

The Required Key to

Mastering Quality Presence

Joseph Rosenfeld
JOSEPH
precision personal stylist | image consultant

Highly regarded research firms negate the value and importance of something very critical to one's executive presence. The required key to mastering quality presence has to do with your appearance, the clothes you wear. Appearance is a prism through which others evaluate and judge your other qualities. Make unforced errors around your appearance and you will needlessly suffer setbacks and hardships.

Your personal style and the clothes you wear are so important that this even stumps the researchers. In fact, when it comes to studies of executive presence, not a lot of information exists. As a result, experts in the field rely on what little tidbits one can find. What's more, even less data exists about the positive and negative effects of personal style and clothing on executive presence.

Without a doubt, executive presence encompasses three ambiguous areas: gravitas, communication, and appearance. I don't mean to question these components. Far from it. Still, a complex issue exists for each of these aspects of executive presence. There are at least two divergent explanations for each of them.

The Center for Talent Innovation, a non-profit research organization in Manhattan, surveyed 268 senior executives. Of note, the study indicated that "executive presence" counts for 26% of what it takes to earn a promotion. If decision makers perceive you as leadership material, it certainly helps your chances.

Ann Hewlett, founder of the Center for Talent Innovation, is a foremost expert on the subject of executive presence. In her book, *Executive Presence: The Missing Link Between Merit and Success*, [she says](#), "Quite simply, promotions are not just functions of ability, values, or the numbers you hit, but also rest critically on how you are perceived."

This perception she speaks of – the gravitas, communication, and appearance – is invisibly wrapped up in personal style and clothing.

If gravitas has to do with others taking you seriously, how you dress only helps you to make the point. This is not about how seriously or formally you dress. It's about knowing the audience and activating them to take you seriously in the right context. As communication is an exchange of information through symbols, signs, and behavior, your personal style and clothing symbolize your gravitas.

Of course, you would naturally associate your personal style and clothing with the appearance category. And yet, this encompasses a whole host of important non-verbal elements. Who has gravitas by wearing poorly fitted clothes, unkempt hair and fingernails, or who has body odor? The answer is: no one.

Okay, so personal style and clothing are not the only thing to pay attention to. Not by any means. But, no one is reporting to work naked. It is blatantly obvious that clothes are an important component for an executive to mastering quality presence. I'll always be the first one to put competence above all else. So, as the right person for the right position, why not help yourself by looking right for the part?

The truth is, I'm not a scholar. My company does not receive corporate funds to conduct research. So, we rely on decades of scrupulous experience. Take it as an assurance that my three decades' experience as a precision personal stylist and image consultant does offer deep knowledge. Our clients' success proves that the required key to mastering quality presence can unlock more career success. And that required key is the clothing you wear. Plain and simple.

This is also to say that the other aspects of executive presence are important as well. Insisting that one additional executive presence element is crucial does not mean that another is not.



“Appearance is the prism through which others perceive your unique inner qualities.”

JOSEPH
ROSENFELD



Soft Skills Silently Wield Influence

Experienced executive search consultants and allied professionals agree that having a set of specific executive presence soft skills is necessary. Regardless, this subject seems to be a hot-button issue because it piques people's sensibilities.

For one thing, the words soft skills make some people bristle. Even more irritating is that it is nearly impossible to create metrics around soft skills. After all, it's impossible to objectively evaluate the personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with others.

This makes people ignore a fact that everyone knows is true deep down inside. Either you have *it*, or you don't.

So, it is no wonder that the required

key to mastering quality presence is so controversial. Your personal style and the clothing you wear are in evidence in plain sight. You simply can't ignore it. To illustrate the point, one of the most spectacular pieces of feedback ever came from a successful technology executive client. He said, **"I can't quantify how working with you on my personal style has helped me. But, I can absolutely qualify that it has made an important difference."**

Spoken like an engineer at heart! His compliment perfectly encapsulates the issue at hand. No metrics. Just a certain feeling that perfectly encapsulates the foundation of executive presence. The silent, unspoken realization that he "absolutely" has it.

Exude Unique Qualities from Within

By this point, you can see that executive presence is not some made up thing. It might still seem a bit elusive, because how do you create something definite out of a nebulous idea? The required key to mastering quality presence helps you to exude unique qualities from within.

