

Exploring inclusion and support for introverts to thrive in fundraising

Shamina Senaratne, AFP Fellowship in Diversity and Inclusion 2018/19

Context/Background

In 2019, [AFP Global launched a new](#) document, [Fundraising is Awesome](#) and made special mention that "the profession draws a variety of personalities: from introverts to extroverts and everyone in-between." And yet there is a common assumption that fundraising is mainly an extrovert's game. How can an introvert thrive in such a profession? Would it just be an exhausting career mismatch?

Right after her famous 2012 TED talk about her findings about introverts in her meticulously researched book, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, Susan Cain says in a [short interview with CNN](#), "Introverts have been taught to sort of fake it, and kind of pass as extroverts, so it's not always easy to spot the introverts among us."

Are we aware that 30-50% of the general North American working population are naturally introverts? And yet our business culture favours the extrovert in our built environment, and our working and socializing style. Inclusion and belonging is connected to well-being, and to people feeling welcome to be who they naturally are.

The investigation in this document sought to support the assertion that fundraising is for both extroverts and introverts; and consider, Are there myths to dispel? Are there barriers to introverts operating at their best and most energetic at work? Why should we be aware of introvert special needs? But further to that, it follows that there are

people to support. Not only for their well-being but for all of us to realize the potential energy and creativity of introvert colleagues on our teams. Finally, could awareness, sensitivity and inclusion of introvert needs and working style within fundraising workplaces go some way to addressing fundraiser burnout/position turnover?

Method

The goal of this project is: to gain understanding, build awareness, and consider suggestions for and benefits of inclusivity for introverts in fundraising; to share what I learn with AFP professionals across the sector; and by doing so, offer support for diversity and inclusion discussions and action within small and large fundraising organizations.

I began my exploration by testing this topic in casual conversations with fundraisers at AFP Congress 2018. My method of research and exploration has included delving into books; online published articles, relevant websites and videos (found in the Sources and Resources section below); and interviews I did with successful AFP fundraisers who identified themselves as introverts.

Questions that guided my research: What is a significant invisible minority we should be aware of including in the way we work in fundraising? What does it feel like to be an introvert? How does not being inclusive to introverts affect our work and our results? How do introverts feel about the work they do? How will I survive over time in an extrovert profession when I am an introvert, even if I perform as an ambivert? Are there introverts in Fundraising? Really?

Exploring inclusion and support for introverts to thrive in fundraising

Strengths of introverts

Marti Olsen Laney, author of *The Introvert Advantage: How Quiet People Can Thrive in an Extrovert World*, says introverts work well with others - especially in one-to-one relationships, they maintain long-term friendships, they are flexible, independent, have a strong ability to concentrate, are self-reflective, responsible, creative, good at out-of-the-box thinking, have analytical skills that integrate complexity, tend to be studious and perseverant.

She notes that it's a misconception to think introverts lack social skills, won't talk, don't like people, are withdrawn or loners or shy. And she's not the only one to notice that the stereotype of what an introvert is, is not helpful.

Introverts have special traits in their toolbox. At the same time, their nervous system is wired differently than extroverts. They may be faking it to fit in with a value system, dominant work style and culture that works for extroverts (what Cain calls the 'extrovert ideal'), but it has its toll. It benefits a whole organization for introverts to be able to draw on their natural strengths and to offer their best, without being depleted by the work or the context in which they work.

Strengths of Introverts

"Listening is probably the most important skill a fundraiser can have," according to the AFP Fundamentals of Fundraising course. "It is an indispensable skill that can make the difference between building a good relationship and a great relationship. It tells the donor you and by extension, your organization, care about [her or] his opinion and value his contribution regardless of what it is."

AFP's Fundamentals in Fundraising course recommends fundraisers develop skills in listening – asking probing questions, discovering passions and motivations of donors, listening for connections to the mission and vision of the organization and allowing a bit of silence during conversations to allow the prospective donor to share who they are and for the fundraiser to learn things they might not have discovered otherwise

Introverts are sensitive and observant. They listen deeply and digest information more thoroughly. They like talking to people, especially one-on-one, making meaningful connections. They are usually happy not to take the spotlight and are interested in depth in relationships.

They pay alert attention and listen broadly as well. If you ask an introvert about all sorts of things, they are likely to have been attentive to absorb some basic knowledge about them, even if they are not the introvert's areas of interest or the central focus of their attention.

Introverts use up capacity by monitoring how the task is going, and the reactions in their environment. This means they are using up energy in a side task, but that monitoring can mean they have good intuition, are able to read a room, are good at judging how an interaction is progressing. They read something often considering the context, other connected ideas and relevant experience or material at the same time. They can be good at strategic thinking. They are known for insightful problem solving.

Often one can observe that extroverts are involved in what's going on around them, and are attentive to *what is*; meanwhile introverts may appear reserved observing what is going on, while they are reflectively "thinking" *what if?* "What if" thinking and the ability to spend time on one's own is the basis of creativity and original thinking that can then be brought to a collaborative process, or can be the basis for insightful problem solving.

Introvert problem solving styles are different than extroverts'. In addition, introverts usually stay with a problem longer. Their tenacity can mean they are better at solving complex problems. Focus, with creativity and persistence leads to innovation.

