

FIERCE LOYALTY PRESENTS:

THE ART & SCIENCE OF LEADERSHIP PRESENCE (AN OVERVIEW)



**A BOSS HAS THE TITLE, A LEADER HAS THE PEOPLE.
SIMON SINEK**

Written by Sarah Robinson, CEO of Fierce Loyalty
www.Fierce-Loyalty.com ~ Sarah@Fierce-Loyalty.com

INTRODUCTION

"You have great potential; you just need to work on your executive presence." Could there be a more challenging statement for someone who wants to be seen as a leader? Often when my clients first come to me, it's because they were told something just like this. Unfortunately, the term "executive presence" can feel shrouded in mystery and my clients have no idea what, specifically, they need to work on and improve.

"Leadership Presence (LP) is a skillset you can master, not something you're either born with or you're not."

A less vague term for "Executive Presence" is "Leadership Presence". It's the term I use in my practice because most everyone has been in the room with a great leader and we know what that looks and feels like. This gives us something concrete to work with instead of something that feels intangible.

Leadership Presence (LP) is a skillset you can master, not something you're either born with or you're not. So, when you hear someone say "Wow – that person really has a strong presence, they must be born with it.", they're wrong. All great leaders work at it all the time.

The real trick is to get a handle on exactly what Leadership Presence is so you know you are working on the right skills and developing the right competencies. Without that clarity, you can waste a lot of time working on the wrong things and no one has that kind of time to waste.

I've designed this Leadership Presence Overview to accomplish two things:

- 1) Help leaders and emerging leaders identify a) what EP is and b) what specifically needs work to enhance their own executive presence.
- 2) Help those who work with leaders and emerging leaders understand what executive presence is so that they can give clear, specific feedback on what skills need to be developed and enhanced.

Ready to get started? Great!

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

Great leaders inspire confidence. If you want to develop Leadership Presence, then inspiring confidence in others is what you are working on - inspiring confidence in others so they see you as the leader they want to follow, inspiring confidence in your peers so they are certain you're capable and reliable and, most importantly, inspiring confidence among senior leaders so they know you have the potential to achieve great things.

Here is the most important thing to remember: inspiring confidence in others has no connection to your title or formal role. You can inspire it in anyone, no matter where you find yourself. If you look around at the world today, we are in desperate need of people who can inspire confidence so others know there is a steady hand at the tiller.

THE SKILL SET

Inspiring confidence comes down to a fundamental skill set that anyone can learn.

Composure: Self-awareness and understanding others are essential components of leadership presence. The ability to manage your emotions, recognize emotion in others and manage your response to them is key, especially when the stakes are high and/or there is a crisis.

Connection: It's critical to meaningfully engage others as you communicate so they feel understood and comfortable. Pay attention to your communication style, observe any challenges it presents and work to overcome them. Learn to "read the room" and adapt to the style of others.

Charisma: People who embody leadership presence have the ability to draw others to them. This is usually because they are exceptional listeners who can stay focused on the present moment. By focusing intently on the person who is speaking, without becoming distracted or hurried, you make that person feel like the most important person in the room.

Confidence: One key aspect of leadership presence is communicating confidence both in what you say and how you say it. To appear confident, strong, non-verbal body language is essential. Pay attention to your posture, the energy your movements give off and that your eye contact is meaningful (but not over done). Your facial expression needs to match your message and your voice needs good pitch, volume, and pace. And of course, you must look the part. Choose your wardrobe and accessories carefully.

Credibility: Not only is your content important (make sure you've done your homework and prepared), but the language you choose to deliver it will impact your credibility. Filler language such as “um,” “uh,” and “so” immediately detract from presence. As do minimizers like “just,” “sort of,” and “this may not be a good idea but...” When someone with strong presence speaks, others take note. The strength of conviction is behind every word. Credibility is also closely tied to accountability. Credible people keep their word and own up to their mistakes.

Clarity: For you to exude leadership presence, the ability to clearly communicate is essential. If your point is unclear or wanders, you lose any chance to command attention. Prepare by writing out the message you want to deliver using as few words as possible. If you aren't clear with yourself, you won't be clear when you communicate with others.

Conciseness: Talking too much kills leadership presence. Not only do you want to be clear on what you want to communicate, you've got to be able to do it concisely. Once you've delivered your message clearly and succinctly, engage others and ask “What else would be useful to you to know about this idea?” This way you won't say any more than is necessary, and what you do say is what your audience most needs to hear.

THE CHEAT SHEET

It's easy to get lost in figuring out where to start working on all seven skills, so I devised a "cheat sheet" of 15 specific actions that will put you on the path to a stronger LP right away.

1 Look the part. Take a look around at those who are seen as leaders in your circle. What wardrobe and personal style choices do they make? Sharpen up your appearance to match and your confidence will get an instant boost. You never know when you'll be making a first impression, so always be ready with the right wardrobe and a matching attitude.

