

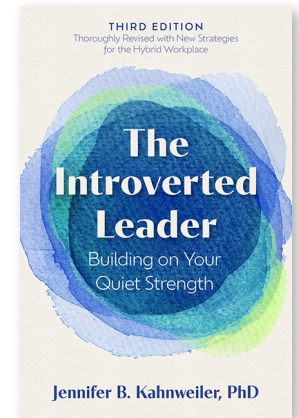


Executive Book Summaries®

The Introverted Leader

Building on Your Quiet Strength

by **Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, PhD**



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The 4 Ps Process

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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Introverts rock. People often think that a big, vibrant personality is needed to succeed in the workplace. That simply is not true. Often it is the quietest people who have the loudest minds. Unfortunately, many introverts feel excluded, overlooked, or misunderstood, and the workplace cultures are still skewed toward extroverts. The hopeful news, however, is that introverts are finding their voice, and the world is starting to awaken to the power of introverted leaders.

In *The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength*, Jennifer B. Kahnweiler is able to define introversion and explain the challenges those individuals face. Furthermore, she is able to examine these workers and emphasize what makes them valuable in the workplace. Over time, many companies have mistaken introverts as shy and quiet and having nothing to contribute to their businesses. However, by learning more about how they work, companies are able to tap into a demographic that often gets overlooked, which leads to a boom in their business.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Learn the definition and benefits of introverted leadership.
- Explore the six main challenges introverts face in the workplace.
- Discover the 4 Ps: Prepare, Presence, Push, and Practice
- Learn the many benefits of focusing on an introvert's strengths.

Six Key Challenges for Introverts

The Challenges

For much of the past century, organizations have privileged the outspoken and gregarious to the exclusion of the quiet and introspective. Many organizations have not rewarded leadership as much as “loudership.” And they have paid a price. By overlooking and undermining introverts in the workplace, companies have wasted untold potential.

Naming the Challenges

In this book’s studies, six key themes emerge as significant barriers for introverted leaders:

People exhaustion- The “people time” threshold is different for everyone, but being outgoing, conversational, and highly engaged can be stressful for introverts. Part of a leader’s role is to connect with people, and without awareness and tools to manage their energy, introverts can become exhausted.

A Fast Pace- You might feel pressure from your manager, team, or organization to do fast turnarounds when you don’t feel you have collected all the necessary data. Meetings are often scheduled back-to-back. As an introvert, you probably prefer to reflect on issues and ideas and to take more time to consider decisions, despite pressure to make them quickly.

Getting Interrupted- Introverts say that when they do speak up, their ideas often get passed over or hijacked by more aggressive people around them. Some also complain about their ideas not sticking. As an introvert, you also are likely to appreciate the power of the pause, which provides you with a chance to catch your breath and think.

Pressure to Self-Promote- Discomfort with networking and a tendency toward humility can make self-promotion a challenge for many introverts. In addition, they value privacy, so blasting their accomplishments on social media feels uncomfortable.

An Overemphasis on Teams- While teams can bring diverse perspectives and skills to a project, structuring team processes to bring out the best ideas from introverts could be a much better way to accomplish goals.

Negative Impressions- Introverts often tend to show less emotion in their facial expressions than extroverts. Introverts are often asked, “What’s wrong?” even when nothing is the matter. They’re usually just thinking. A concept called the perception gap offers one way to view how these impressions are formed.

Unlocking Success: The 4 Ps Process

For introverts who want to strengthen their role as a leader, myriad steps and strategies are available to choose from. How do you get a handle on what to do without getting overwhelmed?

Consider a framework called the 4 Ps Process: prepare, presence, push, and practice.

Prepare- Preparation gives you confidence to handle situations as they emerge. Examples include writing thoughtful questions prior to a meeting, reading the résumé of a job candidate before interviewing them, or researching a client prior to a sales meeting.

Presence- Refers to being present in a way that allows you to be with people. Examples of presence include glancing up from your laptop when a team member asks you a question, calling out a keen observation at a meeting, or switching gears during a presentation when the audience is not responsive.

Push- This likely puts you outside your comfort zone. Examples of push include attending a professional event when you’d rather stay home, initiating a conversation with a coworker, or approaching your boss for a raise.

