

COACHING INTROVERTS THROUGH JOB SEARCH

By Kim Marrone, April 2015

Portions of the job search process leverage extrovert's strengths, leaving introverts feeling at a disadvantage and even overwhelmed. As coaches, we can assist our introverted clients with strategies to leverage their strengths and to stretch themselves in other areas to ensure their overall search is effective.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How Can I Identify an Introvert? Can I just Ask My Client?

Common Characteristics of Introverts

- Prefer fewer, deeper friendships and meaningful conversation over chit-chat
- Enjoy reflecting inwardly on thoughts and ideas
- Tend to think before they speak or act
- May avoid crowds or large gatherings
- Sometimes appear aloof or reserved; may be quieter
- Prefer to focus on one thing at a time; interruptions may be difficult
- Some appear social and can speak to large groups, but eventually need time alone to recharge

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Should my coaching be different for introverts than for extraverts?

INTROVERT STRENGTHS IN JOB SEARCH

Marketing Materials (resume, LinkedIn profile, blog, etc.)

Many introverts prefer written communication and are patient with research and details, which will lead to a strong resume and LinkedIn profile. Introverts typically can focus on a task at great length, allowing them to push through the frustration others may feel in fine-tuning a resume, for example. Also, social media provides a comfortable way to promote their expertise, by writing a blog or interacting online.

Networking

Introverts tend to have strong relationships with people who will likely want to help in their search. They are typically more observant about details of people and companies, which will provide excellent opportunities for follow-up. An introvert may enjoy doing research and preparation, including creating well-planned networking meetings and strategies. They are probably good at creating a detailed schedule for follow-ups. And, many introverts are quietly – yet effectively – persistent.

Interviewing

Introverts tend to be more patient with preparation activities and when applied to interview preparation, this will increase confidence and improve their presentation. Many have a keen ability to listen and stay focused to fully absorb the interview questions. Again, they can apply strong observation skills to observe the interviewers and the culture. They may appear very calm in the interview, even when inwardly stressed.

INTROVERT CHALLENGES IN JOB SEARCH

Marketing Materials

Introverts may have the tendency to keep working on their materials, until that elusive perfection is achieved. The term “analysis paralysis” may apply, and achieving perfection can become the excuse to not move forward in the process. There may also be an intense focus on unimportant details, rather than the bigger picture.

Networking

As we know, there is a wide range of networking situations from 1:1 meetings to large group settings. Even in the comfort of a 1:1 conversation, an introvert may be uncomfortable with small talk and struggle to answer questions that are asked, because they are not always able to come up with an answer quickly. In a large group, introverts can become overwhelmed simply by the energy needed to function, and focusing on approaching strangers or creating conversations may be difficult.

Interviewing

Let’s admit it – interviews can be stressful! This additional pressure may cause an introvert’s mind to go blank or to think slower than usual. On top of thinking about the content of their answers, nonverbal communication may need consideration. Introverts tend to keep their energy inside which could be communicated as uninterested or having low energy. Also, some introverts are very brief in their responses which may not fully convey their experience.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Does the Coach’s Introvert or Extravert preference influence their coaching?

Closing – Share Your Takeaways:

Additional Resources

Article: “Networking for Introverts: Tips and Techniques for Career Counselors” by Wendy LaBenne

Article: “13 Interview Secrets for Introverts” by Mary Sherwood Sevinsky

Book: “The Introvert Advantage” by Marti Olsen Laney

Book: “Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking” by Susan Cain

Book: Self-Assessment for Introverts (in “The Introvert Advantage”, pgs 31 – 33) This short assessment will help them identify their introverted tendencies and also reveals possible areas for development.

STRATEGIES FOR JOB SEARCH FOR INTROVERTS

Encourage your introverted clients to:

Marketing Strategies

- Reflect on and get feedback from colleagues about their strengths - what do they do well?
- Determine their brand – what are they selling about themselves?
- Leverage ability to focus on details to create a strong resume, LinkedIn profile, etc.
- Help the client avoid ‘analysis paralysis’ in trying to achieve perfection with resume, LinkedIn profile, etc.
- Spread their expertise through blogs, LinkedIn groups, discussions, etc.

Networking Strategies

- Leverage strong relationships for contacts and information
- Observe details and listen to people to find opportunities for follow-up (e.g. send an article to a golfer)
- Create well-planned networking strategies through research and preparation
- Increase their network through volunteer activities, hobbies or interests
- Prepare for scheduled networking conversations through research and planning; have a script
- Introduce themselves to a new contact by email first
- Arrive early at large events and offer to help so they can ease into it
- Track details of the conversation or event and determine follow-up dates and opportunities
- Memorize conversation starters and current event topics for discussions with new people
- Set stretch goals each week for specific networking activities (step away from the computer!)
- Set goals for each networking opportunity & strive to achieve them (e.g. meet 4 new people, get cards)
- Strive to be a ‘situational extrovert’ – to be their “best self” for a short amount of time
- Reframe their definition of networking: consider any situation involving people as an opportunity to build a relationship – don’t think of it as networking to get a job!
- Be prepared to suggest a commitment; try to not accept “I’ll think about it....”
- Be clear about how someone can help them – don’t be too vague
- Use email effectively, not to avoid talking to people. Evaluate the best follow-up method for each person
- If they get stumped with a question they’re not ready to answer, ask for time to think about it

