

The  
perfect book  
to create a  
future-ready  
organisation



# Intra PRENEUR

How leaders  
ignite innovation,  
break bureaucracy  
and catalyse change



*Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw*



# REVIEWS

As a 21st century employee in a large organisation, you have two options. Option 1 – you can become extremely good at *following* systems, or option 2 – you can become someone who *creates* the systems – an *INTRAPRENEUR*. The problem with being great at following systems is that no matter how good you are, sooner or later someone overseas will do it cheaper, or a computer will do it better. Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw is Australia's leading thinker and writer on the second (and much smarter) option – being an *INTRAPRENEUR*. This book lays out the blueprint for transforming your career and your organisation from the inside. Critical reading for anyone who wants to stay relevant over the next two decades.

**Peter Cook, CEO, Thought Leaders Pty Ltd.**

Innovation is often considered to be new product or service design, but in fact, it is a leadership skill – it is the capacity to shape the future of an industry and reinvent the business model. This is the world Irena explores in *Intrapreneur*.

**Dan Gregory, CEO, The Impossible Institute.**

There's no greater skill for employees to have in the current climate than the mindset of an entrepreneur. An open and flexible mindset, looking for opportunities, taking action, running experiments and being responsive to what happens. Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw packages up the phases of identifying if this is you and then what to do to bring it to life. It's a guide book, a play book and a masterclass in being entrepreneurial 'on the inside' of your organisation. In short, being an *INTRAPRENEUR*. Managers and leaders would do well to have this book in their library to refer to, guide their teams and use as an obstacle or barrier breaker in these times when innovation is needed at every turn.

**Lynne Cazaly, author of *Agile-ish*.**

*Intrapreneur* is an immensely readable book, full of rich vignettes and practical real life examples. Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw not only shines a light on the importance of developing intrapreneurialism within your people and your organisation, but also points the way to achieving this. An important book for any business wanting to thrive in the 21st century.

**James Anderson, author of *The Agile Learner*.**

There's a lot said today about design thinking to stay differentiated in a fast paced world. Thing is: design thinking has to translate into implementation. And, that's where Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw's differentiation comes in. Her ability to transcend different contexts, in both the public and private sector, and build capability in people to create and sustain new value shines through in her new book *Intrapreneur*.

**Dr. Richard Hodge, Director, [DrRichardHodge.com](http://DrRichardHodge.com),  
Member of Faculty at Thought Leaders Business School.**

If you are a leader who wants to master the art of being an 'Entrepreneur' inside your organisation, then read this book. Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw has discovered that the real power of enterprise and business performance comes from the people on your front line. Tap into the power of your organisation's most valuable resource, your people, and unleash their abilities to become your team of 'Intrapreneurs'. A forward thinking book that provides insights into getting the best out of people by unleashing their intrapreneurial skills. If you are feeling unappreciated as an employee because no one allows you to fly with the eagles, then read this book. It will provide you with the steps to become the intrapreneur you know you can be. Easy to read with many useful tools. As a leader, this book has provided a valuable and fresh perspective for me as well as for my teams.

**Dr. Drew Dwyer, CEO, Frontline Care Solutions.**

The tide is turning. We know that organisational change can no longer be driven solely by those at the top. And we've also long known that many of the best ideas for improvement come from staff at the coal face. Yet the frustration with current slow change processes and the lack of engagement in organisations world-wide suggest we lack genuine ways to access this untapped (and often highly frustrated) talent. In this insightful book, Irena shows you how to unleash an intrapreneurial mindset and provides practical strategies to help generate and realise game changing initiatives. Pass on a copy of this book to the change-makers in your organisation (if you dare) and watch them and your organisation fly!

**Linda Hutchings, Director, LindaHutchings.Com,  
Faculty at Thought Leaders Business School**

Intrapreneurialism is certainly a skillset our leaders and high potential employees need to harness. This book and the work being done by Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw addresses an area that has been missing in organisations so far. It is a must read for leaders in any corporation that wants to strive for greater success, and let's face it, that's all of us!

**Sebreena Cronin, 3M, Talent Development Manager.**

Intrapreneurs are problem solvers who are being recognized as the driving force behind innovation in organizations. Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw is leading the charge in this new way of working. In this book she shares cutting edge concepts that will help you learn how to be an intrapreneur and how to create a culture that fosters creativity and intrapreneurialism. If you are interested in innovation within your organization, this book will be a valuable guide, resource, and source of inspiration.

**Dr. Amy Climer, host of The Deliberate Creative Podcast**



## INTRAPRENEUR

How leaders ignite innovation, break  
bureaucracy and catalyse change







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bureaucracy and catalyse change

*Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw*

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Irena Yashin-Shaw  
PO Box 65, Mansfield LPO, Mansfield,  
Brisbane, QLD, 4122  
+61 7 3849 5003  
irena@drirenayashinshaw.com  
www.drirenayashinshaw.com

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For Phil

# Acknowledgements

Many of the case studies in this book have been drawn from my work with intrapreneurs from different organisations who have come through my in-house or public mentoring programs. I have had the privilege of seeing them rise to the challenges of their diverse workplaces, worked with them as they have doggedly pushed through barriers that threatened to derail their initiatives and celebrated with them the valuable contributions their efforts have made to their workplaces and to society.

To you all I say – thank you! You will see yourselves in these pages although names have been changed. This book would not have been possible without you.

## About the Author

Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw is Australia's leading authority on intrapreneurialism. She is on a mission to liberate innovation, creativity and leadership within people to create future ready organisations. Innovation is unleashed when organisations are liberated from entrenched practices and outdated processes. Creativity is unleashed when people are liberated from the mental shackles of default thinking and rigid mental models. Leadership is unleashed when individuals are liberated from constraints that stifle initiative and talent.



Driven by a belief that intrapreneurial talent is wasted in most organisations, Irena has developed a process for identifying, developing and harnessing it. She works with organisations and leaders who want a critical mass of high performing, dedicated, energised employees who will propel the organisation forward with their creativity and innovativeness.

Irena is a rare combination of deep academic knowledge, real-world entrepreneurial experience and entertaining speakership who has been working in the fields of innovation and creativity since before they became the new workplace imperatives. She holds a PhD in Creative Problem Solving, a Master's Degree in Adult Education, a Bachelor of Arts,

a teaching degree, as well as qualifications in speech and drama from Trinity College London.

Her clients come from all sectors but recently she has specialised in helping government agencies create public value through innovation and intrapreneurialism.

Her previous book, *Leading in the Innovation Age: Unleash knowledge, talent and experience to create an innovative workplace*, serves as a handbook for leaders wanting to unlock the potential of their people in the service of innovation. It provides concepts, case studies, tools and frameworks to help leaders to thrive in the contemporary landscape of the innovation age.

In addition to her work as a corporate educator, adviser and mentor, Irena is an in-demand international conference speaker who has elevated 'edutainment' to an art form. She loves to challenge smart, savvy and sophisticated audiences who want insight rather than information and an experience rather than a presentation. She is a CSP, which stands for *Certified Speaking Professional*. There are fewer than 600 CSPs in the world, representing the top echelon of globally recognised professional speakers.

Irena lives in Brisbane, Australia, but considers herself a global citizen, with a commitment to being part of the solution for the big challenges that define our age.

Learn more at [www.drirenayashinshaw.com](http://www.drirenayashinshaw.com).

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*The skills of an entrepreneur are the  
skills of a 21st century worker.*

Queen Rania of Jordan  
During her address to the World Economic Forum,  
Amman 2011



# INTRODUCTION

Unlike the term *entrepreneur*, the term ***intrapreneur*** is a relatively recent one. In essence, it is **the act of thinking and behaving like an entrepreneur whilst working within a large organisation**. In other words, it is the demonstration of *business skills, personal leadership and creative problem-solving* abilities that enables people to find, explore and implement worthy ideas that will help the organisation to be future-ready and relevant. While there has been some great research done in this field and there have been dedicated people working to make this a global movement, the concept is as yet still not mainstream. However, the groundswell is building.

I believe that it won't be long before intrapreneurialism becomes much more overtly, actively and deliberately pursued and nurtured in smart, forward-thinking organisations. At the moment it is not. I was talking to an emerging public sector leader last week during an innovation workshop I did for a government agency. She told me that she had used the word in a document and people thought it was a spelling error! She was certainly not the only person this has happened to. People are not familiar with this word as yet. But they will be. It is just a matter of time.

In a fast-moving world, intrapreneurs are the source of energy and creativity that help an organisation to find and exploit change and innovation opportunities. They are the most valuable of all employees and will be increasingly recognised as such as we move further into the increasingly VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world of the

21st century. They are worth their weight in gold because they find and solve high-value problems, transform practice and bring in fresh thinking.

Intrapreneurs will be highly sought after, will enjoy career acceleration and will be appreciated for their contributions. They will be instrumental in shaping the future success of the organisations in which they work by challenging the status quo as well as helping the organisation to achieve its strategic goals while adapting to changed environmental conditions.

The interesting thing about these employees is that despite their influence they will not necessarily have *official* leadership positions. But they *act like leaders*. Their impact is not based on positional power but on their talent for identifying opportunities, their indomitability in the face of obstacles and their passion for creating value.

Never before has there been quite such a push for employees to take responsibility for innovating in their corner of the company. And intrapreneurial leaders are embracing this opportunity, seeing it as their vehicle to create change and shape the future.

The era of 'command and control', when people unquestioningly carried out the boss's bidding, is over (but some organisations are still clinging to this structure). Today what is valued in progressive organisations much more than compliance is creativity. Organisations want leaders who will question the status quo and entrenched business-as-usual thinking to contribute insightful, relevant, high-value, future-focused solutions for workplace problems. Never before in the world of work has there been such an

expectation and a push for everyone within the organisation to take ownership of their ideas and outcomes.

Any employee who acts like a leader and rises to the challenges of this new way of thinking, being and working will be increasingly in demand. They are the intrapreneurs who give birth to new ideas and help bring them to fruition. They create and shape the future of their organisations and will be highly valued for their contributions. People with a track record for innovation and creative problem-solving will be even more sought after. Over time, intrapreneurial behaviour will become more the norm rather than the exception. We are certainly not there yet.

It should also be acknowledged at this point that not everyone is cut out for this new way of working. Similarly, not all organisations are providing their people with the opportunity to be intrapreneurial and don't see this new way of operating as relevant for them. That's the reality. This book will have limited value for them.

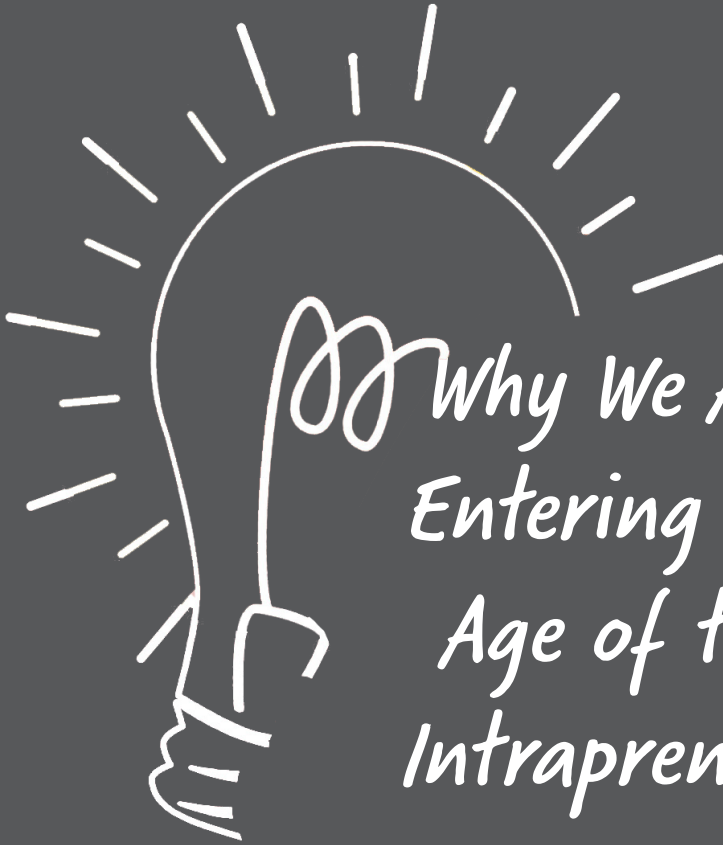
This book is for leaders at any level within their organisation, with or without the official title, whether public sector or private sector, who want to learn an effective process for unleashing their inner entrepreneur. It is for anyone who wants to learn how to rise above obstacles to create better outcomes for their workplace, inspiration for their colleagues and greater satisfaction and opportunities for themselves. It is for leaders who want to help shape the future of their organisation by igniting innovation, breaking bureaucracy and catalysing change.





PART 1

---



*Why We Are  
Entering the  
Age of the  
Intrapreneur*



# RISE OF THE INTRAPRENEUR

## Why organisations need them in the new world of work

Kate had a meeting with the manager for IT. She knew it was time to digitise the induction process in her organisation and had come to talk with him about how to do that as quickly as possible. The current process was unwieldy and time consuming, and the content was stale and outdated. The whole pack needed a total refresh.

As manager for capability and planning in a government agency, Kate was concerned that the existing induction process, which consisted of four massive PowerPoint packs which new employees had to work through individually, was tedious and boring. Worse still, there was no way of knowing when or if people even completed the procedure. Consequently there was no way of knowing if important messages about workplace health and safety and site-specific information had been received and understood by new-starters. There was also no easy way of sharing information

across the business when people changed teams or roles or commenced in new positions. That information was held in the corporate record-keeping system but new-starters wouldn't have known where to find it easily. After all, when you are new, you don't know what you don't know. So even if they did work their way through the entire induction pack – some of the information was already redundant.

Kate wanted the creation of a digital portal using software called SharePoint that was already being used within the organisation. The system she envisaged would provide ready access to content (which she intended to condense), be easily updated and allow visibility to show who had completed the induction modules. She wanted it to be engaging not just for new employees but also for the volunteers and contractors who worked within the organisation.

As part of the refresh she intended to not just condense the content of the existing program, but to also change the tone of the language within the program from compliance to instructional. Greeting people new to the organisation with a list of things they must *never* do or *always* do does not create a sense of anticipation and excitement for having joined the organisation. Neither does it contribute to fostering a culture of innovation.

As the transformation she was proposing was well overdue, she did not anticipate barriers from the IT department.

And she was right.

IT thought it was a great idea. Kate just needed to provide a detailed project plan, \$100,000 and wait two years.

The employee of the past may have accepted that. He or she would have gone away and spent days or weeks putting

together the project plan, then spent weeks or months (possibly years) waiting for budget approval and quietly acknowledged that that was what it took to get things done in a bureaucracy.

But Kate belongs to a new breed of corporate employee. Energised. Empowered. Iconoclastic. Innovative. Her mantra is not business-as-usual but business-*unusual*. If she hits a roadblock to an innovation that she believes in and knows is beneficial for the organisation – she finds an alternative path. Kate is the future of her organisation.

Kate is an intrapreneur.

She applied the process that I explain later in the book and created her own solution – with some help from a few colleagues.

The first thing she did was carve out some time in her diary, booked a meeting room with a large screen and enlisted the support of one of her tech savvy team members. Then she arranged a couple of meetings with one of the IT people, bought a book called *Idiot's Guide to SharePoint*, enrolled in an online training program and identified some useful YouTube videos.

