

Command executive presence

Executive presence is a leadership quality people instantly recognize but find hard to define.

It is a factor that often advances people in their careers or holds them back. You know it when you see it.

When we ask our clients who they think exhibits executive presence, they consistently name Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

Among the reasons: "Gov. Granholm commands your attention." "She looks confident and in control." "She is always dressed professionally." "She is engaging in a businesslike way."

Executive presence is comprised of appearance, confidence and communication skills. Here are some tips to develop it:

1) Appearance. Take stock of your business suits and invest in good, well-fitting clothes.

Dress your best for an appearance at the podium. Make sure everything you have on is up-to-date and in perfect shape. Your shoes should have a military polish. Personal grooming includes a good haircut, well-kept nails and lipstick for women.

2) Confidence. Being prepared is the No. 1 way to achieve this at the podium. Make sure you allow time to arrive early so you are relaxed and not rushed. A person who is confident stands tall, makes good eye contact, gives a firm handshake, shows interest and smiles easily.

3) Communication skills. Learn to speak concisely and stay on point. Organize your presentation around no more than three key messages.

Lose bad habits, such as using incorrect grammar and slang, swearing, interrupting and not listening.

To exhibit executive presence, you must invest time, effort and money in yourself.

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