

# The Introvert Entrepreneur

AMPLIFY  
YOUR STRENGTHS  
AND CREATE SUCCESS ON  
YOUR OWN TERMS IN TEN STEPS

‘An essential resource for introverts who choose to follow their entrepreneurial vision and carve out their own unique path’

**Susan Cain**, international bestselling author of *Quiet*

Beth Buelow

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## About the Book

Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos are often grouped together as some of the greatest entrepreneurs of our time, but they also have something else in common - they are all introverts.

In *The Introvert Entrepreneur* professional coach Beth Buelow shows us the ten steps introverts can take to utilise their natural gifts (such as listening) and overcome their challenges (such as an aversion to networking) when it comes to starting a business, taking on the mistaken but prevailing assumption that entrepreneurial success belongs to the extroverts.

An introvert trying to be a fake extrovert is just that: a fake extrovert. *The Introvert Entrepreneur* takes a strengths-based approach to being a successful entrepreneur, while also helping you deal with the particular roadblocks you may encounter when building a business.

## About the Author



MIKE NAKAMURA PHOTOGRAPHY

**Beth L. Buelow, ACC**, was in elementary school when she outlined the marketing plan for her first entrepreneurial idea, twenty-three when she learned she was an introvert, and thirty-eight when, in 2010, she put the two together to create the Introvert Entrepreneur, a personal and professional development company.

Since founding the Introvert Entrepreneur, Beth has established herself as the go-to person for introvert entrepreneurs across the globe. She is known for her sharp observations on the introvert nature, her accessibility online and in person, and her willingness to reveal her own entrepreneurial challenges alongside intelligent, heart-centered strategies for overcoming them.

A professional speaker, certified coach, and corporate trainer, Beth has coached dozens of introverted clients, trained hundreds, and spoken to thousands, championing introvert strengths and establishing her expertise in entrepreneurship, communication, and leadership. Her coaching, writing, and speaking style draws on her experiences as a trained classical musician, arts administrator, nonprofit professional, and entrepreneur.

She is an active member of the International Coach Federation (ICF) and the ICF-Washington State Chapter. Beth holds a bachelor's degree in music performance from the University of Louisville, a master's degree in music performance from Northwestern University, and a master's degree in arts administration from Indiana University-Bloomington.

Beth has enjoyed sharing her message that "Success Is an Inside Job!" with numerous organizations and corporations. Selected presentations have included Starbucks, Boeing, Bumbershoot Festival's "Words & Ideas" Series, Seattle University, PrimeGlobal, Xceed Credit Union, Ignite Seattle, MarketingProfs University, eWomen Networking, Northwest Human Resources Management Association Annual Conference, Northwest Entrepreneur Network, and *Puget Sound Business Journal*, among others. Beth has been quoted and contributed to blogs and articles in print and online for *Psychology Today*, *Entrepreneur*, *Success*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company, Inc.*, *Crain's Chicago Business*, *Aquarius Magazine*, *Seattle Times*, and [ToiletPaperEntrepreneur.com](http://ToiletPaperEntrepreneur.com), among others.

Her extremely popular podcast, "The Introvert Entrepreneur," features interviews with well-known and emerging introvert entrepreneurs. Since its launch in August 2010, the eighty-plus podcast episodes collectively have been downloaded more than 700,000 times.

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR  
The Introvert Entrepreneur

“Filled with powerful stories from entrepreneurs in all stages of business, along with actionable advice, this book is an essential resource for introverts who choose to follow their entrepreneurial vision and carve out their own unique path.”

—Susan Cain, cofounder of Quiet Revolution LLC and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*

“As a longtime introvert entrepreneur, I was thrilled to discover a toolkit of resources for others like me. This book shows how you can go your own way while still being true to yourself. You can be successful in business without shouting—and you don't have to attend those boring 'networking' events either.”

