

A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the page, featuring a brown background with a white topographic map pattern. A solid red vertical bar is positioned to the right of the topographic pattern.

bates

Conceptualizing and Measuring Executive Presence

The Bates Executive Presence Index (Bates ExPI™)

Abstract

*A paper describing the development of the Bates
Model of Executive Presence and the Bates ExPI™*

INTRODUCTION

We have known for a long time that Executive Presence (EP) is important. Through our work with hundreds of senior executives and developing high-potential leaders, we have honed the art of helping them examine and enhance their presence. In the process and based upon our expertise in leadership communications, we built a very powerful toolbox of skill-building strategies and advice. And we have learned how to help very busy leaders adopt and apply these tools to real work in real time.

About a year ago, we came to believe that now is the time to complement our proven tools and methods with a more rigorous, scientific approach to assessing EP. With this resolve, we funded development of a first-ever research-based model of EP, which has been used to design a multi-rater assessment tool that measures EP. The Bates Model of Executive Presence is presented below (Figure 1), and the assessment tool, the Bates Executive Presence Index (Bates ExPI™), has launched.

Based upon the increased attention EP has received by senior leaders and those whose role it is to design and provide leadership development programs for them, it would seem to be an idea whose time has come. In this section, we set the context for our approach to Executive Presence (EP). We describe our rationale for pursuing research on EP and developing an instrument to measure it.

Executive Presence

EP has become a topic of keen interest in leadership. It is generally agreed that we know it when we see it. Some characterize it as gravitas. To others, it is the leader's ability to command the room in virtue of his or her personal presence and style. Still others enumerate a laundry list of qualities. In any case, the phenomenon of EP is raised with greater frequency in talent development roundtables, succession planning meetings, and when making key leadership assignments.

Interestingly, in such talent development discussions EP is often spoken of only after other descriptors of leadership have failed to capture what we see in those who exemplify EP. In this regard, traditional executive assessment tools and methods seem to fall short. Most of them do little to directly measure the personal and expressive qualities of a leader's presence and style that register as EP.

Allowing EP to remain an "I know it when I see it" phenomenon has consequences. As such, it is neither adequately conceptualized nor operationalized for assessment. This "EP gap" disadvantages those who would like to promote development of EP. In this respect, we might invoke a popular management motto, "You can't manage what you can't measure." The Bates Model of EP seeks to close this gap.

Executive Presence as Action

We believe that what many have intuitively grasped when attributing significance to EP is that it is all about the capacity to mobilize and sustain goal-directed action. They appreciate that EP is a special class of communicative leadership, an active power of motivation and influence, which has the potential for initiating and sustaining productive social action.

Yes, mission-driven enterprises must be seen as social organizations. They accomplish their goals through coordinated action. Communications is the medium through which such coordination occurs. And leadership communications in particular is the guidance system. Intelligent and purposive action requires more than technical skill and sound procedures; it requires motivation, normative guidance, and ongoing adaptive execution.

Thus we arrive at the heart of leadership and recognize that it is as much through the personal qualities of the leaders as through their knowledge that they win over a loyal following and bind colleagues and collaborators to their mission. For these reasons and more, we conclude that EP is not a nice-to-have, it is a must-have. This is true for those leading large-scale, complex, and challenging business initiatives and truer still for firms whose people, markets, and operations span the globe.

The Bates Model of EP described in this paper focuses on a set of variables that research suggests will enhance leadership communications. The Model guides development along pathways of behavior that enhance leaders' capacities to positively impact the engagement, alignment, and performance of those they lead. This is accomplished by using the Bates ExPI™ to awaken the latent potential of leaders to rise to that next level of executive maturity and then providing the strategies, skills, and tools to make it real.

It is an important and personally satisfying avenue of executive development for those who aspire to exemplary leadership. It begins with key insights into self, the perceptions of others, and the vital few gap issues identified from Bates ExPI™ feedback. Leaders target EP-related development themes. With coaching and practice, they learn to convey their messages—verbally, nonverbally, in dialogue or in large-group venues—in a manner that: a) registers with meaning; b) ignites passion in those he/she leads; and c) sustains an adaptive course disciplined execution over time.

Exemplary companies and exemplary leadership thrive on EP. It positions them to connect with those they lead. They learn to communicate not to manipulate or exploit for short-term gain. They learn to communicate for understanding and for influence. They build loyalty and spark above-and-beyond efforts based on good will.

