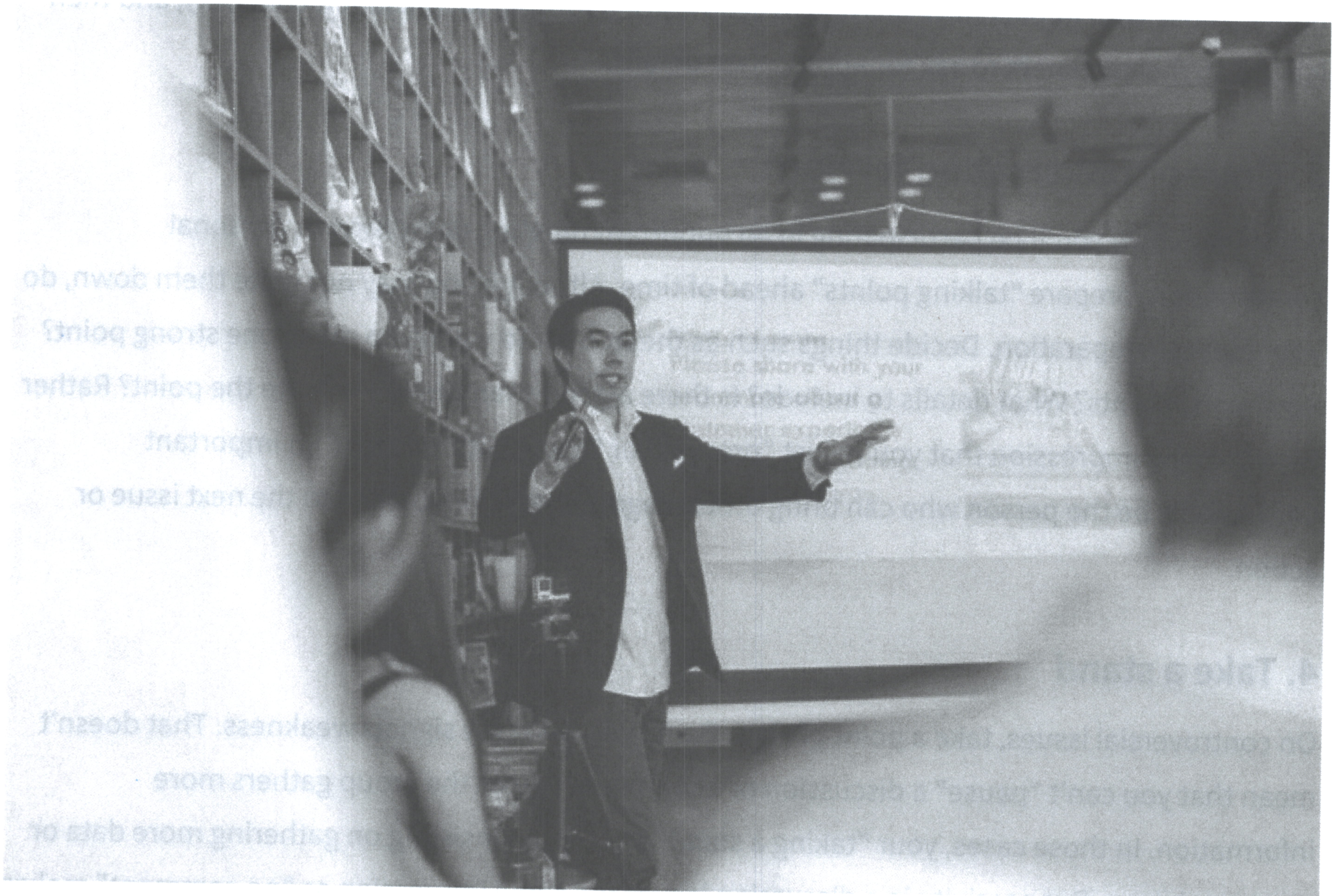


10 Tips to Increase Your Executive Presence and Expand Your Influence

By DIANNA BOOHER FEBRUARY 25, 2020



Executive presence opens doors to the executive suite. That's why we so often hear that you need it to get the job, win a promotion, close a deal, or inspire change. The following habits, skills, traits, and attitudes put you on the path to a strong executive presence that, in turn, increases your own credibility and career success. The “pass on” value can also increase the influence and promotability of those you coach.