—Chris Guillebeau, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The \$100 Startup* and *The Happiness of Pursuit*

“I have always loved listening to Beth Buelow's engaging podcasts. What a treat it is for all of us to learn from her in this well-written and practical book. If you think only extroverts can sell or lead thriving businesses, you will change your mind after reading *The Introvert Entrepreneur*. Interested in joining the growing ranks of entrepreneurs? This book is the definitive guide to have at your side.”

—Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, PhD, author of *Quiet Influence*, *The Introverted Leader*, and *The Genius of Opposites*

“Having followed Beth’s work and then reading *The Introvert Entrepreneur*, I’ve realized that many of my ways of engaging with introverts were always based on my preferences rather than considering theirs. Now armed with increased understanding, I’ve changed my style and am getting better results in my communications with them. This book now has a permanent home on my desk as a valuable reference.”

—Christopher Flett, founder of Ghost CEO and author of *What Men Don’t Tell Women About Business* and *Market Shark*

“As an introvert, entrepreneur, and salesperson, I have been waiting for a book like this one. I just didn’t know it. Beth Buelow provides the essential guidance and encouragement for those labeled as introverts with the passion to grow their businesses.”

—John E. Doerr, co-president of RAIN Group and author of *Insight Selling: Surprising Research on What Sales Winners Do Differently*

“Beth Buelow’s gem of a book is a coach and mentor in your pocket that celebrates your strengths, facilitates your creative thinking, and cheers you along (quietly!), step by step, toward your entrepreneurial dreams. Buelow spurs you to unleash the best of what you have to offer - from reflection to action, from your FUD (fear, uncertainty, doubt) to your prosperity perspective.”

—Nancy Ancowitz, author of *Self-Promotion for Introverts*



“Finally, a book about entrepreneurship that celebrates the gifts, skills, and strengths of introverted business owners. The stories, tools, and frameworks will guide and support effective, sustainable business growth for introverts in every type of business.”

—Pamela Slim, author of *Body of Work* and *Escape from Cubicle Nation*

“In this book, Beth takes you on a powerful journey, dismantling each of the destructive limiting beliefs that most of us introverts have about why we can’t be successful entrepreneurs. This book is an empowering triumph for quiet leaders.”

—Rory Vaden, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Take the Stairs* and *Procrastinate on Purpose*

“What introverted dreamer wouldn’t want a smart, successful mentor available in the quiet of their living room? Beth Buelow is just that, and *The Introvert Entrepreneur* reaches introverts where they live: inside, with their hopes, fears, and questions. An indispensable guide.”

—Laurie Helgoe, PhD, author of *Introvert Power: Why Your Inner Life Is Your Hidden Strength*

“With wisdom and compassion, Buelow teaches introverts not just how to survive the rigors of entrepreneurship but how their particular gifts and quiet strength can help them thrive and prosper.”

—Sophia Dembling, author of *The Introvert’s Way* and *Introverts in Love*

# The Introvert Entrepreneur

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Beth Buelow



## Read This First

You are a walking contradiction.

On the one hand, you are an introvert. You tend to prefer ample alone time. You appreciate blocks of uninterrupted time so you can focus. You enjoy going deep rather than broad in whatever catches your fancy.

On the other hand, you are an entrepreneur. You are required to interact with employees, partners, clients, and customers on a regular basis. You must be accessible and responsive, even when it's not convenient. You have to wear multiple hats, taking on everything from product development to social media to finances.

How can one person be both of these things and remain sane? This book is an attempt to answer that question as well as give you, the introvert entrepreneur, tools not only to save your sanity but to build a business that feeds your soul.

Since 2010, I've been coaching introvert entrepreneurs—those who own their own businesses and those who are “intrapreneurs,” assuming an entrepreneurial role within a larger company—and there are certain challenges that come up over and over again. Here's how my clients typically describe those challenges:

**Networking:** It's exhausting. People are just trying to sell to each other. It's full of small talk, schmoozing, and insincere invitations to get together sometime.

