

Introverts and Extraverts in the Workplace



Naomi Karten

+1-781-986-8148
naomikarten@verizon.net

Author:

- ▶ **How to Survive, Advance and Excel as an Introvert**
- ▶ **Communication Gaps and How to Close Them**
- ▶ **How to Establish Service Level Agreements**
- ▶ **Managing Expectations: Working with People Who Want More, Better, Faster, Sooner, NOW!**

and more

www.nkarten.com

© 2008 Naomi Karten

Introversion/Extraversion Resources for You

This webinar draws from my program:

Introverts and Extraverts in the Workplace

which I provide for client companies and at conferences as a workshop:

<http://www.nkarten.com/sem2.html> (the 6th seminar in the list)

and as a presentation:

<http://www.nkarten.com/pres2.html> (the 4th presentation in the list)

The information in this webinar also appears in detail in my ebook:

How to Survive, Excel and Advance as an Introvert: A Guide for Introverts — and for Extroverts Who Want to Understand Introversion

<http://www.nkarten.com/introversionguide.html>

I invite you to enjoy the numerous issues of my newsletter, **PERCEPTIONS & REALITIES** posted at:

<http://www.nkarten.com/newslet.html>

as well as my articles posted for you at:

<http://www.nkarten.com/indepth.html>

Questions? Contact me at **naomikarten@verizon.net**.

Thanks for your interest.

Naomi Karten

Webinar Objectives

In this presentation, I've aimed:

1. To broaden your understanding of extraversion and introversion
2. To describe how introverts and extraverts perceive each other
3. To explain what extraverts and introverts can do to accommodate, respect, and work well with each other work
4. To suggest things you can do to facilitate an increased understanding of introversion and extraversion in your team or organization.

Setting the Stage

Some key points about terminology I use in this presentation:

1. Language:

It is *not* the case that all introverts or all extraverts behave a certain way, or that either type always behaves a certain way in a given situation. Therefore, in discussing extraversion and introversion, it is advisable to use qualifiers, such as “tends to,” “generally,” and “typically” — as in “Extraverts generally feel comfortable in large groups” or “Introverts tend to be reserved.” These qualifiers acknowledge that even if a given description fits most of the time, any given introvert or extravert may behave otherwise.

2. Alternating usage:

Sometimes I refer to introverts and extraverts, sometimes to extraverts and introverts, switching back and forth so as not to favor either in my comments.

3. MBTI

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality instrument that helps people understand their preference for introversion or extraversion, as well as other aspects of their personality. Unlike many other personality instruments, the MBTI looks at normal differences among healthy individuals, rather than strengths vs. weaknesses or appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior. As a result, the MBTI can help you understand your own behavior better, as well as how you are similar to or different from others.

Numerous websites offer information on the MBTI. A good starting point is:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MBTI#Skeptical_view

4. Extraversion vs. extraversion:

In everyday English, “extroversion” describes people who are outgoing, lively, and talkative. In the context of psychological Type, the word is spelled “extraversion,” going back to its early use in the work of the psychologist Carl Jung. In this presentation, I use “extraversion” and “extravert,” except where quoting sources that using the other spelling.

Self-Assessment

Introversion and extraversion concern *where we get our energy*, which influences how we communicate, when we communicate, and what we communicate about.

	Do You . . . ?	✓	✓	✓	Do You . . . ?
1	Do you tend to be oriented to the outer world of people and things?				Do you tend to be oriented to the inner world of ideas and thoughts?
2	Do you thrive on interaction?				Do you thrive on quiet?
3	Are you generally animated and expressive?				Are you generally reserved and reflective?
4	Do you gain energy from interacting with others?				Do you lose energy from interacting with others?
5	Do you generally enjoy being with lots of people?				Do you generally prefer to interact one-to-one and in small groups?
6	Do you have numerous close friends?				Do you have a small number of close friends?
7	Do you tend to hear your thoughts for the first time when you say them out loud?				Do you tend to “hear” your thoughts internally before you say them out loud?
8	Do you prefer to develop ideas by speaking out loud and by interacting with others?				Do you prefer to develop ideas alone or with a small number of other people?

