AE Week 2 Seminar Readings – Personality: Introversion and Extroversion

- Read the definitions and the two articles below, as well as the pdf ‘Management: Introverts vs Extroverts’.

“But what actually constitutes an extrovert or introvert? It's quite simple. An extrovert recharges by being with people, while an introvert recharges by being alone.” (Power 2004)

“Extroverts tend to be those who are more energized when around other people. They are the ones who will reach for the cell phone when alone for more than a minute, the ones who love to go out every weekend, the ones who love to chit chat, mingle, and socialize.

Introverts tend to be those who are more energized when alone with themselves. They are the ones who have to be dragged to parties, who are the first ones ready to leave after a short period of time, and who generally enjoy solitary activities such as reading, writing, and daydreaming.” (Kim 2014)

The Hidden Advantages of Quiet Bosses

It’s conventional wisdom that’s supported by a decade of academic research: Extroverts make the best leaders. These people—dominant and outgoing—are favored in hiring and promotion decisions, and they’re perceived to be more effective by supervisors and subordinates alike. But our research suggests that in certain situations, an introvert may make the better boss.

Whereas just 50% of the general population is extroverted, 96% of managers and executives display extroverted personalities. And the higher you go in a corporate hierarchy, the more likely you are to find highly extroverted individuals. The chart below, based on a 2009 study of 4,000 managers across U.S. industries, shows the percentage of managers at each level who display high levels of extroversion.

To be sure, extroverted leaders have important strengths. However, they also tend to command the center of attention and take over discussions. In a dynamic, unpredictable environment, introverts are often more effective leaders—particularly when workers are proactive, offering ideas for improving the business. Such behavior can make extroverted leaders feel threatened. In contrast, introverted leaders tend to listen more carefully and show greater receptivity to suggestions, making them more effective leaders of vocal teams.

[...]  

While it’s often true that extroverts make the best bosses and proactive employees make the best workers, combining the two can be a recipe for failure. The extroverted leaders appeared threatened by and unreceptive to proactive employees. The introverted leaders listened carefully and made employees feel valued, motivating them to work hard. Soft spoken leaders may get the most out of proactive employees—so save the outgoing, talkative managers for teams that function best when they’re told what to do.
Introvert or Extrovert: Which Is Better for Business?
L. Arnold-Smeets, Payscale, Dec 5 2013. [accessed March 10 2015]

Don’t fret if you fall under one of the introverted personality types, because you’re just as valuable as an extrovert, according to Susan Cain. In her TEDTalk presentation, Cain makes a valid argument about introverts being an undervalued and overlooked group of leaders, and she provides three main points as to why introverts are able to hold their own in the business world:

1. Introverts are ignored for leadership-type roles, despite introverts tending to be very careful and less likely to take on "outsized risks."

2. Introverted leaders often deliver better outcomes than extroverts because they are less likely to impose their ideals onto their employees and more likely to encourage them to "run with their ideas."

3. Because introverts and extroverts bring unique ideas to the table, there needs to be a better mix of the two in leadership circles to promote a more balanced outcome in the end.

Cain isn’t suggesting that introverts are superior to extroverts, but rather that both personality types complement each other to create a well-balanced flow, especially in the business world. Therefore, if companies want to thrive and maintain constant innovation, then they should look to hire and create teams with an equal balance of introverts and extroverts.

Even if you’re not an ENTJ or another personality type that promises you success in business, you can recognize the unique skills and personality traits that you already possess and learn how to capitalize on them. Take some advice from Dr. Seuss himself: “There is no one alive who is Youer than You,” so figure out how to make the most of what you have and confidently be on your way to career success!


Optionally, also watch the following video on the topic:
http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts?quote=1382