



Book Lions Don't Need to Roar

Using the Leadership Power of Professional Presence to Stand Out, Fit In, and Move Ahead

Debra A. Benton
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Recommendation

Debra A. Benton's book is a guide for making a better impression, exercising power effectively, and developing improved personal relationships at work. In any corporate culture, the goal is paradoxical: you want to fit in and stand out, at the same time. Based on her experience in working with business leaders as a coach, trainer, and consultant, Benton offers a variety of techniques that emphasize personal presentation and communication skills. While the book will appeal primarily to managers, these skills are useful to anyone who wants to get ahead. Benton combines a lively writing style with effective examples. The book includes useful summaries at the end of each chapter and a brief appendix. *BooksInShort.com* recommends it as an excellent book for anyone in a corporate culture, although there is some overlap with topics from Benton's more recent work, *How to Think Like a CEO*.

Take-Aways

- You must make a favorable first impression on those you meet, since people form opinions quickly and don't often change their minds.
- Learn to both stand out and fit in so you can get promoted.
- To stand out and fit in at the same time, be unique, but don't go to extremes of behavior.
- If you control your actions, you can control the impression you make on others.
- Develop the high level of physical, intellectual, and emotional energy which successful people have.
- To make an effective impression, control your body movements, posture, and gestures.
- Adopt an optimistic outlook.
- Lions have self-confidence, guts, and smarts.
- To highlight your individualism and make yourself memorable, look for ways to be distinctive.
- Set yourself apart from the crowd, yet maintain acceptable business behavior.

Summary

The Key Qualities of Successful Managers and Executives

To be successful, it is not enough to be competent at what you do. To really be successful and to stay on the top in business, you must have a powerful presence, emotional impact, and an ability to get along with different types of people. You have to communicate well, and have both courage and luck. Based on studies of more than one hundred chief executives, operating officers, and company presidents, these clearly are the traits of top managers. However, anyone can develop these skills.

“Emotional energy and the people skills that go with it are what will get you to the top and keep you there.”

You also need the high-level energy of successful people. You need the physical energy to meet the "physical requirements of the job." You need the intellectual energy to understand how to best do the job. You need the emotional energy to interact effectively with others. This way, you can control how you affect others and know how to relate to people in different situations. You can make a "positive impression," whatever you are doing.

A Good First Impression Is Crucial

How people perceive you determines their impression of you. Therefore, to be successful, you must make a good first impression. You can control the first impression you make by controlling your actions. You want to "stand out and fit in" so others will trust and respect you, as well as find you interesting. Your goal is not necessarily to have people like you, but to have them remember you favorably. To make this strong first impression, you need to be aware of how you act now, and then shape the way you act in the future. Otherwise, you may make a negative impact that will undermine your success.

“Stand out to get in - by making favorable first impressions and having a positive impact on the people around you.”

Making a good first impression is so important because people rely on their initial perceptions to relate to you in the future. They don't generally change their minds. Because they make assessments about your character and abilities based on your outside appearance, you have the power to control what you show them, and what they conclude.

“Although you can't actually control other people's feelings or their reactions to you, they base their perceptions on what they see - and you can control what you show them.”

Present yourself according to your particular purpose. Decide the impression you want to make, determine what you should do to make it, and then act accordingly. For example, if you want people to perceive you as confident and in control, express yourself by standing straight and acting in a "slow, controlled, purposeful manner."

Control Your Posture and Gestures

To make an effective impression, be careful how you use body movements, posture, and gestures. When you move your head, follow these key tips:

- Keep your expression relaxed but alert.
- Smile.
- Keep your head level. Don't lower it, raise it too high, or bob it.
- Make eye contact, with an attentive gaze that shows your interest.
- Don't look too intensely, or you will make the other person uncomfortable.

“Fit in to get promoted - by looking as though you belong at the top and getting along with many different kinds of people.”

When you enter a room, move confidently and with control. To increase your impact, pause - either in the doorway or just before you take "center stage." Learn how to give a good handshake to show that you are self-assured. Use a firm grip, but respect the other person's preferences for distance and space. Some people like closeness, but it can make other people nervous. When you

meet people for the first time, volunteer your name, and listen carefully to theirs, so you remember them.

“Stand out and fit in at the same time - by doing what others don’t without going to extremes.”

Touch appropriately. Touch can be very effective, such as when you use it to show support, to congratulate, or to console. But make sure you use touch in a planned, purposeful way that fits the occasion. Also, consider other people’s reactions. If you feel any resistance, pull back. On the other hand, avoid the self-touching that often stems from nervousness, such as adjusting your tie or playing with your jewelry. Learn to be comfortable when you are on the receiving end of appropriate touching.

“Competence alone does not lead to professional success. To get to the top, stay there, and be truly successful in the business world, you need presence as well as performance, emotional strength, and the ability to get along with many different types of people.”

Good posture is another key to looking good. Stand up straight to convey a confident, authoritative demeanor. When you do sit, use control. Pause after you approach the chair, and sit on the edge of the chair first. Then, as you sit back, be sure to sit straight.

Dress like those you want to influence or affect. Avoid wearing anything that detracts from an impression of success, such as jangling jewelry or a rumpled sports jacket.

“Control your actions so you can control your effect, so you can control your career and have more power and more impact, and make more money!”