Ways to Use This Grid

- A. Contemplate your own behavior and the behavior of others. For example:
1. Fill out the grid several times, each time reflecting on yourself in a different context.
 2. Contemplate how others (friends, family members, co-workers) might fill it out.
- B. Give copies of the grid to others and compare your results. For example:
1. How many of you have checkmarks entirely in the left column or entirely in the right column?
 2. How many of you have checkmarks in the center column?
 3. How many of you have checkmarks in exactly the same columns?
- C. Gain insight into each other by comparing and discussing responses to the Self-Assessment questions. The next page offers several suggestions for doing this.

Compare Yourself with Your Teammates

Give each of your teammates a blank copy of the Self-Assessment grid and ask them to fill it in based on how they see themselves. Then compare your results with each other and see what you make of the similarities and differences among team members.

Suggested questions/issues for discussion:

1. How many instances are there of two people with exactly the same pattern of responses? (Don't be surprised if there are none.)
2. How many people placed all their checkmarks in the left or right columns?
3. How many people who have a majority of responses in the introverted column also have one or more responses in the extraverted column — and vice versa?
4. For which of the self-assessment items (if any) did the majority of people check the same box? How does that response serve as a strength or pose a challenge for the team?
5. Which of the Self-Assessment items showed the most variability among respondents? What are the benefits to the team of this variability? What are the pitfalls?

Another approach is to discuss items in the grid for which there is noticeable variation among team members. For example, item #2 — thriving on interaction vs. quiet — describes a difference prevalent in many groups. Therefore, you might discuss:

1. What does it mean when you say you tend to thrive on interaction (or thrive on quiet)? What is it like for you to exhibit that behavior? What might I notice?
2. (For those who checked the middle box) What led you to check the middle box? What are some situations in which you prefer interaction vs. quiet?
3. When you're thriving on interaction (or on quiet), what kinds of things annoy you? What kinds of behavior in others do you find frustrating?
4. What confuses or puzzles you about the behavior of those who checked one of the other boxes?
5. How can we take advantage of the differences in response to this item to work together effectively?
6. Given the above, what changes might we make so that we interact in a way that respects and accommodates these differences? What can we do as individuals? What can we do as a team?

Universal Truths

It's important to keep introversion and extraversion in perspective:

1. We are multi-dimensional beings. The introvert/extravert dimension is just one small aspect of who we are.
2. Both introverts and extraverts are capable of doing important, complex work, though they may prefer different approaches to carrying out that work.
3. Extraversion/introversion is *not* about air-time:
 - ▶ Both extraverts and introverts can talk your head off.
 - ▶ Both introverts and extraverts need quiet time for reflection and recharging.
4. It is vital that we guard against stereotyping.
5. What's important is not whether others are introverts or extraverts, but how well you work together, regardless of which you each are. Therefore:
 - ▶ Early in your work with others, compare your communication and work style as it relates to introversion and extraversion, and discuss how your style and theirs are similar or different.
 - ▶ Collaborate about how you can work together in a way that maintains respect for their style — and your own.
 - ▶ Agree to raise concerns about communication differences so that you can make adjustments in support of your relationship and your goals.

BEWARE:

**Any strength, taken to an extreme,
can become a liability.**

Research on Introversion/Extraversion

A lot of research has been done regarding the brain pathways associated with introversion and extraversion. It appears that introverts' and extraverts' blood travels along different pathways and that each pathway requires a different neurotransmitter.

For example, extraverts require large amounts of the neurotransmitter, dopamine, and the more active the extravert is, the more dopamine is increased.

Introverts, by contrast, are highly sensitive to dopamine. Too much causes them to feel overstimulated. Introverts use the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, on their more dominant pathway, and this helps them maintain a calm, alert feeling.

