



Executive Presence

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Some people have the ability to command respect and attention. They have presence and credibility, and others notice them. Then there are those who don't. If you want to be taken seriously, if you want people to buy into you and what you are saying, you do want to have executive presence. If you are a business owner and have products and services to offer, you are going to be more successful if you have executive presence. You will be taken seriously and people are far more likely to trust you as someone to do business with. If you are an employee in a workplace, even if you are not in an executive role, if you have executive presence you will be listened to and taken seriously. It is difficult to get your ideas approved if you don't have executive presence.

Executive presence is not something you are born with. It is something you cultivate over time. Most people can develop it if they are aware of the actions that demonstrate executive presence and practice them.



1. To have executive presence you need to be **composed and calm** all the time if possible. That means an even temperament, even when unpredictable things happen that appear awful. You cannot go into an emotional meltdown, yell and scream at people, and weep and wail in front of crowds and expect to have executive presence. Now we all do have emotions. I am not saying don't have emotions, I am saying control how and where you express your feelings. You need to learn how to manage your emotions and in what forums you can give vent to how you really feel. This is one of the reasons why emotional intelligence is so critical for senior leadership. Executive presence means you can deal with all sorts of news, and you can deal with your own and others' emotions calmly and professionally.
2. For many charisma is seen as key to executive presence. For most people what charisma translates into is having **energy and enthusiasm**. Be excited about projects, be purposeful, be focused and driven to achieve goals. In that way you inspire and motivate others. Linked to this, quite clearly, is you need to have a positive mindset. If you use doomsday talk people are simply not going to find you inspiring and will in fact be wanting to stay away from you. Stand, talk, and walk with energy and enthusiasm, if not all the time, then definitely most of the time.
3. I had a client say to me the one thing that struck her about the people she met in a boardroom was that they all seemed so **confident**. If you want to have executive presence, you must be confident. Walk and talk like you know what you are doing. Believe in yourself and your abilities and communicate it. Don't ever speak down about yourself, even as a joke. Take up space. Don't try to hide yourself away in corners.
4. **Credibility** will help you have executive presence. Come across as someone who knows what they are talking about. Choose a definite position on a topic. Don't be the person who is okay with whatever goes. Assert yourself and your views. Be decisive. Credibility helps to build trustworthiness.
5. Relatability and the **ability to connect with people** matters. If you cannot connect with people, you will have difficulty getting their respect and support. Make eye contact. Look around the room and look at people. The more you are able to read a room and understand people and what is going through their minds, the better you will connect with people.
6. **Clarity and conciseness** are critical. When you speak get to the point. No long sentences, no long explanations, no filler words like ums and aahs. Say what you want to say clearly and concisely in the fewest number of words that ensure you are understood. Don't fidget and don't ramble. If you want to you can record yourself speaking and practice being concise and clear.
7. **Style** is important. And here I am talking about how you look. How you look does matter, despite what anyone may say. People usually see you before they hear you. So, they will make a judgement about you based on your looks. We are visual beings, and we make judgements about people very quickly based on their appearance. There is not a lot you can do about your basic face and body structure, but you can be neat and clean. No dirty clothes, dirty hands, uncombed hair, buttons missing or torn clothing. Don't be overly flashy or overly made up unless the situation requires it. Part of style is knowing what is appropriate in a particular situation. We no longer live in a time where suits and ties are necessary. Nelson Mandela had his own style and still had executive presence. Religious leaders often wear attire appropriate to their beliefs. They still look neat and tidy and clean and well put together. Clothes must fit well, match to some extent, and be well finished. And leave the wardrobe malfunctions to the movie stars and singers.



Executive presence can make or break your career. Even if you are not in a corporate role, or a leadership role, for instance you have your own business, executive presence can help you be more or less successful. It is important to getting ahead, to getting more business, and to building relationship and networks. Yes, it is something that is not on the list of most people's development plans. You won't find much in the way of training courses on how to develop it. My suggestion to you is you want to cultivate executive presence. It can even help you when you are standing in a queue needing to have some problem resolved. You are likely to be taken more seriously and get your issue sorted out if you have executive presence.

Take the above points and look at how you can work these into your behaviour. At work and even personally. Think about some specific ways you will change your behaviour and speech, and the way you will walk and talk, and practice them. You can learn to have executive presence, and all the benefits that go with it.