

What are the differences between intensity and rigidity?

In the boardroom, in the hall, around the conference table – even at lunch, there's a quality that's critical to your leadership success – “executive presence.” Some of you believe “executive presence” is acquired naturally – “She just has it.” Some of you believe “executive presence” is acquired cosmetically – “He has the look.” And some of you believe “executive presence” comes with the position – “She has the title.”

While there is truth in all these perspectives, the reality is that “executive presence” is a quality that can be consciously acquired and developed.

One of the keys to building “executive presence” is to recognize the differences between intensity and rigidity.

What are the differences between intensity and rigidity?

One of the differences is quality of energy.

When you are intense, you project an energy that is multidimensional, well rounded. Your eyes, your voice, your posture, your stance, your walk, your gestures – all parts of your physical behavior work together to project an image that is consistently strong, focused.

When you are rigid, you project an energy that is unidimensional, flat. Maybe your look is strong. Maybe your walk is strong. Maybe your posture is strong. But instead of all parts of your physical behavior working together, one quality dominates. You project an image that is unbalanced, weak.

Another one of the differences is level of involvement.

When you are intense, you project an image that reflects engagement, involvement. Your movements are smooth, without doubts or hesitations. Your rhythm is regular. Your expressions connect with your messages, emerging and disappearing spontaneously. You project openness – approachability.

When you are rigid, you project an image that reflects absence, disengagement. Your movements are jerky, awkward. Your rhythm is off beat. Your expressions are unrelated to your message, tending to be sustained, fixed over longer periods of time – masking, not revealing. You seem aloof, remote.

So fundamentally, you see that the key to building “executive presence” is not about posturing and posing, but about engaging and integrating – doing, not being.