



i introvert insights

Your Strengths as an Introvert Are Likely Hiding in Plain Sight

By Peter Vogt

“You have skills and abilities that others do not. We often undervalue the things we know and what we can do, thinking, ‘If I can do it, anyone can.’ Well, ‘anyone’ can’t.”

—Cathy Stucker

When I was in graduate school studying for my master’s degree in counseling, I was introduced to an eye-opening activity called the *quality awareness exercise*.

In a nutshell, you are given four identical copies of a one-page list of positive adjectives that can be used to describe someone—for example, *adaptable, competitive, decisive, imaginative*, and dozens of others.

You fill out one of the sheets yourself, circling the traits you feel describe you. You give the other sheets to three people in your life who know you well, and they circle the traits **they** feel describe you.

Invariably, you end up discovering a disconnect: that other people see in you qualities (which they have

circled on their papers) you don’t see in yourself (since you’ve left those same qualities uncircled on your paper).

The things we do best, and the personal characteristics that represent us at our best, tend to come easily and naturally to us. So easily and naturally that, in our own minds, they can’t possibly be valuable, to us or to anyone else.

In other words, we often don’t know our own strengths—because we can’t see them.

But other people can. In fact, to other people in our lives, they are frequently obvious.

This strengths-blindness phenomenon is commonplace among introverts, especially. You are probably quite unaware of the many abilities, skills, and personal qualities you possess as an introvert. In fact, if you’re like most people, you’re so oblivious to your own strengths that you need someone else to point them out to you.

Allow me.

Here’s an extensive, though not

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Network Your Own Way: Set Up One-on-One Meetings

If you're like many—maybe even most—introverts, the thought of participating in anything described as a “networking” activity makes you want to throw up.

All you can picture is a bunch of people gathered together in an overly noisy ballroom, gladhanding and taking turns looking over your shoulder for the next person they can talk to.

But “networking” comes in many forms. And for introverts especially, networking is best pursued—and experienced—not in an overstimulating group setting but as a one-on-one activity, according to Lisa Orbé-Austin, a psychologist and career coach in New York City.

“One of the strengths of introverts is one-on-one engagement,” Orbé-Austin says in the recent Mic.com website article “How to Network If You Hate Parties and People Exhaust You.”

“So if you are looking to net-



work,” she stresses, “you are likely going to feel at your best in individual networking meetings.”

“Introverts are at their best when they engage in deep and reflective conversations with another person,” adds consultant and diversity coach Jessica Li, in her recent Forbes.com website article “How I Learned to Love Networking as an Introvert.”

Li says that, as an introvert, you're far better off doing your networking by asking someone you

want to connect with to have coffee or lunch with you.

“By engaging in one-on-one conversations, you'll get to know the person on a deeper level and start off building a stronger relationship than if you had only spent 10 to 15 minutes with them,” Li stresses.

“You'll have time to engage in thought leadership and start discussing ways of how to work with one another. It feels more like building a friendship than just doing business.”

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

If You're Hosting a Gathering, Specify an *End Time*, Too

Sometime in your life, you've probably received an invitation—to a holiday party, perhaps, or to a wedding reception—that offers this:

Start Time: 7:30 p.m.

End Time: ??????

It's that end “time,” or lack thereof, that can be a little off-putting to you as an introvert.

So when things are reversed and you're the one inviting people to an event you're hosting, make sure you state not only a specific start time for the gathering, but a specific end time as well, says writer Rebekah Joan, who describes herself as “an introvert with a hefty dose of social anxiety.”

“We all have our limits, and as an introvert throwing a party, one of yours will probably be a time limit,” Joan writes in her recent blog post “How to Throw a Party as an Introvert—Don't Get Burned Out!”

“You can only go so long before you need to be alone,” Joan says. “So figure out when a good time to end your party will be, and let everyone know.”

