



The Introvert...

Outpacing the Extrovert in Sales Success

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What do Warren Buffett, Harrison Ford, Bill Gates, Michael Jordan, and J.K. Rowling have in common? They are considered to be people with introverted personality types, often perceived as shy, but full of extraordinary talent and abilities. While extroverts are defined by their outgoing natures and readable dispositions, introverts prefer to keep to themselves and think carefully before acting or interacting. Although it is easy to assume that those who gravitate toward fame and fortune are extroverts, the reality is that many of the world's most prominent people, past and present, are introverts.

The terms were popularized by Carl Jung, the Swiss psychoanalyst, in the early 1900s as a central dimension of human personality theories. Recent research has uncovered that there is a difference in the brains of extroverted and introverted people in terms of how they process stimuli. For extroverts, the pathway is much shorter. It runs through the area of the brain where taste, touch, and visual and auditory sensory processing takes place. For introverts, stimuli run through a long, complicated pathway in areas of the brain associated with memory, planning, and problem-solving.

The easiest way to understand introversion is to take a look at how the introvert's energy level is affected by social situations. An extrovert is more likely to feel energetic and livelier after social interactions whereas the introvert needs to be alone to recharge his or her batteries. Contrary to the common assumption that introverts are anti-social, they simply find it depleting to be in intense social situations. Most introverts are not shy. They are just adept at letting people talk around them. The introvert absorbs all the details and thinks carefully before speaking.

Since introverts and extroverts are at extremes of the scale, many people fall in the middle, balancing the two tendencies. These individuals enjoy being around people, but after a long time, the social interaction drains them. Similarly, they enjoy solitude and quiet, but not for too long. It is this person who recharges his or her energy level with a mixture of social interaction and alone time.

Sales Characteristics of Introverts

Although introverts do not possess the hunter mentality, charisma, and demonstrative traits of the extrovert, they are blessed with a unique set of talents that support business development. And, in many ways, these characteristics overshadow the stereotypical salesperson who intrudes, pitches, and persists. Let's take a closer look:

1. **Research Tendencies.** Introverts are gifted at researching, reading, and analyzing information. Technology has been a game-changer for the introvert as he or she uses social media and tools to understand the brand and strategies of clients and prospects. Today, it does not seem to matter that introverts fear cold-calling and telemarketing because it has become nearly impossible to get decision-makers on the phone without an appointment. Lead generation, prospecting, and qualification capabilities provided by social media platforms, including LinkedIn and Twitter, have ignited the sales process for those who embrace research and analytics.
2. **Active Listening.** In contrast to the animated and expressive extrovert who tends to dominate conversations and steamroll past objections, introverts are gifted listeners. They always demonstrate a keen interest in the other person's agenda so they may talk through problems before offering measured advice. The art of active listening gives introverts a competitive edge over the extrovert as they observe, learn, and creatively design solutions.
3. **Relationship Building.** The authentic, deliberate, and inquisitive nature of introverts fosters credibility leading to trust. Deep, meaningful relationships evolve as the introvert demonstrates genuine interest in the other person's goals, passions, and struggles. While the first impression of an introvert is not as dynamic as that of the extrovert, his or her calm and composed demeanor creates long-lasting bonds with all whom they serve.
4. **Independence.** While introverts are capable of working as a member of a team, they function best when left to their own devices. This quality makes them especially valuable as they are not dependent upon the actions of others. The self-driven, focused introvert does not rely

upon others to motivate or support. Their independence also leads to creativity and innovation as they reflect quietly upon the issue at hand. In contrast, the extrovert thrives on the team concept and desires to place his or her mark on each project. When asked to work independently, the extrovert often loses steam.

