

## **Gain Attention Through Confidence, Presence**

*By Donna Rawady, Executive Coach*

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Whether you're running for political office, leading an organization, presenting to a large group, or simply hoping to influence a decision in a one-on-one conversation, confidence and presence play a crucial role in success. For some, high levels of confidence and presence are innate attributes. For others, they may present a development opportunity.

Although we probably all agree on the definition of confidence — belief in our own abilities and freedom from doubt — our interpretation of presence may vary. So let's consider this definition: Presence is the interaction between credibility and connection that increases our ability to command the attention of others.

Terry Pearce, in his book *Leading Out Loud*, shares this: "The images that we most vividly recall are not those from Clip Art, or from the reflection of complex material on a screen. Rather, the images we remember are those we can see in the greater context of life, those created by human communication."

Here are a few key strategies that may help you increase your confidence and presence. Although the following strategies assume a larger presentation, all can be applied to one-on-one and small group meetings as well.

**Know your stuff:** Be prepared. Once you've prepared your notes and segues, put them aside and jot down the flow of the presentation by memory. Check your notes against the presentation. Repeat this exercise until the presentation is anchored in your memory. The more familiar you are with the content of your message, the more energy you can offer your audience. And energy begets energy.

**Connect with your audience:** When you arrive, shake hands, have a brief exchange and offer a warm welcome with as many people as possible. This will not only make them more comfortable, it will make you more comfortable. Once you begin your presentation, make eye contact throughout the room and be conscious of voice inflection. Don't be afraid to pause, especially if it helps the

audience connect to the idea you're hoping to convey. Audiences will appreciate your effort to understand, connect with and benefit them.

**Be authentic:** Your influence and ability to engage your audience increases when your message comes from a genuine place of truth and your own belief systems. If you have to deliver a message you don't fully believe in (such as an organizational strategy), be sure to include something that reflects your genuine perspective (i.e., this can be a challenge for some of us, but we'll be more successful if we pull together through this transition).

**Do your best to relax:** Demonstrate composure. If you feel stressed, simply focus on relaxing your hands and fingers. This will help to relax your whole body and you'll feel the difference immediately. If you feel breathless, take a moment to take a cleansing belly breath (in through your nose, out through your mouth). Then continue. Prepare responses to minimize your reactions to questions or issues that you anticipate may challenge you during a Q&A. Project a confident, open posture and demeanor. If you're standing, anchor your weight on both feet to help strengthen your posture and minimize unnecessary movement, which can be distracting. Composure generates respect and builds trust in your ability to handle difficult situations.

There are many resources available to help build confidence, presence and top-notch presentation skills. In the meantime, apply these four ideas to help strengthen the impact of your next presentation.

*Donna Rawady is an executive coach and can be reached at [www.donnarawady.com](http://www.donnarawady.com).*