

Introvert /Extrovert

Unleash your
personality
superpowers
and thrive in
business.

by Jacki Smith and
Patty Shaw

WHATEVER ROAD LED YOU to owning or managing a store, by now you know a successful store needs a successful leader, whether you were prepared to be one when you first set out or not. The way you lead—your leadership style—influences your vision for your store, your store's culture, and your community's perception of your store. How well you embrace and execute this leadership role depends on how well you understand and play to the strengths of your leadership style.

We all have personality traits that dictate the way we interact with the world, including the way we lead. One fundamental trait, coined by psychologist Carl Jung in the 1920s and later popularized by the Myers-Briggs personality test, is introversion vs. extroversion. Jung believed we all fall within an introvert-extrovert spectrum, and no matter what our predominant type is, we also hold qualities of our opposite. We wouldn't be able to function well in society if we didn't.

Being an introvert or an extrovert (sometimes written as "extraverts") is simply the way you "turn" to maximize your talents and respond to stimulation. The root word "vertere" means "to turn." Extroverts are characterized by an *outward* flowing of personal energy; they are motivated and influenced by their external environment. "Extros" do better in crowds and find their comfort zone in group activities. Introverts are characterized by an *inward* flowing of personal energy; they are most happy alone and have a rich imagination. "Intros" do better when given time to reflect and gather their opinions.

No matter which side of the introvert-extrovert scale you fall on, your personality type is frequently judged by others—both positively and negatively. Extroverts are often said to be great leaders, successful and wise, while introverts are often labeled insecure, shy, and needing to be more extroverted to be successful. The reality is both introverts and extroverts have amazing leadership qualities. In fact, many excellent leaders in the business and political worlds develop more of an "ambi-vert" quality, drawing on both ends of the spectrum. Learning which side of this introvert-extrovert spectrum you tend toward is an important step in embracing your own leadership style.

A true tale of opposites

As business partners in Coventry Creations, we, Patty and Jacki, are proof that opposites can learn and grow together. You don't have to flip through our Myers-Briggs profiles to see we have grand leanings toward opposite ends of the introvert-extrovert spectrum. We have learned first-hand that introverts and extroverts often interpret the same words and actions very differently; it's almost as if we sometimes speak different languages.

We have learned through the years to value each other's qualities, as together they bring a yin-and-yang balance and strength to our leadership. We hope to show you, through our experiences, that your introvert-extrovert status doesn't define your leadership style, as much as it shapes how you express it, and that both introverts and extroverts can become superior leaders.

Patty: The iron-willed introvert

I like my space. My office is my sanctuary, filled with the things that comfort me. It's small and cozy, with an imaginary wall separating Jacki's side of the office from mine. I struggle with being overly stimulated by too much noise, light, emotions, and conflict. I prefer quiet, one-on-one conversations to group presentations. I need quiet time to sort things out in order to come up with my answers. In short, I'm an introvert.

I used to think I was shy and not at all leadership material. Powerful and effective leaders, I thought, are



What Type Am I? Discover Who You Really Are by Renee Baron is a quick guide to finding your type and understanding how to work with other types. A great leader works to understand how to get the best out of each employee no matter their personality type. Open the door to this information, and you will discover a whole new way of understanding yourself and your employees.

What's your type? The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality assessment is one well respected measure for introversion vs. extroversion. Take it online at www.mbticomplete.com (\$49.95) to see where you fall on the spectrum. Or, Similarminds.com (<http://similarminds.com/jung.html>) offers a free, online test similar to the introvert/extrovert section of the Myers-Briggs assessment.

You may be surprised to find you are really an introvert trying to mimic the extroverts in your life, or you may be an extrovert taught to hide your light under a bushel basket. During times of stress or fatigue, though, we revert to our base personality type, in spite of our attempts to suppress it.

outgoing, love the spotlight, are happier when surrounded by people, and get "juiced" when they work in groups. That is to say, they are extroverts and quite my opposite.

It wasn't until I read the book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain that I understood what it means to be introverted. I've been accused of being shy, a snob, quiet and reserved, and having "a low emotional quotient." What I am according to Cain, though, is a person born with an introvert's brain. One third of our population has this kind of brain. Rather than having a flawed personality, introverts are the yin to the yang (extrovert) side of our population.

Studies have shown the sensory part of the brain is larger in an introvert. What happens when these receptors to light, sound, and emotions are larger? They receive more stimuli and pump up the volume of life, right in our own heads. This is the key reason introverts need down time: We lack sufficient filtering for sensory input.