**Sales:** I'm not very good at it. I dread making calls. People will think I'm bothering them. The phrase

*sales funnel* makes me want to run for the hills.

**Self-promotion:** It's challenging to talk about what I do without tripping over my words. I'm hesitant to toot my own horn; I don't want to come across as bragging or arrogant.

**Collaboration:** I tend to wait until the last possible minute to ask for help. It's a lot of work, bringing other people into my business and bringing them up to speed. And if I do start a partnership, I'm concerned our personalities will clash.

**Energy:** I'm supposed to be out and about so much, but it wears me out. I need lots of downtime so that I have the energy to network and market my business. There don't seem to be enough hours in the day for it all.

These entrepreneurs are not complaining or whining. They are simply noticing the areas that drain their energy and stall their progress. And while these challenges aren't unique to introverts, how introverts experience and navigate these challenges *is* unique. We work from the inside out. We internalize, analyze, and sometimes even become paralyzed by the energetic tug-of-war that goes on between our private introvert nature and our public entrepreneurial passion.

*I have the fire, the drive, the know-how. But I've been in the shadow of extroverts for so long, it's vulnerable to step out of the shadows and into the light.*

—Helen Sanderson, owner, Quiet Room Designs

*The Introvert Entrepreneur: Amplify Your Strengths and Create Success on Your Own Terms in Ten Steps* does what no other book on introversion or entrepreneurship has done: It explores a range of entrepreneurial topics from an introvert point of view, including how your personality and energetic type play a role in building a sustainable business; fears, mindset, failure, and self-management; values identification; networking, marketing, and sales; creating community; and partnership and expansion.

*The Introvert Entrepreneur* directly takes on the mistaken but prevailing assumption that entrepreneurial success belongs to the extroverts. This book shares the stories and lessons from introverts who have chosen to defy that assumption, built successful businesses, and created a way of life that honors their natural energy. Rather than seeing introversion as a liability (as most of society treats it), this book provides a road map for entrepreneurs who want to cultivate and amplify their natural, internal strengths.

What many people, including introverts themselves, may not know is that the strengths and traits of the typical introvert—curiosity, desire for depth over breadth, comfort with going solo, thoroughness and introspection, love of research—lend themselves well to entrepreneurship.

Introvert entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates, Larry Page, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, Tony Hsieh, Guy Kawasaki, and others have transformed our lives not by pretending to be extroverts but by applying their introvert strengths to their entrepreneurial endeavors.

An introvert trying to be a fake extrovert is just that: a fake extrovert. If you choose to approach your business with that mindset, you won't solve your problem. You'll only feed the energetic tug-of-war between your private and public personas.

*The Introvert Entrepreneur* acknowledges the particular roadblocks you may encounter when building a business. But it also takes a strengths-based approach to being a successful entrepreneur. Your introversion is a tremendous asset in ways that might not be obvious in our extrovert-leaning world. For instance, you may see yourself in several of these positive traits:

- Ability to focus and develop a depth of understanding
- Comfort with independent thought and action
- Capacity to listen and connect with people on an intimate level
- Active imagination and a strong creative streak
- Desire for knowledge, driven by curiosity
- Calm, steady presence during turbulent times
- Willingness to put other people and their vision in the spotlight

You may have read one of the many books that provides general information about the nuts and bolts of entrepreneurship. This book, however, focuses more on your *relationship* to the nuts and bolts, which is a critical link. It addresses the oft-heard lament: “I know what to do, so *why don't I do it?*”

We can be motivated and excited, but fail to execute on our passions. *Successful execution for the introvert depends on being in alignment with one's energy and strengths.*

One of the reasons introverts choose entrepreneurship is so that they can live and work authentically, according to *their* rules ... yet, so many of the rules are created by extroverts. Learning how to build a sustainable business that emphasizes authenticity, personal and professional relationships, and energy management while leveraging introvert strengths is difficult when much of the available information is provided from an extrovert framework.

