



# Leadership

## Presence

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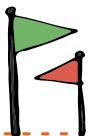
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# Chapter 1:

## What is Leadership Presence?

A study by nonprofit think tank, Center for Talent Innovation, revealed that 26% of weightage in promotion related decisions is given to the candidate's leadership presence.

### BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS LEADERSHIP PRESENCE?

Well, leadership is the quality of being able to lead other people – to motivate them, inspire them and get them to become the best versions of themselves.



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Leadership presence refers to the set of characteristics (or facets of personality) that an individual possesses, which marks him/her as a promising leader. These characteristics usually refer qualities to:

- Confidence
- Humility
- Accountability
- Emotional Intelligence
- Vision
- Integrity
- Passion
- Empathy

But more than these qualities themselves, leadership presence refers to that magical quality – the “It” factor - that an employee exudes, which makes all those around him/her truly believe they are in the presence of a great leader.





## WHY DO EMPLOYEES NEED TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP PRESENCE?

You may have heard Jeff Bezos' famous quote. "Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room." It explains very well why an employee needs to develop leadership presence.

Most decisions regarding your career progression will be taken by people who don't know you intimately. These decisions will be taken when you're not with them or not present to make a case for yourself. It is your past interactions with these decision makers that is used as the foundation to make career-related decisions.

It stands to reason that you need to leave behind a positive image of yourself in the minds of key decision.

It stands to reason that you need to leave behind a positive image of yourself in the minds of key decision makers; particularly about your ability to lead a team. Leadership presence helps achieve this.

When you have leadership presence, the world opens up for you. You get better access to job opportunities, faster growth in the company hierarchy and a better reputation with your peers & supervisors.



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## Chapter 2: Do You Have the “It” Factor?

As we’ve discussed, leadership presence is a quality that people have. But how do you know if you have this “It” factor and how do you know when you don’t.

### SIGNS THAT YOU LACK LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

If you display one or more of these characteristics, you may be lacking a leadership presence:



- **You don’t do well under pressure and tend to get flustered or impatient**

Leaders are expected to always be calm, composed, and patient under stress.



- **You have a very negative body language and appear too distant or defensive**

A leader should be welcoming and confident. Having an open and positive body language is essential.





- **You have very poor communication skills**

You struggle at saying the right thing or writing succinct emails. As a leader, you need to be able to give your team powerful and impactful feedback and support.



- **Your aesthetic sense isn't how it's supposed to be**

A leader needs to look the part as well. But shabby dressing, poor posture and grouchy facial expressions can take away from your leadership presence.



- **You're a bad listener**

A leader isn't a dictator who orders other people about it. He/she is someone who actively listens to the team and provides personalized solutions.



- **You lack self-esteem**

One of the most important qualities of a leader is self-confidence and conviction. If you don't believe in yourself, how can you get others to believe in you?



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These qualities or the lack thereof, can have a devastating impact on your career. It's important that you invest time and effort in developing a strong leadership presence.





# Chapter 3:

## Your Guide To Building Leadership Presence

Most of us know what traits make a leader a good leader. But a lot of us don't know how to develop these traits – how to develop a leadership presence.

To help you, we've made a guide. Here is our 13-step process to building a strong leadership presence:



### 1. Adopt a leadership mindset

For leadership presence to manifest itself, a transformation must first take place in the mind. It is only when you start thinking like a leader, will you start behaving like one.

A leadership mindset is characterized by optimism and critical thinking. You have to start viewing every experience as an opportunity for growth and try to derive positive outcomes from them.







## 2. Dress like a leader

If you've seen Mad Men, you'll know that without a doubt that Don Draper is the quintessential leader. So is Jessica Pearson from Suits. Not only do they exude confidence, but they also dress like the top-brass that they are.

This is exactly what you need to do too, if you want to develop leadership presence.

What you wear speaks volumes about who you are as a person. So, ensure your appearance makes a positive impact. Invest in elegant formal wear, footwear and accessories.



## 3. Unlearn the negative body language

We subconsciously pick-up negative body language. We lock our arms across our chest, purse our lips, stoop as we sit and manspread. All of this can make a terrible impression on the people we interact with.

The body language you adopt can make you look more confident and more leader-like. In order to develop leadership presence, you need to make your body language more open, warm and welcoming.

Smile often, sit up straight, keep your arms open and make eye contact with everyone you speak to.





#### 4. Become more respectful

One of the hallmarks of leadership presence is respect. When you have leadership presence, you command respect.

