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The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength—A Book Review

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Abstract: Jennifer Kahnweiler's *The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength* presents a four-step process introverts can use to handle situations in the workplace, such as how to have your voice heard at a meeting. This book brings out concepts such as that introversion is not a disorder and that introverts can bring value to an organization. The book, filled with examples, reinforces the points of the four-step process. Presented is a process to effectively deal with situations where introversion may be preventing you from reaching your goals.

The Issue

Do you or a colleague struggle with meetings that turn into boisterous social gatherings? Then Jennifer Kahnweiler's *The Introverted Leader: Building on Your Quiet Strength* (2009) will be a good read for you. Have you been surprised when a colleague who never seems to provide input at a meeting gives a brilliant presentation? Then this book will be a good read for you.

Western society values extroverts more than introverts. Positive traits associated with extroverts include being friendly and outgoing. Negative traits associated with introverts include being unemotional and aloof. This book may not change these misperceptions but could help in managing difficult situations arising from the misperceptions.

The Process

Well presented and thought provoking, the book, written for the business climate, is easily transferable to Extension. The book is a quick read, and most will gain further by a second read. The book has examples from business scenes woven throughout. These examples will help introverted team members better understand their more extroverted colleagues as well as give some insight on those who are not so outspoken. The loudest person is only the loudest, not always the one with the best ideas, but frequently their opinions seem to take hold because others are not prepared to offer other views at that time.

The book focuses on the "4 Ps" of Preparation, Presence, Push, and Practice to teach introverts how to turn challenges into opportunities. Diagrams throughout the book help to reinforce the "4 Ps" the author outlines. This book does not preach to introverts that they must become extroverts but rather explains how introverts can capitalize on their strengths. Suggestions include perhaps even adopting an alter ego. The author does

mention that it may require movement out of a comfort zone as well as a serious investment of time and effort. While doing so, the author stresses to extroverts why they cannot afford to ignore their less outspoken colleagues.

The Impact

Can introverts excel in Extension roles? The answer is "yes," because successful Extension people fall all across the range of introvert to extrovert. Much of Extension is listening and one-one-one client work, where introverts excel.

Can introverts survive in Extension? The answer is "yes"— but with many Extension systems heading toward a model of leadership teams, group interactions and dynamics become increasingly important. Of note is the self-quiz included in the book. It reveals to introverted readers what part of their natural strengths would be best used to add value to their organization.

One gem of information I took away from this book was that extroverts process information by talking aloud and introverts process by thinking to themselves. While not a true epiphany, it certainly shed light on many situations I have encountered.

Reference

Kahnweiler, J. B. (2009). *The introverted leader: Building on your quiet strength*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

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