As we have come to understand EP, we realize that it runs deep. It shapes and is shaped by a “host” culture. Perhaps it is the depth and multi-faceted nature of EP that explain why it has eluded definition. In any case, although we do not claim to have all the answers, we believe the Bates Model can lead the way. EP is no doubt the complex product of interaction between many variables, but it's not a mystery!

Conceptualizing and Measuring Executive Presence

The Model is based upon an extensive review of relevant theory and empirical studies in management, communications, psychology, and social action theory by authorities in these fields. We drew upon a variety of English language publications from around the world in order to mitigate the risk of a North American bias. The theoretical underpinnings and empirical studies are robust.¹

We interviewed senior line executives and HR executives to understand their reasons for caring about EP. They also helped us understand how they have conceptualized and addressed EP for themselves and for their developing leaders. In some interviews, we tried to understand situation-specific leadership challenges that require highly skilled communicative leadership, e.g., post-acquisition integration.

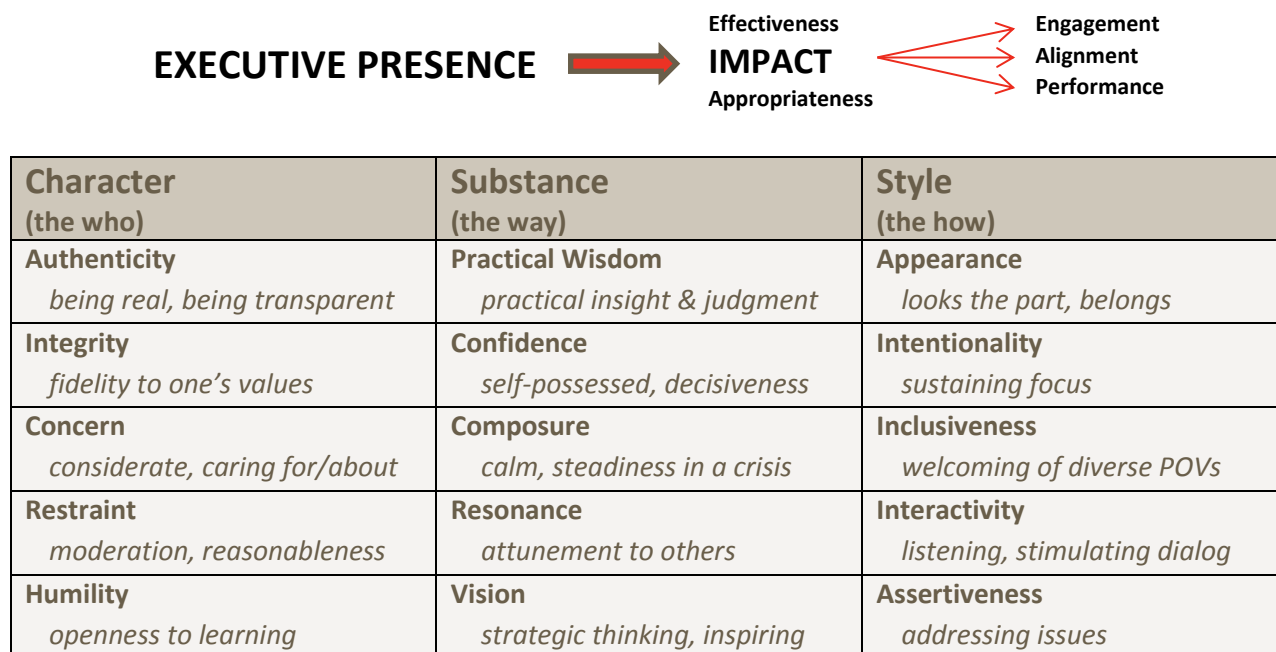
Finally, we conducted in-depth discussions with experienced consultants whose work focuses on helping senior leaders in medium/large companies enhance their EP skills and abilities. We also enlisted the aid of an expert panel of management psychologists, each of whom has 15+ years of practical experience in executive development and assessment, to ensure that the Bates ExPI™ items and scales sample the relevant areas of behavior adequately and appropriately for the target population.

¹ The interested reader will find a thorough and technical summary of this research in a white paper that is available upon request.

BATES MODEL OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE

Under each of the three dimensions of EP (Character, Substance, and Style) there are several facets of observable behavior that have been operationalized as measurement scales in the Bates ExPI™

Figure 1. Bates Model of Executive Presence



The variables used as facets in the Model are known to be associated with effective leadership, communications effectiveness, and measures of organizational and/or business performance. The meaningfulness or “face validity” of the facets for business leaders was also considered.