Kate and her colleague had decided to do it themselves. They weren't experts in SharePoint, but they knew that a working knowledge of the platform was enough to create the outcome they were after.

They holed themselves up in the meeting room for a couple of days, opened a skeleton SharePoint site, watched the training videos and simply switched back and forth between the training, the YouTube videos, basic Google searches and the SharePoint site, building as they went.

The following week they spent some time adding and tidying things up. In less than two weeks they had a good working product which could be refined over time. And they did all this without dropping the ball on all their other responsibilities.

Apart from their time, the cost of the solution was \$45. The book was \$30 and the online program was \$15. Since introducing it to the organisation, the site is being used not just by inductees but also much more widely. A conservative estimate is that it saves at least 10 people each day 10 minutes of time spent searching for information. This equates to over 400 hours saved per year across the organisation, which conservatively delivers a productivity saving of over \$20,000. Multiply that by however many years they use this system for and the cost benefit to the organisation is significant.

Above and beyond the cost benefit and cost saving, Kate's initiative made a contribution to culture change, which is more difficult to measure but no less important.

The new CEO had launched the organisation on a transformation journey with the aspiration of becoming a leader in their field. Such a goal required some fundamental shifts within the mindsets of the employees as well as in the way the organisation conducted its business. Kate's approach to problem-solving, as well as the results she produced, was indicative of both these shifts.

In the months that followed, Kate's initiative grew to become the primary means for internal communication and information sharing within the organisation. She now has plans for pairing it with other platforms to transform their corporate performance planning and reporting framework. This is how Kate described the experience.

*‘As we went through the process of developing the SharePoint site and realising the massive scope for business improvement, my team and I realised that what was more important than skill development was having the right attitude, being tenacious in the pursuit of our goals and not letting barriers stop us from doing things. We really saw the value of taking an approach that was scalable, getting a minimum viable product up and working, and then to continue learning, building, changing.’*

Kate’s intrapreneurialism has transformed her organisation.

***And herein rests the premise of this book. In the new world of the innovation age, an organisation, large or small, public, private or any other sector, will succeed if it has a critical mass of employees who are intrapreneurs.***

Intrapreneurs are the driving force within any organisation seeking relevance, adaptability and competitiveness. *They are the most valuable of all employees.* Bestselling author Jim Collins describes them as ‘productively neurotic’. These are the people who are ‘self-motivated and self-disciplined, who wake up every day, compulsively driven to do the best they can because it is simply part of their DNA.’<sup>1</sup>

Sir Richard Branson has long recognised and advocated for the important role of the intrapreneur.

*‘Many millions of people proudly claim the title “entrepreneur.” On the other hand, a title that hasn’t gotten nearly the amount of attention it deserves is entrepreneur’s little brother, “intrapreneur”: “an employee who is given freedom and financial support to create new products, services and systems, who does not have to follow the company’s usual routines or protocols.” While*

*it's true that every company needs an entrepreneur to get it under way, healthy growth requires a smattering of intrapreneurs who drive new projects and explore new and unexpected directions for business development.<sup>2</sup>*

In a fast-moving world, it is the intrapreneurs who are the source of energy and creativity that enable an organisation to find and exploit change and innovation opportunities. They are the ones who engage in the proactive pursuit of opportunities, who challenge the status quo and seek to improve business systems from the inside out.

And right now there is a wonderful awakening happening in relation to this topic. People are hungry to know about intrapreneurialism. It is an idea whose time has come! We are entering the age of the intrapreneur.

## Why Invest in Intrapreneurs

Executives generally regard talent as vital to the organisation's survival. Every organisation today benefits from a steady stream of fresh thinking and original ideas to drive innovation. An **entrepreneurial mindset brings this much-needed creative thinking to organisations.**

Oft quoted wisdom from Einstein is 'We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.' Similarly, William Pollard warns, 'The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.' Or as Marshall Goldsmith might put it, 'What got us here, won't get us there.' All these great thinkers are telling us that if we want to be successful into the future, no matter how successful we have been in the past, we have to change and evolve our thinking and doing.



There is an imperative for organisations today to think about the problems that are facing them using different perspectives and also to solve those problems in different ways for better outcomes. *Intrapreneurs bring these new perspectives and new ways of problem-solving to their work.*

*Forbes* magazine<sup>3</sup> reported on research conducted by Brigham Young University's Entrepreneurship Center and the Ballard Center suggesting that instead of trying to engage disengaged workers, organisations should focus more on moving the already engaged 30% of workers to the higher tier of intrapreneurship. In the article 'Beyond Employee Engagement - Why One Intrapreneur Is Worth a Hundred "Engaged" Employees', it is argued that 'upgrading even one person from *engaged* to *intrapreneur* can create more value than migrating a larger number of *disengaged* people to the *engaged* group.' A single, empowered intrapreneur can catapult an organisation to even greater success. Richard Branson credits a young designer, Joe Ferry, who came up with Virgin's characteristic herringbone-configured private sleeper suites, for putting the company 'years ahead of the pack'.<sup>4</sup>

This is because intrapreneurs are aware of the strategic, bigger picture and *act like leaders* through cost-reducing and revenue-raising initiatives, and igniting innovation, even if they are not in *official* leadership positions. To quote management guru Gary Hamel, 'In most companies, the formal hierarchy is a matter of public record - it's easy to discover who's in charge of what. By contrast, natural leaders don't appear on any organisation chart.'

In their book *Stretch*<sup>5</sup>, Willyerd and Mistick reveal that up to 67% of millennials want to work as entrepreneurs at some point in their lives. *The Deloitte Millennial Survey*<sup>6</sup> of 2014

placed that figure even higher at 70%. It is not so surprising when you consider that they have grown up in a world where entrepreneurs are rock stars. Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, J.K. Rowling, Oprah Winfrey. If organisations can give talented, young people the opportunity to unleash some of that entrepreneurial vision, then they will attract capable, creative dedicated millennials who want to change the world. Millennials are known for turning down well-paid internships or jobs in favour of opportunities that allow them to have a greater purpose and impact.<sup>7</sup> Organisations that have a reputation for fostering their intrapreneurs will attract potential high performers. Millennials want to make an impact through their employers!<sup>8</sup> They want to see the organisations in which they work be contributors to positive change and want to help drive that.

It is the intrapreneurs who will ultimately help an organisation to achieve many of its key goals such as streamlining business processes to save time and effort, enhancing customer satisfaction and engagement, transitioning to digitisation more quickly, diversifying business and delivery models, new product development and generally staying ahead of the curve, all while helping to create positive change in the broader context of society. ***They are worth the investment!***

## Why Intrapreneurialism Trumps Innovation

During the course of my work in organisational innovation I have started to notice a subtle shift in the way the word *innovation* is being received by some people. It has become so overused that it is starting to lose its currency. One leader who was part of an innovation unit tasked with creating a culture of innovation within her organisation said to me

that she felt the word innovation was ‘almost entering eye-roll territory’. By that she meant that people were becoming jaded with the amount of rhetoric surrounding the concept.

Perhaps they had heard a lot of talk about the importance of innovation but not seen much in the way of results; perhaps they have seen innovation efforts suck up a lot of time, energy and resources without delivering much value back to the business or staff or customers; perhaps they are suspicious about the fact that they are being asked to step up and be ‘innovators’ but are not given much training and development or support – so don’t actually know what to do or how to do it; perhaps they’ve seen colleagues burnt as a result of innovation efforts that haven’t been appreciated or well received; perhaps they’ve seen innovation enthusiasts simply get burnt out or lose months of work in a restructure; perhaps they’ve seen overly ambitious individuals use ‘innovation’ as a fast-track to glory and taken the credit for collective efforts; perhaps they watched sardonically as senior leaders sent people to innovation training or conferences but did not participate themselves; perhaps they feel that in their organisation innovation has descended into a ‘tick the box’ compliance activity rather than an embodied experience that captures people’s imagination and motivation.

There could be a host of reasons why people may roll their eyes when hearing the word innovation. In my opinion organisations still have a long way to go in doing innovation well.

When I launched my *Creating Intrapreneurs* workshop last year there was an overwhelming response. I rather suspected that had the title of the workshop been *Creating Innovators* rather than *Creating Intrapreneurs* there would not have been quite the same groundswell of interest.

So I asked the workshop participants what it was that had so captured their attention about this topic. We had a very interesting discussion about it. Eventually one participant, who was a Queensland Government employee, summed it up beautifully when she said,

*‘Innovation is a word for the organisation, whereas intrapreneurialism is a word for the individual – it resonates more because it is engaging and empowering.’*

So there we have it. Intrapreneurialism carries in it the promise of empowerment on an individual level. It has a personal pay-off above and beyond the organisational one. The term *intrapreneur* evokes a greater sense of individual empowerment and enfranchisement than the term *innovator*. It implies a higher level of volition and reward. So for potential high performers, with high levels of creative energy and self-leadership, seeking autonomy and independent decision-making to get things done differently – this is an irresistible concept.

## Intrapreneurialism – the Ultimate Ethnographic Approach to Innovation

Using intrapreneurs to solve organisational challenges ensures that the people who REALLY UNDERSTAND the issues, the history, the context, and the inevitable web of interconnections across the organisation that encompasses people, resources and processes, are the ones solving the problems. It makes sense to use the people who are already working within the system because they are, after all, well positioned to bring their depth of insight and understanding to the situation. This is an ethnographic approach to corporate problem-solving.

Ethnography is a qualitative research approach that seeks to appreciate and describe, at a deep level, the culture and practices of a community or social system. It has traditionally been the domain of anthropologists – the social scientists who gather data by actually living with isolated tribes in order to understand cultural practices from the inside out. Margaret Mead was arguably the most famous anthropologist of the 20th century, known for her fieldwork in Samoa and New Guinea where she became intimately acquainted with the cultural practices of the communities she was studying.

In reality there are more anthropologists working in offices than in remote, inaccessible regions of the world.

In an organisational context, taking an ethnographic approach to problem-solving means placing the focus on understanding the world from the perspective of the customer, client or citizen, thus enabling the design of highly configured, customised and contextualised services and solutions.

For example, a frequent comment I hear when working in the regional areas of Queensland is that ‘head office doesn’t understand our unique circumstances when they make decisions for us or roll out an initiative designed from the well-equipped, easily accessible context of the city.’ A solution that works perfectly well in the capital may not translate to regional areas that have to negotiate vast distances, scarce resources, different workplace demographics, unreliable or spasmodic internet access and people with lifestyles and expectations that could be quite different from those in the city.

A more effective, sustainable approach would be to identify the regional intrapreneurs, skill them up, resource them and

give them the support they need to develop fit-for-purpose, fit-for-context solutions locally.

Often broad organisational innovation initiatives rely on intrapreneurial corporate anthropologists using their intimate knowledge of the system and taking an ethnographic approach to their work to bring them to fruition. While consultants serve an important purpose, some organisations overuse them, while under-utilising the expertise within their own ranks. With the best will in the world, it is difficult for even highly experienced consultants to develop a truly deep, intricate and intimate knowledge of a business in a reasonable time frame. The investment may be put to better use skilling up and resourcing intrapreneurs who then keep that knowledge, experience and expertise in-house to add to the corporate knowledge base.

Favouring consultant-driven change over intrapreneur-led change may even disempower and disengage employees who may get the impression that management does not have confidence in their capabilities.<sup>9</sup> Add to that the fact that opportunities for new learning and experimenting are lost for intrapreneurial employees and there is a good case to be made for importing expertise selectively and, where possible, deploying and augmenting the skills already in-house.

One large government department recently wanted to reform their recruitment practices. Rather than going to a consulting firm to facilitate that, a couple of keen, intrapreneurial HR managers put their hands up to do it as a project in-house. Over a period of several months they collaboratively worked out a new recruitment process that was significantly different from their traditional practices. They wanted to make sure that the new processes would meet the needs of the organisation not just for the present but also the future.

The problem was that recruitment had become a tick and flick process. A role was advertised when it became vacant without consideration for current and future needs and capability gaps in the team to meet delivery obligations. Advertising of the position tended to be generic in nature and failed to stand out and promote the benefits of working with the department. The assessment process generally followed the standard application-interview-referee check process, where often the interview formed the basis of the selection decision. Then once the person was selected, the onboarding process was inadequate, which adversely impacted newcomers, sometimes even resulting in new recruits leaving soon after being hired. There was also a tendency to recruit from existing employees because 'they knew the business' and 'will stay longer term'. The downside of this was that the department was potentially limiting the introduction of fresh ideas and new capabilities to the workforce.

The two HR managers reengineered and revitalised the process by ensuring that any role descriptions that came vacant were redesigned to reflect the future needs of the department which they identified through various surveys. They introduced assessment of behaviours and attitudes, tested for team fit, leadership skills and professed abilities. People who would be on the interview panel were involved in the process even *before* the position was advertised so they could help inform the advertising content. The panel members could even make recommendations if strong applicants were potentially suited to other roles and they facilitated contact with the appropriate people. Once the job was awarded, the interview panel worked with the role manager to assist with the on boarding process.

To help prepare relevant people for the new recruitment processes, the two managers created a short video series called *Creative Recruitment* which was visually engaging and rather humorous. They also introduced a range of other initiatives designed to promote the benefits of working for that particular government department – especially in regional and remote areas.

The point is that these two managers deeply understood both the issues and the context and designed a highly tailored solution for their organisation using their exceptional in situ knowledge.

Now I do want to make it clear that I am not advocating the abandonment of the use of consulting firms or consultants (I am one of them after all). Such experts serve an important role in facilitating progress in organisations, bringing in specialist expertise and accelerating outcomes (in some cases). The point here is that sometimes it pays to look within your ranks first for people who are hungry to develop their skills and are prepared to invest the time and effort in acquiring them – either for their own personal satisfaction or for the leverage it will bring their career progression. The role of the consultant then can become one of mentoring the intrapreneur through the implementation of their project rather than doing it for them, all the while building the corporate knowledge base.

It is the classic distinction – give someone a fish and you feed them for a day, but teach them HOW to fish and you feed them for a lifetime.

Admittedly this may take a little longer but it is worth the pay-off. Not all organisational needs will be met in this way.



It will be up to the leaders in the organisation to decide which path will be the most suitable.

## The Perfect Storm

The rise of intrapreneurialism is inevitable. It is being fuelled by the convergence of three global trends, creating a 'perfect storm' of conditions within workplaces.

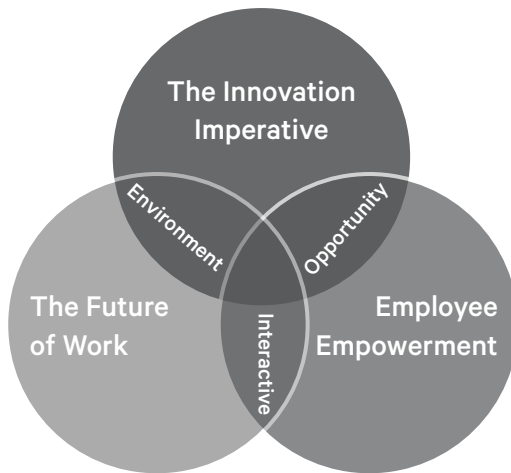


Figure 1: The perfect storm for intrapreneurialism

### 1. The Innovation Imperative

Progressive organisations today have generally recognised the pressing need to innovate in order to successfully negotiate the challenges of a VUCA<sup>10</sup> world. The somewhat melodramatic catchcry of *innovate or die* has now become commonly accepted in business vernacular. The corporate world is replete with examples of previously successful companies that did not see the tsunami of change heading their way, failed to innovate and adapt, and subsequently slid into irrelevance. Kodak, Blockbuster, Motorola, Borders,

BlackBerry are just a few of the more well-known ones. But there are many! In fact, only 71 companies remain today from the original 1955 Fortune 500 list. The average lifespan of an organisation has gone from 55 years to about 15. Only those that are constantly innovating will survive.

