

An Introvert's Guide to Visibility in the Workplace

You don't have to be a loud, outgoing personality to have your contributions recognized. **by Melody Wilding**

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A reader recently told me, “I prefer to be brilliant behind the scenes.”

If you're an introvert — someone who's more comfortable focusing on their inner thoughts and who tends to recharge in solitude — then you may relate to this sentiment. Many introverts value depth and thoughtfulness in their work over noise and showmanship. They're content to contribute without constant recognition or the spotlight.

While this tendency is admirable, it comes with pitfalls, especially in the modern, remote-first work world where being “out of sight”

often equates to being “out of mind.” Perhaps you’ve been overlooked for a promotion because a senior leader wasn’t aware of you or your accomplishments. Or maybe your quiet demeanor has been mistaken for a lack of passion. These experiences may have awakened you to the fact that in today’s competitive workplace, hard work isn’t enough. You need to make sure your efforts are seen and acknowledged to unlock new opportunities and support.

Being visible at work means ensuring that your contributions, skills, and achievements are recognized and appreciated by others within your organization. Unlike bragging or showboating, gaining visibility involves strategically sharing updates, information, and successes in a way that’s useful and relevant to others, always linking your progress with the larger goals of your leaders or company.

As an introvert myself, I get it: You’ve probably never learned how to approach this type of self-advocacy — or worse — it’s something you’ve been discouraged from developing altogether. But letting visibility opportunities pass you by can mean missing out on well-deserved praise that boosts your confidence, as well as leaving authority, and yes, even money on the table.

You don’t have to be a loud, outgoing personality to make your mark. Here are strategies to try if you prefer a quieter approach to visibility that builds on strengths like deep thinking, attentiveness, and the ability to forge strong one-on-one connections.

Speak up early in meetings.

Meetings are a golden opportunity to get in front of decision-makers in real-time. When you speak up, provide insights, or propose solutions during these calls, you demonstrate your understanding of the business, your ability to think critically, and your readiness to lead. But introverts,

with their tendency for introspection, can sometimes fade into the background during meetings, over-indexing on listening, deliberating too long (or overthinking) their contributions, or deferring to authority figures in the room.

If you've ever held back in a meeting, waiting for the "right moment" to jump in, you know how quickly the moment can pass you by. The longer you wait, the tougher it gets to interject, and before you know it, all the good ideas are already out on the table. As the meeting progresses, your anxiety builds, making the hurdle to speak up seem even higher.

You can circumvent this cycle by challenging yourself to be the second or third person to contribute in a meeting. This pushes you to overcome the initial barrier of participation, which is often the hardest part. Plus, it gets your voice and perspectives out there early when everyone's still paying attention. Once you've broken the ice, you'll likely find yourself feeling more at ease and ready to contribute even more.

Take the pressure off.

Visibility in the workplace doesn't always require you to come up with groundbreaking ideas that blow people away or to have all the answers. That's great when it happens, but it's also useful to simply position yourself as an active participant and shaper of the conversation. Being present and involved in the dialogue is often more important than waiting to deliver the perfect show-stopping insight.

You can make your presence felt through thoughtful engagement without being the center of attention. Asking questions that prompt deeper thinking, sharing suggestions that build on what others have said, or even acknowledging and summarizing the points made by colleagues to ensure consensus can go a long way to elevating your stature. For example:

- **Build on a colleague's point.** “To add to what Jamie mentioned, I believe...”
- **Ask a clarifying question.** “What’s the role of cross-functional collaboration in this project?”
- **Reflect on a previous discussion.** “This ties back to what we discussed last week about...”
- **Suggest resources.** “There’s an article from HBR that supports this idea and could offer more insight.”

Ditch self-deprecation.

Have you ever hesitated in a one-on-one with your boss, confessing, “This probably isn’t what you’re looking for...” when handing over a deliverable? Or maybe, while brainstorming with a colleague, you’ve led with, “This may be a terrible idea, but...”? There’s a time and a place to temper expectations and soften proposals, but introverts tend to habitually downplay their ideas and achievements.

But habitually using disqualifiers like “I’m no expert on this” can lead others to underestimate your knowledge and capabilities, unintentionally signaling you’re not a go-to resource or thought leader in your area, even when the opposite is true. Over time, this can diminish your authority and influence.

To change how your communication is received, swap self-deprecating statements for more assertive language. For example:

- Instead of, “This may not be right, but...”, try, “Another approach could be...”
- Instead of, “Just throwing this out there...” try, “I’d like to propose...”
- Instead of, “Sorry if this is off-topic...” try, “To broaden our perspective...”
- Instead of, “I haven’t looked into this much...” try:, “My initial thoughts are...”
- Instead of, “This is just my opinion...” try, “Based on my understanding...”

By framing your contributions positively and confidently, you encourage others to respect your ideas and acknowledge your expertise.

Leverage asynchronous methods of communication.

Unlike real-time conversations that demand immediate responses, asynchronous communication allows for a more reflective and deliberate exchange, which is a perfect fit for introverts. This gives you the opportunity to organize your thoughts and articulate your insights without the pressure of responding on the spot.

Consider crafting a monthly or quarterly newsletter that gets distributed to your leadership or throughout your organization. This has the primary benefit of keeping stakeholders informed, while also giving you a platform to shine. You can highlight the achievements of your team, share insights, and propose ideas in a well-thought-out manner. You can also stand out by circling back. For example, after a team meeting, you could send an email to your boss saying, “After reflecting on our conversation, I believe XYZ could be an effective next step for us to consider.” This shows you’re someone who takes the work seriously.

Show gratitude.

Introverts often find themselves caught in a tug-of-war between humility and the need for visibility. On one hand, they want to be modest, but on the other hand, they recognize the importance of claiming their successes. Expressing gratitude is a graceful solution to this dilemma. By framing your accomplishments within the context of humility and appreciation, you can stay true to yourself while also ensuring your achievements don't fly under the radar.

Statements like "It's a privilege to lead this initiative" demonstrate your readiness to take on responsibility. Mentioning "I'm thankful for the opportunity to contribute to this project, which allowed me to use my skills in XYZ," lets you acknowledge your role in the team's success. Sharing "I'm honored to have our results recognized in front of our clients," allows you to offer a genuine, heartfelt sentiment while reinforcing your value.

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Visibility in the workplace isn't nice to have, it's a necessity. Being seen and recognized for your work can open doors to new opportunities and propel your career forward. But that doesn't have to come at the cost of becoming someone you're not. Even as an introvert, you can find ways to boost your visibility and play to your strengths.

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