

The Presence Factor

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Present and Accounted For:

Everyone wants presence.

You've seen presence and you've felt presence. Personalities with presence walk into a room and people look. They're the people who speak during the chatter of a board meeting and the room falls silent, all eyes upon them. They're the people who approach a group and the people smile, extend their hands in greetings, introduce them to their friends, ask for their opinion, engage them immediately in conversation. They're the people who make others jump when they issue a directive. They reek of experience, reflection, and success. They "know" and their body language lets you know they know. Personalities with presence don't whine that "people don't listen."

People in positions of responsibility want impact. Impact requires presence. A low Presence Factor can be the kiss of death for those wanting to get stuff done. Improve the presence factor and performance will improve.

Presence comes in three distinct varieties. Members and staff are familiar with each. First there's the Present but No-One's Home presence---the board member who sits through the entire meeting but doesn't utter a word. Then there's Competence Presence---the Controller who fades into the woodwork during the Finance Committee meeting then leaps into presence once asked to explain the variance from budget in the widget department. Then there's the "big kahuna" of presence, the one everyone's looking for but rarely find---Command Presence. Members and staff experience Command Presence when, at the annual meeting, the room falls silent as the manager of thirty years strides onto the stage to give the State of the Staff speech. Present But No-One's Home presence is no work at all, Competence Presence can be had after hitting the books and Command Presence isn't available at all without the right genes.

Presence is part persona, part competence and part genes. Competence can be achieved through commitment and persona can be improved through exposure. But the highest of all presence is reserved for those who've got the right genes. Sorry.

Present but No-One's Home Presence:

In the club business, not being noticed is the kiss of death. Clubs are a people business and whether it's the pro, the president, the controller or the manager they need to be noticed. If their competence, persona and "glow" don't draw attention, they'd best get out of the management or the governance of clubs. Point them to the back of the house and tell them to stay there.

Competence Presence:

The first ingredient in building a high presence personality is competence. People with competence know what they're talking about and can talk about what they know with fluency. People don't instinctively fall silent when they speak nor do eyes turn to greet them when they enter a room. But when questions are asked and they begin to respond, people quickly learn that competence presence---based on the mastery of the facts, the techniques and the tactics needed to address a particular problem---is an awfully good presence to have on the team.

There are presence tools that will amplify presence in those with competence. Preparation is the first, last and most essential tool of competence. Do your homework. Play the devil's advocate with yourself and others. Learn to explain "the big issues" in terms that the dense and the uninformed can understand. Speak with focus, brevity and passion. Avoid drift. Dress for success. Get in shape. Avoid alcohol. Drink coffee. Look people in the eye. Stand straight. Become an impassioned storyteller.

Competence Presence isn't about titles, presidential jackets, Armani suits or a commodore's hat. Then again, sometimes it is. If you've "got it"---competence presence--- then the trappings of "having it" accentuate your presence. But if you haven't "got it" then the trappings of "having it" diminish your presence.

Impact presence requires competence. The rest is frosting on the cake.

Command Presence:

People who combine competence presence with persona may achieve Command Presence. Competence can be developed through study and persona can be exposed through experience. But the pinnacle of presence---Command Presence---is in the genes. Command Presence is revealed and not created. They've got it or they don't.

Command presence is having both "the walk" and "the talk." Presence without competence is hot air. Others feel their authority and know that they know. Their "track record" is recorded in the way they walk. Others look at them and wait for guidance. People hush up when Command Presence speaks. Eyes focus on them when they enter

and follow them about the room. There's more energy in the room once Command Presence arrives and there's an air of anticipation that they'll "make things happen" in short order. They're the Alpha of the species. They're the "single combat warrior" of the community. Those with Command Presence are the symbol of all that's good and great in the culture.

Those with command presence have it all the time. Command presence is less "situational" than omni-present. They step out of the car in the parking lot and the air changes around them. They work out in the gym, walk into the living room to grab a newspaper to read on the porch and those they meet acknowledge their presence. What for some without command presence is the kiss of death---the manager or president who arrives at the club on a motorcycle--- will, for the person with command presence, be an idiosyncratic characteristic that enhances their presence.

Command presence requires Persona with a big "P." Everyone has persona but few have the big "P" variety. Experience, education and reflection simply accentuate a genetic predisposition to command presence. Those without the genes will read every book on leadership, listen in rapt silence to great leaders lecture on leadership yet be as "command presence-less" after it's all over as they were when they began their studies.

Start with competence. Provide exposure. Hope that Command Presence surfaces from the genetic depths of the target personality.

How Much Presence Do You Really Need:

It would be nice to have a president or a general manager with Command Presence but it's not often possible nor is it all that necessary for a well-run club to operate effectively.

Clubs don't need personalities with Command Presence to be effective. Competence Presence is an absolute must but Command Presence is not. It's usually enough to develop competence and enhance it with a bit of personality. Work on the one, expose the other through experience. If Command Presence is in the genes, well and good, but clubs can get on quite nicely without it.

That said, it would certainly be nice to be led by a president or a general manager with Command Presence. But we live on planet earth, so don't bank on it.

Putting "Presence" to Work:

Having presence is a big deal if you're in the business of getting anything done with, through or for other people.

People with Present but No-One's Home presence are non-starters in the board room and office. Weed them out early.

Build competence presence through the committee process or the CMAA classroom. Tell them to do their homework, to be there when members and staff need competence, to speak up when they know what they're talking about, to be a resource, to look the part and act the part of someone with competence presence.

If your manager or president has the right genes---and you'll know that quickly enough after a couple of hundred member-staff-board-committee encounters---put that character front and center and leverage their command presence to affirm, promote and evolve your club's culture to a higher plateau.

Enjoy the journey-----

