



# Self-Promotion for Introverts

Get Heard More. Even If You Talk Less.

Nancy Ancowitz





**Introverts.** The world needs us, can't live without us, and often doesn't quite get us. However, we persist, mostly behind the scenes, quietly contributing to society—writing, creating, designing, researching, solving problems, and digging for treasures ancient and new. Are you one of us?

If you're more of a Warren Buffett than a Donald Trump, and more of a Greta Garbo than a Madonna, you've come to the right place. It's time for you to stop hiding from the spotlight. Time to get recognized and compensated for your gifts.

Rather than buying in to the common misconceptions about introverts, you'll apply your quiet strengths to raise your visibility in a way that feels right for you. And guess what? You don't have to brag. Not even remotely. You can promote yourself authentically without the "ick" factor.

You can also propel your career in the right direction by looking and sounding the part you want to play. Are you ready to rise to the level of success you desire? Isn't it time to get the job, the promotion, the client, or just the credit you deserve?

Extroverts\*: listen up too. Even if you're an inveterate schmoozer, I bet you know a few introverts—your boss, your team members, your clients—who would benefit by your seeing the world through a different lens. And you would benefit too. So come along. Ready?

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*\*Also spelled "extraverts" by Carl Jung and the communities of the MBTI® and other personality assessments such as the Five Factor Model.*

## Myths about introverts. Dispelled.

One of my old colleagues, an executive recruiter from my days on Wall Street, calls to touch base. We talk about her business and the job market. I tell her about my new book, *Self-Promotion for Introverts®: The Quiet Guide to Getting Ahead*. And then the fun begins.

“Congratulations,” she says. “But none of the candidates I place need your book.” “Oh, really?” I reply. “Yeah, none of them are introverts. Candidates have to be polished to get the senior jobs—and all the more so in this dismal job market,” she says. “An introvert might have the brains,” she continues, “but doesn’t know how to talk to people.” I ask how she defines introverts and she stops short of saying loners and losers, but it’s clear she’s talking about back-office dwellers who shouldn’t be seen or heard—definitely maladroit nerds!

“I’m an introvert,” I tell her, cheerfully. We go a few rounds of “No” and “Yeah” and she tries to reassure me that my people skills are actually fine. When she realizes I’m not kidding about being an introvert, she sings a colorful: “Yeaaaah?” I respond: “Actually, I took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® [MBTI® personality assessment] early in my career and learned that I was an introvert.”

The executive recruiter clacks at her keyboard. Her first stop: Wikipedia, and she reads me snippets as if they’re coming across a teletype in Times Square: “More reserved ... Not necessarily loners,” she says. “Hmmm. ‘Smaller circles of friends,’ Ah. ‘Introverts are less likely to seek stimulation from others because their own thoughts and imagination are satisfactory.’” “Bingo,” I say. She continues in a quick murmur: “Introversion and extroversion were first popularized by Carl Jung.”

I ask her to Google an article by Jonathan Rauch in *The Atlantic*, one of my all-time favorites, which beautifully captures the spirit of an introvert. She skims the article and declares more of her discoveries: “needs hours alone every day” and “has to be dragged to parties and then needs the rest of the day to recuperate.” And then she continues quoting Rauch in an increasingly exuberant crescendo: “Introverts are not necessarily shy. Shy people are anxious or frightened or self-excoriating in social settings; introverts generally are not. Introverts are also not misanthropic.”

My executive recruiter buddy is quiet for a moment. She's a news junky with deep knowledge of the financial markets. She runs her own successful recruiting firm, which she built based on long-standing relationships with clients in the right places. In her private life, she spends most weekends alone—reading. “Ohmigod!” she exclaims suddenly, “I’m an introvert!”

## Labels or not. Whatever.

Many people don't like to be labeled—introvert, extrovert, or otherwise. We're all complex beings with multiple aspects to our personalities, not to mention our moods, family histories, cultural influences, belief systems, and personal styles. And of course, different situations bring out different aspects of our personalities. Whether you know you're an introvert because you've taken a personality assessment or even if you just relate to introversion some of the time, I'm here to help you raise your visibility to advance your career.

Rather than making me feel labeled, learning that I was an introvert gave context to many of my preferences. For instance, I can happily sit with one of my business communication coaching clients for hours in deep conversation strategizing about how she'll get a promotion. I'm also jazzed by helping a client refine his written and spoken marketing pitch, and helping him rehearse it for an important presentation. I'm psyched when I introduce people in my network for their mutual benefit—and I often do so by e-mail. All of these activities play to my introverted strengths.

So instead of feeling like a social outcast for not thriving on back-to-back group meetings or working the room at cocktail parties, I do better by focusing on my gifts—introverted and otherwise. Don't we all? To take you to the next section, I've got a quick question for you: when is the last time you thought of what makes you special?

