

Balancing Authority and Approachability

Positive Behaviors

Authority

To cultivate an authoritative image . . .

- Take up space
- Maintain strong eye contact
- Keep head and shoulders level
- Be still
- Use strong volume and resonance
- Use downward inflections

Approachability

To cultivate an approachable image . . .

- Maintain strong eye contact
- Use fluid, interactive gestures
- Use fluid, interactive facial expressions
- Use a wide range of vocal variety
- Elicit a response verbally and nonverbally

Negative Behaviors

Authority

Signals that can lead to a “too authoritative” image:

- Emphatic gestures (hands or head)
- Sharp vocal attack on words
- Asymmetrical posture (chin up, leaning in, looking out the corner of the eye)
- Lack of facial fluidity (poker face or locked-on smile)
- Lack of vocal variety
- Poor attentive listening skills
- Lack of eye contact while listening
- Tendency to interrupt

Approachability

Signals that can lead to a “too approachable” image:

- Excessive smiling (or “tailwagging”)
- Weak posture (rounded spine or shoulders, chin down, head tilted, small stance)
- Excessive head movement (bobbing or nodding)
- Weak volume or breath support
- Soft vocal approach on words
- Verbal hedges (apologies and fillers)
- Misplaced upward inflections
- Lack of eye contact while speaking
- Conceding too quickly when interrupted