Use speech and silence carefully. Adapt your voice to the occasion, and adjust your tone and volume accordingly. Strive for vocal variety. Speak slowly, to make what you say seem more important - but not too slowly, or your listener will lose interest. Use breathing techniques to help you control your voice more effectively. Most important, listen well, because listening will help you be part of more effective dialogue. Successful people listen more than they talk, and they really listen intently. Use strategic silences to emphasize important ideas and to give yourself a greater presence.

Learn to Relate to Others

Besides standing out, you need to also fit in. As you rise to the top and stay there, you need to look as if you belong and can deal effectively with whomever you encounter. In short, you need to have good people skills. This is important no matter how competent or knowledgeable you are.

“Successful people make effective first impressions. They stand out and fit in at the same time in order to be trusted, respected, and intriguing.”

Your people skills will also help you control the way you affect others. This makes you much more productive. You will be "more in tune" with others, and you also will help create an atmosphere in which those around you get along better with each other.

People skills aren’t "tricks or tactics for controlling or manipulating people." Nor do they aim to make you merely friendly and popular. Rather, they are a series of skills that enable you to relate to people in appropriate ways that fit a variety of situations. A good way to learn people skills is by observing your role models or mentors. As you observe what they do and say, choose the behaviors you want to emulate, and practice using them. At the same time, adapt them to your personal style, to make them your own. Other people skills you should cultivate include:

- Have an open and approachable attitude.
- Approach new people, even if they seem hesitant. Be friendly, and encourage them to talk.
- Create a relaxed and friendly environment in your workplace.
- Make yourself "visible and available" to talk to employees personally.
- Show some of your personal, non-business side, so you increase your rapport with others.
- Respect others’ privacy by keeping their confidences.
- Avoid becoming too personal, such as getting involved in office romances.
- Use story-telling to make conversations more interesting and to show your humanity.

- Use humor to make the workplace more fun. Show you have the confidence to laugh at your own actions. But don't use humor that is insulting, hostile, in bad taste, or that otherwise creates a negative impression.
- Ask questions to show your interest and to get the information you need to manage better.
- Ask occasional favors. This helps make the person from whom you ask the favor feel important, and it shows you value that person's relationship. When you receive a favor, be sure to thank and compliment the person.

Self-Realization Helps You Move Ahead

You must adopt additional personal characteristics to help you move to the top and stay there. This includes

- Having a philosophy of optimism.
- Having the courage to do what others don't.
- Having the "smarts" to develop and showcase your competence.
- Having the initiative to take advantage of opportunities.

“When you act without awareness, you miss opportunities to make a positive impact; all too often make a negative one; and unwittingly sabotage yourself and your chances for success.”

You want to have an optimistic outlook, because it conveys a "most-things-are-possible attitude." This attitude helps keep you in charge of your goals, thoughts, behavior, and your effect on others. It also inspires people. You need this self-confidence and strength to help you with hard challenges and risks.

“People draw conclusions about you from the moment you make your first entrance and they seldom change their minds.”

To increase your self-confidence, make sure you enjoy your job and are competent in it. "Pat yourself on the back" from time to time, even if it's just for the small steps that you accomplish on your way to your goal. Accept your occasional self-doubts, but don't give in to them - just acknowledge them and move on. Use "mental movies" to create a script to follow. Avoid being around negative people, who can pull you down.

“Your goal is to stand out while still fitting in. You have to add distinctions that highlight your individualism and make you memorable - in moderation...Staying within the realm of acceptable business behavior, set yourself apart from the crowd.”

Having "guts" is a combination of "confidence, courage, conviction, strength of character, stick-to-itiveness, pugnaciousness, backbone, and intestinal fortitude." You need these qualities to show true leadership, and to avoid being a play-it-safe follower. Having "guts" doesn't mean taking needless risks or being hostile, impulsive, and confrontational. Rather, having "guts" means you have the self-assurance to take "calculated risks" if the situation warrants it. It also means taking the initiative in new ideas and projects. If you meet resistance, you can continue to do what you know is right. You also can make hard or unpopular decisions if necessary.

“Successful people send out energy. They don't 'suck it in' the way people with frantic energy do...Conversely, people with relaxed energy have the stamina to work fourteen-hour days, solve complex problems, and effectively interact with the many people they encounter every day.”

Having "smarts" means you have a combination of "basic intelligence, know-how, shrewdness, people skills, and business acumen." Combining both technical effectiveness and people effectiveness, having "smarts" includes being open-minded and flexible about how to accomplish your objectives. Having "smarts" encourages you to look for new insights and input from others. As you acquire a deeper understanding of human nature, you will become better at motivating other people to do well. You will be able to think through problems and plan ahead. You develop "smarts" by:

- Practicing sequential thinking, where you logically move step-by-step from a problem to a solution.
- Rehashing past issues, to examine what went right and what went wrong. Repeat what works in the future, and eliminate or change what doesn't.

- Experimenting with opposites and analogies. Mentally remove the limits on taking action.

Finally, show your "smarts" in the way you speak and write. As your career demands it, learn how to become a good public speaker. If you are going to speak to a group, learn about your audience in advance. If you have time, prepare a speech and practice it. Learn how to effectively answer questions. Techniques include restating the question to clarify and gain thinking time, and making eye contact with the person asking it.

About the Author

Debra A. Benton is the head of Benton Management Resources. She provides advice and expertise on professional development to CEOs and managers. She is the author of *How to Think Like a CEO*.
