

Rapport-based interviewing is the process of communication between individuals in which a bond, a degree of trust and/or mutual understanding is developed.

During law enforcement and intelligence-related interviews, a rapport-based approach has been found to be most successful in obtaining incriminating information, corroborating existing information and developing new leads. Rapport-building allows an interviewer the opportunity to develop a detailed understanding of a subject, determine his/her motivations and identify specific areas of vulnerability.

A rapport-based approach is considered to be more effective and reliable than an aggressive approach. Although rapport-based approach is considered by some to be soft and overly polite, this is not necessarily the case. For example, there may be times during interviews in which there is pronounced tension, suspicion, hostility and intense disagreement. Depending on circumstances, these reactions may not be negative and, if exploited correctly, they may actually serve to enhance the building of rapport/trust between the interviewer and subject.

Developing rapport takes time. Some agents are more patient than others, and some are more able. The best interviewers are ones with experience, sensitivity and insight. Proscriptive approaches are not the answer and should be avoided. To the extent possible, agents should be encouraged to develop as much background information as possible on a case and subject and on the cultural milieu in which it occurred before beginning an interview. If detailed information is unavailable, agents should use the initial stages of an interview as an opportunity to obtain additional information which can then be used to create a specific interview plan.

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