

Is your lack of “Executive Presence” holding you back?

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Most people want leaders who look like leaders and act like leaders.

If you’re an executive who is choosing a new department head, a company board of directors appointing a new CEO, or simply a voter deciding who should lead the country for the next four years, it’s a fact that one’s appearance goes a long way in the decision-making process.

Seems kind of like “common sense,” right? Clearly, nobody wants to hire, appoint, or elect someone who looks like (s)he doesn’t know how to dress himself or herself properly, or when he opens his mouth, sounds like a pumpkinhead.

Often, there’s a presumption that if you can’t do these things, you won’t be any good at the other technical skills required to do a job effectively. That’s usually wrong by the way. But it doesn’t help the person who missed their opportunity because they didn’t look the part.

One’s presence is a big deal in most organizations. But, interestingly, most people tell me that it’s not an issue in their own place of employment. I think those people are naïve. To the point of self-sabotage.

One of the most common assignments I get at my coaching practice, BusinessSuccessCoach.net, is helping people deal with their lack of executive presence. It’s a very common problem. It goes across organizations of all sizes, in all industries, and is not gender specific. We are usually asked to help someone who doesn’t even realize he has a problem. Our assignment is usually initiated by someone’s superior or the HR Department; and usually I am told that so-and-so’s a “great person,” but he or she is in trouble, and executive presence is a big part of the problem.

Are you in danger? Can you do better?

Here are some of the things I’m asked to help people work on:

1. Presentations – The individual doesn’t know how to communicate effectively and appropriately for her role. This may include any or all of: clothing style, hair, eye contact, voice volume and/or pitch, speed of speaking, use of charting such as PowerPoint, addressing audiences, dealing with media, use of humor.

2. Appearance – In this case, the person is usually dressing inappropriately for their job.

Things like too much or too little clothing, flip flops, shoes never polished, pants which hang way too low (underwear show isn't good for either gender's presence), clothing a bit provocative or a bit too dreary. We also consider and discuss things like facial hair, hair style, makeup use, and more often lately, weight. (Though it's unfair, people are harsher on women than they are with men on the weight issue.)

5. Verbal Communication – People with great presence are great communicators. Others interrupt constantly, never speak up, are seen laughing or telling jokes inappropriately, may be too loud, not loud enough, too whiny, not confident enough, too brash, or generally impolite to peers in meetings.

4. Written Communication – More important for those further up the line, this addresses things like spelling and punctuation issues, being too long-winded, or someone who copies everyone in the company when only a person or two need to have the information.

5. Meetings – Extremely common, these folks generally don't hold productive meetings. This may be that they have too many or too few, or that they don't know how to run a meeting which facilitates the task at hand.

6. Overall “Style” – This is the person who just seems to lack any positive human connection. She or he is known for being too demanding, too bossy, or too folksy. He often has no consistency in behavior so you never know “who” you're going to be seeing when you have a meeting with him.

Many people don't realize they even have a problem with any of these or any other executive presence issues.

Generally, bosses don't have the confidence (or care) to tell someone that she or he has any of these issues because they may not even know if they are allowed discuss the problem or if it's too personal.

So, it's important that you have a trusted ally or mentor

in your organization who won't be afraid to tell you if the way you look is not the best for advancement in the company, or if you should consider a good mouthwash.

Otherwise, you may be stuck in the same assignment watching others with less qualifications move ahead.

Finally, if you are a boss who has a good employee who needs to improve their style and approach, I suggest you figure out a way to help them become the best they can. It will help them and your organization overall. Or pay a professional to come in. Whatever you choose, do it before it's too late for the employee or the company. In a tight business market, every individual and every company needs to perform at the best possible level.

John
Leadership Coach

 Loading ...**John M. McKee** is the founder and CEO of *BusinessSuccessCoach.net*, an

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