



THE POWER OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Executive Presence. You know it when you see it. That inspiring leader who exudes confidence, speaks with clarity and consistently utilizes their passion to encourage the team. She commands the room, and people rely on her wisdom and strength on a daily basis. Associates gravitate toward her and want to be like her. But how did she develop that certain, “je ne sais quoi” or was she just a born leader? More importantly, would your team describe you in this way?

Even the best leaders reach points in their career when the paradigm shifts, expectations change, and the scope of the job becomes different. The higher your level of seniority, the more perception seems to matter. Amy Jen Su, author of *Own the Room*, describes leadership presence as the, “ability to consistently and clearly articulate your value proposition while influencing and connecting with others.”¹ Executive presence is what sets exceptional leaders apart. It is about demonstrating confident, authentic and effective leadership in different situations with diverse audiences.

Impressive leaders have the ability to read the crowd and adapt their communication style accordingly.

So, what exactly is Executive Presence? Executive presence is a combination of your **personal demeanor** which links physical presence with your particular style, **communication expertise** and agility and **emotional intelligence**. Let’s explore these three components in further detail.

Personal Demeanor

It’s important to remember that personal demeanor is the most visible characteristic of executive presence. Your personal demeanor is about your physical presence combined with your gravitas as a leader. Simply stated, it’s the energy you project through your body language, clothing attire, eye contact and facial expressions. It is your self-confidence, poise and grace under fire. It begins with the way you enter a room and doesn’t end until you turn off the light switch and close the door.

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Communication Expertise

When communicating at a leadership level, you aren't just trying to make a point as a skilled philanthropy leader; you are trying to engage, inspire, collaborate with and influence those around you. To do this effectively, Amy Jen Su argues that you must, "provide context and framing for your message so it is relevant for the audience, deliver a clear, crisp, and consistent message, and be able to listen, engage, and connect to your audience."² Jen Su's points have relevancy not just for interactions in the board and meeting room but for making presentations in a larger setting.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is the key to executive presence. It is the ability to harness your emotions to influence others. It is about intuition, self-awareness, perception of others, timing, understanding context and the ability to read the room. But as the pressures of leadership mount, so does the likelihood that negative emotions can surface in our leadership style. This is why having a strong emotional compass is essential. Just the simple act of hitting the pause button can foster better results. The most encouraging part about emotional intelligence is that skills can be developed for positive results.

Executive presence is about your physical presence combined with your personal substance and confidence as a leader. It's about communicating expertly as a skilled philanthropy leader, passionately yet authentically when motivating others and speaking concisely with fellow senior executives. It's having the skill set to speak convincingly in front of large crowds and also small, intimate groups. Agility comes into play in understanding when to connect with others in a supportive role and yet asserting yourself as an expert in your field when necessary. Also, recognizing when to listen versus speaking up and making a point is critical. These are proficiencies that are constantly evolving and are extremely dynamic. It is a commitment to strive to

be the leader you envision yourself to be, but it is also a necessity for the success of yourself and your organization!

So, how do you find that perfect intersection between fundraising acumen and strong executive presence? How do you demonstrate confident, authentic and effective leadership in the C-suite?

- First, acquire honest feedback. Find out how you are perceived as a leader around executive presence.
- Next, identify where the opportunities for growth lie. Where do you need help and guidance?
- Determine how you can add value to the overall strategic discussion of your health care organization.
- Lastly, create an integrated action plan for growth around presence. What are some key learnings you can act on immediately to strengthen your personal demeanor?

¹ Amy Jen Su, *Own the Room*, [E-reader version, if applicable] (location 100). March 2013.

² Amy Jen Su, *Own the Room*, [E-reader version, if applicable] (location 1344). March 2013.

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