

# Leadership Presence Tip Sheet

You know leadership presence when you see it, but what is it? Leadership Presence can be broken down into a few key attributes including confidence, authenticity, credibility, knowledge and being inspirational.

## 4 Leadership Presence Components to Master:

**Be Present** – This means being calm, focused, and present in the moment. Here are four techniques to practice:

- 1) **Mindfulness vs. multi-tasking.** Research shows that multi-tasking is rarely done well. Mindfulness – being present in the moment – has many benefits, including:
  - Eases stress and anxiety
  - Helps you focus on people to help them feel valued, important and motivated
  - Increases your flexibility – your ability to quickly adapt to change
- 2) **Take a few seconds to breathe and focus** as you walk into a meeting or a new interaction.
- 3) **Be mindful of what you're thinking** ... stay in the present.
- 4) **Be mindful of any negative self-talk (your inner critic)** that stops you from being present. Thoughts like, "I'm not smart enough," "I'm not senior enough," "My idea isn't relevant," etc., interfere with your participation and ability to be present.

## **Fieldwork options:**

**Option 1:** Commit to spending an entire morning doing one project at a time. In other words, no multi-tasking. Measure the results in terms of productivity, relationships, and less stress.

**Option 2:** Pay attention to how your negative self-talk gets in your way. Write down one negative statement you tell yourself – i.e. "If I speak up, they will think I am stupid" or "I'll never learn this..." Now, counter it with: "I have lots of great ideas." "I'm a smart person; I'll learn one step at a time."

**Be Connected** – Leaders build relationships not only within their team, but throughout their organization. Great leaders do this by showing...

- Authenticity (be genuine)
- Interest in others
- Empathy

**Fieldwork:** This week, when someone shares something that evokes strong emotions in them (fear, anger, sadness), try to empathize with those feelings instead of offering solutions. Sometimes, feeling heard and understood is what people really need.

**Be Expressive** – Interpersonal communication skills are critical and this includes our visual, vocal and verbal signals. Look and sound like a leader and people will see you as a leader.

**Visual signals:**

- **Posture:** stand or sit straight with an open posture. It's helpful to imagine a string pulling you up towards the ceiling. You will look more confident and feel more confident.
- **Gestures:** Use gestures to reinforce your ideas, but use them sparingly. Be expressive, but without invading the other person's space.
- **Facial expressions/Eye contact:** Be sure to connect with eye contact. Vary your facial expressions, and make sure to smile to add warmth.

**Vocal signals:**

- Speak confidently from word one.
- Cadence matters -- maintain a good pace.
- Add appropriate pauses — especially in presentations; they add impact.
- Sound like you care -- add inflection with your voice to reinforce key points.

**Verbal signals** – the language of leaders is clear, concise and often colorful. How do you do this?

- Avoid “hedging language” like: “I guess, I hope, I think, maybe, probably, sorta, kinda.” These words rob you of power. If you use them, do so intentionally.
- Only use “insider” words and phrases, acronyms and jargon, if they are understood -- and commonly used -- by your audience.

**Fieldwork:**

Videotape a short presentation on your smart phone. Not only will the practice help, it's also valuable to see your visual/vocal/verbal messages. Ask yourself: How am I coming across? Am I projecting authenticity, confidence and warmth?

**Be Inspirational**

A goal of all leaders is to inspire others. Building trust, being transparent and sharing your values are critical to being inspirational.

- Share who you are and why you believe what you believe – your values. If you speak about organizational commitments/competencies/values, reveal how they are meaningful to you.
- Storytelling is a powerful way to launch visions, teach lessons, and inspire. What are the stories you can share that will help people get to know you and learn what drives you?

**Fieldwork:**

**Option 1:** Notice the stories that excellent communicators use. Whether at meetings, during formal presentations, over dinner and even on sports fields – how are they using stories to influence, motivate and engage? Start using stories (2-minute or shorter anecdotes) in your everyday communication.

Effective leaders, in all walks of life, successfully combine and use these techniques – and now you can, too!