The “B” Word for Leaders:  
**Balancing** Strength & Style to Communicate Effectively

7 Steps to Balancing Strength and Style Toward Strategic Assertiveness

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**Step 1: Self Awareness:** Everything we do or don't do, say or don't say sends a message. Awareness about how you look, sound, and behave helps ensure the message is heard accurately.

**Step 2: Executive Presence:** Leaders with executive presence command the attention of others, exude confidence, remain composed even under stress, and inspire others to follow. Achieving executive presence requires strategic decisions about how you look, speak, and behave.

**Step 3: Emotional Intelligence (EI):** Balancing strength and style requires awareness of one’s own emotions and others’ emotions to adjust your message and style. Followers trust messages from leaders who understand them, touch them in a personal way, and empathize.

**Step 4: Listening Skills:** Effective listening helps you gain data to shape the message and develop rapport. Balance requires: being present, using eye contact, avoiding distractors, asking questions, using reflective listening techniques, discovering what is not being said or done, and avoiding judgment and assumptions while listening.

**Step 5: When to Communicate:** While technology allows you to communicate anywhere and any time, late night email reflects poor self-control and lack of concern for others. Balance requires strategic decisions about when to communicate and reasonable boundaries.

**Step 6: How to Communicate:** Whether you communicate in person, by telephone, or by email sends a message. Balance requires a leader to match the medium to the message and avoid flame mail.

**Step 7: Content:** Tailor the message to the audience; what do you want them to know, feel, or believe? For strong messages consider: a headline, three supporting points, and inclusive language. Disagree without being disagreeable by: reflective listening techniques, beginning with points of agreement, acknowledging others’ views, avoiding “I” statements, and framing messages around group goals and benefits.

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