But respect is earned and not handed out. One way to earn respect, is to give respect.

It's important to be respectful of your colleagues, their challenges and their needs. This respect should also translate to higher responsibility towards others. So be mindful of how you treat people, how you perform your job-related tasks and how these actions impact the rest of your team.



#### 5. Display your emotions the right way

There is a common misconception that leaders shouldn't show their emotions to their team. But studies show that truly effective leaders show their emotions. The trick here is to display emotions the right way.

When evaluating an employee for leadership presence, employers often consider their emotional quotient as well. It's been found that employees who display positive emotions encourage their team members to become more positive and creative. These well-managed emotional displays which





don't overwhelm can actually be excellent to improve group motivation and collaboration.

So learn the art of displaying your emotions.



## 6. Improve your communication skills

Leadership positions require a lot of communication in the form of emails, calls, face-to-face feedback sessions, client meetings etc. If you want to exude a strong leadership presence, you should develop your communication skills as well.

Focus on both verbal and written communication. The important thing to remember here is that communication isn't language specific. You should put in the same effort to master both English and your regional language. This is particularly important for companies operating in markets that are multi-lingual.

Another key thing to work on, is to match the listener's communication requirements. This could be the type of vocabulary they use, the tone they best respond to, the type of messages (i.e. criticism or suggestion) they work best with etc.





## 7. Become an empathetic listener

A leader's job involves managing people. As you know, each individual has his/her unique aspirations, challenges and grievances. Only when you're an active and empathetic listener, will you be able to help your colleagues overcome these problems and achieve their professional aspirations.

Some ways to become an empathetic listener are:

- Pay attention to the speaker and allow them to have their say.
- Pay attention to the speaker's body language as this will help you understand the depth of the message.
- Acknowledge what the speaker is telling you and don't be dismissive.
- Consider your response before you say them. Evaluate the speaker's unique needs to customize the solution.



## 8. Display accountability for your job

If you're interested in being considered for a leadership position and want to develop leadership presence, you should become more accountable on-the-job.

Leaders are responsible for so many people and so many jobs. To evaluate





whether you have the skills to handle such immense responsibility, decision makers will check how responsible you are as an employee.

It's imperative that you remain accountable for your role responsibilities. Take ownership of tasks assigned to you and discharge your duties diligently. You can go beyond the mandated deliverables and ask for additional responsibilities as well. This speaks volumes about your desire to be held accountable for corporate objectives.



## 9. Discover your passion

Passion is an extremely important component of leadership presence.

Often, passionate leaders are the most proactive change agents. They are the most-likely to find opportunities in challenges and adversaries. They are the people who have excellent clarity of vision and who will push boundaries to succeed.

So, find your passion and discover what you are most excited about. Identify how you'd like to improve the way things are done in your company. Work towards acquiring the knowledge and skills to create change.





## 10. Begin genuine engagement with others

A real leader cares about what others want. This is one trait that senior management looks for when they're grooming future leaders – the ability to be relational.

You need to start genuinely engaging with your co-workers. Develop meaningful relationships and friendships in the workplace. Get to know people and understand how you can collaborate better.

When you engage in genuine workplace relationships, every decision you take will be for the greater good. This is one of the most important signs of leadership presence.



## 11. Be a lifelong learner

Curiosity and humility are two hallmarks of leadership presence. When you're curious and willing to learn from all sources, you open your mind to so many possibilities.

When you become a leader, this curiosity and desire to learn will allow you to look at challenges from unique perspectives and find the best solutions. These traits will lead you to become an innovator – another important quality in a leader and an indicator of leadership presence in an employee.





## 12. Fuel your internal motivation

The job of a leader can be exceedingly hard. While external motivators like pay and job recognition do make things easier, they're not always enough. You'll need to have sufficient internal/intrinsic motivation fueling your work.

In fact, this type of self-motivation is a trait that people look for when judging an employee's leadership presence. If you can find satisfaction and happiness in your job without external motivation, you will find it easy to motivate others too.



## 13. Let all your actions be driven by integrity

One of the greatest signs of leadership presence is integrity.

A person who is honest and reliable and who actually lives what he/she preaches, makes for an excellent leader. This is because such a person won't excuse shoddy performance or a "less-than" attitude in themselves. They will be committed to achieving the best results, in the most ethical way possible.