That's a fancy way to say that your personal style and clothing can help to reveal your **it factor** strengths.

Gartner, a global research and advisory firm, provides information, advice, and tools for leaders. The firm conducted a survey of chief information officers to determine the top 20 leadership traits that make a difference. Would you be surprised to know that presence won the number two spot on the list? By way of comparison, technology skills came in 12th position.

A second set of more detailed executive presence parameters dispels some of the *it factor* mystery.



Charisma is your special magnetic charm or appeal. Your style of leadership arouses loyalty or enthusiasm. Maintaining undistracted focus on the person or group you are communicating with shows that they matter to you. This is a surefire way for you to matter to them. Did you ever consider that some elements of your personal style and how you dress can help you to more easily convey your natural charisma? When you put something on and you feel a heightened sense of focus, it adds to your appeal. There's no denying that clothing and charisma go hand-in-hand.



Incisiveness is about your very clear and direct thought or style. People also think of this as transparency. When you communicate with others, they know instantly that you are truthful. To visually match this characteristic, wear just one or two colors in your outfit. You'll look as clear as your thoughts. Depending on your personal coloring, there are many variations on what kinds of colors can help you to convey clarity. The right one for you is the required key to mastering quality presence.



Composure, also regarded as self-possession, shows control of your emotions or reactions, especially when under stress. Staying calm, cool, and collected is a valuable trait for a leader. Not only do you want to keep your temper in check, but you also want to show it. Behind the scenes, chaos might be brewing. But, if your wardrobe looks consistent, it demonstrates to others that you are steady under pressure. This instills others' faith and confidence in your steady leadership. Something so simple, and so silent, says so much, especially when this is a core inner strength.

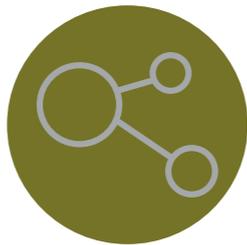


Succinct refers to making your point with few words. A certain elegance exists by conveying a message in easily understandable language. This is a little bit like that throwback game show, "Name That Tune." You win the game by knowing the song after hearing the fewest notes possible. Part of the serious game of playing into your executive presence skills is also how you appear in a concise style. Have you ever thought about how a pared down, minimal look can also help you to convey your presence in a concise manner? No matter your personal style, there is a way to reign it in and deliver a concise non-verbal message.



Confidence shows when you exude self-reliance and certitude. Usually, people associate confidence with important non-verbal cues such as focused eye contact, managed facial expressions, and posture. Other audible non-verbal cues like vocal tone, volume, and cadence impact whether people perceive you as confident. Here again dangles the required key to mastering quality presence. What you wear and how you show up demonstrates that you look the part, and that you have *it*.

No matter your personal style, the right clothing can enhance your confidence and improve your non-verbal communication. In fact, even wearing clothes that make you feel confident can help you immediately improve your posture. How you look serves as a useful reminder about how to look at and talk to people. It is that powerful.



Relatability is what you have by creating personal intimacy between you and others you interact with. In order to effectively connect with others, you have to understand them. Choosing to wear something specific when meeting with others radically impacts how you connect. Whether a one-on-one meeting, or a keynote address, mirroring to your audience that you understand them shows remarkable executive presence. Of course, you communicate with words. But, when you look like the words you speak, you strengthen your connection right on the spot.



Credibility is the result of inspiring belief from others. As a competent leader, you know your stuff. When you speak, you have to deliver on your credibility so that others take note. You can't lead without people to walk along with or who will follow you. That is to say, your personal style and the clothes you wear will either add to or detract from your credibility. Why is this the required key to mastering quality presence? Because when you wear quality, you look like quality, and you communicate quality. Quality creates a believable and powerful presence.

Avoid These Key Disqualifying Mistakes



The survey mentioned earlier, conducted by the Center for Talent Innovation, proves that appearance matters, especially in the negative. Here, I share blog post about the [obvious pitfalls to avoid](#) that relate to clothing. A disheveled appearance takes away from one's executive presence. 73% of respondents also said provocative clothes, and clothes that fit too tightly, negatively impact a woman's executive presence. Bear in mind that this survey occurred years before the #metoo movement and men should similarly take heed. It is entirely possible to exude charisma without having to reveal too much of your body.