2 Be decisive. Do your homework so you fully understand the challenge, issue or situation – just don't take too long. Then make your decision and communicate it with confidence. Always allow for new information or a better solution to show up and change your mind.

3 Take initiative. If you see something that needs doing, do it. If there are areas of LP that need work, start working on them BEFORE anyone says anything to you. Being proactive about your own professional development is key.

4 Pay attention to what you say and how you say it. Communicating clearly, concisely and naturally takes practice and preparation. Begin by paying attention to the tone, inflections and pace of the conversations you are in so your contributions flow with the discussion. Bonus: become a student of body language – what you and others say without words is as important as what you say with words.

5 Manage your emotions. Of course we want to express how we feel when it is appropriate. However, when we let something or someone get the better of us, we can over-react and overwhelm those around us. Will expressing your feeling help or hinder the current situation?

6 Learn about Emotional Intelligence. Leaders who inspire confidence are both competent and approachable. As you move through your day, are you warm and engaging or hurried and distracted?

7 Be humble. There's no need to call attention to your accomplishments or contributions (unless they are truly being ignored). Look for opportunities to give credit to others and let your actions speak louder than words.

8 Know your audience. Whether you are preparing for a one-on-one conversation, a meeting or a keynote in front of thousands, know who you are talking to. Choose your wardrobe, language, vocal tone, etc., that meets your audience where they are.

9 Know your values and beliefs. It's easy to get swayed by prevailing opinions if you are not solid on your own values. Being clear on who you are will help you align your words and actions so you show up authentically. It's equally important (see emotional intelligence above) to allow others to hold their values and beliefs – especially when they conflict with your own.

THE CHEAT SHEET (CONT.)

10 Build bridges. We all need the support of allies, so get in the habit of building bridges. The key to success here is to be both politically savvy and genuine as you develop these relationships. As tempting as it may be sometimes, don't burn a bridge unless you have no other choice.

11 Be a great storyteller. There's a reason that storytelling is all the rage today. A well-crafted story draws your listeners in, keeps their attention and influences their thoughts and feelings. If you think of a great leader, chances are good that they were also great storytellers.

12 Know your values and beliefs. It's easy to get swayed by prevailing opinions if you are not solid on your own values. Being clear on who you are will help you align your words and actions so you show up authentically. It's equally important (see emotional intelligence above) to allow others to hold their values and beliefs – especially when they conflict with your own.

13 Ask for Feedback. As you take initiative and begin working on the things that need to be worked on, ask for and welcome feedback from. One of the things I tell my clients is "be very specific about exactly what you are looking for feedback on." This will help you make the right choices about who to ask and will give you specific and useable information.

14 Stay calm, cool and collected under pressure. Everyone looks to the leader for steadiness and guidance and a model for how they are supposed to behave. If your words, emotions, body language and actions all say "I'm a steady hand on the wheel", you will inspire confidence and people will follow you.



**THE MEDIOCRE TEACHER TELLS. THE GOOD TEACHER
EXPLAINS. THE SUPERIOR TEACHER DEMONSTRATES.
THE GREAT TEACHER INSPIRES.**

WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

Anyone, anywhere, doing anything can be a leader. That has always been my core belief and is at the center of the work that I do with established leaders, emerging leaders and those who want to lead but don't know how to start. All it takes is the ability to inspire confidence in others. Of course there are other skills and knowledge to acquire, but without a fundamental leadership presence, gaining the hearts of other people is nearly impossible.

If being a leader - a true leader - is your goal, develop your leadership presence. If others want to follow you, if they are certain you're capable and reliable and, most importantly, if they know you have the potential to achieve great things, you know you are on the right path.

If you want to accelerate your growth as a leader by working with an executive coach, I would enjoy talking with you, exploring where you are and determining if we are a good fit to work together.



SARAH ROBINSON

CEO, Executive Coach & Trainer
Sarah@Fierce-Loyalty.com
www.Fierce-Loyalty.com

Hi, I'm Sarah Robinson. Today's unpredictable times demand leaders who have a "steady hand on the tiller", inspiring confidence and certainty in those around them. I am committed to partnering with leaders as they develop an understanding of themselves and those around them, and learn to master Leadership Presence (LP). LP is a combination of inner work and outward communication mastery that transforms business, careers, relationships and the world.

I've spent the past twenty-five years coaching and training leaders and teams around the world, as the founder and CEO of Fierce Loyalty and Birmingham Speaks. I'm a best-selling author, international keynote speaker and trainer, and a featured business expert and thought leader at Inc.com, Entrepreneur.com, AOL.com, AmEx Open, The International Business Women's Conference, Vocus, Aileron, The DEX Entrepreneur's Summit, LOHAS and Social Media Marketing World, and The National Press Club.