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Book Review: Self Promotion for Introverts®

by Nancy Ancowitz

Reviewed by Ruth Ann Woodley

I've just finished reading a very helpful book that reads as though it were written with actuaries in mind: *Self Promotion for Introverts®: The Quiet Guide to Getting Ahead*. Full disclosure—I've known Nancy Ancowitz for several years, helping coordinate her presentations for the SOA and articles for this newsletter. So I was looking forward to her first book, knowing how well Nancy understands the personal preferences I share with many of my fellow introverted actuaries. Now I can objectively say that there is great value in this book, whether you are promoting your own business or consulting practice, or just want to be sure your talents are recognized within your larger organization.

I read an advance copy of the book on plane flights over the course of a few months, and each time I picked it up I found advice perfectly suited to my current situation. As I read the first chapters, I had just landed a significant assignment with a new client. Instead of being excited, I scared myself to death with thoughts of everything that could go wrong. Lucky for me, Chapter 1 is titled, "Your Negative Self Talk," and I found myself quickly and actively engaged in the exercises included. Nancy tells us that it's common for introverts to have more "chatter" in our heads, and that often for us, self-talk is negative. After I followed some of her suggestions—like creating a list of my biggest fans and cheerleaders, and writing down some fact-based statements to refute my negative thoughts—my attitude about the new assignment did an about-face and I tackled it excitedly.

The book has many such moments, and includes numerous concrete action steps rather than just feel-good talk. Some of the points are quite basic, such as e-mail etiquette, or learning as much as possible in

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advance about your audience for a presentation or people you want to meet. And yet, there wasn't one of these tips that I haven't needed at some point, or seen others (often senior executives who should know better!) need too. I loved the examples of networking e-mails and conversation starters; these will be great to use so that I don't have to start with a blank page.

The section on public speaking and presenting—which I happened to read as I flew to my first presentation with another client—caused me to step back and gain new clarity on my thoughts and goals for that meeting. The last chapter on connecting with extroverts is full of entertaining stories of Nancy ginning up her courage to get advice from famous chatterboxes. And it features some "us" and "them" comparisons that made me laugh out loud with recognition, but also gave me better insight into some of those extroverts with whom I sometimes struggle to connect.

Not every section of the book will be immediately useful at any given point in your career. For example, advice on job interviews and salary negotiations are not relevant to me right now (although some of the ideas I can apply to other areas) and the section on choosing your best marketing activities mostly confirmed that I'm already on a good track. But I plan to keep my copy of this book in my office close by, and refer to it often for guidance and moral support as I do battle with the extroverted part of the world.

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