## Introverts' strengths. Believe it.

If you're like most introverts I know, you have to think hard about what you're good at—or why someone should hire you instead of an equally qualified candidate. And when you accomplish something notable at work, you hesitate to say boo about it. As an introvert, you may instead wait for someone to say boo for you. Sadly, you might wait a long time.

So modesty has its limits. As does getting passed over for jobs and promotions. Another detractor that many of us face is the chatter between our ears—a constant broadcast of our weaknesses on a radio station with the call letters U-SUCK. Why not instead tune in to U-ROCK? The more we're aware of the way we speak to ourselves, the more we can speak to others positively about our strengths and accomplishments. So how do we do that as introverts?

The good news is that self-promotion is just a skill and anyone can learn it. Start with what you do well naturally. For introverts that often entails activities involving researching, writing, gaining expertise, listening, concentrating, and building deep, lasting relationships. We gravitate toward activities that we can do alone or with just one other person.

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## Marketing mix. Works like magic.

My advice? Don't rely on just one activity to raise your visibility. In your mind's eye you may think that promoting yourself just involves a single activity that you find crass and repellent. It doesn't have to be that way. Instead, create a marketing mix, or combination of activities to raise your visibility. The menu of options is limitless. It can include blogging, building your social network on sites such as LinkedIn, actively tweeting on Twitter, doing podcasts, writing a newsletter, writing articles for a publication, hosting events, speaking about your area of expertise, and lining up informational interviews—or one-on-one meetings with people you want to get to know for networking purposes. None of this has to feel forced and all of this can play to your strengths—introverted or just plain human ones.

So you can get the recognition you deserve by doing things you like to do. It might take some planning and you may need to create some new habits. Start now by listing a few of the promotional activities you like the most (or mind the least).

Then map out a game plan including concrete steps involving these activities. So if one of your activities is to write e-mails this week to five people in your network asking for introductions, write down when you aim to complete that. If you're looking to find a new job, start by writing down the types of opportunities that appeal to you. And then make a list of activities you'll need to do to get where you want to go.

Be careful. Don't wear yourself down running around from conference to conference, from networking event to networking event. That will knock you out if you're an introvert! Instead, pick only the most vital social activities (e.g., where you can be introduced to senior managers and/or prospective clients) and show up well rested. Balance those more outward activities with quieter activities like e-mailing and one-on-one meetings.

## Self-promotion. Not bragging. Try it.

I conduct a fun exercise during my Self-Promotion for Introverts® workshop at the New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies. The participants are from many walks of life, including computer programmers, doctors, architects, advertising executives, lawyers, bankers, artists and entrepreneurs.

The point of the exercise is to demonstrate the differences between bragging and effective self-promotion. We brainstorm and the participants say things like: bragging means talking at your conversation partner, carrying on a monologue about yourself, and even namedropping for good measure. Boo hiss. We all agree that bragging—both performing the nasty and being on the receiving end of it—is distasteful.

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So I ask someone in the class to brag. Shamelessly. Mercilessly. To the moon. And in front of the room. We do a role-play in which she runs into a colleague at an office holiday party. The braggart doesn't stop bragging until she makes her colleague cringe. So she talks about herself, throws in lots of fancy factoids of no interest to anyone but herself, and she tries hard to impress—she mentions how her son just got into Harvard (she drops the “H” bomb within the first 30 seconds!). The rest of us laugh. Applause.

Next, the class brainstorms about what effective self-promotion would be like. Asking about the other person, they say. Finding ways to help her by offering useful information, introductions,

and insights. Showing genuine interest. And succinctly saying what you do best, what types of organizations or individuals need and value what you do, and how your conversation partner might consider helping you. Yay!

I ask the two volunteers to shift gears and start over. Now the woman who formerly played the braggart engages in an exchange and we hear two people connecting and advancing their relationship. They compare notes about the projects they're working on. The former braggart says that she's reached a plateau in her current job and is exploring her next steps. The other asks how he can help. He also shares what he's looking for and the former braggart engages, shows interest, and helps. Simple, but effective. Quiet applause.

So self-promotion doesn't have to involve bragging. As introverts, our sweet spot is building relationships over time. We can position ourselves as the "go to" people for our area of expertise and share, share, share. And when we need to look for our next opportunity or build our businesses, we'll already have the relationships in place—people who are happy to reciprocate our thoughtfulness. And that doesn't have to make anyone wince.

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## Presence. Gotta have it.

Self-promotion is such an intimate game. It starts with the connection between the two of us. And it's only as good as the overlap between what you have and what I want. Yet there's more. Let's say you're conducting an all points bulletin search for an accountant. You meet a highly qualified one, and her fees and location are right for you. However, she mumbles in a monotone with a worried look on her face, doesn't look you in the eye as she fidgets with her calculator, and her shoulders are hunched inside her ill fitting suit from the '80s. You might still hire her because she can do the job. Or you might look elsewhere for an equally qualified accountant who presents herself better.

