by Aaron "Butch" Pucetas

After reading [Susan Cain's](#) *Quiet*: *The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, I have reflected greatly on how the Army People First campaign can be improved. Up front, my recommendation is for the Army to make a conscious effort to promote introverted leaders in roughly equal amounts as their extroverted peers to bring balance and diversity of behavior to the organization. This may actually help the Army meet its People First ambitions, while also providing a more flexible, innovative, and effective fighting force.

Just like modern Western society, the Army has fallen prey to what Cain calls the Myth of Charismatic Leadership and the Culture of Personality. That is, we are led to believe that being extroverted not only makes us more successful, but also makes us better people. The

hundreds and thousands of public speaking workshops and leadership seminars across the country treat introversion as a disease and something that must be cured. Even FM 6-22 includes a pejorative swipe at an introverted officer whose leader forces them to "get outside their comfort zone to meet family readiness group personnel" because it will supposedly improve their communication skills and relationship building.

Based on the studies cited in Cain's book, however, introverts are actually better than extroverts at empathy, sensitivity, connectedness with others, and other "social" skills that are often misattributed to extroverts. Introverts are not "anti-social" but "differently social", they value deep relationships and conversations that cannot be achieved in a 5-minute elevator pitch or quad chart slide briefing. If the Army truly wants to execute its People First campaign, it must make the effort to promote more introverted leaders who are wired to do exactly what the People First campaign entails.

There are also substantial tactical and operational advantages to promoting more introverted leaders. Studies have shown that they perform better in critical thinking tests and are more innovative than extroverts, even though they share the same levels of intelligence. Introverts are also better at leading initiative-taking employees, whereas extroverts are better at leading passive employees. These qualities make introverts well-suited to lead in the arduous conditions of 21st century warfare–critical thinking, innovation, and empowering Soldiers to practice the principles of Mission Command are just as valuable as having a charismatic extrovert and their respective skills.

None of this is to utterly discount the power and utility of extroverted leaders. The Army needs leaders who forge ahead quickly, are superb oral communicators, and motivate through their presence alone. But if we want to execute the People First campaign as it was intended, and also improve our Army's tactical/operational performance, we need a healthier balance of introverted leaders and extroverted leaders.

The Army can achieve this healthy balance of introverted and extroverted leaders by incorporating an extensive personality assessment into the psychological evaluations currently conducted in the Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP), Colonels Command Assessment Program (CCAP), and the Sergeant Major Assessment Program (SMAP). The professional psychologists can utilize numerous personality assessments and their own expertise to bin candidates based on their personality markers. This will provide the panel with an idea of how many introverts and extroverts are in the pool of candidates. The goal, based on the studies listed in Cain's work, would be to provide more balance and parity between the number of introverts and extroverts we promote to command positions. At the very least, the awareness of the candidates' personality indicators may shed light on

previously unknown biases and prejudices.

BCAP, CCAP, and SMAP panel members should also receive some training from behavioral psychologists on how personality affects leader behavior. Introvert and extrovert candidates are expected to demonstrate the leader attributes and competencies listed in [ADP 6-22](#), but they may look different for each personality type. For example, an introvert may come off as aloof or overly cautious in a certain evaluative scenario. An extrovert may "dive right in" and demonstrate a seemingly more engaged and enthusiastic response. The evaluations of both candidates must be tempered with their personality types in mind. Ultimately, panel members must acknowledge and understand that the Army needs both types of leaders.

The Army can also provide this personality training to NCOs and officers so they are made aware of the differences between the personality types of those they rate and senior rate. The training could be a part of their respective PME paths or provided by Installation resources. This may mitigate the prejudices against introverted forms of leadership and encourage a better balance of leadership behaviors at lower levels, providing an organization-wide cultural shift.

Lastly, the Army should explicitly codify how personality affects leadership behavior in ADP 6-22. There is one small paragraph, para. 1-86, that discusses the characteristics that are internal to a leader, "These affect how an individual behaves, thinks, and learns within certain conditions." This section and other parts of ADP 6-22 should be expounded upon to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of introversion and extroversion, how they affect leader behavior, and how they complement one another. The doctrinal changes will hopefully help the cultural shift take root and promote a more diverse and effective Army.

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