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Executive Presence

The Missing Link Between Merit and Success

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Do you exude confidence and credibility? Can you command a room? Sylvia Ann Hewlett, one of the world's most influential business thinkers, cracks the code of Executive Presence (EP) for men and women intent on winning the next plum assignment and doing something extraordinary with their lives.

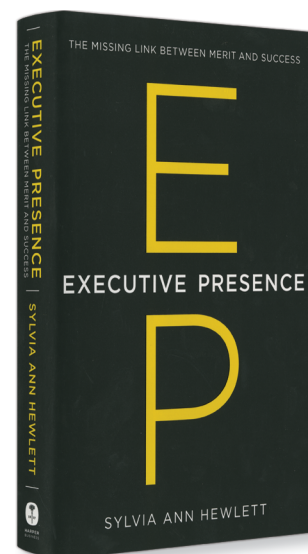
You might have the qualifications to be considered for your dream job, but you won't get far unless you can signal that you're "leadership material" and that you "have what it takes." Professionals are judged on presence as well as on performance. Using a wealth of hard data, Hewlett reveals EP to be a dynamic mix of three things: how you act (gravitas), how you speak (communication) and how you look (appearance).

Executive Presence is immensely practical. Hewlett teases out tactics that can help you raise your game and close the gap between merit and success. She offers the unvarnished advice you won't get from supportive friends and tackles head-on such touchy subjects as too-tight clothing and too-shrill voices. She shows how the standards for EP vary for men, women, multicultural and LGBT employees, and she shares how to get meaningful feedback from politically correct bosses intent on avoiding the real issues.

With hard facts and vivid examples, Hewlett shows you how to ace EP and fully realize your unique potential — no matter who you are, no matter where you work.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why gravitas is the core characteristic of executive presence.
- The six key elements of communicating with executive presence.
- How to balance authenticity with conformity in the business world, no matter who you are.



by Sylvia Ann Hewlett

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

by Sylvia Ann Hewlett

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What Is Executive Presence?

President Obama has it. So does Facebook's chief operating officer, Sheri Sandberg. It's embodied by people as varied as Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt, the late British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, celebrated Burmese parliamentarian Aung San Suu Kyi and actress Angelina Jolie. Nelson Mandela exuded it.

It is executive presence — and 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 we're in the presence of someone who's the real deal. It's an amalgam of qualities that telegraphs that you are in charge or deserve to be.

Executive presence is not a measure of performance: whether, indeed, you hit the numbers, attain the ratings or actually have a transformative idea. Rather, it's a measure of image: whether you signal to others that you have what it takes, that you're star material. If you're able to crack the EP code, you'll be first in line for the next plum assignment and be given a chance of doing something extraordinary with your life.

EP rests on three pillars:

- How you act (gravitas)
- How you speak (communication)
- How you look (appearance)

While the specifics vary depending on context (what works on Wall Street doesn't necessarily work in Silicon Valley), these three pillars of EP are universal. They are also somewhat interactive. If your communication

skills ensure you can “command a room,” your gravitas grows exponentially.

One thing to note at the start is that these pillars are not equally important — not by a long shot. Gravitas is the core characteristic. Signaling that “you know your stuff cold,” that you can go “six questions deep” in your domains of knowledge, is more salient than either communication or appearance.

How do people know you have gravitas? You *communicate* the authority of a leader — through your speaking skills and ability to command a room. When it comes to communication, eye contact matters enormously. Being able to look your coworkers in the eye when making a presentation, or being able to make eye contact with an audience when making a speech, has a transformative effect — on your ability to connect, to inspire, to create buy-in. It means you need to lose your glasses, your notes and your PowerPoint and just wing it. This is not easy. It requires a huge commitment of time since you need to prepare and practice so thoroughly that the arc of your remarks becomes part of your muscle memory. There are no shortcuts.

While cracking the EP code can be onerous and sometimes eats into your soul, this work and these struggles allow you to flower and flourish. It turns out that becoming a leader and doing something amazing with your life hinge on what makes you different, not on what makes you the same as everyone else. ●

Gravitas

We all know a real leader when we see one. He or she projects an aura of calm and competence that instills faith



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even in — *especially* in — the white-hot center of a crisis. He or she reveals integrity and demonstrates courage by uttering truths when they are inconvenient or most unwelcome. And he or she demonstrates courage and emotional intelligence that secures followership even in the wake of news that would seemingly destroy it.