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It's imperative that you exhibit the highest integrity in everything you do. Hold yourself accountable if you make mistakes. Work on those negative attributes which you feel will adversely affect your team and the company. Be the best you can be and this way, you'll have the ability to bring the best out of everyone else.







## Chapter 4: Making Your Leadership Presence Stronger & More Impactful

There is a highly-debated question in the realm of leadership – “Is a leader born or is a leader made?” The fact is, leadership traits do manifest from birth in some people.

However, as we’ve seen in the previous chapter, leadership presence can be developed.

But, how do you know if the leadership presence you’ve built, has a take-notice appeal to it?

### SIGNS THAT YOUR LEADERSHIP PRESENCE IS WEAK



- You have innovative ideas or constructive feedback to offer, but hesitate to speak up during meetings. You share your inputs only after the meeting ends on one-on-one conversations.



- You have extraordinary knowledge or special skills which other employees don’t. But you never make these abilities known to others and hence, recognition never comes your way.





- You are voluntarily and proactively helping your co-workers address their job-related challenges and grievances. But you've never brought your contribution to light.



- You act as a surrogate leader or are an influential member of the team; but shy away from showing key decision makers your leadership skills.

If the leadership presence you've developed isn't strong or impactful enough, it will yield no results. Neither will you get the respect and recognition you deserve, nor will you get that coveted promotion. This is why it's important to hone and strengthen your leadership presence once you've built it.

## STRENGTHEN YOUR LEADERSHIP PRESENCE FOLLOWING THESE STEPS



### 1. Develop your self-esteem

Let's face it. You do have a leadership presence. It just doesn't shine through.

Oftentimes, the reason is your own lack of self-confidence. When you don't believe in yourself, you will always devalue your worth to your team.

So, the first step to increase your leadership presence, is to develop your self-esteem.





List your accomplishments and evaluate how each of these victories have broken-down your limiting beliefs. When you're able to get this clarity, it becomes easier for you to allow other people to see how much you're really worth.



## 2. Demonstrate gravitas

Gravitas refers to dignity; and dignity stems from conviction in your own talents and competencies.

One way to develop and demonstrate gravitas, is to change the way you behave and say things.

Empower yourself through positive body language and affirmative vocabulary. What we mean is, keep an open and welcoming body language that gives you the opportunity to really connect with others. You should also speak (to yourself and others) positively and be optimistic in your outlook. Avoid words that make you feel uncertain or which drag you down. This will increase your faith in yourself and you'll be able to command the room with ease.





### 3. Shed the inhibitions that hinder your growth

Many employees feel they may appear immodest or egotistical if they “toot their own horn.” But to be honest, there's nothing wrong with being confident about your own leadership presence, especially if you have it.

Leadership presence and leadership traits take immense effort to develop. If you’ve worked this hard to develop them, then you need to be recognized and rewarded. So, give yourself a break and accept the positive attention that comes your way.

If you don’t, you may lose out on all those opportunities that you rightly deserve.



### 4. Adopt a service mentality

People with a leadership presence have the best intentions for their company, their co-workers, and their customers. You, too, maybe making decisions for the common good. If yes, let this attitude fuel your leadership presence.

Think about it.

You obviously have the skills to be an excellent leader and service provider. But by not allowing your senior management to see and experience your leadership presence, you’re harming the very things you care about – your company, your co-workers, and your customers.





Remember - strengthening your leadership presence is as much about your career progression, as it is a service to your company.



## 5. Lead yourself

Finally, the best way to make your leadership presence more effective and impactful is to actually lead yourself.

Identify your inner conflicts and overcome them. Shift the boundaries that limit you and explore the extent of your capabilities. Develop emotional intelligence and really work to understand your own feelings and those of others. Put good habits to practice and inculcate them into your life.

Most importantly, be accepting of your leadership presence and be open to leadership opportunities.





## CONCLUSION

Leadership presence is an essential trait in any employee who wants to grow in their career and take up a leadership position in the future.

Developing and inculcating leadership presence isn't very difficult. But it does require discipline and a mind shift. When you are open to taking risks, testing yourself, and becoming vulnerable to others, you learn how to develop and activate those traits that make a person a good leader.

But merely developing leadership presence isn't enough. You need to constantly fuel it and strengthen it to ensure it yields the desired results. For this, you need to become more accepting of your strengths and be willing to lead yourself through a mental and emotional transformation.

Once you do this, your leadership presence will truly shine bright, and it will allow you to reach the pinnacle of corporate success.



## A few books that we recommend:

