

Transcription - Executive Presence

Welcome back. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today we're going to talk about executive presence. Part of it is about how you maintain your executive presence remotely as well as in the board room or wherever else you might be. Part of it is about being "present" as an executive. So regardless of where you are that you remember what your role is and that you carry out your role suitable for the medium that you are using.

If we look at the fact that we might be presenting through technology as we have done increasingly over the last couple of years, that the environment is right. We see and we hear about lots of disasters in terms of Zoom and Zoom filters, what people play around with. It's about not allowing the opportunity for that to happen. Executive presence is about your environment as much as it's about you and how you present yourself. If you're in environment that allows you to be lazy, then your presentation has a lazy edge to it regardless of how well you think you might be doing because we are all affected by the environment in which we find ourselves.

Executive presence is not just about your environment. It's about you, it's about your thinking, it's about how you sit or stand and speak and all of those things give you a presence. If you have determined that you speak or stand or interact in a certain way then regardless of where you are, that's how you have to do it. So it's got to be something that you are comfortable doing, that you understand is how you are going to do it in every environment.

We had some questions just recently about people who are stepping up to present at executive sessions and how they feel that they have to present a certain way because it's the boardroom, it's the executive. And so I can't be who I am normally because I have to step up to what I perceive is their level or their environment and that's not the case. The reason you're presenting to them is because you are the expert in this particular field. They want to see you and they want to hear from you. They don't want to hear from a manufactured person about the topic that you have to present to them. In reverse it's the same thing. If you're in the board meeting and it might be your first one, it might be your 50th one, that you who you are so that the rest of the members understand what they can get from you, how you are going to interact, how you are going to talk, how you are going to ask questions, how you are going to present your reports. Whatever it is that you determined that this is how I present in any environment.

So, what I'm hearing is being authentic and having your own trademark instead

of trying to be someone or something you're not. Once you've done all of that I think if I can summarize it, we're talking about preparation. So if you're a subject matter expert, it's probably safe to say you know that stuff, you live it and breathe it every day and that is something that you've inherently got. So that's not the bit that we're talking about. We're talking about you being prepared and saying, what is the purpose of me interacting with this group? Who is this group I'm interacting with? And what is the message? What's the story I'm leaving here? Have I been invited to cover something? Am I trying to convince them to go a certain way? Am I making a recommendation? Whatever it is I have to be very, very clear and I have to have the vision and I want them to receive that and that's the preparation.

If it's interactive, you've got to be able to listen and not to be rigid in, I was going to tell them a, b and c, and I'll keep talking about abc's all day even though the question was about none of that. Let them see you as a person that you would normally be, you having a conversation and they interrupt you, you respond. Be sure that your expression and the way you are standing and all of that is not coming across as "you interrupted me" and I'm now defensive. That takes preparation and practice and the communication has got to be appropriate to the group. It's just like if you are communicating with some professors, they are just different levels of detail. But the communication is always to be clear so at the end of the day, people will remember what you said if you're delivering it comfortably yourself, if you deliver it clearly and if your body language and eye contact reflect that.

The other thing is always go in, this is not to freak you out, but be prepared to present under stress. "Under stress" might be just that person in the crowd that pushes your buttons, you turned up and the layout or the equipment or the space you were in, was nothing like you expected, even though you're prepared, you're going to be under stress. So how do you do that? We all have our own technique to do that, where you park it. You park it, say I'm going to stress about that later. Right now I'm going to continue with what I prepared and the image I'm going to leave behind and the most important message I'm leaving behind and concentrate on that.

So your presence is about what you look like, what you're wearing, how you are saying it, your eye contact, your demeanor. All of those come together. The other one, obviously, the biggest one is, you've got to know what you're talking about. But we giving that as given, here is about your presence and image.

To paraphrase a very well known saying, it doesn't matter what you say, it's how

you make them feel because what they'll remember is how they felt at the end of your presentation or interacting with you. So if you make them feel confident in the fact that you know what you're doing, that you know what you're talking about, that your decisions are measured, the right ones even if they are the wrong ones, that they were measured decisions. It's how the other side of that interaction feels that creates the presence for you in their eyes. You can't manufacture that, the feelings that they will have, but you can be authentic, as Fulyana has said and you can be consistent. I think consistency is as important as authenticity.

I think we've covered that for you and a little bit of an insight into how you can have some executive presence. If you've experienced this and you've found a way of being comfortable about your presence, drop us a line and we'll share those views with our listeners. For now I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.