

# Show your true colours

Match the job to your level of sociability, writes **Anne Fawcett**.

**A**re you an introvert or an extrovert? Psychologists often classify people according to whether their primary focus is on the world around them or on their inner world. In general, extroverts tend to be outgoing, sociable types with a tendency to speak before they think. Introverts tend to be reflective, quiet and focused, with a preference for solitude.

Knowing which group you fit into and the attributes it carries with it could help you choose the job that's right for you.

"Introversion-extroversion is a scale of personality which supposedly measures whether people are socially withdrawn – associated with introversion – or socially skilled, outward looking and in need of external stimulation," says Professor Chris Jackson of the Australian School of Business. "There is a theory that these traits are related to excitation in the brain. For example, introverts are more aroused and therefore don't need to seek additional stimulation."

The division isn't necessarily black and white and there are broad career groups that suit both types and those in the middle.

Amantha Imber, an organisational psychologist, says introverts are often suited to positions as quantitative researchers, scientists, academics, writers and to jobs in information technology. "These are jobs where you're not dealing so much with people," she says.

Extroverts, who are energised by other people, make excellent

business development managers, publicists, teachers, corporate speakers and hairdressers.

Introvert Danielle Szikszai, account manager for Newcastle web-development company Datamax, says her role is perfect for her personality type.

"I don't like talking, I've been known not to answer the phone when I'm at home and I'm not a party person – I can make my own fun," she says. "I'm not antisocial. I have a small group of very close friends and I talk to clients but I definitely wouldn't want a job where I have to chair meetings every day."

Szikszai's role involves financial administration and research. "I like the fact that it is very formulaic, everything adds up, there are checks and balances. Some people would find it pretty boring but it suits me."

If you have your heart set on a particular role, don't fret if your personality type seems at odds with the job description.

"Personality type is just one part of the picture," says Professor Chris Jackson of UNSW's Australian School of Business. "There are different ways to approach a lot of jobs – and different personality types can be successful in different ways in the same role."

Barbara Warren, head of corporate performance at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, says that what matters is not personality type but what you are passionate about.

Warren regularly coaches introverts and extroverts to improve their communication and presentation skills.

"The stakes for most corporate presentations are quite high," she says. "Introverts can load themselves up with pressure and extroverts can launch into something in a way that alienates the audience. Anyone can be a good corporate performer when they understand that it is more about the audience and less about them."



Make it work ... introverts don't need as much interaction.

At the other end of the spectrum, Ryan de Bruyn, business unit manager of CitiGroup's corporate transaction services, admits he is an extrovert in an ideal role. His job involves interacting with multiple stakeholders in the organisation, locally and regionally, and delivering presentations to them. De Bruyn has no qualms about chairing a meeting or addressing a large group of colleagues. "I enjoy the energy of being around other people and bouncing ideas around," he says.

In the boardroom, de Bruyn is

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Ryan De Bruyn

comfortable engaging in heated discussion, even if he is proven wrong. "I think that being an extrovert helps me in this role because it does suit someone who is happy to put forward ideas," he says. "I think it is also important when you're working at the senior level of a company to be confident and outspoken. You have to be able to manage perceptions and these are key enablers in that process."

De Bruyn says that an awareness of personality types can be helpful.

"For example, you might communicate in a way that appeals to extroverts but may not be as sensitive to the needs of introverts, so learning about how introverts communicate can be helpful to an extrovert."

De Bruyn is cautious about pigeonholing people based on personality type. "You can be an extrovert but have introvert's tendencies," he says. "They say when you are under pressure that you revert to your opposite, which is probably why I withdraw when I get stressed."

The division is interesting but professionals agree that personality type alone should not determine whether or not someone gets a particular role. "It's a description of who

someone is and the pluses and minuses of that personality," Jackson says. "We can all learn to play our pluses and compensate to an extent for our weaknesses, or find a job where our weaknesses are less apparent."

Introverts may be disadvantaged in the traditional interview-based recruitment process as they are less good at selling themselves.

"Recruiters are often quite extroverted themselves, so they will tend to look for extroverted candidates," says Peter Davis, managing director of Frontline Recruitment Group.

"Unless a recruiter is quite good that can work against an introverted candidate."

There are advantages to being an introverted candidate.

"Introverts are generally more considered, tend to listen better and take more time assessing what has been said," Davis says. "Extroverts can over-promise and under-deliver, you won't die wondering what their opinion was and when they are nervous they tend to fill in the silence by talking about themselves, which can work against them."

According to Davis, introverts tend to excel in interviews when asked about a project or aspect of their work in which they are particularly interested.



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