This is why an increasing number of large corporations are asking their employees to be intrapreneurial and this philosophy is reflected in their vision statements. For example, IBM asks everyone to behave ‘in an intrapreneurial, non-bureaucratic and productive manner’; UBS – Swiss Bank Corporation declares, ‘We think, decide and behave in an intrapreneurial way’; DaimlerChrysler says, ‘Outstanding and innovative products and services will be the focus and essential components of value-driven management. This requires a management philosophy which is based on intrapreneurial thought and behaviour’; Siemens states, ‘We ask our employees to be “entrepreneurs” in their own affairs, to recognise the precise strengths and competitive advantages of their business to believe in themselves and in success.’ These vision statements from well-known global companies reflect the new call to intrapreneurialism within corporate practice.

Innovation today has become mainstream! Within successful organisations, it is now seen as everyone’s responsibility – not just the people with innovation in their title or the research and development team.

### ***Staying Relevant Requires a Critical Mass of Intrapreneurs***

Maintaining a constant stream of innovation requires a critical mass of intrapreneurial employees who are constantly looking for ways to create new as well as improved processes,

products, services, customer attraction strategies and innovative delivery models. Without this fuel in the tank of a business, it will eventually start to get run-down and falter even if it has had a great run in the past.

A couple of years ago I did some work with a medium sized financial services firm. They had been very successful for many years, driven by the entrepreneurialism and energy of the founder. But one day he lifted his head and realised that he could not keep up that pace indefinitely and that he was the only one bringing in new business. After a bout of ill health he realised that despite all that hard work, the business was in jeopardy if they couldn't create a critical mass of intrapreneurs within the business. It is a common situation within the SME (small to medium enterprise) sector.

The innovation imperative is just as relevant for the government sector as it is for the private sector. While the driver may not necessarily be about creating profit, it is certainly about creating public value. Providing better services in better ways to create a better society for citizens is at the core of good government. Sticking with business-as-usual (BAU) thinking and doing in a rapidly changing world will not provide such advantages. (In fact BAU is a dangerous and outdated strategy that will lead to unintentionally creating risks and vulnerabilities rather than preventing them.)

A progressive public sector has people who can think and act like intrapreneurs to turbocharge the innovation imperative in government and help bring key goals to fruition. There are many government employees who are more than capable of developing and demonstrating intrapreneurial thinking and behaviour given some encouragement, training and opportunity. They create public value by bringing an

entrepreneurial mindset to public service. Consequently they help government achieve many of its key goals such as cutting red tape, streamlining bureaucratic processes, enhancing procurement, transitioning to digitisation and diversifying delivery modes, to name a few. There are many first-hand case studies throughout this book that demonstrate this.

## 2. Employee Empowerment

Empowerment is about giving people discretion, latitude and autonomy over their work. With that also comes a higher degree of responsibility and accountability. It is essentially a transfer of power from the employer to the employee.<sup>11</sup> Increasingly there is now greater opportunity and permission for people within organisations to take ownership of innovative ideas and projects. I see this on a daily basis in my work with leaders and their teams. Smart, successful, progressive leaders are obsessed with developing and empowering their people. They are constantly looking for opportunities to nurture and grow potential and find contexts in which their team members can apply their evolving skills and capacities.

### *Unleashing Initiative*

Great leaders WANT their people to demonstrate initiative and to problem-solve independently and are prepared to support them on that journey to independence. They give them latitude to experiment in safe-to-fail environments, to create minimum viable solutions (MVPs) which can be refined and scaled up over time and to generally leverage their talents and expertise to create value through innovation within the team and organisation.

This means that employees today have an unprecedented level of autonomy, authority and responsibility ... *if they accept it!* Those that *do*, invariably find they have higher levels of motivation, confidence, self-reliance, self-determination and self-management which leads to higher levels of job satisfaction, productivity, effectiveness and happiness.<sup>12</sup> Empowered employees have a higher sense of purpose. *The 2017 Deloitte Millennial Survey* showed that millennials who feel their jobs have meaning, or that they are able to make an impact through their employers, exhibit greater levels of loyalty.<sup>13</sup> Many benefits flow from employee empowerment.

### ***Leaders Are Becoming ‘Talent Curators’***

As the nature of ‘employeeism’ evolves in the new era of empowerment, so will the nature of leadership. Leaders in the future will be more like *talent curators* rather than people managers. They will be much better at developing their team members, connecting them to their purpose and providing them with the opportunities to be creative and intrapreneurial. In a *work anywhere, anytime, on any device* world people want autonomy, the opportunity to develop their skills and a chance to utilise their creative talents in work that has meaning and significance for them. The future of leadership will be more about finding, nurturing, harnessing, leveraging, and featuring the talent of their people – in other words, *talent curation*.

A *curator* traditionally is someone who oversees collections – usually valuable ones such as works of art or cultural and historical artefacts. They make strategic decisions about which pieces to include in exhibitions and how they will be displayed. They may direct the acquisition, preservation and storage of the artworks as well as authenticating them.

Good leaders do something similar with the valuable talent within their teams and organisations. They steward them in a way that will increase their value over time. They facilitate the formation of project teams and collaborations in a way that best maximises and showcases the qualities and value of different team members.

### 3. The Future of Work

We've all heard the statistics about job losses due to automation over the next decade. It is predicted that by 2030 between 30% and 40% of current jobs will be lost to technology in various forms. Even white collar jobs that were once considered 'unautomatable', such as lawyering, stockbroking and doctoring, are now able to be done by robots. Machine learning systems and artificial intelligence outperform human radiologists and pathologists at interpreting medical images and data.

It is now vital for people to develop *themselves* in a way that will future-proof their careers. It is up to each of us to take responsibility for our own development. Writer George Crane famously said, 'There is no future in any *job*. The future lies in the [*person*] who holds the job.' Workers who take a passive approach to their professional development and rely entirely on their workplace to provide for their ongoing learning could find themselves losing ground to more proactive, lifelong learners who actively and independently seek out opportunities to extend themselves – both within their workplaces and beyond.

#### *Freelancing*

As we enter the gig economy, characterised by more short-term contracts and freelance work rather than permanent

jobs, people have the chance to shape their careers in non-traditional ways. Millennials in particular are looking for experiences and growth rather than long-term stability. They are driving the trend towards freelancing because they want flexible autonomous work. In this environment someone with a reputation and a track record for being intrapreneurial is more likely to be in demand – in ANY industry. Even when seeking out contract labour, employers are more likely to opt for workers who have a demonstrated ability to rise above obstacles, overcome barriers, persist in learning new skills and capitalise on opportunities. So in the gig economy, people who can overlay their expertise with an entrepreneurial approach and outlook will most likely be the ones who will do the best.

Intrapreneurs keep the bigger picture in mind for their skill development – constantly growing their abilities and using their work environments as problem-solving laboratories to benefit their workplaces as well as themselves.

### *Fluid Careers*

I was recently in conversation with a progressive senior public leader who was placing a number of her staff in an innovation mentoring program to give them intrapreneurial experience. She said, ‘I want to upskill my workers so much that they feel confident about applying for other positions – either in the public or private sector. I am actively encouraging them to look for other employment opportunities, either in other parts of the organisation or beyond, that will develop and extend them. My hope is that they will experience other environments and then come back to us with their new knowledge, expertise and perspectives.’

Here is a leader who is actively nurturing the intrapreneurial abilities of her people above and beyond their technical skills, who sees the value of having an empowered staff who come to work not because they HAVE to but because they WANT to. She is encouraging them to see their career trajectories as fluid experiences rather than the traditional linear pathway. She is what Sydney Finkelstein would call a *superboss*.

In his 2016 bestseller *Superbosses: How exceptional leaders master the flow of talent*<sup>14</sup>, Finkelstein gives the example of Roger Corman, the trailblazing independent film producer who would encourage former employees to ‘go shine elsewhere’, confident that their success would shine on him too. Superbosses, ironically and counterintuitively, encourage star talent to leave (when the time is right), at which point they become part of the superboss’s strategic network in the industry.

### ***What the Near Future Holds***

The last 18 months of global political and social upheavals and turbulence have tempered the ambitions of some millennials and curbed their confidence. According to the *2017 Deloitte Millennial Survey*<sup>15</sup>, young professionals in developed or mature-market countries such as Australia now seem less likely to leave the security of their jobs due to reduced optimism about their prospects. This is a chastening development – especially given John F. Kennedy’s observation that, ‘The future promise of any nation can be directly measured by the present prospects of its youth.’ If graduates and young professionals feel that they have less cause to be optimistic about their futures, then they may be more inclined to stay in jobs longer. So the near future may see a slightly reduced level of ‘fluidity’. This development



gives organisations the increased opportunity to develop and leverage their internal talent.

### What This Means

The perfect storm of conditions is providing employees, those who have and want to develop their entrepreneurial qualities, with unprecedented opportunities. They are on the cusp of a new world of work which is providing them with the enabling *environment*, the *opportunity* and the *incentive* to develop these capacities within their existing organisational roles. Organisational barriers to intrapreneurialism are crumbling and are being replaced with springboards to launch those with creativity, drive and vision on their journey to becoming intrapreneurs.

### Wrap-up

I have used, several times, in this chapter the qualifier of 'progressive' in describing organisations that are welcoming the developments in the new world of work. I feel the need to make this distinction, because while the broad trends are clear, some organisations are simply not embracing intrapreneurialism. Some by choice who don't do it because change is too hard; some by default because they are not looking up and out and haven't even recognised it as a trend; some because they are in internal chaos as the leaders are working at cross-purposes with each other and so the enabling environment isn't there; some because the culture is so toxic it has killed off any goodwill, inspiration and motivation; some because their fear of failure has paralysed them; some because they are not in enough pain as yet because the momentum of their past success is still carrying them through and they see no need to change a formula

that's worked so well for so long; and some because they simply don't know how.

Whatever the reason, the outcomes are the same - lost opportunities and a gross waste of internal potential that could be harnessed in the service of the organisation, its employees and customers - but isn't.

Sooner or later they will be swept up in the perfect storm.



## Idea Extensions

1. Why do you want to be an intrapreneur?

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2. To what extent do you feel empowered in your workplace to implement positive change?

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3. Have you identified the next step in your career and how it represents an evolution from your current state?

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4. In a world heading into increased automation, what are the things you do, or would like to do, that would ensure you are always in demand?

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5. What is the contribution you want to make to the world? What do you want to be known for?

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# WHY BE AN INTRAPRENEUR

## What's in it for you?

In May 2015, entrepreneur Healey Cypher started a company called Oak Labs Inc. in New York. It is a start-up aimed at helping high end fashion retailers to provide a more customised, enhanced, 'digital age' experience for customers through interactive technology. Currently being trialled at Ralph Lauren's Fifth Avenue store, Oak Labs has created a smart mirror for fitting rooms which acts like a personalised stylist. The mirror is also a touch screen which can change the lighting in the fitting room, send a request to an assistant to bring a different size or colour of the garment being sampled and even make recommendations for accessories. It also provides data to the retailer such as the number of times a particular garment is tried on but not bought and information about flows through fitting rooms - both volume and duration.

At a time when online garment purchasing is increasing, physical stores are looking for ways to provide unique

customer experiences to keep people coming in. This kind of technology could transform retail garment purchasing, which hasn't changed in 100 years.

The relevant point here is that *before* Healey Cypher was an *entrepreneur*, he was an *intrapreneur*. As head of eBay's Retail Innovation Lab, his vision and task was to help retailers transform the physical shopping experience. In this role he learned how to develop transformative technology for bricks-and-mortar stores. When that part of the business was restructured and absorbed into another enterprise, Cypher went on to co-found Oak Labs. But he identified his passion, built his skill set and gained his insights in this particular area while working *inside* a large organisation. Then when circumstances changed, he moved into the next incarnation of his career.

## Learn to First Be an *Intrapreneur* Before Becoming an Entrepreneur

The message here is that if you aspire to be an entrepreneur at some stage in your career but currently find yourself working in a job, then use your existing context to grow your skills and capacities. Become an intrapreneur!

By so doing you will learn valuable skills and develop the essential qualities for success when the time comes for you to strike out on your own.

Try this simple five step process for now. (Later we will learn a more detailed process.)

1. Identify an innovation opportunity. They are all around you! Start really small with something that is within your control to change. Is there something in your work

environment that is 'broken'? I don't mean literally (although why not). A process or procedure or situation that takes too much time? Frustrates people? Delivers substandard results? Wastes resources? Costs too much? Irritates clients and customers? Belongs in the 19th century not in the 21st century?

2. Come up with a plan to fix it. Map it out. Draw it. Brainstorm it. 'Post-it note' it. List the steps. What resources do you need other than your time? How long will it take? What technology is there available now that possibly wasn't available a few years ago? Is there an app that could help?
3. Get buy-in from others so they will support you. Advocate for your idea with your leaders, team members, colleagues, customers. Clearly articulate the benefits of your idea. What will the future look like if you DON'T implement your idea? How will the problem get worse if not attended to now? Then contrast that with the much brighter vision of the future once you have implemented your great idea. What are the risks if the whole thing fails? How can you mitigate the risks?
4. Do it. If possible, quantify the benefits. How much time does it save? Add it up over a week, a month, a year. Put a dollar value on it. Be amazed at what that can add up to.
5. Enjoy the kudos (humbly). Start building your reputation and confidence as an intrapreneur.

This simple process experientially develops a host of useful entrepreneurial skills. Problem identification, project planning, advocacy, influence, mitigating risk, business acumen.

Intrapreneurialism comes in all shapes and sizes. Start small to build *confidence*.

I had a budding young intrapreneur in one of my workshops recently. (Not that he recognised himself as such.) He worked within the record-keeping section of his organisation – which happened to be one that was steeped in bureaucracy. During the break, as we chatted he mentioned a very simple change he had devised for the way his files were tabulated. (Yes, they were still using hard copy files.) His new method saved a few minutes of processing time on each file. I asked him how many files on average he might process in a day. About 12. So his new method saved him about an hour a day. I asked if he had shared it with his fellow team members. How many were there? 10. No – but maybe he should in case they also found it useful. But it was such a small thing it was hardly worth mentioning. I disagreed. I thought it was very noteworthy and suggested that his team members would think so too. Why? Because while we chatted I had done the maths and his new tabulation method could save the team nearly \$25,000 in lost productivity over a year. He suddenly saw his very simple initiative with a new set of eyes.

The example above suggests that there are many intrapreneurs-in-waiting within organisations. These are people with capacity to identify and implement innovation opportunities. They don't just accept the status quo and repeat procedures because that is 'how it has always been done.' They make changes without being asked.

But they don't always recognise their own intrapreneurial potential.