For the abstract of some of this research (and access to the full report), see The American Journal of Psychiatry, February 1999, which reports:

RESULTS: Overall, introversion was associated with increased blood flow in the frontal lobes and in the anterior thalamus. Regions in the anterior cingulate gyrus, the temporal lobes, and the posterior thalamus were found to be correlated with extraversion.

CONCLUSIONS: The findings of the study lend support to the notion that introversion is associated with increased activity in frontal lobe regions. Moreover, the study suggests that individual differences in introversion and extraversion are related to differences in a fronto-striato-thalamic circuit.

<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/156/2/252>

Sharing Perceptions

Positive Perceptions

What I like, admire, or appreciate about (introverted)(extraverted) behavior is . . .

Extraverts sometimes see introverts as

- ↑ Deep thinkers
- ↑ Articulate in presenting their ideas
- ↑ A calm and calming influence
- ↑ Good listeners

Introverts sometimes see extraverts as

- ↑ Bringing great energy to interactions
- ↑ Lively, enthusiastic
- ↑ Able to keep any conversation going
- ↑ Skilled in social situations

Sharing Perceptions

Negative Perceptions

What frustrates, annoys or upsets me about (extraverted)(introverted) behavior is . . .

Introverts sometimes see extraverts as

- ↓ Controlling and dominating the group process
- ↓ Talking non-stop, even if no one seems interested in what they're saying
- ↓ Frequently changing their minds
- ↓ Social butterflies who can't just sit down and get their job done
- ↓ Needy – always needing someone to talk to

Extraverts sometimes see introverts as

- ↓ Deliberately withholding ideas or important information
- ↓ Uninvolved, uninterested, non-participative
- ↓ Making minimal contributions to team efforts
- ↓ Putting everything in writing instead of just picking up the phone
- ↓ Unfriendly, aloof, distant, cold, remote, etc.

Working Well Together: Accommodating Extraverts

What specific things can you do to accommodate each other?

Examples of how introverts can accommodate extraverts

1. Allow them to think out loud.
2. Listen persuasively. Show “signs of life” when they are speaking.
3. When interacting with them, show evidence that you are involved and interested.
4. Provide opportunities for them to interact with others.
5. Occasionally respond more quickly with less pausing to think.
6. Offer information — don’t always wait till you’re asked.
7. Let them know that you need time to reflect before responding.

What would you add to this list?

Working Well Together: Accommodating Introverts

What specific things can you do to accommodate each other?

Examples of how extraverts can accommodate introverts

1. Provide written information in advance of a meeting.
2. Allow time for them to get to know you.
3. Don't wait for them to offer ideas — ask them.
4. Allow time for them to work through their ideas before responding.
5. Provide for individual or one-on-one time.
6. Allow breaks or periods of quiet time during times of intense interaction.
7. Listen persuasively. Resist the urge to interrupt. And watch out for facial expressions and body language that suggest you can't wait to speak.

What would you add to this list?

Tendencies and Preferences

	Extraverts Tend To . . .	Introverts Tend To . . .
1	Be oriented to the outer world of people and things	Be oriented to the inner world of thoughts, ideas and feelings
2	Seek stimulation from the outer world	Seek stimulation from the inner world
3	Reach understanding through interaction and discussion with others	Reach understanding through quiet reflection
4	Gain energy through interacting with others	Lose energy through interacting with others (even just listening)
5	Enjoy action and variety	Enjoy concentration and quiet reflection
6	Act, then think, then act	Think, then act, then think
7	Think out loud, hearing their thoughts for the first time when they speak them	Refine, edit, revise, and “rehearse” their thoughts before speaking them
8	Be self-disclosing, sometimes readily revealing personal information to others	Be private, often withholding personal information from all but a select few
9	Be animated and expressive	Be reserved and reflective
10	Prefer to communicate in spoken form (especially face-to-face) than in writing	Prefer to communicate in writing than in spoken form
11	Enjoy interaction in large groups	Prefer interacting one-on-one or in small groups
12	Prefer to attend a party than stay home alone and read a book	Prefer to stay home alone and read a book than attend a party
13	Need occasional quiet time to recharge, especially after a demanding schedule	Need frequent quiet to recharge, and may suffer if they don't get it
14	Often find it energizing and enjoyable for people to stop by while they're working	Usually find it disruptive or distracting for people to stop by while they're working
15	Enjoy solving problems by brainstorming with others	Enjoy solving problems alone or with input from selected others