These qualities connote gravitas, that weightiness or heft that marks you as worth following into the fire. Gravitas is the very essence of EP. Without it, you simply won't be perceived as a leader, no matter what your title or level of authority, no matter how well you dress or speak. Gravitas is what signals to the world you're made of the right stuff and can be entrusted with serious responsibility. But what is it, really? How do you come by it, and how might you telegraph it?

Top Aspects of Gravitas

Research reveals gravitas to consist of six key behaviors and traits:

- **Confidence and “grace under fire.”** You've got to reach inside yourself to that place where you believe, you absolutely *know*, you're eminently qualified to do the job at hand. Most of us are like teabags, to borrow from Eleanor Roosevelt's shrewd words: We don't know how strong we are until we're in hot water.
- **Decisiveness and “showing teeth.”** Making difficult decisions is what we look to leaders to do. It is not so much about rendering the right decision but about rendering a decision at a time when no one else dares, that confers gravitas, because it telegraphs that you have the courage as well as the confidence to impose a direction and take responsibility for it. Real leaders listen, gather critical information, weigh the options carefully, look for a timely opening (typically when everyone else is writhing in indecision) and *then* demand action.
- **Integrity and “speaking truth to power.”** Speaking truth to power is a potent affirmation of leaderlike courage. The higher you go in an organization, the more impressive you are when you demonstrate you have the spine to share your convictions. Make sure, however, that when you challenge authority, you're coming from a core of unshakable values. Anything less, and your actions will be perceived as insubordination and/or arrogance — the opposite of gravitas.
- **Emotional intelligence.** While decisiveness and toughness in a leader signal conviction, courage and resolve, when untempered by empathy or compassion these same characteristics come off as egotism, arrogance and insensitivity. Emotional intelligence is

important for building trust because demonstrating it shows you have not only self-awareness but also situational awareness. Standout leaders who can be trusted to pick up on all relevant cues win the trust of followers to steer them through an uncertain future.

- **Reputation and standing/“pedigree.”** Before you enter a room or open your mouth, your reputation speaks for you — never more so than today, when word of your latest blunder or scandal races at lightning speed around the globe in 140 characters or less. Managing your personal brand is almost a job unto itself, lest it be managed for you by people who don't hold your best interests at heart. You've got to be proactive in asserting who you are, what you stand for and how you'd like to be perceived.
- **Vision/charisma.** To communicate gravitas, it's critical you telegraph vision.

Gravitas alone won't secure you the corner office, of course: You've got to have the skill sets, the experience and the innate talent to qualify for the job. But if you have that depth of experience and those vital skills, gravitas is all that's between you and that top job. It can't be faked, but it can be cultivated.

Gravitas is that *je ne sais quoi* quality that some people have that makes other people judge them born leaders. But born leaders are made, oftentimes through their own systematic efforts. They live intentionally, guided by a set of values or a vision for their lives that compels them to seize every chance to put their convictions into practice. We gravitate to them because they telegraph that they know where they're going — a rare and intoxicating certainty that most of us lack. That is the real font of their gravitas. ●

Communication

Most of us tend to think of communication skills in terms of formal presentation skills. But when are you not onstage? No matter your job title or how junior or senior you are, you are always presenting. Whether it's a quick email to your boss, a casual comment you make to colleagues in the hallway or a pitch you prepare for clients, you're conveying who you are and what authority is your due. Your communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal, are what ultimately win you the attention and mindshare of colleagues, clients and friends.

Communication is not so much *what* you say but rather *how* you say it. This you can condition and control. The tone and timbre of your voice; your choice and use of words; your inflection, articulation and delivery; and even

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your body language determine what and how much your listeners take in — and what overall impression of you they will form and retain as a result. Other people's perceptions of you are very much yours to shape.

Superior Speaking Skills. Below are verbal cues that can be adjusted. The painful part is that you'll probably need to be told you've got a problem before you can begin to address it. Ask for feedback. A sponsor or mentor should give you a good sense of what you need to work on. Then get to work — because a lot is at stake.

- **Accent.** Sounding provincial can “destabilize your authority,” says top attorney Kent Gardiner. A British accent, on the other hand, does wonders for your gravitas, according to focus groups.
- **Grammar.** Sounding uneducated undermines your gravitas and marks you as an outsider to the inner circle. And yet it's the rare person who will risk correcting your word usage, as such correction calls attention to chasms of socioeconomic class, education and ethnicity.
- **Timbre and pitch.** Not only does the sound of your voice matter twice as much as what you're talking about, but a voice in the lower-frequency range will encourage others to see you as successful, sociable and smart. A high-pitched voice, particularly for women, is a career-stunting attribute.

