



# Unlocking Gravitas and Executive Presence: Strategies for Becoming an Influential Leader



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I have coached hundreds of leaders in more than 20 countries, and regardless of career level, location, or industry, two of the top areas on which clients seek advice are executive presence and gravitas. The reasons underlying these requests usually boil down to the desire for greater influence. People want to be taken seriously, have their contributions considered essential, and be trusted and respected. Gravitas and influence enable individuals to command respect, make a lasting impact, and inspire others.

Contrary to popular belief, executive presence and gravitas are not innate qualities that you either have or don't have. They can be developed through conscious effort and practice, allowing you to build them in a way that feels authentic. In this article, we will explore effective strategies to build gravitas and executive presence, empowering you to become more influential and respected.

## CULTIVATE SELF AWARENESS

Building gravitas and influence begins with self-awareness. Take the time to understand your values, strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations. Reflect on your personal and professional goals and align your actions with your core principles. This self awareness will provide a solid foundation for your growth and enable you to project authenticity and confidence.

## SEEK FEEDBACK

If possible, undergo a 360-degree feedback assessment. If that's not an option, schedule time with individuals who are important to your professional success, including your peers, supervisor, and direct reports. Conduct these conversations away from the office and ask specific questions, such as:

- What words would you use to describe me?
- What three things do I do well?
- What three things can I do better?
- What three things can I do differently to make my leadership more effective?
- What can I do differently to improve our working relationship?
- How can I better support you?

Listen closely to the feedback and ask follow-up questions if needed, ensuring that your responses do not sound defensive or combative. Valuing and acting upon feedback demonstrates your commitment to growth and improvement.

## BUILD RAPPORT AND TRUST

Demonstrate curiosity about your colleagues' lives outside of work and share something about your own life. This helps build rapport and trust, which are essential elements of influence. Genuine interest in others fosters stronger relationships and makes people more receptive to your ideas and suggestions.

## EMBRACE COURAGE

Even the most influential leaders experience nerves and anxiety at times. Embrace courage and have confidence in your ability to handle whatever challenges come your way. This shift in mindset may seem subtle, but people will sense it and respect you for it.

## ENHANCE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Learn to communicate complex financial information in a way that non-financial colleagues can understand and appreciate. Work on strengthening your overall communication skills and be prepared to answer questions and clearly explain financial concepts. Additionally, practice being concise in your responses, as many executives value succinct and to-the-point communication.

## EXPAND BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE

Take the time to understand the priorities and concerns of other areas of the business, including human resources, IT, operations,

sales, and legal. This broader understanding will enable you to make better decisions and support other departments' goals. By demonstrating a holistic perspective, you position yourself as a well-rounded leader who can contribute effectively to the organization's overall success.

## CONNECT WITH OTHER BUSINESS LEADERS

Arrange quarterly meetings with other business leaders to discuss their goals, priorities, challenges, and successes. These meetings establish personal connections, build trust, and demonstrate your support of their goals. Collaboration and mutual support among leaders create a powerful network that enhances your influence and impact.

Building gravitas and executive presence is a continuous journey that requires self-awareness, feedback, courage, effective communication, business acumen, and relationship-building skills. By incorporating these strategies into your professional development, you can enhance your personal power, gain influence, and become a respected leader in your organization and profession.

Remember, building gravitas and executive presence is not about exerting control over others but about positively impacting their lives and driving collective success. ▲

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