



Introverts and Extraverts *CAN* be ideal teammates - moving beyond perceptions

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How often do we rely on first impressions that may or may not be completely accurate in moving forward to build relationships with colleagues, peers, teammates, clients, vendors and other people we encounter daily? Understanding our own preferences and needs can be important in identifying our own biases based on assumptions and perceptions.

One area of misconception that is often misread is our source of energy, otherwise known as introversion and extraversion. The difference lies in the focus of that source being derived internally through thoughts and reflection vs. externally through people and activity based on human personality theories by well-known psychologist, Carl Jung. There are many tools and resources available that enable us to understand this concept as well as assess our own tendencies. Without this knowledge, however, we can rely solely on our interpretation of these differences which can lead to misguided perceptions and missed opportunities.

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar to you?

Perception 1 - "They aren't responding or showing any expression, so they must not agree with me or have an interest in what I am saying", says the extraverted person. Reality - the introverted person is absorbing what was said, processing the information and carefully thoughtful of how they will respond in a meaningful way.

Perception 2 - "I wish all this chatter would stop and we could have some time to concentrate before we regroup to discuss", says the introverted person. Reality - brainstorming with others and out loud is a necessary process for the extraverted person to be able to sort through and share their thoughts and ideas in an interactive manner.

Perception 3 - "He didn't say much, he must be shy and not like to socialize with others", says the extraverted person. Reality - the introverted person is not shy whatsoever and does not lack social skills in any way, however, prefers one-to-one or small group interactions and shares more thoughtfully and selectively.

Perception 4 - "She is such a social butterfly how does she get anything done?!" says the introverted person. Reality - the extraverted person gets their work done by interacting with others, needing to actively connect, engage with others and effectively multitasks to achieve results.

Perception 5 - "It was hard to read her as she didn't show any expression or even smile", says an extraverted person. Reality - the introverted person is reflecting on the points made in the discussion, digesting it all while formulating their thoughts. In addition, since they don't require affirmative words or expressions, they may not find it necessary to offer them in return.

Perception 6 - "I was overwhelmed by his level of animation and expression, it was exhausting to watch and I can only imagine how exhausted he feels", says the introverted person. Reality - the extraverted person gets excited and enthusiastic the more they converse with others and have the opportunity to think out loud which may naturally lead to a lot of animation and expression. The more affirmation they receive from others around them, the better.

These are a few typical scenarios that can occur when we allow perceptions to be formed because of differences that may exist in our personalities. If we are able to understand these differences, we can then learn to appreciate them. This, in turn, allows us to value and embrace our differences which not only results in having the benefit of gaining a range of perspectives and deeper insights but more productive outcomes as well. It also enables us to grow and learn in new ways when we are able to tap into these different viewpoints.

We can be more effective by being flexible with our approach and trying different strategies when we are communicating with one another. First, we want to step back and determine if we tend to have a preference for introversion or extraversion. Second, we want to understand how that may translate into needs we have and determine what requires us to push out of our comfort zone. Once we understand ourselves better, we can attempt to determine what others' preferences may be which will give us a clearer take on their needs, how to best communicate and collaborate with one another. Here are some tips for consideration:

Communications tips based on preference:

Extraversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assign time to discuss individual's concerns and ideas• Ask individual for their suggestions and thoughts even when you have not formulated yours completely• Involve other people since they will want to interact/consult with others• Provide affirmative and expressive gestures, both verbal and non-verbal• Engage in brainstorming and interacting 'in the moment'
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Introversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let individual speak first• Listen to what he or she wants to say rather than what you will say next• Allow time and space for individual to do their best work• Provide information prior to a meeting or discussion so that she/he can formulate ideas• Try interacting in a variety of ways including email, on-line, phone and in person
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Imagine the possibilities this can create for us at work and in all aspects of our lives. Taking the time to really understand all of these dimensions can shape accurate perceptions and enable us to build powerful relationships as well as achieve compelling results. Teaming up with those who can complement our own personality can help us grow and push in new ways, offer balanced perspectives as well as achieve better outcomes! Be sure to have a good mix of introverts and extraverts on your team and in your life. Take the time to get to know each other, appreciate all viewpoints and encourage open dialogue for success.

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a national career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, the author of numerous articles, blogs and the book, *"Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment"*. Rita was voted one of the top ten executive coaches by the Boston Women's Business Journal.