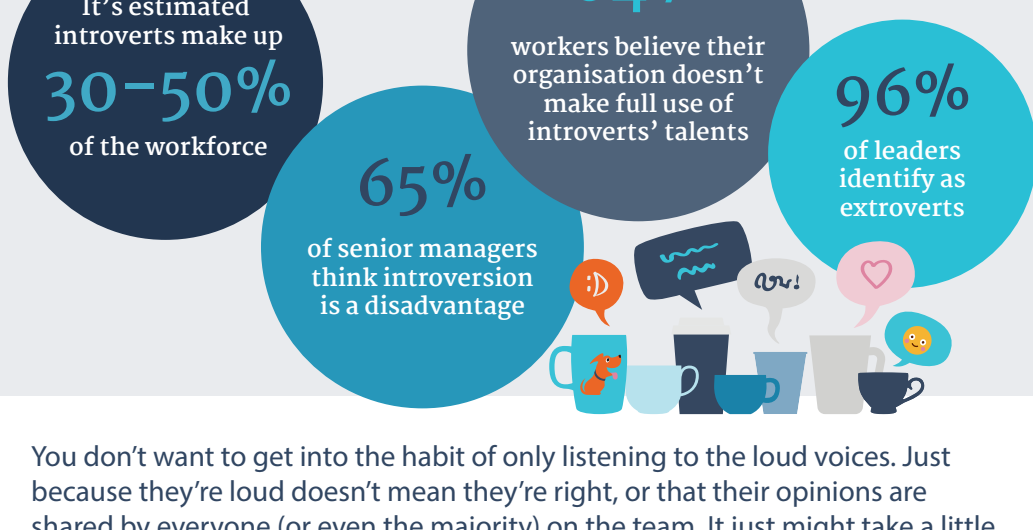


Encouraging feedback from introverts



Quiet doesn't (always) mean disengaged. You may have team members you seldom hear from in meetings, or who don't always step up with feedback or input. It doesn't mean they don't care, or that they have nothing to say; they may simply not be wired for speaking out. It's easy to overlook the quiet workers, but it would be a mistake to think they have nothing to offer...



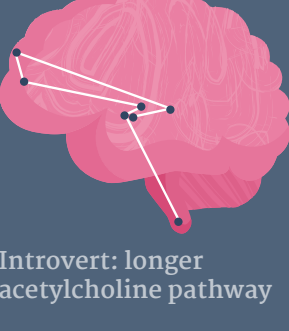
You don't want to get into the habit of only listening to the loud voices. Just because they're loud doesn't mean they're right, or that their opinions are shared by everyone (or even the majority) on the team. It just might take a little creativity to get the same input from introverts.

Let's take a brief scientific detour and find out what makes introvert brains tick.

Yeah! Science!

Yes, it's a spectrum, but people tend to self-identify with one end or the other. Either way, there's more to introversion than preferring to be alone.

While extroverts are famously people-centric, introverts pay equal attention to people and other stimuli and information they encounter. It's part of the reason why they get so quickly drained in high stimulus environments, and why they may be so quiet in your meetings. They're just dealing with a lot of information...



Introvert: longer acetylcholine pathway

That information runs through a longer path in the introvert brain, including long term memory and the parts that notice mistakes and evaluate outcomes.

When introverts are coming up with something to say they're also thinking through their feelings, plans, and previous experiences. So it can take some time to find just the right words, and just the right way to say them.

Compare that to extroverts, who tend to be a lot better at thinking (and talking) on their feet.

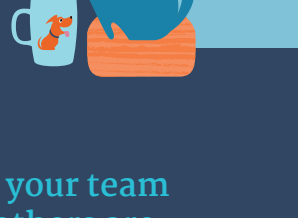


Extrovert: shorter dopamine pathway

Even brain chemicals are different. Introverts are sensitive to dopamine and don't need much to get over-stimulated, while extroverts thrive off it.

People seek out the situations they find rewarding - and for introverts that's more likely to be quiet, internally-focused activity that activates acetylcholine rather than adrenaline-fuelled dopamine.

Introverts tend to engage the parasympathetic side of their nervous systems more - the side responsible for slowing down. Extroverts engage the sympathetic nervous system more. That's the fight-or-flight side: driven by adrenaline and ready for action.



So how do you manage feedback when half your team prefers to go slow and keep quiet and the others are moving - and talking - at warp speed?