Finally, introverts are often seen as shy or risk averse. Rather, an introvert's style of risk taking is usually to understand the context and have enough information in hand – a good trait for a Major Gifts fundraiser who will want to be well researched and prepared as they meet a prospective donor one-on-one.

Adam Grant, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, has written that “despite growing social and professional acceptance, introverts are still wildly misunderstood. People may be more open about being introverts, but they cling to assumptions that don’t stand up to the test of rigorous evidence.” He [debunks a number of myths](#) about introverts.

A main myth being *“Extroverts get energy from social interaction, whereas introverts get energy from privately reflecting on their thoughts and feelings.”* Grant says that research shows, “Extroverts report the most energy when they’re being talkative and assertive—but so do introverts...regardless of whether we’re working, reading, eating, or partying.” So why do introverts find chatty social scenes deplete their energy?

“Introversion-extroversion is about more than just social interaction...*It’s your sensitivity to stimulation.* If you’re an introvert, you’re more prone to being over-stimulated by intense or prolonged social interaction.” Introverts often respond by shortening their time in over-stimulating situations or leaving the scene to be in a less stimulating environment to do something quiet, like look at a view or go for a walk or take a break to reflect on what has already happened to that point.

Introverts don’t need to go off alone necessarily, they love a good one-on-one conversation where they can go beyond small talk and have an extended and meaningful connection with another person. Still, an introvert will find that in addition to bedtime, they need some interior time alone to process, ground, reflect and refresh.

Grant also writes that although according to research, most leaders and managers report they are extroverts; the assumption that *“Extroverts are better leaders than introverts”* is a myth. Research also shows that introvert leaders are very successful especially when managing extroverts. Introverted leaders thrive supervising a proactive team by validating initiative, listening carefully to suggestions from below, supporting reports to run with their ideas and not seeking all the limelight. They will end up leading more productive teams than an extrovert leader with the same team.

A third myth he denounces is one that *"Introverts are plagued by public speaking anxiety."* Not true he says, citing research showing that "84% of public speaking anxiety was completely unrelated to introversion-extroversion." He then quotes Malcolm Gladwell to sum it up: "Speaking is not an act of extroversion. It has nothing to do with extroversion. It's a performance, and many performers are hugely introverted." In fact, look at Susan Cain herself – she's become an effective and persuasive public speaker even though she's an introvert.

[Ginger](#) a UK public speaking training company says Introverts make great public speakers because: "they prepare, they focus on the message, and they serve their audience." To deliver a successful speech and engage with your audience, "you need to find out as much about your audience as you possibly can. Who are they? What do they need to know? What is their knowledge of your subject matter? Introverts will take time to research, ask questions and think through what the audience needs to know and how to shape the message."

Karen Wickre, author of *Taking the Work out of Networking: An Introvert's Guide to Making Connections that Count*, writes in her article on QuietRev.com, "we introverts have qualities that make us very effective networkers." Grant would agree and would like to set aside the myth that *"Extroverts are better networkers than introverts."* Karen Wickre writes, "our interest in others exceeds our need to talk about ourselves." And introverts are good observers. "I'm forever wondering about who people are and why they are that way. What's their demeanor, what's their history, what animates them? I observe, and somehow, I remember and apply that knowledge...These abilities—listening, observing, being curious—are wonderful tools for connecting with people. And none of them requires you to be in the limelight."

This way of seeing surely makes a fundraiser good at prospect research, being a developer of donor profiles and most definitely in developing relationships with donors and prospective donors.

"Extroverts are better salespeople than introverts," is yet another myth that Grant and others wish to debunk. According to research, ambiverts—people who are able to *pivot* from qualities of extroverts and introverts according to the needs of the situation—are more effective and successful salespeople than extroverts. Daniel H. Pink discusses work on this idea in his book, *To Sell is Human*.

Which brings us back to Susan Cain and her assertion that there are many introverts among us – faking their way as "pseudo-extroverts". Likely they are acting as ambiverts. Take [Pink's quiz on-line](#) and see where his analysis will place you. Whether you are born somewhere in the middle of the introvert-extrovert spectrum, or you are a natural introvert or extrovert who has learned to be skilled in the traits you need from the extrovert or introvert personality toolbox, Dan Pink predicts you will be the best kind of salesperson.

How Introverts Manage the Cost of Functioning Outside their 'Natural Niche'

Cain, and many more introverts have observed similarly that, "you can function outside your 'natural niche' [on the introvert to extrovert continuum]...but it will consume extra energy without creating any new energy."

Psychologist Michael Alcee in a TedX talk says, "Introverts are people who take in a lot from their environment, they are sensitive and perceptive and completely attuned to what's happening outside of them. And they are spending a lot of time, processing and absorbing it... and because introverts are naturally spending a lot of energy taking a lot in, they also need to take a break and recharge. And they do that best by going into their world of imagination and ideas. In other words, going inside."

Brian Little's Free Trait Theory

Discussed in Cain's Quiet, it is especially relevant for fundraising introverts managing how they live within the extrovert ideal.