Interviewing Strategies

- Prepare, prepare, prepare! This helps immensely to increase confidence
- Handle stress-induced reactions such as mind going blank, forgot the question, didn’t answer fully (ex: “I can add more detail”, “Want to give you my best answer. Could you please repeat?”)
- Practice their interview answers with a friend, in front of a mirror or on Skype; be observant about non-verbal communication and appearing to have low energy or enthusiasm
- Make solid eye contact and to smile occasionally
- Give full answers, not ones that are too brief and may not convey their full experience
- Reframe the interview as just a conversation to reduce stress
- Put on their “interview self or persona” to be the best they can be.
- Evaluate what went well and what could be improved on shortly after the interview is done.
- Share additional skills/strengths in their Thank You email

Networking for Introverts: Tips and Techniques for Career Counselors

By Wendy LaBenne

Are you working with a client reluctant to network? A common statistic related to the job search is that 70% of jobs are discovered through networking. Further, in the current economic climate, this skill is becoming even more vital. Through my work with clients, I have found a significant number of individuals reluctant to network. These clients tend to be more reserved in nature and can possibly be described as introverts. This article will provide strategies to assist counselors to empower reluctant networkers to become more competitive in using this job search skill.

Strengths of Introverts

While introverts are probably more likely to be reluctant networkers, they also have an advantage with networking. The purpose of networking is to build relationships and this is one area in which introverts excel. Introverts like to build meaningful and deep relationships with people. There are a multitude of other strengths introverts embody including the ability to work independently, reflect on experiences, listen carefully, focus, systematically follow-up, and write well (Ancowitz, 2010). Fifty percent of the United States population is introverted; however, U.S. society places more value on extroverted characteristics (Zack, 2010).

Given this statistic, it can be challenging for introverts and non-introverts to understand and appreciate the strengths an introvert can bring to the work environment.

One activity I use with clients is to have them reflect on their strengths and take the time to identify how these strengths make them unique and thus increase their value to the employer.

Common Themes of the Reluctant Networker

How can career counselors get reluctant networkers to approach networking in a way that provides meaning for them? In working with introverted clients, I hear statements that are unproductive to moving forward in reaching goals. More specifically, the thoughts are fears they have about outcomes of a situation.

A common statement is, "I don't want to bother anyone." I will try to reframe this asking, "What if someone asked for your help or to talk with you about your major or career, what would you say?" The answer has always been, "I would talk with them," sometimes with a qualifier about preparing in advance. Another theme I hear is, "What if I don't know what to say?" or similarly, "I am not good at small talk." I will ask, "What would you like to know from a professional in the field?" There is usually a lot of information they would like to know. I say, "Why not make a list of questions to ask?" If appropriate, they can take that list into an information interview. If not, they can review the questions and have them percolating in their minds before the event. Discussing these concerns in advance allows for reframing the situation and can help alleviate some anxiety.

Networking Techniques

It is not enough to tell a person hesitant to network, "go network to get a job," or that there is one "right" way to do so. As counselors, we need to consider the concerns of the client and identify and discuss networking strategies that will be successful for him or her. Clients are told they should network, but often don't know how to do it effectively. Generally, introverts prefer more structured activity with purpose driven and authentic conversation. For introverts, the quality of the connection is more important than quantity. With these concepts in mind you can brainstorm with clients about ways to make connections with people. Some ideas with introverts in mind follow.

Information Interviews:

These allow for structured meetings in which the networker develops questions prior to the meeting based on career information of interest to the client.

Set Goals for Networking Events:

This technique provides the individual with specific tasks to accomplish, whether it is to focus on identifying information related to a specific topic or interacting with a specific number of people.

Go With What You Know:

Introverts tend to like to research and this can be used to their advantage. They can be the ones to share information at the networking event; people will then know they can go to these individuals in the future.

Remember to Share and Connect:

Most introverts are relatively self-sufficient when dealing with issues. Consider brainstorming with others about solving a problem. Connecting with others on small things can help develop a continuing relationship, thus ensuring a support system for bigger issues.

Attend Events with a Purpose:

These types of events, educational or cultural for example, tend to provide structure through an agenda, as well as concrete information on which to build a connection afterward.

Volunteer:

A great way to have a purposeful role is to volunteer to work at a networking event. This will provide a structured way of interacting with many individuals.

Share the Experience:

Taking a friend or colleague to an event can make the experience less intimidating. Make this a fun venture by seeing how many people you can each connect with during a specified time frame; then reconnect and share what you learned.

Talking vs. Listening:

It is important to share information, but listening can be underrated. There is no need to feel responsible to talk as much as the other person.

