

The Five Ps of Presence: Developing Your Influence and Impact

Purpose, Preparation, Practice,
Perseverance, Partnership

Praesta is an international partnership of business coaches. We support senior leaders, including CEOs, main board directors, leadership team members, other key senior executives and emerging leaders through Executive Coaching, Team Coaching and Board Performance Reviews. We are leaders in working with executive women and job-sharers.

All Praesta coaches have had senior level careers in business or government and combine this deep experience with rigorous professional coaching practice and professional development.

Three core values are fundamental to everything we do:

Insightful

Broadening perspective, fostering creativity and finding clarity

Excelling

Igniting client confidence to excel now and into the future

Uplifting

Enabling those we work with to be confident, authentic and encouraged in their leadership

Praesta Insights draw together ideas and experience on topical leadership issues in an accessible and digestible way.

Praesta coaches Una O'Brien and Peter Shaw are the joint authors of 'The Five Ps of Presence'.

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Purpose, Preparation, Practice, Perseverance and Partnership

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Introduction

'What can I do to make my presence felt?' is a recurring question in our coaching conversations. Leaders and aspiring leaders wanting momentum and tangible results often look to develop a more influential presence at work. They can however face a conundrum: how to increase personal and professional impact whilst avoiding pitfalls such as missing the mark or evoking overly negative reactions.

This booklet is about developing and deploying your presence to gain momentum and make a positive, sustained difference. We bring together reflections and ideas from our direct experience of working with aspiring and senior leaders. We also share insights from a wide cross-section of influential leaders who generously contributed to our research for this publication.

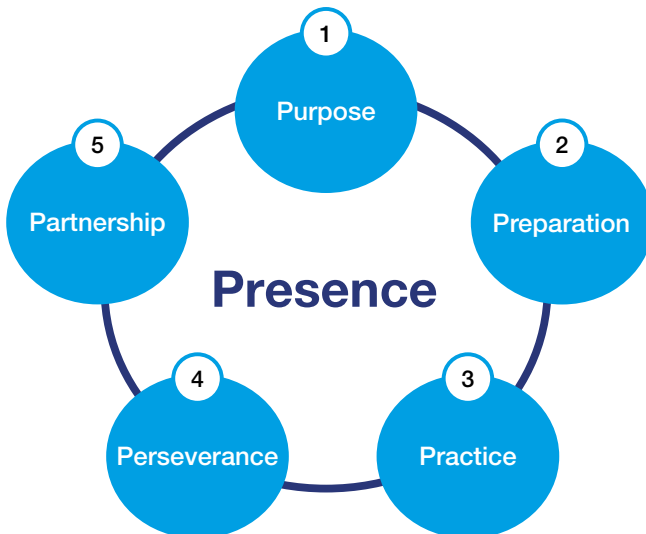
Working with women and men from diverse backgrounds, age ranges, ethnicities and nationalities, we appreciate there can be both subtle and

overt differences in the way presence is experienced and perceived. This understanding has shaped our thinking and we offer an invitation for you to draw from whatever of these insights may be relevant or useful to you, depending on your background, context or contemporary work challenges.

Our aim is to offer practical suggestions along with questions for reflection and encouragement for new thinking. This booklet is a companion for self-reflection. You may also find it useful to identify a friend or trusted other person who can be a sounding board and support along the way.

Our thesis is that presence that brings traction and momentum involves thinking and acting intentionally in five domains:

- **Purpose**
- **Preparation**
- **Practice**
- **Perseverance and**
- **Partnership**



Whatever your work-setting, formal or informal, virtual or in-person, paying attention to these five domains can help build a stronger presence.

In practical terms, with the new realities of hybrid and flexible working, it's increasingly important to be mindful that an effective presence in one setting, for example when working together in-person during a strategy session, does not readily translate into a virtual setting, especially when handling more transactional type activity. The same is true in reverse.

Equally 'stage presence' when presenting to a large audience, or 'attentive presence' at a formal meeting, will be different from the type of presence that works best when speaking 1-1 with a colleague, or when engaging with the wider team whether in person, virtually or via email exchanges. Such differing contexts and new workplace realities call for deeper self-awareness and the agility to adapt how our presence is expressed, and thus experienced by, others.

