

Leadership Presence *Checklists*

Checklists for challenging situations that The Leadership Style Center experts often see when working with their clients.

Diane Parente, Visual Presence

Karen Anderson Peters, M.A., Verbal Presence

Nancy Webb, Visual Communication



The Leadership Style Center
developing more effective leaders

415.686.2389 TheLeadershipStyleCenter.com

How to Get the Best Headshot

Diane Parente, *Visual Presence*

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. In the business world, it's your calling card. Leaders need a professional photograph for use in articles, on websites, directories, memberships, business cards and social media. People will recognize you by the photo you use in various media. These photos really say something about who you are—your headshot can reveal a distinct leadership look and presence.

Use this checklist to prepare for a photo that speaks well of you.

Appearance

- ☐ Wear clothing that contrasts with your skin. White is never good on camera.
- ☐ Wear solids or textures. Bold patterns are distracting in photos.
- ☐ Wear a simple neckline, jacket or shirt, making sure all lies flat and doesn't appear rumpled.
- ☐ Neat and understated hairstyles create the best impression.
- ☐ Keep jewelry to a minimum, and avoid highly reflective metals.
- ☐ For women: Wear natural looking makeup, but apply it somewhat more heavily than normal. Camera light tends to wash out your coloring. A make-up artist can be invaluable for this.
- ☐ For men: Make sure your shirt collar fits—you want it to fit snugly without constricting. Slide two fingers between the closed collar and your neck. If the two fingers fit, the shirt collar is right for you.

Facial Expression and Body Language

- ☐ Have a relaxed, engaged look.
- ☐ Show some teeth in a sincere smile.
- ☐ Look directly into the camera. Avoid appearing shy or timid.
- ☐ Position your head facing forward, engaging the viewer.

Technical Considerations

- ☐ Schedule your photo shoot for mid-morning. This avoids the look of early morning puffiness or afternoon fatigue.
- ☐ Make sure you're well lit, without distracting or unflattering shadows. A professional studio is valuable for high quality lighting.
- ☐ Be sure to get both a high-resolution and a low-resolution version of your photo(s)—high-res for print and larger format use, and low-res for on-line (screen) use.

Making Meetings Run Smoothly

Karen Anderson Peters, *Verbal Presence*

Have you ever had the responsibility of leading a meeting, and realized only when you were well into it that it wasn't going as expected? There is no foolproof formula for running a perfect meeting, but taking a few minutes to plan how you can facilitate the process will maximize everyone's contributions and increase your chance of success.

Use this checklist to make your meetings run more smoothly and efficiently.

Before the meeting

- ☐ Set a clear agenda for yourself and the primary objectives you want to accomplish.
- ☐ Using a worksheet, identify your objective, then work *backwards* to identify the steps and/or prerequisites needed to move toward your objective.
- ☐ Review this list in reverse, i.e.: read aloud *forewords* to pinpoint gaps in the flow of presentation. Note the gaps and address them verbally in the meeting.
- ☐ Prepare a printed agenda—even if you use PowerPoint. Identify only the main topics, leaving space for note-taking. This lets everyone do a quick scan to get a sense of the goals, and serves to keep the discussion on track.

During the meeting

- ☐ Begin the meeting, whether it's a formal meeting or an informal brainstorming, by positively greeting each person. Acknowledging people individually sets the tone that you value them.
- ☐ Don't assume that everyone knows, remembers, or understands every item in your agenda, even if they're supposed to. Ask "check in" questions along the way to be sure everyone is "on the same page."
- ☐ If you're concerned that certain participants always sit together and can easily distract each other with side comments, try name cards, seating them next to someone who they usually don't sit next to. Halfway through the meeting, you might take a brief break and switch the seating arrangement. Do this exercise lightly.
- ☐ If you know that some people have good suggestions but are often reluctant to "jump in," ask them what they think—looking directly at them so others know not to talk but to listen.
- ☐ Make notes about process during and after the meeting so you can track where the successes and glitches occur.

Optimizing Your Emails

Nancy Webb, *Visual Communication*

The visual aspect of our written messages are most overlooked when writing emails. Because we're all inundated with email every day, you could argue that this is where it is most necessary. Just as you need to quickly and easily extract pertinent information from emails you receive, as a leader you must provide that same opportunity to the people who receive your emails.

Use this checklist to get your emails read, understood, and acted upon.

Organize and Format for Scannability

- ☐ Organize your content with the most important information first. If you require important action to be taken, consider placing it near the top of the email.
- ☐ Announce the organization of your content early in your email (e.g.: sequence information by team-member, scheduling priority, etc.). This helps people to quickly zero in on information relevant to their situation.
- ☐ Visually reveal the organization of your content by using bolded or colored subheads to alert your reader to categories of information.
- ☐ Avoid overwhelming your reader with text—break it into short paragraphs.
- ☐ Insert a blank line between paragraphs. White space makes quick scanning easier.
- ☐ Use lists. Almost everyone will scan a list before reading a paragraph.
- ☐ Reserve any text color for headings and subheads. Use your company's colors, if possible.
- ☐ Keep your body text black. This is the easiest to read quickly (and remember longer).
- ☐ Use bold to highlight key points, but avoid having your email become distractingly busy.

Differentiators

- ☐ Use your company's branding to add credibility and clout to your message. At a minimum use the logo and colors in your signature block.
- ☐ Include your email address in your signature block if you desire a reply. Some software in corporate settings strips "From" information from emails.
- ☐ When sending carefully designed or formatted attachments, use a PDF version of the document—so you don't lose the look-and-feel when it arrives at the other end. Different software, typefaces, or even different versions of the same software can wreak havoc on the appearance of a document, making it difficult or even impossible to decipher.