



# self promotion for introverts

[ the quiet guide to  
getting ahead ]

Nancy Ancowitz

# Self-Promotion for Introverts<sup>®</sup>

*The Quiet Guide to Getting Ahead*

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# Introduction

I've seen you silent at meetings. I've seen you eating lunch alone. And I've even seen your louder, less talented colleagues promoted over you. Yet I know you have something to say. What stops you from saying what you want to say, especially when it's about you? Perhaps you don't want to brag or draw too much attention to yourself. Compounding this, as an introvert, you prefer to think before you speak. And if you think about it long enough, some weird logic prevails about how others should figure out your strengths on their own—as if they should be able to see your merits by just looking at you. If only . . .

Wouldn't it be nice if someone would discover you? What are the chances of that happening? Considering the tough economy and job market of recent years, how long will you have to wait? If waiting just isn't an option, this book—written by an introvert for introverts—is for you. Together we'll celebrate your strengths and build the vital skills you need to raise your visibility. You'll decide how visible you need to be to accomplish what matters to you, and then you'll drive yourself toward your goals.

## **PROMOTING YOURSELF AUTHENTICALLY**

People who are successful at gaining visibility—from Whoopi Goldberg to Donald Trump—do so in many different ways. What

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### Introverts and Extroverts

Introverts	Extroverts*
Get energy from “down time”	Get energy from people contact
Think before speaking or acting	Think out loud
Listen more	Talk more
Speak more softly	Speak faster and louder
Are more inclined to make deep conversation	Are more inclined to make chitchat
Prefer to speak with one or two people at a time	Prefer to work the room
Wait to be approached in social situations	Initiate conversations in social situations
Are typically reserved	Are typically active and expressive
Enjoy working alone or with one person	Enjoy working in a group
Know a lot about a few topics	Know a little about a lot of topics
Are reflective and appear more calm	Are more energetic
Are more detail oriented	Prefer faster, less complicated tasks
Need more personal space	Enjoy more people contact—the more the merrier
Are more private and hesitant about self-disclosure	Are more readily open
Have a few deep interests	Have many interests

\*Also spelled “extraverts” by Carl Jung as well as the communities of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) and other personality assessments, such as the Five-Factor Model.

Which list of attributes describes you more than 50 percent of the time—the introverts’ preferences on the left or the extroverts’ preferences on the right?

### Connecting to Your Core

Self-promotion starts with self-reflection, which requires observing oneself in the lighting of awareness and without judgment. It helps to pay close attention to what you are or have rather than to emphasize what you think you're not or don't have. The more one is connected to oneself, the greater will be one's capacity to reach out. And the less one will expend energy trying to please the world.

—Shakti Gattegno, educational consultant

works well for them may not work for you, especially if you're an introvert. Just as there is not one right way to promote yourself, there is not one right self-promotion goal. We'll find a way that works for you and helps you get wherever you want to go.

It may initially seem impossible for you to promote yourself. I encourage you to stay the course and to approach this learning with depth and intensity, which are your gifts as an introvert. Be willing to stretch as you take steps toward sharing your gifts with the world in a way that's authentic to you. You'll find your voice, create your signature presence, and speak your truth—in a big, clear voice. As Leonard Nimoy aptly shares with us: “We strive to find within ourselves our own personal voice—that which puts us in a state of grace.”

## GAINING VISIBILITY

Tired of no one noticing your nose glued to the grindstone? I know you produce—and you even do “double time.” Who else needs to know?

Gaining visibility is a big challenge for introverts. We often immerse ourselves in our tasks, plunge the depths of our inner worlds, and neglect to come up for air to take credit for discovering New Worlds. What's an introvert to do?

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Broadway legend Chita Rivera offers a piece of advice for you: “Be proud of yourself,” she says. “Most of all, be proud of who you are and what you want to do. And choose your friends. Make sure you have the right energy around you, the right friendships around you. You stimulate other people and they stimulate you.” That sums it up. Here’s some more advice from professionals in diverse fields.