But, this same "lack" is also a superpower in disguise. We introverts simply need to embrace the fact that nothing escapes our notice. As the great observers of life, we know how others feel, see what others think is hidden, and naturally watch behaviors, habits, and trends. All this goes into the introvert's brain and is categorized for later analysis and problem solving. So, when an introvert tells you your motivations for your actions, they are likely to be eerily spot on. Not because we are psychic, but because we take it all in, constantly.

If you're an introvert, don't dismiss this quality of "noticing" as being too nosy or intrusive. Embrace it as



"As the great observers of life, we know how others feel, see what others think is hidden, and naturally watch behaviors, habits, and trends."

the quality that makes you able to collect and use data to best serve your vision for your store. You also will be able to serve your community better with programs, classes, and events that really speak to them. You'll be the one who knows exactly what they want, just by tuning in and letting your introverted brain work on it. It will feel magical, and you'll become more empowered as you share your gifts of observation with the world.

Introverts can't handle stress? Poppycock! An introvert can give a dynamite presentation, run a store with many things going on, handle conflict with employees, and solve customer problems. It's imperative, though, that introverts give themselves

down time and respect their tendency toward information overload.

Lots of stimuli can drain our batteries, while it charges the batteries of an extrovert. Turn this need for reflection into a superpower: Let others (extroverts!) take over while you retreat and let all that delicious information get converted into solutions! Find the extroverts on your staff and empower them to be the temporary ringmasters of your three-ring circus. You will be amazed how well they can carry your vision and sell it to others.

Another misconception about introverts is that being quiet is a cover-up for "lights on, nobody home" or "cute, but kinda dull." If you have ever paid attention to the quiet ones when they have something to say (which I'm sure you introverts have), they nail it. Remember, introverts are the ones who have the superpower for gathering not-so-obvious information. Although not as glamorous as the flair extroverts have for working a crowd with their gift of gab, "nailing it" is a notoriously effective skill for you to have as a dependable leader and store owner. It comes from taking the time to think things through and present a solid solution based on all factors.



Jacki had to learn to be patient when she asks me questions or needs my input. Many times my thoughtful, delayed responses were misunderstood as "I don't know" silences, and she would carry on the conversations without me or feel she had to make all the decisions herself. Both options stress us out. After some honest communication, we learned that I need time to construct my responses, not because I am "cute and dull," but because I have so much data to organize and prioritize. As an introvert, I do not like wasting anyone's time with off-the-cuff answers; I want to give a useful opinion that can stand up to any litmus test.

Another interesting difference between introverts and extroverts is that one of them can process information and make a decision at the same time. I bet you guessed which! Yep, that is a beautiful quality and gift of the extrovert.

Jacki: The red-headed, freight-train extrovert

I used to be shy, and to this day I can still feel really shy in certain situations. Whenever I share this, people refuse to believe me. Yes, I can be very passionate and gregarious and a little pied-piper-like in my approach to life, but I still have my insecurities, and for extroverts, our insecurities are as loud as our confidence.

As an extroverted child I loved to perform to gain attention. Not that I put on stage performances necessarily, but I had something to say about everything. I wanted to have a voice, to be heard, and to be a part of any conversation going on around me. With seven older siblings, two parents, and countless cousins, my extroverted nature was not enjoyed by all. My teachers both loved and hated me: I was always there with an answer ... but I was *always* there with an answer.

Extroverted children can be very outgoing and attention-seeking, yet they are told not to show off, not to seek attention. The big mixed message when you are growing up extroverted is that society prefers and rewards extroverts, but don't act like that when you're a

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child. I watched how the quiet and helpful kids were praised, so by the time I got to high school, I had lost the verve to challenge and embrace life. I got quiet, and a quiet extrovert is one filled with self-doubt and fear of judgment—and can become really out of balance.

The brain of an extrovert works fast: they see a problem, assess the immediate factors, and create a solution—right now. That kind of speed can throw off the introvert and make the extrovert seem unconcerned with the severity of a situation. Another side effect of this quick thinking is that everyone learns to go to the extroverted “boss with all the solutions.” Why bother taking the time to figure it out when the boss can just make a snap decision?

