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Dear,

I hope that this finds you well and enjoying some summer weather. In this issue, you'll find:

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- * Practical Tip: Looking Beyond the Recession

My Best Regards to You,
Joyce

Survey Results: Challenges that Introverts Currently Face

By Joyce Shelleman, PhD

The results of the survey of newsletter subscribers are in. I asked, "Frequently, introverts face challenges in their professional lives. To what extent are the following issues a challenge for you personally?" Responses were on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Not at all challenging" and 5 being "Very challenging". Average scores are reported below.

Top Challenge is Networking

Results show that the number one challenge faced by the introverts who responded is networking events (4.75). The related topic of building a professional network (3.75) is also challenging.

The next four highest rated challenges after networking events are diverse. The second greatest challenge reported is **having energy** for professional interactions (4.50). This is related to the introvert's need for quiet and being drained by interpersonal exchanges. While extraverts feel more energetic when they talk more (yes, what you suspected is really true), the opposite is true of most introverts and your responses show that you experience this effect. Comments from a survey respondent also showed the importance of energy. The respondent added the challenges of "Having energy leftover for my family at end of day" and "When in a networking situation or educational seminar, becoming more and more quiet as the day or weekend goes on because the social output exhausts me."

Being recognized for accomplishments (4.00), and **finding a role** that fits one's personality (4.00) are the next highest rated challenges, deemed about equally challenging. The first has to do with being able to do well in your role while the second has to do with finding the right career or professional role to start with. Accomplishments can mean little if they go acknowledged and unrecognized. As an introvert, it can be important for you to actively seek out and find ways to gain "notoriety" with higher ups and others in one's professional circle. The trick is in finding ways to do that that suit you. Speaking of fit, finding the best career role for an introverted personality is something that many introverts struggle with. When I work with clients, I begin this process by conducting a formal assessment of personality, predisposition, and values, among other things.

New Situations

A survey respondent added that, "All (or most) of these [challenges] are difficult when I'm in a new situation; they all get much easier as I become more familiar with people over time." This is an important insight and one that I myself often emphasize because it's not always recognized. When we introverts are in what are considered strong social situations, meaning that we are comfortable and familiar with the parties involved, we tend to behave in ways that are more similar to extraverts. This means that you will tend to be less drained by the interaction, will be less reserved, etc. The lesson here is to create more opportunities for those responses to emerge.

Other Challenges

Some challenges, such as, "Getting along with my boss/superiors" (2.86), though not rated highly overall, were very important to some respondents. So if the challenges that you see as most critical are not highest here, it simply means that you face a differing situation than many others who responded. Because the sample of respondents was small, please be aware that these results may not generalize to a larger population. I have just posted a slightly revised version of the survey to the Resources page of my

website in hopes of collecting more responses. Periodically I will post results there so that you can see what others experience.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the survey! In future issues, I plan to use your highest rated challenges as topics for practical how-to articles.

Summary of Top 4 Challenges:

Networking events
Having energy for my professional interactions
Being recognized for my accomplishments
Finding a role that fits my personality
[Click here for the full list of results.](#)

In the News: Desired Leadership Qualities

A recent survey of accountants conducted by Ajilon Finance and the Institute of Management Accountants (reported by Smartpros Ltd.) showed that a third (33%) of accountants rate "an ability to inspire and motivate" as the most important leadership trait of the 21st century. Communications skills (15%) and people management skills (13%) are the next highest rated desired qualities. These so-called "soft skills" are in stark contrast to the skills that the accountants say their organizations actually reward: global knowledge/expertise, financial savvy, and keen decision-making.

As an introvert, how do these findings reflect your leadership expertise? Are your skills greater in the "soft" or the "hard" category? I suspect that introverts fall either way, with perhaps more on the hard side. But much depends on your industry and your own situation. Also, is there a disconnect in your organization between the skills needed and those rewarded? Send me your thoughts.

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Practical Tip: Looking Beyond the Recession

Both introverts and extraverts are seeking ways to weather the current recession, so this tip applies to anyone. But it has special relevance to introverts because you may face more difficulty getting recognition for your efforts. During this recession, think about how you can be poised to take advantage of an upturn in the economy when it happens. While there's little voluntary movement in the job market right now, with people hunkering down just to survive, that will change. In the meantime, keep your eyes open to future possibilities. There will be different opportunities that emerge due to the economic upheaval and its broad effects. For example, while some layoffs may occur in banking and related industries, there may be new opportunities in green businesses reflecting stimulus spending and Administration priorities. Focus on preparing yourself for these so that you are poised for change, if that is what you want. More on where to look for change and how to prepare yourself in the next issue of Insights for Today's Leaders.

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