An introvert's brief guide to networking

By [Simone Stolzoff](#) November 27, 2018

Karen Wickre has been working in Silicon Valley longer than most Silicon Valley CEOs have been alive.

She came to the Bay Area in the mid-1980s to join a nonprofit, but ended up spending the 30 years since serving as the tech industry's resident communicator. She joined Google, then a 500-person startup, in 2002 as a writer and left the 50,000-person company nine years later as a manager on its global communications team.

She then joined Twitter, where she served as editorial director for more than four years. Now a 60-something, she has decades of experience being the adult in the room. And, like any wise elder, has accumulated enough knowledge to fill at least one book.

This week, Wickre released *Taking the Work Out of Networking: An Introvert's Guide to Making Connections That Count* (Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster). Besides her experience, the characteristic that differentiates Wickre from many other successful Silicon Valley networkers is that she's a self-proclaimed introvert. But she hasn't let her inclination to listen first and talk second stop her from making connections to people. In fact, she believes being an introvert is one of the main reasons why she's built one of the [largest professional networks](#) in all of tech.

Wickre sat down with Quartz at Work and shed some light on why introverts can actually be better than the rest of us at making professional connections. The interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

QaW: What does introversion mean to you?

Wickre: People often think introverts are shy, but introversion doesn't necessarily mean shy. It has more to do with the fact introverts need to recharge and reenergize themselves with some quiet time and solitude to think things through. That's why I would define myself as an introvert. It doesn't mean you're antisocial.

Is networking for everyone?

Everybody seems to hate networking—or at least the word—no matter who you are. So many people have said to me, "I'm an extrovert and I hate networking and I want to go home at the end of the day." But networking is a reality of professional life. People are living longer, working longer, and will have many more jobs throughout a lifetime. A network is just another word for a web of people we can turn to for advice.

Where do you network?

I don't go to big parties and work the room. I'm in touch with scores of people every week, all online. Sometimes it's a Twitter DM, a lot of times it's email, sometimes it's off something I see on Facebook, and increasingly it's on LinkedIn. So in the book, I talk specifically about using LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram because they were designed so that we can meet strangers and make connections with people we don't know.

How can introverts leverage that in their networking efforts?

I'm known for having a big network. But I don't know everyone. The truth is, I know who everyone *is* because I'm paying attention. So, that's something introverts bring to the party. Another is being good at listening. I never want to talk first when getting acquainted with someone. I'm going to ask the questions that you're going to fill me in on, and then, after I get a better picture of you, I decide how much I want to reveal. Being curious and observational are hallmarks of introverts and good networkers as well.