Despite only 5% of leaders viewing appearance as impacting executive presence, it appears that nearly 100% do dress the part. Or, at least, they make the effort to do so. For top leaders, looking the part is something people automatically think of, or just do. So, it's no wonder that a very small percentage of those surveyed think personal style and clothing are a big deal. On the other hand, nearly all of those surveyed acknowledge that a subpar appearance can upend otherwise capable people. Again, a misogynist slant exists to these data points. But, 83% of survey respondents say that unkempt attire detracts from women's executive presence. And 76% say it detracts from men's.

Compare this data to the impact of sounding uneducated, where 59% say it detracts from a woman's executive presence. Similarly, 58% say it detracts from a man's. This comparison shows that looking messy is actually worse than saying something messy.

Even if surveyed executives don't find appearance impactful to one's presence, don't mind what they claim. Pay attention to what they do and how they show up. What they say and what they do is discordant to the actual truth.

Effectively Beating the CEO Stereotype



Malcolm Gladwell, author of many best-selling books, including “Blink,” [conducted research](#) about CEOs. He found that 30% of Fortune 500 company CEOs are at least 6 feet 2 inches. Whereas, only 3.9% of the American population is 6 feet 2 inches or taller. Even though this data is several years old, there’s no point in resurveying, because the information is largely the same.

And yet, opportunity abounds because this means that 70% of Fortune 500 company CEOs have different physical qualities and backgrounds. That opportunity is precisely what this white paper has set out to highlight. You have a unique blend of qualities, traits, characteristics, goals, strengths, and gifts. When you draw upon and further develop all of these, you improve the quality of your executive presence. Your personal style is deeply embedded into your presence as an external manifestation of your inner self.

Conceive Your Precise Style Today



Do you feel mostly confident in yourself but sense that you don't look as sharp as you should?

You've noticed others who stand out in a way that you wish you could. No one working with or for you will tell you that your appearance is outmoded. After all, you're the one in charge.

Maybe you've tried working with a personal shopper or a fashion stylist before, but that person never really got you. So, you try your best to get by.

Upon some self-reflection, you ask yourself: Is this really how I want to present myself to the world?

In answering your question, you realize that you need to do better to become more stylish and confident.

Above all, deep down, you just know that having that ***it factor*** will make a huge difference in your life. You can finally feel like your insides and outsides match, and people will respect you for who you are.

So, if you truly want...

- Total Confidence in your appearance
 - People to take you more seriously
 - To take yourself more seriously
 - Others to favorably evaluate your leadership ability
 - To communicate more effectively
 - To stand out in a crowd
 - That ***it factor***
- ...then you need to be certain that your style matches who you are on the inside.

Your style is unique to your personality, strengths, talents, gifts, and goals.

My proven, precise methodology helps you to become the person you envision with equal parts strategy and implementation.

If you want to be a c-level leader who has ***it*** and want to hear more about how to get it, [send me a note](#) and let's have a confidential conversation.



About Joseph Rosenfeld

Joseph Rosenfeld was born to be a precision personal stylist and image consultant. He overcame a difficult childhood of physical abuse and bullying. The turning point came when he had an epiphany, theorizing that personal style could transform a person's reputation and presence. In fact, it remains the crux of his work for over thirty years.

Combining personal branding exploration with executive presence coaching, Joseph best serves those on a quest for transformation. He encourages clients to sync their inner and outer energy. And he guides top leaders with his trademark blend of empathy, creativity, and precision to maximize their complete executive presence.

Quoted in The New York Times, NPR, The Washington Post, and NBC, Joseph loves sharing encouraging messages about style. Also, Silicon Valley Magazine named him best personal stylist in its 2020 It List.

In his spare time Joseph nurtures his interests in art, fashion, design, good food, traveling, and exploring his new home town, New York City.

Joseph Rosenfeld
JOSEPH
precision personal stylist | image consultant



joseph@josephrosenfeld.com
T 408.550.5335 | josephrosenfeld.com