Practice- Seize opportunities to practice new behaviors. Engaging in conversational icebreakers, facilitating meetings, and telling stories all take a great deal of practice to master.

Leading People and Projects

Can Introverts Really Be Leaders?

Many of the leaders who have presided over astonishing gains in the performance of their companies would hardly be described as “extroverts.” Such leaders mostly combine the introvert’s tenacity and focus on the business with humility and a willingness to share leadership.

Reframing the Traits of Strong Leaders

Introverts are no more likely to be good or bad bosses than extroverts. For example, introverts might be more likely to exhibit traits such as listening, while a trait like friendliness might be more overt in extroverts. But all traits are typically mixed and matched.

Prepare: Getting training, coaching, and mentoring will increase your chances of leading and managing others successfully. Several other steps can help prepare you for lead-

Now there's an opportunity to take advantage of these options that have tremendous potential benefits for introverts.

ership responsibilities as they morph and change. Consider these suggestions as you prepare for your leadership role:

- Know yourself.
- Build your team.
- Create an introvert-friendly hiring process.
- Allow for breaks.

Presence: Being present with people and projects is an essential part of being an introverted leader. As you practice leadership presence, here are some key strategies to build on your quiet strength:

- Walk around.
- Write it down.
- Listen like a leader.
- Have spontaneous conversations.
- Flex your approach.
- Observe to make decisions.

Push: In amplifying your leadership strengths, you can address one change at a time. Ask yourself which skill can help you achieve the most important challenges you face. Here are three leadership strategies that can push you toward both discomfort and growth:

- Be assertive.
- Delegate.
- Manage conflict.

Practice: People tend to think that it's the extroverts who engage effortlessly in conversations and give eloquent speeches. But introverts can do this just as well. Here are two ways to ensure that you practice these strengths:

- Lead from your natural strengths.
- Surround yourself with a support system.

Introverted Leaders in the New Workplace

The Pros of Remote and Hybrid Work

Experiments with working from home, even one day a week, were having a positive impact. Even before the pandemic, back in 2018, a survey of 240 introverts reported that remote work was viewed very favorably. In 2020, the first year of the pandemic, over 85 percent of the respondents in our survey of almost two hundred introverts indicated they were very satisfied or satisfied with the arrangement. Some critical reasons for this were no commute, being more productive, and having a flexible schedule. In the most recent research conducted in 2024, they asked introverts in a remote or hybrid work situation to respond. The high satisfaction rates remained, with approximately 90 percent of the fully remote respondents either very satisfied or satisfied with their arrangement. Eighty-five percent of those who work remotely five days a week still cited "no commute" as a top benefit.

Challenges

Lack of Communication and Connection- zoom fatigue, superficial relationships, virtual overload, and loneliness.

Other Risks of Being Alone Too Much- losing sight of the larger mission, creative paralysis, loss of perspective

As discussed, during the global pandemic, the world changed and offices changed along with it. Now there's an opportunity to take advantage of these options that have tremendous potential benefits for introverts.

Prepare: Some strategies to help you prepare are to:

- Prepare for connection.
- Implement Employee Resource Groups.
- Plan for days in the office.

Presence: Some ways to drive presence in the office are to:

- Manage performance.
- Consider office spaces.
- Think creatively about other spaces.

Push: Following are some ways to push yourself to address the challenges you may face in the new workplace:

- Make intentional connections.
- Announce your accomplishments.

Practice: As you move forward in this new remote and hybrid workplace, take these two steps to keep practicing:

- Listen to introverts.
- Become a voice for the quiet.

Delivering Powerful Presentations

As with any leadership skill, strong presentation skills are not correlated with extroversion. Many introverts have developed high-profile careers that require presence and presentation skills, including introverts like entrepreneur Oprah Winfrey, the late chief justice of the Supreme Court Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and Apple CEO Tim Cook, all of whom have mastered the skill of public speaking.

Prepare: Successful introverted leaders discover that they must prepare the material and themselves. If you are prepared, you can be more aware and grounded when in the actual presentation. Here are the major elements of preparing for your presentation:

- Know your audience.
- Prepare your content.
- Prepare yourself.