Dimensions and Facets of the Model

The Bates Model of EP defines the dimension and facets of leadership behavior that are measured by the Bates Presence and Influence Index (Bates ExPI™). The Bates ExPI™ has been designed as a multi-rater assessment tool. As such, it is specifically designed to capture stakeholder perceptions of an individual leader's presence and impact.

Bates ExPI™ results allow leaders to compare the perceptions of others (supervisor, peers, and direct reports) with their own self-perceptions. The comparison is made using a common questionnaire so that patterns of convergence and difference in perception are easily identified. The Bates ExPI™ provides 15 individual rating scales (Likert style) organized under the three dimensions of EP.

Character

Character is conceptualized as the core of who we are from the standpoint of values, dispositional tendencies, and essential beliefs about self, others, and life in general. Character, then, is the most foundational level of the leader as a person. None of us is perfect, nor do we perfectly express who we

are in our communications (verbal and nonverbal) with others. Knowing how we are perceived by others allows us to adaptively develop and self-manage our presence and our impact on others.

Character in the Bates ExPI™ is defined by certain tendencies—moral, emotional, and social—many of which are acquired early in life. These tendencies may serve to help and enhance or they may hinder and detract from our presence and impact as leaders. We have identified five salient facets of Character. Feedback on how others perceive us on these facets will help us target areas in which adaptive strategies for self-development, self-presentation, communication, and self-management may be indicated.

Facets of Character:

Authenticity – The quality of being transparently who you are as a person and as a leader. Sincere and genuine in words and actions. To be the real author of your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Willing to reveal oneself – strengths, limitations, and vulnerabilities. To exhibit a thread of consistency in who you are even as you learn, grow, evolve, and thrive as a leader.

Sample Item: “Shares the life lessons that underlie his/her views and beliefs.”

Integrity – The quality of fidelity to your values. To be clear about your beliefs and values. To consistently act in accordance with your values and core beliefs. To live up to your own standards of fairness and propriety. To be identified with your values. To keep promises. To be unwavering in your moral actions and truth telling. To take your commitments to others seriously. To honor the spirit of a commitment, not only the letter of the law.

Sample Item: “Walks the talk on values of honesty, promise-keeping, and fairness.”

Concern – A fundamental ethical and developmental concern for the well-being of others, the greater good, and the interests of future generations. Shows concern for colleagues and employees as persons and not merely as means to an end. Curious about others, seeks to understand them, their interests, abilities, and points of view. Respectful of and ready to draw upon individual differences. Gives others the benefit of the doubt. Encourages and plays an active role in their development.

Sample Item: “Even when giving hard-hitting feedback, his/her positive intentions are clear.”

Restraint – A calm disposition; alert and sensitive but not inclined to emotional extremes. A considered, measured tendency to take a second look. To view an evocative event as a call for reflective appraisal, even if it must be swift. A natural guard against impulsive or rash reaction. Imbued as a habit of mind and emotion, as a fundamental inclination to understand rather than merely react. Even when it yields to prompt action it ensures a measure of reasonableness and proportionality.

Sample Item: “Projects an air of calm that checks hasty, impulsive, or ill-considered action.”

Humility – A virtue in conduct that follows the Stoic principle that some things are within our control and some are not. An attitude of curiosity and openness to others, their ideas, and their points of view. Inclined to respect others and to assume others may know something you do not know. Unselfish and considerate in relationships. Accurate self-awareness of strengths and limitations. Belief that all human beings have worth. Awareness of something greater than self.

Sample Item: “Knows he/she does not have all the answers.”

Substance

The facets of Substance are also rather stable qualities. They develop over a longer stretch of time and into our adult years. They concern our social presence, demeanor, and our gravitas in leadership

situations. These are cultivated ways of being. They convey an overall sense of maturity, a capacity to integrate and bring one's character and virtues into play as a leader. They are not mere cleverness, nor are they evidenced in a one-time display of brilliance; they are revealed as a deliberate path taken.

Substance in the Bates ExPI™ is conceptualized as consisting of five facets. Few of us will realize equal levels of self-actualization across all them, but each is important and significant deficits in any one of them could detract from our presence and impact. Our research indicates that these facets play a significant role in shaping a leader's presence and enhancing the impact of his/her communications. Feedback on these facets of Substance will enable leaders to target areas in which adaptive development is indicated.

