

We All Need Leadership Presence



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You are talented, skilled, and highly competent, with positive business results that have been responsible for your career progress to this point. What more could you possibly need?

At a certain level, the force that will catapult you to more senior positions of leadership may have less to do with the abilities that got you this far, and more to do with the impression you make. You may be knowledgeable, skilled, and innovative, but that doesn't guarantee that others see you as the talented leader you authentically are.

The good news is that managing this impression doesn't require you to fake or exaggerate. The goal of leadership presence is to align people's impression of you with your authentic best self. It's the art of better expressing those qualities you already possess. (BTW: As a speaker, author and leadership presence coach, I would be highly ineffective at helping people pretend to be something they're not – but I am very good at helping people discover and project their genuine

talents and potential.)

So let me ask you a question: How skilled are you at expressing your authentic Credibility, Confidence, Composure, Connection, and Charisma?

Credibility: Regardless of how credible you are, your communication style can strengthen or weaken people's perception of your credibility. Attention spans are so short today that you have to be able to make your point in a way that's both compelling and brief – and eliminate words (kind of, sort of, maybe, um, er, uh) and phrases like “This may be a bad idea, but . . .” or “You probably already thought of this, but . . .” which reduce the positive impact of whatever statement follows.

Confidence: When it comes to looking confident, your body language plays a major part in how people perceive you. To appear as your confident best, remember to stand and sit with good posture – shoulders squared, head straight, arms slightly away from your torso, feet flat on the floor if seated and about shoulder-width apart if standing. Posture is especially important in a virtual environment where your body language makes an instantaneous statement about your authority and personal power. A side benefit is that good posture not only makes you appear more confident, it also makes you feel more grounded and self-assured.

Composure: You may be presented with unwanted interruptions, tough questions, or personal attacks – and all these can be challenging situations for even the most senior leaders. To retain your composure, don't be blindsided. Anticipate what is likely to occur and prepare to respond appropriately. And when you encounter a situation you'd hadn't prepared for, remember to stop and take a slow breath before responding. By staying poised under pressure, you appear reliable, capable, and in control – all qualities that people look for in a leader.

Connection: Your ability to connect with others has everything to do with how you make people feel. The goal of leadership today is to get others to willingly engage and collaborate, and that means creating work environments where people feel safe and valued. As one Silicon Valley CEO told me: “There is absolutely nothing wrong with command and control leadership. It’s simply *irrelevant* in the 21st century.” That’s why your ability to show empathy and make genuine connections is such a powerful element in projecting leadership presence.

Charisma: The fact is you already have charismatic qualities that are waiting to be revealed in order to showcase your unique character and talents. Strengthening your personal brand of charisma begins with embracing and expressing your core values and by appreciating and being grateful for all that you have to offer to your organization and the world.



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