

# FAQs for Quiet Schools Facilitators

## FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

### **What is Quiet all about and why does it resonate with readers?**

There currently exists a strong—albeit primarily unspoken—bias for extroversion in our society. This bias shows up in our homes, schools, workplaces, and places of worship and strongly influences how we perceive and engage with others. However, extroverts only account for a third to a half of the population. The other half considers themselves to be introverts. The “extrovert ideal” often fails to recognize, respect, and nurture the unique strengths of introverts. Quiet examines this dynamic and debunks many of the myths we share about what it means to be introverted and extroverted.

Part of Susan’s motivation for writing the book was due to a major disconnect she noticed between effective leaders and assumptions about introversion. In essence, she noted several successful leaders making a significant contribution to our culture (e.g. Bill Gates, Theodore Geisel, etc.) who were classic introverts. In fact, their introverted personality style directly contributed to their ability to BE so successful. How did this measure up against our cultural bias for extroversion?

Psychologists agree that introversion and extroversion are one of the most salient elements of human nature regardless of gender, race, or culture. Regardless where we may personally fall on the introversion/extroversion scale, we can all relate to the personality styles, which is what makes Quiet so compelling to readers globally. The research gives people the permission to be who they inherently are and empowers them to unlock their individual potential.

### **What is the correlation between solitude and creativity?**

Artists have long valued solitude as a critical element in their creative process. In one example, the designer Phillip Starck secludes himself from the world for eight months out of the year

so he can focus on his creative process and be unencumbered by outside distractions. Compare the value placed on solitude in artistic fields versus how creativity is fostered in the corporate context where collaboration, brainstorming, group work, and open floor plans are the norm. There is ample research to support the fact that the dependency on brainstorming and group work is less effective for generating creative outcomes. Ideally, the creative process should be a mix of individual focus and social sharing. Research indicates that the most successful creative people and teams—regardless of industry—are those who demonstrate a healthy balance of introverted and extroverted behaviors. What does this mean for corporate America? The innovation process would be better served by allowing employees to have a period of alone time for deep, intensive creative thinking following by organized time with others to dialogue about ideas and share feedback.

### **What is the relationship between being introverted or extroverted and being creative?**

Creativity or innovation is not a condition of being introverted or extroverted. Both introverts and extroverts can be highly creative individuals; however they have different sources of inspiration and express their creativity differently. Take Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak as an example. Jobs was a classic extrovert and Wozniak a classic introvert and they were both incredibly creative. Wozniak sought out solitude and silence for his creative endeavors whereas Jobs preferred interacting with others for his inspiration. By working in the conditions that best suited their personality style they each were empowered to innovate in deeply influential ways.

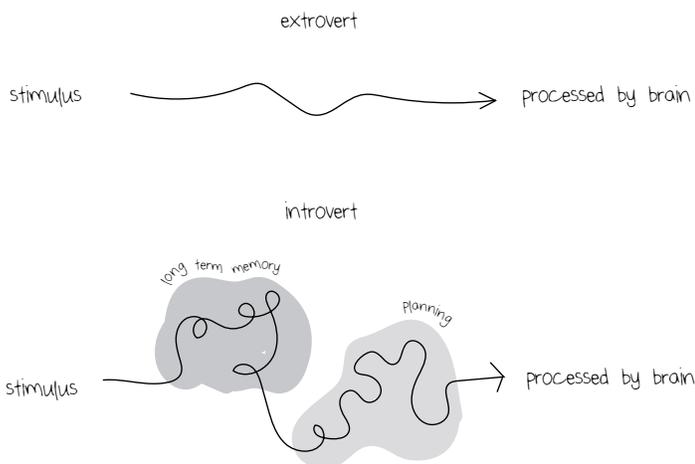
### **Are introverts poor communicators?**

Introverts are not inherently better or worse at communicating than extroverts; they just have a different style of communication, which works to greater or lesser effective in various contexts. Many introverts have learned to act like extroverts in the way they communicate (e.g., being more direct, not afraid to interrupt others, etc.) and some of them are quite good at this. However, acting as someone you’re not for an



extended period of time is exhausting and take a serious psychological toll.

Introverts do not need to pretend to be something they're not to communicate effectively. They are better served when they own their introverted personality style and leverage their inherent strengths. Doug Conant, the former CEO of Campbell's Soup and a self-identified introvert, conducts a "Declare Yourself" activity each time he begins working with a new direct report. In this activity, Doug speaks candidly about being introverted and makes explicit what this means for how he prefers to communicate and work with others. He invites the colleague to share their own style and preferences, if they feel comfortable doing so. Through repeated use of this declaration exercise, Doug has discovered that it quickly builds trust and mutual respect between leaders and direct reports



## LEADERSHIP & COACHING

### What is it about introverts that make them great leaders?

Introverts usually aren't drawn to leadership roles for the sake of being leaders. They typically arrive there because they demonstrate passion and aptitude in a particular area. Over time, through their focus and commitment, they are recognized for their extraordinary performance and expertise. They also build broad, loyal networks of colleagues and advisors, who often advocate for their move into a leadership position.

In his landmark leadership book *Good to Great* Jim Collins studied the top 11 performing companies in an effort to determine the secret to their success. The results were surprising. Every single company was led by a man or woman whom others described as "modest, humble, shy, reserved, low key." While Collins doesn't use the introversion/extroversion terminology, the characteristics of these 11 leaders are classic introverted personality strengths.

### Very often, senior leaders have a hard time believing that introverts are promotable into leadership positions. How can you change this perception?

