

# THE INTROVERT'S GUIDE TO THE JOB HUNT

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO  
OWNING YOUR SEARCH, YOUR WAY

AMMA MARFO



# Hello From The Author!

So maybe you're thinking about starting a job search. Or the process is underway, but you sense you might need a bit of guidance finding a job that fits the way you work, interact, and live. I completely understand, I've been there.

Here's the good news: this resource isn't designed to teach you to "fake it." The introverted temperament has a number of strengths and gifts that are an asset to the workplace, assets and gifts that shouldn't be covered up. No, this guide is designed to help you identify those advantages, use them at each stage of the search process, and identify companies and organizations that will value them in your everyday work.

That said, this guide is also a two-way street. In addition to sharing information about the true nature of introversion and how you can make it work for you, "Make Your Mark" sections will provide you a chance to prepare for the job hunt process by thinking through the content, and then prompting you to work through it in preparation for the battery of questions that always accompanies applications, interviews, and negotiations.

This guide is a starting off point, and I imagine many questions will arise as you peruse its pages. I urge you to get in touch using the information below; my goal is to help you be as successful as possible. Best wishes, take care, and let's dive in!



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# WHAT INTROVERSION IS...AND ISN'T

## What Introversion Is

A neurologically based way of interacting with the world that drives one to identify strongly with thoughts, ideas, and abstract concepts.

A need to follow periods of high stimulation (from people, temperature, light, strong emotion, etc.) with time to recharge and restore energy levels.

An advantageous orientation in the professional world when ensuring that all ideas are heard and considered, and that a diversity of thought and interaction is represented on a team.

## What Introversion Is Not

An aversion to social interaction or time with people. Introverts enjoy and excel at relationship building, though it may tire them at times.

A need to retreat or hide from the world due to shyness, awkwardness, or social ineptitude.

A need to opt out of social or stimulating activities for a lack of skill or desire.

No skill, ability, or task is off limits to any temperament; we all need a supportive environment in which to moderate the energy it takes to do new or energy-spending things.

## ACTION STEPS

Temperaments on all sides are often misunderstood, due to longstanding misconceptions about their origin and traits. By **interacting meaningfully** with others- talking to them about who we are, how we work, and what we excel at or struggle with, we can break down the barriers that have us misunderstanding one another.

**Challenge yourself** to find an environment that appreciates how you work, *and* affords you the opportunity to learn things that you may still want to learn...even if they'll take a little energy to figure out!



# THE INTROVERTED BRAIN AT WORK

There's nothing wrong. You're not slow, there's nothing broken. Your brain simply responds *differently*.

There are two neurotransmitters constantly at work in the brain: dopamine and acetylcholine. An orientation toward introversion or extroversion is simply a greater sensitivity to one of the two. Extroverts respond better to dopamine, while the introverted brain handles acetylcholine better.

Acetylcholine moves along longer neural pathways, which means that a response may take a bit longer than it would if dopamine was running the show. So you're not at a loss for words when a question pops up in an interview; the thought simply hasn't arrived where it needs to be yet. You don't have "nothing to say" when in an informational session or while listening to others; but what you have to say may arrive a little later than expected. Offices and organizations that allow for this, will be a great fit for you.

## ACTION STEPS

These thinking moments can be stressful if you feel burdened to respond in a timely manner. **Practice** "time-buying" mantras, such as May I take a moment to think about that? or I'd like to get back to you shortly, if I could.

**Identify** the method in which you do express yourself the best: writing, drawing/photography, video, etc. Seek opportunities to share your skills, talents, and qualifications with interviewers and decisionmakers in that medium.

# Make Your Mark

## MUSTS, MAYBES, + "MMM..NO"S

The journey toward finding your best job (not the "right" or "dream" job, but one that is your best fit right now) means knowing what you need in a role, what you can decide on later, and what your dealbreakers are. Using the boxes below (and the notes pages at the back, if necessary), start defining these items for yourself. Think about office environment, development opportunities, and supervisory style as well as things like salary, benefits, and scheduling.

### My Musts

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### My Maybes

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*Make Your Mark*

## MUSTS, MAYBES, + "MMM...NO"S

*My "Mmm...No"s*

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*Hold Me To It!*

As I continue to evaluate these characteristics, who will hold me accountable to honoring what I've written?

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If I notice myself veering away from what I've classified, how will I refocus on what I've identified as important?