“First get clear about what you want,” says Anne Houle, senior manager for leadership training at Saks Fifth Avenue. “One of the myths about promoting yourself is that you’re supposed to be out there talking yourself up to everyone about everything. That’s not what it’s about.” A client of mine we’ll call Amy Jacobs, a technology vice president at a major investment bank, adds: “Think about when to use the *we* versus the *I* word. It doesn’t come naturally to me because I like to give credit to my group. However, when an idea truly is mine, instead of saying *we* came up with the idea, I’m learning to say that *I* did.”

“We are each an entire universe with unique value and something special to offer,” says Lewis Bernstein, Ph.D., executive vice president of education and research at the Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit organization behind *Sesame Street*. “So,” he adds, “like my good friend Grover on *Sesame Street* who is naturally shy, we must all find ways to let our passion and potential bubble out of us so we can share them. Sometimes that takes practice, discipline, and trial and error. It is almost always worth it.” Bernstein’s passion and potential have earned him and the Sesame Workshop three Emmy Awards.

### **QUICK TIPS TO JUMP START YOUR VISIBILITY**

While we’ll get into more detail later on, here are some quick tips to help you increase your visibility:

- Balance the time you spend *doing* with the time you spend *thinking* or *talking* about what you’re doing.
- Take stock of what you do well by writing down your accomplishments and putting them in an “atta-girl” or

“atta-boy” file. Also include in the file congratulatory e-mails, testimonials, and glowing performance reviews you receive.

- Practice articulating your accomplishments, and then run them by a trusted senior colleague, mentor, or coach for feedback.
- Get on the agenda for meetings to build a platform for your ideas.
- After meetings, write follow-up e-mails to confirm your points and contributions as well as to acknowledge those of others.
- Stay in touch with colleagues, managers, and clients throughout your career. Let them know your comings and goings, and inquire about and celebrate theirs.
- If you're a sociable introvert—at least, in doses—host and even speak at meetings, conferences, and social events to boost your credibility and visibility.

## PROMOTING YOURSELF VERSUS OTHERS

Have you ever noticed how much easier it is to promote someone other than yourself? “There’s not as much of me on the line when I try to sell you on ‘Bob’ than when I try to sell you on me. It’s much easier to accept defeat, rejection, or ridicule on Bob’s behalf than it is on mine,” says actor and longtime television anchor Brad Holbrook. “Instead of worrying about coming across as arrogant or self-serving, you’re advocating for someone else who deserves it,” adds Heidi Rome, marketing director, UJA-Federation of New York. “Throughout my career, I’ve fought for the people reporting to me and won them promotions. However, when I’ve been up for promotions, it suddenly felt much more challenging to make the case to prove my value. Why couldn’t my good work speak for itself? Now I consider it part of my job to advocate as fiercely for myself as I do for others.”

“So tell me about yourself,” someone says to you at a cocktail party. When you have to talk about yourself, it may feel like

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someone has hit the off switch on all your thoughts. So why is it not nearly as difficult to promote others? Here's why:

- It's easier to see and articulate someone else's strengths than it is your own.
- When you promote another person, you don't doubt her accomplishments the way you doubt your own.
- You take someone else's accomplishments to be a result of his talents and efforts while you take your own to be a result of dumb luck.
- You enjoy being generous with your friends by promoting them.

You may experience talking about yourself as a journey into a dusty old subterranean library of archives, getting lost in a maze of hallways, stairways, and blind turns until you crash into a wall . . . in the janitor's closet. Talking about the glories of a close friend, on the other hand, may be as simple as opening a door. So since you can open that door, why not go through it too? It might take some plotting and planning. It might take plenty of practice. And it might take lots of support. The good news is that promoting yourself gets easier with practice.

### **EFFECTIVE SELF-PROMOTION VERSUS BRAGGING**

While bragging is an obvious no-no, even quieter forms of self-promotion carry a stigma. It may seem impossible to be authentic and engaging while also promoting yourself. You're bored by other people who talk too much about themselves, and you don't want to be a bore. But if you don't talk about your accomplishments, you'll have to rely on others to do so. This can leave you feeling powerless and disappointed—not to mention invisible. While it's important for others to recognize your contributions, they first need to see your value and know what you're up to.

