

110 views | Jan 28, 2020, 06:03pm

How To Increase Your Executive Presence



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Leadership Strategy

Attracting high-paying clients by marketing with a book and a speech.



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Do you inspire others to believe in you?

Inspiring others is a big part of leadership. Once I edited a book on leadership and charisma. The author, Cynthia Burnham, was a former Fortune 500 executive who is hired by companies around the globe to be a leadership charisma coach.

Burnham calls leadership charisma as “that commanding spark that persuades others to believe in you and to follow you.”

If you want to attract high-paying clients, it pays to increase this charisma, which others dub as executive presence.

To gain more insight on increasing this sometimes intangible, but no less important aspect of one’s professional identity, I turned to Dianna Booher. She is an expert on executive presence and the bestselling author of 48 books, published in 62 foreign-language editions. She helps organizations to communicate clearly and enables leaders to expand their influence. Her latest books include *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails*; *Communicate Like a Leader*; and *What MORE Can I Say?*.

Booher asks the executives who consult with her a series of key questions. “Do you feel that others frequently ‘talk over’ you during meetings or social gatherings? Do you routinely shun confrontation? Are you often referred to by your coworkers as a ‘hidden talent’ or? Do you feel that you’ve been wrongfully passed over for promotions? If you answered ‘Yes’ to any of these questions, you may want to consider increasing what I call your *executive presence*. While humility and congeniality are admirable traits, sometimes you need to present yourself in a more impressive, visible way to make a contribution—and receive credit for it.”

Today In: Leadership



When I asked Booher to define executive presence more precisely, she replied: “We all know it when we see it—or don’t.”

Consider these four categories of habits, skills, traits, attitudes, or aptitudes that contribute to your personal presence:

“*How you look*: posture, gestures, facial expressions, movement, walk, dress.

“*How you talk*: pitch, pace, volume, emphasis, word choices, sentence patterns, colloquialisms, clichés and word fillers or their absence.

“How you think: structure and organization, speed or slowness of expression, clarity of ideas, analogies, and illustrations.

“How you act: accomplishments, personality traits (humor, wit, authenticity, approachableness), character traits (integrity, loyalty, compassion, and so forth).”

Booher provides the following tips for increasing one’s executive presence:

“Demonstrate confidence in your body language and voice. Stand, gesture, and move with energy and intention. Make your gestures bold: up, out, big, firm, and content-specific. Avoid habits that make you look nervous, such as pacing around or using filler in speech.

“Vary your voice to avoid a monotone that bores listeners. Consider your volume, pacing, pitch, inflection, pausing, and tone to create credibility and connection. A low rather than higher, pitch typically connotes authority and expertise. Speaking too quickly reveals nervousness.

“Approach people. Don’t wait for them to approach and introduce themselves. Make introductions between others. Be the liaison to help other people get things done together.

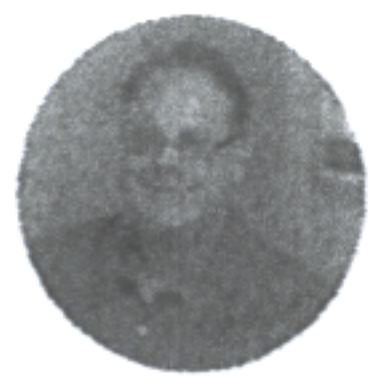
“Add humor and wit to create a sense of light-heartedness and being authentically in the moment. The ability to be spontaneous is the language of leadership and confidence.

“Think on your feet when others ask questions or solicit your opinions. To be persuasive and authoritative, develop a format to structure a clear, complete, concise response.

“Summarize succinctly. This applies to your writing, presentations, and conversations. Those with impact have learned to synthesize information, present it concisely, and then leave it to their listeners to ask for appropriate details.”

Now I do not think executive presence is the be all and end all. Executive presence will help you capture people’s attention; once you have their attention, you have to have something valuable to say. Executive presence attracts the attention of high-paying clients, and then you get the opportunity to land those clients.

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Henry DeVries, M.B.A., cofounder and CEO of Indie Books International, speaks to thousands of business people each year on how to persuade with a story. In his writing and speaking he shares, in humorous ways, pragmatic strategies that can double sales results and achieve marketing returns of 400% to 2,000%. He is also the president of the New Client Marketing Institute, a training company he founded in 1999. He is the former president of an Ad Age 500 advertising and PR agency and has served as a marketing faculty member and assistant dean of continuing education at the University of California, San Diego. In the last ten years, he has helped ghostwrite, edit, and coauthor more than 300 business books, including his McGraw-Hill bestseller, "How to Close a Deal Like Warren Buffett" now in five languages, including Chinese. He earned his bachelor's degree from UC San Diego, his MBA from San Diego State University, and has completed certificate programs at the Harvard Business School. As a result of his work, consultants and business owners get the four Bs: more bookings, more blogs, more buzz, and a path and plan to more business. On a personal note, he is a baseball nut. A former Associated Press sportswriter, he has visited forty-one major league ball parks and has three to go before he "touches 'em all." His hobby is writing comedy screenplays that he hopes will one day be made into films. **Read Less**