

# Case Study: Breaking Through to the C-Suite

## How Executive Coaching Helped a Senior Leader Develop Executive Presence and Land Her Dream Role

### The Challenge

A highly accomplished senior leader reached out to me at a pivotal moment in her career. Despite her proven track record of delivering results and her deep expertise in her field, she found herself repeatedly passed over for C-suite opportunities. While her technical competence was never in question, she sensed there was something intangible holding her back from making that final leap to executive leadership.

The frustration was mounting. She had the credentials, the experience, and the strategic mindset, yet she couldn't seem to break through to the highest levels of leadership. She knew she needed an objective assessment to identify what was missing and a strategic approach to address it.

### The Approach

Rather than making assumptions about what might be holding her back, we began with a comprehensive 360-degree feedback assessment that would provide crystal-clear insights into how she was perceived across all levels of the organization.

**360-Degree Assessment:** We conducted in-depth interviews with:

- Peers at her current level
- Senior leaders above her
- Key stakeholders across departments
- Direct reports on her team
- Decision makers involved in C-suite selections

**The Revelation:** The feedback revealed a consistent theme: while she was universally respected for her competence and results, there was a gap in her executive presence. Specifically, stakeholders noted challenges with:

- The timing and delivery of her communications
- Her ability to build relatability with diverse audiences
- Her influence skills in high-stakes situations

**The Coaching Strategy:** Armed with this specific feedback, we developed a targeted 6-month coaching plan focused on executive presence development, with real-time application and refinement.

### The Transformation Process

Our coaching engagement was designed to create sustainable change through awareness, mindset shifts, and skill development in authentic leadership settings.

**Phase 1: Building Awareness (Months 1-2)** We worked together to help her understand how her current communication style and approach were being perceived. Through detailed feedback analysis and self-reflection exercises, she gained clarity on the specific adjustments needed.

**Phase 2: Mindset and Strategy Shifts (Months 3-4)** We focused on developing her understanding of executive presence as a strategic tool for influence. This included:

- Reframing her relationship with authority and leadership
- Understanding audience psychology and stakeholder motivations
- Developing her authentic leadership voice

**Phase 3: Real-Time Application (Months 4-6)** The most powerful aspect of our coaching was the real-time observation and feedback. I observed her in:

- Executive team meetings
- Board presentations
- High-stakes stakeholder conversations
- Strategic decision-making sessions

This allowed us to make immediate adjustments to her approach, timing, and delivery style.

#### **Key Development Areas:**

- **Relatability:** Learning to connect with diverse audiences by adapting her communication style while maintaining authenticity
- **Timing:** Developing intuition for when and how to present data, decisions, and requests for maximum impact
- **Influence:** Building skills to guide conversations and decisions through strategic positioning rather than force

#### **The Strategic Execution**

Beyond skill development, we created a comprehensive promotion strategy that positioned her for C-suite success.

**Success Markers:** We established clear, measurable indicators of progress:

- Increased positive feedback from stakeholders
- Greater inclusion in strategic conversations
- Enhanced visibility with decision makers
- Improved outcomes in high-stakes presentations

**Strategic Roadmap:** We developed a systematic approach to her promotion pursuit:

- Identification of target C-suite opportunities
- Relationship mapping with key decision makers
- Strategic positioning and visibility initiatives
- Preparation for executive interviews and presentations

**Momentum Sustainability:** We created systems to ensure her continued growth:

- Regular self-assessment protocols
- Ongoing stakeholder feedback mechanisms
- Continuous refinement of her executive presence skills

## **The Results**

The transformation was both dramatic and sustainable. Within the 6-month coaching period, the changes in her executive presence were visible across the organization.

### **Immediate Impact:**

- Stakeholder feedback showed marked improvement in her perceived leadership presence
- She was invited to participate in more strategic initiatives
- Her influence in meetings and presentations increased significantly
- Decision makers began viewing her as a natural fit for C-suite roles

### **Career Achievement:**

- Successfully landed a C-suite position with a leading organization
- Negotiated a compensation package that reflected her enhanced value
- Positioned herself as a sought-after executive leader in her industry

### **Personal Growth:**

- Developed authentic confidence in her executive presence
- Gained clarity on her unique leadership style and strengths
- Built sustainable systems for continued growth and influence

## **Key Takeaways**

This case demonstrates that even the most accomplished professionals can benefit from targeted coaching to unlock their full potential. The gap between senior leadership and C-suite roles often comes down to executive presence—the ability to influence, relate, and communicate in ways that inspire confidence and drive results.

The combination of comprehensive 360-degree feedback, real-time coaching in authentic settings, and strategic positioning created a powerful transformation that not only landed her the C-suite role she desired but positioned her for continued success at the highest levels of leadership.

Most importantly, this engagement shows the value of investing in executive presence development as a strategic career move. The skills and awareness gained through this coaching process will serve her throughout her executive career, making this a transformational investment in her long-term success.