This book aims to fill that information gap.

We're not going to dive deep into research or statistics; there are plenty of other resources that do an excellent job going into the mechanics of introversion or entrepreneurship. Instead, we're going to rely on practical advice, personal experiences, and lessons learned from introvert entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey. We'll dissect the fears, challenges, and opportunities that we encounter every single day.

I invite you to see this book as your personal coach, mentor, and reality check. It's part cheerleader, part gentle push off the cliff. Meditate on each chapter or read the book all in one sitting. Make the most of the book's online resources. Reach out to the people who offered their wisdom to you through this book. And, as with any advice you receive about living as an introvert or building your business, some of what you read here will resonate and some of it won't. Take what works and leave what doesn't.

With every growth opportunity, you get out of it what you put into it. I've poured the best of my heart and mind into this book, and I invite you to do the same.

## Chapter 1

# Introversion 101

## What Does It Mean to Be an Introvert and an Entrepreneur?

### **The Perception**

One evening a few years ago, I attended an event sponsored by my professional coaching association. I was seated next to a colleague and his wife, and we were exchanging pleasantries about the event and people we knew. Then the conversation inevitably turned to our work. My colleague's wife shared that she was a schoolteacher and asked me if I was a coach like her husband. I told her, "I am, and I specialize in working with introverts." She was very curious about what that meant, so I explained to her why introverts have a particular set of opportunities and challenges when operating in a more extroverted society. She listened politely, then asked, "Well, are *you* an introvert?" I replied, "Most definitely!" She was flabbergasted. "But you can't be an introvert! You're talking to me!"

Has something like that ever happened to you? Did you know that according to the media and maybe even your friends and family, if you're an introvert, you're probably shy, a poor conversationalist, a loner, depressed, without many friends, a geek, or even a serial killer in waiting? All of these misunderstandings and more are part of the



general myth of what it means to be an introvert. While we've made progress in recent years, there's still an excess of negative stereotypes that are attached to the label *introvert*. The assumptions people make about introverted types range from the benign shy to the more harmful sinister.

We are in the midst of a sea change, in which introversion is being more widely understood and accepted. We have long lived in the shadows, challenged by stereotypes that have seeds of truth but are inaccurately applied to the whole. As author and activist Jonathan Rauch remarks, "In all of these consciousness-raising movements, the first step is embracing the stereotype. But then the second step is moving beyond the stereotype."

In the spirit of leaving those less-than-flattering perceptions behind and moving beyond the stereotypes as quickly as possible, let's take a closer look at what it really means to be an introvert.

## **The Reality**

Understanding the true definition of *introvert* can be extraordinarily empowering and liberating. And yet, because introversion is still not well understood by most people, we can find ourselves defending our choices or disowning what comes naturally to us. Even those who love us can think we need to be fixed in some way. They encourage us to get out of our shell and tell us not to be afraid to speak up. We decide they might have a point, even as we think to ourselves, "Maybe I like my shell" and "I'm not afraid, I just don't have anything to say at this point." We start doubting ourselves and our social skills, and "Fake it till you make it" becomes our mantra for everything from birthday parties to networking events.

The reality is that introversion inherently has nothing to do with social skills and everything to do with how a person gains or drains energy, processes information, and relates to the world.

If introvert entrepreneurs are to step into their power and claim the strengths inherent in their personality, it's important to be clear on what it means to be an introvert. Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Jung coined the terms *introvert* and *extrovert* in the early 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Jung was initially a student of Sigmund Freud in the 1910s. The two had a falling-out, and Jung was fascinated by the different ways each of them had of relating to the world and communicating their ideas. This led Jung on a quest to identify the root causes of their differences, which he found to be related to their orientation to the world, Jung's being inward, and Freud's outward. According to the Jung lexicon, *introversion* is "a mode of psychological orientation where the movement of energy is toward the inner world."<sup>2</sup>

While that's the original formal definition, introverts have their own way of describing their personality. When I conducted a survey of introverted business owners, they shared these insights about how they defined *introvert*:

**We are drained after lots of social interaction.**

"I was taught in college that an introvert is a person who finds interacting with people to be tiring and an extrovert gets energy from interacting with other people. I had a hard time believing that there were actually people who would come home from a particularly difficult day at work and would want to go out to a party or to see people in order to feel better. I still have a hard time believing it."