Let's dispel some myths about self-promotion. First, you can be a nice person and promote yourself. Next, you can promote yourself without bragging, or at the other extreme, begging. You can also do so without stretching the truth, talking someone's ear off, or pushing. You don't have to be self-centered. You also don't have to be an extrovert to do it well; instead, you can let your quiet strengths shine through and do it your way. This book is about helping you find your way.

Let's look at the differences between effective self-promotion and bragging. Simply, self-promotion at its best is articulating the overlap between what you have to offer and what your target audiences need. It enables you to solve more problems for more people

### How Do You Know When People Are Saying You're a Braggart?

Circle True or False next to each of the following statements. Answer based on what you do more than 50 percent of the time.

- |   |      |       |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. I do most of the talking in social situations, and the main topic of conversation is me. | True | False |
| 2. I drop names to impress people.  | True | False |
| 3. When I talk about myself, I just state the facts about my strengths and accomplishments. | True | False |
| 4. I promote myself by matching my capabilities with my conversation partner's needs.       | True | False |

If you answered True to items 1 or 2, it's time to auction off your bullhorn on eBay. If you answered True to item 3, ask yourself if your message is relevant and interesting to your audience. If you answered True to item 4, you're on your way to effective nonbragging!

by letting them know about you. Bragging is talking *at* people, and it's all about you. It's not connected to your conversation partners—instead, it's as if they're not there. You're just talking about how outstanding you are, the phenomenal achievements you've made, and the fancy people you know. Note the glazed eyes around you. After all, isn't it tiresome when someone tries to impress you? Time to refresh your drink?

So how can you promote yourself without evacuating a room? It starts by identifying what's special about you. I can assure you there's plenty, and we'll delve into that together. Then you'll learn to speak about yourself with more confidence and tailor your message to whomever you're addressing. We'll talk about that more in Chapter 4.

## A WORD ABOUT PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES

No one on earth is exactly like you. Yet for thousands of years, scientists, philosophers, and scholars have been compelled to categorize human personalities into types—an activity called *typology*. The ancient Greeks, beginning with the physician Hippocrates, believed that our physical and mental health required an optimal balance of the four humors: blood, yellow bile, phlegm, and black bile, which corresponded with our sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, or melancholic temperaments. (For more information, take the free Humoural Personality Test at [www.passionsandtempers.com](http://www.passionsandtempers.com).)

Fast-forwarding a couple of millennia, one of the best studied personality assessments used today is the previously mentioned Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) assessment, which was developed by Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katharine Briggs, in the 1940s, and was based on the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. The MBTI® tool identifies four sets, or dichotomies, of basic personality preferences. One set is extroversion (which focuses more on the outer world) and introversion (which focuses more on the inner world). The other three sets are sensing and

intuition, thinking and feeling, and judging and perceiving. If you're interested in learning more about the MBTI® tool, resources abound in libraries and on the Internet; you'll find a useful starting point with myriad articles and links at [www.mbtitoday.org](http://www.mbtitoday.org).

Numerous other personality assessments are used, and extroversion and introversion are common to most of them. The Five-Factor Model, also referred to as the Big Five, is another major assessment. "It represents a systematic reduction from over 17,000 personality descriptors to five major factors that explain much of the ways personalities differ," notes Bob McPeck, Ph.D., director of research at the Center for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc. (CAPT). "American psychologist Gordon Allport culled these descriptors from the dictionary in the 1930s. Of these five," he adds,