Why does this matter? You are in your role for a reason and you have something important to 'bring to the table'. By contributing more effectively through a stronger presence your days will likely be more satisfying and, as Marianne Williamson famously wrote, "...as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same". (From the poem 'Our Deepest Fear' 1992)

In Part Three, we set out in more detail how the Five Ps approach can help you to develop your presence; we start however with some important scene-setting about what is presence (Part One) and planning and pitfalls (Part Two).

Part One - Presence: what is it?

“When fully present, we are more attuned to those around us and to the needs of the situation and we fluidly adapt to what is needed – in other words we are in flow.”

- Daniel Goleman

People who develop an influential presence, as observed in our coaching conversations, exhibit a combination of behaviours. They

- listen with openness and curiosity
- focus on key issues
- are selective and deliberate in how they intervene
- shape expectations and outcomes
- build alliances and followers
- communicate in ways that ensure their voice is heard
- seek regular feedback and keep refining and adapting their approach
- are good at managing their emotions in the moment

Presence develops over time

There may be moments when a single intervention can change the direction of decisions or debate. Often the kind of presence that leads to making a sustained difference happens where an individual helps shape an approach over time through bringing consistent and thoughtful contributions.

When a colleague enters a room, or an email dialogue, they bring their reputation with them. Do they live their values? Are they trusted? Do they deliver on their promises? What is the shadow they cast? Are they someone who can take on board

the contributions of others and unlock a way forward? Can they contribute a broad perspective? Where an individual is recognised as bringing longer term and strategic perspectives, their influence encourages others in that engagement to move naturally into that space.

‘For me presence means a genuine and open-minded engagement with the issue at hand. To listen to others and allow myself to be influenced by their thoughts and views...’

– Leader, national charity

Someone’s presence, mostly unintentionally, can also bring negativity, weariness and gloom to people around them. Leaders especially need to be aware of how observed they are, since a sound reputation built up over many months can all too easily be lost. A negative presence shows up visibly in demeanour and body language, or in curt comments, especially when someone is over-tired or under stress.

Negative presence can also come through in the choice of focus in meetings or email exchanges. For example, a person who is perceived as pandering to the current fashionable trends and is habitually preoccupied with the short term can tend to bias discussion to the tactical and close out important contributions from others. The result? Short-term ‘gain’ perhaps but diminishing effectiveness and impact over time.

Building a presence that brings positive outcomes therefore depends on an approach that embraces inclusivity, drawing on shared purposes and values.

It also depends on clarity, consistency and challenge.

'I often get informal feedback from people after (or even during) meetings that I have made a good point or that they were grateful for my contribution, or indeed that I've said something they were worried about raising themselves. That is my assessment of whether I am making the right impact.'

– Deputy Director, Civil Service

Once a reputation is established someone's presence will have an impact that cascades in ways they might not anticipate, for good or ill, so it is important to continue to pay attention to minimising the gap between 'the impact you intended and how you were actually experienced by others.'

Thinking of a colleague with presence, how did they get to that point?

Let's imagine Alex, a project team leader who's widely seen as professional and self-confident. Consistently, she turns up well prepared and contributes effectively making timely interventions that move things on. She has a way of listening and taking on board others' contributions making colleagues feel valued and involved. Even when Alex isn't directly working on a particular project, her input is sought because of her knowledge, judgement and thoughtful approach. She is regularly called on to make presentations to clients and to meet significant stakeholders. And in a tricky situation, Alex's calm bearing means she's one of the first people others turn to for help.

But it wasn't always this way. There was a time when Alex said little in meetings and often seemed distracted. Sometimes she didn't show up on time, she wasn't always prepared and, while her contributions outside of meetings were often good, they were a bit too rambling and inconsistent to be relied upon. In effect Alex, while valued, did not have an influential presence.

What changed? Alex worked on two levels. Looking within herself, with support from others, she became more aware of her behaviour and impact on others. She started to prepare better, paying more attention to where others are coming from, and contributing with greater focus and clarity. As her performance improved, so did Alex's self-belief. Alex became more open in showing commitment not only to her own projects but also to those of colleagues. In short, Alex worked both internally on her hopes and doubts and externally on practical changes in the way she interacted with colleagues and showed up at work.

Part Two: Planning and pitfalls

When working out where your presence is needed it is tempting to start with filling your days with meetings. Yet a packed diary will rarely be enough to amplify your impact. Discerning your purpose, focusing your effort and being clear about 'why' will help to shape priorities.