Engaging introverts in feedback

If you manage introverts you don't need science to tell you that group meetings and team-wide brainstorming sessions are not the ideal way to get their feedback. Good luck trying to stop extroverts from leading those sessions though!

Here are some techniques to try instead.



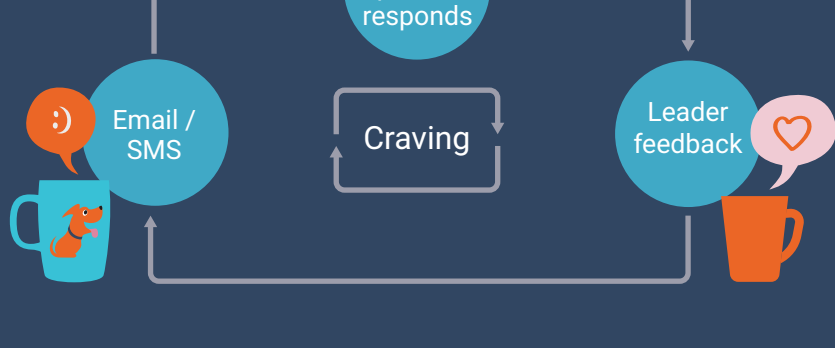
Give people the option to write instead of talk. Because finding the right way to say something can require a lot of processing for introverts, they're often more comfortable expressing themselves in writing.

Don't ask for an immediate response. Whether you want feedback in person or in writing, don't put people on the spot. Give them space to come up with a response they're happy with.

Asynchronous is best. It can be difficult for introverts to interject when louder voices (and faster thinkers!) are dominating a conversation. When you don't expect everyone to contribute at once, it's easier for them to speak up.

Ask specific questions and invite specific feedback. Ask for one thing they'd improve, one thing that went well, or one problem they've encountered. Keep the scope defined and it will be easier to come up with the answers.

Go first. Give people a statement to agree or disagree with. This helps anchor and focus the response.



Match effort. If someone gives you a thorough, comprehensive piece of feedback, give them the courtesy of a thorough, comprehensive response. Leader feedback is instrumental in creating feedback habit loops.

Follow up on feedback how and when you've said you will. When people make the effort to speak up - especially when it's something they find difficult to do - ignoring their input only ensures they won't bother in future.

Read more on leader responses and habit loops

joyoushq.com/blog/post/leader-responsiveness-critical

Here's what introvert-engaging questions might look like

Are there any discussions or decisions you'd like to be a part of?

It might seem like people aren't interested in participating when they are; it's just not easy for them to step up. Asking this question gives people a chance to talk about things that are important to them - things that they might otherwise stay quiet about.

It's not always easy for introverts to strike up conversations with people they don't know well. Feedback can be used to facilitate introductions and help connect team members with complimentary interests and skill sets. Skip the small talk!

Are there any teams or people across ACME that you'd like to get to know better?

How would you like to be recognised for your contributions?

Introverts aren't famous for loving the spotlight, but that doesn't mean they never need to hear good things. If you want to praise or recognise them for their work, find a way to do it that they're comfortable with.



Get more questions in the Employee Experience Genome Project

pulse.joyoushq.com/download-guide-exgenome-project

Further reading

- <https://www.amazon.com/Quiet-Power-Introverts-World-Talking/dp/0307352153>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Introvert-Advantage-People-Thrive-Extrovert/dp/0761123695>
- <https://knowyourteam.com/blog/2014/07/15/futility-one-of-the-mistakes-that-make-people-quit/>
- <https://knowyourteam.com/blog/2017/10/02/11-ways-to-get-feedback-from-your-most-introverted-employee/>
- <https://io9.gizmodo.com/the-science-behind-extroversion-and-introversion-1282059791?IR=T>
- <https://introvertdear.com/news/the-science-behind-why-introverts-struggle-to-speak/>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshi/2019/01/16/10-timely-statistics-about-the-connection-between-employee-engagement-and-wellness/#551b19c322a0>
- https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/1999-03/UoI-BADI-290399.php
- <https://www.quietrev.com/6-illustrations-that-show-what-its-like-in-an-introverts-head/>
- <https://www.livescience.com/8500-brains-introverts-reveal-prefer.html>
- <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/what-its-like-to-be-an-introvert-and-what-everyone-gets-wrong-2018-5?r=US&IR=T>
- <https://hbr.org/2010/12/the-hidden-advantages-of-quiet-bosses>
- <https://joyoushq.com/blog/post/managing-feedback-tool-kit>