Presence: You're prepared and you know your material cold. Now it's time to speak. Consider how to make all that preparation time pay off so that you can stay present. Here are three ways to be fully present:

- Connect with your audience.
- Take pauses.
- Attend to your body language.

Push: The push step in delivering presentations raises your game. Here are three steps to consider:

- Use technology.
- Say it aloud.
- Get creative.

Practice: If you take the time to notice them, opportunities to speak are all around you. Here are some tips to practice:

- Deliver a recap of a recent training class at your next staff meeting.

- After you attend a conference, report back to your team what you learned about competitive trends.
- Offer to present a project status report to another team.
- Volunteer to encourage people to attend a fundraiser.

Leading and Participating in Meetings

Look at what techniques can help you, as an introverted leader, build on your quiet strengths in meetings where extroverts tend to dominate.

Prepare: Whether you are running the meeting or are a participant, know the key elements to help you prepare:

- Know the purpose.
- Prepare to contribute, and help others do the same.
- Ease into the meeting.
- Sit strategically (in person).

Presence: Ways to develop presence in meetings:

- Establish and enforce ground rules.
- Use brainwriting.
- Get your voice in the room.
- Build in breaks.

Push: You can strengthen your push muscle at meetings when you:

- Use technology wisely.
- Have assertive tools to handle extroverts.

Practice: You most likely will have many opportunities to practice your meeting management approaches. Here are some ideas on how you can practice getting the maximum results from your meetings:

- Become a meeting SME. (Subject Matter Expert)
- Use meetings as learning labs.
- Practice new approaches.

Networking, Your Way

Networking concerns are among the top issues that introverted clients bring to sessions. There is misunderstanding about what it means to network. Networking is about building relationships for mutual, beneficial exchange. We accomplish our goals, receive support, and learn from the people we know

Introverted leaders take the time they need to think about their goals for interactions, whether it is in face-to-face conversations, phone calls, or meetings.

and trust. Research has revealed that introverts, with their focused attention, willingness to prepare for social situations, and listening acumen, can be tremendously impactful connectors who build strong, lasting relationships.

Prepare: To become a strong networker, follow these five guidelines:

- Know your purpose.
- Decide what you can offer.
- Decide what you need.
- Prepare questions.
- Create a social media strategy.

Presence: Here are ways to develop your networking presence:

- Listen actively.
- Move to substance talk.
- Pique interest.

Push: Introverted leaders take several actions to move out of their networking comfort zone. Here are nine practical networking push steps you can choose from:

- Resist looking at your phone.
- Introduce people.
- Try the Fast Friends Procedure.
- Look for “open 2s and 3s.”
- Lead an icebreaker.
- Learn and teach names.
- Step up to volunteer.
- Ask for an introvert-friendly meeting location.
- Honor your need to recharge.

Practice: Not only will you become better at networking, but you can practice once you’ve established momentum. Here are two ways to do that:

- Feed your network.
- Follow up.

Communicating and Coaching for Results

Have you ever had a productive work conversation in an informal setting? Maybe it wasn’t in a pickup, but you probably found the unstructured setting made it easier to converse. Informal environments set the stage for building rapport and leading the kind of low-key, low-stress conversations that introverts relish. Work can then flow more naturally.

Prepare: Preparation contributes greatly to communication success. Introverted leaders take the time they need to think about their goals for interactions, whether it is in face-to-face conversations, phone calls, or meetings. Here are a few key steps that they take to prepare to communicate and coach for results:

- Be curious.
- Prepare a script of talking points.
- Prenumber comments.
- Allow time between appointments.
- Prepare great questions.
- Plan productive coaching sessions.

Presence: After they have prepared, introverted leaders are clear in their ongoing communication. Here are three important ways to do that:

- Communicate expectations.
- Solicit input.
- Match the medium to the message.

Push: Introverted leaders who possess strong communication skills may make it look easy; but like actors who have focused on the discipline of learning their lines, they have likely pushed themselves out of their natural comfort zone. Here are four key ways you can push yourself to excel in communication while staying true to who you are:

- Flex your style.
- Raise the bar on your presentations.

- Communicate with grounded energy.
- Show power through your voice.