So if, as you read, you are thinking to yourself, 'I do that sort of thing all the time without beating a drum about it. I solve



problems without being asked – I can't help myself. I like doing it. It gives me satisfaction. I don't expect to wait to be told to make improvements and add value or seek permission to make something better. Surely it is part of my job?' then congratulations, keep reading, you are an intrapreneur-in-waiting. And this book might give you some ideas about how to unleash yourself on the world.

If you are a senior leader and you know you have intrapreneurs-in-waiting within your ranks, then tap them on the shoulder and have a conversation about what opportunities you can create for them or co-create with them. Are there particular projects they'd like to work on to develop their skills? Are there different parts of the business they would like to experience in order to expand their skill set? Is there someone they would like to have mentor them? These are the employees who, with the right encouragement and opportunity, will transform the organisation and ensure it is future-ready and future-focused.

Earlier this year I had the privilege of being the chair of a judging panel awarding a prestigious industry recognition to leaders in different fields. One particular candidate, who was the founder of a digital marketing firm that had grown quickly to span three countries, struck me as the embodiment of an intrapreneurial leader. For starters he was a role model of intrapreneurialism who successfully created a culture of innovation in his organisation. But what I found so impressive was the way he systematically identified and developed intrapreneurial talent among his staff through regular one-on-ones to proactively identify opportunities for them to pursue. In an industry characterised by high staff turnover – in this organisation there was virtually none.

## Use the Resources of the Organisation to Change the World for the Better

In 2003 Nick Hughes was a senior Vodafone employee working in Kenya for Safaricom, their local arm. He was head of social enterprise and had the idea to use mobile phones to facilitate financial services in the form of microfinance loan repayments. In the process he and his team inadvertently identified one of Kenya's major financial challenges – how to transfer relatively small amounts of money person-to-person long distances via mobile phone. In Kenya, as in other parts of Africa, it is not uncommon for the breadwinner to travel to urban areas to find work. Getting money back home to their family was difficult. In rural areas there are few banks by which transfers could be made and even if this method could be used, it was expensive. People resorted to measures such as sending money on trust via bus drivers or travellers.

Hughes with the support of his CEO, Michael Joseph, and a grant from the Department of International Development in the UK, re-engineered the microfinance loan repayments system to focus on developing a straightforward, simple to use service for the 'unbanked' that could be accessed from a basic phone. The aim was to transfer money via SMS to anyone else, almost instantaneously, safely and securely and at virtually no cost. Hughes describes that transition.

*'We then pivoted the business model, simplified the technology, worked with the regulators to define the rules of operation and launched M-PESA.'*<sup>1</sup>

That was in 2007. By 2013, just five years after launching, a staggering 43% of Kenya's GDP was flowing through M-PESA. (Pesa means money in Swahili – so M-PESA stands for mobile money.) The system has created an alternative

financial infrastructure to traditional banks in the form of a geographically dispersed network of agents. This was a game-changing service in a country with limited financial infrastructure. It was a 'leapfrog innovation' that was made possible because they were working with a blank slate without the legacy systems that can slow down the pace of innovation in developed countries. It has reduced poverty in Kenya, especially in female-headed households.

Today nearly 20 million people use M-PESA. Each day over 70 million dollars is moved across the platform in small transactions. It was an intrapreneurial initiative that harnessed technology to change the way people did business. In the process it transformed the lives of millions of Africans and instigated massive social change.

The initiative has, since then, put Kenya on the world stage as an innovation hub. It has been taken up in other parts of Africa (as well as other countries) and is contributing to the accelerated pace of development, making Kenya one of the fastest growing regions in the world.

Since launching M-PESA, Hughes went on to co-found M-KOPA in 2011, a solar energy company that has helped over 300,000 homes in East Africa connect to solar power. M-KOPA provides clean, affordable, sustainable energy to people living off-grid. The introduction of M-KOPA was made possible because of the existence of M-PESA.

In the previous section it was suggested that you might learn intrapreneurial skills as a precursor to creating your own enterprise. But this section suggests that you can leverage the existing resources, network and infrastructure of the organisation in which you work to drive change on a large scale to benefit everyone – the organisation, individuals and

society as well. Social intrapreneurialism on this scale is difficult without the corporate infrastructure through which it can be operationalised and deployed.

## Being an Intrapreneur Makes You an Irresistible Employee

What if you have no intention of leaving your job to start an enterprise? Should you still become an intrapreneur? If you want to future-proof your career and ensure that you are always in demand as a valued employee – then yes.

On 5 January 2018 an article appeared in the BBC News business section with the headline ‘China offers 10-year visas to “high end talent”’.<sup>2</sup> It went on to elucidate that ‘Technology leaders, entrepreneurs and scientists from in-demand sectors are among those eligible to apply.’ Visa applications will be free of charge and processed quickly.

China is on an accelerated trajectory of development and is looking for at least 50,000 foreigners to help. People specifically with ‘innovative and entrepreneurial talents’ are invited to apply. Mass entrepreneurship and innovation have been key drivers in China’s modern economy. It is only a matter of time till intrapreneurs will also be recognised as core drivers of a nation’s economy because they help make companies more profitable and government agencies more effective.

Rathna and Vijaya (2009) argue that intrapreneurs should be recognised as a significant source of economic development. Their article in the *South Asian Journal of Management*<sup>3</sup> champions the status of intrapreneurs.

*‘While entrepreneurs have traditionally contributed to the growth of the economy, this new breed called intrapreneurs is an equally significant force in economic development.’*

Perhaps the next time China puts out a global call for ‘high end talent’ they will include intrapreneurs alongside entrepreneurs.

### ***Intrapreneurs Become the ‘Linchpins’ of Their Organisations***

Seth Godin in his book *Linchpin*<sup>4</sup> identifies a particular breed of employee whom he likens to artists because they pour so much emotional labour into their work. These are people who don’t need detailed instructions from managers but rather find their own way of solving problems and getting great outcomes for their workplace (often with flair and passion). They innovate, they lead (regardless of their title), they serve as the conduits who connect people, they take action and make things happen and they bring their best selves to work each day. They have found a way of rising above the fear that holds most people back. Godin says that it is precisely these abilities that make linchpins not just slightly more valuable but a hundred times more valuable than the average worker. Such employees will always find work because only a foolish company wouldn’t want them. They are indispensable.

Bottom line – being an intrapreneur strengthens your job security and earnings potential.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Find the Joy in Your Work***

It is of course much easier to be the kind of employee described above if you love your work and derive joy from it. It is easier to invest discretionary energy into tasks that

bring us satisfaction and fulfilment, where our natural aptitudes and interests are engaged. So the simple solution is to identify the elements in your job that light you up.

What are you doing when you feel you are making the greatest contribution? What aspects of your work do you really look forward to? What projects have brought out the best in you? What activities or tasks do you often find you can lose yourself in because the time flies so fast when you are doing them? When do you feel energised rather than drained? What takes you into ‘the zone’?

Do you love interacting with and helping customers and clients? Writing code? Mentoring or developing others? Carefully piecing together complex solutions from many different data sources? Writing well-structured reports or documents that bring order to chaotic information? Designing something? Fixing something? Making something? Teaching something? Researching something? Giving presentations? Championing a cause? Networking? Connecting others?

Make a note of these in the *Idea Extensions* page at the end of the chapter.

When you are doing what you love and what matters to you, Sir Ken Robinson would say ‘you are in your element’. In his book *The Element: How finding your passion changes everything*, he explores the nexus between natural aptitude and personal passion. When people arrive at their element, they feel most themselves and most inspired and achieve at their highest levels. What a joy therefore to live in one’s element.

When are you in your element within your role? Identify it because that will be where your intrapreneurial talents are most likely to shine, enabling you to demonstrate your leadership and make ever increasing levels of contribution

to your area, organisation and the world. With that comes a greater sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment, as well as the ability to use your creativity and build your professional credibility.

### ***Constantly Develop Yourself***

If you are fortunate enough to work in an organisation that places a high premium on learning and development, then grab every opportunity with both hands. To be intrapreneurial requires you to be a lifelong learner, constantly learning and evolving your skill set and experience. Identify skills that are BOTH valuable in your professional practice AND of interest to you personally.

Look around your organisation to identify other roles that appeal to you. If possible, arrange a temporary placement or secondment there. How are you preparing yourself for your next incarnation? How can you bring depth AND breadth to your existing skill set?

In his book *The Art of Non-Conformity: Set your own rules, live the life you want and change the world*<sup>6</sup>, Chris Guillebeau says that true job security comes from developing your competence.

*‘Most people believe that having job security means working for someone else. Indeed, the general advice on how to achieve job security and live a good, comfortable life is, “Stick to a reliable paycheck!” But, in fact, deriving that sense of security from your own competence – such as your skills and abilities – is less risky than entrusting someone else to look after your career. No one cares more about your well-being than you do.’*

So if you work in an organisation that is too short-sighted to see the value in developing its people, then don't let that

stop you. Do it anyway – on your own coin and your own time. Because ultimately it's YOUR career. The skills that you develop in yourself and the experiences you create for yourself will go with you and open doors.

## Intrapreneurialism Is the New Generic Skill

In my previous life as an academic, one of the projects I worked on while at Griffith University was the *Griffith Graduate Project*. The component that I was involved with looked at how to help undergraduate students acquire the suite of skills commonly referred to as *generic skills*. Generic skills are capacities and abilities that are not domain specific. In other words, they are highly portable and can be transferred and applied across different work settings and contexts.

Although there is no one definitive list, typically they include skills such as communication (which always seems to be at the top of the list), both written and oral; problem-solving and analytical thinking; using and managing a wide range of technology; personal skills (such as self-management and self-reliance, reflectiveness, flexibility); and creative thinking. The argument was, and still is, that these skills increase professional effectiveness and therefore employability. Hence they are also sometimes referred to as *employability skills* or *soft skills*. Technical skills, sometimes referred to as *hard skills*, are important of course and form the foundation for the development of expertise, but this complementary suite of generic skills is also essential in order to deploy those technical, domain-specific skills effectively, participate and contribute successfully in the workplace, and to work well with others in different contexts and in different ways.



As we near the end of the second decade of the 21st century it is time to revise what constitutes that skill set. Of course the traditional generic skills are still important. To be effective in our workplaces we still need to communicate well and be technologically literate and work well with others. But today we ALSO need to be confident about launching new ventures that will solve problems in new ways, finding opportunities to innovate and add value without being asked, challenging the status quo to shift paradigms that are limiting the profitability or positive impact that the organisation could potentially have, and generally helping to shape the future of the organisation. In short – *intrapreneurialism*.

Today most employers feel the pressure to innovate. They are aware that the future belongs to those businesses and organisations that can successfully adapt, stay relevant and be future-ready. Logically, they want employees who are going to be able to help them with that mission and contribute to the organisation's success. Consequently I think it might be time to add intrapreneurialism to the list of generic skills.

In her opening address to the World Economic Forum in Amman, Jordan, in 2011, Queen Rania of Jordan made the statement, 'The skills of an entrepreneur are the skills of a 21st century worker.' In other words, entrepreneurial skills are not reserved for an exclusive few; they should be part of everyone's skill set – whether they start their own businesses or whether they work inside a large organisation, or any organisation for that matter. They are skills which, if nurtured and embraced, make career and workplace success more likely.

## Wrap-up

The title of this chapter poses the question *Why Be an Intrapreneur?* We've looked at a few reasons.

Firstly, it is good training for anyone who has aspirations to one day start their own enterprise. Secondly, it gives you the opportunity to change the world and potentially make life better for people. Thirdly, it ensures you will be in demand because your passion for your work shines through. Pursuing this approach to work brings joy and fulfilment to our lives and enables us to make higher levels of contribution which ultimately create satisfaction and purpose for us. And finally, because intrapreneurialism is a highly transferrable skill that you will be able to take with you into any context and so opens up a broader range of work opportunities. The most sought after professionals of the 21st century will be intrapreneurs.

I hope you agree these are worthy reasons.



## Idea Extensions

1. What is your personal motivation for being an intrapreneur?

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2. What skills have you already developed that have stood you in good stead and made you a more effective intrapreneur?

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3. Are there gaps in your skill set that need to be addressed so as not to hold you back? If so create a plan to address those gaps.

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4. What are the things about your job that you love? What are the elements that motivate you and light you up?

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5. How can you find or create more opportunity to do more of the things you love?

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# QUALITIES OF AN INTRAPRENEUR

What sets them apart from  
other employees?

***‘The world needs dreamers and the world needs doers.  
But above all, the world needs dreamers who do.’***

Author Sarah Ban Breathnach’s quote above aptly sums up the essence of an intrapreneur. They are people who can operate at both ends of the spectrum – dreaming and doing. That means that they can conceive and birth creative ideas as well as action and implement them to bring them to fruition.

To consider the qualities of intrapreneurs, let’s start from a more familiar point – the qualities of entrepreneurs. When we think of the popularised image of an entrepreneur, what might come to mind is an extremely wealthy individual with a global empire living an ostentatious lifestyle. Consequently people may assume that entrepreneurs are driven by greed, power and ego. And yes, some are. However, many entrepreneurs have become wealthy as a consequence of

solving a problem that satisfied people's needs. Financial success was a *by-product* and not the initial motivator and intention. Very often they were simply following their passion or implementing a cool new creative idea.

Airbnb started because Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia couldn't afford the rent on their apartment in San Francisco and had the idea of renting out an air mattress in their living room. When the Industrial Design Conference was held in San Francisco in 2008 and hotel space was at a premium, they helped attendees by providing alternative accommodation. The idea took off from there. Michael Dell, founder of Dell computers, was hooked on computers by the time he was a teenager in the 1980s. While doing pre-med at college he spent all his spare time buying old computers, upgrading them and selling them from his dorm room, eventually coming up with the idea of selling personal computers directly to customers. J.K. Rowling just loved writing and persisted with it through impoverishment, hardships and rejection to become one of the world's most successful authors.

The personal qualities that help *entrepreneurs* to succeed are the same qualities that help *intrapreneurs* to succeed – with a few nuances. Intrapreneurs often have to deal with bureaucracy which can stifle their idea in so many ways, whereas start-up entrepreneurs have carte blanche and are accountable primarily just to themselves in the beginning. They can spend all their time on their passion if they want to, they can experiment to their heart's content and not have to ask for permission or explain themselves if things don't work out. On the other hand start-up entrepreneurs may not have resources readily available while intrapreneurs may be able to use the organisation's resources for ventures that are supported.

If an idea is wildly successful, there is no guarantee that an intrapreneur will necessarily benefit in the same way an entrepreneur might. There will certainly be kudos – but not necessarily financial rewards. Similarly, if the idea tanks, the intrapreneur won't personally go bankrupt. So the risks and rewards are inherently different. But these are external considerations. The internal qualities that drive entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs are essentially the same.

The list of twelve qualities below that is unpacked in this chapter is representative and not definitive. You might be thinking, 'But what about open-mindedness and competitiveness and self-discipline and self-belief and confidence and decisiveness and networking and communication and versatility and flexibility and independence and drive and fearlessness and focus and ...' I hear you. Many of those qualities are related to some of those in the list below and are therefore covered incidentally. Others that come to mind as you read can be recorded on the *Idea Extensions* page at the end of the chapter.

