

Self-Promotion for Introverts®

The quiet guide to getting ahead

By Nancy Ancowitz

(A book review by R. Max Wideman, FPMI)

The views expressed in this article are strictly those of Max Wideman.

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Introduction

In today's world of projects, and correspondingly intermittent occupation, you have to sell yourself for the best projects, or even just to stay employed. And selling yourself means self-promotion. According to Shakti Gattegno,¹ educational consultant:²

"Self-promotion starts with self-reflection, which requires observing oneself in the lighting of awareness and without judgment. It helps to pay close attention to what you are or have rather than to emphasize what you think you're not or don't have. The more one is connected to oneself, the greater will be one's capacity to reach out. And the less one will expend energy trying to please the world."

That's all very well, but while self-promotion is a necessary activity, it can also be quite uncomfortable for some people. This is perhaps best illustrated by finding yourself on one side of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) Grid, the side identified by an "I", for "Introvert". If this is the case, then you may be surprised to learn that you are a part of about one-third of the population.

For those not familiar with the MBTI grid, see the references below.³ Introversion gets even more pronounced if you are in the quadrant designated by an "IN", where "N" represents "iNtuitive" that represents about 5% of the population.⁴ These are the people who are clearly "introverts".

When I took the MBTI assessment I was quite proud to find myself marked as an "INTJ", which is in the very far corner and represents only 1% of the population. Descriptions such as: "compelling, self-confident, strategic, creative and drive" spring out, which is all very positive and encouraging, but introverts do have some disadvantages as shown in the following table, Figure 1.⁵

Introverts	Extroverts
More inclined to deep conversation	More inclined to chit chat
Waits to be approached	Initiates conversations
Typically reserved	Typically expressive
Knows a lot about a few topics	Knows a little about a lot of topics
Appears reflective and calm	Appears more energetic
More detailed oriented	Prefers less complicated tasks
More private and hesitant	More readily open

Figure 1: A comparison between Introverts and Extroverts

From this you can see that self-promotion presents a particular challenge for introverts. All too often, introverts get passed over for job offers and promotions while their more extrovert colleagues get all of the recognition. So, I was pleased to receive a copy of the book *Self-Promotion for Introverts®*. The author of this book is Nancy Ancowitz, who is a self-confessed introvert, has studied the challenge from a very personal standpoint, and has been offering a *Self-Promotion for Introverts®* workshops and coaching many important clients.

If you have introvert tendencies such as those tabulated in Figure 1, and seek to counteract them with a

view to improving your image and position in the workplace, then this book is for you.

Book Structure

By way of introduction, this book is dedicated to:

"You who go mum at meetings, get passed up for promotions, and would rather read about the Powers That Be than rub elbows with them. You're the brains behind the operation, the creative virtuoso, and the walking wiki. You want to make more of a difference in your life and the lives of others – but first, they need to know who you are."⁶

The book structure is quite simple:

Introduction

1. Your Negative Self-Talk
2. Your Strengths
3. Your Game Plan
4. Your Target Audiences
5. Your Network
6. Your Chalk Talk
7. Your Job Search
8. Your Opposite

As the author says:

"My intention [in this book] is to offer a place for you to explore and a springboard for you to be heard and seen by the people and organizations you want to impact. I want you to get more credit for your ideas, become more visible wherever you want to be noticed, earn more money if that's your goal, and ultimately make greater contributions to society."

To this end, the author explains for example how to make networking situations more palatable:⁷

- Choose events where you are likely to feel more comfortable
- Take stock of why someone would want to talk to you
- Do something that makes you feel at ease
- Scope out the most comfortable places in the room [where you can see and be seen]
- Remember that all eyes are not on you
- Learn about other people, listen intently, try to help solve their problems
- Remember to breathe!

Throughout, the book includes a number of tables and charts to be completed by the reader to assist in self-assessment and self-actualizing action plans.

What we liked

This book contains valuable insights for both the newly minted project management practitioner as well as the seasoned professional. For the newly minted practitioner, with a definite introvert leaning, the first four chapters essentially provide advice on how to position yourself to adopt new attitudes, deploy your strengths and tackle new ground. For example, the reader is invited to jot down five labels that characterizes their strengths. Then, against each label, describe: (1) What Makes Your Strengths Different and/or Special; (2) What Inhibits Your Strengths? And (3) What Brings Out Your Strengths?⁸

Note that the original strengths that you list should not be limited just to your work environment. In fact they should be anything that you have really enjoyed doing at some time in the past and felt that you did well. This opens up a much larger range and may even bring to light memories that one day you may be able to put to good use — perhaps sooner than you think if you are looking for a new source of employment!

Further along you will learn how to set about planning your future. But this should be second nature to anyone in, or venturing into, the project management field. It starts with a "To Do" list, and then you just add a date column titled "By When"!