WORK STRATEGIES

“Parking Lot” Technique Will Help You Maintain Deep Focus

One of the most frustrating things about attending meetings at work is that they are so often prone to veering off the task(s) at hand. It doesn't take much for what was supposed to be a half-hour check-in to balloon into two hours of torture.

Devora Zack, author of the enlightening book *Singletasking: Get More Done—One Thing at a Time*, describes a technique organizations can use to keep meetings on topic. It's called the *parking lot*, and she says you can use it in your own personal life, too, whenever you need to establish and maintain the deep focus you thrive on to do your best work.

Here's how the technique works, in the context of a meeting: You set up a flip chart or a whiteboard that the meeting leader can use to write down any topics people raise that are unrelated to the meeting's objectives, and that are therefore best addressed at **another** time.

“You can adapt this technique

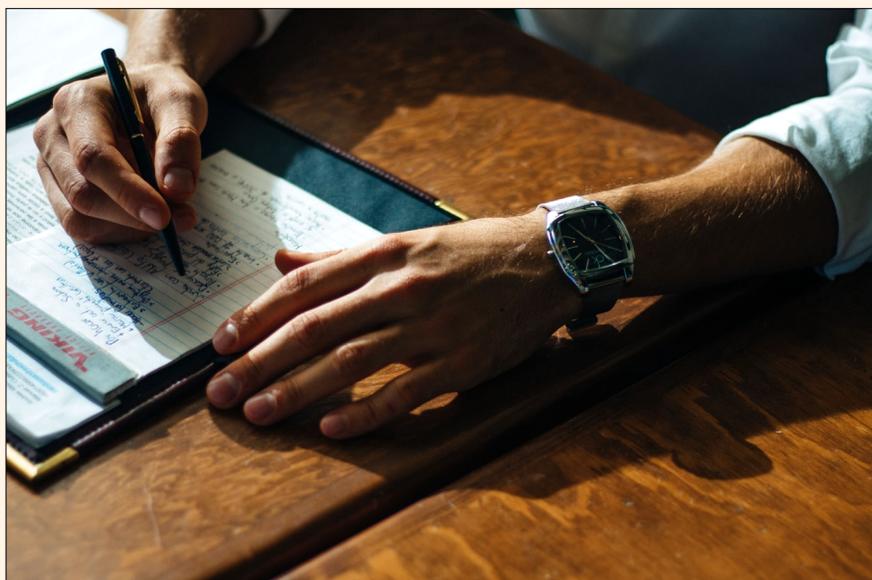
when working independently, to focus on your current task without allowing your own thoughts to become sidetracked,” Zack writes.

“When embarking on a task, keep handy a designated place to notate items for your own parking lot. You can create a ‘Notes’ page on your smartphone or use a notebook. I do not recommend Post-its®, the back of receipts, or envelopes from discarded junk mail. I learned this the hard way.

“When an idea strikes you that is unrelated to your current task, don't let it distract you from what you've begun. Write it down and go back to what you are doing.”

You might wonder: Isn't the act of using the parking lot technique **itself** a form of distraction?

No, Zack says. It's no different than quickly turning on a light if your work area gets too dark in the late afternoon: You still maintain your full concentration.



COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Use “Pre-Numbering” to Get All of Your Points Across

Ever struggle to be heard—or to even finish making your comments without being interrupted—when you're responding to someone, particularly during a disagreement?

Communications strategist and speaker Gene Griessman has a solution for you: Specify, right before your remarks, the exact number of points you're about to make.

Griessman refers to this ingenious technique as *pre-numbering*, and in

his recent blog article “How to Use a Martial Arts Tactic When You Communicate,” he says it “gives you a way to make sure your point of view or concern gets a hearing, and perhaps turns an attack into a win for you.”

Here's how pre-numbering works, according to Griessman:

Once the person you're talking to has finished speaking, you say something like: “You've made some very good points.”

Then you simply pause for a moment, Griessman says, and say

something like: “I have two (or three) concerns” or “I can see three weaknesses in that position” or “I can think of at least two, possibly three things that could go wrong if we use that program (or adopt that strategy).”