Intrapreneurs are:

1. Growth oriented
2. Creative
3. Opportunity finders
4. Influential
5. Iconoclasts
6. Collaborators
7. Determined
8. Risk takers
9. Resourceful problem solvers
10. Trend spotters
11. Change agile
12. Action takers

Let's deal with each in turn.

## 1. Intrapreneurs Are Growth Oriented

In her bestselling book *Mindset*<sup>1</sup>, Stanford University professor Carol Dweck suggests that people fall loosely into two categories – and these two categories are very starkly contrasted when it comes to learning, failure and self-efficacy. The two mindsets are a *fixed* mindset and a *growth* mindset. Her premise is that intelligence and talent are not set in concrete. Rather, we can become smarter and more talented depending on how we view the learning experience. It is a spin on Abraham Maslow's premise that 'in any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety.'

Fixed mindset people believe that success is the result of natural, raw talent. If you have to work too hard at something, then it means you are not naturally gifted in that area. So someone who is trying to protect their identity of being considered smart and talented prefers to undertake activities that they know they will succeed at. To do otherwise risks failure – which might expose deficiencies. They believe that if you are not born with a natural talent in an area you could never master it. They are easy to spot in a workplace. You will frequently hear them saying things like, 'We tried that before and it didn't work. Don't waste your energy.' 'We don't have time to try anything new. We're too busy.' 'This is how we've always done things around here.'

Growth mindset people believe that their potential is unknown and that with effort and passion they will constantly improve. They view qualities such as intelligence and talent rather like muscles that can be strengthened with exercise. They see learning as a lifelong process.

The different thinking paradigms are distilled in the following table.



<b>Fixed Mindset</b>	<b>Growth Mindset</b>
Failure means I am at the limit of my abilities.	Failure is an opportunity to grow.
Challenges are threatening.	Challenges help me improve.
My abilities are unchanging.	My effort and attitude determine my abilities.
Feedback feels like personal criticism.	Feedback is constructive.
I stick to what I know.	I like to try new things.
I can either do something or I can't.	I can learn to do anything I want to if I really put my mind to it.
The success of others diminishes me by comparison.	I am inspired by the success of others.

*Intrapreneurs have a growth mindset!*

I recently had a participant from one of my intrapreneurialism workshops call me up the following day to tell me she had had a huge AH-HA moment when we dealt with this topic. She said that she had been feeling frustrated in her career development for quite a while and couldn't figure out why she wasn't moving forward. As we discussed the distinction between the two mindsets and unpacked the characteristics of each she realised that what was holding her back was that she had a fixed mindset. What an epiphany! That's a huge breakthrough! Now she can address that and consciously and deliberately learn to adopt a growth mindset.

### ***Intrapreneurialism Is a Decision Not a Talent***

Let us put to rest any notion that intrapreneurialism is a quality one is either born with or not. Rather, let us accept that intrapreneurialism is a decision. Intrapreneurs are not born – they are created! Success is proportional to the effort

we put in. Being intrapreneurial is a decision. To paraphrase Elon Musk, 'We can be innovative if we choose to be.' And the research bears it out.

A study at Harvard University, as reported in the book *The Innovator's DNA: Mastering the five skills of disruptive innovators*,<sup>2</sup> Jeff Dyer, Hal Gregersen and Clayton Christensen, found that people who were identified as being innovative spent 50% more time ***consciously and deliberately trying*** to think differently. According to this research, about two-thirds of our innovation and creativity skills come through learning and not genetics.

So this is all good news. Anyone can learn to be intrapreneurial if they are prepared to work at it.

Given that intrapreneurs need to be prepared to try new things, step out of their comfort zone and experiment with new ideas, which brings with it the possibility of failure, fixed mindset people are simply not attracted to the prospect - unless they are ready to change and evolve. And if they are, then the rewards are worth it.

### ***Practising Being Intrapreneurial Changes Our Brain***

The last couple of decades of brain research have revealed some fascinating findings about how our brain adapts to different kinds of activities. One very clear finding is that our capacities are not fixed entities as once thought. They evolve in response to how we engage in particular kinds of practice and behaviour. Our brains are even more plastic than originally thought.

In their recent book, *Peak: Secrets from the new science of expertise*<sup>3</sup>, Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool present the compelling research evidence to show that we get

smarter and more talented in areas that we focus on using an approach that they call *Deliberate Practice*, which is a particular methodology of learning.

If we're aiming for expertise in *any* field, whether it is music, mathematics, memorisation, sports, chess, carpentry, physics, design, art or even intrapreneurialism, the trick is to practise. Of course, that's obvious! But it has to be a *particular kind* of practice and not just repetition. Repetition alone doesn't develop expertise. Rather the focus must be on *HOW* to improve.

This entails finding new ways of systematically experimenting with things that are *just* beyond our comfort zone, focusing on and concentrating hard on particular aspects of skill development, becoming highly tuned to our performance.

On their own, none of these concepts are particularly new. The great 20th century Russian educational psychologist Lev Vygotsky called the zone beyond our comfort zone the *Zone of Proximal Development*; teachers call it *scaffolding*. And when we get good at reflecting on our own performance, monitoring ourselves and making decisions about how best to improve our learning and performance, it is referred to as *metacognition* and *self-directed learning* - all concepts that have a good body of rigorous research to substantiate them. However, what *is* new are the insights we are beginning to glimpse from the last decade of neuroscience research into how our brain *physically* adapts and recalibrates in response to these kinds of learning activities.

When we approach skill development in this very deliberate and purposeful way, our brain responds by adapting the parts required in the performance of this skill. Neural pathways are rerouted and sometimes even new neurons are grown. In

other words, the structure of the brain changes in response to the attention we are channelling into this development. This changed structure not only improves our performance in this area but also *actually increases our capacity to continue the improvement*. In other words, we become more able, more talented and potentially smarter in relation to that particular discipline.

These findings challenge traditional notions that talent and IQ are immutable, innate properties. That people who reach the pinnacle of performance in particular fields do so because they are ‘naturals’ born with a particular capacity that inevitably destines them for greatness in their field. Now we know that we can actually grow our talent, IQ and ‘smarts’ in any field if we channel energy and effort into it. Our amazing brains rise to the challenges and help us on the road to peak performance.

Nurture is far more powerful than nature.

The point being made in this section is that no one can ever use the excuse of ‘I don’t have what it takes to do this’. Employees who truly aspire to be intrapreneurial can acquire the skills if they are growth oriented.

## 2. Intrapreneurs Are Creative

The discussion in the previous section also applies to this one. Creativity can be learned as well! It is a skill that can be acquired, developed and honed with practice. In other words, the deliberate, conscious application of creative processes makes us more creative.

It is a myth that some people are just born creative and that it is an inherent gift that you either possess or don’t.

The aspiration to be creative is available to everyone who *wants* it. If you want to be more creative and develop the skills of creative problem-solving to inform and support your intrapreneurial efforts, then learn some creativity tools and heuristics and use them regularly.

An extremely simple cognitive tool I have created and use often is called *creative BODS*. It is an acronym that uses four questions to prompt or kick-start creative thinking. The acronym stands for **BETTER, OTHER, DIFFERENT, SIMPLE**. And the associated questions are: 1. Is there a **BETTER** way to do this? 2. How have **OTHER** people solved this problem? 3. What would I see if I looked at this situation from a **DIFFERENT** perspective? 4. Can I **SIMPLIFY** this? Simple is the new smart.

It is time to demystify creativity and to recognise it as a fundamental human capacity. It is not something that only a gifted few are born with. The last several decades of research from the fields of cognitive science, cognitive psychology and brain science support this conceptualisation. This is good news given that the Institute for the Future<sup>4</sup> placed creative thinking in the form of mental flexibility as number three on the list of top ten workplace skills for 2020. The 2016 World Economic Forum report entitled *The Future of Jobs: Employment, skills and workforce strategy for the fourth industrial revolution*<sup>5</sup> reports that by 2020 creativity will be third on the list of top ten workplace skills behind complex problem-solving and critical thinking. In 2010 IBM conducted a global survey of CEOs called *Capitalising on Complexity*<sup>6</sup> which identified creativity as the new core leadership skill in a complex world.

### ***Creativity Is the Precursor to Innovation***

Creativity provides the raw materials that fuel and feed the furnace of innovation. Any workplace that says it wants a culture of innovation but ignores the role of creativity is destined for frustration. We are moving from a workplace paradigm where creativity has for so long been a ‘fringe’ activity, the marginalised poor cousin of logical and critical thinking. But we are now transitioning into an era where creative thinking is gaining the respect and attention it deserves, taking its rightful place alongside analytical and critical thinking. It is becoming embedded in the culture of progressive organisations and is a first rather than a last resort. How could it be otherwise in a world where success is as much dependent on experimentation as on efficiencies, and on flexibility as much as on formulas? Creative thinking is the complement to logical thinking that unlocks the full gamut of higher order thought processes and problem-solving approaches. People who can be comfortable switching among all different kinds of thinking are the ones who will bring original holistic solutions to complex workplace problems.

Intrapreneurs value their inherent creativity and view it as an embedded regular activity in their workplace activities. They have moved past thinking of it as an inexplicable, mysterious force but recognise and respect it as a fundamental human capacity that complements, augments and enhances their thinking for intrapreneurialism.

A true intrapreneur would never say, ‘I’m too busy. I don’t have the time or headspace to think creatively.’ They recognise that the mandate for intrapreneurialism is to break out of established patterns of thought that continually produce the same old tired solutions that reinforce business-as-usual practices. To avoid that, they recognise the need to set aside time to do the most important work there is – thinking.

Intrapreneurs accept that it will initially take additional effort, attention and time to think outside the box in order to change established practices. They are prepared for the initial frustration and mental exertion that comes with challenging themselves to think in new ways.

Intrapreneurs have reclaimed their faith and confidence in their creativity.

### 3. Intrapreneurs Are Opportunity Finders

Intrapreneurs have a unique lens through which they look at their work and the world. They see opportunity where others see either failure, or possibility where others see none.

The famous story of 3M's Post-it notes is an example of finding opportunity in failure. A research scientist was disappointed with the adhesive performance of a particular adhesive the lab was working on. It would peel off too easily. Had a less entrepreneurial thinker been at the helm of that lab we might never have had Post-it notes.

The transition to digital photos instead of film based photos of inmates at the Massachusetts Department of Correction originally came from a suggestion from a guard. In the first year of implementation across their 16 facilities, they saved \$56,000 dollars on film.

The country of Jordan today has an advanced piece of scientific infrastructure called SESAME (*Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East*) thanks to the opportunity spotting capacity of an intrapreneurial scientist from Stanford University. I met him when I attended the World Science Forum at the Dead Sea in November 2017. His name is Herman Winick and I had

the great good fortune to sit next to him during the opening ceremony of the conference. We struck up a conversation and I discovered the story behind SESAME.

Herman, who is now professor emeritus at Stanford University, has worked for over 50 years in the field of synchrotron radiation for scientific uses. A synchrotron accelerator makes X-ray beams, ultraviolet light and infra-red light that is more than a million times more intense than other sources. The use of these light beams has revolutionised many areas of science and technology. Herman's role has been in designing, maintaining and improving these machines to further increase their capability for use by biologists, chemists, medical researchers, archaeologists and an array of other physical scientists.

In 1997 Herman was serving on a committee to review and to advise on the new synchrotron machine in Germany that would replace the old one that had been operating for over 20 years. When a project of that nature and magnitude commences, it is traditional to form an international advisory committee to draw on the experience of scientists from all over the world. Herman was invited to join that committee.

In September 1997, when the new machine was about to come online, Herman asked what would happen to the old one. It was a perfectly good machine but had limited ability to reach the short wavelength of the new one that was needed for more advanced biomedical and protein crystallography research. But in the lower energy category it was one of the best in the world and was still a remarkable piece of scientific infrastructure with a very active scientific user community. The new machine had more than twice the energy of the old one, so it could reach shorter wavelength, higher energy X-rays.



The answer to Herman's question was that the old machine would be decommissioned and sold off for scrap.

Herman had a better idea. Here was this incredibly productive scientific tool which was going to be, in effect, treated like a piece of junk. He turned to his German colleague on the committee, Professor Gus Voss from the DESY lab in Hamburg, and suggested that the machine be donated to the Middle East which was one of the few regions of the world at the time that did not have a synchrotron light source. It could serve as a hub of scientific collaboration in the region. His colleague, who was one of the world's foremost accelerator physicists and also a good friend of Herman's from their 14 years of working together on accelerators at Harvard, followed up the suggestion by bringing the idea to the relevant groups, including Middle Eastern scientists, at a meeting promoting scientific cooperation in the Middle East. Voss explained that the machine could be modified, improved, redeployed and set up in the Middle East. The suggestion was met with a very enthusiastic response. Voss also made UNESCO aware of the idea, and they agreed to become the umbrella organisation for the project. The machine was given a makeover and moved to Jordan, triggering the SESAME project.

Herman also found himself with a whole new project – advising on the SESAME project. Voss played a key role until his death in 2013.

Beyond being a synchrotron light source, SESAME is a triumph of science diplomacy as it is a cooperative venture among the nations of Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Cyprus, Israel, Palestine, Pakistan and Turkey, modelled on CERN and under the auspices of UNESCO. As such it is promoting international cooperation among countries that are politically divided.

The facility will also stem and even reverse the brain drain from the region as such facilities have done in countries such as Brazil, Korea and Taiwan. One might say that it is both a literal and metaphorical light source because of the understanding and cooperation it is bringing to the region.

All this may never have happened if Herman had not spotted the opportunity, turned to his colleague in that meeting and made the suggestion.

### *Involve Young People in Opportunity Finding*

Imagine a world where we teach our primary school children to become opportunity finders, empowering them to grow up with a belief that they can all contribute to the solutions for complex problems. The tiny tourist-dependent country of Palau in the Micronesia region of the Pacific Ocean is doing that.

Palau is an archipelago of about 200 limestone and volcanic islands covered in forests and surrounded by a lagoon. A huge spike in tourism to this island paradise over the last few years has brought with it increasing levels of ecological and environmental damage. It is a challenge they are addressing with the help of their children.

Palau is the first country in the world that has changed its passport requirements from a purely functional entry document to a 'contract' of sorts in the cause of environmental protection. Visitors have to sign a passport pledge vowing to 'tread lightly, act kindly and explore mindfully' for the sake of Palau's children and future generations. The country introduced it along with a mandatory in-flight video on respecting the environment and a 'dos & don'ts' checklist. And they enlisted the creativity and participation of the children in creating it. Children from all over Palau helped in

drafting the pledge. By stamping the pledge into passports, it reaches tourists at the right time: *before* they have the chance to wreak environmental havoc. This initiative shows how even the smallest of nations can capture global attention by being opportunity finders.

O'Neill (2014)<sup>7</sup> makes a strong case for teaching students entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial skills because these skills will stand them in good stead in the new world of work. As the trend towards independent work, freelancing and self-directed careers continues, it will be those who can find, create and exploit opportunities who will be successful in the 21st century.

## 4. Intrapreneurs Are Influential

Bringing intrapreneurial initiatives to fruition will often require you to enlist the cooperation and collaboration of others. This requires you to be influential. There are many ways of influencing people. Intrapreneurs need to be adept with at least a few of them in order to gain traction for their ideas. Being able to use influence is especially important if one doesn't have positional power.

I will share three fundamental strategies.

