



## EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Executive presence is an elusive quality that is difficult to define but even more difficult to miss and has become a popular term in business lingo. Though its ambiguous definition and multiple uses do dim the clarity of the term, its importance is clear as day.

Executive presence is a mix of personal traits and characteristics which are positively correlated with executive success. Though some of these traits are innate, research suggests that all can be developed over time and practice. No one would claim that this development is an easy or indeed guaranteed outcome for everyone, however self awareness and knowledge of some of the key elements of this topic are useful starting points for an executive wishing to develop their own presence.

Nonverbal communication is an important component of executive presence and the correct gestures and mannerisms can be studied and implemented. Proper nonverbal communication requires one to always be aware of the signals he or she is sending, as what is being said is either supported or negated by what is being done, and mannerisms can convince others of your earnestness or alternatively invoke doubt.

Solid eye contact and proper posture are critical in radiating confidence, openness and professionalism. Further, when speaking to others one should distribute their weight equally on both feet and avoid being rigid or fidgety as this can implicate doubt and insecurity. When seated one should lean slightly forward showing interest in what the other person is saying. Strong gestures, interested expressions, and high energy are imperative aspects of nonverbal communication in portraying confidence, interest and professionalism.

Verbally, those with executive presence speak loudly and clearly. Inherently, volume captures attention and energizes conversation, and importantly, the right volume increases authority. The pitch of ones voice is also fundamental in verbal communication as confidence and authority are usually expressed through low pitched speech, as in contrast to high pitched tones which can often implicate anxiety and insecurity. Strong executive presence requires the execution of deliberate, articulate and audible speech while remaining inoffensive.

Other characteristics critical to executive presence are those such as candor,

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confidence, passion, courage, thoughtfulness, clarity, and inspiration. Executives must be frank and to the point while still expressing sincerity and honesty in their statements. This will yield respect in the workforce as others will know that even if they don't like what they are hearing, it is genuine, valid and must be addressed. As touched upon, confidence is a critical trait of executive presence. Knowledge, skills and experience can all be top-notch but the lack of confidence can break the deal. Passion conveys dedication, motivation and a genuine belief in what one does. People are more likely to believe in another when it is evident that person believes in themselves. The trait of courage emanates from those with executive presence as they do not shy away from difficult tasks but rather persist regardless of seemingly overwhelming barriers and remain calm and collected while facing stressful situations.

Impulsive behaviors and decision making often elicit negative feelings and thus showing thoughtfulness is highly important. Timely decision making with proper thought and consideration of all aspects involved and their effects on all players is imperative to exuding executive presence. Those with executive presence project clarity as they convey information with simplicity, precision and in a compelling manner. Finally, those with executive presence will inspire others to persevere; to strive to reach new heights and overcome limitations.

Overall, executives must be poised at all times, radiating a sophistication backed by experience and education. They must exude confidence while not portraying arrogance, and always be seen as approachable and interested in their colleagues and subordinates. While the many characteristics and traits that encompass executive presence make it difficult to break down, you know it when you see it and yes, you too can have it.

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