

The Situation

“Why can’t they just figure it out on their own?” “What is taking him so long?!” “Why does she keep talking about stuff she doesn’t know about?” “Why can’t we ever have a productive team meeting?”

In the typical workplace, there are a wide range of personality types, all trying to accomplish the same thing but having very different ways of doing it. We often label others as “control freaks” or “fly by the seat of her pants” types, sometimes using even less flattering terminology. Underneath those behaviors is a core personality trait – being introverted or extroverted – that informs whether we prefer to have lots of space or be rapid fire.

In short, an introvert is someone who gains energy from solitude and drains energy from too much social activity. An extrovert is energized by people and activity and depleted if she has too much time alone. Another key difference between innies and outties: their problem-solving and communication methods. The extrovert will want to gather others and reflect collectively, asking “What do *you* think?” The introvert will move towards solitude or maybe one other person, to ask “What do *I* think?” The introvert prefers to reflect on that information by going deeper into the self, whereas extroverts assemble the troops.

Why is this important? Because by understanding each type’s modus operandi, we all can improve our communication and be more productive.

Top 5 Communication Tips for Introverts

1. **Use your listening skills to support others in problem solving.** Extroverts think out loud by talking through things with others. Introverts generally have a natural curiosity and like to listen more than we like to talk. Use that to your advantage; often, you can diffuse a tense situation or appease someone by simply listening and acknowledging.
2. **Speak up if you feel you’re not being heard.** Extroverts expect you to interject, even if it doesn’t feel comfortable to you. Decide if you can wait until after the meeting, or practice interrupting at appropriate moments. If you want more processing time, ask for it. Check with the meeting organizer to see if there will be time for later input, or if you need to speak up in the moment (see Tip #5 for more about flexing that muscle).
3. **Know that extroverts prefer face-to-face, verbal communication, while introverts tend to prefer things in writing.** Respect their preference while honoring your needs by scheduling short, focused meetings as needed to clarify key information. Write your talking points out and bring them with you to the meeting. Send an agenda in advance, or key points to cover, so that the conversation can stay on track. If someone puts you on the spot and demands an immediate answer, offer, “I can give you an answer, but it probably won’t be my best. If you give me X minutes/hours/days to think about it, I’ll have a better response.” If they still insist on an answer, do your best and know that you at least stated what you needed!
4. **Set clear expectations and measures of success.** Extroverts tend to be motivated by external rewards and want to know that you recognize their efforts and progress. Introverts don’t generally seek out public praise and can find it puts them in the spotlight a bit too much; therefore, they don’t always understand how much extroverts crave the praise. Acknowledge the accomplishments of the extroverts on your team with specific feedback and recognition, while also acknowledging introverts with proportional praise (too much and they can become self-conscious again!).
5. **Trust yourself.** Introverts like to think things through and respond, rather than react. This is a communication strength, and it can also create a perception that introverts are slow to make decisions or provide input. Respect your need to think before you speak (thoughtfulness is good!), while also trusting yourself to share ideas that might feel imperfect or unfinished. You can always preface your statements with “I’d like to think this through, but the first thing that comes to mind is...” or a similar caveat.

The Bottom Line

Experiment with communicating with others according to their preferences, not yours, while still honoring your needs. Introverts generally dislike the phone, but they can learn to deal with it because it’s sometimes the fastest way to accomplish something. Extroverts often don’t like to think too much before doing something, but they can choose to slow down because it helps avoid later problems. It’s a matter of stretching yourself while being aware of what you prefer, what your colleagues prefer, and how you work best. The ultimate outcome is less frustration and easier communication.

**Six Things Your
Introverted
Colleagues Want
to Tell You**

(But Probably Won't)

Presented to the Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce
October 11, 2011
Beth Buelow, ACC, CPC
The Introvert Entrepreneur



Sources

www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/extraversion-or-introversion.asp

www.andrewsobel.com/articles/view/introverts,-extroverts,-and-billy-joel

www.utne.com/Spirituality/solitude-leadership-william-deresiewicz-speech.aspx

The Introvert Advantage by Marti Olsen Laney

Life Types by Sandra Hirsh & Jean Kummerow

Personality Type: An Owner's Manual by Lenore Thomson

Type Talk at Work by Otto Kroeger with Janet Thuesen & Hile Rutledge

Read

Self-Promotion for Introverts by Nancy Ancowitz

The Introverted Leader by Jennifer B. Kahnweiler

Introvert Power by Laurie Helgoe

The Introvert Entrepreneur by Beth Buelow (coming soon!)

Connect

TheIntrovertEntrepreneur.com (blog, podcast, coaching, speaking, training, etc. Includes links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn profiles)

Beth@TheIntrovertEntrepreneur.com, 253.617.0779

About



Beth Buelow is known as The Introvert Entrepreneur to a growing tribe of thousands of followers and fans. As a certified professional coach and a skilled interviewer, writer, facilitator and speaker, she's recognized as a thought leader in the area of life and leadership coaching for introverts. Beth is a verified introvert (INFJ, according to Myers-Briggs) who believes introverts can thrive as leaders and entrepreneurs while still being authentic. She's contributed to blogs and articles in print and online for Psychology Today, Toilet Paper Entrepreneur, Biznik, The Coaching Commons, Sharp Skirts and Upstart Smart, among others. She hosts a popular podcast, The Introvert Entrepreneur, interviewing well-known and emerging introvert entrepreneurs. Beth has enjoyed sharing her message that "Success is an Inside Job!" with numerous organizations and corporations, including Boeing, Starbucks, Peterson Sullivan, Puget Sound Business Journal, Ignite Seattle and the Puget Sound American Marketing Association, among others.

Beth's academic background includes degrees in music performance and arts administration. She spent 12 years working for various nonprofits in Wisconsin, Michigan and Washington, with responsibilities that included fundraising, marketing, public relations and grant making. Her professional coach training was through inviteCHANGE (formerly the Academy for Coach Training), and she holds her Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credential with the International Coach Federation. She is a Living Your Vision® Licensed Facilitator and an active member of the Puget Sound Coaches Association and International Coach Federation.

If you are interested in engaging Beth as a speaker for your next meeting, event or professional development offering, please contact her at Beth@TheIntrovertEntrepreneur.com or 253.617.0779.