“Then you say: ‘Would you allow me to...’ (or ‘Could I...’) ‘...tell you what they are?’” Griessman says.

Invariably, the person you're talking to will then subconsciously wait for you to deliver the specific number of points you said you wanted to make.

IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

The Activities You Loved as a Kid Can Replenish You Now, Too

By Peter Vogt

When I was in fifth grade, I got started playing golf by taking a free summer class at my school.

Our instructor, Mr. Hatlen, bravely introduced us to the basics of grip and stance and swing, then stood at a sensible distance as we hacked away a fair chunk of the turf, and occasionally a chunk of each other, at Rossman Elementary.

I was hooked on the game instantly. And soon, seeing where I was headed and wanting to stay acquainted with me, my parents started playing too. So did my siblings.

Before long, we were all regulars at Maple Hills Golf Course near my hometown of Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. It was the only place where we could play relatively inexpensively, which was important in our household since money was tight.

We bought the golf clubs and bags we needed for next to nothing from the plentiful summer rummage sales in our area.

But we never bought golf balls.

We didn't need to. Because, as we quickly discovered, hitting your ball **into** the woods at Maple Hills was at least as much fun as trying to keep your ball out of them.

For in those woods lay the motherlode: dozens of golf balls, sitting there like colorful eggs—minus the protective hens—just waiting to be found and picked.

Once we were aware of this bounty, we didn't even need to hit our balls into the woods. We'd just rou-

tinely stop about 225 yards off the tee of hole No. 6, abandon our stuff on the lefthand side of the fairway, and dive into the thicket, ticks and poison ivy and barbed-wire fencing be damned.

Our safaris were not brief. We'd spend 10 minutes, 20 minutes, half an hour or more harvesting golf balls, shouting gleefully about our finds as we went. If other golfers came up behind us, we let them play through; we were busy.

Some people are Dumpster divers. We were Titleist stalkers.

That was 40 years ago. But the other day, on Thanksgiving afternoon, I was back at it again.

My family and I live just down the street from The Meadows, a low-key public golf course here in Moorhead, Minnesota. It's a two-minute walk for me to get to one of its greens, where in the summer I will often decompress from the day's activities by sneaking on to the 14th green to practice putting at dusk.

Come Thanksgiving Day in Moorhead, though, we no longer have that luxury. What we do have, usually, is at least a thin layer of snow on the ground. And even when we don't, as was the case this year, the greens at The Meadows are by



then covered with tarps, since the course is closed for the season.

Closed, however, doesn't mean inaccessible.

Childhood passions aren't inaccessible either.

And so, wanting to digest both my morning brunch and my ever-swirling thoughts, I walked to The Meadows Thanksgiving afternoon and went Titleist stalking.

I soaked in the sights, sounds, and smells as I meandered around course, eyes down, combing through the tall grasses, scouring the edges of the half-frozen marshes, trudging through the adjacent farm field.

When it was over, I'd found 17 golf balls. Even better, I'd reconnected with an old, restorative friend.

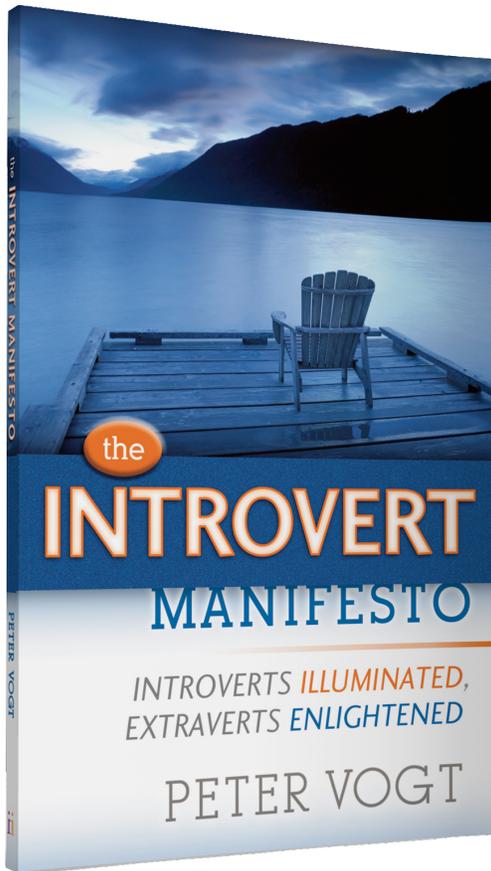
Can there be a more fitting—and filling—Thanksgiving Day dessert?

