

RSA Shorts - The Power of Quiet

If you take a group of people and put them into a meeting and have them talk about something, the opinions of the loudest person or the most charismatic person or the most assertive person, those are the ones that the group tends to follow.

And yet - researchers have looked at this. There's no correlation between being that best talker and having the best ideas, like zero correlation.

I think that we're living in a society now that is so overly extroverted. As we shifted from an agricultural economy to a corporate one, we started to admire people who could be magnetic and charismatic because these were qualities that seemed to matter for job interviews and things like that. And so, in the earlier agricultural economy, our self-help books used to have titles like "Character: The Grandest Thing In The World". But then the self-help books later on became the ones that we kind of know of today, like Dale Carnegie's "How To Win Friends And Influence People" and those were all about teaching us to be more entertaining, more dynamic and that kind of thing.

I think, for any trait of human nature, any aspect, it has its pros and cons. And what I'm saying is that for too long, we've looked at introversion only through its disadvantages, and we've looked at extroversion only through its advantages. So I'm trying to now fill in the gaps and what that can sometimes sound like is,

"Down with extroverts, up with introverts". And my vision of the right world is a world where it's yin and yang. There's space for extroverts and there's space for introverts - and it's equal space.

If you look at the birth of Apple, Apple computer, we tend to associate Apple with Steve Jobs, who is this dazzling showman. But really, the person who invented the Apple computer was a different Steve. It was Steve Wozniak, who's a self-identified introvert. And he created this amazing thing by sitting by himself in a cubicle at Hewlett-Packard, where he was working at the time. Late at night and early in the morning, before anybody was at work, he would work by himself for months. And then he produced this amazing thing that he then shared with his friend, Steve Jobs. And then it was Steve Jobs who said, "Hey! We should start a company with this. This

is amazing."Without Steve Jobs, none of it ever would have come to pass.

So it was this combination of letting the solitary person go off by himself to think in his deep way and then having a partnership between the two. And in fact, you know, in companies, it's been found that the most effective teams are the ones that are a combination of introvert and extrovert. And the two types are really drawn to each other and really need each other.