"Little believes fixed traits and free traits coexist. According to Free Trait Theory, we are born and culturally endowed with certain personality traits – introversion, for example which he thinks of as "fixed"...but we can and do act out of character [(using "free traits")] in the service of "core personal projects."..."introverts are capable of acting like an extrovert for the sake of work they consider important, people they love, or anything they value highly..."

"According to Little, our lives are dramatically enhanced when we're involved in core personal projects that we consider meaningful, manageable, and not unduly stressful, and that are supported by others...Many of us are uncomfortable with the idea of taking on a "false" persona for any length of time. And if we act out of character by convincing ourselves that our pseudo-self is real, we can eventually burn out without even knowing why."

"The genius of Little's theory," says Cain, "is how neatly it resolves this discomfort. Yes we are only pretending to be extroverts, and yes, such inauthenticity can be morally ambiguous (not to mention exhausting), but if it's in the service of love or a professional calling, then we're doing just as Shakespeare advised: [To thine own self be true.]"

"When people are skilled at adopting free traits it can be hard to believe that they're acting out of character." However, Susan Cain offers two examples of introverts acting as pseudo-extroverts for consideration.

One is of a pseudo-extrovert who spends much of her time doing things that suit her personality and when she steps out of her comfort zone it is for the purpose of advancing her advocacy work, which she loves and cares about. She acts out of character for the sake of worthy tasks that only *temporarily* require a different orientation. She may have felt anxious before chairing a meeting but spent much of her time researching and writing policy papers on topics she cared about. She felt successful and satisfied with her accomplishments and who she is. *

The other was acting out of character in the service of a project she didn't care about: her pseudo-extroversion was not supported by her deeper values. She was not saying to herself, 'I'm doing this to advance work I care about deeply, *and when the work is done, I'll settle back into my true self.*' Instead, her interior monologue was, 'The route to success is to be the sort of person I am not' which is an underlying belief that there is something fundamentally wrong with who she is. This orientation is self-negating and demanding and will undermine being a successful pseudo-extrovert or ambivert. Also, she has not identified her personal requirement to keep space and time for herself to settle back into her true self to support her sustaining energy.

Cain says, "It is not always so easy, it turns out, to identify your core personal projects. And it can be especially tough for introverts, who have spent so much of their lives conforming to extroverted norms that by the time they choose a career or a calling, it feels perfectly normal to ignore their own preferences. They may be uncomfortable in...the marketing department, but no more than they were back in middle school or summer camp." This is food for thought.

Key to supporting introverts in the workplace and key to introverts supporting themselves is the following understanding: "*Even if you're stretching yourself in the service of a core personal project, you don't want to act out of character too much or for too long.*"

Introverts need to manage overstimulation. The second reason for exhaustion or burn out can be not taking appropriate breaks from overstimulation.

Little's model for success has an introvert agree with him/herself or others, to act out of character only for a period and then take a restorative niche.

Introverts need, 'restorative niches' —places you go when you want to return to your true self. It can be a physical place (a quiet space you go to) or a temporal one (breaks you plan between sales calls or while working in noisy environments). It can be a walk on your own, especially in nature, reading a book, allowing time for imagination and freedom for interior thought and unwinding.

"It can mean canceling your social plans on the weekend before a big meeting at work, practicing yoga or meditation, or choosing an email over an in-person meeting." Susan Cain, *Quiet*.

Interviews with 3 successful introvert fundraisers to find out more about introverts in fundraising.

Excerpts from three interviews offer insight into their experiences as introverts in fundraising. The AFP Inclusion and Philanthropy Fellowship Blog article, [*Tips for Thriving as an Introvert in Fundraising*](#), a companion piece to this paper, will also be of interest.

Darius Maze

on the Board for AFP Foundation – Canada, and an active member of AFP International's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) committee:

When I ask him, when in fundraising he has felt most productive and energized? He says, "I may be an introvert but I actually like high pressure situations, where you know I've got this, this, this and this—I've got a direct mail, and a holiday event and... I've done this thing, this thing, this thing and that now that sets the rest of the team up for success, for me that's where I can execute -- on the back end, so I've really thought through our mission and how it syncs with our donors and I've put together the best possible direct mail campaign. That goes out, and then the Executive Director will connect with the donors. For me it is nailing the donor analysis, nailing the direct mail, nailing the execution."

Being well prepared, going deep, being strategic, being fully connected in a core personal project gives him energy. Talking to Darius, you hear it in his voice. Make

no mistake, introverts can be demonstrably passionate about the work they do in fundraising and who they are doing it for: supporting and leading teams to really make a difference in our communities through the great work our organizations are able to achieve.

Paul Nazarath

Vice President, Education & Development, Canadian Association of Gift Planners, and previously with Canada Helps:

“Susan Cain says, manage your energy and manage the operational side of what you do. So for me, this is my superpower getting to speak and be an educator. So what I learned, now as I’m getting older and speaking more and doing it at a higher level—keynotes—what I find is I’ve got to be ‘hyper on’ and then, ‘hyper off.’ And actually the best thing for me to do is a big keynote to a thousand people, and then get into a hotel room, turn the lights off and be still for a couple of hours: full recharge. So this is the thing, if you can decide the off and on, it’s all about pacing.”

