

CAREERS & OCCUPATIONS

GET READY INTROVERTS, I'M GOING TO BLAST YOU (US)!

HILE RUTLEDGE (INFP)



Hile Rutledge is President of OKA, author of the MBTI® Introduction Workbook and co-author of the revised Type Talk at Work. He is an experienced organization development consultant, trainer and public speaker with a background in management, sales, adult education and leadership development. Hile has a BA in Humanities from Hampden-Sydney College and a Master of Science in Organization Development from the American University (AU/NTL). Hile resides with his wife and two sons in Falls Church, Virginia.

Email:
hrutledge@typetalk.com

[Christine Rigden, Interest Area Co-ordinator for Careers & Occupations introduces this article as follows: "At the conclusion of our BAPT 25th Anniversary Conference in May, Ann O'Sullivan spoke very powerfully about how Type is not just a 'toolbox' to randomly dish out plug-and-play results (my phrasing, not hers!). Rather, it is about a journey of development for each of us as individuals, and also an ongoing exploration of the theory and its implications. This article from Hile Rutledge seems to me to help underline Ann's point, of the importance of Type as a support for personal development, rather than one of many simplistic categorizations of individuals. It may be seen as controversial to some, but Hile is making some important points here for the wider Type community, and especially those of us who are career coaches and in related fields."]

I recently read an article written by an Introvert (another person inspired by Susan Cain's *Quiet*), that suggests that more marketers of the future will likely be (or should be) Introverts because effective marketing requires good and active listening. While I entirely agree with the thought that effective marketing (and almost everything else) is enhanced with active listening, as a Type-rooted coach and trainer of more than twenty years now, there are a few distressing thoughts in this essay that I feel compelled to call out as hopeful food for thought.

Here are some excerpts from the article that have influenced my response and to give you some context:

"First, as power continues to shift to the consumer, listening becomes a more valuable asset. Consumers have more products, brands, and retailers to choose from than ever ... How leaders react to feedback is now paramount..."

"Second, advertising will continue to shift from advertiser monologues to dialogues — and even reverse monologues — as highly engaged consumers showcase

their creativity and love for certain brands...

"In a world where consumers are increasingly proactive, introverted marketers may have the edge ... Since introverts listen more than extroverts, it makes sense that introverted marketers will be more willing to loosen their control of their brands and listen to consumers for inspiration ...

"Of course, the conclusion is not that extroverts can't be great marketers or that all introvert marketers will succeed. But hopefully the marketing departments of corporate America will become increasingly introvert-friendly. Introverts have traits that will be even more valuable for success in tomorrow's world — and I, for one, am tired of seeing them leave marketing."

While it is not my intent, Introverts will likely feel under siege by some of my ideas. My hope is that any Introvert so torqued will reflect on what I'm saying and consider re-reading before committing to being offended (what I'm saying is actually empowering, not diminishing), and also keep in mind that I am an Introvert myself (INFP). I'm saying this about introversion to Introverts, as an Introvert myself.

My three points are these:

Introverts are not necessarily good listeners --

-- just like Extraverts are not necessarily good speakers. Introverts are frequently given props for listening prowess, and while many Is may be great listeners, it is not the preference that makes this so. Just because I am not talking, don't think I'm actually listening. Active listening requires engagement in the flow of the conversation and, at least in part, an external focus. It is hard work to actively listen — as hard for Introverts as for their extraverted counterparts, so I wholeheartedly believe that the more marketers (or almost any profession) actively listen, the better and more effective they will be, but a preference for Introversion will not ensure this.

Type does not equal behavior or skill

Introverts can be compelling performers while Extraverts can be wonderful authors, yet both of these seem like unlikely career paths for the preference at hand. The truth is that Type tells us cognitive preferences, but life requires that we use (with some competence and skill) even those things we don't prefer. I'm on the hook for all of it — each of us is. The fact is that marketers need to be quiet and reflective, AND they also need to talk and to participate in the world around them. Marketers do not need to be Introverts (or Extraverts). Rather, they need to develop their Type so that they can flex outside of their preference (whatever that is) when appropriate.

Introverts need to plug in and engage the outer world

While buried in point #2, this bears repeating. Too many Introverts, in my view, cling to the idea that a preference for Introversion is an excuse for not engaging, not plugging in, not talking, not joining. Balance - a core developmental goal - is achieved only when we each spend an adequate (which does not mean equal) amount of time in both the extraverted and introverted worlds. In the end, Introverts need to engage just as Extraverts need to be quiet and reflect.

The end goal is not matching Type to careers, but to be happy and fulfilled in our relationships, roles and lives — to develop our Types so that we inhabit our preferences fully but also flex beyond them when necessary.

Our preferences may be clear, but balance is still the developmental goal.

If you would like to read more about developing yourself through understanding Type, Hile wrote an earlier article for *TypeFace* in 2010 called *Engaging your Type Development*. You can read it by visiting: http://insightsforchange.co.uk/articles/Rutledge_TypeDev_2010.pdf

References:

Cain, Susan (2012) *Quiet – The power of Introverts in a world that can't stop talking*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Why Marketing Needs More Introverts, Harvard Business Review, <http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/07/why-marketing-needs-more-introverts/> retrieved from the Web July 2014.



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Susan Nash is an international expert in business applications of Type and Temperament focusing on improving team productivity and leadership effectiveness. Author of "*Turning Team Performance Inside Out*" published by Davies Black, "*Dating, Mating and Relating*" and the new *Teamwork from the Inside Out Field Book*, she specializes in helping organizations achieve better business results by capitalizing on individual personality differences. EM-Power, Inc. is also a licensed certification provider for MBTI and Susan runs Master Classes for qualified MBTI professionals in the USA and Europe.

Please book by emailing Sue Nash (the other one!) suenash@actionlearningteams.co.uk