### a) *Use the WIIFM principle*

WIIFM stands for What's In It For Me - with the ME being the person hearing about your idea - not you. As much as people may respond to your idea, they will respond even more to the prospect of benefiting from it in some way. Don't talk JUST about what you want to do - talk about WHY you want to do it. That is much more compelling and persuasive.

Simon Sinek, bestselling author and popular TEDster<sup>8</sup> reminds us, 'People don't buy what you do, they buy WHY you do it.'

If we strategically remind people about the benefits of our message, then they will be much more receptive. This is really important, especially if you are trying to influence difficult people and there is some resistance or even hostility in the air. Clarifying benefits will help to diffuse negativity and resistance. If people feel they have a vested interest in the solution you are proposing, then it is more likely they will support your idea. So talk their language, see the world through their lens and adapt your message accordingly.

b) *Invoke FOMO*

FOMO stands for *Fear Of Missing Out* and it is an effective way of bringing people on board with new ideas. However, for it to be effective there must be a sense of excitement, expectation and anticipation about the idea.

Intrapreneurial initiatives must inspire people to WANT to participate by making involvement in it seem highly desirable to the extent that if people don't come on board they feel like they are missing out on something amazing. It is one of the reasons why having a 'sexy' title for a project is so important.

Intrapreneurs are able to create a sense of excitement and passion so that others catch their enthusiasm. Mark Twain once said that there is nothing more contagious than enthusiasm - except a *lack* of it. The way you talk about your innovation efforts will influence the outcomes. So be enthusiastic, up-beat and positive when

sharing your ideas and you'll have much more chance of influencing others.

One of my favourite movies is *La La Land*, about two aspiring artists dealing with the highs and lows of trying to make their dreams a reality. The main characters are Mia, who wants to be an actress, and Sebastian, who wants to start a jazz club. When Sebastian is just starting to lose sight of his dream, making the excuse that no one would want to come to his jazz club because jazz is dying, Mia disagrees with him saying people will come because of his passion for jazz. People love to be around others who are passionate.

Never underestimate the power of your enthusiasm and passion when influencing others. When we are passionate about something – that is when we are at our most authentic and most persuasive. And that is what will resonate the most with people. Influencing without authenticity is akin to manipulation. People's BS meters generally have a high sensitivity for that sort of thing so your message will most likely be caught in the filter and not get through.

What about the people who refuse to catch the 'innovation germ' and are not inspired by the energising vision of a great idea brought to reality through dedicated action? Don't worry about them. Push on regardless. Don't let them stop you. Easier said than done, I know. Your dedicated action will contribute to changing the culture around them and then they will feel like 'viruses surrounded by antibodies and some will self-eject.' This is how Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*<sup>9</sup>, describes the process of building a 'pocket of greatness' without positional power. Even if

you are not a senior leader in your organisation, you can exert a tremendous amount of influence by helping to transform the culture of your team – your ‘pocket’ of the world. Your enthusiasm, passion and determination are powerful tools for bringing other people on the journey.

c) *Create a sense of ownership*

People do not appreciate being told what to do and how to think. Rather *people support what they help create*. So as much as possible, form relationships that will provide the opportunity to share energy and to develop a sense of collective purpose in relation to your proposed projects and initiatives. Go and talk to people! Consult with them. Turn THEM into advocates using WIIFM. A classic rookie mistake is to rush off to create a detailed plan that YOU think is wonderful and ticks all the right boxes, then proudly circulate it to the relevant people whose help you need and then be baffled as to why your great plan seems to suddenly grow concrete feet and won't fly.

Create an expectation that because of the inherent value of the idea and benefits that will flow from it for everyone, the talented individuals supporting it (whose involvement you will have carefully nurtured through your consultative approach) and the timeliness of the initiative – how can it do anything but succeed!

In this way you can set up a *self-fulfilling prophecy*. A self-fulfilling prophecy occurs when a person's expectation of an event makes the outcome more likely to happen.

Medical patients who unknowingly take placebos (injections of sterile water or treatments of sugar pills) often respond just as favourably as people who actually receive an active drug. The patients BELIEVE that they

have taken a substance that will make them feel better and this belief brings about a cure. Children randomly selected (drawn out of a hat) were reported to teachers as having unusual potential for intellectual growth. Eight months later these children showed significantly greater gains in IQ than did the remaining children who had not been singled out for the teacher's attention. The change in the teacher's expectation regarding the performance of these supposedly 'gifted' children led to an ACTUAL change in the performance of these randomly selected children. Children who are told by their parents that they can't do anything right will incorporate this idea into their self-concept and will fail at many tasks. On the other hand if children are told that they are capable, lovable or kind, there is a much greater chance of their behaving accordingly.

***We get what we expect.***

So talk about your initiative as if the outcome is a foregone conclusion. Be diplomatic of course - the intention is to demonstrate your belief in it, not to come across as an out-of-control steamroller flattening everyone and anything in its path. You'll undo all your good work with getting people on board to share ownership. For a deep dive into the topic of influence I recommend reading Robert Cialdini's bestseller *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. Intrapreneurs Are Iconoclasts

The contemporary definition of an iconoclast is someone who challenges established beliefs. In other words, in an organisational context they challenge the status quo and call out default thinking and business-as-usual practices.

Iconoclasts break boundaries of establishment thinking to lead the charge for innovation and progress. They are the kinds of people Alexa Clay and Kyra Maya Phillips call ‘misfits’. In their book, *The Misfit Economy: Lessons in creativity from pirates, hackers, gangsters, and other informal entrepreneurs*<sup>11</sup>, they define a misfit as ‘a person whose behaviour or attitude sets them apart from others in an uncomfortably conspicuous way’. Misfits have shaped the course of history with provocative ideas and blatant disregard for rules and conventions. Today, society and workplaces are seeking the misfit mindset to help develop the out-of-the-box thinking that will meet the challenges of our fast-changing world. They are the ones who are pioneering new ways of thinking and operating even inside some of the world’s most established institutions. Business is no longer just about conforming to a job description but about unlocking the entrepreneurial and ‘positive deviance’ of employees.

New ways of working will not be forged by conventional thinkers who are the corporate equivalents of tame elephants swaying their way through work. Ever wondered why so many tame elephants sway while standing? As cubs, they are tied to posts and would constantly swing in an attempt to be free. Eventually they realise that they cannot escape. After this the owner can remove the chain and post and the elephant will still have that characteristic swaying as if it was trying to break free, but will not try to escape.

Similarly, consider this experiment with rats. When placed in cold water they have no difficulty swimming around for 40–60 hours. However, if instead of being put immediately into water the rats are held until they stop struggling, the outcome is very different. Instead of swimming, they give up immediately and drown. The parallel is that some people who have worked in large organisations for a long time have



come to accept that it is too hard to change the bureaucracy in which they work; they believe that nothing they can do will make a difference. They've stopped trying. They drown – not in cold water but in mindlessness.

Mindlessness at work has spawned a whole subculture of satirical media entertainment, as anyone who has ever laughed (or groaned) at the characters in the TV shows like *The Office* from the US and UK or *Utopia* from Australia knows only too well. The central themes of these and other satires expose, through humour, the tragedy of over-reliance on outdated thinking, groupthink where people blindly accept solutions just because everyone else is, and the dangers of being on autopilot.

Iconoclastic intrapreneurs serve as an essential '*pattern interrupt*' to workplaces that have become complacent, a lightning rod for workplaces that want to channel the creative energy of their people, and as a resource for high performing organisations wanting to soar even higher.

### ***Iconoclasts Are Independent Thinkers***

Independent thinkers are question askers who refuse to participate in groupthink. *Groupthink* is a form of group normative behaviour where people don't actively question ideas, policies, actions or the decisions of their managers or leaders. It is a pattern of agreement that kills innovation. It is where norms, rules and standards for group behaviour have become frozen or over-ritualised to the point that they are never challenged. It is more common than we think.

The term groupthink was originally coined by Irving Janis in his 1972 book *Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascos*.<sup>12</sup> He analysed the reasons behind two of the biggest blunders of the Kennedy

presidency: the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis. After those two political disasters, Kennedy ordered an inquiry to figure out how his advisers could have got it so wrong. It found that there was a cosy unanimity among the group so there was a lack of intellectual rigour in their decision-making. Janis hypothesised that ‘members of any small cohesive group tend to maintain *esprit de corps* by unconsciously developing a number of shared illusions and related norms that interfere with critical thinking and reality testing.’ Fear of rejection by the group can prevent otherwise smart, educated, knowledgeable people from questioning assumptions or confronting uncomfortable facts.

Recent history is replete with many other examples of disastrous outcomes when people didn’t speak up or question what was happening. After the *Titanic* sank, it was discovered that several of the planners did have concerns about a number of engineering issues but *didn’t voice them for fear of appearing foolish*. After all, if none of the other ‘experts’ were worried then everything must be okay – right? Wrong! When the Space Shuttle *Challenger* exploded 73 seconds into its flight, later it came to light there were serious concerns about the reliability of the ‘O-ring’ – a sealing component that prevented hot gasses escaping – but when it came time to ask the questions, the people who should have didn’t. If we analysed many of these sorts of disasters we’d find that there had been a lack of intelligent, independent questioning. People had just gone along with others instead of being independent thinkers.

A well-known psychology experiment investigated these phenomena. The researchers put one subject in with a group of other people who were actually part of the experiment unbeknownst to the subject. Among other questions, the people had to say whether they thought two lines were the

same length or not, when the lines were *clearly of different lengths*. All the group members who were part of the research project said, as they were instructed to, that the lines were the same length and so did over 30% of the research participants. This outcome showed that over 30% of people are willing to go along with the majority view. Even when the majority is *obviously wrong!*

Robert Cialdini, Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University, has a chapter in his book *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*<sup>13</sup> devoted to 'social proof'. It shows with compelling evidence that people are much more likely to do something if other people are doing the same thing. Or alternatively if others are NOT doing something then they won't either. So we take our cue about how to respond, behave or react based on what others are doing, saying or feeling.

Today the metaphor often used to describe this effect is 'echo chamber'. This is where people operate in an environment where they encounter only ideas and beliefs that accord with their own, so that their views and perspectives are constantly reinforced rather than challenged.

Today we also live with online versions of echo chambers in the form of *filter bubbles*. Search engines use algorithms to selectively feed us information they assume we are interested in. The result is that we are less likely to be exposed to a wide variety of perspectives and contradictory viewpoints, which can result in intellectual isolation.

Intrapreneurs actively protect their intellectual independence.

## 6. Intrapreneurs Are Collaborators

Collaboration is important to intrapreneurialism because it is the enabler for recruiting and synthesising expertise from diverse areas. It is a means by which we can leverage the creativity and knowledge of a variety of different people. Pooling skills and perspectives from different sources, be they inside or outside the organisation, means intrapreneurs are more likely to get better outcomes and more innovative solutions.

There are various levels of collaboration and it is useful to differentiate them.

*Consultation* is where people value dialogue and discussion. The focus is on conversation and the exchange of information. In this form of interaction people ask and answer questions, and seek and offer insights and advice.

Beyond consultation is *cooperation* where people effectively work together with mutual respect. They go past conversation to voluntarily offering assistance in problem-solving. The focus is on combining their separate and relative skill sets and expertise to deliver great outcomes.

But beyond cooperation is *collaboration*. This is where people are focused on co-creation of outcomes, which is where they produce something jointly for mutual benefit and value. It presupposes a very active involvement and a sense of joint ownership and commitment on the part of all concerned. It is where respective skill sets and contributions are synthesised seamlessly. The difference between cooperation and collaboration is like the difference between a jigsaw puzzle and a painting. They can both be images of a beautiful sunset but with the jigsaw you can see how the separate pieces fit together and the boundary lines of each piece. But a painting

is seamless and smooth – even if it has been created by a number of different people, you can't tell where one person's contribution starts and ends.

Intrapreneurs value all these forms of interaction and degrees of collaboration, recognising them as valuable to the process of bringing great ideas to fruition. But we can take it even further.

Beyond even being good collaborators, intrapreneurs can become collaboration *catalysts*. In other words, they encourage people to network with each other and actively connect people who could help each other. In effect they become the conduits by which others can join forces. Tony did this by setting up a system of one-on-one conversations across the seven teams in his workplace. He wanted to break down the silos they were working in. So he spent some time setting up a spreadsheet and pairing people up so they would meet once a week for coffee with a person from a different team. It was a simple but effective way of starting the process of de-siloing his workplace to increase collaboration.

Human beings are tribal creatures. We love to feel a sense of belonging to a group where we are respected and where we can make a contribution, and most especially where we can connect with others in meaningful ways. People who can facilitate this sort of dynamic stand a better chance of creating the kinds of interactions that lead to genuine collaboration.

### ***It Pays to Have a Good Network***

Having a diverse group of people whose ideas and input you can call on is invaluable. Above and beyond the trusted *input* they can provide, a good network also helps with *output*.

A great network can provide an effective mechanism for distribution of your ideas and will increase your influence.

In Malcolm Gladwell's bestselling book *The Tipping Point*, he talks about the famous story of Paul Revere's midnight ride from Boston that changed the course of history in 1775. When alerted to the impending attack from the British on the armoury at Concord, Revere rallied the surrounding towns by riding through and sounding the alarm to marshal the local leaders and militia. He knew which doors to knock on and the right people to call on, who in turn spread the word to others. His vast network allowed him to get the message out quickly about the impending attack.

At the same time another man also galloped out on that fateful night with the same information and the same intention, facing the same danger. His name was William Dawes. But William Dawes was not well connected with the patriots in the countryside. His efforts, although just as earnest, had much less impact. No ballads were written to laud his endeavours as they were for Paul Revere. Why? It all came down to the power of their respective networks.

We see this pattern repeated throughout history. People with the better networks are more likely to become recognised, acknowledged and become famous. It is their names that are associated with breakthrough inventions and daring deeds. Alexander Fleming for penicillin instead of Howard Florey; Galileo Galilee for the telescope instead of Hans Lippershey; Alexander Graham Bell for the telephone instead of Antonio Meucci. What the unsung heroes lacked was a good network that gave them the power of *distribution*.

Build networks both online and offline, internally within the organisation as well as beyond. Be strategic in how you

develop your network so that you can maintain a connection with them. A general rule of thumb is the 15, 150, 1500 ratio.

Have 15 people who are close to you, whose advice you can trust and who will actively support you. In the workplace these will be your mentors, trusted colleagues and friends.

Beyond this 15, have 150 people who are your tribe. You might be connected with them on social media but they are also personal connections. You would stop and have a chat if you saw them on the street. They are people who know, like and trust you. This number is now referred to as *Dunbar's Number* after the Oxford anthropologist and psychologist who recently proposed it. It has cropped up in various incarnations. It was the typical size of a village in agrarian society, a company size in a professional army, and the size of the group that most people would have as casual friends.

Then beyond your 150, cultivate a 'fan base' of about 1500 people on social media across various platforms. These are the people who are likely to see and affirm your posts, articles or thought leadership. They extend your influence. Today social media gives us a global reach. You could have thousands of followers. However, the trick is to be strategic with your time so that you put your energy into developing a network that will serve you and your aspirations.

