

LPM: And the Quiet Ones will Lead Them

By [Carla Landry](#) on July 31, 2023

You have an LPM initiative to launch. What's churning in those lawyerly heads? *You're not the boss of me.* Dr. Larry Richard, founder of LawyerBrain and leading expert on the psychology of lawyer behavior, has told us for many years that lawyers are precipitously high on the Caliper profile on two personality traits: skepticism and autonomy.

On top of the natural skepticism and autonomy of the lawyer personality, let's overlay a healthy dose of introversion, as mentioned in [part one](#) of this series. Who are these people? That would be your lawyers with the AirPods permanently attached to their ears lest someone actually might want to talk to them.

It's no wonder it can sometimes feel like an uphill climb to get engagement in your firm's LPM effort. But it really doesn't have to be an impossible chore. Despite the highly skeptical, fiercely autonomous lawyers that comprise your firm or practice group — and the closeted introverts lurking within the ranks — there are strategies you can use to propel your LPM initiative forward.

Who Are the Introverts?

If you read our blog last month, you may have been surprised to learn that 60% of lawyers are introverts. It can be a difficult trait to recognize when you observe outward lawyer behaviors. When a situation, e.g., a courtroom appearance, calls for a successful introverted lawyer to "turn on" extroverted behaviors, they have the unique ability to go full on Perry Mason.

Consequently, you may be dealing with more introverts than you suspect. According to Dr. Dee Soder, founder and managing partner of CEO Perspective Group, "People are on a spectrum, introversion and extraversion at different ends. While introverted people may be shy or loners, it is hard to tell, as it's not about interpersonal skills, but about energy level." There may be just as many seemingly gregarious introverts as there are shrinking violets that would rather be left alone. Either type can be instrumental in the success of your LPM initiative, if you understand who they are and how to work effectively with them.

If you still haven't identified the introverts in your practice group and firm, read part one again and then look for [a few more clues](#).

Introverts are people who:

- **Listen more, talk less.** As mentioned, introverts like to think first and take their time making decisions. They may mull over inputs and be slow to speak up during rapid-fire conversations. One of Dr. Soder's clients would typically go around the room twice asking for comments. "When I asked why," Dr. Soder revealed, "he said some people won't speak up the first time, but will the second." Those quiet people with carefully considered insights? Introverts.
- **Prefer to write.** When you have an internet connection, why would you need to have an actual conversation anyway? Given the complexity of legal projects, introverts support effectiveness and efficiency by memorializing critical information and ensuring that everyone is informed about progress, risks and milestones. They do it in writing, though, as opposed to extroverts who prefer an audience ... applause optional. The authors of the most

practical documents for your LPM effort are likely to be introverts.

- **Exhibit less emotion.** Some introverts *may* have a great deal of empathy and insight. Still, they may not be super expressive. They are more inclined to show the world a poker face, measure their words carefully, and keep their hands close to their bodies when talking. Most people describe introverts as reserved. They can be a calm voice of reason when the inevitable challenges arise, facilitating communication among dissenting team members.
- **Prefer to work alone.** They may work best with others when they leave them alone. Introverts listen to instructions, ask questions, then put their heads down and get to work. In this way, introverts are focused on tasks and invest their energies into getting the job done without interference from the group. Of course, it's important to have collaboration within your LPM team. It is equally important to have a clear strategy and milestones for execution. The team member who is producing while the extroverts are hurling insults at one another in outdoor voices is likely to be an introvert.

By the way, introversion and extroversion are not measured in the Caliper assessment that Dr. Larry Richard uses. However, although this is not a scientific argument, we suspect that skepticism with a big dose of autonomy yields a high degree of resistance to initiatives like, say for instance, LPM.

Even still, there are strategies you can use to successfully involve introverts in your efforts and the impact of your LPM initiative. Here's how.

Seven Strategies for Managing Relationships with Introverts

Before we move on, a bit of a disclaimer: Be advised that some of the irreverent observations herein about both introverts and extroverts are tongue-in-cheek. I am not a psychologist, but I am an introvert and reserve the right to poke fun at my own kind.

We mentioned in part one that introverts can be good networkers. Wait ... how can introverts be depleted by social interactions on the one hand and good at networking on the other? It all comes down to how successfully you can accommodate the diverse work styles and personality types that comprise your group.

Following are seven strategies that will help you leverage the unique strengths that introverts bring to the table. These strategies fortify your network and energize the LPM initiative.