Work Styles

	In This Context	Extraverts Tend To . . .	Introverts Tend To . . .
1	Work style	Seek opportunities to interact with others, ideally in person	Prefer working alone, involving others (if at all) only after clarifying their own ideas
2	In communicating vital information	Prefer to communicate in person, rather than in writing	Prefer to communicate in writing, rather than in person
3	Speaking style	Speak at length, often presenting many ideas at a time	Speak deliberately and present ideas in a coherent, orderly fashion
4	In meetings	Speak up early and often. Contributing actively.	Speak up (if at all) after thinking, reflecting and observing
5	As a member of a team or group	Let others know what they think, even if not asked	Remain reserved about what they think until asked
6	In coping with change	Seek ideas from many others and display eagerness to act	Seek ideas primarily from close colleagues and make decisions in a deliberate manner
7	During problem solving	Enjoy rapid-fire methods such as brainstorming for surfacing ideas about the problem	Enjoy pondering problems alone or with just a few others and reflecting on the ideas generated
8	In resolving conflict	Readily express thoughts, concerns and feelings, often preferring to address issues now rather than later	Seek private time to reflect on issues, often preferring to address them later rather than sooner
9	Regarding social activities	Enjoy interacting with co-workers at birthday parties, lunch, after-work gatherings, and the like	Prefer to limit or skip social occasions such as birthday parties, lunch, after-work gatherings, and the like

Recommended Reading

Hirsh, Sandra Krebs. **Work It Out: Clues for Solving People Problems at Work.** Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 1996.

Hirsh, Sandra Krebs and Jean Kummerow: **Life Types: Understand Yourself and Make the Most of Who You Are.** NY, NY, Warner Books, 1989.

Karten, Naomi. **Communication Gaps and How to Close Them.** New York: Dorset House Publishing, 2002. <http://www.nkarten.com/book2.html>

Karten, Naomi. **How to Survive, Excel and Advance as an Introvert: A Guide for Introverts — and For Extraverts Who Want to Understand Introversion.** <http://www.nkarten.com/introversionguide.html>

Karten, Naomi. **Perceptions & Realities** newsletter. <http://www.nkarten.com/newslet.html>

Keirse, David and Marilyn Bates. **Please Understand Me: Character & Temperament Types.** Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis Books Co., 1984.

Kroeger, Otto with Janet M. Thuesen. **Type Talk at Work: How the 16 Personality Types Determine Your Success on the Job.** New York: Dell Publishing, 1992.

Laney, Marti Olsen. **The Introvert Advantage: How to Thrive in an Extravert World.** NY, NY: Workman Publishing Co, Inc., 2002.

Lawrence, Gordon. **People Types & Tiger Stripes.** Gainesville, FL: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc., 1997.

Murray, William D.G., **Give Yourself the Unfair Advantage! A Serious Practical Guide to Understanding Human Personality That Will Have You Rolling in the Aisles.** Gladwynne, PA: Type & Temperament, 1995.

Myers, Isabel Briggs & Peter B. Myers. **Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Types.** Palo Alto, CA: CPP Books, 1993.

Pearman, Roger R. and Sarah C. Albritton. **I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just Not You: Secrets to How We Can Be So Alike When We're So Different.** Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 1997.

Rufus, Anneli. **Party of One: The Loners' Manifesto.** NY, NY: Marlow & Co., 2003.

Thomson, Lenore., **Personality Type: An Owner's Manual.** Boston & London, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1998.