

# Leadership Communication: 3 Things That Increase Executive Presence



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When senior leaders come for coaching, they often show up with great motivation but guarded perspective. Their CEO has often given them some direct or implied feedback that their career has hit a roadblock unless they develop more “executive presence” or overcome some other nebulous challenge.

In my experience in working with these executives for more than two decades, I’ve identified three recurring difficulties they have in communicating with their staff, peers, and strategic partners. If the following issues sound familiar to you, the accompanying tips may help.

## Say It in a Sentence

These leaders often confess to their inability to summarize key points succinctly in their presentations before I even ask: “I have a tendency to get down in the weeds.”

Or: “I came up through the ranks in our organization, so I’m technical and tend to tell them all I know about the situation.” Or: “I like to be comprehensive. It’s hard to know what information they need to make decisions.”

The cure for this problem comes down to this: Consider how you like to listen to your voicemails. Do you want 3 minutes of the backstory first, before the caller gets to the point? Or do you prefer that callers give you a one-sentence overview of the point of the call and then go into the necessary details?

## Talk With Them—Not AT Them

Some leaders lack an understanding of how to connect with people in a large group. In conversation, they do well. But give them a crowd, and they crumble. While they know what message they want their audience to walk away with, they have little understanding of how to deliver that message in a way that motivates different individuals in a group.

In short, turn this situation around by changing how you think of a presentation: It is not a performance. It is a conversation—but with many people at once. It’s a conversation for which you’re prepared and know where you want to lead people.

Some leaders also confuse the “talk with” principle and turn it into the “laid back” principle—another mistake. They come across as unprepared, low energy, and lacking in presence. Rather, as a leader talking *with* and presenting *to* people, they need to inspire those in the audience with passion and enthusiasm about the topic.

In a nutshell, the demeanor for such a delivery means that you:

- Interact with people in the audience
- Encourage questions by word and body language
- Let others recall and summarize your key points rather than doing so yourself
- Give ownership of ideas by asking others to develop plans to implement what you’ve said
- Let others be the hero of your stories
- Ask for examples or illustrations of your points from audience members
- Refuse to stand rigidly in one spot
- Keep your energy high

# Handle Tough Questions From Strong Personalities With Poise

Nothing makes leaders look more capable than handling tough questions with credibility and ease. Yet, in our surveys through the years, by self-report this skills seems to be what most professionals say they lack.

To overcome this challenge of fielding hostile, upstaging, trapping, or forced-option questions, prepare ahead of time. Of course, you can't prepare for THE specific question. But you can prepare psychologically:

- Anticipate potential questions before any presentation so that you have potential responses for sensitive issues.
- Buy thinking time (pause, look reflective, acknowledge the question, make a universal statement with which everyone can agree, take a sip of water, change positions in the room, ask the person to elaborate on the question, relay it to someone else for an opinion first)
- Overview, then elaborate, then summarize.

Never let it be said that a lack of personal presence is stalling your career. Every presentation serves as a chance to showcase character, substance, and style.

As a Hall of Fame keynote speaker and bestselling author of 46 books including *What MORE Can I Say* (<http://booheresearch.us9.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=81666fc184a599e7d421ad033&id=f79a8b4d19&e=03f61ca28a>) and *Creating Personal Presence* (<http://booheresearch.us9.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=81666fc184a599e7d421ad033&id=106094a8da&e=03f61ca28a>), Dianna Booher works with organizations to communicate clearly and with leaders to expand their influence by a stronger personal presence. National media such as *Good Morning America*, *USA Today*, *WSJ*, *Forbes*, *CNN*, *Fast Company*, *Bloomberg*, *Success*, and *Entrepreneur* frequently interview her on critical workplace communication issues. [www.BooherResearch.com](http://www.BooherResearch.com) (<http://www.booherresearch.com/>) 817-283-2333 @DiannaBooher (<https://twitter.com/diannaboohier>)

49

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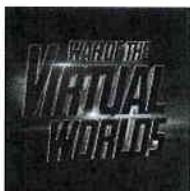
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