**We sometimes exert more energy on not being seen than it would take to be seen.**

“During school I worked harder at *not* speaking in front of my classmates than if I had just done it. Took many F grades to not be up in front of the class and would rather write huge reports instead.”

**We process internally.** “Someone who is introspective, who has excellent reflection skills, who in actuality has excellent communication skills because he is generally a fantastic listener. Overall, pretty awesome.”

**We enjoy being alone.** “Someone who is self-contained and can enjoy activities by themselves.”

**We need our alone time.** “A person who requires alone time to recharge his or her batteries.”

**We’re focused on ourselves.** “Introversion is a preference of being in my thoughts and feelings more than around other people and theirs. By honoring this, I bring my best energy and enjoy being with others for conversation and friendship.”

As one of my friends puts it, an introvert can be “happy as pie” spending time alone. An extrovert is likely to become restless or lonely after fifteen minutes of solitude, especially if that solitude’s not been balanced out by a healthy dose of energizing social interaction.

In addition to Jung’s theory, there is research from the 1960s conducted by German psychologist Hans Eysenck that provides a biological basis for the definitions of *introversion* and *extroversion*.<sup>3</sup> Eysenck found that responses to stimuli varied between introverts and extroverts. Introverts had naturally high cortical arousal, which means they reached their stimulation saturation

point much more quickly than did extroverts.<sup>4</sup> This explains why large social gatherings or noisy environments can be stressful for introverts. It seems to be a complement to the Jung theory of energy: It makes sense that introverts would drain energy in high-stimulation environments because our circuits become overloaded. To replenish our reserves, we need to limit the amount of external input coming our way.

Throughout this book, our discussion of introversion admittedly stays on a surface level. Those familiar with the depth of Jung's work, as well as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, know there is tremendous complexity and richness that comes from going deeper into how other psychological functions influence our introversion (read *Please Understand Me* by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates to learn more).<sup>5</sup> It's dangerous to generalize and say something is or isn't true for all introverts. Remember as you read this book, or any book about introversion or personality, you will find as many descriptions to be true as not true. There are introverts who love to network, go through a sales process, or make speeches with no preparation. There are others who dread those activities but want to develop those skills in service to their vision. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, there will be times when your introversion will be a strength and other times when it will be a challenge. Your power lies in your awareness and the degree to which you act on that awareness.

Most people fall fairly clearly on one side or the other on the introvert-extrovert scale. That said, we all have elements of both energies within us. It's simply a matter of which is more dominant. Introverts have a side of them that is outgoing, energized by interaction, and likes to talk through challenges to work them out. Extroverts have a side that needs to rest, reflect, and recharge through quiet time and solitude. You can generally tell which one is

dominant by which one is your default. There is generally one type of energy-boosting activity—solitude or socializing—that is your preference and to which you're naturally drawn.

Interestingly, I often hear people observe that they've become more introverted as they've matured. Perhaps they don't feel the need to perform or prove themselves anymore, or they've had their fill of parties. Perhaps they're responding to—and wanting to step away from—the overstimulation that is rampant in our society. Whatever the reason, it's anecdotal evidence that while we are predisposed to being more introverted or extroverted, it's possible that the scales may tip as we age.

*One point I want to make crystal clear:* Claiming the word *introvert* is not about slapping a label on you or putting you into a little box. It's about having another piece of information that can help you understand yourself better, be true to yourself, and along the way create a successful and sustainable business.

