

8 Tips & Triumphs to Build Executive Presence

How you look is only part of what your image projects. How do you handle yourself in public? Do people listen when you speak? Are they reassured by your presence? Read the top eight tips and triumphs when projecting an executive image.

Appearance

Always looking your best from head to toe gets you noticed and puts you on the leadership track. Pay attention to the details. Missteps such as scuffed shoes, wearing wrinkled, sloppy clothing for men; or for women, too tight, revealing clothing can seriously derail your executive career.

Integrity

Being perceived as an executive is about having strong values and ethics. You need to honour commitments, tell the truth, respect others (and yourself) and above all, be authentic. Being authentic increases your self-confidence, credibility and likeability—key qualities for a leader.

Body language

After your appearance, the second thing that people notice is your body language. Watch out for any habits that signal anxiety or insecurity, such as arms folded over the body, hands in pockets or lack of eye contact. To feel more confident, stand up straight, keep your head up and avoid leaning, slouching or crossing your arms and legs.

Own the room

Leaders walk right into a room with one purpose—to connect with other people. You take on the role of host, initiating a handshake and making everyone feel that they belong. Without raising your voice, causing a commotion or drawing attention to yourself, everyone knows you are there.

Be adaptable

Leaders adapt to circumstances, change, even surprises. You fit in gracefully with all groups of people, varying your approach depending on who you are dealing with and the specific situation. You are calm (and effective) during transitions and receptive to looking at a different way of doing things.

More than business

Your business acumen may be legendary but a true executive is about more than just business. People at the top of the corporate ladder are intellectually curious. They're up to date on current events, truly interested in what is new and different, and effortlessly find points of connection with everyone they meet.

Great communicators

Effective leaders focus on listening. They don't need to hear their own voices. When they do speak, they use clear language, not buzzwords, jargon or filler words. They are always well prepared and take time to present their ideas logically. Most importantly, they leave time to invite others to share opinions, seeking ideas and conversation from the quieter individuals.

Online savvy

Having an online presence is a must but it can be a minefield. Successful leaders carefully curate their presence. They know how easily a careless comment, unprofessional photo, or controversial post can contribute to a negative online impression. Their comments or posts are well thought out and timely, designed to engage and inform not blow their own horn.