

Introverts, use 'quiet strength' in your career



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There are those people who are outgoing, love to speak up and enjoy being the center of attention. And then there are those who would rather keep to themselves and keep their mouths shut. The workplace is full of both types of individuals who both have a lot to offer. However, when it comes to promotions and leadership opportunities, the quiet ones are often overlooked. According to leadership consultant Jennifer Kahnweiler, four out of five introverts say extroverts are more likely to get ahead where they work.

It doesn't have to be that way.

"Introverts can learn to build on their quiet strength and succeed," says Kahnweiler, who is author of "The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength." Here are some of her tips:

- Have a game plan. Prepare for high-stakes meetings and conversations, anticipating questions and rehearsing your responses.

- Communicate early and often. Don't wait to be asked for updates and reports or news about your accomplishments. Take the initiative in sharing information with higher-ups,

team members and project stakeholders.

- Match the medium to the message. Don't hide behind e-mail. Texting and e-mail are great for quick exchanges, but they miss the mark in critical high-touch areas, including developing relationships and delivering difficult news.

- Use social networking to set the stage. With Web sites like Facebook and Twitter, you can introduce yourself to and get to know people you'll be meeting in person later.

- Assert yourself. Assertiveness is simply being open, honest and direct — asking for what you need and want. Fail to assert yourself at work and you risk losing career-making opportunities.

- Get your voice in the room. Without delay, speak up in meetings and conference calls. Try to make your first comment within no more than five minutes. Even a quick question, remark or paraphrase will do.

- Stand up to "talkers." One simple, sure-fire strategy to get a word in edgewise: Hold up your hand, give the stop or timeout signal, and calmly announce, "I'd like to say something."

- Value humor. As a reserved, inner-focused contributor, you can overcome perceptions of being stand-offish or too serious by smiling, laughing and having fun now and then. You need not "yuk it up" — just be good-humored.

- Be a storyteller. Stories put oomph into ideas and help engage and connect people. Weave real-life anecdotes and examples into talks and presentations.

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