Facets of Substance:

Practical Wisdom – A deep and rich kind of insight and intelligence acquired over time by reflection upon one's experience. A capacity to navigate complex, real-world situations and discern the essential factors and issues that underlie and affect the identified problem or opportunity and the solution. An ability to anticipate the consequences of certain decisions or actions. An impeccable sense of timing. A sense of what is the best decision or action (right, proper, and effective) under the circumstances.

Sample Item: "Able to appraise a complex situation and go directly to the heart of an issue."

Confidence – Self-assurance in executive decision making and action. Self-possessed and ready to accept risk and responsibility for decisions and action. Capacity to form judgments and take action based on imperfect information in order to achieve time-sensitive goals. Pragmatic attitude that relies on good-enough understanding of key factors to guide action. Able to realistically appraise progress based on feedback. Gives solutions time to work, and ready to recognize failure and adaptively change course based on feedback. Does not allow perfection to become the enemy of the good.

Sample Item: "Trusts his/her judgment and willing to take reasonable risks."

Composure – A calm, thoughtful attitude. Introduces steadiness in times of crisis. Responds with composure rather than merely reacting to events and issues. Exhibits a capacity to self-regulate his/her emotions and has a calming effect on others. Enables others to regain a more objective perspective and sense of stability. Encourages a focused, deliberative style of decision making and action. Brings a tone of reasonableness when emotions flare. Resists hasty or impulsive action.

Sample Item: "Knows how to de-escalate emotions and focus discussion."

Resonance – Being in sync with others. A relational quality grounded in attentiveness and attunement to others and to our audience(s). Able to read and respond to the feelings of others. Able to connect deeply with others. Forms relationships in which we and those we lead feel heard, seen, understood. Relates to others as autonomous agents while also establishing an alignment of feeling, thought, and values. Having a keen awareness that we are all part of a larger whole.

Sample Item: "Fully present and attentive when engaging with others."

Vision – Generates and articulates an inspiring picture of what could be. Credibility as a strategic thought leader in his/her industry. Identifies emerging trends in markets and industry sectors. Enterprising sense for translating trends into commercial opportunities. Connects the future to the present and shows others how they can get there. Portrays challenging goals as worthy of sustained effort. Helps his/her followers understand and identify with an enterprise-wide vision and perspective. Builds and sustains energy for realizing the goal.

Sample Item: "Makes even daunting goals and aspirations seem realistic, exciting, and achievable."

Style

If the positive effects of Character and Substance register quickly and consistently, we must give a good deal of the credit to Style. Whereas the facets of Character and Substance express deeper levels of the leader as a person and the cultivated qualities of mind, emotion, and presence that convey gravitas, Style represents the most overt behavioral and skill-based features of EP. In its highest state of development, EP reflects a natural and seamless integration of all three dimensions.

We have good reason to admire indications of Character; they convey virtue. Likewise, we are properly impressed with signs of Substance because they represent the prudent and productive abilities of an executive to lead and manage a business. But it is the distinctive role of Style facets to reveal these virtues and abilities of leadership and management. Absent the skilled patterns of self-management and communicative behavior described in the facets of Style, effective EP might be slower in coming and diminished in practical impact.

Facets of Style:

Appearance – Looks the part and acts like he/she belongs in the executive leadership ranks. This includes attention to culturally appropriate attire, grooming, and social proprieties. Able to adapt to more and less formal settings. Exhibits awareness of and attunement to the norms associated with place, position, and role. Appearance and physical presence project energy and preparedness. Appearance meets expectations and does not distract from the intended mood, message, or purpose of the situation.

Sample Item: “Does not show up looking fatigued, poorly dressed, or unprepared.”

Intentionality – Ensures that there is clarity of purpose, clarification of direction, and a convergence of vision and goal-directed energies. Communicates with clear ends and aims in mind. Takes time to explain the rationale and principles that underlie key decisions or strategies. Even while encouraging dissent and expression of diverse points of view, he/she ensures communications end with a common agenda and the alignment of thoughts and actions with strategic objectives. Brings a measure of closure to dialogue and discussion.

Sample Item: “After a discussion with him/her everyone is clear about direction and next steps.”

