

Got Introverts? Your LPM Initiative Needs Them

By [Carla Landry](#) on June 5, 2023

Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Barack Obama are pretty obvious examples. Oprah Winfrey and Elon Musk? Not so much. But they all share a much-aligned and frequently misunderstood personality trait. If you guessed that they are all introverts, you would be right. And if your high-performing law firm has a balance of personality types, roughly 60 percent of your lawyers are introverts, as well.

Introversion isn't about how many friends you have, whether you deliver riveting courtroom theater, or your ability to lead others. Rather, it's about how you make decisions, process information and recharge your energy. Introverts excel in the legal arena because they are champions at solving problems. Plus, many introverted lawyers are voracious readers, writers and analytical thinkers – the typical solitary pursuits that provide measured and deliberate answers to anxious clients facing uncertain outcomes.

Society typically demands that introverts be more – more social, more communicative, more gregarious. But these pressures can cause us to overlook the many virtues and positive qualities that introverts possess which could, for example, energize your LPM initiative.

Introverts are Complicated

Got introverts? People are, of course, much more complex than the labels suggest. Introverts may have just what you need. For example, [introverts](#) tend to be:

- Good listeners
- More empathetic and, thus, easier to talk to
- Selective about what they communicate and how they say it
- Able to put their egos aside
- Deliberate in their risk assessment
- Skilled at interpersonal connections

Although some may be uncomfortable in groups, they are not necessarily shy or anxious. They just may do better building influence one-on-one. As the leader of an LPM initiative, you need true commitment, the kind that is built one lawyer at a time. Introverts can do this.

Extroverts, on the other hand, breathe fire into the party. We all love to love extroverts. They can also drive strong emotions, both good and bad. They tend to be:

- Assertive go-getters
- Quick thinkers
- More comfortable with conflict
- Increasingly bored and restless in quiet environments

By the way, none of the above is meant to imply that introverts are better than extroverts or the reverse. They're just different.

In fact, in reality, most people are a blend of both. Some even change depending on the environment. For example, a heads-down worker in the office may transform into a social butterfly and engaging party-giver at home.

Yet, Carol Schiro Greenwald, author of the book "Strategic Networking for Introverts, Extroverts, and Everyone in Between," says that introverts can be better than extroverts at networking. While extroverts are working the room glad-handing and collecting business cards, introverts tend to go a little deeper in relating to people. Good networking requires more than a laser focus on goals and plans. Context is important, as well. This includes things like understanding the client's situation, current pain points and needs, the environment, how the practice intends to grow, and what its leaders want to achieve.

Most Lawyers are Introverted

Although roughly 60 percent of all adults are extroverted, most lawyers – 60 percent again – are introverted. The most successful people, no matter where they fall on the spectrum, have the skills required to flex, i.e., to meet someone else's style. That's a good thing because, in addition to deep thinking and challenging legal issues, law firms need people to be out front, making rain, handling negotiations, and ingratiating community leaders. Both types, introverts and extroverts, are capable of navigating either side of the line, it just may not be as intuitive for one.

It's not always easy to identify introverts because many people, either by design or choice, are somewhat in the middle. You could assess everyone using Myers-Briggs or a similar tool. However, you can also use your powers of observation. Remember, introversion has to do with whether social situations are energizing or draining. Even when introverts are having a great time, when they are done, they're done – time to retreat. Extroverts, on the other hand, will be looking for the after-party or planning the next play date.

Challenges of Introversion

Introverted lawyers, even the most skilled at their profession, have a special challenge. Because a legal career is so demanding, they may need to recharge more than other professionals. Many modern offices are set up for increasingly collaborative work styles with shared offices, meeting lounges, and open-concept designs. But introverts may prefer noise-canceling headphones, floor-to-ceiling walls, and lunch behind a door that provides blissful peace, if only for an hour.

But what does any of this have to do with LPM? If you're going to sustain momentum for your LPM initiative and engage that 60 percent of introverted lawyers, you'll want to understand how they interact with others. They may not be the star of your dog-and-pony show, but they will be invaluable in building in-depth connections through one-on-one meetings and interactions. They see subtleties that others may miss.

The quality of empathy may be in short supply among the general lawyer population, but introverts bring the special ability to listen actively without interrupting. While extroverts talk first and then think, introverts retreat, whether mentally or physically, to gather their thoughts and consider their contributions carefully. Only then do they speak. This may seem to be the introverted lawyer's kryptonite, this need for quiet reflection. But in reality, it can be a strength that builds confidence among peers.

We all become incredibly empowered when we learn more about ourselves and others and how best to work together to enhance our collective experience. If you work with introverts, and chances are good that you do, or if you are an introvert

yourself, there are strategies that will work for you. We'll delve more into those strategies in part two.