Stop Underselling Yourself
Use Your Unique Strengths to Promote Like a Pro

QUICK OVERVIEW
If you’re the type of person who feels drained after a big networking event or company meeting, and find yourself re-energized when you can spend a few hours by yourself problem-solving or working on a creative project, then chances are good you’re an introvert. But does being an introvert mean sitting on the sidelines when it comes to promoting your company, advancing your career, or being heard in a public forum?

Absolutely not, according to Nancy Ancowitz, herself an introvert and author of *Self-Promotion for Introverts*. In a quick and easy read filled with real-life examples, Ancowitz points out how even a quiet and thoughtful person can get ahead in business—and in life. It doesn’t mean taking on the traits of extroverted peers, who work the room at cocktail parties and love nothing better than talking extemporaneously before a group of colleagues in a meeting. It means harnessing inner strengths like dedicated problem-solving skills, deep thinking, analytical prowess, sensitivity to others’ wants and needs, and careful observation of the environment, and using them to promote one’s self in ways that don’t necessarily involve being in the limelight, at least not all the time.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE
One of Ancowitz’s key chapters involves goal-setting and planning, making sure the self-promotion you need actually takes shape. Doing so, she points out, will likely require you to step outside your comfort zone, much as Ancowitz did herself in writing this book and approaching celebrities for interviews. She advises readers to set goals to work toward and to make success possible. That may mean setting deadlines for projects or enlisting a small support group to keep you on task. Whatever it is, she advises, make sure you’re beholden to someone or something, so there’s no way for...
you to put off a self-promotion effort that may be outside your normal comfort zone.

Ancowitz says breaking larger goals into small chunks is especially effective, so you can give yourself a sense of accomplishment each day until you reach that ultimate goal, which may be something like preparing a presentation for a large group of people, or jumping through the hoops necessary to interview a major celebrity. You can also help yourself tackle goals by taking the time to review your inner strengths and how you might use each one to meet those goals.

People who are successful at gaining visibility—from Whoopi Goldberg to Donald Trump—do so in many different ways. What works for them may not work for you, especially if you’re an introvert.

Gaining visibility is a big challenge for introverts. We often immerse ourselves in our tasks, plunge the depths of our inner worlds, and neglect to come up for air to take credit for discovering New Worlds. What’s an introvert to do?

Let’s dispel some myths about self-promotion. First, you can be a nice person and promote yourself. Next, you can promote yourself without bragging, or at the other extreme, begging. You can also do so without stretching the truth, talking someone’s ear off, or pushing. You don’t have to be self-centered.

Simply, self-promotion at its best is articulating the overlap between what you have to offer and what your target audiences need.

You may be surprised to learn that introverts comprise about half the population. And, according to an article in USA Today, 4 in 10 top executives are introverts. In fact, the article offers Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Charles Schwab, Steven Spielberg, and the Sara Lee Corporation chairperson and CEO Brenda Barnes as examples.

Many introverts, particularly those in highly visible roles, can be indistinguishable from extroverts, especially to the public eye.

My intention is to offer a place for you to explore and a springboard for you to be heard and seen by the people and organizations you want to impact. I want you to get more credit for your ideas, become more visible wherever you want to be noticed, earn more money if that’s your goal, and ultimately make greater contributions to society.

YOUR NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

Tuning Out U-SUCK Radio

So before you promote yourself outwardly, let’s take a look at how you talk to yourself inwardly.

*How to Make Networking Situations More Palatable*

- Choose events where you’re likely to feel welcome.
- Before going to a networking event, take stock of why someone would want to talk to you.
- Do something that makes you feel grounded just before the event.
- Scope out the most comfortable places.
- Remember that all eyes aren’t on you.
- Learn about other people. Listen intently, solve their problems, and share resources.
- Remember to breathe. We often forget this most basic human need. Taking a few deep breaths will help you relax.
- Drink water. Stay hydrated for your overall well-being and specifically for your voice.

