

## Developing Our “Leadership Presence”

Quite frequently in my leadership consulting and coaching practice, I am asked about “leadership presence”, specifically how to increase our “executive presence” or “board room presence”.

Coincidentally, many of the men and women who bring this up are people whom I believe already do, in fact, have significant leadership presence.

This may not be surprising as we all have some degree of insecurity, that inner voice in our mind that often whispers negative thoughts to us.

Key questions are, how much insecurity do we have and how do we manage it?

While there is a wealth of good information about this subject on the Internet and in books, articles, and videos, let me offer my ideas gained from my experience.

Our leadership presence stands on the shoulders of our character – our values, how we carry ourselves, how we think, what we say and what we do.

Here are basic principles that will help us a great deal:

- Have a positive attitude, be encouraging and helpful to others, and never – I repeat, never – speak critically about someone behind her/his back (doing so reflects poorly on you).
- Be an attentive listener. Listen to understand and learn. Lean forward. Let people sense your interest and that you care. If appropriate, take notes. It is a sign of respect.
- Use your soft skills, being friendly, warm and welcoming.
- Don’t talk about yourself. Realize that your listening is your gift to others. Be curious. Try to listen 80% and speak 20% of the time.
- Want to impress someone? Ask helpful questions that show your leadership presence. For example, “What first step could you take to help you achieve that goal?” or “What is holding you back?”
- Appearance is important, dress neatly and for the occasion, being well groomed, and smiling helps, as do comfortable eye contact, a firm handshake, standing tall, shoulders back and walking purposefully, like an athlete. We can all do that.
- Try to always be early, and remember names, which is so very important, a simple way to impress people.

- Speak with clarity. Clarity is a sign of your strength.
- Allow yourself to be vulnerable, which is attractive to others, and is a sign of your strength, and also is a pathway to trust. Remember, it's not about you; it's about others. True leaders genuinely care about others and their success. Show that you are comfortable with yourself by asking for feedback and advice, accepting that you have areas for personal development, as we all do, and that you want to help others learn, grow and succeed. This shows how we all should strive for continuous improvement.
- Don't seek personal credit or the spotlight. Share credit with others, and celebrate their success, even small successes.
- Give helpful and timely feedback, even critical feedback in an encouraging manner. True leaders genuinely care about others and their success.
- Try to maintain your composure, even under stress. Recognize that as a leader, you are a signal sender. What signal do you want to send? How about "We can do this"?
- Take the time to have conversations. I know you're crazy busy, as we all are. Way too busy. Figure out how you can "unplug" so you can have conversations, even short conversations, and develop and maintain relationships. Business is about relationships, the quality of our relationships and trust. This means less time in front of your computer and in meetings. Develop your strategy, do what works for you.
- Handle problems gracefully and promptly. You'll be respected.

Our leadership presence, how we are perceived and accepted by others, is founded on our attitude, our character, how we act when no one is watching. It's about our positive energy, being there for others and helping them, being a giver. It's about our being genuine and comfortable in our own skin.

I mentioned above that a leader is a signal sender and to think about the signals we want to send. Keeping our composure, remaining calm, letting our team members, all of them, sense that we have confidence in them as well as ourselves and sending the signals that "Let's do our best and we can succeed". That's leadership presence.

Remember, we are all leaders. It's how we carry ourselves and what we say and do to help others.

Leadership presence is what you bring to others!

## About The Author



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