Command a Room. If you aspire to lead, you must mesmerize your audience. How do you grab and keep an audience?

- **Establish connection.** You've got all of five seconds to “touch an audience,” or get them to invest in your message. It's all about making yourself human: not oversharing, not indulging in self-revelation but unveiling just enough of your inner core that your listeners feel connected to you and start pulling for you.
- **Deliver your words as a musician delivers notes.** Phrasing, inflection and pace are what distinguish you as a person worth listening to. As in music, it's important to deliver your words conscious of your narrative arc, lifting and dropping your cadence to emphasize key passages or points, paying particular attention to how you end a phrase, so that your listener senses closure and consequently hangs on to the last word and retains it before making room for the next.
- **Use narrative.** Stories, not bullet points, are what grab and hold an audience. Ronald Reagan, an actor by training, earned the sobriquet “the Great Communicator” because he was a colorful storyteller and natural entertainer, not because he wielded facts like a policy wonk.

- **Be succinct.** “Executive presence is not necessarily about being formal or abundant in your communication but rather straightforward and brief,” says Kerrie Peraino, head of international HR for American Express. Get to the point, and people will give you their attention.

Assertiveness. Being forceful and assertive is a core executive trait for both men and women. But for women, it's a decidedly more difficult trait to embody, as assertiveness in a woman often makes her unlikable. The executives I interviewed uniformly suggest you resist the urge to charge in and make known your demands. The best strategy for women may be what Linda Huber of Moody's describes as “leading from behind.” In a room full of men, women often feel impelled to assert themselves by launching the first salvo. But far more effective, says Huber, an army officer who at age 21 had 45 soldiers in her command, is holding off until others have fired off their best shot.

Ability to Read a Room. Sensing the mood, absorbing the cultural cues and adjusting your language, content and presentation style accordingly are vital to your success as a communicator, and succeeding as a communicator is vital to your executive presence.

Being oblivious to the needs of your audience will undermine perceptions of your authority. Here's why: First, it intimates you're a closed circuit, someone who can't or won't take in new information. Second, it implies you don't care about your audience, destroying any chance of connection, which is after all the foundation of any communication. Finally, and most damning, it implies you're simply not nimble enough to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances.

Humor and Banter. Not everyone can pull off a funny story at the lectern, but everyone can learn to banter at the water cooler. Many of our focus group participants affirmed the importance of mastering the art of small talk. “It's the conversation before the meeting that establishes whether or not you're worth listening to in the meeting,” one senior executive pointed out — a skill she refers to as “mastering the banter.” It shows, she explained, that you're part of the larger conversation, someone who's “one of the tribe.”

Body Language and Posture. Never underestimate the communicative power of body language. Since people will be “reading you” the moment they lay eyes on you, take care to enter a room or take the stage with aplomb. Is your head up, your gaze focused straight ahead? Shoulders back but relaxed? Do you stride or shuffle? And do you

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look happy at this opportunity to engage? Or do you look like you're nursing an ulcer? ●

Appearance

As we wrestle with the thorny — and annoying — issue of looks, three things are uppermost in our minds: What marks us for success? What exactly are bosses and colleagues looking for these days? And how much does this superficial stuff matter anyhow?

Qualitative data found that appearance was typically the *filter* through which gravitas and communication skills were evaluated. That explains why high-performing junior employees oftentimes get knocked out of contention for key roles and promotions: they simply don't look the part. In other words, get this appearance thing wrong, and you're struck off the list.

Over the long haul, the way you look may not be nearly as important as what you say or how you act, but it's incredibly important in the short run. Cracking the appearance code opens doors and puts you in play. So what are senior leaders looking for? What are their top picks?

Being Polished and Groomed. It turns out that the intrinsic stuff (body type, height) is not what matters most; rather, it's what you do with what you've got. Research conducted at Harvard Medical School found that judgments about a woman's attractiveness were heavily conditioned by how much makeup she was wearing — the more the better. When you make an effort to look polished, you signal to others that you see them as worth your time and investment, and you're even prepared to tolerate mild discomfort.

Casual clothes may be the right choice for your organizational culture, but in their fit and brand and style, they should telegraph that you take your work and those whom you engage in it very seriously.