Key questions for self-reflection and maybe a conversation with a trusted friend or colleague can include:

- What are my responsibilities to myself and others?
- What does the organisation need me to say?
- What will go missing if I do not contribute?
- How do the dynamics around me constrain me or provide openings?
- How can I use my presence and influence to draw others in so they are able to contribute more?

The next stage is to think about turning these insights into practical application and to consider the 'who' and the 'how'.

With whom do I need to 'up my influence'?

- With team members or managers
- With colleagues across my part of the business
- With others across the wider organisation
- Across a broader system, supply-chain or sector
- With external parties, sponsors, owners, stakeholders and customers

Depending on context, the priority

could be your immediate team or individuals elsewhere within or outside the organisation whose involvement might be crucial to your goals.

How can I best demonstrate and exert my presence?

- In one-on-one conversations in person or virtually
- In emails or WhatsApp exchanges
- During set-piece regular catch-ups and project meetings
- In a forthcoming workshop or away-day
- At the next and subsequent team or group meetings
- At webinars, conferences and wider events

This could be as straightforward as making more use of openings already in the diary, like set-piece weekly team meetings where you might look to increase or change the quality of your contribution. Or, if external influence is a priority, you might want to be more proactive in generating or responding to opportunities to meet and speak with others. Short interventions can help set up the right expectations for subsequent conversations.

What can hold you back?

There's real value in reflecting on what can hold you back by asking yourself the following:

What beliefs do I have about myself...

- Are my internal hopes and hesitations distorting what I judge is possible?
- Is there an element of self-doubt arising from lack of affirmation and/or lack of backing and sponsorship?
- Might I not fully believe in or use the authority that comes with the role?

What fears or risks might be in my way...

- Does a fear of getting it wrong sometimes inhibit me unnecessarily?
- Is there a feeling that I cannot show vulnerability and must know all the answers?
- Do I feel unsafe and not able to speak freely?
- What is the risk that I am trying too hard and need to be a bit more relaxed or philosophical about the outcome?

What beliefs or assumptions do I have about others...

- Might I be missing some of the dynamics or undercurrents that are going on in the room?
- Are others' expectations of me weighing me down unnecessarily?

Pitfalls to watch out for

Potential pitfalls can result from how you perceive yourself or react to how others perceive or behave towards you. We observe the following as pitfalls that can undermine developing a more effective presence.

On how you perceive yourself or react...

- Believing too much in your own rhetoric
- Wanting to be the rescuer or the hero
- Allowing yourself to become over-tired
- Over exerting yourself; talking too loudly or quickly
- Allowing disappointment in yourself or others to erode motivation
- Being readily distracted
- Allowing yourself to become too deferential or even fearful towards those in positions of authority

On how others perceive you or behave...

- Being viewed as out of touch
- Being seen as too pushy
- Over deference to your role or positional authority
- Different perspectives escalating into disagreement and discord
- The use of manipulative approaches by others, e.g. people creating challenging situations so they can be seen as fixing the issues

Some points for reflection:

- What pitfalls might I be at risk of falling into?
- What helps me spot and avoid a pitfall?
- Who do I trust to give me forewarning of when I might succumb to a pitfall?

Part Three: The Five Ps of Presence

“Cultivating the power of presence comes from creating the space to observe one’s mind and one’s self.”

– Dee Waldeck

Our thesis is that for anyone to build their presence, attending to how they *feel on the ‘inside’* is just as important as thinking about what they *do on the ‘outside’*, namely what is done in practice. In this part, we invite you to consider questions and encouragement for reflection along with ideas for practical steps you might take to adapt your behaviour and how you act at work and across your broader networks.

Achieving presence that brings traction and momentum involves thinking and acting intentionally in five domains of Purpose, Preparation, Practice, Perseverance, and Partnership.

Purpose: What are the outcomes you want to see?

Having a sense of purpose, a ‘north-star’ is all about bringing meaning to your life and to your work. A credible presence develops from the inside out, so being clear in your own mind about the outcomes that truly matter to you personally, as well as professionally, affect how you act and what you say.