Just as praise can give you a boost, criticism can drain your energy and distract you from your attempts to raise visibility. Have you ever had a friend whom you could always count on to remind you of your weaknesses, minimize your accomplishments, or put you down?

“If you were to look deeper into the choices your naysayers made in their lives, there’s a good chance that they had a hope or dream they decided not to go for,” says Lizz Winstead, co-creator of The Daily Show and co-founder of Air America Radio. “So when you stand before them, willing to put yourself out there to make the world a better place or make yourself a better person, there’s a pain inside them. They’re telling you not to pursue your dreams because they don’t want to see you succeed where they didn’t take a chance.”

YOUR STRENGTHS

Tuning in U-ROCK Radio

We’re about to celebrate you. This may sound too fluffy for someone of your intellect. However, there’s empirical evidence for the benefits of cheering yourself on.

Caroline Adams Miller, an author, motivational speaker, and professional coach, says “research has proven that certain ‘interventions’ into one’s behavior can enhance one’s well-being.
One of the most potent interventions is focusing on one’s unique talents."

This is because when we lead with our strengths instead of our weaknesses, we come across as more authentic, we put people at ease, and have more energy.

Focus on your introverted strengths. Since you spend more time listening than talking, you can process what you learn to target your audiences effectively.

We’re so used to our own strengths that many of us take them for granted. We also tend to focus on our tangible headline accomplishments (or lack thereof!) rather than on paying attention to which of our strengths are most important to our clients, managers, and other target audiences.

Let’s look inward again and answer the following questions to discover more about your strengths and accomplishments.

• What is one thing you’ve accomplished that you’re most proud of? Which of your strengths came into play?
• Briefly describe a time when you solved a problem that made someone’s life easier. Name three of the strengths you used to solve the problem.
• What is the last thing you did that someone appreciated?
• If your most stalwart supporter were asked the three things she or he likes best about you, what would they be?
• Whom do you admire? Which qualities do you admire most about her or him?

Think of the internal and external factors that encourage you to flourish.

Consider the impact of selling yourself short. How might that affect your advancement in a competitive business environment?

Remember that it’s self-sabotaging to broadcast our imperfections in our day-to-day interactions.

Many of the people who are highly visible never appear to be promoting themselves—Mother Teresa comes to mind. They’re passionate about their mission rather than about just getting famous. What mission are you passionate about?

YOUR GAME PLAN

Creating a Winning Marketing Mix

Planning is a power tool for many of us introverts because it enables us to go inward and think quietly behind the scenes before we act or speak.

The newest research out of the University of British Columbia by Dr. Jessica Tracy has found that authentic self-esteem is fostered by taking on challenging goals that require doing something hard and outside one’s comfort zone.

Many find it challenging to move toward their goals without deadlines that they commit to others.

If you work best under deadline pressure, then get yourself on a deadline. If you work better with the support or camaraderie of another individual or a small group, then get that support rather than fighting what you know you need.

While it’s fine to stretch, avoid making unrealistic demands on yourself. If a mantra would be helpful, think chunking.

**Chunking** is the act of breaking things down into smaller pieces so you don’t get overwhelmed. So many priorities are always looming with so little time to tackle them. Chunking things down makes them all the more manageable.

The idea of setting and moving toward your goals, particularly as they relate to self-promotion, may intimidate you, or even sound too formal and rigid. I’ll offer you a variety of ways to think about goals and action plans.

A self-promotion goal that seems small to one person may be formidable to another. Whether your goal this week is to send an e-mail to network with an old colleague or to plan an event you can host, be sure it’s within your reach, no matter how easy you think it may be for someone else, particularly Joe Extrovert. If your goals are too outsized, you run the risk of getting overwhelmed and spiraling downward into inaction.

I’ll offer you tips to help you manage three of the ubiquitous self-promotion biggies: time, energy, and money.

Stay focused on your goals and tackle your priorities first, rather than getting bogged down with the less important stuff.

