

3 Ways to Have Presence

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Have you ever seen someone walk into a room and thought to yourself, “WOW, this person has something special; they have IT!” We know “IT” when we see it. People turn to see who just walked into the room and conversations are directed toward this person. Everyone listens when this person speaks. The person is engaging and people are always around them. They have something special. They have presence.

Developing presence does not happen overnight and is not something everyone can master. It starts with being yourself and not worrying about how you come off. So, take a breath and sneak a quick look in the mirror as we look at three areas of developing presence.

Confidence. Confidence is easy to talk about but difficult in practice. Imagining you are standing on the edge of a deep pool and can’t swim. If someone threw you in, there’s a chance you could figure it out, but more than likely would need saving. To be good at swimming, you need practice. The same goes for developing confidence.

Think of confidence as owning and controlling a room. When you walk into a room,

especially where you don't know many people, you'll naturally be nervous. Stand up straight and have an energy about you people can see. With practice, confidence will become part of you, requiring no bravado or hubris.

I saw an example of confidence when a new director was brought into a contentious team meeting for the first time. She came into the room, shook everyone's hand around the table and made a point to share something about herself to each person. She didn't flinch when the conversation turned uncomfortable and though I'm sure she was a little uncomfortable, she never showed it.

Communication. Communication is the foundation for inspiring those around you and includes verbal and non-verbal. When you speak, do so clearly. Don't soften your words and abandon the niceties. Speak clearly and get listeners to the point. Making eye contact is a must. Listen intently to whomever is speaking to you with the goal of understanding.

Body language is also part of communication. Have you ever talked to someone who had their arms crossed and swayed away from you? Did you feel they were engaged in the conversation even though they responded to you? Probably not. Be aware of your body language as keeping an open posture will help engage those around you.

Appearance. When meeting for the first time, people will put you through a filter on appearance alone. It's not about wearing designer clothes or wearing a suit and tie in an environment where jeans are OK. It's about being put together; well groomed, clothes look nice and fit properly.

I once was invited to a formal client dinner where most of the client attendees were executives. One of the attendees, a manager of the marketing team, came wearing jeans that were too big and a t-shirt. His attire didn't fit the "formal" category and even before we formally met, I had already drawn a conclusion he was not fit for a senior management position. It turned out he was very smart, but I had already drawn a conclusion before we had even spoken a word to each other.

Having "It", that presence, can be developed over time. With practice, confidence can be obtained, communication developed and attire properly selected for the occasion.

About the Author

Jason Orloske



I am a seasoned project, program and portfolio manager with over 15 years' experience in the healthcare, retail, legal, and regulatory sectors. I believe that a successful project is more than just delivering on time, scope, budget and quality. It starts with a solid understanding of the requested project and ensuring it aligns with organizational goals and market needs. Through a governance process, I have worked with executive teams so only the right projects are approved, as well as agreement on priority. I have created a culture of success with project teams through well-defined processes, open communication with and among team members, and continual stakeholder engagement. I'm a clear communicator who can interact with executives and their teams about technology, business and financial topics.