1. Think on your feet to express yourself clearly when others ask questions or solicit opinions

To be persuasive and authoritative, develop a format to structure a clear, complete, yet concise response. A good format: A) Overview your opinion or answer. B) Support your opinion with reasons, ideas, or facts. C) Add an example or illustration. D) Finally, recap your answer or opinion in ONE sentence.

2. Summarize succinctly

This ability applies to your writing, presentations, and conversations. Anybody can babble on for hours. Those with impact have learned to synthesize information, present it concisely, and then leave it to their listeners to ask for appropriate details.

3. Move a conversation forward

When you know you'll be participating in an important meeting discussion or personal conversation, prepare "talking points" ahead of time. Although you may not write them down, do your mental preparation. Decide things such as these: Should you try to make one strong point? How many points? What details to include? Is there a good example to illustrate the point? Rather than give the impression that you're just "present" or "going with the flow" in important discussions, be the person who can bring others together and move them to the next issue or action.

4. Take a stand

On controversial issues, take a point of view. Being wishy-washy signals weakness. That doesn't mean that you can't "pause" a discussion or action until you or the group gathers more information. In those cases, your "taking a stand" may mean insisting on gathering more data or expert opinions. But passivity in a discussion leaves the same impression as "no comment" makes in a courtroom or TV interview.

5. Commit to what you communicate

Trust trumps speech. That is, if you say something, do it. Stand up, speak up, follow up. Practice the principles you preach. Consistency counts. Even if others don't agree with your views, they expect to see consistency between what you say and what you do. If they hear you espouse

certain values, they demand that you live by those values. To do differently destroys trust and respect.

6. Think strategically

Of course, tactical thinking serves a critical purpose, but strategic thinking sets you apart from the crowd. Lead others with strategic questions. Focus on why or why not when new opportunities arise. Consider the consequences for the future. People with presence rarely rush to judgment—of people, situations, data. They make it a practice to listen first, to observe, to collect and assess information.

7. Demonstrate confident body language

When conversing with executive leaders, confidence counts. It says you believe in what you're saying. To that end, stand, gesture, and move with energy and intention. Stand in the "ready" position (on the balls of your feet, which are squarely beneath your shoulders). Make your gestures bold: up, out, big, firm, and content-specific. Avoid body language that says, "I'm nervous": Jerky or aimless gestures. Pacing side to side or foot-shuffling back and forth. A furrowed brow.

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8. Speak with energy

Often in an attempt to appear relaxed or “laid back” during a meeting with their executive team, people fail to project their voice. Instead, they mumble or lower their volume to a one-on-one level—even when talking to a larger group. While an intimate conversation is appropriate from time to time, a projected, energetic voice grabs attention and typically carries more authority.

Vary your voice to avoid a monotone. Consider your volume, pacing, pitch, inflection, pausing, and tone to create credibility and connection. A lower, rather than higher, pitch typically connotes authority and expertise. Speaking too quickly reveals nervousness. Allowing word-fillers (*hmm, uh, ah, so, like*) to creep in also reveals nervousness.

9. Display a sense of light-heartedness

Be authentically “in the moment.” Never be afraid to add spontaneity to your agenda—even in the C-suite. Welcome witticisms from others. Unless you know others have ill-will behind any humorous remark directed at you, develop the ability to laugh at yourself. Light-heartedness is the language of leadership and confidence.

10. Take the initiative in meeting people

Don’t wait for them to approach you and introduce themselves. Likewise, make introductions between others who may have a common interest. Be the connector or liaison to help other people get things done together. With such a habit, you’ll become known as the person “who knows everyone” and whom “everybody knows.”



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Dianna Booher’s latest books include *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails*; *Communicate Like a Leader*; *What MORE Can I Say?*, *Creating Personal Presence: and Communicate With Confidence*.. She’s the bestselling author of 48 books, published in 61 foreign editions. Dianna helps organizations communicate clearly and leaders to expand their influence by a strong executive presence. National Media such as Good Morning America, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Bloomberg, Forbes, FOX, CNN, NPR, and *Entrepreneur* have interviewed her

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