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# IDENTIFYING JOBS THAT FIT YOUR STYLE

There is no shortage of gifts and assets that an introvert can bring to an organization, particularly in leadership. While I can't list them all here, Jennifer Kahnweiler has a list I'd like to share as a jumping-off point:

## *Taking Quiet Time*

Many of us seek corporate work that seems to live and die by clocks and calendars; the ability to create quiet time for contemplation, focus, and deliberate action is an asset for many organizations.

## *Preparation*

A mindset well suited for measured and deep preparation is of importance to departments that make high-stakes decisions. Position yourself as a researcher, information gatherer, and thinker to capitalize on this trait.

## *Engaged Listening*

Much of our work is a conversation between our organization and the outside forces that shape how we act and respond. Listening - to individuals and to inanimate outside forces - is advantageous to keeping our contributions relevant.

## *Focused Conversations*

We've all been in meetings where conversations needed to be reset, information summarized, and perspectives shared. A bias toward productive and substantive communication means introverts thrive in these conversations - when well prepared!

## *Writing + Social Media*

Effective writing skills are common in introverts, due to its asynchronous and uninterrupted nature. Strong written communication is an asset to all organizations; if it is a strength of yours, sell this skill **hard**!

# ACTION STEPS

If these are the assets that you bring to the table, find ways to **highlight** them in applications, cover letters, and interviews. Seek out others, and articulate them often too!



# CREATING A CAPTIVATING COVER LETTER

In contrast to an application or resume, designed specifically to list your qualifications for a position, a cover letter is designed to demonstrate your *approach* to the work at hand. A resume and application can say "I can do this;" the job of a cover letter is to illuminate "*why* I want to do this, *here*."

Demonstrate the *why* with a narrative that addresses how you found them, what excites you about the prospect of the work, and specific reasons that you are the person who will get it done better than anyone else- but mind the fact that these claims will need to be substantiated should you get an interview. In the sections ahead, you'll get practice in crafting a narrative that can bring to life the bullet points and text boxes they've already seen in your application and resume. Use those skills to create a cover letter that stands apart from other robotic, staid, and boring cover letters the organization is likely already buried in.

Demonstrate the *here* with a clear knowledge of their purpose, values, and recent successes and challenges. If you're well-suited to help address their challenges, say so. If you're excited by their successes and want to be a part of them, say so. The answer to "here" shouldn't be (or appear to be) "because they're hiring." It should be a demonstration of how your personality, gifts, assets, and desire align with the organization's strengths, needs, and image.

## ACTION STEPS

**Resist** the urge to restate your resume in this precious blank space. They've already seen it.

**Elaborate** on a particularly proud or accomplished moment from your resume with an anecdote or narrative that demonstrates *how* you did it.

**Describe** the response to some of the points on your resume. Have a snippet from a satisfied customer, supervisor, or client? Share *that*, to quantify the impact of your work in a dynamic way that numbers cannot.

# Make Your Mark

## "IT'S KIND OF A FUNNY STORY..."

An introverted nature means a comfort with our thoughts. This is a wonderful trait...but it also means we make leaps and skip over information as we tell stories. This exercise, designed to help you expand on narratives and include all key information, will help you get comfortable telling stories.

### *Start with the laugh.*

What's something funny that has happened to you recently?

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### *Now, tell it to a friend.*

This step is *crucial*. Even if you don't find yourself to be a "funny" person, stories designed to provoke laughs are helpful in this exercise because they're so sensitive to missing information. Tell the story you summarized above to a friend- in person, over the phone/Skype/FaceTime, etc. As they ask questions, take note of what information you might have skipped, and at what point they found the laugh. Beware the phrase: "You had to be there!"

# *Give that story a "Take Two."*

As best you can, try writing down the story a second time, taking note of the questions that your listener asked. Did you need more detail?

Less? What made the story resonate for your listener?

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## *Hold Me To It!*



Your next step in this process will be to find a few moments in your life—professionally, personally, or otherwise, that can strengthen your ability to showcase your best skills, talents, and advantageous qualities. Who in your life will you call upon to help you find and craft these stories?

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2. 

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3. 

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*Make Your Mark*

## YOUR STYLE IN ACTION

Now, using the skills you just developed in the last activity, your challenge is to find a story that illustrates how you go about your work. Think of a time you felt particularly proud of an outcome, of a challenge you successfully overcame, or a professional relationship that you've gotten a great deal from.

