

Achieving the LOOK & SOUND of LEADERSHIP



ESSENTIAL
COMMUNICATIONS

TELE 818.788.5357
info@essentialcomm.com
www.essentialcomm.com

EXECUTIVE COACHING TIPS



Listen to this Podcast

Project the Image You Want ▶ 10/09/08

Katarina had a meteoric rise through the executive ranks of Hollywood. She was a division president at one of the major studios before her fortieth birthday. Originally she'd engaged me to help her conquer her life-long fear of public speaking. Being smart and motivated, she [mastered her nervousness](#) in fairly short order. Then our work turned to fine-tuning her executive presence.

A wonderful opportunity presented itself. She was to present an industry-wide initiative at an international conference in Europe with masses of press and industry-watchers in attendance. "Now that I'm not so worried about my nerves, I want to be sure I come off the way I want to come off," she told me.

Without knowing it, Katarina had hit on a core exercise I use to help people be perceived in the workplace the way they want to be perceived.

Choose adjectives you want people to associate with you

I asked, "If reporters were going to use two or three adjectives about you in their articles, what words would you like them to use?"

She thought for a second, then said, "I want them to say I'm knowledgeable, presidential and confident."

"Great," I said, "then that's what we'll work to create: knowledgeable, presidential and confident. Those are your target words. Here's how to use them.

"Everything you do—from listening to me right now, to giving your assistant instructions, to running your staff meetings, everything—can be done in an infinite number of ways. But from this moment forward you want to explore doing things in a way that's knowledgeable, presidential and confident. You could be ordering lunch at the commissary. It doesn't matter. As many times a day as possible, you're going to step outside yourself and ask, 'Am I being knowledgeable? Presidential? Confident? Right now? What about right *now*?'"

"How will I know if I'm doing it or not?" she asked.



"You decide," I answered. "It's just an exploration. There's no right or wrong. Think of it this way: until now you haven't consciously focused on projecting any particular quality, have you?"

"No, not really."

"So give it a shot," I said.

She raised an unconvinced eyebrow but said she'd be willing to give it a try.

Here's how to find your target words

To manage the way *you're* perceived in the workplace—something I think everyone should want to manage!—first choose your target words.

Try this exercise.

Imagine yourself five years from now. You're in a job that perfectly matches your strengths: every workday is a joy because you get to use your natural gifts. On one of these joyous days, you're in a meeting where you're at the very top of your game. Then, it's time to leave. You collect your things and go. As the door closes behind you, the people around the table look at each other and say, "Wow, working with her is great. She's so ____." Or, "He's really something, isn't he? He's so ____."

What words fill in that blank? What do you want them to say about you? Write down whatever words come to you. Those are your target words.

Choose two or three of those words and focus on them as often as you can. Put them in your mind as you prepare for meetings or lunches or phone calls. Tell yourself that's how you want to be during that event. Then during your meeting or lunch or call, think of those words as often as you can.

Don't plan your behavior—that cuts off discovery. Just think of the words and see what happens.

How you'll likely experience "becoming" your target words

At first, it's likely the words will go completely out of your head. That's to be expected. You're training yourself to consciously focus on something you've probably never thought about before. Awareness won't come quickly.



But if you can make your target words conscious over a period of time, they will become part of your self-awareness. And people may well start to use those very words when describing you.

Katarina and I worked together on her international presentation. One day after we were finished writing the text, she got up to practice. After she'd spoken the first few sentences, I stopped her and asked, "Do you remember the three words you said you want to project?"

"Knowledgeable, presidential and confident," she answered without pause.

"Right. Pardon me for asking, but is that your version of knowledgeable, presidential and confident? It doesn't look like it to me."

"You're right," she said quietly. "I forgot."

She took in a deep breath and let it out slowly. Then she began again.

I don't know what she told herself in that short silence. If I did, I'd tell it to all my clients. What I do know is that she ran through her entire speech—and it wasn't short—and projected those three words the entire time. It was quite a performance.

If Katarina can do this, so can you. Choosing and embodying the words you want to project is a powerful way to display *The Look & Sound of Leadership*™.

Read a related Tip:

[Choose the Impression You Make](#)

To SUBSCRIBE or to CONTRIBUTE an idea for future Executive Coaching Tips, email us at:
info@essentialcomm.com

To SUBSCRIBE to the Podcasts, [click here](#).

To VIEW the entire archive of Executive Coaching Tips, visit:
<http://www.essentialcomm.com/tips/execcoachtips.html>