### **Neither a Schmooser nor a Cheerleader**

As an introvert, you may feel hindered by not being a schmooser. This starts, according to Katharine Myers, coguardian and trustee of the Myers-Briggs Trust, in the cliquey extroverted environment of the American high school, where, she says, "introverts often feel out of place because they are not inclined to hang out, chatter, make small talk, and tell jokes, which is what makes them part of a group socially. I was on the varsity team each season, a good student, editor of the paper, member of the National Honor Society, and voted girl most likely to succeed, but I felt inadequate because I did not have the skills to be what I called 'the cheerleader type.' In my senior year, I took the MBTI® and had an individual interview with Isabel Myers [who would later become Katharine Myers's mother-in-law]. I learned that there was a kind of person who preferred introversion to extroversion and that it was an okay way to be. . . . This information changed my life. I did not have to learn the skills of the cheerleader type. I could be myself. Now I can go comfortably into any situation anywhere in the world whether I know anyone or not."

“extroversion–introversion is arguably one of the two most important dimensions of personality.” (In case you’re wondering, the other “Big Two” factor is neuroticism, which is a whole other ball of wax.) Our main focus in this book is on how you can raise your visibility if you relate to being an introvert, regardless of all the other aspects of your personality—not to mention your humors!

## A WORD ABOUT INTROVERSION

You may be surprised to learn that introverts comprise about half the population.<sup>1</sup> And, according to an article in *USA Today*, 4 in 10 top executives are introverts. In fact, the article offers Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Charles Schwab, Steven Spielberg, and the Sara Lee Corporation chairperson and CEO Brenda Barnes as examples.<sup>2</sup> Add comedian Jerry Seinfeld to the list. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, he shares that he’s an introvert and adds: “I love people, but I can’t talk to them. Onstage, I can.”<sup>3</sup>

I’ve seen suggestions that many other high-profile people are introverts as well. However, we can never be sure unless they tell us, and not many do—possibly because of the stigma around introversion. Why can’t we be sure who is actually an introvert? “There’s no introvert ‘gay-dar’ that I can tell,” says Jonathan Rauch, an opinion columnist for the *National Journal*, in an interview in *The Atlantic* magazine. The interview was inspired by a stunningly popular article that Rauch wrote titled “Caring for Your Introvert” in the March 2003 *Atlantic*. He continues: “One reason is that a lot of introverts are actually very good at being social. It just takes a lot of work for them.”<sup>4</sup> In fact, many introverts, particularly those in highly visible roles, can be indistinguishable from extroverts, especially to the public eye. They are often in roles that require lots of people contact. Furthermore, they’ve often received coaching to become excellent public speakers. So it can be hard to tell who the real introverts are.

No matter. This book is for self-described introverts—and even those who just lean more toward some introverted preferences,

such as having a deep conversation with one person at a time instead of working a room. You may have discovered that you were an introvert by taking a personality assessment. I took the MBTI® assessment when I was working in the corporate world and learned that I was an introvert. This helped me understand myself better and gave context to my need for quiet time—as opposed to face time—to recharge my energy and collect my thoughts. Ultimately, I reshaped my career, from being the head of a marketing team on Wall Street to being a business communication coach and speaker.

Despite the staggering bias against introversion in American society, the MBTI® tool treats extroverts and introverts as equals and doesn't place any value judgment (explicit or implicit) on one as being better than the other. "It was designed against the backdrop of the negative, 'what's wrong with you' focus evident in clinical assessments, such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) in use in the 1930s and 1940s," says Bob McPeck. The MBTI® assessment helped me see that my introversion wasn't a deficit. I became more accepting of my preference to think before I speak or act and then think again, while Jo(e) Extrovert prefers the opposite; so I became more tolerant of others.

Cathie Black, president of Hearst Magazines, shares another useful perspective: "We had a diversity course that offered much more than a narrow definition of diversity in an association I was running. The people leading the course explained the difference between extroverts and introverts: extroverts can get their energy from a roomful of people, even though [the extroverts] might be tired when they walk into that room. Introverts need time to decompress and can resurface when they've regenerated their energy." She adds: "An introvert's energy comes from being more quiet and introspective, in contrast to someone more extroverted, who accomplishes the same thing by getting energy from others." While schools of thought vary, I believe that most of us lie somewhere in the spectrum between introversion and extroversion,

with fewer people at the far extremes and many of us having some characteristics of each.

