

Executive Presence – Do you have what it takes to be a firm leader?

By [Jim Cranston](#) on August 6, 2015

I read an article many years ago that most CEOs, when asked to “please take a seat” by the receptionist, will elect to stand. Needless to say, I have made a habit of not taking a seat in the lobby when visiting a client. I’m not sure that I’d classify standing as executive presence, but maybe there’s something to it. Whether you’re in the corner office or aspire to be, we can all use a few pointers to improve our executive presence.

So what is “executive presence”?

According to Sylvia Ann Hewlett, author of [“EXECUTIVE PRESENCE: The Missing Link Between Merit and Success”](#) executive presence is a dynamic mix of three things:

1. Gravitas (how you act)
2. Communication (how you speak)
3. Appearance (how you look)

“No man or woman attains a top job, lands an extraordinary deal, or develops a significant following without this heady combination of confidence, poise, and authenticity that convinces the rest of us that we’re in the presence of someone who’s going places,” Hewlett explains. Just witness how far “executive presence” has propelled the careers of **Barack Obama, Christine Lagarde, Steve Jobs, Angela Merkel, and Angelina Jolie.**”

In the article [“Do you have Executive Presence?”](#) Jenna Goudreau writes “The ability to project gravitas—confidence, poise under pressure and decisiveness—seems to be its core characteristic . . . often times people who exhibit executive presence exude a ‘wow factor’ or magnetism, and are able to easily influence others. They often speak up, use strong and clear language, communicate with passion and energy, and display positive body language by standing tall, making eye contact, offering a firm handshake and using an authoritative tone of voice.”

So the next time you’re asked to take a seat in the lobby, consider standing.