

LEADERSHIP OF INTROVERTS

Nishi Sharma¹

Abstract

Leadership is the ability to lead, direct, guide and influence the work of others. In this study, efforts are made to throw light on a very less explored field i.e. leadership of introverts. This study examines the traits of Introverts with reference to the well-known theories like Carl Jung's theory and MBTI instruments. Traits of introverts like reasoning, logical thinking, focused and deep conversations, engaged listening can be used in informing, supporting, guiding, directing subordinates, making good decisions, resolving conflicts and creating an achievable vision for the organization. Introverts put all strengths together in order to influence.

Moreover, it is evident from the study that many successful introverted leaders feel proud to say that they are leaders. So, just like extroverts, introverts can also become successful leaders.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to throw light onto the relatively unknown field of Introverted Leadership. Whenever it comes to Leadership people always connect it with the Extroversion traits. But the lacking point here is the identification that introverted personalities do possess some traits that can contribute to their success in leadership roles. There is a growing body of research adding to the new-found belief that introverts can become good leaders. There is a common belief so far that extroverts are the real leaders because of their traits like they are outgoing, sociable, good communicators, loud, and seek the company of others. But having all extroverted leaders in an organization can lead to ineffective communication. Chaos can ensue due to the power struggle between a group of extroverts all trying to express their views at the same time. Thus, the importance of introversion traits emerges. Introvert possesses traits like calmness, clarity of mind, focus, good listeners and goal oriented. This study wants to examine the recent evidences that propose that introverts can be an advantage in leadership by exploring how introverted managers perform.

¹ Student, M.Com, Sanatan Dharma College(Lahore), Ambala Cantt

Introvert and Extrovert Personalities

Introversion and Extroversion were popularized by Swiss Psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1875-1961) in 1921 and then later by the Myers-Briggs Personality Test, used in many universities and corporates. After that several more prominent people have tried to define what traits can be coupled to introverts and extroverts, respectively.

Theory of Carl Jung on Personality

According to Jung there are two mutually exclusive attitudes- extroversion and introversion

"Each person seems to be energized more by either the external world (extroversion) or the internal world (introversion)."

Jung noted that none of us are completely extroverted or introverted, but we certainly connect to one or the other attitude. In all of us, lies an unconscious mind- one which is not conscious of feelings and thoughts all the time, but those feelings and thoughts are capable of affecting our lives nonetheless. If you take an extrovert you will find his unconscious has an introverted quality, because all the extroverted qualities are played out in his consciousness and the introverted are left in the unconscious.

(Jung in Mc Guire and Hull, 1977, p.342) In the following table examples of introverted and extroverted traits are given as presented in the book "Quiet" by Susan Cain(2013b, pp 24-27)

Introvert traits	Extrovert traits
Gentle	Dominant
Mature	Assertive
Good listener	Take risks
Like to focus at one thing at a time	Do several things at a time
Have rich inner life	Take fast decisions
Focus best in quiet environments	Like to be the middle of attention
Do not think of money and fame as an incentive	Avoid loneliness
Think before they speak	Strong need for companionship
Like deep conversations	Chase reward such as money and status
Work methodically and prudent	Talk rather than listen

According to Howard and Howard (2010, p. 132) many extrovert managers are comfortable leading by wandering around, enjoy being in the thick of things, handles a heavy meeting schedule well, enjoys meeting and greeting, likely to have an extensive network of contact inside and outside the organization. Contrary introvert managers excel in quieter paperwork-intensive leadership in highly introverted cultures such as accounting, engineering, IT and R&D. (Howard & Howard, 2010, p. 132)

However, Susan Cain, in her famous book "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a world that can't stop talking" pointed out one more major element in personality and that is shyness and introversion. According to Susan Cain, "Bill Gates is quiet and bookish, but apparently unfazed by others' opinions of him: he's an introvert, but not shy. Barbara Streisand has an outgoing, larger than life personality, who also battles with a paralyzing case of stage fright: she's a shy extrovert. Shyness and introversion are not the same thing. Shyness is the fear of negative judgment, and introversion is a preference for quiet, minimally stimulating environments."

Leadership

DuBrin (2012, p. 5) defines leadership as "the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve the organizational goals".

According to Keith Davis, "Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals."