‘How do you bring purpose to this phase of life?’ Key questions to ask yourself might include:

- What is the contribution or impact I most want to make in life?
- Which of my values do I want to prioritise in the next stages of my life?
- What are the challenges or issues facing my community/my organisation/my country that I care about and would like to be involved with?
- What activities energise and motivate me?
- What needs to be in place to ensure I feel a renewed sense of commitment and energy?

‘I drive my presence very much out of my values....I think I have a strong positive presence when I am being authentic and talking about things that excite or resonate with me.’

– Higher Education Senior Leader

Settling on a meaningful purpose entails getting the right balance between idealism and pragmatism. A strong purpose will have sufficient stretch to be motivating, yet not be so unrealistic as to offer little prospect of change or progress.

Steps going forward could include:

- Seek out alignment between your own guiding purpose and the stated purpose of your organisation and/or profession
- Use a time-out with your team to make space to discuss and share individual and collective views on purpose
- Consider when and how to re-fresh your team’s purpose and how together you contribute to wider outcomes
- Set a positive tone in maintaining your own motivation and that of others

- Take stock periodically; the world is always changing and a new context may call for a shift in the way you think and act with purpose

Preparation: taking time to prepare

Preparation is often the first thing to go when time is tight and yet frequently, we hear from clients that making space to do the groundwork before a meeting, presentation or important interaction pays dividends. 'Winging it', aiming to get by with no preparation at all, is sometimes inevitable but it rarely works as a longer-term approach, especially when aiming to build your influence.

Reading the context is key; preparation for one meeting for example might call for hours of detailed thought and rehearsal. For another maybe just five minutes' reflection about the key point you want to make is all that is needed. Being well prepared can significantly enhance your confidence when it comes to reading the room and judging when best to contribute.

Questions to ask yourself about the best way of preparing can include:

- What type of preparation has worked well for me in the past and how might that be useful to me in the future?
- What do I need to do beforehand to show up for a conversation or a meeting being, looking and feeling fully engaged?
- Who will be 'in the room'; who is in my audience?
- Is there someone around whom I am at risk of feeling overawed by which might mean I am too deferential to their perspective?

- With only 10 minutes preparation time what might I best focus on?
- How do I influence how much time is spent on different items within a conversation or meeting?
- What are the predictable contributions that I need to be prepared for?

'When is my presence at its best? when I am prepared for the discussion or event, secure in my role and expectations of others... Where I have done my research on the purpose of the event as well as on the attendees to understand what their backgrounds are and what they might want to get out of it. Also being well rested... ensuring that I am focused and calm before I start.'

– Independent Policy Consultant

Steps going forward could include using a prep checklist. Below is an example of one that could be used for a meeting be it in person or virtual. It could easily be adapted for a presentation or an important 1-1 conversation:

- What is the key outcome needed?
- In what frame of mind are others entering the room?
- What energy is needed from me in this interaction?
- What facial expression or tone of voice am I going to be bringing?
- How am I going to pace my contribution?
- How do I ensure there is clarity about next steps for myself and others?
- Am I likely to need to summarise the way forward at the end or is that a matter for others?

'My presence is at its best when I am prepared. Both in terms of feeling like I know the content of the meeting well, but also having thought about how and when I want to play a role in the meeting to get the best outcome.'

– Director of Strategy, Third Sector

When participating in virtual meetings we observe that an influential presence is enabled by:

- Tuning in on time
- Being fully present and having the camera on
- Bringing in personal anecdotes but not overdoing it
- Potentially continuing on-line for brief conversations with some participants after the main meeting has ended
- Using the chat function openly and intentionally as a supplement to the meeting's purpose; for example, sharing a link to a relevant article or podcast or affirming the contribution of a colleague
- Avoiding holding in-parallel conversations (such as via WhatsApp and texting) causing distraction and at worst undermining trust
- Recognising when the best chance of reaching an agreement on a complex topic may well be in a face-to-face meeting
- Creating where possible opportunities to have follow up one-to-one informal conversations either virtually or in person

Practice: drawing on your wider experience

Two possible approaches are learning from activity outside work and developing a coaching mindset.

Learning from activity outside work:

We regularly explore with clients how they bring their presence to bear in engagements during their time outside work. Often this reveals qualities that are less evident at work. A relatively quiet team member might be an inspirational football coach. A parent might be brilliant at cajoling an unwilling youngster to do an activity against their will. A junior colleague's role as a volunteer mediator might reveal previously un-noticed negotiating skills.

