

## Leadership Coaching Tool

# Executive Presence: 12 Steps to Get It and Keep It

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Executive presence is not about first impressions. It's about consistent long-lasting impressions. It's about how others perceive you: strong, convincing, direct, committed or wishy-washy, indecisive, weak or unsure. Executive presence means you are seen as someone who commands a room and commands attention by communicating clearly, concisely and honestly. It also means you are not afraid to voice your ideas even if those beliefs are contrary to other opinions. Your ability to impact or influence others is not based on [job title](#). It's your personal authoritative style that creates loyalty and respect.

The following 12 steps will help you develop your own executive presence so others visualize you as a leader who can instill confidence and genuinely connect with others.

1. **Speak Up:** Be a regular contributor at the table. Don't wait for others to ask questions. To provide valuable input, prepare 3 to 4 points you want to deliver in advance of a meeting or important conversation.
2. **State Your Beliefs:** Articulate your ideas even if others don't agree. Leaders stand up and voice their opinions without apologizing or making excuses. State what is correct, not what you think others want to hear. By taking personal risk, you project confidence and self assurance.
3. **Use Strong Words:** Avoid disclaimers and tentative phrases such as "It seems I get results" or "I hope to have the plan by August" or "In my humble opinion" or "I think or "I guess". Replace these soft words with stronger more assertive language such as "I believe", or "I would like the plans on my desk by Monday", or "I get consistent results" or "The facts are as follows".
4. **Passion:** Speak with passion, energy, conviction and commitment. High energy and emotional content appeals to people on a very human level. If you don't believe in what you are saying, no one else will.
5. **Take Credit:** You need to be your own cheerleader. Self promotion is not bragging. It's taking ownership and credit for your hard [work](#) so people notice you. Certainly give credit to others where credit is due, but it's not necessary to overly compliment or continually thank people for their input.
6. **Pause:** Don't feel a need to fill the silence. Give people a chance to think for a second about what you've said before you move on. This will also help you come across as comfortable and confident in your delivery of information.

7. Ask Challenging Questions: Show you will not take things at face value and want to continually get as much information as possible to accurately understand the issue and make informed decisions.

8. Delegate: There is a difference between delegating and doing. It's always important to help people but that doesn't mean doing their work for them. Instead of continually offering to "put something together for you" or "give it to me and I'll see what I can do", it's important to take charge. Offer to look or help, but then suggest: "why don't you put it together and I'll take a look at it".

9. Manage the Message: Avoid too much detail when presenting/speaking to executive audiences. Most listeners do not want to sit through a bunch of historical perspective and background. They want you to get to the point quickly. What do they need to know or do to move forward? Think about delivering a few key points with relevant examples that tell them why they need to listen to you.

10. Direct Delivery: Instead of backing into conversations or delivering details first, think big picture and state your main point up front so you deliver a quick, concise message and are more definite in your responses. By getting to the point quickly, you are in a better position to address concerns and persuade others to see your point of view.

11. Stand Tall: Positive body language draws positive attention. It's important to stand tall and straight, make direct eye contact, offer a firm strong handshake and speak in a strong voice. When speaking to a group, think about projecting to the back of the room to give more oomph, energy and passion so you are animated and interesting.

12. Authentically Firm: Being firm and definite doesn't mean you have to be rude or nasty. Being polite and using tact when questioning or challenging the opinions of others will foster conversation and put others at ease so you can create an atmosphere of trust and open dialogue.

Everywhere you go, you are always being evaluated by somebody. When your actions across the board from the maintenance worker to the CEO are consistent and genuine, you are on your way to becoming the type of executive others admire and want to follow.