Practice: Opportunities to experiment with communication and coaching approaches are everywhere. The next time you are sitting in an airport, waiting in a grocery store line, or at a school function, try striking up a conversation with a stranger. It will offer you a chance to practice your conversational skills, raise your endorphins, and make new connections. Here are some specific ways to practice:

- Use the eyebrow test.
- Record yourself.

Managing Up

Renowned management expert Peter Drucker famously said, “You don’t have to like or admire your boss.” But he also emphasized the importance of managing relationships with supervisors because they can be key resources for “achievement, accomplishment and personal success.” Managing your boss means being savvy enough to realize that you need each other to accomplish your mutual goals.

Prepare: Here are four steps you can take when preparing to manage up:

- Meet regularly.
- Consider the big picture.
- Know what support you need.
- Observe your manager’s style.

Presence: During these meetings, you will inevitably learn a great deal about your boss, your team, and your organization. This will help you accomplish your job and keep your career moving forward. Here are suggestions to make the most of these conversations:

- Be yourself.
- Demonstrate results.
- Act on feedback.
- Seek out mentors and sponsors.

Push: It is not always easy to manage up, but it is necessary if you are to accomplish your goals. You are in a partnership that is not unlike a marriage, where open communication is necessary. You and your boss can achieve better results together than either of you could alone. Look at push approaches that can help make this happen:

- Be honest.
- Give upward feedback.
- Try the SAR method.
- Know when to step back.

Practice: As an introverted leader, you can make managing up a key part of your leadership portfolio. One of the main ways to do that is to stay on top of change.

Results of Using the 4 Ps Process

The Wins for You

Prepare Example: Raj’s consulting firm had imposed a sales quota. He felt pressure to call Michelle, a former client, to touch base and uncover her current business needs. As he prepared to press the numbers on his handset, Raj reviewed his prepared questions and visualized a successful call by closing his eyes for two minutes. He pictured a calm, focused exchange between them. Raj felt energized and optimistic about future business opportunities with Michelle and her company.

Presence: When you convey presence, as Raj did, you are perceived as a good listener and people will share valuable information with you.

Push: Testing your limits helps you discover your capabilities and increases your confidence. It can open opportunities you never thought possible. That is the key payoff of push.

Practice: When you practice, you can figure out which behaviors work for your authentic self.

The Wins for Your Organization

Prepare: Introverted leaders who prepare for conversations and research their stakeholders’ needs build trust and commitment with employees, customers, and managers.

Presence: Leaders with presence create a climate in which people are appreciated for their contributions. Companies that are populated with managers who have presence attract and retain employees.

Push: Companies benefit when all leaders—not just extroverts—are able to contribute ideas.

Practice: Introverted leaders who practice their strengths garner respect from others. Their leadership impacts the organizational culture in a positive way.

Overuse of the 4 Ps

Prepare: You can overprepare. Preparation reaches a point of no return, and you can feel anxious and start to second-guess yourself when you overprepare.

Presence: It is also possible to go overboard on presence. When under pressure to connect, it is very common for introverts to act the role of being more sociable than they feel. This can work to a point, but you can put so much energy into pretending that it exhausts you or comes off as inauthentic.

Push: You can push yourself too hard.

Practice: You can overpractice a strength. That can lead to you ignoring important tasks you need to accomplish as a leader.

With planning and conscious attention, you can build on your natural introverted leadership strengths to get results. These accomplishments will impact your own personal development and your organization's performance. With the great problems the organizations face today, they are surely losing out by not tapping into more than half of the population and acknowledging the many gifts they contribute. Introverts bring tremendous strengths to the challenges of leading a team. When they harness these quiet strengths, they can be powerful leaders. Introverts also have unique qualities that make them particularly suited to leading people toward great results. We face tremendous challenges and great opportunities in our workplaces and in the world at large. Our organizations, teams, individuals, and ultimately our planet benefit when we highlight and harness these introvert strengths, reaping the broad range of introvert talent available to us.



Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, PhD, helps build strong leaders through her highly engaging speaking, training, and executive coaching programs. Called the “down-to-earth Ph.D.” she specializes in translating leadership theory into practice. Her clients include Capital One, Turner, AT&T, the Coca-Cola Company, and GE. She is an author and speaker hailed as a pioneer of the introvert revolution of the past decade. Her practical books have focused on how introverts can lead and inspire others at work by tapping into their natural quiet strengths.

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