

The Social Capitalist: Nancy Ancowitz



What can introverts do to ensure that they get the credit pay and career they deserve? The answer comes to us from a shy lady herself, Nancy Ancowitz, a business communication coach and the author of *Self-Promotion for Introverts*.

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TAHL RAZ: Hello, I'm Tahl Raz and this a Social Capitalist Skills Session. Today we ask, what can introverts do to ensure that they get the credit, pay, and career they deserve? The answer comes to us from a shy lady herself, Nancy Ancowitz, a business communication coach and author of *Self Promotion for Introverts*. Welcome, Nancy.

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Thank you. Glad to be here.

TAHL RAZ: Great. So this talk will be structured into three parts. In the first part we'll deal with a few questions to provide context and a little background. The second part we'll have a selection of scenarios representing typical challenges that people, specifically introverts, face, and the characteristic coaching advice that you would offer. Finally the third part, "Tips, Tricks and Tactics," will give some quick-hit applicable nuggets of wisdom and insight regarding a few other issues.

All right, let's just start with the basics. How do you know if you qualify as an introvert?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Okay, that's a fun word, *qualify*. You're an introvert if you regain your energy through your quiet time and quiet activities, as opposed to, let's say, an extrovert, working the room at a cocktail party. An extrovert gains energy from

talking to lots of people and from constant interaction. If you're an introvert, you would probably prefer reading, writing, researching, and searching the web to recharge your energy.

Those are the main differences but there are many other things, like an introvert is more likely to do more listening and extrovert is more likely to do more talking. I'll sprinkle in some other examples as we keep going.

TAHL RAZ:

Now where in that description you just gave does this hurt people most in the workplace? What qualities are the largest liabilities?

NANCY ANCOWITZ:

The way it would hurt you most if you're an introvert is in the invisibility department. If you tend to believe that your accomplishments should speak for themselves, that can hurt. Don't expect that other people are going to promote you in your work, just because you're sitting there, working really hard and creating great things all day. It's so important that you take it upon yourself to say, "Well, actually I need to get out there and I need to do a certain amount of networking. I need to do whatever it takes to get the word out about my accomplishments so I can get to the next step in my career," whether it's a promotion, an increase in salary, get the next job, whatever it is.

So let's say you prefer conversations with one person at a time, rather than big group meetings. That's fine, so use it to your advantage so that you can get the visibility that you need to advance in your career.

TAHL RAZ:

You just talked about the weaknesses. Are there strengths specific to introverts?

NANCY ANCOWITZ:

Absolutely. Strengths specific to introverts include the skills that I mentioned previously, reading, writing, researching, and listening. They're the quieter strengths.

Now, how can these help you get ahead? Well, if you are an introvert, chances are, when entering a negotiation, you'll go really well-armed. You've done your research. You've got the drive. You crossed your *t*'s. You tend to be more detail-oriented. And when you speak, if you practice techniques like resting up and preparing that are especially important for

introverts, people will listen. Using those skills to your advantage is a real strength.

Let's use the example of writing. If you don't tend to be somebody who schmoozes and all, that's fine. So get published or publish yourself on blogs, on the Internet, on podcasts. Or co-write white papers in your industry.

There are a lot of ways you can raise your visibility using that strength as a writer that don't entail schmoozing all the time.

TAHL RAZ:

Let's move into part two, and we'll get into the different ways to improve your visibility. I want to give you a few scenarios. Let's call them *clients*, and see how you coach them.

Client number one is Jerry. He's a tech manager and he just got his performance review back. The one big complaint his boss had was that Jerry seems aloof, disinterested, shy and retiring, specifically in meetings. He said, "Oh, you know, all of your colleagues, they're out there, they're talking. But you, Jerry, you don't really contribute."

So how does Jerry turn that perception around?

NANCY ANCOWITZ:

There's a lot of social stigma around being an introvert. So if you're Jerry, I'll tell you what you need to do to help shift that perception. One thing is to get videotaped. Get yourself in a practice scenario; it could be with a coach, it could be with a mentor, it could just be with a trusted colleague. Do some mock meeting scenarios, role-play and get yourself videotaped so you can see how you come across verbally and nonverbally at meetings. Then you can practice your contributions.

My advice to Jerry would be to never, ever go to a meeting again without a few key points at the ready. Key points that you can make in your most articulate way, in your best voice, with your best eye contact, and your best gestures to show what you've got to contribute. That'll really help shift that perception.

