

Have You Discovered the Power of Your Presence?

AN ARTICLE BY MARIE MORAN

Executive presence. Most of us can name at least one individual who is said to have executive presence. We recognize presence in others when we feel their impact on others, a situation, or their environment. Yet, how do we define this mysterious quality we call executive presence? And to what extent are you utilizing the power of your presence?



A Bigger 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 own identity and intuition, which allows them to move with ease through multiple challenges in their life.

They know how to be gracious, which allows them to demonstrate compassion for others, and be flexible as circumstances and environments require.

People who possess a strong charismatic presence typically are aware and sensitive to the orientations of others, and of what is happening around them. It shows in their behavior, as they are able to respond effectively with grace and ease.

Characteristics of People Who Demonstrate Presence

Over the years, as my colleagues and I have coached scores of clients to develop their executive presence and a stronger, more inspirational leadership style,

we’ve come to identify a variety of specific traits and behaviors demonstrated by individuals who possess executive presence and a charismatic leadership style.

- **Present** – Fully “here now,” focused, balanced, and aware, versus distracted or disengaged.
- **Self-aware** – Conscious of their own feelings, thoughts, and behaviors; understand their own strengths and growth areas; and demonstrate discernment and self-control.
- **Authentic** – Consistently express their individuality without trying to prove themselves or be someone or something they aren’t.
- **Flexible** – Know how to relate to different personality styles, cultures, and people at all levels within an organization. They are at ease with most any group or constituency, and able to flex their approach when appropriate.
- **Charismatic** – Convey a radiant energy that others feel and respond to. Are genuinely open and inclusive of others. Present themselves well, visually, vocally, and verbally.

If you are like most people and weren’t born with all these desirable personal characteristics, is it possible to acquire and develop them? Absolutely!

Is It Possible to Develop Executive Presence? Yes!

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.

Here Are Some Behaviors to Build Your Presence

- **Be Deliberate** – Don't rush. When you speak, be focused, articulate, and steady, demonstrating that "powerful people never rush." Ensure that your body language is purposeful and not distracting.
- **Stay Poised Under Pressure** – Learn how to stay unruffled when pressure increases due to conflict, change, or unexpected difficulties. Learn to harness your emotions and fine-tune your expression under stress.
- **Respond vs. React** – Even in the face of conflict, disturbance, or something you find distasteful, hold steady. Take a breath, so you can "think on your feet" and respond appropriately.
- **Be Respectful** – Even when you do not like someone or something, remain patient and listen. Be tactful and refrain from criticizing or embarrassing someone in front of others.
- **Be Polished and Expressive** – Communicate in a clear, concise manner with appropriate gestures, voice inflection, and facial animation. Pay attention to your dress and grooming so as to bring out your best in various environments.
- **Demonstrate "Balanced Talk Time"** – Maintain a relatively even exchange when conversing with others. Attempt to listen as much as you talk.
- **Be Appropriately Assertive** – Whatever the situation, express yourself without being either too pushy or too timid. Learn to calibrate how much pressure is enough or too much.

- **Be Open** – Be willing to initiate, to reach out, be more curious about others. Be flexible versus fixed in your interpersonal approach, and learn to "mend fences" when needed.

When you are not demonstrating the above behaviors, you aren't maximizing your executive presence. But, if you're willing to make the effort, your presence can be developed! Many executive presence traits (such as the ability to stay poised under pressure) can be strengthened over time by working to develop yourself. Some characteristics might be strengthened as you work closely with others who possess them, as you learn from their demonstration. Over time, you can incorporate 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's possible for each of us to cultivate it. A higher level of personal power and leadership ability is definitely within reach when we dedicate ourselves to continually learn and grow!

About the Author

Marie Moran is an internationally recognized expert in executive presence and leadership development with more than 30 years of experience. Marie provides dynamic and meaningful workshops and individual coaching for individuals, entrepreneurs and leaders in Fortune 500 companies across all industries. You can reach Marie by emailing info@mariemoran.com.

*With over two decades of service to leadership in work and life, **Marie Moran & Company, LLC** brings ease, excellence and effectiveness to the workplace by providing top-quality leadership development workshops, executive coaching and organizational consulting to organizations worldwide. Learn more by visiting mariemoran.com.*

MARIE MORAN
& COMPANY LLC