Inclusiveness – Attentive to including all relevant stakeholders. Includes and involve others who have a stake in the issues at hand. Encourages initiative. Relinquishes some control over messaging and lets others know that they too are expected to generate compelling stories, to promote the brand, to innovate, to take responsibility for results. Causes others to feel more emotionally engaged, to feel a sense of increased ownership in the company’s growth, brand identity, and success.

Sample Item: “Actively involves those who have a stake in the issues and a relevant viewpoint to offer.”

Interactivity – Promotes dialogue and an exchange of comments and questions with and between others. Leader-follower interactions are dynamic, two-way, and everyone gets a chance to express their views. Creates a welcoming space for conversation. The prevailing culture is characterized by interpersonal dialogue rather than hierarchical, top-down communication. Lines of communication are more direct, spontaneous, interactive, and timely. Models a pattern of accessibility and responsiveness.

Sample Item: “Encourages and expects frequent interaction to coordinate action and sustain alignment.”

Assertiveness – Reflects an appreciation for constructive conflict and speaking one’s mind. Not inclined to let issues fester. Able to raise issues directly without being overbearing or shutting others down. Expresses issues with the implicit expectation that there are actionable and acceptable ways to resolve them. Helps everyone appreciate that problems, unlike wine, do not usually get better with age. Readily notices those who are hesitant to confront issues or averse to conflict and mentors them.

Sample Item: “Does not shy away from making his/her opinions, views, and reactions known.”

DESCRIPTION OF THE BATES ExPI™ PILOT PROGRAM

As part of our development and validation process, the Bates ExPI™ will be administered to a pilot sample in November and December of 2013. The pilot version of the Bates ExPI™ will have sound content validity (i.e., it samples the “right stuff”), and we have every reason to believe that it will provide a very useful source of feedback for participants interested in assessing and developing EP-related capabilities. If you think leaders from your company may be interested in participating, please contact your Bates consultant or call the Bates Communications office at 781.235.8239.

Timeline:

- The launch date for the Pilot is November 3, 2013.
- Recruitment of participating companies and leaders begins September 25, 2013.
- Consultation with participating companies is provided to answer questions and align use with needs.
- Feedback reports and interpretation will be available within three weeks of completing the survey.
- Normative data for the pilot sample will be available upon completion of the pilot, end of Q1.
- Aggregate company-specific data with comparison to sample norms also available end of Q1.

Administration:

- By launch date (11/3/2013), the Bates ExPI™ questionnaire will be set up for online administration, and participation will at that time be guided by procedures established with our technical partner.
- Participants will receive an email message inviting them to complete the Bates ExPI™ as a self-rater or other-rater. The message will provide a link to the site where they will sign in and complete the survey.
- Reminder emails will be sent and tracking information on the number of completions to date will be captured to monitor progress. Those who have not completed the survey will be prompted by email.
- Bates staff will jointly monitor the process in order to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the pilot.
- A help number will be provided in the original email to participants for questions concerning online access to the questionnaire

Bates ExPI™ Questionnaire:

- The questionnaire will be completed by the individual leader (self-rating) who is receiving feedback from others. It will also be completed by the individual's manager, peers (3-5), and direct reports (3-5). Individual ratings will be shown for self and manager; peer and direct report ratings are aggregated.
- In order to encourage candor, individual ratings of peers and direct reports are not revealed. But attention is given to points of variability and convergence of ratings between groups and within groups during interpretation of the feedback reports.
- The results of the Bates ExPI™ questionnaire are intended to support the individual development of leaders who will be receiving the feedback. Therefore, it is recommended that leaders being rated also be empowered to decide when and how they will disclose Bates ExPI™ results to others.
- When there are a sufficient number of participants from one company, it is possible to generate aggregate data on the participants (mean scores, range and variability of scores, and themes from open-ended comments). This can be done without disclosing individual results.
- The Bates ExPI™ will contain 90 items and 3 open-ended questions. Results will be reported by scale (15), by item, and by dimension (3). Mean ratings by rater group will be graphically represented. Several of the highest and lowest rated items as well as comments will be reported.

APPENDIX ONE

Figure 1. The Bates Model of Executive Presence

An overview of the Bates Model of Executive Presence is provided below. It is the first comprehensive, research-based model of executive presence, and it is the only such model to be operationalized in the form of an instrument intended for a senior executive population in an organizational setting.