TAHL RAZ:

So let me be clear. Jerry already knows how he comes across, but the video will reinforce that, and you would go through this video with him and work mostly on body language? On eye contact?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: It depends what Jerry needs but yes, all the above. Now Jerry *knows* what he needs because he got the feedback. Very few of us know how we really come across. There's nothing like seeing it on video and saying, "Oh, my gosh! I didn't realize I was hunching my shoulders. Oh, my gosh! I didn't realize I kept saying, *um, um, er*, all that distracting filler language." There's no hiding from the things that we do unconsciously on video. It's a quick, easy way to fix them.

TAHL RAZ: So body language is a quick, easy way to improve presentation. What else is specific to introverts that you'll work with?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: The way we use our voices. If you're an introvert, you need to think before you speak. And that may seem, "oh obvious, don't we all? Aren't we all supposed to think before we speak?" But no, introverts are wired differently. If you're an extrovert, you *like* to think out loud. You love to brainstorm. That comes naturally to you.

If you're an introvert, ooh, that's a tough one. You really need to think about things ahead of time. Being put on the spot at the meeting is terrifying for you, so practicing that kind of thing really helps.

In fact, I've studied improvisation for years for that very reason, to get myself more comfortable with thinking on the spot. It's still not my natural strength, and I still prefer to be able to think in advance, but it helps.

TAHL RAZ: So you're also suggesting that people pre-package and pre-script things that they're going to say? To have the points that they're going to make in front of them before the actual meeting?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Absolutely. Again, if you're an introvert, you like to think before you speak. So if you go into a meeting blank, without preparing, you're in tough shape. If an extrovert goes into a meeting without preparing, hah!, she can wing it. An introvert doesn't wing it as easily. It's just not the way we're wired. It doesn't work as well, and it takes a lot more out of us.

If you want to be your most articulate and you're an introvert, you really need to prepare. Come up with those key points.

Another thing you could do is talk to people. If you have important points to make or need to lobby for something, take people aside before the meeting. You do that because you're more effective one-on-one than you are in a group in general. So that's another technique to use.

TAHL RAZ:

If I take the Myers-Briggs Assessment, I'm a big time introvert, and I've fought to design behaviors that compensate for that. What really resonates with me is that with introverts, it's not that they're unable, but there seems to be a general *unwillingness* to participate in a kind of social improvisation. If they don't have something interesting to say or there's not a level of depth, they won't necessarily engage.

Your first solution to that was to come with scripted points. Now does that mean that you don't advise that introverts engage in improvisational social behavior, or is that something people can get better at as well?

NANCY ANCOWITZ:

You can definitely get better at that. I think, absolutely, that you need to engage people. You can't only come with your points, and then you're done, check out. No, of course it's important to engage others and listen to them, to comment on their comments and add your own suggestions. But, as a baseline to go to any meeting, any networking event, any negotiation, and any job interview, you really want to go in well-armed. That's your starting point.

TAHL RAZ:

All right, so client number two: She's a copywriter and does marketing for a big company. She said she knows she has to get out there, meet people and mix it up at industry networking events and the like. But she says, and I quote, "I go to these things and I find myself standing alone watching other professionals mixing and mingling. And yes, of course, I know I should introduce myself and meet new people and all of that, but I just can't muster the courage."

NANCY ANCOWITZ:

Okay, a few things, you know you're not alone, this is a common situation. One thing you can do is the tag-team approach. You don't have to go to networking events alone. You can go with a buddy, a more outgoing buddy, if you prefer.

But also, and this is very much to the philosophy of myGreenlight and Keith Ferrazzi, is to go with the spirit of generosity. Instead of going with the attitude of *What are*

people thinking of me? How am I being judged? How am I lesser than someone else?, or any of that other stuff, go with the spirit of, How can I make a difference? How can I make someone else's life better? How can I connect people? In other words, how can I be seen as a connector, as someone who really brings valuable social capital to the party?

So again, tag team, but also go prepared to be a connector.

TAHL RAZ: What does that actually mean though, *go prepared to be a connector?*

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Show up in a networking event with some specific leads that you can share with other people. It's a concrete thing, to go in with that spirit of generosity.

Another specific thing to do is to remember to ask about other people. It takes the spotlight off you. And if you're an introvert, you'll like that. You like to listen. You like to inquire, more than just gabbing about yourself. You're really not too fond of the spotlight in general. So all these things can help.