Paul does a lot of travelling, speaking, meeting with groups and individuals, and advising. He understands how powerful and necessary restorative niches are for his success. Over the weekends he “puts the gadgets by the door” as he comes home, and is “super vigilant to be present with his family” especially as he has young kids. He also says he does most of his impressive social media communication through scheduled posts once a week. And though he live-tweets from special events, “everything else is on rails.”

“We may need to be on all platforms, and be super reachable — text, DM, everything. But you don’t have to respond right away. Someone might say, ‘Paul, I texted you!’ [And I’ll say,] ‘Yes, I responded today.’ That’s just the way it’s going to work. *We* have to set the pace.”

Paula Attfield

Chair of AFP Canada and President of Stephen Thomas with more than 20 years experience in fundraising marketing for non-profits.

"Introverts will be good at storytelling. They tend to be thoughtful smart people who can communicate well because they naturally observe, listen and respond thoughtfully." Before heading her agency she said she knew early on that she loved writing copy—where she's able to connect emotionally to a cause, and connect donors to a cause (thank you letters, appeal letters, researching and writing a case for support...) Nowadays she's writing strategy and running a company.

She builds restorative niches into her day. She admits to closing her office door when she wants to get work done on a project, and finding a quiet place alone away from her office to check emails on her phone just to be in a quiet headspace. Taking time alone in the morning before work and then walking to the office, and taking lunch away from her desk are ways she gets the space and time for processing and regenerating so she can be most productive and creative. Regarding managing energy and career over the long term, Paula has changed roles to suit her need to be intellectually engaged. And every once in a while she does a "Stop—Start—Continue " checklist, checking in with herself regarding the things she's including in her life.

Talking about inclusive strategies so that working teams don't miss out on quiet voices at the table she says, "As Chair of AFP Canada, I have told our Board, because we meet through a cross-country phone call, 'it's not always easy for people to participate... so if interjecting on a phone line with 20 people doesn't work for you—always, we can find other ways. I can have a direct conversation with you to gather your ideas, you can share them by email if you're more comfortable, so I'm looking for ways that everyone's voice can be heard in spaces where they're not always comfortable. And there are lots of tools on-line where to look at 'how do you engage everyone in a conversation, even the introverts?' So I think as facilitators, as managers of people, as presidents and CEOs and chairs of Boards it's really incumbent on us to make sure that every voice is heard; and recognize that every

voice is not going to be heard through the same means and channels. We have to make room for everyone's ideas and everyone's voice to come through. As leaders we have to make sure that happens."

Speaking of herself in earlier times she says she worked with a coach, and was lucky to have mentors who helped her work with different strategies to support her professional growth. One idea that she worked with was to come into a meeting with a point of view written out. And setting a goal to have her voice heard in meetings. She noticed, "If I open my mouth earlier in that space, I'm more comfortable. If I'm quiet at the beginning I'll be quiet for the rest of the meeting." She encourages setting goals and pushing your self to make strategies to stretch yourself, even if it's scary, even if you find you suffer from 'imposter syndrome.' Paula says, "push, push, push – practice, practice, practice" – it's easier to do anything if you can be brave for a while.

"Our company had a theme for a while to, 'Be Brave' and it was a cultural thing we undertook staff-wide. We had buttons that said 'Be Brave' and we were championing each other to do things which were brave within our own context—because something brave for me might not seem a brave act for someone else and vice versa. And some people were private about what being brave meant for them personally. I think that's important too, especially for introverts, I mean you don't have to be out there with all this stuff. You can manage it privately, although it is better to have support for sure."

Supporting Inclusion for Introverts in Fundraising Organizations

Teams that are a mix of introvert/extrovert are most effective, and most happy. We know introverts are good at strategic thinking, creativity, complex problem solving, listening and making deep connections with people especially one-on-one, all very important in a variety of fundraising roles. Marti Olsen Laney, notes that introverts produce high quality work that is often original, well thought through and addressing the needs of the organizational goals. Inclusive approaches are important in our workplaces to remove stress that can be getting in the way of the best work people

have to offer. It is important to remember that introvert sensitivity operates at the level of the nervous system; it's not merely a preference.

Introverts can be sensitive to stimulation such as heat and cold, fluorescent/bright light from only one source, they are vigilant to their environment so attention is taxed by too much in the surrounding work space – noise, people, talking, light, music, etc. They are thinking deeply and in a connected way about new information and existing bodies of knowledge, they are seeking relevance and richness in their work. Without opportunities to refresh and recharge in ways that support them, they can become over-stimulated.

"The first thing we need to do, all of us, is to help introverts learn who they are. What their nature is, and to help them stop shaming and blaming themselves for who they are." Psychologist Michael Alcee says in his TEDx talk, "For example, we all have a cell phone, and we know if we are running a number of apps at once the battery drains faster. When it gets down to 5% power, we don't throw away our smart phone. We just charge it up." Introverts are taking in a lot at once and if they start to drain quickly, they start to denigrate themselves and judge themselves against what they believe is standard performance based on what appears to be the extrovert norm.

Alcee asks, "Imagine if we don't tell our fellow introverts in the world...how they're built. If we don't remind introverts of how they drain quickly and how they're built, we're going to see those anxiety and depression symptoms coming up big. So now that we know how introverts drain, how can we help them to charge up?"