For us, the more useful stuff started with chapter 5: "Your Network – Expanding Your Sphere of Influence". Here you will find wonderful encouragement. For example:⁹

"As an introvert, you'd probably rather listen than talk most of the time. You're adept at building deep and lasting relationships. You're trusted, accountable, and a core contributor. People look to you for expertise. However, you're not a schmoozer. You value your space and quiet time. Regardless, you have distinct advantages that enable you to create a strong network that can provide you with continuous support."

Subsequent pages describe how to position yourself as a valued expert, how to network in a spirit of sharing, and how to hone your skills in this area. Or, again, how you should prepare for a networking phone call, or for informational interviews, or how to draft an approach letter. If you are speaking, "Speak as if you own the room."¹⁰ On the other hand, if you are writing, don't just rely on your spell checker, "have someone proof read your work because you will not see your own mistakes."¹¹ And, by the way, if that's not possible, re-read your work one or two days later when your brain has been cleared. You will be surprised by the number of mistakes you made, or the improvements you can make, to the text you wrote just two days earlier!

Chapter 6 is particularly useful as it provides guidance on "Public Speaking for Private People".¹² Much of the content is well established elsewhere, but it is useful to have the subject covered in the same book, especially since it is laced with tips for the naturally introverted. For example, where should you sit at a business meeting? Assuming the meeting table is not round, the suggestion is to sit close to the center where everyone will be able to see and hear you. OK, it takes some courage, but that's the whole point.

And, by the way, if it's a public meeting with a room full of chairs in rows, try for an outside seat somewhere where you can see the rest of the audience. This way, most people will be able to see you and, at the same time, you can command their attention and gauge their reactions.

Chapter 6 also includes advice on making a presentation including preparing visuals with flipcharts or the ubiquitous PowerPoint slides. Do make them concise and dynamic.¹³ Actually, author Nancy Ancowitz somewhat decries PowerPoint for she says:¹⁴

"It's pet peeve time. While I am not completely anti-PowerPoint, I am against being numbed or overwhelmed by slide after slide of everything a speaker knows about a topic. On the other hand, I'm all for keeping a few cool nuggets that the speaker supports with visuals (PowerPoint or otherwise)."

That's a very good point, better yet if the "visuals" are presenting concepts and relationships in graphical form.

Chapter 7, *Your Job Search*, is another useful chapter for introverts if you are into that stage in your career. It describes how to make career choices consistent with your style, how to handle interviews including preparation, how to develop a forceful resume, how to dress for the occasion, how to perform with quiet confidence, and how to negotiate compensation. These all tend to be difficult topics for the introvert.

Conclusion

Downside

To assemble this book, author Nancy Ancowitz, an introvert herself, evidently interviewed a large number of prominent people. Indeed, the book starts out with five pages of "People Who Have Shared Their Wisdom in This Book", listing some 66 names including some prominent individuals such as Warren Buffet and Bill Clinton. Interestingly, the list does not include an interview with Bill Gates, though Gates is mentioned in the text as an introvert.

Moreover, the advice proffered by the author throughout the book is frequently supported by quotes from these eminent people. However, we could not help feeling a certain degree of excessive "name dropping"¹⁵ and, from a Canadian perspective, we found this a little tedious.

Summary

All too often, introverts get passed over for job offers and promotions while their more extrovert colleagues get all of the recognition. But it does not have to be that way. In this book, the author helps introverts tap into their inner strengths, voice their accomplishments, and launch an action plan for gaining career advancement. In other words:

- Promote yourself without bragging, whether while networking, at job interviews, or simply at home and at work.
- Use your "quiet" gifts to your own advantage, such as writing, researching and listening.
- Develop a commanding presentation style, despite your naturally reticent nature, and
- Formulate personal plans for setting goals, taking action and, when the opportunity presents itself, find better and more satisfying employment.

R. Max Wideman
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¹ Shakti Gattegno is the wife of the late Caleb Gattegno who founded the Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM) in 1950 to encourage the development of mathematics education for children. For more information, see <http://www.calebgattegno.org/caleb-gattegno-biography/introduction-to-caleb-gattegno.html>

² Ancowitz, Nancy, *Self-Promotion for Introverts®*, McGraw-Hill, NY, 2010, p3

³ For an introduction to MBTI see this page: <http://www.maxwideman.com/papers/personality/classification.htm> and the implications for project managers, see this paper: <http://www.maxwideman.com/papers/profiles/intro.htm>

⁴ No wonder some types of project manager are hard to find!

⁵ Ancowitz, *Self-Promotion for Introverts®*, examples extracted from p2.

⁶ *Ibid*, p v

⁷ *Ibid*, paraphrased from p21

⁸ *Ibid*, p45

⁹ *Ibid*, p108

¹⁰ Ibid, p129

¹¹ Ibid, p127

¹² Ibid, p141

¹³ Ibid, p166

¹⁴ Ibid, p154

¹⁵ "Name dropping": The practice of casually mentioning important people in order to impress the reader.