I'm not suggesting that you appear anything like that accountant. However, as introverts, we tend to bury our heads in our books and some of us attach less importance to things like buying the best suit we can afford or getting a stylish haircut. If you can relate, start by taking a look in the mirror. How do you appear? And how do you sound—on the phone and in person? Do people take note when you speak?

If your presence and image detract from your ability to get the gigs that are right for you, take specific steps to enhance them. Start by determining what needs improving. Is it your clothing, accessories, hairstyle, posture, movement, eye contact, hand gestures, your voice? Line up activities to help you make improvements, whether that means working with a personal shopper at a department store, hiring a presentation skills coach, or going for voice lessons. Start improving your presence. Today. Notice how much easier it gets to raise your visibility. There's nothing like crisp attire and an attractive hairstyle—not to mention a genuine smile—to help open a few doors. It certainly can't hurt.

## Introverts can excel at job searches. In any job market.

Now let's tie together what we covered about our discussions of your introverted strengths, promoting yourself without bragging, and enhancing your presence. Let's look at how an introvert can successfully conduct a job search—regardless of the unemployment statistics. It's all about networking, building relationships and staying in touch with people throughout your career—not just when you need a job. You share your resources. And when you're gainfully employed, you take the time to conduct informational interviews to help others.

## If your presence and image detract from your ability to get the gigs that are right for you, take specific steps to enhance them.

Now it's your turn. You need a job. Maybe you're miserable in the snake pit your organization has become since the recent merger. Or you have a boss who wants to eat you for lunch. Or you've been marginalized, minimized or, though it's no one's fault, you have just lost your job because of a global workforce reduction initiative or some other gobbledegook.

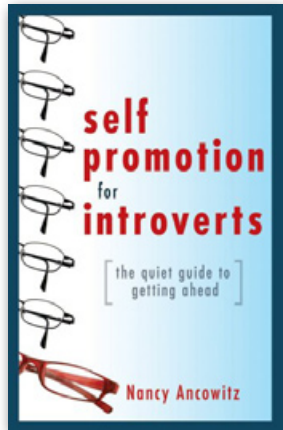
The point is you're an introvert looking for a job amid legions of applicants for every position you're applying for. What do you do? Consider the following tips for job seekers; many of these also apply to entrepreneurs building their businesses.

- 1 **Don't waste your energy** blaming yourself for being out of a job.
- 2 **Take impeccable care of yourself**—mind, body, and soul—and remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments. Every day.
- 3 **Whenever you feel like you're begging, stop yourself.** Think of all the people you've helped throughout your career. And now it's your time to receive—with gratitude.
- 4 **Rally support among people who value you.** Ask for help in the way of leads, assistance with practicing for interviews, and feedback on your résumé.
- 5 **Get plenty of introductions.** Ask friends, colleagues, former bosses, mentors, and people you can connect with on social networking sites such as LinkedIn. Tell them specifically whom you'd like to meet and/or the organizations and functions that interest you.
- 6 **Find a few hours of quiet time every day** to take specific actions toward your job search.
- 7 **Use your introvert's advantage at research**—online and through your network—to get the scoop on the organizations and people you want to connect with.
- 8 **Prepare for the toughest questions** you might be asked on job interviews and rehearse your answers—preferably on videotape. It's worth putting yourself through the paces.
- 9 **Follow up promptly** when someone in your network offers to make an introduction for you. Also, circle back appreciatively and let your acquaintance know any positive outcomes of the introduction.
- 10 **Have a few succinct stories up your sleeve** that you can use on interviews. The highlights of these stories can include how you have made a difference in an organization—and the specific contributions you made. Make the point of the stories relevant to the organization you're applying to.

## Let your quiet star twinkle. Now.

If you're like most introverts I know, you typically sell yourself short. And if you don't take credit for your contributions, you're relying on others to notice you, reward you, and compensate you for accomplishments that you're mum about. That's not fair—to you. Of course, you can advance in your career without promoting yourself. However, it's more likely that you'll need to give it a go. Make it a habit. Just remember to do so naturally, using your introverted strengths. So listen with your ear to the ground, tell your story, solve that problem, and tap on that keyboard.

**I'll be looking out for you!** 📧



## BUY THE BOOK

Get more details or buy a copy of Nancy Ancowitz's [\*Self Promotion for Introverts\*](#).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Author of *Self-Promotion for Introverts®: The Quiet Guide to Getting Ahead* (McGraw-Hill), Nancy Ancowitz is a business communication coach specializing in career advancement and presentation skills. She has spoken at New York University, Columbia University, the 92nd Street Y and the Smithsonian Institution, and her media coverage has included *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, CNN.com, Monster.com, CareerJournal.com, WABC-TV, and *Self*, *Woman's Day*, and *Gotham* magazines. Ancowitz is a mirror who reflects your best self, a sounding board for your deep intelligence, and a navigator to help your quiet star twinkle. Her clients range from CEOs to emerging leaders in the business and creative worlds. Find out more at [selfpromotionforintroverts.com](http://selfpromotionforintroverts.com).

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