*What's the story?*

In as much detail as possible, outline the story here and in the Notes. Be sure to include points that highlight some of your strong qualities (as mentioned in "Identifying Jobs That Fit Your Style")

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*Now, tell it to a friend.*

Just as before, find a willing friend or colleague to listen to the story above- in person, over the phone/Skype/FaceTime, etc. As they ask questions, take note of what information you might have skipped, and at what point they understood your success. Beware the phrase: "You had to be there!"



# *Give that story a "Take Two."*

As best you can, try writing down the story a second time, taking note of the questions that your listener asked. Did you need more detail?

Less? What made the story resonate for your listener?

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## *Hold Me To It!*

Repeat this process 2-3 times to find a rotating "stable" of stories that can be used to answer common interview questions. Give these stories names, then write those names and a summary of each story below. As you practice interviewing, think about how these stories can reasonably answer commonly asked questions

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# GETTING TIME ON YOUR SIDE

No matter how comfortable we are with ourselves, our qualifications, or our stories, the interview stage of the job hunt can feel draining. And rightfully so. The strength it takes to be "on," the frequent stream of new people, and pressure associated with having your best foot forward can, in many ways, conflict directly with where introverted individuals get their energy.

While these stakes will likely never lessen, and the format may not always favor your temperament, hope is not lost. Here, we'll share a few tricks you can use to regain composure and energy if your "battery level" is waning.

- The morning of your interview, wake up 15-20 minutes early to review the schedule, your materials, questions prepped in advance. The extra time, even for those who like to sleep, will provide a charge through the extra prep.
- Once done, take a few moments to breathe deeply, eyes closed, to oxygenate the brain and blood.
- If travel is required and you're able to select solo travel over public transit or a provided ride, take that opportunity.
- If stuck or stumped on a question, take a deep breath and count inwardly to 3 before your answer.
- If all else fails? During bathroom breaks, linger for an extra 2-3 minutes. That's your time, they can't take it from you!

## ACTION STEPS

**Select** 1-3 of the strategies listed above as your "go-to" time-buying strategies. **Practice** them as you go over interview questions. This sort of practice will allow them to be second nature in moments where you need to "slow things down."

# Make Your Mark

## TAKE A BEAT

Let's hold you accountable. Knowing that the course of your day will drain you is one thing; creating a plan to act through it is quite another. Below is a list of questions to help you shape your "day-of" interview routine. Take your time answering these questions, and then commit yourself to acting on the plan!

### My Day-Of Schedule

When I wake up in the morning, what steps will I take to center myself and energize for the day ahead?

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If given the choice, how will I get myself to where I need to be for the interview? (Remember to leave time for delays, getting lost, traffic, etc.)

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If I feel stuck on a particular question or need some time to think, what will I say to the interviewer?

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Select 2 strategies from "Getting Time On Your Side" as your go-tos

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# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE YOUR FIT

Interviews are expressly designed for everyone to put their best foot forward- you, but also the organization. This means that just as you're hoping to be all that they need, they're hoping to be all that you need if you're a candidate they like. This means that if you have definitive needs to meet (which, as we established earlier in "Musts, Maybes, and 'Mmm...No's," you do), then you'll have to ask. In addition to what you've listed, here are a few introvert-centric questions that may help you further determine fit.

- *What does the work space and work environment be like?*  
If you're an individual who has a hard time working in open office spaces, this question could be quite helpful.
- *What sort of culture will there be as far as coworker interaction?*  
Even with office doors or ways to adjust interaction in your environment, how are "closed doors" or headphones perceived?
- *What's the meeting culture like?*  
How much of your time will be spent in meetings, and what sorts of things do you meet for?
- *In what ways can we contribute feedback or ideas?*  
Are you expected to "speak up" in the moment, or are contributions welcome after the fact/later on?
- *What sorts of individuals succeed and advance here?*  
What qualities do they value in leadership? Does it seem like a place where "quieter" individuals can make their mark?

## ACTION STEPS

Where possible, bring up these questions as you interview. If you can, ask them of staff members as well as supervisors.



# *Make Your Mark*

## THANK YOU TEMPLATE

If you're the sort of introvert that also excels at written communication, the thank you note provides an opportunity to not just be courteous in your communication, but also share additional information that could contribute to your status as a candidate.