We all already have valuable experience to draw on when thinking about how to increase our impact and influence at work.

Home and community activity can be a great 'training ground' to try out new behaviours or approaches in improving our presence. Hence the value of reflecting on:

- In what contexts outside work am I influential and what enables me to bring a distinctive presence in those contexts?
- What can I be practising in engagements outside work that I can draw into my approach at work?

Using a coaching mindset:

A coaching approach can help you to 'stand on the balcony' and look with perspective and relative distance at what

needs to shift. Questions it can be helpful to ask of yourself include:

- How can I bring an external voice into a room when it is not present?
- What do I observe about how I am able to influence the pace in a conversation or meeting?
- What type of contributions keep the focus on the strategic rather than the tactical?
- What behaviours am I seeking to reinforce or normalise in my team or organisation?
- Do I recognise and admit when I've got it wrong?
- What do I observe in the way I handle uncomfortable conversations?

'I personally do not have much by way of physical presence, so I have concentrated on being completely on top of my subject, feeding back in a way that gets people nodding, and then extrapolating into the proposals that I am making. I listen first.'

– Business Leader

Steps going forward could be:

- What wider interest could I invest more time in and be deliberate in experimenting with different approaches that could be useful to the challenges I face at work?
- Who could I invite to give me feedback on what I do in an influential way in spheres outside work?
- Experimenting with trusting and deploying my intuitive reactions and emotional awareness more

- Experimenting with being two degrees bolder in my contributions than is my natural inclination
- Being alive to what voices are absent and needing to be heard and then taking action to widen inclusivity

Perseverance: Getting the timing right

"The best gift you can give to others is your presence. The best gift you can give to yourself is perseverance."

– Maxime Lagacé

Getting the balance right between patience and proactivity is a judgement we are all making throughout the day and probably our working lives. What we intend to do and how we then react in the moment may differ. Judging when to hold back and when to act takes lots of practice whether in writing, in meetings or even when participating in a webinar or on a panel.

Key questions to reflect on can include:

- Is my instinct to intervene too early or too late?
- What can I learn from those who seem to get the timing of their interventions right?
- When might a short contribution be more effective than a long speech?
- What types of steers, nudge or questions might unlock next steps?
- When can patience be an underrated virtue?
- How do you become comfortable with a reality that now is not the right time for a decision or action?

There are times when saying nothing is the right approach. Your influence might be coming from your role, reputation, or past contributions. Your presence can be felt without your uttering a word. Your body language will be being observed. Others may be trying to predict what is going on in your head. Some participants will be influenced by what you have contributed before, even though on this occasion you are silent.

'In a meeting, presence means demonstrating through your body language (not fiddling with your phone, ensuring you look at the people speaking) that you are fully engaged, and when you intervene, have thought carefully in advance about what contribution you want to make. But you can say nothing at all, and still have positive presence.'

– Leader, Higher Education

Steps going forward could be:

- Applying the 'rule of three' to focus the number of points you make in any intervention
- Experimenting with contributing at different points in a discussion
- Noting down during or after a meeting which three interventions from others were most influential
- Observing when repeated contributions on the same point become counter-productive
- Observing when your heart wants to intervene and your head wants to hold back, and be deliberate in prompting an internal dialogue between head and heart

- Accepting that there are times when it is better to withdraw gracefully rather than keep pressing your point

'One of the best examples of presence for me is those who challenge well. People who listen to others before making a point and reflect on what they have heard if they disagree.'

– Deputy Director, Civil Service

Regaining your presence when things don't go to plan:

Inevitably there will be times during a conversation, a meeting or event when things don't go as expected and your presence is thrown. At these moments it's not so much the misstep that matters as how you're able to recover and re-gain your composure.

Taking a few gentle, deeper breaths and moving slightly, adjusting your chair or seated position can help to 'break the moment' of discord and re-focus your mind.

In a 2023 article for Harvard Business Review, experienced psychologist and meditation teacher Anke Thiele, takes this approach further. She has developed and named the 'Inner Presence' framework, based on mindfulness, to help leaders better regulate their emotions when they are thrown off-kilter. Her research shows how it is possible to manage our reactions when under stress, access our 'inner presence' and re-gain self-control. (A. Thiele, "How to regain your composure in stressful situations" Harvard Business Review, July 2023)

Partnership: Building a shared way forward

"It takes time to get to point where you are genuinely influential, and it comes from people seeing you being effective"

– CEO Third Sector

Change rarely results from the contribution of one individual. Any team to be successful requires all the players to work together to build a shared way forward. Using your presence to build alliances can ensure your influence is amplified through joint endeavour and complementary approaches.