5. **Art of Negotiation.** The introvert is often a first-class negotiator as he or she takes time to understand the big picture, uncover hidden agendas, and gain genuine buy-in using data and facts to persuade rather than coercion. Introverts come to the table well-prepared, actively listen, read body language, control emotion, and look for win-win solutions. Most importantly, introverts realize that negotiation is like a chess match. For that reason, they are not only gifted at sensing the other party's next move, but several moves down the line.
6. **Process not Product-Driven.** Introverts are "process-driven." They see projects as a sequence of interdependent and linked procedures...a series of actions or steps to achieve a particular end. They have positive impact on performance as they are constantly analyzing and improving existing processes with the goal of enhancing stakeholder value. The introvert asks three questions related to process:
 - Are the processes clearly defined, understood, and aligned with my values and objectives?
 - Do I have ownership and performance accountability for each process?
 - Are the processes streamlined, consistent, and standard?
7. **Empathy.** Introverts are understanding, aware of, and sensitive to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others. They have a gift of putting themselves in the other person's place and seeing things from his or her point of view. While introverts often exhibit a high intelligence quotient (IQ), it is their emotional intelligence (EI) that gives them a competitive advantage in business development as they have the capacity to recognize feelings and use this knowledge to motivate, inspire, and direct. The introvert is keenly self-aware of the importance of putting the other person as priority number one.
8. **Public Speaking.** To the surprise of many, introverts are often gifted public speakers. Their thoughts are organized, precise, and the words are chosen carefully. The content of the speech is well-researched and factual. When introverts talk about a topic they are passionate about, it is noticeable in the delivery. As introverts want the takeaways of their communication to be impactful and long-lasting, they go the extra mile to get to know the audience in advance, rehearse, and prepare like their lives depend upon it.
9. **Team Player.** Although introverts prefer working independently, they are outstanding team players for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, their active listening skills, attention to detail, valuing deadlines, collaborating with a sense of purpose, and the ability to stay calm under pressure. It is interesting to note that introverts complement extroverts in a team setting as their analytical and strategic skills support a big-picture mentality. Introverts do not feel threatened by extroverts who need to personally "own" the success of a

project. Just the opposite. Introverts are aware of their own inhibitions and welcome the opportunity to allow the extrovert to shine.

10. **Attitude of Gratitude.** Introverts have an internally generated capability that allows them to create and discover unlimited meaning and value in every situation and relationship. They possess an ability to shift their focus from what their life lacks to the abundance that is already present. It is this attribute of gratitude that fosters deep appreciation and people go out of their way to assist their progress as there is something genuine, happy, and special about them. This mindset results in emotional levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, optimism, and energy...critical attributes to sales success.
11. **Composure.** Often mistaken for being too reserved or shy, introverts prefer to sit back to give themselves a better vantage point. As a result, they are able to avoid getting emotionally entangled so as to properly sort out various interests and agendas. Composure is in the DNA of introverts. Being calm, cool, and collected has the effect of putting people at ease rather than coming across as tense or defensive. In direct contrast to many extroverts, the introvert has no emotional push, aggressive or hard sell. Instead, he or she is focused on the identification of issues and practical solutions to solve them.
12. **Leadership.** Counterintuitive as it may seem, research suggests that introverts make better leaders than extroverts because they let employees run with their own ideas, whereas extroverts pull in the reins of employees who take too much initiative. Simply put, introverts are better at supporting initiative-takers – a vital characteristic of a good manager. Introverts also tend to show a sincere interest in their co-workers which creates deep, long-lasting relationships. In the book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, Susan Cain states, "We don't need giant personalities to transform companies. We need leaders who build not their own egos but the institutions they run."

When it comes to sales and sales leadership, do not underestimate the skills and capabilities of the introvert. You may be surprised to find that he or she is outpacing the extrovert.

About the Author

Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA is the CEO of Beyond Insurance and is recognized as an industry leader having been named a Philadelphia finalist for *Inc. Magazine's* "Entrepreneur of the Year" award as well as one of the "25 Most Innovative Agents in America." Beyond Insurance is a consulting firm that offers leadership training, cultural transformation, and talent and tactical development for enlightened professionals who are looking to take their practice to the next level. Since 2007, the proven and repeatable processes of Beyond Insurance have transformed individuals and organizations as measured by enhanced organic growth, productivity, profitability, and value in the marketplace.