

# The Introverted Leader

What kind of professionals would you bet on to get promotions first — introverts or extroverts?

Introverts would probably say it's their extroverted rivals who get the good management positions. More than 40% of introverts surveyed by Jennifer Kahnweiler, author of *The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength* (Berrett-Koehler, 2009), say they would like to change their tendencies. But, does it actually matter? Not really, say experts. Introverts can be just as effective as extroverts in management positions.

## Making Changes

Kahnweiler suggests "4 P's" for introverted professionals who want to change their "natural" approach:

- **Preparation** — devise game plans;
- **Presence** — focus on the moment;
- **Push** — stretch and grow;
- **Practice** — rehearse and refine skills.

## Tips for Personal Success

Maureen Metcalf of Metcalf Associates, a management consulting firm in Columbus, OH, says she's an introvert who has built a successful career as a consultant, executive coach and part-time university professor. Some of the techniques she's used include:

**CLARIFYING INTENT BEFORE MEETING WITH OTHERS** "Because I'm more comfortable letting others take the lead, this helps me decide when I should step forward and when I should just listen."

**PREPARING FOR CONVERSATIONS** "Because I do not feel comfortable unless I'm highly versed on a topic, I'm likely to spend more time preparing for a discussion than others who are more comfortable winging it."

**TAKING ADVANTAGE OF QUIET TIME** "I'll take two minutes quiet time before going into a potentially intense meeting. As an introvert, quiet helps me prepare."

Maribeth Kuzmeski, author of *The Connectors* (Wiley, 2009), says most successful business people are those who connect well with others. However, she adds, "good connectors come in all personality types, including introverts." The key, she says, is connecting with feeling, purpose and honesty. She offers a few tips:

- Don't panic. There's no need to become best friends with every single person you meet.
- Create situations in which it is easier for you to connect. For instance, set up a one-on-one lunch at a quiet restaurant rather than a meeting in a big group.
- Remember it's not about you. Put others first. You need to ask: "What's in it for them?" not "What's in it for me?"

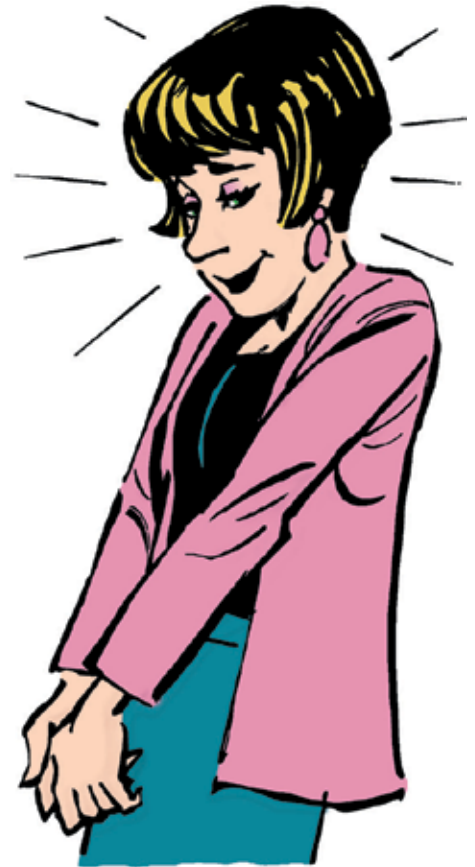
## The Role of Managers

Managers can help to ease introvert angst, says Marlene Caroselli, a corporate trainer in Pittsford, NY. For instance, she says, at the start of a staff meeting, a manager might say something such as, "I know some of you prefer to mull things over before expressing your ideas out loud. So, if you'd prefer to email me later with your ideas, that's fine." It's a stop-gap measure designed to increase the introvert's comfort level.

Greg Schinkel, president of Unique Training & Development, a consulting company in Ontario, Canada, shares the following tips with managers at the leadership training programs he conducts:

**PROVIDE TIME TO THINK** Introverts like to have time to process information instead of replying off the cuff, so give them something to think about and ask them for their ideas in a day or two. The wait is worth it, as introverts tend to think about things in greater depth.

**KEEP PRAISE LOW-KEY, SPECIFIC** Introverts are shy by nature and appreciate praise and recognition on an individual level, not in a group setting. General



comments such as, "good job," have less impact than, "thank you for the work you did on the ABC file. It was detailed and complete and made us look good."

**CONSULT AND INFORM** Introverts may create the impression that they are not offended when excluded. However, they do not like it. They are less likely to raise their hand and volunteer information than extroverts. Take the time to consult with them and explain your decisions and actions in greater detail.

The bottom line for managers and HR professionals: Recognize that there are introverts in your midst and take steps to ensure you don't overlook potentially superb managers just because they aren't as visible as their more-extroverted colleagues. Some of the best decisions may come from those who focus on quiet thinking. ▲

## For More Information:

### The Introvert Advantage

<http://www.theintrovertadvantage.com/being.html>

### Being an Introvert in an Extroverted World

[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/43309/being\\_an\\_introvert\\_in\\_an\\_extroverted.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/43309/being_an_introvert_in_an_extroverted.html)