A possible overall effect on mental health sector-wide is an important motivator to develop a culture that is supportive of up to half of the population. Making inclusive tweaks to the way the workday, workflow and work environments operate, would add to the happiness and productivity of fundraising individuals and teams.

Three areas where fundraising organizations can begin those tweaks and make inclusive adjustments emerged from my research: office design, exploring 'restorative niches' and organizational culture.

Office design

There are a variety of drawbacks to open plan offices including sensory overload for the introverts trying to concentrate with a brain that is always attuned to the environment. Open plan offices also make it difficult to have control over privacy,

stimulation and distraction. Susan Cain is a critic of open plan offices for extroverts as well as introverts. And she details in her book why they can be detrimental to everything from productivity to emotional health.

Open plan offices are not supportive of introvert communication style (introverts prefer one-on-one conversations and deep connections). In an open plan office, "It's harder to actually develop close relationships with your colleagues" Cain notes, "...it's kind of the opposite of what you think...You think it's this great big social experience, but actually forming true connections often depends on a level of privacy and a level of intimacy... people in open office plans feel like they can be overheard all the time. So it's harder for them to exchange the confidences that make friendships happen." Dan Schawbel has found that 63 percent of introverts feel lonely at work, compared to 37 percent of extroverts.

"A one size fits all environment really doesn't work. And we need to be figuring out ways where people can kind of pick and choose their environments, and then be at their best." HBR interview with Susan Cain.

Ideally, having an office with a door suits an introvert better. Even making offices with doors, or meeting rooms available for introvert fundraisers to use depending on the work they are doing, can be very helpful both as providing spaces to work or gather privately, but also to offer some control over space, light, heat, noise level and as a place to retreat to work privately and in a focused way before sharing with others. If there is no way to accommodate such space in your offices, are there other places/spaces your introvert team members might use for a few hours instead?

Exploring restorative niches

As Richard Little suggests, can we provide flexibility for restorative niches necessary for refreshing energy either as a restorative break or as places or times to do work that becomes itself a restorative niche?

Introverts need breaks: introverts should be sure to take vacations and have meaningful downtime. Daily, introverts need time to go inside to their world of ideas

and imagination. Can staff be encouraged to take a walk at lunch time and discouraged from eating lunch at their desk? Toronto YMCA has done this.

Introverts take longer to recover from over-stimulation. Help them by offering flexibility in their hours so they can pace themselves and have time to regroup and replenish energy after events, presentations and other hyper-stimulating and intense experiences.

Is multi-tasking necessary all the time? Can the work flow include longer zones of one thing, even one complex thing, followed by multi-tasking times so that interruptions and distractions are limited for certain periods in the day? Often it makes sense for introverts to work quietly in the mornings and keep afternoons for meetings and phone calls.

Is there the option to work from home for a few focused hours? Can stretches of time be scheduled for your introvert to go deep so work itself is the restorative niche between meetings, events, other more noisy/interrupted/high energy/overstimulating work?

How can the work a fundraising introvert does, be their restorative niche?

When a fundraiser has been acting at times out of character to accomplish work needed, it is important to also spend time doing work that suits their natural strengths.

For example, introverts on staff may be great at developing cases for support and the case statements that support annual giving, major gift and planned giving programs. These documents requiring reflection, synthesis of context and complex factors, a bit of "what if?" thinking, articulate the aims, purposes, mission and the organization's programs and impacts in the community – they are support for the team that will set everyone up for success. At the same time, researching and writing a case for support may feel so well suited to an introvert's natural niche that it becomes a restorative niche in the work day.

We know introverts are good at analysis (donor analysis, data analysis, future scenario analysis etc.) and at strategic thinking, planning, writing, creativity, and so on. It is satisfying and meaningful to be able to use one's special introvert skills at work for our causes.

In the flow of their work, if an introvert can have a project to work on, on their own, especially if it uses their introvert strengths—and time to do it—that work can itself be a restorative niche.

Organization culture

A culture of inclusion for any one group can open the door for further meaningful diversity and inclusion organizational support. Some suggestions for organizations to look at to support introverts:

- Encourage all good ideas to come forward from meetings:
 - Allow extra time for introverts to process the info and make sense of it – they are considering both the problem at hand and the rich context in which it is occurring
 - Ask for further thoughts on what has been raised to be emailed to you so introverts can be thoughtful, and be open to one-on-one face to face or by phone follow up so that an introvert can be reflective before responding.
- Have regular one-on-one meetings or check-ins with introverts so you can keep connected, keep lines of communication open and discover their good ideas in a style more comfortable for introverts.
- Consider that introversion is on a neurodiversity spectrum. Help/mentor an introvert into a new role so they get "a longer runway" and know that when they're flying, they'll be great.
- Introverts socialize best in small groups or one-on-one – allow longer lunch time occasionally so staff can get to know each other or they can take time in a way that refreshes them