1. **Support critical thinking.** Introverts may not talk much in a group. That's because they are processing, not because they don't have good ideas. Introverts excel at critical thinking, such as identifying potential risks and challenges in your scoping documents. Leverage this ability by ensuring that they preview discussion topics so they know what to expect. Avoid putting them on the spot. If it's not possible to distribute meeting agendas ahead of time, follow the [Amazon meeting technique](#) of starting the meeting in silence so that everyone has a chance to read and consider the points they want to make. Also, consider assigning agenda items in advance. If you want to ensure participation from the quiet people at the table, ask them to be prepared to take the lead, for example, on a discussion of amount of budget used as compared to work completed to date. Ask for introverts' opinions on the gray areas. Introverts are good listeners and they may see the nuances and subtleties of issues that others may not.
2. **Stop the 'storming.** Okay, you don't really have to stop [brainstorming](#) completely. It is a feel-good activity that persists despite research that suggests it isn't terribly effective. Individuals actually come up with more and better ideas than brainstorming groups. This is true whether they are introverts or not. We do recognize that brainstorming is baked into many cultures, but you may get better ideas if participants write down their ideas

ahead of time. Urge introverts to thoroughly explain their reasoning behind, for example, resource allocation recommendations, so that others can understand the thought process. Remember, introverts don't think out loud like extroverts and may not feel the need to vocalize. As an LPM leader, you will build a more engaged culture if you switch up your techniques so that both introverts and extroverts feel heard.

3. **Be inclusive.** Research shows that in a six-person meeting, two people will do [60 percent of the talking](#). Remind the heavy contributors how much you appreciate their contribution before gently encouraging them to dial it back a notch so that others can be heard. Make it clear that it's okay to think now and contribute later, demonstrating that you respect all communication styles. Your LPM initiative benefits when you create a culture where everyone is encouraged to contribute.
4. **Focus on passions.** Introverts may be naturally good listeners and keen observers, focusing on quality over quantity. In part, the success of LPM will depend on assigning the right resource to the right project. Introverted lawyers will be particularly successful in small groups and one-on-one meetings. Their unique brand of influence will grow from there. Introverts may find it easier to speak about the things that capture their interest and imagination.
5. **Let the inner extrovert speak.** You may think that you are better off putting an extrovert in front of an audience. This simply isn't true. How about Winston Churchill and Nelson Mandela? Many [introverts](#) enjoy speaking in front of a group and are, in fact, very good at [connecting with them](#). There is a big difference between schmoozing at a cocktail party and presenting on stage. When quality is important, i.e., the deep understanding and emotional buy-in you need from LPM stakeholders, ask your introverts if they want to be involved. This is particularly evident when they are passionate about the topic. Although introverts may generally prefer to converse with one or two others rather than a large group, you'll find a fair number that love to be front and center. But don't push; encourage.
6. **Allow time to recharge.** Everyone needs time to rest. Introverts, in particular, can spend their social currency rather quickly. Give them time to recuperate following activities that put them in front of people. These activities include LPM tasks as well as legal work such as presentations, networking, client consultations and court appearances. Encourage introverts to retreat and recharge as needed and to alternate people-facing activities with other types of work or leisure pursuits.
7. **Overcome resistance.** According to Dr. Richard, skepticism is a real enemy of innovation. This could mean that when you have a room full of lawyers, very few new ideas will percolate to the top. However, according to the research on introverts, we know that they tend to be [great listeners](#). So, when you need to get beyond covert resistance and bring other lawyers on board, introverts may be very useful in propelling the LPM movement toward the tipping point.

Let it Be

The most important takeaway from any discussion about personality traits is that they are generalizations that tend to apply broadly to large groups of people. Recognize and work with what you observe. It's true that introverts need time to recharge. But when they are ready, they can be excellent relationship builders and unifiers of people.

According to Dr. Soder, "Managers can help introverts be more successful by understanding their strengths, helping them hone skills, providing requisite alone and energy recharge time and support." Above all, let introverts be introverts.

Introversion is a trait to be celebrated, not fixed. Introversion is not social anxiety and it is not shyness. It doesn't require intervention. Some of the best lawyers are extroverts. Some of the best lawyers are introverts, as well. If you're fortunate enough to have a few introverts in your corner, use the strategies outlined above to optimize their strengths and take your LPM initiative to the next level.