

## It's Time To Embrace Our Introverted Industry!

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I was told by a mentor once that the most successful veterinarians were extroverted and liked people more than patients. While there may be some truth in that extroverted people often ease into conversation with others without as much social anxiety, the reality is that 57% of people in the world are introverts. We are a field that most likely outweighs this percentage. Knowing this can help a distribution sales and strategy team be more effective in approaching and interacting with veterinary hospital leadership. Here are three tips for success.

### Don't Mistake Quiet for Shyness

The first misconception about introverts centers around shyness. This is a very common myth of introverts and one to disprove once and for all. Introverts are not quiet because they are socially anxious, dislike people, or are incredibly shy. The quiet nature comes from how these people derive energy. While extroverts recharge from socializing and other people's energy, introverts recharge from time alone, where they decompress and process thoughts and interactions. This is not just an applied theory but proven by research on the differences in brain function between the two groups. A 1999 study in the American Journal of Psychiatry demonstrated clear differences in the brain between extroverts and introverts. Extroverts have an active dopamine reward system, driving them to find stimulation externally to themselves (i.e., socializing).

In contrast, an introverted veterinary professional will need time for introspection and often be deliberate and considerate when choosing words. Create a safe space and build a strong relationship with these quiet leaders by asking for follow-up thoughts by email after meetings, talking one-on-one after group meetings for deeper conversation, and allowing space and time between the meeting and follow-up for ample reflection time. This patience and understanding are crucial to fostering a respectful and collaborative work relationship.

### An Introvert's Dream Position

One of a leader's best skills is positioning team members in roles that match their skills and strengths. This is often assessed solely on technical skill set or aptitude without consideration of personality. As you think internally about your sales and strategy team roles and responsibilities, there are certain positions to consider where introverts thrive. Yes, introverts can be incredibly successful salespeople! We know introverted people function best with routine and clear duties, prefer projects and goal-oriented tasks to be in writing, and have quiet, designated areas where they can independently work. If meetings are being scheduled, send the agenda in advance and request any written thoughts to be submitted. Introverts have strong attention to detail and are often highly effective at creating standard operating procedures and training manuals. Team members prefer email to spoken communication, allowing them to compose and refine more profound

ideas and thoughts. Creating this type of environment supports success, and when it happens, remember that introverts don't want the spotlight. Give praise in private and avoid dramatic displays of attention to keep them comfortable.

#### An Introvert's Social Calendar

Finally, a primary focus of today's veterinary hospital is improving work culture and inclusivity. This often translates into scheduling well-intentioned group activities and outings for team building and relaxation. However, if introverted team members don't participate, they are frequently judged unfairly. Introverts don't dislike fun; instead, they prefer quieter, smaller-scale outings where they can participate, opt-in, or out on their terms. Introverts are also more prone to experience sensory overload. They are more cautious and reserved in new situations, which might explain why a new axe-throwing bar event may not be at the top of their priority list. Team activities can be draining for introverts; remember this as you discuss with hospital leadership the best ways to support group hospital events. Ask for suggestions and offer opportunities that allow options for people who prefer less sensory stimulation.