See You in January!

We'll be taking our customary break from publishing in December. See you in January for the January 2020 issue! Until then—thanks, as always, for reading. I'm grateful to you for your interest and support!

Peter Vogt, Editor and Publisher

Introverts. Explained. Accurately.



“*The Introvert Manifesto* is the manual [on introverts] that should have come in the box.”

Nancy Ancowitz, author of *Self-Promotion for Introverts* and producer of the “Self-Promotion for Introverts” blog for *Psychology Today*

Read extensive excerpts and order your paperback copy now at:

IntrovertManifesto.com

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Study Hints That Introverts Really Do Benefit from Depth

Though its authors note that the finding is tentative and therefore “entirely exploratory,” a recent study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* suggests that, compared to extraverts, introverts really



do benefit from depth and quality in their social interactions.

Led by psychology doctoral student Jessie Sun of the University of California, Davis, the study involved 256 participants who were assessed on the quantity and quality of their social interactions for one week.

The participants all wore an Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) device so that outside observers could eventually rate the quality and quantity of their social interactions at selected points in time.

The participants also self-rated the quality and quantity of their social interactions each day.

The study’s main conclusion: All the participants, whether introverted or extraverted, reported feeling happier and more socially connected when they spent more time interact-

ing with other people.

But Sun et al. also note what they refer to as an “intriguing exception” within the study’s data.

“...[R]elatively introverted participants,” they write, “experienced relatively greater increases in momentary feelings of social connectedness during hours in which they had deeper conversations, compared to relatively extraverted participants.”

“[O]ur exploratory results,” Sun et al. conclude, “suggest that introverts may experience greater boosts in social connectedness, relative to extraverts, when engaging in deeper conversations.”

Source: “Is Well-Being Associated with the Quantity and Quality of Social Interactions?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, October 24, 2019 (online), pp. 1-18.

REFLECTIVE READS

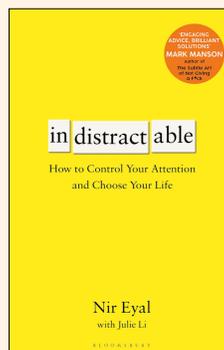
A “Timeboxed Schedule” Will Help You Defeat Distraction

Early on in his fascinating book *Indistractable*, Nir Eyal asks an illuminating question about the game of pool: “What makes the colored balls go into the pockets?”

Is it the white cue ball? Is it the pool cue? Or is it the player who is using the cue?

It’s the player, of course; the player is the “root cause,” Eyal notes. The cue ball and the cue are merely “proximate causes.”

Keep this critical analogy in mind the next time you blame something external—like your smartphone, for



example—for luring you away from doing what you really want/need to be doing.

“Solely blaming a smartphone for causing distraction is just as flawed as blaming a pedometer for making someone climb too many stairs,” Eyal stresses.

Yes, smartphones and other external distractions are, well, distracting. But the root causes of distraction are internal, Eyal argues.

“As is the case with all human behavior, distraction is just another way our brains attempt to deal with pain,” Eyal writes.

A key solution is the internally oriented *timeboxed schedule*, where you can plan your days in detail—with yourself as the top priority.

“Only by setting aside specific times in our schedules for traction (the actions that draw us towards what we want in life) can we turn our backs on distraction,” Eyal concludes.

