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# Emotional Intelligence and Charisma:

## Two Facets of Leadership Presence

*Donn LeVie Jr / Donn LeVie Jr. STRATEGIES, LLC*

In the eyes of many people, Mitt Romney in 2012 failed to endear voters to his presidential campaign. Despite his leadership skills and abilities, Romney lacked charisma, but seemed to display an emotional intelligence. To people outside of his immediate family and inner circle, so Richard Nixon often displayed his lack of emotional intelligence. Charisma, or “the presence of presence,” endeared Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and JFK to so many people around the world.

In the 1988 Dan Quayle – Lloyd Benson vice-presidential debate, Senator Dan Quayle compared himself to a Jack Kennedy. Senator Benson replied:

“Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy.”

The strength of JFK’s leadership presence/charisma was clearly communicated in Senator Benson’s words; the lack of Senator Quayle’s leadership presence was equally highlighted.

Trying to describe the characteristics of presence is like trying to explain the qualities of a summer breeze. You can only express the effects of the breeze on your person or how it moves through the trees and clouds, but not the breeze itself. I’ve identified four elements that characterize the application of presence by leaders: Engagement, Positioning, Influence and Conversion — which form the acronym: E.P.I.C. and I’ve witnessed epic results when they are applied.

Here are some examples of how presence manifests itself with these four elements:

* Presence lets you engage authentically with decision makers to establish familiarity and build trust; it lets you better position your expertise or creativity with direct engagement; it lets you use the influence of social proof of your branded value to convert (or lead) them to offering you the contract, the sale, the promotion, the job offer.
* Presence lets you authentically engage with others; it lets you position your idea or proposal; it lets you use the influence of your expertise to help convert them to give audience (and perhaps approval) to your story, your pitch, your idea.
* Presence lets you *engage* authentically with potential clients to create familiarity and trust; it allows you to better *position* your branded expertise in direct engagement scenarios to further enhance trust and create a “likeability” factor; and it uses the *influence* of the social proof of your value in post-engagement scenarios to help *convert* them to becoming a client.

You can look the part, act the part and “fake it till you become it,” says Amy Cuddy in her popular book, *Presence: Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges.* In her book, she writes about learning how some body language – what she calls “postural feedback” – is tied to dominance and how to “pose for presence.”

The expansive postures Cuddy writes and speaks about are for getting YOU to feel like you have presence and power[[1]](#footnote-1). There’s definite value and validity in learning and applying such body language because, as Adlai Stevenson once wrote, you can’t lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny sitting on a horse.

There is this interrelationship between the “Innergame/ Outergame Connection” whereby you must first *believe* you are a Presence-Driven Leader before that belief can manifest externally through your interactions “with people and situations with seemingly no effort at all.”

Elizabeth I of England, a paragon of empathy, patience, and receptivity, once counselled another queen, however, that, “if your subjects see your words so honeyed while your acts are envenomed, what can they think?” Her success in no small measure was due to her ability to cultivate and nurture an enormous network of personal relationships that helped her assemble trusted, honest, capable, and loyal advisors.

Neuroscience has demonstrated the critical role of mind in the human operating system:

* Our beliefs influence our thoughts, which in turn influence our feelings (the Innergame).
* Our feelings dictate our actions, and our actions produce results (the Outergame), which affirm our beliefs.
* The internal conditions (believing we look good sitting on a horse) help drive external success (leading a cavalry charge) as Presence-Driven Leaders.

But understand that ineffective leaders – even terrible ones – can mimic the body language and gestures of leaders who do possess authentic presence. Power posing alone does not a Presence-Driven Leader make.

There’s more to it than that, but it’s a start.

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*Engagement and positioning strategist, leadership platform expeditor, author, and conference speaker Donn LeVie Jr. has 30 years’ experience leading people and projects for such Fortune 100 companies as Phillips Petroleum, Motorola, Intel Corporation; government agencies (NOAA), and academia (Department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, University of Houston Downtown College). Donn specializes at the intersection of leadership, communication, and performance, which means he works with organization leaders and executives through the doorway of coaching and consulting. Contact Donn at* *donn@donnleviejrstrategies.com**.*

1. in part to defeat the *Imposter Syndrome* Cuddy also writes about, where you don’t believe in yourself as a leader and that you’ll be “found out” by others. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)