TAHL RAZ: Okay, great. All right, so on to client number three, and we have six in all, so I'll move through this.

David is a business consultant. He says, "All these coaches I hired tell me the same thing: position myself as the go-to expert, get out there and do public speaking. Well, number one, I don't know how to position myself or where to start. Number two, I need a better way of managing my fear of public speaking."

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Okay, so you don't know where to start with positioning yourself. Most people don't. Let's face it, most of us are not born marketers. So where do you start? You pick a few activities that work best for your personality. Now, again if you're an introvert, these promotional activities you'll want, they're less schmoozey. It might be an activity, as I've mentioned, like blogging. It could be being interviewed by your alumni publication. It should be something that plays to your strengths. Pick five of those activities that play to your strength, that help raise your visibility, and brainstorm them with a colleague. You don't have to do it alone.

Now for the “go-to expert” part. So let’s say that with public speaking, you don’t know where to start. The beauty about learning public speaking is that it really is an iterative process. It’s a universal fear but it has a short-term fix. Taking a class, joining Toast Masters, hiring a coach, any or all of those three makes a huge difference. It does get easier with practice. I teach public speaking at NYU and other places, it really makes a difference.

TAHL RAZ: Do you see that day-by-day the people in your class just start improving immensely?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: It is staggering. That’s what I love about public speaking, particularly for introverts. It’s a highly efficient use of your introverted energy. You get up there once and you reach a lot more people than you normally would in a day. So it’s a great skill to tackle, and anyone can learn. It’s not a big deal. It feels terrifying, but once you get in there, and you’re patient with yourself, and you practice, it is absolutely doable. I’ve never had a student that couldn’t do a great job.

TAHL RAZ: Of course, people are afraid of public speaking, but I think their next fear is, “So where am I going to use this? What, where, when and why?” Can you just give a cross-section of the students who come in to you? What places are they looking to speak at? Where are these opportunities for public speaking coming from? How are people applying these new skills?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Well, some of them want to learn public speaking just to raise their visibility in their career. In that case, they can actually reach important people at their alumni organization. It could be at a professional organization, it could be at continuing ed for a local university. There are endless podcasts and really so many opportunities to practice public speaking.

A great way to start, by the way, is to volunteer to work at your local library or some organization that really needs your expertise. This way you’re giving back to the community and practicing a vital skill for your career.

TAHL RAZ: Great. So moving on to client number four. Her name is Mary. She’s read all the self-help business books, including her favorite *Self Promotion for Introverts*, but she says “I just find myself in all of these situations and I’m still nervous,

agitated, and totally lacking in confidence. I really need some help from exercises, cues, anything to feel more relaxed and confident.”

This comes up in our course all the time. People just want to feel less nervous. I don't know if there are some sort of self-taught secrets, but the question continually comes up. How do I enter that room just a little bit more assertively, just a little more confidently?

NANCY ANCOWITZ:

The good news for Mary is that she can do it. The rougher news is that it's trial and error. So what works for Mary, maybe taking a few deep breaths and remembering to breathe, will not work for Peter. Now Peter, he needs to get physical exercise before he goes into a stressful event. He may need to take a brisk walk. Sam, on the other hand, Sam may need to call a mentor and get grounded. And then there's Maria who has to meditate beforehand. Some people need to do an affirmation. So, there's nothing you haven't heard, there's nothing that isn't in the self-help books. The question is working out what works for Mary and what works for you. And that's a bit of trial and error to figure out.

TAHL RAZ:

Let me throw this at you because I think this might be universal, and I actually come to it from the other side. When I go into stressful situations or meet different personality types, I have to somewhat modulate my personality according to what their personality is like. And if it's someone on the more introverted side, my general thinking is to pull that person out. I need to find out what they're passionate about. I'm looking for passion, because passion is a sort of social lubricant. You know, it allows people to forget themselves for a moment. So if I'm using that to pull someone out, is that a technique for the introvert to use on himself? Could they start to center themselves or try to put themselves in a special position where they have an ability to work around that passion? Would focusing on their passion help them to communicate more easily, or feel more confident or a little bit more relaxed?

NANCY ANCOWITZ:

Sure. I think it's incredibly grounding to think of where you're really great, where you shine, where you have the most confidence. That tends to circle around your passions. That's a wonderful thought, I agree with you. Absolutely.