- Dan Schawbel, author of the new book *Back to Human!*, for leaders who want to create deeper and more meaningful relationships with their introverted teammates, says: "Create a safe work environment so introverts feel comfortable sharing." [Google](#) set out to discover the secret to creating a high performing team with their Project Aristotle. They discovered that psychological safety was key: creating a safe place in which teammates feel they belong and can freely share ideas without repercussion.
- Schawbel also suggests, "Promote a shared-learning culture." If there's one thing introverts love to do, it's learn. They also love to feel valuable, and to share their knowledge with others. In a climate where we all need to learn "at the speed of business," this can be a huge advantage. We need to create work cultures that promote continuous education – and these are work cultures in which introverts can shine.
- Communicate support for the idea that it is important to stretch and push oneself beyond natural temperament and to be able to do things that are not naturally comfortable, to meet the challenge, to explore a skill or practice a learned ability; but it is also important *not* to be living in that place that is not really who we are, *most* of the time.
- Consider flexible schedules and ways for introverts to manage their time as they get their work done alone and connect with and work together with teams.
- Ask the introverts in your office, "How can we support you to be your best?" Introverts like to be asked and often don't just speak up, no matter what the issue.

Even if we don't know the numbers regarding whether or not they are a minority within fundraising, introverts are a significant minority in the overall population. It is important not to miss out on the strengths of this minority in fundraising.

Nor do we want to miss engaging with this minority in our donor population. Perhaps not everyone loves a Gala – but might there be other reasons than ticket price, date and time? Awareness and sensitivity to introvert needs can also allow us to be more sensitive to our donor needs and creative in our ways of connecting with some of our donors.

Conclusions and benefits to embracing introverts

and making changes in the workplace to support this significant minority to do their best work

There are likely many introverts in the fundraising office big or small. Dr. Beth Breeze, who studied both the social and technical skills of fundraisers, published “The New Fundraisers: Who Organizes Charitable Giving in Contemporary Society?” in 2017. Her research on the personal characteristics of fundraisers in the U.K. referred to in AFP International’s *Fundraising is Awesome!*, tells us that those in the profession:

- are emotionally intelligent, which includes having high levels of self-awareness, the ability to regulate emotions, being highly motivated and exhibiting high levels of empathy.
- can read people and situations, understand body language and “hear the unsaid.”
- are enablers or scene-setters rather than visible leaders seeking recognition.
- are not egotistical, preferring to save the plaques for donors, not the askers.

Breeze’s research focuses primarily on major gift fundraisers. And it appears that many of the key characteristics of good major gift fundraisers are in fact the strengths of introverts.

For any introvert in any role in fundraising, managing time they spend in what kind of tasks and roles; managing overstimulation; and managing energy renewal; are key pieces that would help ensure long-term success, well-being and longevity in this career path that clearly can be a good fit for introverts.

Fundraising attracts a variety of personalities, "from introverts to extroverts and everyone in-between," involved in everything from, "planning multi-channel fundraising appeals, organizing mass participation events, writing skillful, donor-focused communications, managing back-end donor databases, and developing effective long-term stewardship strategies." (*Fundraising is Awesome!*)

Considering that the breadth of fundraising roles requires so many of the strengths of introverts, it raises a possibility that the profession could be made up of more than 50% introverts and pseudo-introverts.

It's just that introverts are not able to recharge energy efficiently when challenged in workspaces and contexts suited for extroverts. A modern open plan office style without walls, especially desks without partitions, may only have been used for its cost-saving especially by small organizations—but it is important to understand how people and office dynamics are affected regardless of such a constraint, so that creativity may be employed with insight to help introverts remain energized and work at their best.

Many of the adaptation/flexibility in the workplace that supports the needs of introverts can actually also improve work life and well-being for extroverts also.

This paper is not just about inclusion but why inclusion matters which became more and more important to me as I researched and began writing. Increased productivity of teams and individuals, increased well-being and respect are important results of inclusion. Living our values to support and lift people up with our actions and attention brings us into alignment with the values of many of the causes our organizations exist for. And this is powerful.

A number of recommendations follow after a few limitations affecting the context of this paper are acknowledged.

Limitations

- Are we a profession of 30 – 50% introverts? We don't know. It could be more or less. This exploration begins from a position assuming a general minority in the profession based on the general cultural norm for North America. Knowing actually the breakdown of introvert tendency to extrovert tendency in fundraising professionals across all roles would be valuable.
- Do people think this exploration matters? In an interview with HBR, Susan Cain says, people think the number of their colleagues who are introverts is "a small percentage...just a small handful of people. And that is because introverts get into the habit of sort of trying to act like extroverts. And by the time you're a grown up, you get quite skilled at doing this. But that doesn't mean that that doesn't take a toll, and that doesn't deplete your energies that could be better directed towards actually getting your work done." They also don't seek the limelight so may be peddling hard in the background to keep up without saying anything; they may have begun as introverts but over time are happily inhabiting ambivert territory. Further inquiry would clarify.
- Small organizations may find it is not easy to address office design if space or money is limited. However, awareness and creativity can prevail.

Recommendations

1. Survey AFP membership to discover more about introverts in Fundraising so that more specific and insightful recommendations for support can be made. Survey of AFP Canada wide membership?

- a. Would members take a test and anonymously tell us the fundraising role they are in, the roles they felt most alive and energized in, the things they need to thrive (no matter if they are extrovert or introvert)
- b. Are introverts actually a minority in fundraising? Note that MensaFoundation.org says that in 2011 "While the general population is made up of approximately 75 percent extroverts and 25 percent introverts, the membership of Mensa is nearly the reverse: approximately 65 percent introverts and 35 percent extroverts."