**SELF-PROMOTION PICKS FROM INTROVERTS**

I’ve long sworn by networking, which I define as building relationships over time for mutual benefit.
While it takes time to cultivate these relationships, it doesn’t cost a lot of money.

I’ve been fortunate to receive favorable press attention when I’ve run my own businesses. I just let journalists know what I’m doing that’s newsworthy, respond immediately and thoroughly to their inquiries, serve as a useful source, and introduce them to other sources.

Just as you would in traditional networking situations, consider the image you want to get across in the arena of social networking. Maintaining a professional presence on social networking sites can give you an edge over the competition when you’re seeking a job. A nationwide CareerBuilder.com survey of more than 3,100 employers found that 22 percent of hiring managers use social networking sites to research candidates.

YOUR TARGET AUDIENCES

Going Inward and Reaching Outward

Your target audiences are anyone you want to reach: your boss, your colleagues, your clients and prospects, your mentors, people who can recommend you or connect you to opportunities, those who read your blog, and so on. While it may sound daunting to appeal to all these stakeholders, you can do so well by using your introvert’s propensities for researching, quietly analyzing ways to reach them, offering expertise they will value, writing information that will interest them, and building deep, lasting relationships with them.

While I certainly wasn’t born to sell (anything, including myself), I often find being sold to even more unwelcome. Think of the last time someone promoted herself successfully to you. Chances are you felt engaged rather than bamboozled because the self-promoter solved a problem, addressed a need, provided you a shortcut, or otherwise delivered something that you were interested in.

Now let’s talk about your target audiences, or the people who need or want what you have to offer. It may come as a relief to realize that they’re probably only a tiny sliver of the population, rather than “el mundo.” The clearer you are about who is in that sliver and what you can offer that they’ll care about, the better you can target them. Gaining this clarity can help you focus your efforts, rather than waste your energy—a precious resource for an introvert—trying to please everyone.

Targeting your audiences is not as much an exact science as it is considering an aggregate of many variables, including their needs, moods, cultural background, financial status, personal chemistry, timing, and so much more. If that sounds overwhelming, keep in mind your advantages as an introvert. You’re more inclined to learn as much as you can about your audiences and think deeply about how you can make a difference to them.

YOUR NETWORK

Expanding Your Sphere of Influence

As an introvert, you’d probably rather listen than talk most of the time. You’re adept at building deep and lasting relationships. You’re trusted, accountable, and a core contributor. People look to you for your expertise. However, you’re not a schmoozer. You value your space and quiet time. Regardless, you have distinct advantages that enable you to create a strong network that can provide you with continuous support.

You can reframe self-promotion as a more palatable activity by approaching it as a way of connecting and sharing with people you would enjoy knowing.

When you invest your time and energy to connect with someone and you don’t hear back after persisting several times, free yourself up to pursue other opportunities. It beats getting sucked into the vortex of self-doubt that many of us introverts are prone to. While it’s important to be aware of how you approach others, it can be self-defeating to second-guess yourself and ascribe your contacts’ unresponsiveness to something you did wrong.

Let’s take stock of whom you already know or could meet through an introduction. Write the names of people you know, would like to reconnect with, or would like to meet.

- Friends
- Acquaintances
- Family members
- Neighbors
- Colleagues
- Managers
- Clients
- Mentors
- People you’d like to meet

You may be amazed by how many people you know. Keep this list somewhere that is easily accessible, perhaps in a file on your computer. Update it frequently (at least once a quarter),
and determine whom you need to contact, when, and for what purpose. Make networking a habit, and get to know people who are further—as well as less far along—in their careers than you are. Find out what each person in your circle is up to and how you can support her or his efforts. This will make asking for help when you need it that much easier.

Practice breaking the ice in everyday encounters, such as those with cab drivers and hairdressers. And don’t be intimidated when talking to people with authority, like doctors and dentists.

The idea is to build rapport and get to know the other person—at least initially.