However, getting the card going can feel awkward or disingenuous. This worksheet will help you synthesize the notable points of the day and cite them meaningfully, while also expressing gratitude.

### *Who Needs Cards?*

First things first: who needs to be thanked? [HR, prospective supervisor, interview host, committee members, etc.]

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### *The Day's Highlights*

What moments were memorable from the day? Think about conversations started, unexpected common ground, questions posed that you needed time to answer, or even personal facts and anecdotes.

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# Make Your Mark

## Stay Excited!

What elements of the role excite you most after interviewing? Have any ideas or resources caught your eye that could help in the role since you spoke with them?

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Now, using the information shared above, create a note that can be customized for each individual you spoke with, without feeling robotic or canned.

*Dear [insert individual here],*

*It was a pleasure getting to meet and chat with you about [insert role] here. I really appreciated [insert day's highlights], and have been thinking a great deal about [question posed or point posed] since we parted. After our time together, I look so forward to the prospect of [insert point of excitement], and have even thought about [insert additional idea or mention additional resource] upon leaving. Thanks again so much for your time, and best wishes with [personal anecdote, fact, or upcoming event/project]!*

**IMPORTANT:** If, for any reason, an interview leaves you not wanting to pursue an opportunity, it is still **highly recommended** to send a thank you note expressing appreciation for everyone's time.

# THE WAITING GAME

The interview process takes a lot of energy out of introverts, and so any promising lead can feel like a tempting opportunity to halt our progress and wait longingly for a reply. Resist this urge! It can take a great deal of time for these decisions to be reviewed among stakeholders, and you'll lose valuable time (not to mention, possibly miss out on exciting other opportunities) by only focusing on one. Here are some tips for navigating the sometimes long wait before the call back.

- *Stay occupied!*

This can mean applying for other positions, but can also mean staying busy socially or with hobbies (or current work!).

Having something to do will lower the stakes of the inquiry at hand.

- *Follow up using approved measures.*

Job postings and interviews will often cite their preferred means of follow-up after the fact. Don't deviate from these paths; overly persistent or unsolicited contact can sour your impression with hiring managers and prospective coworkers.

- Remember: it (often) isn't personal.

Hiring takes on a tremendous level of importance because it feels like an assessment of ourself-worth. However, more often than not, the people we meet and talk with don't know us well enough for these decisions to be deeply personal. If an interview doesn't go your way, be gracious and understanding- even if feedback isn't provided. Preserve relationships, you never know what could happen or come later!

## ACTION STEPS

**Schedule** activities (work, hobbies, side projects) to keep you occupied.

**Continue to apply** for opportunities. Better to graciously decline an interview, than scramble to find them if needed.

# FINAL AFFIRMATIONS + FURTHER READING

Well, you've reached the end of this guide. But it most certainly is not the end of your journey. Remember, even if you have to review this guide more times than you'd like, the result will be a job that you can be confident will fit you well- a position that is willing and able to capitalize on the gifts and assets you bring to the table as an introvert.

If you're interested in learning more about introversion as a construct, here are some of my favorite reads and resources to guide your discovery:

*Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*

Susan Cain

*Quiet Influence: The Introvert's Guide to Making a Difference*

Jennifer Kahnweiler

*Genius of Opposites*

Jennifer Kahnweiler

*The I's Have It: Reflections on Introversion in Student Affairs (but helpful for all fields of work/study!)*

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## ACTION STEPS

**Reach out** with any questions, concerns, success stories, or struggles you might have! I always love hearing from folks who have gotten something from what I share.

<http://www.ammamarfo.com/about>



# NOTES

Need some extra space? We get it. Use the pages below to take notes as you go, or to write more from the previous activities.

[illegible]

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# WANT MORE?

Amma is a dynamic and sought-after speaker on topics such as leadership, group dynamics, learning and optimizing the temperament of your organization, cultivating environments that encourage creativity, and incorporating your values into your work and larger goals. She speaks on college and university campuses across the country, at regional and national conferences, and has partnered with organizations like HubSpot, Wayfair, Startup Institute Boston, and General Assembly. To work with her to schedule a training, workshop, or keynote address on your campus or with your organization, contact Ken Abrahams at Fun Enterprises Speakers:

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Amma is an education and writing professional that equips her audiences (on paper and in person alike) to understand creativity, their temperament, and the intersection of comedy and our daily lives. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from the University of Rhode Island, and a Master of Education from the University of South Florida.

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