

Have You Discovered the Power of Your Presence?

AN ARTICLE BY MARIE MORAN

Executive presence. All of us can name at least one person who is said to have it and knows how to use it. We easily recognize presence in others because we feel the impact of it. But what is it exactly? Do you have it? Are you fully applying the power of your executive presence?



Is it possible to acquire and develop charisma and presence? You bet!

Undeniably, the individual who possesses charisma and a genuinely warm-yet-powerful presence has a tremendous advantage, not just in the business world, but in all aspects of life. In the corporate world, a person with presence possesses leadership ability that is strongly enhanced when they demonstrate an executive presence. Although the quality of presence is somewhat subjective and a bit elusive to put into words, here are some of the key characteristics that comprise it.

Characteristics of People with Presence

- **Present** – Fully “here now,” focused, in balance and aware.
- **Self-aware** – Conscious of their own feelings, thoughts, and responses, even at deeper levels of feeling.
- **Authentic** – Consistently express their individuality without trying to prove themselves or be someone they aren’t.
- **Flexible** – Know how to relate to different personality styles, cultures, and all levels within an organization. They are at ease with most any group or constituency.
- **Charismatic** – Convey a radiant energy that others feel and respond to. They include versus exclude others in their manner.

Now, suppose you are like most folks and you weren’t born with all these desirable personal characteristics. Is it possible to acquire and develop charisma and presence? Absolutely!

Over the past 25 years, I’ve coached hundreds of business people to develop a stronger presence and a more inspirational leadership style. In doing so, I’ve identified specific traits and behaviors of individuals who possess executive presence and a charismatic style.

A Snapshot of Executive Presence

First, individuals with executive presence consistently convey a strong, vital life energy. Their presence is felt by others even before they utter a word — we typically describe this as part of their “vibe.” They carry themselves with a poise and self-assuredness that is open and neither weak nor arrogant.

These individuals are not preoccupied with projecting an image! Instead, they are strongly connected to their inner conscience and intuition as they move with ease through the many situations of life. They demonstrate graciousness, a magnanimous compassion for others, and an ability to be flexible in a variety of circumstances and environments.

People who possess a charismatic presence have a deep awareness of themselves, of others, and of what is happening around them. It shows in their behavior.

Behaviors That Demonstrate Presence

- **Poised Under Pressure** – Individuals with presence remain unruffled when pressure increases due to conflict, change, or unexpected difficulty. It's not that they don't have strong feelings, but they harness their feelings and control the expression of them.
- **Deliberate** – While not slow, these individuals don't rush. Their speech is focused, articulate and steady, demonstrating that "powerful people never rush." Their body language is purposeful and not distracting.
- **Respond vs. React** – Even in the face of conflict, disturbance, or something they find distasteful, these individuals hold steady. They can "think on their feet" and respond appropriately.
- **Respectful** – Even when they do not like someone or something, they stay open and listen. They refrain from putting others down.
- **Polished yet Animated** – People with presence communicate in a clear, concise manner yet with an appropriate amount of gestures, voice inflection, and facial animation.
- **Demonstrate "Balanced Talk Time"** – They maintain a relatively even exchange when conversing with others. They listen as well as talk.
- **Appropriately Assertive** – Whatever the situation, they express themselves without being either pushy or timid.
- **Open** – Individuals with presence are willing to initiate, to reach out, to be flexible in their approach, and to mend fences when needed.

If you are not fully demonstrating the above behaviors in your role as a leader, you probably are not fully applying the power of your executive presence. But you soon can be, if you're willing to make the effort.

I've observed time after time that presence can be developed! Many of the traits associated with executive presence (such as the ability to stay poised under pressure) can be strengthened over time through working to develop your character. Other characteristics are strengthened as you work closely with others who possess them. You learn from their demonstration. You can incorporate many of these behaviors with the right type of instruction, in the right environment, and when you recognize how vital they are to your growth.



While some people do seem to have been born with more than their fair share of presence, it is possible for all of us to learn and cultivate these desirable characteristics. A higher level of personal power and leadership ability is definitely within reach for all when we aspire to it and apply ourselves!

About the Author

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