Other introvert traits and preferences include the following (this is a generalized list; there are as many different variations and levels of introversion as there are introverts):

- Thinking carefully before speaking or acting
- Preferring to express feelings in writing rather than talking
- Having a selected few deep, close friendships
- Disliking small talk
- Enjoying self-reflection and introspection
- Having different public and private personas

## **Split Personality?**

That last one on the list trips people up the most. Being an introvert is not always an obvious personality trait. Introverts don't wear a scarlet *I* on their clothing. They commonly refer to needing to put on an extrovert hat or mask during the day while they're working, then retreating when they're not. It's not that they're a split personality or that what you see in public is not the "real" person. It's simply that over time, many introverts have learned to manage their energy to match the situation. They know how to be social or spontaneous and still take care of themselves and their needs.

It's undeniably a balancing act; we have certain preferences and tendencies that have the potential to get in our way as we move out into a predominantly extroverted world.

In fact, it's estimated that 50 percent of the population is introverted.<sup>6</sup> So why do introverts feel like we're in the minority?

The dominant culture (at least in the United States) favors extroverted behaviors. We're constantly pressured to be social: go to parties; make lots of friends; be funny, smart, and the life of the party. And if you're an entrepreneur or a midlevel manager of a start-up who's expected to act entrepreneurially, the pressure is intensified. We're told that we need to engage in constant business development if we want to be successful. That means much of our time is spent with networking, self-promotion, collaboration, public speaking, selling, selling, and more selling.

As we move through the various aspects of being an introvert entrepreneur, we'll spend time going into more detail around each of these areas. Before we do that, let's explore an area that introverts often think they aren't very good in but that can actually be an incredible entrepreneurial asset: communication.

## Measure Twice, Cut Once

**Calvin:** *Sometimes when I'm talking, my words can't keep up with my thoughts. I wonder why we think faster than we speak.*

**Hobbes:** *Probably so we can think twice.*

—Bill Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*

So often, when relationships break down, everyone points the finger of blame in one direction: to communication, or rather, the lack thereof. The exchange between Calvin and Hobbes highlights perfectly why there are so many problems: Our thoughts and our speech don't always align in a way that pleases everyone.

The reasons for crossed signals and misunderstandings are numerous and complex. It would be too simple to say that the root of it all lies in the difference between how introverts and extroverts communicate. However, much of the friction—and fiction—that comes from poor communication could be alleviated if we all had a basic understanding of how we each think and speak.

As we learned earlier, introverts gain energy from solitude and drain energy from too much social interaction. In contrast, extroverts gain energy from being around and interacting with other people; being alone for too long is tedious and boring.

Another key point of differentiation between these two personality types is how they process information, which in turn influences how they interact with others.

Introverts are internal processors. Their primary source of information and point of reference comes from within themselves. This doesn't mean that they are self-absorbed or oblivious to others; they simply rely first and foremost on

their inner thoughts to guide them. For example, when an introvert receives information, she takes it in and flips it around in her mind until it's right side up enough to be shared with the world.

Extroverts rely more heavily on external stimulus to inform their views and choices. They tend to be verbal processors; rather than spending lots of time in quiet contemplation, they want to talk it out. When confronted with a challenge or decision, for example, the extrovert will pull in other people for brainstorming or discussion.

## **Translation, Please**

*I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.*

—Robert McCloskey

You probably can see at least one way introvert-extrovert communication differences cause problems in the workplace or at home. Let's consider a common occurrence: An extrovert manager wants to call a team meeting to solve a problem that's just surfaced. Within that team, there is a mixture of introverts and extroverts. The manager decides to have a freewheeling discussion about the problem, expecting to act immediately after the meeting.

The extroverts dive right in, brainstorming and thinking aloud. There is little to no time lapse between their thought and their speech. Meanwhile, the introverts are taking in the information and turning it over in their minds, thinking through various scenarios and solutions. Before they even say a word, they may have considered and dismissed several ideas. Rather than talk stream-of-consciousness, they wait until they have a fully formed idea before speaking.



