

Who Needs Executive Presence? You Do!

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Your boss tells you that you need to work on Executive Presence. However, you are swamped, doing the job of three people and attending one meeting after another. In theory, you agree that it would be great to develop Executive Presence, but yet, you don't really know what you should be doing differently. Additionally, you don't have time now. You will tackle this when and if you ever have free time. Does any of this sound familiar?

Why it matters:

How you deliver your message affects whether or not people listen and take you seriously. It impacts people's perception of you, your company and its products or services. Amy Cuddy, in her book, *Presence*, says the when you have presence, it signals authenticity, believability, genuineness, and trustworthiness, all critical elements for a leader, for anyone hoping to rise up the corporate ladder. The question you should be asking is can you afford not to address how you convey your message.

What Presence is:

Cuddy says presence is hard to define. People can describe the lack of it but can't easily put words to what it is. She describes it a number of ways:

- Believing and revealing the abilities you truly have
- Confidence without arrogance
- Passion without being over-the top
- Ability to relate on a personal level

It's not about impressing. The more you are yourself, the more you are able to be present, the more your ideas will be heard.

What the behaviors are:

Confident speakers always stand or sit up straight. They don't rock or shift from one foot to the other. They look people directly in the eye with sustained eye contact. They complete a thought or sentence

with each person. They don't scan the room and assume they are connecting. They aren't afraid to show how they feel. They speak with a strong voice, not one that is a monotone. They do not rush through their argument but take their time to let their ideas sink in. When they gesture and move, it is to make a point. They do not try to curtail energy, but work at letting it out purposefully.

How you gain presence:

A lot of us have important messages to deliver to important people. This can cause anyone to feel anxious. It is easy to feel we aren't good enough. As a result, we just try to get through it. We end up talking quickly and reading from our slides or notes. Our nervousness shows through strange mannerisms or tics. Cuddy says you can trick your body into feeling confident by doing certain actions. You can fake it until you make it. In essence, your body can influence your brain and behavior.

To get to the point where you aren't faking, you have to practice until the delivery skills are part of your muscle memory. By isolating the skills of eye contact, posture, gestures, movement, vocal and facial animation and practicing them one at a time, they will begin to feel natural. Your body will automatically do them. You will let out energy appropriately.

Sometimes, we only get one chance to make a positive impression. Obviously, we want Decision Makers to feel we are the right one to handle the job, the perfect person to put in charge. Displaying confidence, showing conviction and connecting on a personal note will make others conclude we deserve the right to be there. Others will see us as having "presence."

Question: *Think about your own presence. What is something you need to change in order to be better at having Executive Presence. We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

Continued on page 2

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.Impact-CommunicationsInc.com.