- TAHL RAZ:** By the way have you ever advised anyone to take, or seen someone take, a drug like Paxil to resolve this issue?
- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** No, I haven't thankfully. I can't comment on that. Why, is that something that's come up for you?
- TAHL RAZ:** Yes, it's come up in conversations. What about people who take beta-blockers for public speaking?
- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** Hmm, that's just not been in my experience with my clients. I've never been asked to talk about taking any kind of any drug.
- TAHL RAZ:** Maybe it's a New York thing? Okay, moving on to client number five. So Larry is a reformed introvert. And he's implemented all the lessons, and they're working, but he says "I'm miserable. I'm out there in all these social functions and I'm always pushing myself to meet and greet, but I just end each day completely exhausted, with no alone time. And I'm kind of unhappy because it takes so much work to pretend to be an extrovert."
- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** My first comment is, I believe that if you're an introvert, there's nothing wrong with you. There's nothing to reform, but that's a whole other story.
- Regarding the point about being exhausted and always pushing himself, I think we all need to find that balance. If you're an introvert, always pushing yourself will exhaust you, especially if you're always pushing yourself to go out to the next event.
- And you do need to strike a balance between your social time and your quiet time. It's absolutely essential for you to thrive. So get to know how many meetings or social events you can put on your calendar to produce your best and know how many are too much.
- That's an individual choice for each of us. For me, back-to-back meetings are just not my thing. I really need to give myself a little quiet time between meetings or have more 'one-on-one' meetings and really schedule those group meetings so that it works for my introverted strength.
- TAHL RAZ:** Okay, so it's not a coping mechanism, but rather a way of designing the optimal work life for introverts. You're saying

- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** that there's got to be thought given to where your breaks are coming from.
- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** Yes, your peak performance will not be back-to-back group meetings. It's just not. You need to throw in some downtime.
- TAHL RAZ:** That's great advice, and often people don't, because there are cultures that look down upon that, and make it harder for introverts to really perform at their best. But they've got to find a way to do it.
- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** Good point, yes. There are cultural expectations around just 'doing, doing, doing.' That's not the way an introvert does best.
- TAHL RAZ:** I know I'm definitely not hardwired that way. So, on to client number six. This is right from an article on introverted executives in the *Wall Street Journal*, and I'm wondering what your take was. It was about this CEO named Tim Miller of Rally Software Development. He talks about a time where he unsuccessfully pitched to an investor group for \$10 million for a software start-up. The investor said that it was "all steak, no sizzle." Tim just didn't create the kind of excitement that they were used to seeing from the more extroverted, flamboyant CEOs. Essentially, he's talking about charisma.
- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** Yes.
- TAHL RAZ:** How would you work around that?
- NANCY ANCOWITZ:** Ha, charisma. I believe introverts can absolutely have charisma. Look at Warren Buffet. You don't have to be loud and you don't have to be boisterous. You can have your quieter strength shine, it's just a different way of approaching things.
- I think it relates back to what you were saying about passion. If Tim, when making this presentation, is truly grounded, connected to his passion and what excites him in his pitch, he'll bring out his introverted charisma. Trying to lay it on thick and being a used car salesman isn't going to work for Tim.
- TAHL RAZ:** I think in the article Tim utilized the tag-team approach by bringing in one of his more extroverted partners to compensate. Is that something you encourage?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Ah, it can work; however, I think it's more important for Tim and Tim's career to work on his own delivery. I think either you have natural charisma, or you can work with those sweet spots that you do have. Some people are not naturally very charismatic, and you may not be the center stage kind of guy, but that's fine. Maybe you have a wry sense of humor and your delivery is dry, but you crack everybody up. Again, that's fine, use what you've got. That's going to be much more important for his career than bringing the extroverted wingman.

TAHL RAZ: A lot of your advice keeps coming back to the fact that you have strengths you probably don't know about. Strengths that you aren't leveraging correctly, and weaknesses that are magnified because you're trying to do it the way extroverts do – and so greater-self awareness is needed. Your advice isn't, "Okay, we're going to make a whole self-change of who you are." That's impossible.

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Yes, absolutely. It's not possible and it's silly. Why would you want to change who you are? You need to bring out what's great and focus on that. You need to be able to articulate what's important and what you have to offer. Don't focus on what you're not great at. Who needs it?