The Bates ExPI™ multi-rater feedback survey measures self-perceptions of the leader and the perceptions that others have of him/her on all 15 facets of the Bates Model of Executive Presence. The Model was built based upon an extensive review of relevant areas of theory and empirical research, and it was further informed by in-depth interviews with practicing leaders and experienced executive development consultants (internal and external).

We also drew upon the input of an international panel of 10 independent Ph.D. level experts in executive assessment and development in selecting items for and finalizing the design of the Bates ExPI™. It is designed to be comprehensive and to measure the “right stuff.”

Dimensions of Executive Presence

| Facets of Behavior | Character — qualities that are fundamental to the leader as a person, to his/her identity, and give us reason to trust him/her. | Substance — cultivated qualities of mature leadership that inspire commitment, inform action, and lead to above-and-beyond effort. | Style — overt, skill-based patterns of communicative leadership that build motivation and that shape and sustain performance. |
|--------------------|--|---|---|
| | Authenticity — being real, genuine, transparent, and sincere in one's relations and interactions with others. | Practical Wisdom — displaying highly honed qualities of insight and judgment that get to the heart of issues and produce prudent decision. | Appearance — looking and acting like an able executive, adapting dress and demeanor to the situation, and handling social situations with tact. |
| | Integrity — acting with fidelity to one's values and beliefs, living up to high standards of morality, veracity, and promise keeping. | Confidence — being self-assured in decision-making and action; ready to accept the risk and responsibility for taking timely action. | Intentionality — clarifying direction and keeping actions aligned and on track, all without stifling dissent or neglecting needs to adjust course. |
| | Concern — demonstrating interest in others, encouraging adaptive development, and promoting a healthy sustainable culture. | Composure — proving to be steady in a crisis, able to calm and focus others, and to bring objectivity and perspective to critical decisions. | Inclusiveness — actively involving others, welcoming diverse points of view, encouraging ownership in mission, and empowering initiative. |
| | Restraint — displaying a calm disposition, characterized by reasonableness and by avoidance of emotional extremes or impulsiveness. | Resonance — connecting with others; attentive, attuned, and responsive to feelings, motivations, and thoughts; deepening alignment. | Interactivity — promoting an interpersonal style of dialog and timely exchange of information and questions to coordinate action. |
| | Humility — showing awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, an openness to others, and a belief that all persons have worth. | Vision — generating an inspiring, enterprise-wide picture of what could be; recognizing emerging trends, and engaging all in strategy. | Assertiveness — speaking up, valuing constructive conflict, and raising issues directly without shutting others down. |

APPENDIX TWO

Validation of the Bates ExPI™: Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's Alpha is the standard statistical measure of reliability for assessment scales. The evaluation of reliability is fundamental and important because it lets the user know whether the assessment tool in question can be counted on to produce the same results in repeated trials. It indicates that we can count on it to work consistency over time and across situations.

This measure of reliability was applied in analysis of the Bates ExPI™ Pilot Program data. Results indicate that the Bates ExPI™ is sound in its scale construction. This is encouraging to see because our model or "construct" of Executive Presence was deliberately designed to preserve the original complexity and nuanced nature of the phenomenon.

We took this approach to assessment design in order to maximize "content validity," that is, to measure as fully and completely as we could the phenomenon of Executive Presence. Just as one can drive up the value of the alpha statistic by writing highly redundant items, one can lower the statistic by developing items that reflect distinct aspects of the facet in question.

| Facet | Cronbach's Alpha ² | Description of Result |
|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Authenticity | .747 | Good |
| Integrity | .875 | Good |
| Concern | .823 | Good |
| Restraint | .846 | Good |
| Humility | .845 | Good |
| Practical Wisdom | .877 | Good |
| Confidence | .821 | Good |
| Composure | .849 | Good |
| Resonance | .823 | Good |
| Vision | .849 | Good |
| Appearance | .834 | Good |
| Intentionality | .815 | Good |
| Inclusiveness | .870 | Good |
| Interactivity | .803 | Good |
| Assertiveness | .789 | Good |

These results indicate that no elimination or change of items is necessary from a reliability standpoint. We can attribute this outcome to much more than good luck! Our research resulted in a model of Executive Presence that is based on decades of advances in understanding what contributes to success in business leadership, especially in times of change and challenge. Also, our use of an international expert panel (10 Ph.D. level experts in executive assessment and development) to winnow down a rather large pool of items to the few best items by Facet played a big role in our success.

² Very high alpha levels, e.g., over .95, are often regarded as undesirable because they can indicate redundancy.