## SHYNESS VERSUS INTROVERSION

“Introverts are apt to be quieter, which is often interpreted as shyness,” says Katharine Myers. “However, it may or may not be. Shyness has more to do with a lack of social skills. Introverts are more self-contained, which can seem shy.” Notes Bob McPeck: “Though the concepts differ, introversion and shyness are often moderately correlated. In fact, introverts are more likely to be shy than extroverts, but that’s not always the case.”

“A lot of people confuse introversion with being shy and quiet,” adds Ken Frazier, executive vice president and president of Global Human Health at the pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co., Inc. “My group at work was shocked to learn that I was an introvert.” Outside of work, Frazier says, “I would just as soon read a book in my basement than engage other people, while my spouse is the life of the party. She feeds off her interactions with other people. She’ll get to know everybody in the room, and I’ll get to know only one or two people.”

Call me a walking oxymoron: As an outgoing introvert, I look and act like an extrovert—when I’m on, that is (after sufficient quiet time). I can relate to what Jonathan Rauch shared in the *Atlantic* interview that I described earlier: “I’m not great at small talk,” he says. “But I can seem quite outgoing for spells of up to an hour or so before I completely run out of gas.”<sup>5</sup>

Introverts and extroverts alike, even those who are typically outgoing, can be shy in certain situations (e.g., among people they perceive as more powerful). Shyness can be overcome by psychotherapy and other types of self-discovery and support. Introversion, on the other hand, is not curable—and I hope you see that it’s not a malady. While this book mainly addresses self-promotion for introverts as opposed to shy people of any stripe, both groups face many of the same challenges. In these pages we’ll often look inward before going outward, which may be incurable too!

## HIGHLY SENSITIVE PEOPLE

Many of us can benefit from the work of Elaine Aron, Ph.D., whose research-based books and other resources about highly sensitive persons (HSPs) resonate with many introverts in particular, although 30 percent of HSPs are extroverts.<sup>6</sup> Her Web site defines an HSP as someone whose “nervous system is more sensitive to subtleties.” It adds: “Your sight, hearing, and sense of smell are not necessarily keener (although they may be). But your brain processes information and reflects on it more deeply.” It also says: “Being an HSP also means, necessarily, that you are more easily overstimulated, stressed out, overwhelmed.” Can you relate? You can take a self-test at [www.hsperson.com](http://www.hsperson.com) to learn if you’re an HSP and if you are, what you can do to make your life easier.

## INTROVERTS AND EXTROVERTS: BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

Are the differences between introverts and extroverts caused by biological factors in the brain—maybe even ones we’re born with? Carl Jung and other major psychologists have believed this, and recent brain studies have suggested they are. These studies have been based on a variety of models, including the MBTI®; however, most of these models have categorized introverts and extroverts similarly (i.e., if you’re an introvert under one model, you’re likely to be one under the others). Generally, the research has found that introverts have higher levels of certain types of brain arousal and are more sensitive to some kinds of stimuli.<sup>7</sup>

“Introverts get more of their stimulation internally, whereas extroverts seek outside sources,” says Debra L. Johnson, Ph.D., a physiological psychologist and the lead researcher on a University of Iowa study examining brain activity patterns associated with introversion and extroversion.<sup>8</sup> According to Johnson: “Introversion is associated with activation in areas of the brain responsible for learning, memory, planning, and language production. Extroversion

is associated with areas responsible for sensory processing. Extroverts may be driven to seek sensory stimulation from other people or situations because they can't provide for their optimal level of stimulation internally." Johnson concludes: "This supports the idea that introverts tend to be more internally focused and extroverts tend to be more driven by the external environment." This makes sense to me intuitively, though I'm not a scientist. Maybe it helps explain why making chitchat with lots of people in a noisy place is difficult because it feels like there's a marching band parading inside my head. Extroverts, who are internally less stimulated, might dive into those noisy places and do a jig.