In the meantime, the manager has moved on, the extroverts have all had their say, and the meeting comes to an end. The introverts may or may not have gotten to chime in (they prefer not to interrupt; better to ask them what they think), and so several of them choose to have one-on-one conversations with the manager or key people after the meeting.

While the extroverts are like Calvin in the opening quote—leading with speech rather than thoughts—the introverts are like Hobbes and thinking twice.

Put another way, introverts tend to measure twice and cut once.

This can lead to impatience on the part of both personality types. Extroverts want introverts to think and speak up faster; introverts want extroverts to slow down and leave space for more thinking. Without understanding that these tendencies are about as hardwired as brown eyes or blond hair, people can go through life thinking introverts are withholding and slow and extroverts are nonstop blabbermouths.

## **Closing the Communication Gap**

While a zebra can't change its stripes, it can adapt to its environment enough to survive and thrive. Here are a few quick tips to help smooth things out when communication gets a little rocky.

When talking to introverts:

- Give them adequate time to think through a question or problem. If at all possible, don't put them on the spot and demand an immediate answer.
- Offer to provide as much advance information as possible about a situation and be prepared to answer questions. Introverts like to both be prepared and clear

about expectations. Ask if written information is preferred (too much out-loud sharing might be overstimulating).

- You may find that you need to intentionally call on introverts in group discussions. Ask, “Do you have anything you’d like to add?” or “Joe, what do you think?” Avoid calling attention to their relative silence with, “You’re awfully quiet over there.” Chances are the introvert is quiet externally because he’s actively listening and forming a response in his head. Don’t compose elaborate stories, make assumptions, or read anything into his silence; just ask.
- Get comfortable with pauses, longer silences, and nonverbal cues. The pace of a conversation with an introvert feels different because she’s thinking before she speaks. Once she does start talking, refrain from interrupting or finishing her sentences.

When talking to extroverts:

- Give them time and space to process out loud, and be patient with the faster energy that they project. This is how they come to conclusions.
- Listen carefully and be prepared to interrupt if you need to make a point. Extroverts aren’t necessarily going to pause or make room for you. Jump in as needed and use body language to reinforce your point.
- Understand that extroverts speak to think. They may change their mind after some time away from a conversation; be ready for that possibility.
- Be aware that they make decisions based on external feedback, so be direct and forthcoming. Give feedback in a way that feels comfortable to you and that the extrovert can absorb.
- Ask them what information they need. Most likely, it’s a broad overview or summary of the situation rather than

lots of depth or details.

Understanding and respecting differences in communication style is essential to building positive and productive relationships. Without that understanding, we can personalize, make assumptions, and misinterpret what another person is saying. Patience is important, as is allowing space for someone to say, “You know, I need time to think about this, and then I’ll get back to you,” or “It would really help me to be able to talk this through, and you just listen.”

When we know what works for us, we can ask for what we want. And sometimes that’s all that’s needed to keep bad communication from happening in the first place.

## **Strengths of the Introvert Entrepreneur**

Introverts, rejoice! You are about to learn about some of the most fabulous parts of your personality, just waiting to be unleashed on the world. I like to call them your “secret superpowers.” Why secret? Because the extroverted society we live in moves so quickly and loudly that our superpowers are often working quietly behind the scenes and under the radar, unseen by others.

Here’s the truth: Some of the most famous, wealthy, and successful people on the planet are introverts. And it’s their superpowers that helped them get there.

Consider these household names: Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Charles Schwab. Steven Spielberg, Michael Jordan, and Julia Roberts. We don’t think of these people as shy underachievers, do we? Yet, they all identify themselves as introverts. There are also the introvert founders of some of the most successful social networking sites: Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Jack Dorsey (Twitter), and Larry Page (Google). And while I haven’t come across definitive