### ***Collaboration as a Developmental Tool***

Apart from the benefits of collaboration in bringing diverse ideas and perspectives to the problem-solving process, it is also an effective developmental tool. In her book *It's Who You Know: How a network of 12 key people can fast-track your success*,<sup>14</sup> Janine Garner shares an ingenious model that explains the power of having 12 key people in your immediate network who can help to accelerate your development – both personal

and professional. They serve rather like your very own ‘board of directors.’ She identifies them in 12 archetypes. They are cheerleader, explorer, inspirer, lover, connector, balancer, influencer, professor, architect, truth-sayer, accelerator, and mentor. Each makes a unique contribution and plays a different role in our development.

The reason this model is so useful is that it enables people to identify if their network is sufficiently diverse. ‘A balanced, interconnected network enables diversity of learning, reduces bias in decision-making and increases opportunity for personal growth.’ Intrapreneurs are often on an accelerated growth trajectory. Having people around them who can support them on that journey is extremely helpful.

The message for intrapreneurs is to have a network that serves them on two levels. A smaller, more intimate group of about 12–15 people that helps them to grow personally and professionally, as well as a larger group of between 100 and 200 people who form a community, providing them with a sense of tribal belonging. They expose the intrapreneur to different ideas, possibilities and potentials for collaboration and can also help serve as an effective distribution channel for great ideas and powerful messages.

These are the people with whom we have some sort of intersection, who share a common vision, professional projects, and provide collaboration opportunities.

## 7. Intrapreneurs Are Determined

Successful innovation often seems obvious in *hindsight*. Peter Diamandis said, ‘The day before something is a breakthrough it’s a crazy idea.’ Before that success, intrapreneurs sometimes have to persist in the face of ridiculous barriers to bring to



fruition ideas that will benefit the organisation - in some cases even *save* it. Crazy - like a drowning man fighting against the lifesavers trying to pull him out of the water.

That was the experience of Ken Kutaragi working for Sony as an engineer during the 1980s. He came up with the idea for the original Sony PlayStation while he was a junior member of staff. While tinkering with his daughter's Nintendo he identified ways of creating a better gaming experience. He took the idea to his bosses within the company who did something unbelievable. They ignored him! They dismissed his idea as a mere toy and didn't want anything to do with it. Perhaps it may also have had something to do with the fact that they considered him brash, outspoken and something of a maverick - qualities that were not appreciated at the time by traditional Japanese executives.

Fortunately for Kutaragi AND Sony, the CEO of the company recognised the value of joining the gaming industry and the concept of the Sony PlayStation was born. First hurdle negotiated but what happened after that was anything but a smooth ride. Ken was working alongside Nintendo's development team to bring the prototype to life when, incredibly, Nintendo pulled out of the deal and the whole project was in jeopardy.

Kutaragi convinced Sony to continue, reportedly threatening to quit if the project was cancelled. The acuity of his judgement was confirmed when the PlayStation, introduced in 1994, met with immediate success, rapidly becoming the bestselling game console on the market. In the years that followed, the proportion of revenue that came from the PlayStation steadily increased.

In this case the story has a happy ending for the intrapreneur who had to bat so hard for his idea to first be accepted and then survive the vagaries of corporate vicissitudes. In 1999 Ken Kutaragi was named President and CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment, the subsidiary responsible for the PlayStation. In 2000, after the introduction of the Sony PlayStation 2 which sold 40 million units in the first 30 months, Kutaragi was awarded a seat on the parent company's board.

In 2003, in an interview for *Time* magazine Kutaragi said, 'My role is to help lead the company into the future.'<sup>15</sup> Indeed that is the role of all intrapreneurs – that is why they are so indispensable.

## 8. Intrapreneurs Are Risk Takers

To be entrepreneurial means to be consciously focused on rewards rather than the fear of loss. As a motivator fear is much more powerful than reward and it drives our behaviour. This is why many people don't take risks. They are too afraid of what they might lose which eclipses the joy and benefit of what they might *gain*. Their fear is bigger than their vision.

Fear of risk is one of the greatest barriers to entrepreneurialism and intrapreneurialism. Risk is a term that strikes fear in the hearts of many leaders – especially those who consider themselves to work in severely risk-averse contexts. However, taking a risk is NOT about being irresponsible, naive or reckless. Calculated risks still require due diligence.

If someone thinks it is risky to innovate, think of the alternative. Today the riskiest course of action is to NOT innovate. That is a direct route into irrelevancy – bankruptcy and oblivion await there.

### ***Risk Aversion Can Create More Risk***

Michael Barber, in his book *How to Run a Government: So that citizens benefit and taxpayers don't go crazy*<sup>16</sup>, points out that very often a bureaucracy's reaction to risk makes them *even more* vulnerable.

*'The instinctive reaction of a bureaucracy to a problem or a crisis is to become more cautious, more risk-averse. Ironically, in an era when change is as rapid as it has become in the early twenty-first century, this reaction ultimately adds to the risk of failure rather than reduces it.'*

Clearly we need a new way of thinking about risk. In a risk-averse culture such as in the public sector there are some things that leaders can do to mitigate risk while still innovating. They can:

1. Focus the innovation efforts and be very strategic about which ideas are selected, groomed and implemented.
2. Use *evolutionary* rather than *revolutionary* innovation. In other words, move forward in iterative cycles rather than taking a huge leap of faith into uncharted waters.
3. Run *pilots*, experiment, figure out what works and what doesn't and then scale up.

Christian Bason, in *Leading Public Sector Innovation: Co-creating for a better society*<sup>17</sup>, has some good advice about risk and failure for leaders who want to innovate. He says, 'Fail early to succeed sooner.' So figure out quickly what does or doesn't work and move on. Adapt and iterate, or abandon and cut losses. Reframing risk in this way can help unleash the entrepreneurial spirit in you and your team.

Leaving academia to start my own business back in 2005 was a huge leap of faith for me. I felt like Alice in Wonderland who had tumbled headfirst down the rabbit hole to emerge in a world in which everything operated under different rules – a parallel universe, an alternate reality. Every day was a steep learning curve. Very quickly I had to learn to change from thinking like an academic to thinking like an entrepreneur. Amidst all the change, I also felt tremendously empowered. Perhaps it was the realisation that whatever the outcome, be it success or failure, the responsibility rested squarely on my own shoulders. It was worth the risk.

### ***Resilience***

Life in general – both our personal and our work lives – can be full of setbacks, especially if we are signing up as change agents in the form of intrapreneurs. Being able to bounce back, or better still bounce *forward*, from setbacks is essential if we want to last the distance. If you experience a disappointing result or outcome, ask yourself, ‘Where is the *opportunity* in this?’

It could also help if we reframe what we mean by failure. A disappointing outcome is a learning experience. Even if you did not achieve the outcome you were expecting or hoping for, can you repurpose any achievements along the way? Can you apply them to a new context for a different outcome? The important thing is to not let a derailment turn into a train wreck. Persist. Get back on track as soon as possible.

Reflecting on a disappointing result is also a good time to ask ourselves whether any of that failure was due to gaps in our own skill set that may need to be addressed. If so, then address them – otherwise the same thing will happen again and again and hold you back.

If the idea ‘pitch’ you made was a disaster because you hate speaking in front of a group – then get along to a public speaking or presenting course as soon as possible and get over it – otherwise it will hold you back. If the brainstorming sessions you ran descended into complete chaos with no outcomes, then learn a process that works for you before next time. If you ran into a problem where you felt completely out of your depth, overwhelmed and consequently dropped the ball – find a mentor. Ultimately it is up to each of us to work out for ourselves what we need in order to succeed. The important thing is to not let an obstacle or stumbling block become a reason to give up.

We all have the power to choose how we respond to challenges. Viktor Frankl, Austrian psychiatrist, Holocaust survivor and author of the bestselling influential book *Man’s Search for Meaning*<sup>18</sup> published originally in 1946, said, ‘The last of the human freedoms [is] to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.’ Ultimately resilience is a choice. How we *perceive* and frame challenges and failure influences our capacity for progress and achievement.

Intrapreneurs do not avoid risk because of fear of failure. Igniting innovation, breaking bureaucracy and catalysing change can be a risky business. Do it anyway.

### ***Use Good Judgement***

The fields of intrapreneurialism and innovation are saturated with paradox which contributes to a sense of riskiness when working in this space. There are many mixed, often contradictory messages, about how to achieve success as an innovator and intrapreneur.

Fail fast versus never give up; create minimum viable products versus create quality outcomes; learn the rules versus break the rules; increase productivity versus be less busy; there is power in unity versus there is power in diversity; deliver quality outcomes versus engage in experimentation; minimise waste versus use trial and error to find better solutions; think critically versus think creatively; use good processes to produce good results versus improvise to find potentially better solutions; persist versus pivot.

Recognising that there is no right or wrong way to be an intrapreneur is essential. It boils down to *good judgement* about what is the most appropriate course of action in a particular context, at that particular time, when implementing intrapreneurial initiatives. Both ends of the spectrum are equally relevant – just not at the same time.

The more judgement calls we make – the better we become at them. *It's called experience.*

## 9. Intrapreneurs Are Resourceful Problem Solvers

Most workplaces don't have unlimited funds to throw at projects – even the most worthy ones. That is when the resourcefulness of an intrapreneur comes to the fore. Sometimes the most creative ideas and effective solutions emerge because there was a *lack* of resources rather than an abundance of them.

If you are a Monty Python fan you've probably seen *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The movie was made on a shoestring budget which forced the group to do things differently because there was simply no money to do things the conventional way. The most famous running joke in the

movie was the knights riding around on invisible horses. They were heralded by the sound of the horses hooves made by the clapping together of coconut halves. There was no money for real horses. The comedy troupe had a background in radio and they translated the old radio sound effects trick into the movie – and ended up creating one of their most iconic concepts. That’s resourceful problem-solving.

### *Killing Two Birds with One Stone*

Ella works for a large government department in my home state of Queensland that was having difficulty staffing some of its very remote regional offices in the far north. In fact, staffing had become a critical issue due to a change in the funding model which meant that during 2017 committed and long-term staff began to seek permanent opportunities elsewhere as employment was being offered on a temporary basis. Consequently the area manager of the region was finding it impossible to attract skilled staff to deliver important services to people living in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

At the same time the department also had a focus on developing its workforce’s cultural awareness and capability. It delivered that via a one-hour online training course but the department was looking for ways to augment that experience.

Intrapreneur Ella, who was based in the region, came up with an ingenious solution to address both issues simultaneously. With the support of a number of senior leaders she was able to fast-track her solution, without having to go through multiple levels of bureaucratic approval and lengthy time frames. She was able to implement her idea in the space of a few weeks. This is what she did.

She created a short five-minute film using her iPhone and some other departmental equipment which showcased the positive aspects of life in the region – the lifestyle, the sense of community, the stunning landscapes and beautiful beaches. She got permission from the community and filmed staff working in the field and talking about their experiences. She captured them speaking passionately and enthusiastically about how much they loved living and working in the region. The communications team assisted with some editing, the Deputy Director General endorsed it and it was on the department's intranet only days later. Her intention was to attract permanent, experienced department staff from the urban areas to apply for temporary postings to the remote region.

The short-term relocation was suddenly reframed as a development opportunity! The chance to get a 'taste' of working in one of the most beautiful and remote regions of the world and to experience first-hand a unique lifestyle. It was the best possible cultural development opportunity they could hope to receive. Being immersed in the community, experiencing the weather conditions, working alongside local staff, sharing stories with clients. It certainly beat an online training program!

Almost immediately the region was inundated with applications from people wanting to work there. Ella was overwhelmed by the response. There is now a long waiting list. People who go there extend their postings. All the vacancies were filled very quickly. Now the regional manager has gone from struggling to fill vacancies to having an extensive resource pool from which to draw. The management team in the region are now able to strategically facilitate the movement of resources and skills so that staff experienced in particular areas can be directed to where they are most



needed. As a result the local community is being served in the best possible way.

Then when staff return to the city after their posting in the remote region, they take with them an intimate knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of the communities. It will inform their decision-making and help others who may not be able to go to have a vicarious experience of life in a very remote community.

There are a number of noteworthy elements in this story. Firstly Ella's solution was cost neutral. Other than time, there were no overt expenses. No equipment needed to be bought, no consultants were hired, no expensive recruitment procedures were needed. The solution was implemented very quickly because it was supported by the senior leaders who saw the value of the solution and cleared a path through the bureaucratic red tape. People who are applying for the positions are genuinely excited about the prospect of going there and so they take that energy and enthusiasm with them to their work in the region. There is now department-wide, high quality capacity building in cultural awareness. A critical staffing issue was addressed in just a few weeks. Ella used her creativity and her passion for serving remote communities to implement an elegant solution to a pressing problem to create public value for marginalised communities. That is intrapreneurialism in action! At the time of writing this, other government agencies with a similar challenge were already adopting the model.

Resourceful problem solvers translate ideas into action. They don't just dream – they do. They don't say, 'It's too hard' – they figure it out. If they need to learn new skills, they learn them; if they meet a hurdle, they find a way over or around; if they encounter nay-sayers, they put their shields up so as not to be

discouraged; if something doesn't work, they try something else. They can't help themselves – they're intrapreneurs.

## 10. Intrapreneurs Are Trend Spotters

In the Academy Award winning movie *Hidden Figures*, Dorothy Vaughan, played by Octavia Spencer, saw the digital disruption coming her way. Her team, which did the number crunching and calculations for NASA's space program during the 1960s, was on the cusp of redundancy when NASA bought an IBM computer. It was a huge clunky card reader. So Dorothy taught herself FORTRAN which was the programming language for the computer. And then she taught her team. So when the time came, Dorothy's prescience made it possible for them to transition from actually doing the computations to managing and programming the machine that did the computations. Dorothy was an intrapreneur. Her gift for trend spotting saved her job and those of her team.

Being able to look ahead of the curve, pay attention to what's happening in their industry and the world in general, spot trends, make sense of them and use that information like a compass to inform decisions is a huge advantage in a fast-changing world. It's like having dragonfly eyes! Dragonflies have a 360° field of vision. Very useful when having to react quickly to changes or threats in the environment.

It is all very well to have great hindsight in order to understand and learn the lessons the past offers us. But it is foresight and trend spotting that will help prepare an organisation for the future – especially in an unpredictable VUCA world. If you are driving in a storm, you have to make good driving decisions in order to get home safely. You constantly and vigilantly switch your vision from the front view and the road ahead to the rear view as well as side views. Good driving decisions

in bad weather conditions are made by integrating the information received from all directions, looking far ahead as well as at the road immediately in front. Like dragonflies. Like Dorothy Vaughan.

Although BlackBerry's co-CEOs watched Apple announce the iPhone in 2007, they dismissed it as a niche product. They didn't consider it again for another six months, losing valuable time. Even a cursory look at disrupted companies shows that their leaders were vaguely aware of the threat to their business model. They waited too long and then mounted half-hearted responses to the threat. There is a tendency to want to delay action till others have gone ahead and paved the way. But the advantage that comes to those that spot trends early is that they can take early action, alter processes, adapt their business model. Diversify. Enter new markets, whether adjacent or in new territories. They get to operate in *Blue Ocean* not *Red Ocean*.

In their bestselling book *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to create uncontested market space and make the competition irrelevant*, Kim and Mauborgne (Rev. Ed. 2015)<sup>19</sup> show that companies that are able to decipher trends, spot opportunities and create new company strategy to capitalise on them leap ahead to a place where the competition is irrelevant. Those left behind, using conventional approaches, have to viciously fight for dominance metaphorically turning the ocean water red with their blood. Trend spotting is a valuable skill to cultivate.

