



EXECUTIVE PRESENCE IS THE LEADERSHIP DIFFERENTIATOR

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WHAT IS EXECUTIVE PRESENCE AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Executive presence can be challenging to define but, it is about **projecting a mature self-confidence**. It is about how we act, how we speak and how we appear. It is about how we walk into the room and how people see and experience us.

Executive presence is about our substance. It is how people perceive us. But more importantly, Executive Presence can set leaders and executives apart in today's complex business environment.

Executive Presence is key to standing out as a leader

It is not magic that makes great political, business and social leaders stand out. Influential leaders have a highly developed **executive presence**. The elements of executive presence are essential traits the best leaders among us exhibit. Executive Presence is more than just confidence and appearance. It's about your ability to **connect with** and **inspire others**. Your presence can and will impact your success as a leader – and Executive Presence can be learned.

EVEN WHEN TECHNICAL SKILLS ARE PARAMOUNT, LEADERS VALUE EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

In a Gartner survey of more than 2,000 CIOs, technical skill was ranked the twelfth most important trait, while **Executive Presence was ranked second**.

3 PILLARS OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

The elements of executive presence – **gravitas**, **communication**, and **appearance** – are essential traits the best leaders among us exhibit. For example appearance alone can have a significant impact on your executive presence:

- 60% of executives believe that sounding uneducated negatively impacts the way others perceive you
- More than three-quarters of responders said unkempt attire detracts from both men and women's executive presence
- 73% said ill-fitting or provocative clothing undercuts executive presence

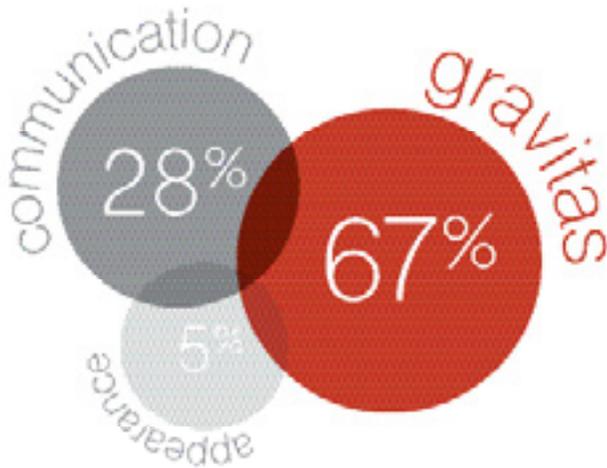
Gravitas is exhibited by exuding confidence, being decisive, having integrity, demonstrating emotional intelligence and projecting vision.

Communication is exhibited through great speaking skills, the ability to command a room and the ability to read an audience.

Appearance is demonstrated through good grooming.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE 3 PILLARS OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE:

268 executives surveyed ranked which matters most



Source: Sylvia Ann Hewlett (2014) *Executive Presence: The Missing Link Between Merit and Success*

7 TRAITS OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Leaders with Executive Presence exhibit specific traits, according to *Business Insider*:

Composure – The ability to control your emotions and reactions, to remain calm even under pressure.

Connection – Understanding how others communicate and adapting to engage with them authentically.

Charisma – The ability to motivate others and treat everyone – at every level – with dignity and respect.

Confidence – Not only what you say matters, but how you say it and how you present yourself.

Credibility – Consistent integrity and certainty in what you say, do, and believe.

Clarity – The ability to clearly articulate your thoughts and ideas.

Conciseness – Knowing how to convey your message succinctly and clearly.

IMPROVE YOUR GRAVITAS

- Observe how leaders you admire exhibit executive presence and emulate them.
- Place yourself in situations (networking, public speaking, panel presentations) where you can practice making eye contact and communicating with authority and passion
- Pause. Think before speaking and learn to formulate your thoughts before sharing them.

IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Ditch verbal crutches and fillers such as “um,” “like,” and “you know.”
- Take control of your voice - breathe.
- Broaden your small talk.
- Over prepare – practice, practice, practice.

IMPROVE YOUR APPEARANCE

Unkempt attire detracts from both men and women's executive presence.

- Grooming – hair, fingernails, hygiene – all matter.
- Avoid inappropriate clothing. Dress professionally.
- Stand tall and use good posture.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO DEMONSTRATE EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

- **Use breathing exercises** that help you remain focused, calm and poised.
- **Practice making eye contact** when you speak with people.
- **Update your wardrobe** by discarding anything that doesn't fit properly and replace those items with one or two essential pieces.
- **Go to networking events** where you can practice engaging with people to become more comfortable.
- **Take a moment to pause** before responding to questions and really think about what you'll say.
- **Listen carefully when people speak to you** - without looking down at your phone or at your computer.
- **Be gracious and kind;** say “thank you” and give credit to others.
- **Speak boldly** about things that matter, without worrying how it will affect your image
- **Create opportunities** for every team member
- **Listen carefully** and hear what people need and want

Leaders with executive presence remain composed even during stressful moments, build strong connections with others through genuine engagement, communicate clearly and confidently, and don't ramble.

INNATE BEHAVIORS THAT SIGNIFY EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Exhibiting humility

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.” – Rick Warren

Confidence is necessary, but so is recognizing that you will not always get your way, win the game, or get the promotion. It’s not always about winning – it’s about what you learn along the way that you can apply to the next opportunity, and about how you handle each disappointment. In the end, every experience prepares you for the next opportunity.

Taking responsibility

“When you blame others, you give up your power to change.” – Robert Anthony

Responsibility and accountability are different. We are often held accountable for accomplishing certain tasks but, responsibility is what occurs when leaders make bold decisions, act and accept the consequences – positive or negative – that result from their decisions. Like the captain of a ship or the commander of troops, it is a matter of recognizing that regardless of which team member did what, ultimately, you were the driving force.

TAKE ACTION NOW TO IMPROVE YOUR EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Seek Feedback. In addition to self-assessment and self-reflection, seek feedback from trusted colleagues about where you can improve your presence. Be humble enough to acknowledge weaknesses and embrace the opportunity to build strengths.

Take one action. Set one goal for improving executive presence. Hire a coach to help you improve your communication, leadership skills or make small but critical changes to your visual presence.

Know It’s Possible. Executive presence can be learned and strengthened with time, effort, guidance and mindful choices in your behavior.

TAKE. ACTION. NOW.

Want to learn more? Visit our [website](#)



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When people thrive, business thrives.

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