Have professionals tend to your hair and nails regularly. Invest in well-cut attire that compliments your body type. Accessorize, but don't billboard your bling. Your appearance should focus your audience on your professional competencies, not distract from them.

Physically Attractive, Fit, Slim. There's a plethora of research proving the point that intrinsically attractive people get a speed pass over life's bumpier transitions: They get hired more often, earn more and even fare better in court than unattractive people. With regard to your physical attractiveness, what you do with your God-given gifts counts more than your intrinsic beauty in establishing your credibility as an up-and-comer.

The most important thing you can do is signal fitness and wellness. It's not how much you weigh but how resilient you seem that enhances or detracts from your executive presence — because leadership is demanding. We tend not to entrust our toughest jobs to people who look like they might keel over from a heart attack.

Pay more attention to how well (as in healthy) you look and how well you look after yourself. Whether you're a size 16 or 6, get enough exercise to ensure your muscles are toned and your lung power will see you up stairs without wheezing.

Simple, Stylish Clothes that Position You for Your Next Job. The journey begins by dressing for the job you *want*, not the job you have. Complement a sophisticated look with a signature style piece or accent. For men this may be a pair of colorful socks, a playful tie, vintage cuff links, distinctive shoes or a bold watch. Women have arguably more options. Remember that your signature look encompasses not just you but also the physical space you occupy.

Being Tall. Shortness in a male leader was and is so easily conflated with major shortcomings. Shortness can create a presumption of weakness. What to do if you're among the height-challenged? In this regard women have one killer app to help them compensate: high heels. And they use them.

For men, there's not much to be done that doesn't risk exacerbating the image problem. The best way to make height a nonissue is to take a page out of New York mayor Michael Bloomberg's playbook. Bloomberg's amour, Diana Taylor, is not only a good four inches taller but also inclined to appear by his side in showstopper heels. He reportedly "doesn't care" about their height difference. A man secure enough to be photographed at the shoulder height of his girlfriend is a man no one will see as weak.

Being Youthful and Vigorous. Looking youthful boosts the EP of both men and women because, like slimness and fitness, it implies you've got the vitality to lead the charge and not succumb to setback. If you cannot impress everyone with your obvious vitality, then at least make sure you minimize signs of age and downplay any infirmity.

The crucial point to keep in mind is that appearance is the medium for your message, and, as such, it should neither distract nor detract from what you stand for and what you want to say. Ask your superiors for feedback on your attire, hairstyle and grooming. Provide assurance that you will receive their observations and suggestions not as fault-finding but rather as constructive guidance. While

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it may be painful to hear what you're doing wrong, consider how much more painful it is to learn about your blunders later, from someone else, when it's too late to reverse first impressions. ●

Feedback Failures

Think for a minute: When's the last time someone at work gave you honest, critical feedback on some aspect of your EP? For that matter, when's the last time you gave someone at work a critical and specific EP pointer?

Unvarnished, concrete feedback on your appearance, communication skills and gravitas is hard to come by. It's especially hard if you're female, though your chances improve slightly with a same-sex boss.

Women often don't get EP feedback from their male superiors. Senior men just can't afford to have their motives misconstrued. It takes only the perception that something unprofessional has transpired to bring down the mighty. As every male who's been subjected to sexual-harassment training might conclude, developing female talent by giving women individualized feedback just isn't worth the added risk of bumping against the third rail of office politics.

For similar reasons, people of color don't get the feedback they need to develop their EP: Fearing discomfort as well as discrimination litigation, senior executives said they would sooner pass over multicultural professionals lacking executive presence than have an honest conversation about their shortcomings. In particular, people of color don't get unvarnished feedback about hair, clothing and body weight.

Difficult Conversations – But Extraordinarily Important

Some kinds of feedback are intrinsically difficult to give no matter who is on the receiving end. But dispensing good critical feedback across all three EP pillars is a core leadership competency, one that should be developed and evaluated along with other managerial skills.

Great feedback is (1) timely, meaning it's delivered either right before or right after you've blundered; (2) specific to one discrete behavior, as opposed to a global condemnation; and (3) prescriptive, or explicit about what actions need to be taken by you.

Feedback is bad when it sets up a very narrow band of acceptability. Women, for example, are told they're either too angry or too nice, overly passive or way too aggressive, too young or too old. Feedback is bad, too, when it's vague. Given the ubiquity of bad feedback in

the workplace, it comes as no surprise that the majority of respondents say they haven't been able to act on the feedback they've been given.

