

Introverts: Strong Leaders in the Hospitality Industry

Hospitality is a people business, right? So how do introverts fare in a job that involves leading all types of personalities, interacting with guests and being the “go to” person who diplomatically solves problems on a daily basis?

Introverts have some unique qualities that are actually assets in the service industry. Most introverts are careful in their decision-making, don't rush to take risks and are good listeners. They're happy to let employees run with their own ideas and give them opportunities to explore their own talents and express themselves. Often, employees of introverts are more motivated because of these traits and those managers experience better outcomes as a result.

Introverts are Sometimes Misunderstood

In today's world, especially in American culture, extroverted, quick-thinking, highly social, risk-takers are perceived as “take charge,” effective leaders. Introverts are sometimes perceived as “loners,” anti-social, slow-thinking and poor team players.

In fact, however, introverts just have a different approach. They may need time to themselves to think of creative solutions, develop new plans or examine details that might escape someone who's more apt to react quickly. Introverts also don't typically overshare, so when they do speak up with an idea or plan, it's likely well developed and thoroughly thought-out. If you're introverted, you process more on the inside than demonstrate on the outside (like an extravert), but that doesn't mean you're uninterested or uninvolved.

How to Relate to your Introverted Boss

So, what if you have an introverted boss? What can you do to take advantage of his/her strengths and get along if your personalities are really different?

- First of all, recognize that your boss IS an introvert and acknowledge you might have contrasting communication styles. Knowing that, be aware that introverts like to think before they speak. So, when introducing a new idea or issue, give them time to think and circle back after they've had time to consider the options.
- Understand they require some alone time to recharge. They don't always want company at all times of the day, at meals or after work.
- Realize that introverts are good listeners and are typically patient and persistent. Those are strong leadership qualities that will allow you to broaden your own talents and receive insightful guidance that can move your career forward.

Hospitality Careers for Introverts?

Surprisingly, it really isn't about a specific career or industry that works best for an introverted personality. It's more important to identify the environment you'll be working in and the daily responsibilities you'll face. Because introverts want to listen to others and don't invite a lot of small talk, they are engaged at a deeper level and build strong relationships. Guests feel heard and employees feel empowered...all of which results in a work environment where superior customer service is found.

Throughout history, many of our leaders have been considered shy or introverted. Eleanor Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin were all focused more on their causes than on themselves and enjoyed their solitude and down time, yet they were very successful individuals.

Good Negotiators and Problem-Solvers

Because of their tendency to speak quietly and act reasonably, to actively listen and ask questions, introverts are great negotiators and problem-solvers. Adam Grant, PhD at the Wharton School of Business says the most effective leaders gain the respect of their employees and subordinates because they listen. “Turns out, listening

is key to good leadership: New research by Grant and his colleagues has revealed that introverted leaders often deliver better outcomes than extroverts, because they're more likely to consider other people's suggestions.”

As long as you choose the right environment and work to your strengths, being an introvert can truly be an asset in your leadership role – yes, even in the hospitality industry.