So is it better to be an introvert or an extrovert? "Rather than imagining that there is some personality profile that is uniformly good to have, let's assume that all have their strengths and pitfalls," says Daniel Nettle, Ph.D., in an article titled "The Science Behind Personality" that he wrote for the *Independent UK*. Nettle is the author of *Personality: What Makes You the Way You Are*, a book that presents increasing evidence from the work of neuroscientists, evolutionists, and geneticists on the science underlying personality type. He says in the article: "Scoring your personality won't tell you anything you don't know. It's based on how you see yourself, so logically it couldn't." He adds: "But it can reveal to you how you compare to other people, and [it] can also tap you into a wealth of accumulated psychological knowledge about the strengths and liabilities that other people similar to you have experienced."<sup>9</sup>

## **BALANCING OUR INWARD-FACING NATURE AND OUR NEED TO REACH OUTWARD**

While it would be easy to portray introverts as underdogs, I'd rather underscore our advantages and foster better understanding and tolerance, regardless of personality type. "A great example of an introvert was the actress Grace Kelly, whom I met some years ago in Monte Carlo," says Shoya Zichy, author (with Ann Bidou) of *Career Match*. "She spoke at length about growing up in a family

of extroverts, and how her father thought there was something wrong with her because all she wanted was to go to her room and read. Then she became an actress, got rich and famous, and finally won her battle that way. As an actress,” Zichy says, “she got to play other people. And the lines were already made up for her.”

While the inward-facing nature of introverts can be a source of strength, if we neglect to reach outward, we miss out on the richness that human interaction can bring—not to mention the career advancement associated with our increased visibility. Kelly found an elegant balance between going inward and outward—and all the world got to benefit.

## WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

This book enables me to share my experiences and help as many people as possible—particularly introverts—to promote themselves more adeptly. I’ve spoken with insightful introverts and extroverts from all walks of life, not to mention a few giants like Cathie Black (Hearst Magazines); Warren Buffett; President Bill Clinton; marketing guru Seth Godin; Earvin “Magic” Johnson; Katharine Myers (Myers-Briggs Trust); Craig Newmark (founder of craigslist); Leonard Nimoy; and Chita Rivera. See what you can learn about visibility from their collective wisdom.

My perspective integrates the various lenses through which I see the world: as a businessperson, a communication coach, and an artist. I draw from more than two decades’ experience as both an entrepreneur and a corporate marketing vice president as well as my after-hours life as a playwright. I’ve been keeping copious notes from the trenches, from selling my wares to major retailers and getting national press as a young jewelry designer to getting credit for my accomplishments and learning how to be heard at meetings at major financial firms on Wall Street.

While you may be interested in the robust body of psychological literature exploring the world of introversion, this book is by and for laypeople. The main focus of the book is raising your

visibility in your professional life as an introvert. However, what you'll learn can also be helpful in your personal life. Skills such as networking are useful in both.

My intention is to offer a place for you to explore and a springboard for you to be heard and seen by the people and organizations you want to impact. I want you to get more credit for your ideas, become more visible wherever you want to be noticed, earn more money if that's your goal, and ultimately make greater contributions to society.

First we'll go inward, which is most likely within your comfort zone as an introvert, and then we'll go outward. We'll cover everything from mitigating the self-doubt and negativity inside your head to identifying what's special about you; from making a game plan to getting into action mode. You can read this book cover to cover, skip around, or skim. I welcome you to proceed at a pace that stimulates yet doesn't overwhelm you.

In Chapter 1 we'll go eyeball-to-eyeball with those demons inside you who cheer on the sidelines every time you misspeak or misstep—or prevent you from stepping out much at all. They whisper nasty reminders of all your faults and weaknesses. Of course, they would have you believe that you can't live without them. Can you relate? Yet how can you promote yourself when the voices in your head are constantly reminding you of all your shortcomings? How convincing can you be at selling yourself if you're not convinced of your own value? We'll go inward to take stock of your strengths, talk back to those sniping voices, and emerge stronger and ready to go after what's important to you.

Ready to go inward, outward, and onward?