

Executive Presence & Board Communication

When Domain Expertise Misses the Mark with the Board

Tagline: *Technical Depth, Communication Gap*

BetterGround Advisory | Case Study

AT A GLANCE

A global cybersecurity leader develops board-ready communication skills, earning industry recognition for executive effectiveness.

The Leader

The Global Head of Cybersecurity and Privacy at a Fortune 500 professional services firm oversees information security strategy, risk management, and regulatory compliance for an organization with over \$3 billion in annual revenue.

Like many technical leaders who ascend to executive roles, this leader possessed deep domain expertise and strong operational capabilities. The challenge was translating that expertise into the kind of executive presence that earns trust at the board level.

The Challenge

Board presentations are high-stakes moments for any executive. For a cybersecurity leader, they are especially challenging: the topics are technical, the risks are significant, and board members often have limited time and patience for complexity.

This leader was losing credibility with key decision makers every quarter. Board presentations ran long, often getting compressed when earlier agenda items ran over. Technical depth obscured key messages. Pacing and number of slides meant this client rarely covered everything during the time allotted.

The goal was not to become a different kind of leader; it was to demonstrate mastery of the material through simplifying the approach, especially in high-stakes moments.

The Approach

The goal was not to turn a technical leader into a perfect presenter. It was to let deep expertise come through clearly in high-stakes moments. That meant building confidence, simplifying slides to leave room for conversation, and ensuring the most important information was upfront.

We practiced on real materials before real meetings, raising the intensity when the stakes were low so game time would feel more normal. Practice sessions before board meetings allowed the leader to present actual materials, receiving real-time feedback on content, delivery, pacing, and presence. We reinforced existing strengths (humility) while addressing specific gaps (confidence, rhythm). In the simplest terms, we worked on how to think about what the board needs versus what a cybersecurity expert instinctively wants to share.

A guiding principle emerged: **"If you're given 15 minutes, finish in 10-12."** This was not about rushing—it was about earning a reputation as a leader who respects others' time, gets to the point, and demonstrates command of the most important issues through using simple language anyone can understand.

The Results

The leader **earned industry recognition for excellence in board communication**—specifically named to the Top Global CISOs list by Cyber Defense Magazine for success in communicating with boards and senior executives, building risk mitigation programs, and leading information security strategy.

Beyond external recognition, the real measure of success is sustainable change. The client's tighter messaging, confident delivery, and respect for the audience's time compounded with each presentation. Board feedback shifted from tolerance to engagement and their questions became conversations rather than challenges.

The Takeaway: Technical excellence gets you to the executive table. Communication skills determine what happens once you're there.

Engagement Overview

Client: Fortune 500 Professional Services (Global Cybersecurity Leader)
Duration: 6 months
Capabilities: Executive Coaching | Skill Development | Board Communication | Executive Presence

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