

Introverts Rule! (Or Can)

Wallflowers of the world unite — because flashy, in-your-face personality types aren't the gold standard among corporate brass. By Janene Mascarella



Do you start sweating buckets come schmoozing time? Find networking exhausting? Seek refuge during social settings? Worry your low-key, humble tendencies will hurt you in the workplace? It is estimated that as many as 40 percent of executives are introverted to at least some extent, and a new book, *The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength* (Berrett-Koehler, \$20) by Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, PhD, says introverts (quiet, reflective, contained types) can indeed step out of the shadows into leadership roles.

Insider Advice "An introverted person draws energy from within," explains Kahnweiler, president of AboutYou Inc., a firm that delivers highly engaging speaking, training, and executive-coaching programs. "They need time to process, [to] reflect, and they tend to have a more quiet demeanor. It's a temperament." If you're hardwired for introversion, it needn't

be a hindrance to your career, though — you can learn to be a quiet, impactful leader. According to Kahnweiler, you can build upon (and embrace) your many strengths. Key qualities of introverts: They listen and focus very well; they are cued into depth (more than breadth); and when they do speak up, people tend to listen.

The Introvert Elite

Leaders Kahnweiler cites as likely shy introspective types who have developed ways to thrive in a challenging environment: **Bill Gates**, **Andrea Jung** (head of Avon), **Warren Buffett**, late *Washington Post* publisher **Katharine Graham**, and **President Barack Obama** — to name a few. Want to join the ranks of highly successful introverts? Kahnweiler's book offers inspiring stories and detailed advice on how introverted types can succeed in the extroverted business world using [this progressive four-step strategy](#):

1 Prepare Carefully devise a game plan for any potentially anxiety-producing situation. Most likely, preparation is something you're good at already, as you've probably never just "winged" it. So take those prep skills and apply them to the people part of your day.

2 Presence It's about showing up, being where your feet are (literally), and building relationships. Try to become completely focused on the present moment.

3 Push With a firm foundation of preparation and presence, try to go beyond your comfort zone. Kahnweiler says introverts who have succeeded in our outgoing business culture claim to have done so by truly pushing themselves.

4 Practice The more you practice, the more at ease you'll become in social scenarios. Acting "as if," or adopting an empowering persona you make up in your mind, is helpful. For instance, when you get off the plane, slide on the shades and think: Bond, James Bond. Or, you can always try Beyoncé's alter ego: Sasha Fierce.

OUTIES VS. INNIES

EXTROVERTS	Talk first; think later	Seek out other people	Are transparent, easy to read	Tend to be "babbling brooks": People often tune them out.	Draw energy from other people
INTROVERTS	Think first; talk later	Prefer going solo	Show fewer facial expressions	Don't speak up too often: People tend to tune in when they do.	Are energized by time spent alone