As counselors, we need to be champions for our clients and help them discover their unique attributes, as well as encourage personal growth moments through experiences that stretch a bit beyond their natural comfort level. By keeping the client's unique attributes in mind, the counselor can work with each client to discover the best strategies for them to be successful at networking. Initiate discussions with your clients to learn what networking techniques will work for them, share some of the ideas presented in this article, and then set goals to help them achieve their career aspirations in these competitive economic times.

Reference: http://ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/55730/_self/layout_details/false

13 INTERVIEW SECRETS FOR INTROVERTS

By Mary Sherwood Sevinsky on February 12, 2014

Introverts often feel especially challenged by an interview as any out of the ordinary communication can be worrisome. Given the level of importance attached to an interview, it may really ramp up nervousness and keep them from performing their best.

If you are an introvert or want to perform your best during an upcoming interview – apply these interview secrets for a stellar performance. (Even extroverts and closet introverts can benefit from many of these interview secrets!)

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. Practice
2. Practice
3. Prac....Well, you get the idea. Over preparing will give you a sense of mastery that can calm your nerves and improve your self-confidence and performance. Know the company, job, your resume, and your career goals inside and out. Write out the questions and answers you want to practice and edit them with a critical eye to get started. Then, practice with someone else playing the employer, even if it is only on the phone. You may need to do this more than once. Before the interview, do a dress rehearsal in your interview attire and in person, if possible. If you can afford it, engage a professional – it is well worth the investment. If not, practice with someone whose opinion and perceptiveness you trust.
4. Prepare notes that you can refer to unobtrusively during an interview. Usually, it is perfectly expected for you to have a few copies of your resume, and a pen and paper, perhaps in a portfolio or folder. Don't write in full sentences and keep your notes to the top page of your pad. Leave plenty of space to jot notes in a different color ink so that they are easy to pick out. You can write questions for the employer on the next page.
5. Wear comfortable, suitable clothes. Think about the setting and your personal style and kick up your attire one more notch. Make sure that your clothing fits you well and is comfortable to wear sitting, standing and walking. Ladies, this includes hose or stockings (having a backup pair that has been tested is also advisable). It should also look good front and back. Ask someone else's opinion. If you are an introvert, you will already be nervous enough – no need to add to it by allowing your mind to stray toward your outfit!
6. Visit the location early so you can visualize the setting. This will also ensure that you know about any construction or other anomalies that may impact your arrival time with a calm, cool, demeanor. If it is a public location, a quick reconnaissance will provide additional information to increase your comfort level and limit any fears that can be fed by the unknown.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

1. Breathe instead of saying um, uh, and so on. As an introvert, you may get most nervous when you have to speak in a public or unique situation – such as an interview! Instead of filling the silence with random syllables, breathe in. Typically, we stammer when we are trying to find the right words and feel the pressure. Focus on breathing in once then out while you think. This is usually enough to buy you time to find your language.
2. Strike a pose. As introverts (or even extroverts!), we sometimes worry that the interviewer will wonder if we have “spaced out” or “lost it” if it takes too long to speak. If you have a pose you normally strike when thinking (a hand on your chin?), do that. Or, you can rephrase the question while culling your mind for the perfect words. Sometimes, the introverts I work with feel comfortable saying something like, “That is a good question, I am processing that as we speak!” A combination can also be employed, of course.

3. Smile. Really – remind yourself to smile! When I worked as a telemarketer, many years ago, I learned that people can hear you smile when you speak. It is true. Well, if people on the other end of a phone can react to a smile, doesn't it stand to reason that an in person smile will make an even more positive impression? Take the interview seriously, by all means, but show your humanity as well. A recent introverted client became comfortable and successfully sharing the fact that he is introvert during the interview. It works really well as a prelude to your answer to, "What is something you have to work on?" or weakness.
4. Keep your answers positive. There is no need to provide anything but the best of your best during the interview. Unless asked specifically about a weakness or a project that has gone wrong, keep your mouth shut. Even then, always put a positive spin on things, and highlight what you have learned and how good you have become at planning and avoiding X,Y,Z. If you are introverted, you may be harder on yourself than anyone else. The last thing you want is to give your mind something to gnaw on while you try to be "in the moment" during an interview.
5. Ask questions. In order to avoid an interview feeling like an inquisition, ask questions. Approach the interview as if it were a conversation: You listen, you respond, you interact, and the interviewer does the same. If you can nudge the interview in this direction, you will feel a lot more confident and comfortable than if the interviewer is asking all the questions!
6. Watch your body language. Leaning forward shows that you are interested and alert. Crossing anything sends the message that you are closed off and negative. Leaning back in your chair may give the impression that you don't care or are arrogant. Be careful not to fidget, doodle, or make faces while the interviewer is speaking or you are thinking.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Prepare for next time. When you are safely out of sight, but before you get home, write some notes about anything you might want to include in a thank you note, ask in follow up or next interview, or could improve on the next time you interview for a job or need to speak in a public or unusual situation!

Reference: <http://www.careerealism.com/interview-secrets-introverts/>