As an extroverted leader, I have had to bite my tongue and learn to trust my team to assess the situation and come up with their own answers. Notice I say “trust my team” rather than “let my team.” Your employees know the difference between trusting them and humoring them. It’s in the extrovert’s



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bring everyone in line with my goals. I have learned I also have to make space for introverts to join in quietly, yet just as enthusiastically.

The superpower of the extrovert comes through when we are working in groups. As we listen to the ideas and input of others, our consciousness expands and we are stimulated and energized. Extroverts tend to define themselves within “group think” and through the responses of group members. As extroverts, although not fans of the status quo, we need to be careful of losing our own opinions to mob mentality.

We are living in the age of the extrovert. Dale Carnegie started this trend with his book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. From the growing number of networking groups to leadership training, we are being pushed into more and more extroverted roles. With all this emphasis on extroversion, it can be hard for extroverts to remember that not everyone is like them, and yet there is much an extrovert can gain by embracing some qualities of the introvert. Here is how I find some balance for my red-headed, freight-train qualities:

nature to pounce at the first opening to share their ideas. As a leader, though, I can use my extroverted nature to encourage and celebrate my team’s ideas as they bring them forward. Often I find they have been more thorough and caught things I missed.

I love being an extrovert. Once I shed that childhood training to never make a “spectacle” of myself, I realized I love talking to people, inspiring people, and engaging with life. I get to flirt with my customers, be passionate about what I do, and yes, I get to make a spectacle of myself at times. As the visionary at Coventry, I set the culture of our business. Being an extrovert allows me to do this with outward passion and helps

- I give myself space to be quiet and introspective. I shut off all the noise and sit alone with my brain. I can then form my own opinions and identity based on my core self.
- I don’t engage in a conversation until I have heard from everyone involved in the discussion. Full disclosure: I am still working on shutting up once I start talking!
- When working with my favorite introverted business partner, Patty, I send her a detailed e-mail and then ask her to speak to me about the situation within the next 24 hours. If it’s an emergency, I talk to her and then wait for her brilliant response.
- When I am feeling shy in an uncertain situation, I remember that being a spectacle in front of strangers can be cathartic!

Embrace your style and thrive

Whether you’re an introvert, an extrovert, or even an “ambi-vert,” understanding where you fall on the introvert-extrovert spectrum will help you to fully embrace your leadership style. By recognizing how you relate to the world and playing to your strengths and the strengths of your staff, you can unleash your personality superpowers and thrive in business.

■ **JACKI SMITH** is the Founder and Enchantress of Coventry Creations (www.coventrycreations.com). Her magical candles have been changing lives for almost 20 years. Jacki’s continual study of the retail market helps her help her customers stay in business.

■ **PATTY SHAW** is a writer, healer, teacher, and co-owner of Coventry Creations, where she is Operations Oracle. She has been making Jacki’s magic happen in a very practical way with wax, herbs and oils, and a crack team of magic makers.

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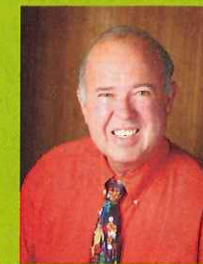
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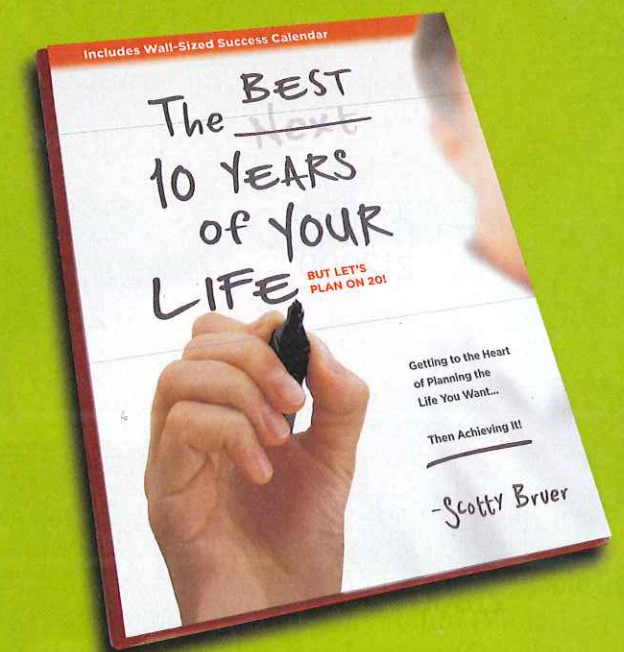
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