Improving feedback will require a two-pronged approach. First, you as a rising star must learn to become better at eliciting, receiving and acting on criticism. And second, you as a leader must become better at giving criticism while still modeling how to receive it.

Tactics: How to Get the EP Feedback You Need

- **Recognize you need it.** Says one communications exec, "everybody says they welcome feedback but then persists in thinking they're perfect." She adds, "People I know, probably the smartest people in my group, won't be going anywhere because they don't have EP. And they don't have EP because they don't accept that they need to acquire it."
- **Develop a thicker skin.** Debora Spar, President of Barnard College, says, "I think we're raising both women and men to be overly sensitive to criticism, so that when they finally get out in the real world and they don't get a 5.0 on a performance review, they fall apart. It's so important, early in life, to get that lesson and toughen up."
- **Routinely ask for specific, timely, prescriptive feedback.** If you make a blanket request, as in "How am I doing?," you may get a blanket answer ("Just fine!"). Better to laser in on a recent encounter that required considerable EP — a meeting with a high-powered client or leader in the firm — and request that a superior assess you on your body language, speech and delivery, attire, command of the room and so on.
- **Create a circle of peers with whom you can share feedback.** One ad executive explains, "I always find the time to reach out to people on my team and build these relationships," she says. "I will make sure I'm there to support them when they need my feedback, because at some point I'm going to need theirs."
- **Cultivate a sponsor.** Sponsors are not mentors. Sponsors are powerful leaders who see potential in you and, provided you give them 110 percent, will go out on a limb to make things happen for you. Because sponsors have a vested interest in how you turn out (your reputation now being linked with their own), they will give you the kind of feedback that mentors can't or won't.
- **Demonstrate you will act on the feedback you've been given.** Unless you show superiors that

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you are willing to course-correct, they might conclude you're not worth the time and energy it takes to impart difficult feedback in the first place.

Good feedback on executive presence is hard to come by — it's difficult to give, difficult to elicit and difficult to receive. The issue is even more sensitive for women, people of color and LGBT employees. The good news is that improving the feedback loop is a central part of EP workshops and training sessions that have been developed by the Center for Talent Innovation over the last two years. ●

Walking the Tightrope

Carolyn Buck Luce, a leader who has negotiated narrow bands of acceptability for decades, says, "If you don't fit the stereotype of a leader, you're not likely to be seen as becoming one." If you're not straight, not white or not male, that is, and you aspire to leadership, you're likely to find yourself up against the impossible expectation that you be someone you're intrinsically not. This expectation is communicated via feedback that's inherently contradictory or paradoxical and that so many on the path to leadership have had to parse before they can proceed.

The majority of women being considered as potential "leadership material" hover in that layer just below top management, what's known as the marzipan layer because it's so rich with talent — and so sticky. We find that, at the door to the C-suite, they hesitate to cross the threshold — fearful, we suspect, of having to walk the tightrope between feminine and authoritative and between effective and likable. Men simply aren't forced to choose, since by dint of being male they're already perceived as leadership material.

Across all three pillars of executive presence — gravitas, communication and appearance — women continue to walk a tightrope. While women are as likely as men to believe that appearance plays a small part in a leader's executive presence, women are much more likely to be pilloried on the basis of it, whatever they do. Women who speak confidently about their accomplishments are identified as "tooting your own horn."

The trickiest EP terrain a woman must navigate concerns her gravitas, where the forceful-but-unlikable chasm yawns the widest. A woman who shows teeth, for example, risks being perceived as a bitch or noncooperative ("not a team player").

How To Win Greater Latitude: Insights and Strategies

When you Show Teeth, Show That You Have the Best Interests of the Team at Heart. Assert your difference of opinion, but take the "I" out of your argument. Too often, says Intel's Rosalind Hudnell, women and people of color set themselves up to be branded as "not a team player" by framing their argument in terms of what's bugging them personally. "Don't make it about yourself, because that only underscores your status as the outsider," says Hudnell. "You'll be far more effective if, before taking a stand, you consider, 'How will this idea be heard by those in power?'"

Hit the Mark by Taking More Careful Aim. Too often, says Alliance Bernstein's Lori Massad, women take a broad-spectrum approach to communication: instead of listening to others' views, they blurt out their own first; instead of waiting for an opening that might maximize receptivity, they stream consciousness. Better to be a sniper, says Massad: Pick your target, pick your moment and fire your best shot.

