

Seizing the Elusive “It”

Exploring Executive Presence

by Pamela Geer





What is “It”?

Executive Presence (“It”) refers to that ability to...

Take hold of a room by making a polished entrance

Immediately shake people's hands, and forge quick, personal connections instead of defaulting to robotic formalism and shrinking into a chair

Speak, and people listen, because the talk is filled with conviction instead of equivocation

Inspire that “I’ll-follow-you-anywhere” loyalty, conveying an aura of warmth and authenticity to everybody from the receptionist to the CEO



Executive Presence is “It”

What exactly is Executive Presence (“It”)?

Some experts think of it as a frame around your other credentials and experience

If you don’t have good professional presence, it’s almost like having a beautiful painting that has been placed in a tacky frame

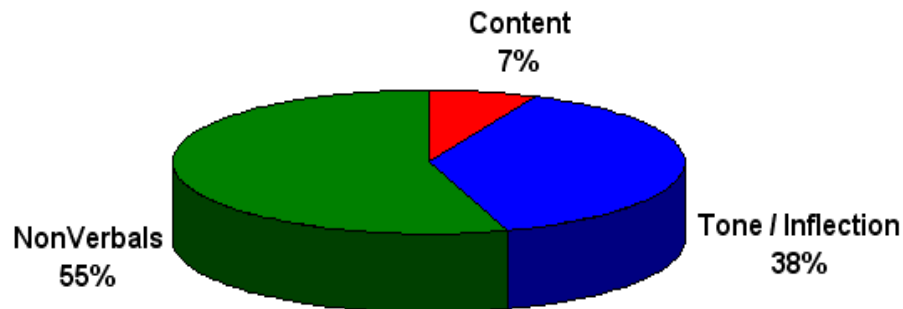
We all know that a cheap frame will detract from the beauty of a painting, while a great one will enhance it

Connie Glaser, “What is Executive Presence (And why is it so important?)”

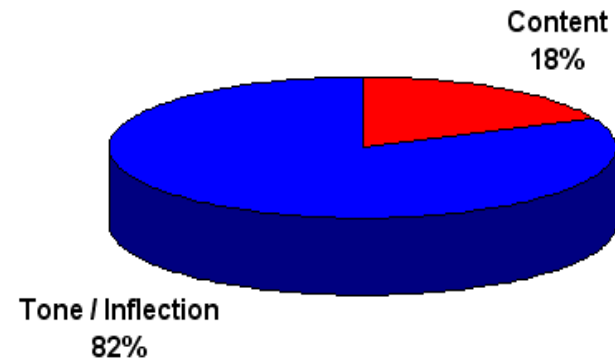
Importance of “It”

Why is Executive Presence so important?

Face to Face



Remote



- In a face-to-face setting content is only 7% of the message
- In a remote setting content is closer to 18%
- Non-verbal cues and tone / inflection make up the majority of the message whether you are meeting face-to-face or via remote tools

Albert Mehebian, UCLA sociologist



How to get “It”

Leaders with “It”:

- Take up space
- Take up time
- Know their topic
- Look the part

Leaders with “It” Take up Space

Confident people take up SPACE:

At meetings give yourself and your belongings room to spread; make sure your presence is known; don't squeeze into the back corner

Make Deliberate Gestures:

- One gesture per thought
- Gestures wider than the body
- Be natural but intentional
- Don't repeat the same gesture over and over
- Avoid finger and fist gestures that may be insulting to other cultures

Use Eye Contact:

- One person per thought
- Not too fast...not too slow
- Cover the room
- Eye contact often conveys self-confidence to others





Leaders with “It” Take up Space (cont.)

Use a Neutral Stance (studies have shown this appears to be a friendlier pose):

- Place feet asymmetrically
- Hands by Side
- Avoid clasping hands in front or behind back
- Good posture conveys energy and power

Display a Pleasant Expression:

- Smile naturally
- Smiling appropriately makes others see you as likeable and approachable
- Smiling improves your mood
- Strive to project an image that is consistent with your self-perception

Leaders with “It” Take up Time



Don't...

- Apologize for taking people's time
- Always end with a thank you
- Use upward inflections at the end of the sentence
- Think / process out loud
- Shutdown and process internally (for too long)

Do...

- Use a conversational tone
- Pause instead of using filler words
- Avoid qualifiers -
(*sort of, kind of, maybe, I think*)
- Use downward inflection at the end of the sentence
- Believe that you are worth the wait
- Practice your “voice of authority”
- Speak up (be sure you can be heard)
- Take your time before you answer

Remember: The great American writer and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said,

“All the great speakers were bad speakers first.”

Leaders with “It” Take up Time (cont.)



Exhibit high energy level

Speak with conviction...be confident

Ask questions...listen attentively

Inject humor and stories when appropriate

Be natural and authentic

- Using zany props
- Skits or parodies
- Witty or wry observations
- Puns, metaphors or analogies
- Fable, fairy tale or other literary narrative
- Personal stories or anecdotes



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Make sure it will work!



Leaders with “It” Know Their Topic


Laser the Message:

Match content to the audience

- Executive?
- Mid-level manager?
- Contributor?

Learn to synthesize data

- In Emails
- In Presentations



Leaders with “It” Know Their Topic (cont.)

Know your Material:

- Knowing the content well is essential, even though it is a small percentage of the message
- For an executive presentation, while materials may be summarized, you need to be able to speak quickly to any request for details
- Practice the material in at least 3 different sequences

Practice...

Practice...

Practice!



Leaders with “It” Know Their Topic (cont.)

Pay Attention to Detail:

- What is the audience?
 - What do you most want them to know or do?

- What is the goal of your presentation / communication?
 - Action from your audience? Then ask for a response and suggest a deadline.
 - Do you want to simply impart information? Then start the communication with FYI.
 - Are you providing training or complex materials? Consider interactive exercises to allow “hands-on” learning.
 - Is your goal entertainment? Consider a survey afterwards to gauge effectiveness of your message.

- Presentation Materials
 - Is your presentation neat? Is the text / format / colors consistent?
 - Are graphics used sparingly? Do they enhance the message?
 - Have you checked grammar? How about spelling?
 - Ask others to read / edit

Leaders with “It” Look the Part

“When in Rome wear a Toga”

“You are now being paid to look or dress the way you did when you came in for your very first interview. So why is it that within a few weeks after being hired, some employees take it upon themselves to change their appearance?”



ROMAN GLAD IN THE TOGA.

- The corporate culture or the type of business usually dictates appropriate attire
- Find someone in your culture that you perceive as a successful executive and emulate their style of dress
- Be tasteful
- Woman leaders should pay attention to too much . . . too much glitz, make-up, cleavage, tight clothing (less can be more)
- In most corporate cultures flip flops or tennis shoes are not appropriate
- Most conservative corporate cultures do not embrace visible tattoos and piercings