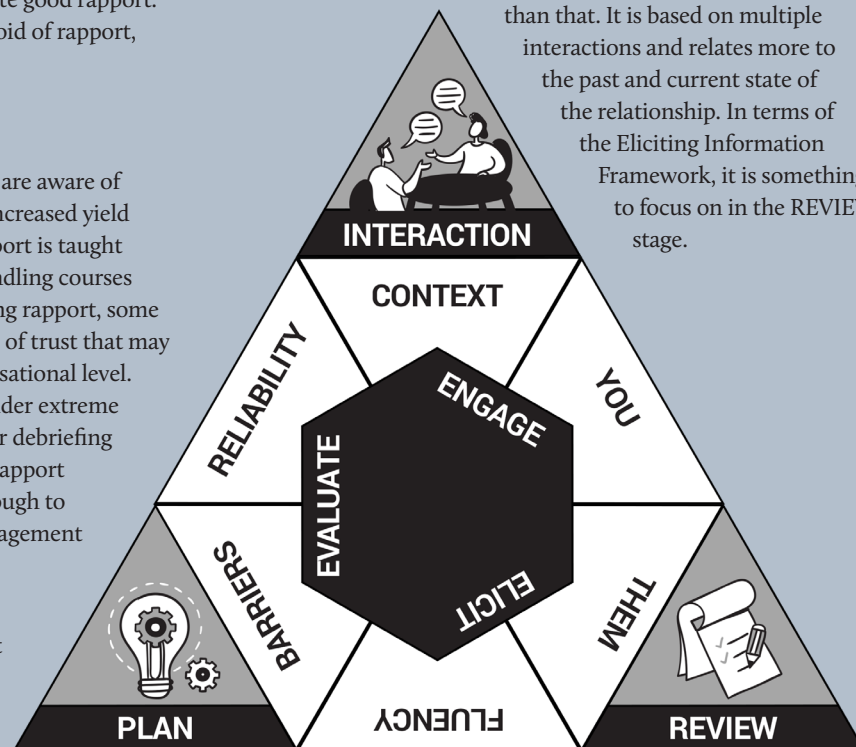
## SO, WHAT?

So, what does this mean for practitioners? Most are aware of the well-established link between rapport and increased yield of credible information. The importance of rapport is taught widely on negotiation, interview and source handling courses (Alison & Alison, 2020). In addition to monitoring rapport, some practitioners focus on trust, including the layers of trust that may (or may not) exist at an individual and an organisational level. However, we recognise that practitioners are under extreme cognitive load when interviewing, negotiating or debriefing (Hanway, 2019). Focussing on whether trust or rapport is present during an interaction may well be enough to reduce listening and thus negatively impact engagement and effective elicitation.

To help, we propose using CREST's Eliciting Information Framework. Both rapport and trust sit under the function of ENGAGE; they are both concerned with having a consistent and positive interaction with the other person as

a means to elicit maximum information. Conceptually though, they perhaps relate to different phases of the interaction.

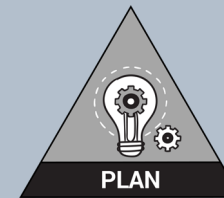
Rapport is all about the INTERACTION; the flow of the conversation, the attention that two parties give each other and whether there exists a genuine desire to connect. Trust is larger than that. It is based on multiple interactions and relates more to the past and current state of the relationship. In terms of the Eliciting Information Framework, it is something to focus on in the REVIEW stage.



## TOOLS

We recommend using the following tools and techniques to help you build rapport and trust.

### Plan



We suggest that you plan to build both cognitive and affective trust (Lewis & Wiegert, 1985). **Cognitive trust** in this context is someone's measure of your competence. Many factors feed into this including your appearance, the layout of the room and the credibility of the

logistical planning. In order to develop **affective trust**, consider how you will communicate empathy, how you will show that you are interested in them, and how you will demonstrate that you trust them.

To achieve maximum yield of credible information we advocate the use of rapport-building non-coercive techniques. This requires planning; use language in line with your objective, consider what you already know about the individual and how to use this to facilitate their comfort, and rehearse your approach.

### Interaction



#### Engage:

In order to build engagement, be guided by simple acronyms such as OARS:

O PEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

A FFIRMATIONS

R ESPONSIVE LISTENING

S UMMARIES

Remember that being in charge and setting an agenda, being frank and forthright, while at the same time social and warm, will also be seen as non-judgemental and is likely to build rapport and increase yield (Alison, Humann & Waring, 2016).

#### Evaluate:

As already discussed, if you are interviewing on your own then attempts to measure trust and rapport during the interaction may lead to cognitive overload. As an alternative, we suggest that you simply consider whether you are in or out of 'sync'. Signs of being out-of-sync include:

**Remember that being in charge and setting an agenda, being frank and forthright, while at the same time social and warm, will also be seen as non-judgemental and is likely to build rapport and increase yield.**

- The interviewer/negotiator working harder than the subject;
- Overtalking;
- Too many questions;
- General signs of agitation or anger;
- The subject not engaging and being avoidant.

When you are in-sync, it feels and sounds good, and you are eliciting information that helps your objectives. Put simply, focus on the other party, respond appropriately and encourage someone to say more.

### Review



This phase is your real opportunity to review trust and rapport. If you were in-sync and had an increasing level of yield, then you were cooperating and will have had rapport. If that didn't happen, we recommend that you examine rapport (within the interaction), separately from trust (within the relationship), and focus on the problem spaces

## IN CONCLUSION

This article is designed to reduce the confusion between trust and rapport by demonstrating use of CREST's Eliciting Information Framework. Plan for both, and review whether your interaction included rapport and whether your relationship has components of trust. But when engaging, aim to just stay in sync. If you do something which feels uncomfortable, take a breath, assess, and don't be afraid to ask what has changed during the dynamic.

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