

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 Extroverts

1. **Understand that introverts need space and quiet to gather and process their thoughts.** Brainstorming sessions can be stressful (unless you ask the introvert to facilitate or scribe). Share the brainstorming topic or question in advance, so they can get a head-start on thinking of ideas to contribute. Allow people to submit ideas in writing, either during or after the meeting. Consider spending some of the brainstorming or problem-solving time in smaller groups, then coming back together to discuss as a full team.
2. **In general, introverts like to listen, extroverts like to talk.** This results in conversations that can easily become very one-sided, because the other person – especially an extrovert who’s a heavy verbal processor – doesn’t pause and talks stream-of-consciousness. It creates a safer space for introverts to share thoughts and ideas if you’re comfortable with allowing for some silence. If there’s not a relatively even exchange, introverts become exhausted, trying to hold onto thoughts and not being able to speak up (it’s not comfortable to interrupt). Offer your information and ideas in pieces, rather than creating a feeling that someone is “drinking from the fire hose.” Become comfortable with silence; ask a question or make a statement and come to a full stop.
3. **Provide gentle nudging if your introvert colleague is moving too slowly for you or the situation.** While extroverts are comfortable processing in the moment, introverts like to take a little time. There can be a preoccupation with needing to provide the “right” or “final” answer. Find a way to give permission for others to share something that’s imperfect or unfinished, for example “It’s OK if you’d like to think on it, but I’m curious about your first impression/gut reaction.”
4. **Don’t assume that because an introvert doesn’t speak up that he has nothing to say,** is disinterested or is consenting to what’s being said. You may have to ask for feedback directly. If you sense that someone wants to speak (by noticing body language, or that someone’s trying to chime in but getting talked over), make a point to ask that person for her thoughts. Refrain from prefacing your request by saying “You’ve been quiet over there,” which puts her on the spot. “Sue, is there anything you want to add right now?” is more invitational. If the situation requires an answer in the moment, let everyone know that this is their “last chance.” Otherwise, open the door to further (probably one-on-one) input and questions after the meeting.
5. **Keep meetings on-topic and respect the meeting timeframe.** Long meetings with free-form agendas leave most people exhausted, especially introverts. Be mindful of the energy of the group, and find a way to gracefully bring in quieter people into the conversation. Learn how to reign in the talkers. Create a safe, judgment-free environment.

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.

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The Introvert Entrepreneur

Success is an inside job.

Six Things Your Introverted Colleagues Want to Tell You (But Probably Won't)

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Beth Buelow, ACC, CPC
The Introvert Entrepreneur



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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)

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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.