Traits of a good Leader

1.	Inspires and motivates others
2.	Displays high Integrity and honesty
3.	Displays technical or professional expertise
4.	Drives for results
5.	Communicates powerfully
6.	Builds relationships
7.	Develop others
8.	Displays a Strategic Perspective
9.	Solves problems, analyzes issues

Introverted Leaders

Through interviews and observations Kahnweiler (2013a) has identified six strengths that introverts embrace to achieve an impact: taking quiet time, preparation, engaged listening, focused conversations, writing and thoughtful use of social media. Introverts typically put all these strengths together in order to influence, although each strength by itself is powerful. According to Kahnweiler (2013a) introverts process information internally, keep matters private, avoid showing emotion and exhibit calm nature and she describes five key characteristics of introverted leaders:

1. They think first and talk later. They consider what others have to say, then reflect and then respond;
2. They focus on depth not superficiality. They like to dig deeply into issues and ideas before considering new ones; like meaningful rather than superficial conversations;
3. They exude calm. In times of crisis in particular, they project reassuring, unflappable confidence;
4. They prefer writing to talking. They are more comfortable with the written word, which helps them formulate the spoken word;
5. They embrace solitude. They are energized by spending time alone, and often suffer from people exhaustion. They need a retreat, from which they emerge with renewed energy and clarity

Introverts are not anti-social but they are selectively social. They perform in their personal groups very efficiently as their intellectual knowledge is more as compared to extroverts. Introverts have more focussed minds.

Of course, introverts define themselves in many different ways:

““So many people think that introversion means you don’t like being around people. Introverted does not equal antisocial.”-- Cody Vermillion, co-founder of Uncommon [good]

““An introvert is someone who prefers isolated scenarios... someone who isn’t necessarily anti-social but someone who excels with internal workflow.” — David Acosta, co-founder of Rebel PR

““To me, it means I get refreshed and rejuvenated by having some quiet time to myself on a regular basis.”” — Dan Purcell, co-founder of Ever In Touch

John Sherwin, CEO of pharmaceutical startup, Hydrant, and a self-proclaimed introvert, works at his desk

“”I tend to let other people talk, really listen to what they’re saying, then come in with less words that are more powerful,””

“”Being an introvert doesn’t mean you’re a loser or socially awkward, it just means you need to be alone when others need to be with people.” ”Adds Kevin Pasco, co-founder of Nested Naturals, one of the best-selling natural supplement brands on Amazon.

Here are some well known Introverted Leaders (source: Internet)

- ★ Bill-Gates (co-founder Microsoft)
- ★ Jeff Bezos (founder and CEO Amazon)
- ★ Elon Musk (founder and CEO Tesla, space X)
- ★ Sergey Brin (co-founder, google)
- ★ Marissa Mayer (founder CEO yahoo!)
- ★ Warren Buffett (president and CEO Berkshire Haethaway) `
- ★ Peter Thiel (co-founder PayPal, Plantir)
- ★ Steve Wozniak (co-founder Apple)
- ★ M. Zuckerberg (co-founder Facebook)
- ★ Susan Cain (author of book "Quiet")

Findings and Suggestions

Approximately half of the population of world are introverted personalities. One the other hand if leadership positions are considered approximately 96% positions are filled with extroverted leaders with extroversion qualities. Remaining 4% positions are left for introverted leaders which also include leaders like Bill Gates, M. Zuckerberg or Susan Cain. So the concept of Introverted Leadership is relatively unknown field.

Imagine a group full of extroverts, isn't it noisy and loud. On the other hand, imagine a group full of introverts; it shall be boring or dull. So a proper balance should be maintained in order to make anything effective. There should be a blend of these two personalities--full energy, enthusiasm, excitement combined with groundedness, ability to listen, inner strength, focus, logic and calmness. Hence, introverted leaders can prove great leaders if given opportunity. This hidden field needs to be explored.

References

Howard, P. J. & Howard, J. M., 2010. The Owner's Manual for Personality at Work. 2 ed. Charlotte: Center for Applied Cognitive Studies.

DuBrin, A. J., 2012. Principles of Leadership. 7th International ed. Mason, Ohio: South Western Cengage Learning.

The Myers & Briggs foundation, n.d.. The Myers & Briggs foundation. [Online]

Available at: <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>

Power of introverts: Ted talk show by Susan Cain

Available at: <https://youtu.be/c0KYU2j0TM4>

Book: "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that can't stop talking" by Susan Cain(2012)

Cain, S. (2012b, February). Susan Cain: The power of introverts. [Video file]. Available at http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts?language=en