Questions to ask yourself might include:

- Who has similar objectives?
- What previous alliances can I build on?
- Where might I have a problem with trust?
- What might be holding me back from forming stronger partnerships?
- How do I ensure I do not become a potential single point of failure?
- Who can I bring to the fore and help develop their contribution and presence?

'People with presence have an ability to make you feel like what you're saying or doing is important. They can carry a meeting or conversation when otherwise it would fizzle out. They can bring energy and clarity to discussions.'

– Director, Higher Education

Potential next steps might include:

- Consider how well and how clearly you communicate the underlying reasons for effective teamwork and/or new partnerships
- Look to build a clear acceptance of shared accountability
- Across your organisation, consider the opportunities for greater collaboration with teams in other directorates or departments
- Beyond your organisation's boundaries, consider openings for partnership and joint working that might help accelerate delivery of your objectives and wider purpose
- Put yourself in others' shoes: where you are already engaged in collaborative or partnership working, what more might be needed of your personal presence and contribution

Presence in Practice

This section looks at presence in practice for three leaders. They all exemplify the five P's of presence. Ann currently works in central government. Zina worked in local government before moving into the health sector. Sunil works in a professional services firm.

Ann Carter-Gray is responsible for the strategic management of the estate of a central government department. Decisions on office space are often contentious with emotions running high if people do not feel they have the space they need. Ann is always keen to ensure there is alignment of purpose with the different interests in the direction she sets on both improvements and the use of accommodation.

Ann ensures there is meticulous preparation and is very practiced in planning stakeholder engagement at all levels of the organisation, tailored to how different people are likely to respond. Perseverance is key when people are resistant to the changes her proposals bring. Ann is skilled at knowing who to build partnerships with when she is seeking to ensure acquiescence in a plan that is inevitably going to be disruptive in the short-term. Ann always seeks to describe the longer-term perspective and benefits to counter balance the short-term concerns she often has to contend with.

Ann describes her approach in the following way, 'I like people and enjoy making connections. I treat everyone the same and can be frank with people whilst seeking to be empathetic. I understand people's backgrounds and perspectives. I

recognise when I need to spend time with people to take them on a journey with me, so they see the benefit of what we are seeking to do'.

Ann's presence is built on the trust she establishes with people. Her desire is to bring a consistent level-headed, calm and reassuring presence, whilst ensuring the best possible use of the estate resources.

When **Zina Etheridge** was appointed as the CEO of an outer London borough, she was an outsider having spent much of her career in central government rather than local government. Zina could see clearly how the London local authority CEOs could be more influential as a group. She helped them clarify where they needed to have a voice and influence, thereby ensuring that the purpose of what they were seeking to do was clearer. Zina prepared carefully for the engagement with her new colleagues limiting the points she wanted to make and then putting them in a way that was very evidence-based.

Zina got into a rhythm of how best to influence her colleagues through practice and recognised when she needed to persevere and when was the right moment to back off. Zina quickly built a strong sense of partnership and moved from being an outsider to being the convenor of the CEOs. Her colleagues welcomed the wider perspective she brought and her understanding of both government and political engagement.

Zina combined clarity of thinking, precision in her oral and written contributions, alongside the ability to articulate clearly

the concerns of others. Her colleagues recognised that she was able to spot the dynamics in any situation and express a forward-looking view which others readily could align with. Zina has brought a similar influential presence into her current role as the CEO of an Integrated Care Board.

Zina knows the importance of continuous learning and recognises that she does not get it right every time. She seeks to constantly test, learn and adapt. She is deliberate in thinking about what approach, words, tone or incentives work best for the individual as well as for the collective intent.

Sunil Patel is the Chief Data Officer for a major, professional services partnership. He brings a wealth of experience having worked at senior levels in a variety of organisations. He has worked closely with people across the business to build a clear sense of purpose about the collection and use of data. He is deliberate in understanding the needs of different parts of the business in putting forward proposals.