You meet someone new. “So tell me about yourself,” you say. Would you rather hear: (1) a robotic “I’m a systems analyst” type of response; (2) a 10-minute ramble; or (3) a succinct response that entices you to learn more?

An **elevator pitch** is the third option. While the concept may be as old as the elevator itself, the idea is to get across your message in the time span of an elevator ride.

**CRAFTING YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH**

Think about what makes you exceptional (or what your greatest supporters would say), jot down a draft of your elevator pitch, be creative, have fun with it, put it away, share it with a trusted colleague, and keep noodling it until the words really sing who you are.

Write brief answers to each of the following questions. Keep in mind that the more specific you are, the more interesting your pitch is likely to be.

- What do you do?
- What’s different about your approach?
- What problems do you solve, and for whom?
- What else would your prospective employers, clients, and other people in your network like to know about you?

Practice saying your pitch to several friends or colleagues.

**YOUR CHALK TALK**

**Public Speaking for Private People**

While as introverts we’re more at home in the private world of our thoughts and imaginations, many of us have surprising advantages in the outward world of public speaking. Our propensities for solo activities, such as research and deep thinking, for example, suit us well for stepping into the shoes of our audiences and carefully choosing our words. Here are a few tips for preparing and delivering your message.

**BUILDING A FRAMEWORK**

Answer the following questions to build a framework to help you plan for many different types of presentations, including formal speeches at conferences and informal meetings at your place of work.

- **Goal.** What is the goal (or point) of your presentation? Do you want to inform, raise awareness, persuade, inspire, sell, encourage people to take action, build relationships, increase your visibility, or achieve something else?
- **Key message.** Write a one-sentence message you want your audience to walk away with from your presentation. Imagine an audience member briefly describing her or his takeaway to someone who didn’t attend. What would she or he say?
- **WIIFM.** Remember to step into the shoes of your audience members and ask yourself from their perspective: “What’s In It For Me?”
- **Actions.** What actions do you want your audience to take as a result of your presentation?

Find out as much as possible about your audience in advance. So who are the people in your audience? What do they have in common? What are their cultural backgrounds? What do you know about their demographics and preferences? What brings them to your presentation?

Assume that your audience has a short attention span. If you’re not clear about your single key message, review all the points you want to make and distill them down into something memorable.

**CONCLUSION**

Self-promotion may work best for you as an introvert when you get to know people over time, and when you welcome them to get to know you. It’s from that place that you’ll want to help each other and spread the word about your respective talents.
ACTION STEPS

Get more from this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you’ve learned. Here are a few questions and thoughts to get you started today.

1. Are you an introvert? If not, who do you know that could benefit from the tips in this summary?
2. Do you ever let naysayers get the best of you and dissuade you from taking a chance on your dream?
3. List five reasons people would want to know you.
4. Write down five of your greatest skills, strengths or abilities.
5. Create a realistic self-promotion strategy by chunking down the steps into manageable steps.
6. Start a list of all the people you know or could meet through an introduction. Begin connecting with them by getting to know more about them.
7. Take some time to craft or sharpen your “elevator pitch.” Remember that the point of an elevator pitch isn’t to close the sale, but to open a door.

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of Self-Promotion for Introverts check out:

Networking for People Who Hate Networking: A Field Guide for Introverts, the Overwhelmed, and the Underconnected
by Devora Zack

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High
by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler

Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone
by Mark Goulston

About the Author

Nancy Ancowitz is a business communication coach who focuses on teaching corporate and creative leaders how to advance their careers and polish presentation skills. An adjunct instructor at New York University, she teaches her Self-Promotion for Introverts® workshop to quiet types to help them harness their personal strengths for increased visibility in the world of business.

Ancowitz has worked in the corporate world for more than a decade, having served as vice president at JPMorgan Chase & Company. She has been featured as a business coach on CareerJournal.com, CNN.com, Monster.com, and in the New York Times, Newsday, Self, and Woman’s Day. She also blogs for Psychology Today.

She holds a B.S. in communication from Boston University School of Communication and lives in New York City.