This observation may strike one as possibly predictable. However, for me it piqued my interest further – might we be surprised to find that introverts were in fact more than a small minority in fundraising? given the roles we need fundraisers to play, we could find that there are in fact 50% natural introverts or possibly more than 50%. How much more important is the self-care and managing energy piece for our members, in order to manage and mitigate burnout? – and to manage working in small nonprofit offices who may have fewer resources and smaller staff to work with? There may even be an impact regarding general turnover in positions to find out more about. Knowing more would allow our professional organization and members to consider and suggest further professional development to keep our members thriving, and doing the work they love.

2. AFP: especially after a survey is done, provide relevant professional development to members.
3. Fundraising organizations: consider ways to support introverts in the profession by creating understanding and inclusive office environments and

- office culture; supporting inclusive policies and accommodation; and supporting curiosity and creative ways to address unnecessary situational, temporal and environmental stresses to introvert nervous systems, that get in the way of them thriving and doing their best work.
4. Organizations and individuals in fundraising: engage in thinking about how well-being can be considered in how everyone works, so that everyone has a feeling of respect and inclusion.
 5. AFP leadership and members: Organize local AFP chapter meet ups for introverts in fundraising to meet, find each other, socialize, enjoy each other and learn from each other, learn something new together.
 6. Introverts: Self-knowledge is power – learn more, manage yourselves with insight and confidence
 7. AFP members: Share what you learn about introvert needs, strengths and strategies for inclusion.
 8. Everyone: Know that we all want to be operating at our “peak level of energy and efficiency and motivation.”

There was much interest in supporting discovering more about introverts in our profession as I talked to members at the 2018 AFP Congress in Toronto, and as I did interviews with fundraisers. Next steps would be to keep the conversation going. There are lots of ways for you to get oriented and find resources you might need to continue a conversation in your organization or at home. And you can get a quick jump on things by starting with the **Appendix** to this paper, **Sources and Resources**.

Appendix: Sources and Resources

Exploring inclusion and support for introverts to thrive in fundraising

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Appendix

Sources and Resources

For Insight into “introvert”, “ambivert”, “extrovert”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJWA2MARNxk>

Faking it: How introverts succeed

How can introverts succeed in a society with an extrovert bias? Writer Susan Cain describes the power of the introvert. Mar 19, 2012 – 2 minute short on CNN after her TED talk.

https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts#t-1023187

Susan Cain’s classic TED talk in 2012 – where she spoke of the power of introverts.

Quiet: the Power of Introverts in a World that Can’t Stop Talking

Susan Cain, Broadway Books, 2012

The Introvert Advantage: How Quiet People can Thrive in an Extrovert World

Marti Olsen Laney, Workman Publishing, 2002

To Sell is Human: The surprising Truth about moving others

Daniel H. Pink, Riverhead Books, 2012 see pp. 7-93 re: being “Ambivert”, and advantages

The Irresistible Introvert: Harness the Power of Quiet Charisma in a Loud World, Michaela Chung, Skyhorse Publishing, 2016

Never Eat Alone: and other secrets to success, one relationship at a time

Keith Ferrazzi and Tahl Raz, Crown Publishing Group, 2005, 2014 (Want to get schooled in useful extrovert ways?)

Quiet Power: the secret strengths of Introverts

Susan Cain with Gregory Mone and Erica Moroz, illustrated by Grant Snider, Penguin Canada Books, 2016 (written for young people but worth looking at any age.)

<https://www.quietrev.com>

Susan Cain's call for a Quiet Revolution, "To create a world where introverts are celebrated for their powerful contributions and, more importantly, for who they are. And where everyone's quiet strength—no matter what their personality type—is validated." Curated articles by researchers and others worth reading.

Not an Introvert, Not an Extrovert? You May Be An Ambivert

Elizabeth Bernstein, July 27, 2015 5:07 p.m. ET, *Wall Street Journal*

Sometimes social, sometimes solitary, ambiverts often make good sales people

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/not-an-introvert-not-an-extrovert-you-may-be-an-ambivert-1438013534>

Tips for Thriving as an Introvert in Fundraising,

Shamina Senaratne, AFP 2018-19 Inclusion and Philanthropy Fellowship Blog article

<http://www.afpinclusivegiving.ca/story/tips-thriving-introvert-fundraising/>

<https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/extraversion-or-introversion.htm?bhcp=1>

Myers Briggs website's descriptions of personalities include their 8 kinds of introverts

Goodbye to MBTI, the Fad That Won't Die

Adam Grant says good bye to Myers Briggs

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/give-and-take/201309/goodbye-mbti-the-fad-won-t-die>

<http://highlysensitive.org/4923/marti-olsen-laney-introversion-advantages/>

Nice audio clip of Marti Olsen Laney Psy.D., M.F.T, author, researcher, educator, psychotherapist being interviewed for Mensa International about introversion.

