

Five Success Strategies for Working with Introverts

1. Chill Out

In meetings, conversations, and even casual chats, slow down and give your introverts time to reflect and respond. Put space between your questions — counting "1, 2, 3" in your head if you have to — and avoid what most introverts perceive as a cross-examination. I know several extroverted managers who also post a reminder next to their phone: "Shut up and listen."



2. Give the Gift of Solitude

Introverts need alone time. As a manager, refrain from judging this need, and do what it takes to honor it instead. One simple technique: Rather than stopping by throughout the workday, bundle your non-priority items and schedule a single conversation.

3. Write More, Converse Less

Accommodate your introverts' preference for writing over conversation. Instead of picking up the phone or showing up unannounced at their desks, communicate through e-mail or online chats whenever possible.

4. Pass the Megaphone

Encourage balanced participation in meetings, and help introverts prepare. Ask for agenda items in advance, assign pre-work, and agree on a system that invites everyone to be heard. One group I work with distributes 10 tokens to each team member at the start of a meeting. When someone speaks, he or she gives up a token. The idea: No tokens, no talking.

5. Allow Them Time to Prepare

Provide an agenda for meetings so introverts can bring their best thinking. Give them a heads up about what you want them to contribute. Whenever possible, provide your questions for one-on-one sessions in advance. This will also focus the discussion and force you both to be more productive.

Five Success Strategies for Working with Extroverts

1. Let Them Think Out Loud

As an introvert, your natural ability to tune into others can serve you especially well with extroverts. In fact, recent research reported in the Harvard Business Review reveals introverted leaders are more likely than their extroverted counterparts to listen to and process the ideas of an eager, vocal team.

Additionally, you can help your extroverts refocus when they ramble on (and on) by using your "innie" instincts to dig deep and ask pointed, penetrating questions. It's also O.K. to have extroverts send their ideas before meetings or conversations, giving you a chance to reflect on the ideas beforehand.



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2. Make Room for Face Time

In today's tech-fueled workplace, face time is about much more than chitchatting. For extroverts, in particular, it's about your connecting with them, eyeball to eyeball, and collaborating on their views and ideas. Resist the temptation to hide behind e-mails or texts — a frequent source of disconnects and misunderstandings — and get out there as much as possible. If your extroverts work remotely, reach out via regular phone calls.

3. Play to Their Strengths

Leverage your extroverts' people skills early and often. Working at trade shows, entertaining customers, or heading up community service projects are just a few of the opportunities for your "outies" to sparkle in meaningful ways. Even if an extrovert's job isn't a people-intensive one, you can find ways to put his or her extroverted energy to work wisely.

4. Pull up the Curtain

Your extroverts probably have a hard time reading you, even perceiving a negative vibe from your silence or pauses. They want — and need — words. Are you mad, sad, or just thinking? Help set the stage by explaining your more quiet, introverted nature and how you tend to process new information. Tell extroverts, for instance, that when you don't immediately respond to their questions or ideas, it doesn't mean anything other than "I'm just taking time to think."

5. Be Yourself

Many people say their best boss ever was an Introvert. Why? Because in our go-go extroverted business world, an introvert's quiet, deep, and reflective leadership style can be a tremendous asset. So, don't try to be an extrovert. Instead, adopt a few simple new behaviors and just be ... you.