Having built on this preparation, Sunil works carefully with different bits of the organisation to devise approaches that are going to be effective and sustainable. Perseverance is key when people are often focused on the immediate business needs rather than the long-term, best use of data. Sunil has been skilled at building partnership right across the business, including internationally. Sunil is often describing the longer-term opportunities and dilemmas about data analysis, usage, and the potential application of AI.

Sunil is quietly spoken and thoughtful. He understands where people are coming from and is able to keep his cool in any situation. Sunil draws on his cultural background in being deliberate, measured, clearheaded, calm and timely contributor. Sunil has built a high level of trust within his organisation and with external stakeholders which means that he is always listened to carefully.

Key to Sunil's presence is the trust he has established alongside his reputation for clear forward thinking. Sunil recognises that the impact of presence is often determined by how you 'show up', hence his intent is to be 100% present in any meeting or call.

Concluding reflection: Keep learning and bringing a longer-term view

“The quality of our presence is the most positive element that we can contribute to the world”

– Thich Nhat Hahn

We often invite the individuals we work with to reflect on how their perspectives have changed over time and how their presence is now different from how others might have experienced them in the past.

The enthusiasm of relative youth might have been tempered by experience. Pragmatism might hold sway more often. Or seniority might mean that an individual can hold more firmly onto values that are important to them and the organisation they work for.

On the other hand, it is helpful to remind yourself how you might have dealt with a situation when you were full of untarnished enthusiasm. It is always valuable to fully engage with how a younger and more idealistic you would handle a situation.

Suggestions for reflection about bringing a longer-term perspective include:

- What would the 21-year-old me have said and done in this situation?
- What would a wise experienced authoritative leader have said and done in this situation?
- What has life experience taught me about when to speak, when to compromise and when to ‘bide my time’?

- If I do not bring my presence to bear on the current issue how much could that matter over the longer term?
- What is my next step in developing an influential presence over the next six months?

We hope this Insight booklet has prompted you to reflect on where you can develop your presence. Immediately after this page is a prompt sheet with a set of questions which might be useful to consider as an individual or with a team.

Adding to your repertoire is a lifelong endeavour. Be ready to be surprised about the contribution you can make and the presence which you bring.

Prompt sheet for individual self-reflection or a coaching conversation on the Five Ps

Purpose

1. What is my organisation aiming to achieve and what is my purpose in this context?
 2. How can my purpose help me to bring positive energy to this moment?
-

Preparation

3. Who do I want to engage with and what is the outcome I am aiming for?
 4. How is the way I prepare for engagements changing?
-

Practice

5. What am I learning about my presence and impact?
 6. What approaches do I want to practise?
-

Perseverance

7. How do I decide when I need to keep going?
 8. When should I step back and wait for the right moment to engage?
-

Partnership

9. How might I enable others to enhance their presence and impact?
 10. What wider alliances could amplify and extend our collective impact?
-

Next Steps

11. What can hold me back from being at my best that is within my control?
12. How do I ensure that I keep avoiding pitfalls and embedding my experience?



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This publication was developed and written by Praesta coaches, Peter Shaw and Una O'Brien. Both Peter and Una draw on extensive experience of coaching aspiring and senior leaders in the private, public and third sectors.

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Una's career is in public service; she held a wide range of senior leadership roles within the UK Civil Service and the NHS. Between 2010 and 2016 she was Permanent Secretary at the Department for Health and Social Care. Today, Una specialises in coaching senior leaders within government departments, regulators, the wider public service and not for profit sectors. Una is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Government; a trustee of the Lloyds Register Foundation and on the Board of the Ashmolean Museum.

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Booklets available for download from the Praesta website

www.praesta.co.uk

Leading through Turbulent Change,

Hilary Douglas and Peter Shaw

(Praesta, 2023)

Stepping up: Leading with Confidence,

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Louise Sheppard and Jane Upton

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Four Vs of Leadership: Vision, values, value-added, and vitality

Peter Shaw (Praesta, 2019)

What Value do Senior Women and their Organisations get from Coaching?

Hilary Douglas, Janet Rubin and Louise Sheppard (Praesta 2019)

Job-sharing: A model for the future workplace?

Hilary Douglas and Peter Shaw

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The Resilient Team,

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Knowing the Score: what we can learn about leadership from music and musicians,

Peter Shaw and Ken Thomson

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