



THE 7 ELEMENTS OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE:

How to Develop the “Wow” Factor that Makes Great Leaders Stand Out

We’ve all witnessed that moment when someone walks into a room at a business or social event and instantly attracts intense, positive attention. The air shifts. Heads turn. People gravitate toward them in the conversation circle. In short, they have a “wow” factor.

The wow factor is often called “executive presence.” It is easy to see and yet hard to define. But it’s important to develop because when you have it, people want to promote you, do business with you, give you better assignments, and recommend you to others.

Is executive presence in your DNA or can you learn it? It turns out you’re not born with this skill. And it’s not as much of a mystery as you might think. Executive presence is a blending of competencies and skills that when combined send all the right signals.

Executive presence creates a strong personal brand. The brand is the message or impression that comes to mind when people see you, hear of you, or think about you. In business, you need to build your brand with everyone – your colleagues, boss, direct reports, clients or customers; because it’s impossible to meet and know everyone well. Brand gives you word of mouth that is a tremendous advantage.

Executive presence isn’t just fluff, and it isn’t about first impressions; it is a thought or feeling about you that develops over time based on other people’s experiences with you. When you do it right, you build trust, which creates word of mouth or buzz that opens up business opportunities and creates professional and financial success.

So how do you start developing a powerful executive presence and create your own personal brand? I believe there are seven elements of executive presence:

- 1) Substance
- 2) Personal Style
- 3) Physical Presence
- 4) Vocal Skill
- 5) Manners/Etiquette
- 6) Receptivity/Listening
- 7) Work Space



#1. Substance

The most important aspect of executive presence is the ability to communicate substance. You are an expert in your field, and you need to share that expertise in a powerful way. In order to do this you need to develop a high level of skill in speaking, presenting, writing and communicating your ideas. You may be one of the most knowledgeable people in your industry, however, if you cannot convey your business and technical skill, you won't get the recognition you deserve.

#2. Personal Style

We can hope that it doesn't matter, but the way we dress speaks volumes about us as professionals. Your business attire should make you feel confident and powerful every single day. Think about how you feel when you put on your best suit. You should walk in the door feeling like that every day. Polished personal style isn't just about the clothing you wear; it's about how you feel in those clothes.

#3. Physical Presence

Your physical presence is more than your body language. It's your confidence, spirit, and energy. People are reading your body language 24/7. Learn to sit, stand, walk, move and gesture purposefully. It says so much about your professionalism.

#4. Vocal Skill

Many people know us only by the sound of our voice. Yet the voice is one of the most overlooked aspects of executive presence. Knowing how to use your voice effectively is one of the secrets to standing out in the crowd. Your voice should be conversational and clear. It should demonstrate your confidence, enthusiasm, passion and intelligence. Add interest to your voice by using inflection, varying the pace, emphasizing important words or phrases and pausing when you make an important point.

#5. Manners/Etiquette

It sounds like a no-brainer, but business etiquette is essential to professional presence. Etiquette is easy if you remember a few things; treat others as you want to be treated, put their comfort ahead of your own, and be gracious and grateful to everyone you meet. People may not comment on your manners, but they do notice them.



#6. Receptivity/Listening

Listening is a leadership skill. Those who listen stand out and are remembered. Listening includes being accessible, encouraging people to express themselves, listening with mindfulness, not speaking too much, and using verbal and non verbal language to convey genuine interest in the other person. If you don't know whether you're a good listener, ask someone who will tell you the truth.

#7. Work Space

Your work space is an extension of you and can be a tip off to others about how you really conduct business. Many people with a messy office believe it shouldn't matter. As much as we wish no one will see or notice, that's not true. A CEO once said he decides whether to promote his people based on "clutter." Clear it out, find a home for everything, keep electronic files of most documents, and then make it an attractive space for you and others. This is not only important to your image; it will also help you feel better about your hours at work.

Now, where do you start? Choose one of the elements and get started. Ask a trusted advisor to help. Soon, people will be gravitating to your circle when you walk into the room!