Continued from page 1

exhaustive, list of introverted qualities that may be so second-nature to you that you don't recognize them, let alone appreciate their value.

You're Independent

"You don't need a babysitter," says Joan Pastor, author of the book *Success as an Introvert for Dummies*.

You're self-reliant and self-motivated. You can work alone with little or no supervision—because you don't need any.

You're also unlikely to be swayed by peer pressure; you make your own decisions based on your own values and priorities.

You're Focused

You are not easily distracted. You can focus on something for a long time—hours and hours—without needing to get up every five minutes to talk to someone.

You also have the ability to hang in there when things are difficult. You have what author Angela Duckworth calls *grit*: "passion and perseverance for long-term goals."

You're Reflective

You're willing to ponder things—before you do them (to make sure they're right), while you're doing them (to adjust your actions as needed, on the fly), and after you've done them (to determine how you'll handle things differently next time).

You're also good at thinking before you speak, so that you don't put your foot in your mouth.

You're constantly trying to learn and to improve yourself, too.

You're Methodical

You're the opposite of impulsive; you're careful and cautious, in the best sense of both words.

You're also meticulous and

detail-oriented. People can count on you not to drop any balls.

You're Imaginative

You have both the willingness and the ability to sit quietly, inviting the boredom that in turn leads to original thinking and creative problem solving.

You can also see connections among things that, on the surface, don't seem to have any obvious relationship to one another.

You're Good at Research

You have a knack for digging—on the Internet and elsewhere—to find answers. You like dealing with complex topics, and you often develop expertise in the subjects you spend so much time studying.

You also thrive on the deep analysis necessary to understand what you've found through your research activities and apply it in your everyday life, at work and at home.

You're Observant

You notice things that other people may not, and you're good at taking in information and ideas through your senses.

You read people well, too; you sense how people are feeling, even if you have to interpret "between the lines" to figure it out.

You're a Good Listener

You listen well—an ability you should not take for granted in a world where too often, it seems like no one is listening to anyone.

You give other people the chance to fully express themselves without interruption. And you offer them the critical empathy that helps them see they're not alone.

You're Good One on One

The other people in your life see you as genuine, reliable—the "real

deal"—largely because you're so good at building one-on-one relationships with others.

You're willing and able to have deep, lengthy conversations with one other person, or perhaps a small group of people, that not only draw them out, but draw you out too.

You Write Well

You may or may not be a grammar and punctuation champion, but the messages in your writing are clear and powerful.

You have a way with words, especially when you can communicate them with your fingers (after having given them a great deal of thought beforehand, of course).

You're Prepared

You can wing it in life when you have to, but normally you're planful and prepared.

Yes, this trait helps you as an introvert as much as it helps others; it minimizes the surprises that can deplete your energy. But your preparedness is a trait that others appreciate in you, too. You're someone people can rely on to be ready, whether it's for a meeting at work or an event at your child's school.

You're a Mentoring Leader

You have a calm, humble, quiet leadership style that keeps you out of the spotlight and ensures that the people you're leading feel confident and supported.

You're less a boss and more a coach and colleague who gives credit instead of taking it.

Do you have all of these traits as an introvert? Probably not.

Then again you just might! Especially if you go beyond a self-assessment and ask **other** key people in your life to help you pinpoint your many gifts as an introvert.



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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“Introverts have an extra filtering process: ‘Is what I have to say worth making myself that vulnerable and uncomfortable?’ And if it is, then whatever is being said must be pretty powerful.”

~ Damon Brown

“Needing time to process your experiences doesn’t mean you’re crazy or there’s something wrong with you. It means you’re an introvert.”

~ Lauren Dykovitz

“There are many different ways to build meaningful relationships in life, and the fact that introverts and extraverts do them differently doesn’t give one group an edge.”

~ David Burkus

“It’s OK to be an introvert, and it’s OK to be an extravert. It’s absolutely OK to be a mix of the two. It’s OK to be anything, as long as it is an honest version of yourself.”

~ Abigail Pluff