TAHL RAZ: Well, let's go into part three, Tips, Tricks and Tactics. As you know, this speaks directly to something in your book, "Tips for Introverts to get Credit for and Promote Their Accomplishments." What are they not doing that they should be doing?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: So, one thing is to speak with confidence. Many introverts are confident; that's not the issue. Being able to talk about yourself and what you've accomplished with confidence is a whole other story. That gets back to being videotaped, getting coached, and practicing. Most of us are not that comfortable talking about the things we're great at. Yet unless you can talk about your offerings with confidence, you're going to be waiting around for a very long time to get the recognition you deserve.

Another thing to do is to target your message. If you're an introvert, you're probably really good at doing that research and "behind the scenes" stuff to make a very powerful pitch in a sales meeting, in an interview, in a negotiation. Really

get to know your audience so you can target it as effectively as possible. Then you're not just winging it, you're really doing your homework. So use the patience and the detail orientation from that ability to your advantage. That's another one, should I keep going?

TAHL RAZ: A couple of more would be great.

NANCY ANCOWITZ: If you're an introvert you're probably concerned about bragging. You don't want to come across as a braggart when you talk about yourself. So learn to take credit without bragging. How do you do that? One way is to practice just stating the facts. If you say that your accomplishments have contributed to a 30-percent increase in revenue or something specific and concrete, you're not just being a road hog. You're saying specifically what you do or what you can do to make a difference.

TAHL RAZ: You often talk about a "marketing mix" for people. What does that refer to?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: So, this goes back to the idea that each of us has things we love to do and things we hate to do and everything in between. In my book I recommend brainstorming 20 marketing or promotional activities and then picking the one that work best for your personality. If you hate to write, okay, writing is off the list. If you like having "one-on-one" interactions, which you probably do as an introvert, start having some lunches or coffees with people that you need to help advance you in your career. Of course, there's always the "give back" aspect as well, but pick those activities that play to your preferences, as opposed to forcing yourself to do stuff you hate.

Larry, that client we were talking about before, was just pushing himself constantly. He was not working his marketing mix. He was just pushing himself doing stuff he hated to do and that's not a good thing.

TAHL RAZ: So what would your specific marketing mix be? Can you give me one example that suits you particularly well, I assume it's writing, and one that doesn't suit you and bores you?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: For me, it would be loud group events. I like concentrated,

deep conversations with one person at a time. That's what I enjoy doing and where I'm at my best. That's why I'm a coach. I really love to be deep with one person at a time. My hardest time is enduring loud, loud music and lots of people schmoozing. As introverts we don't tend to like a lot of chitchat or small talk. We want to get to the meat of the matter, to what's important. That's what I relate to.

TAHL RAZ: Two more "tip" questions here. I wanted to see if you have any specific idea about being a successful manager as an introvert.

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Well, as a successful manager and this goes back to the one-on-one stuff. It's vital to get to know the people that you manage so you can play to their strengths, as well as your own strength as a manager. Sure, you're going to have group meetings, that's typical, but it's getting to know each person one-on-one and having those lunches that counts. It's such an important thing to really discover what you can bring out in each person to help contribute the most to the organization.

TAHL RAZ: That's excellent advice – to circumvent the manager as "rah-rah cheerleader" and instead lead by establishing strong personal relationships.

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Yes, that's really important. There's a lot in the book about how introverts can communicate well with extroverts and vice versa, if you're a manager who is managing a lot of extroverts. It's important to remember that if you're managing extroverts, they do need to think out loud, they do like to drop in, they do like to chat before they get into the heart of matters. There are things that they prefer to do that you don't. It's a negotiation. You're going to need to figure out how to get the most out of your team and how they're going to need to get the most out of you. Having a conversation about it is a good thing.

TAHL RAZ: That was actually my last question!

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Oh, I already answered it?

TAHL RAZ: Bridging the communications gap, yes exactly.

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Okay.

TAHL RAZ: So, is there anything else? Something that we haven't covered or something that you'd like to add?

NANCY ANCOWITZ: Well, I guess my advice to introverts would be to remember to be patient with extroverts. They tend to ask a lot of questions that can seem invasive. They tend to like to talk a lot, probably a lot more than you do. If you're an introvert, I say be patient and tolerant, and for the extroverts listening, same story. Be patient and tolerant, we really are different and yet we can truly complement each other magnificently and get much further by working well together. There's a lot we can do to that end.

TAHL RAZ: Wow, that's a wonderful note to end on. That'll do it. Thank you much for joining us Nancy. For the legions of introverted, like myself, you're an oracle. So to connect with Nancy and get more information about her and her book "Self Promotion for Introverts" go to www.nancyancowitz.com.

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