Build a Personal Brand that Grants you Lots of Latitude to be You — and be Relentless in Projecting it. A consciously built and confidently maintained brand that positions you outside the box goes a long way in ensuring that others won't dare box you in.

Show Your Care. For women in particular, winning more latitude in the public's eye depends on showcasing activities that demonstrate you care about the disenfranchised. This works wonders on the likeability front. Kirsten Gillibrand, Hillary Clinton's replacement as the junior Senator from New York State, has become a voice against sexual assaults in the military; Elizabeth Warren, in her run-up to winning a Massachusetts U.S. senatorial seat, recorded a contribution for the "It Gets Better" video campaign to help bullied LGBT teenagers.

Feedback can be helpful in pointing out which paths to take — and which pitfalls to avoid — but at a certain point, many people feel constrained by parameters that narrow the choices between comfort and conformity. Yet walking that fine line is the ultimate test of executive presence. ●

Authenticity vs. Conformity

The old metaphor "bleached-out professionals" refers to individuals who, in order to be perceived as professionals in their work environments, had effectively scrubbed themselves of all ethnic, religious, racial, socioeconomic

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and educational identifiers. While EP for some was a set of unwritten rules that no one had bothered to share with them, for others it was a terrain they felt they couldn't navigate without sacrificing core aspects of their identity.

The results of our national survey brought this conflict into sharper focus. Forty-one percent of professionals of color said they had felt the need to compromise their authenticity in order to conform to EP standards at their company. White respondents also conceded they felt the need to conform, of course, but people of color were significantly more likely than whites to feel this tension. Among people of color, respondents of Asian descent were afflicted the most — particularly Asian men. Across the board, a majority of professionals of color (56 percent) told us they felt held to a stricter code of EP than their Caucasian peers. Overwhelmingly, the EP code they feel impelled to fit into is that embodied by white men.

The experience of minority professionals parallels that of another group: LGBT professionals who feel obliged to pass for straight at work. Nearly half of gay professionals surveyed said they remained closeted at work for fear of being ostracized by their colleagues and penalized professionally by their superiors. That expenditure of remaining “off the gaydar” costs them both personally and professionally.

No matter who we are and where we work, the workplace imposes norms around appearance, communication and gravitas that we'd be fools to ignore if our intent is to thrive and not just survive.

The difficulty, of course, is that only *you* can determine what constitutes a compromise to your authenticity, as opposed to just a compromise.

Tactics

Below is strategic and tactical advice from professionals of color who've been down this same road.

- **Know Your “Non-Negotiables” and Walk Away.** Some cultures simply don't deserve your compliance.
- **Never Try to Be Someone You're Not.**
- **Play the Long Game.** Says Carolyn Buck Luce, “It's your responsibility to figure out how to align your talents and gifts to the culture so that, long-term, you achieve your goals. When you are the curator of your authenticity, you can invest intentionally — and then it's a win-win for you and your company.”
- **Perceive Slights as Opportunities to Address Ignorance.** One senior executive says, “If you're overly sensitive to the possibility of intentional slights and withdraw as a result, you freeze yourself rather than move forward.”

It is precisely your difference that your superiors need to burnish their brand, build their team, extend their innovative capabilities and ultimately succeed as leaders. It is your insight into end users like yourself that gives them a competitive edge in the relentless competition to innovate. In this brave new world, the organization absolutely needs you to bring your whole self to work.

So don't downplay your difference. Commit to owning it. ●

Conclusion

Ordinary mortals can crack the EP code. These skills are eminently learnable. You don't have to be born an actor or be endowed with a James Earl Jones voice.

You don't have to be some kind of genius and ace all top picks across the three categories of gravitas, communication and appearance. No need for straight As. Work with your strengths, and try to nail three picks in each category.

Figure out what is negotiable — and what is not. In your drive to crack the EP code, don't compromise your authenticity to such an extent that it puts your soul in play. It will make you miserable and will also backfire, because in the end gravitas rests centrally on your true identity. Eventually your integrity and authenticity will win out.

Finally, commit to the work involved, and embrace your EP journey. It will be enormously empowering. Of course it will require a ton of energy. Learning how to command a room or read a client, figuring out how to use silence to punctuate a speech, finding the perfect skirt or suit to complement your body type — none of this is easy, and it will require hours of painstaking effort. But you can count on the results being transformative.

Cracking the EP code will close the gap between merit and success, between where you are right now and where you could be if you unleashed your full potential and allowed it to fly and soar.

And it will make you feel quite wonderful. ●

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