<https://introvertspring.com/the-truth-about-introvert-anxiety-and-depression/>

[Michael Alcee, Ph.D.](#) clinical psychologist based in Tarrytown, NY. He specializes in working with individuals who have introverted traits and talks about the link between introversion and mental health.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1013&v=vkkGPyc3ZmA

Introverts, College, and the Mind: Solving Our Mental Health Crisis | Michael Alcee | TEDxTarrytown

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1SM9NxxmJo>

2014 Susan Cain TED talk published Feb 2017. where she asked for quiet revolution: "Solitude is a crucial ingredient of innovation and even of leadership." Susan Cain about erosion of focus and privacy in office spaces. And training the next generation of quiet leaders to lead, communicate and connect by drawing on their own natural strengths, instead of asking them to turn into extroverts.

<https://www.pinterest.ca/u/invitedu/susan-cain-introvert-expert/>

Paul Nazarath: "I'm not obsessed with Susan Cain: I'm obsessed with the business power of her work. Since we identified "emotional intelligence" as the new smart, we've been waiting for the wisdom of Introverts to be championed. Susan Cain IS that champion. Enjoy her work!"

Networking for Introverts:

Taking the Work out of Networking: An Introvert's Guide to Making Connections that Count

Karen Wickre, Touchstone, 2018

Making Connections that Count, Karen Wickre

<https://www.quietrev.com/making-connections-that-count/>

Introverts and Leadership:

Five Reasons Introverts Make Great Leaders

Trina Isakson, Published on June 1, 2016

https://charityvillage.com/cms/content/topic/five_reasons_introverts_make_gr_eat_nonprofit_leaders

Why Introverts Can Make Incredible Leaders [video interview]

Published on Jun 6, 2017, Next Big Idea Club - Heleo

Susan Cain joined Sheryl Sandberg, the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook and founder of the Lean In Foundation, for a conversation on introversion and leadership.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svZ6Q0WAqgM>

Workplace friendly for Introverts:

How to make the workplace friendly for introverts

Nobl Academy 2 min read

<https://academy.nobl.io/how-to-make-the-workplace-friendly-for-introverts/>

<https://www.quietrev.com/how-leaders-can-create-deeper-relationships-with-introverted-teammates/>

Susan Cain introduces work of [Dan Schawbel](#), author of the new book *Back to Human!* Excellent tips from Dan's book, for leaders who want to create deeper, and more meaningful, relationships with their introverted teammates

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/workplace-award/how-to-engage-the-introverts-and-extroverts-at-your-workplace/article37981021/>

https://ap.themyersbriggs.com/content/Research%20and%20White%20Papers/MBTI/Well-being_in_the_workplace_by_The_Myers-Briggs_Company.pdf

Well-being in the workplace re Introvert vs. Extrovert personalities.

<https://hbr.org/2012/07/the-power-of-the-introvert-in>

“The Power of the Introvert in Your Office”, Harvard Business Review

An interview with Susan Cain, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbhctpQVyJk>

Tips from Susan Cain for your extrovert team mates to help you start the conversation about supporting you in your workplace.

Tools for getting a conversation started with staff.

https://www.quietrev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RC_Personality-Styles-Tool.pdf

https://www.quietrev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RC_Inclusive-Meetings-Checklist.pdf

<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/19-heard-seen-respected-hsr/>

Heard, Seen, Respected (HSR): Practice Deeper Listening and Empathy with Colleagues (35 min exercise), liberatingstructures.com

<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/18-users-experience-fishbowl/>

User Experience Fishbowl: Share Know-How Gained from Experience with a Larger Community (35-70 min exercise)

A subset of people with direct field experience can quickly foster understanding, spark creativity, and facilitate adoption of new practices among members of a larger community.

Office design for introverts:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2014/06/04/office-design-for-introverts-by-an-introvert/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.61908ba48145

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-introverts-corner/201307/the-introvert-friendly-office>

<https://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/how-to/growth-strategies/2014/09/create-space-for-introverts-in-extroverted-offices.html>

https://charityvillage.com/cms/content/topic/introverts_in_the_nonprofit_world#.XJ_cjOtKjxV

<https://digest.bps.org.uk/2018/07/05/open-plan-offices-drive-down-face-to-face-interactions-and-increase-use-of-email/comment-page-1/>

<https://digest.bps.org.uk/2013/08/19/the-supposed-benefits-of-open-plan-offices-do-not-outweigh-the-costs/>

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/relationships/giving-introverts-permission-to-be-themselves/article4242454/>

Take a test:

See Susan Cain's and Marti Olsen Laney's books above for two good tests determining whether you are an introvert. Both offer you good insight as the results are explained.

<https://www.quietrev.com/the-introvert-test/?from=takethequiz>

(not as thorough as the test in the book, Quiet.)

Also on-line – a Myer's Briggs type test:

<https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>

<https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/the-16-mbti-types.htm>

Myer's Briggs (Testing usually through workplaces. See also 16 Personality basics for on-line testing.

<https://www.howatthronline.com/quicksurveys/introvert-extrovertintro.a5w>

<https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/extraversion-or-introversion.htm?bhcp=1>

<https://www.16personalities.com/articles/mind-introverted-vs-extroverted>

Other Resources:

Fundraising is Awesome, AFP Canada, January 2019 (pdf)

[https://afpglobal.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2019-01/Fundraising is Awesome 2019_1.pdf](https://afpglobal.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2019-01/Fundraising%20is%20Awesome%202019_1.pdf)