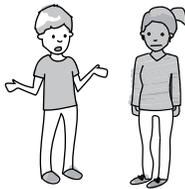
Changing perceptions often can be accomplished with small but meaningful steps. One way to do this is to identify one or two high-potentials who are also introverts and have a deep conversation with them about their career aspirations. Many people are surprised to hear that introverts are often just as ambitious as their extrovert colleagues; they just go about pursuing that ambition in a different way. In these one-on-one conversations the objective would be to work with the high-potential to identify his/her strengths and then together create a professional development plan that leverages those strengths for the organization.

There was a great article in the *Wall Street Journal* about a man by the name of Thomas Lynch who was disregarded as being promotable because of his introverted personality style. However, he was ambitious and determined to advance in his career so he hired a professional coach to help him be more extroverted, and thereby more likely to be promoted. Through working with his coach, Thomas gathered 360 degree feedback from managers and peers who overwhelmingly said they valued his introverted personality traits. He learned he didn't need to change his personality to advance his career but rather needed to figure out how to leverage his strengths in such a way that helped others see the value he would bring to the organization in a leadership capacity.

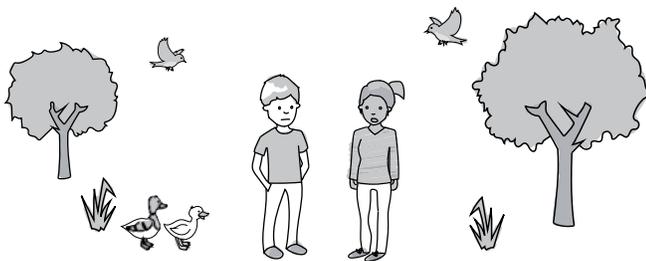
### How can you encourage extroverted leaders to be better listeners?

Extroverted people can be excellent listeners but sometimes they need a little reminder. One technique shared by an extroverted sales leader was to have a list of questions posted

next to his computer. When he finds himself talking too much he looks at the list and begins asking questions of others. Another technique is to assign people roles to play in meetings. Give the extroverted leader the role of “questioner” or “observer” to help him exercise his more quiet side.



and then - hey, are you listening to me?



yes, sorry there's a lot going on

## TEAMWORK

### What guidance can you provide for coaching teams that are a mix of introverts and extroverts?

There is a sound body of research that illustrates the most effective teams are those with a mix of introverted and extroverted personality styles. So ensuring your team has a healthy balance is a good place to start. From there, an effective strategy is to talk openly as a team about the different personality styles and how best to work together. Good questions to discuss include:

- Where do you do your best thinking?
- How do you like to communicate?
- How do you like to celebrate successes?
- What is the best way to share feedback with you?
- How do you like to handle conflict or difficulty situations?

Open dialogue on these issues helps to make explicit and normalize the differences amongst the team. It also opens pathway for collaboration and communication that may not have been readily apparent to the team.

### Do cultural norms influence how introverts and extroverts are perceived?

While there are many competing theories of personality, psychologists agree that introversion and extroversion are one of the most foundational elements of personality. In fact, approximately 50% of this personality style can be attributed to genetics. However, introversion and extroversion play out very differently in different cultures. Cultural norms and biases influences how introversion and extroversion is perceived, nurtured, and valued in personal and professional contexts. For example, Western cultures (particularly the US) are overly biased in favor of an extroverted personality. In comparison, Eastern cultures tend to hold introverted styles in higher regard. That said, cultural nuances and preferences regarding introversion and extroversion is an area that requires more research and understanding. Our advice for global teams is similar to that for culturally or geographically homogeneous teams: talk about individual styles and preferences and identify the best way of working together.



steve looks the same from the front as he does from the back



this is not what i meant by a 360 review

### When coaching or mentoring an introverted colleague, what's the best way to help him/her get recognized for his/her achievements?

Introverts are often uncomfortable with self-promotion. Yet they want to be recognized for their accomplishments as much

as anyone else. One technique that can help them become more comfortable with highlighting their successes is to reframe why they are doing it. For example, instead of thinking about drawing attention to their accomplishments as a means of putting themselves in the spotlight, encourage them to think of it more as putting their work or results in the spotlight.

Introverts are often more comfortable promoting something they care passionately about than their own personal success. Another technique is to share successes and build advocates in one-on-one or small group settings. These settings create a greater degree of intimacy, which plays to introverts' strengths.

## TECHNOLOGY

### What role does technology play in the introversion/extroversion dynamic?

Interestingly, many leaders in the technology industry are classic introverts (e.g., Google, Microsoft, etc.). Technology itself affords multiple ways of connecting with others and sharing ideas. These venues create unique opportunities for both introverts and extroverts to create and sustain relationships in meaningful ways.

### Does social media have greater advantages for introverts?

There is no doubt that social media is creating amazing spaces for people to connect and exchange ideas. However, the advantages and disadvantages of these spaces is still to be determined. Social media does create opportunity for more

thoughtful input and dialogue—which introverts appreciate. But the “always on” element and the pressure to present your best public self at all times (versus your authentic self) can be draining for introverts and extroverts alike.

There are some clever examples of how technology is being used to the advantage of introverts. Prior to founding their startup, Right Solutions, the founders worked in a very competitive business where new ideas were presented in front of a “murder board.” As the name implies, only the heartiest of ideas and presenters got through the ordeal alive. In reaction to this experience, when they started their own company, Right Solutions leaders created an online stock exchange for idea sharing. Every employee was granted “shares” which they use to vote on new, innovative business ideas. The platform promotes thoughtful sharing and constructive feedback and gives everyone the opportunity to shape the future of the organization.

## SCHOOL SPACE DESIGN

### What is your opinion about open office space design and work habits?

There is a significant body of research that documents the negative impact open design has on employees: increased illness, increased distraction, lower productivity, lower quality office relationships, etc. The ideal office layout is one that enables people to move between quiet, individualized spaces and collaborative spaces at will.