### ***Open the Aperture***

Intrapreneurs are usually plugged into a wide variety of information sources which positions them well to spot trends. They've *opened their apertures*. They expose themselves to content beyond their relevant industry publications and look

further afield. They might do that through channels such as Google alerts; various news sites; global research reports from reputable organisations such as the World Economic Forum, McKinsey, Deloitte, IBM; subscribe to newsletters from organisations that specialise in trend spotting, e.g. Shaping Tomorrow<sup>20</sup>, Springwise<sup>21</sup>, and the Institute for the Future<sup>22</sup>; follow influential thinkers on Twitter and subscribe to their blogs; belong to groups on Facebook or LinkedIn where high quality information is exchanged and discussed; converse with a diverse range of people; watch TED talks (bite size chunks of leading thinking on every imaginable topic); use apps like Blinkist to leverage the time spent in information consumption; attend leading edge events and conferences; and a myriad of other channels. Everyone has their personal favourites. The important thing is to be able to filter the mass of information to spot what is relevant without becoming overwhelmed.

The key consideration in all this is to develop and maintain objective, future-focused, wide-scope, big picture thinking to facilitate trend spotting.

## 11. Intrapreneurs Are Change Agile

Change agility is the ability to anticipate and adapt to shifting circumstances. Be prepared to change your mind and your course of action in the light of new facts, insights and conditions. Some people resist doing this because they think it implies that they didn't know what they were doing in the first place. But what worked last time may not work next time.

When the music changes tempo do you leave the dance floor or simply adapt your movements? In the book *The Agile Learner*<sup>23</sup>, James Anderson aptly sums up the importance of agility.

*‘The most successful people in the 21st century will be those who are the most responsive: the ones who can adapt in the face of disruption. These people will be able to constantly build new skills and abilities in the face of change.’*

Change agile intrapreneurs are the kinds of leaders who are not disorientated when the environment and circumstances shift. They learn fast, act fast and figure out fast what it takes to get back on track and keep going.

### ***Change Agility Comes from Learning Agility***

The ‘University of Everywhere’ is a term coined by Kevin Carey in his book *The End of College: Creating the future of learning and the University of Everywhere*.<sup>24</sup> It is a global phenomenon that is giving control of learning back to the learner. With the vast amounts of easily accessible information available to everyone at low or no cost, we can choose to educate ourselves in any area. As the world population grows and significant numbers rise out of poverty, the number of aspiring graduates will increase. The number of additional people who will want a higher education over the next 20 years could well exceed the number of people who have ever received a degree. So traditional bricks-and-mortar universities are not pragmatic and are unsustainable. Carey argues that the solution is to reimagine the idea of the university.

The point for our purposes here is simply to illustrate the increasing trend towards the democratisation of knowledge and its access. Anyone with a computer and an internet connection can tap into instruction on any topic, from anywhere in the world at any time. As with Kate, the heroine of our opening story, we can learn whatever we need whenever we need. That enables us to be change agile.

## 12. Intrapreneurs Are Action Takers

Having a great idea does not create value unless it is put into action. The great Leonardo da Vinci said, 'I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must DO.'

Some people become paralysed into inaction because they are constantly gathering information, assessing the situation and making plans. They suffer from 'analysis paralysis'. While that is important, of course, it can become an excuse for inaction. People who are naturally highly curious can become side-tracked in the pursuit of deeper knowledge and understanding. A natural consequence of this is to run behind on deadlines, which can frustrate others. While curiosity is an admirable trait and essential for creativity, there comes a time when one needs to stop collecting even more information or data and just get on with producing outcomes. It is important to find the balance between thought and action. Know when it is time to move on and produce results from all that great thinking.

The concept of 'done is better than perfect' is more important today than ever in a fast-moving world. This is why the approach of creating *Minimum Viable Products* (MVPs) is fast becoming the new normal in many workplaces. Experiment, test, iterate, scale up. Waiting till your idea or product or solution is 'perfect' before sharing it with others is an outdated concept. The world is moving too fast.

I recently produced a short 90-second video for my website to give additional information about my *Creating Intrapreneurs* workshop. We filmed it literally in one take in my office, on my iPhone and uploaded it to my website within 5 minutes. It was pretty rough. I figured done was better than perfect. I then outsourced the post production to Fiverr to create a

slick final product. That then went up at a later stage. Point here is that in the past I would have waited till I had the finished product before uploading it, but today I live in an MVP mindset. Get it done, then iterate and improve.

### *Take Action and Solve Problems En Route*

When dealing with complex innovation projects it is virtually impossible to nail everything perfectly in advance. There are too many moving parts and too much inherent unpredictability. Trust yourself to figure out the solutions to challenges that arise as and when they become apparent. You can't foresee everything - don't let this stop you from taking action.

Nowhere was this more dramatically evident than in the historic mission of the Cassini-Huygens space probe to Jupiter launched in 1997. The plan was for Cassini to release the smaller Huygens probe to descend to Jupiter's moon Titan, gathering data during its descent and relaying it back to Cassini using a radio link. When Cassini received the data it would relay it back to Earth. While Cassini was already on its way, scientists continued to test the communications capabilities of both probes.

About three years into its seven year mission it became clear that there was a problem. Cassini's receiver hadn't been built to receive the changes in frequency and wavelength of the signal it would be receiving from Huygens as it descended to Titan. All that invaluable data would be lost. At risk was half a billion dollars and years of work. It would have been a devastating blow to the world's science community. High stakes indeed.

A 'rescue team' was formed to figure out a solution. Which of course they did! That is what clever scientists do. While they

couldn't do anything about changing the actual wavelength of the signals from Huygens, they could alter the trajectory of Cassini to put it at a further distance from Huygens and at an oblique angle. This changed their relative velocities, preventing the data from becoming scrambled.<sup>25</sup>

This was just one of the many challenges that were successfully negotiated during the course of this extraordinary mission which ended up being even more spectacularly successful than anyone could have hoped for.

Intrapreneurs take it as a given that *Murphy's Law* (anything that can go wrong will go wrong) is always in play. They take action anyway.

## Wrap-up

Intrapreneurs are a new breed of leaders – even though they may not be in official leadership positions. They demonstrate the qualities discussed in this chapter.

They may be savvy millennials who have grown up in a world where creativity and entrepreneurial thinking have been encouraged and nurtured and want to unleash those skills in their workplaces. They may be employees who have kept their lights under a bushel for too long and are now ready to step out and bring their entrepreneurial talent to work in the new age of empowerment. They may be people who have not previously had the confidence to speak up about their great ideas, especially if they have worked in authoritarian, rigidly hierarchical workplaces that have historically not encouraged challenges to the status quo.

Whatever their background, they share a number of qualities which can set them apart. These qualities, if harnessed, can create undreamed of value within their organisations.





## Idea Extensions

1. What are some other qualities of intrapreneurs you would like to add to the list in this chapter?

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2. Of the 12 qualities discussed in this chapter, identify the qualities that you believe are particularly well developed in you.

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3. In what circumstances and contexts have you demonstrated these qualities?

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4. Of the 12 qualities discussed in this chapter, identify those that you would like to develop further.

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5. Think of how you can make that happen.

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PART 2

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*Becoming an  
Intrapreneur*



# INTRAPRENEURIAL ARCHETYPES

## Which one are you?

The concept of an archetype has been around since the time of Plato. However, it has been more recently revived through the work of the psychologist Carl Jung. It refers to characteristic patterns of behaviour which result from particular motivations and needs within a person.

This chapter presents nine intrapreneurial archetypes. A caveat in using this information is that intrapreneurial archetype identification is a starting point only and not meant to be a 'pigeonhole' or lifelong label. People will transition to different archetypes if they change their behaviour patterns and drivers. They will often behave differently in different contexts and with different groups. As people go through the different stages of their careers they gain experience, insight and wisdom which will transition them to different archetypal behaviours.

Using archetypes provides us with a model for gaining insights into people's drivers, needs and behavioural patterns. Identifying their archetype can be very revealing and instructive for an individual. It can help to make visible, subconscious behaviour patterns. This awareness can serve as *a starting point* for self-reflection, change and transformation. The exploration of these archetypes in this chapter is not meant to be prescriptive and rigid but rather instructive and educational.

The lens being used here is that of *intrapreneurialism* so the archetypes discussed in this chapter belong to the group of employees who are already within the 30% subset of engaged employees. We are not dealing with disengaged employees or even those who are ambivalent about their work. So we are considering people who are already high performers or potential high performers. Figure 2 illustrates the positioning of intrapreneurs.

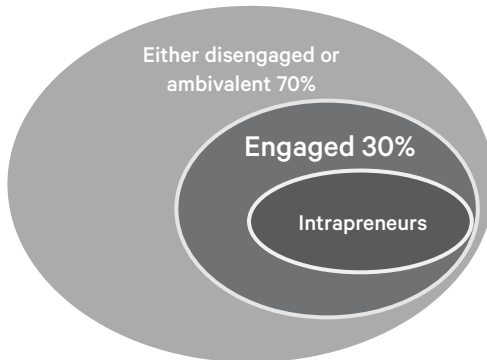


Figure 2: Positioning of intrapreneurs

## The Nexus Between Creative Energy and Self-Leadership

Intrapreneurialism results from the combination of creative energy and self-leadership. Because we are dealing with high performers and potential performers, the two axes in the model start at *medium* rather than low. Anyone who is low in these qualities would not be in this group.

Creative energy is the desire to be original, to push past the status quo, to break free of constraints and ignite innovation. It drives us to ask *what could be* not *what is*. It includes qualities such as passion, vision, curiosity, adaptability, insight, multidisciplinary, risk appetite, imagination and inventiveness. It is the essential raw material for sparking novelty and catalysing change. Without the ability to envision a different future using our creativity and imagination, nothing changes.

Self-leadership is the fusion of a sense of who you are, what you are capable of and how to manage yourself. It includes qualities such as self-discipline, self-efficacy, self-belief, self-esteem, self-knowledge, confidence, determination, grit, ethics, resilience, courage, focus, resourcefulness and commitment, reflection and emotional intelligence. Self-leadership is essential in bringing form and focus to the welter of creative energy. Without it valuable potential may be squandered, or worse, misdirected to cause chaos.

The way these two capacities and their characteristic qualities combine in different ratios produces *the nine intrapreneurial archetypes*. Each one has its different potentials and possibilities for driving change, innovation and intrapreneurialism within organisations.

Let us examine each in turn. As we go through the nine archetypes I'll make reference to well-known movie characters who embody the qualities of that archetype. Movie heroes and heroines (or anti-heroes and anti-heroines) are already drawn as archetypes so they serve as a good reference point for this exercise.

C R E A T I V E  E N E R G Y  Passion, vision, curiosity, adaptability, insight, multidisciplinary, risk appetite, imagination, inventiveness.	V E R Y  H I G H	SHOW-OFF	ADVENTURUER	REVOLUTIONARY
	H I G H	DELINQUENT	ROOKIE	EXPLORER
	M E D I U M	FREELoader	EXPEDITER	DIPLOMAT
		MEDIUM	HIGH	VERY HIGH
<b>SELF-LEADERSHIP</b> Self-discipline, self-efficacy, self-belief, self-esteem, self-knowledge, confidence, determination, ethics, resilience, grit, courage, focus, resourcefulness, commitment, reflection, emotional intelligence.				

Figure 3: The nine intrapreneurial archetypes



## The Freeloader

The archetypal *Freeloader* has medium creative energy and medium self-leadership.

This kind of intrapreneur takes advantage of other people's generosity without giving much



back in return. This style of intrapreneur may make a habit of using others to bring their own intrapreneurial initiatives to fruition but without giving credit or acknowledgement. They may take other people's ideas because they want very much to be intrapreneurial but don't trust themselves to have an abundant supply of their own fresh ideas to bring to the table. Because their levels of self-leadership are relatively underdeveloped, they either don't recognise the lack of ethics in this behaviour or do – and don't care.

They're a bit like the party guest from hell who turns up uninvited, empty handed, eats all the food and drinks all the wine, hogs the conversation, and then won't go home. But that is a very benign metaphor because no one really gets hurt – just annoyed. In the real world the consequences can be much more insidious.

In the business world these 'thought thieves' can steal people's livelihoods by commercialising other people's inventions and ideas and leaving them out in the cold. In the context of an organisation they steal trust which creates a toxic culture which in turn will limit the success of the team or organisation. It will limit the free flow of ideas that is so important for innovation, constrain collaboration and create a climate of guardedness and resentment.

I'm not talking about the kind of 'stealing' that Austin Kleon is talking about in his book *Steal Like an Artist*<sup>1</sup>, where creatives build on the work of their artistic heroes. Great creative endeavours in any field don't spring out of a vacuum. They are the extensions of previous work in the field distilled, filtered and reconfigured through the unique lens of the maker. No, I'm talking about the deliberate and bold appropriation of someone else's idea and passing it off as one's own.

I am reminded of the 1988 movie *Working Girl* with Melanie Griffith, Sigourney Weaver and Harrison Ford. Tess McGill (Melanie Griffith) is a smart, ambitious but somewhat naive new employee in a Wall Street firm in the mergers and acquisitions section. She is a constant stream of creative ideas which she shares freely. Her boss, Katharine Parker (Sigourney Weaver), is a savvy, experienced, self-serving, somewhat unscrupulous operator.

Given that the film is 30 years old, I'm not going to be too apologetic about the spoiler that's coming up.

Tess discovers that Katharine is in the process of stealing her genius idea for saving a large company from a takeover and taking all the credit for herself. The only thing that saves the vulnerable Tess from being taken advantage of in the end, losing her job and being denounced as a troublemaker is that she could demonstrate the derivation and development of her idea when it came to the ultimate, inevitable showdown between her and Katharine. As this is a Hollywood movie, everyone gets their just desserts. The *freeloader* Katharine is exposed and suffers the consequences while Tess is rewarded for her cleverness, creativity and chutzpah.

In real life workplaces, of course, there are no Hollywood endings. So freeloading needs to be dealt with through firm,

ethical, experienced leadership and mentoring. There is huge potential in the freeloader because of their desire to create change – but they may need some help to fulfil their potential.

## The Delinquent

The archetypal *Delinquent* has high levels of creative energy and so brings passion and imagination to their work. However, because they have only medium levels of self-leadership, they lack the discipline and emotional intelligence to capitalise on it.

This kind of intrapreneur is often a great source of creative ideas but people are reluctant to work with them because they are infuriatingly negligent and remiss when it comes to organising themselves and their undertakings. When wiser heads and more experienced hands try to offer guidance, they seem impervious. They inadvertently give offence by not following through on commitments – even when it is their own great idea that they have convinced everyone to take on board.

Their ideas often have great merit and potential value and they can present them with a great deal of passion and excitement and genuine good intentions, which works when enlisting the attention and support of others. But their lack of focus and inability to work in a systematised way to bring ideas to fruition means that others invariably withdraw support because they can see the writing on the wall. They



know either from previous experience or intuition that they will be left holding the bag and having to take responsibility for something that they are not committed to or having to clean up a mess not of their own making for something that could have been great – but wasn't.

Delinquents are like an undisciplined teenager – full of potential and energy but who can't focus on anything. Even though they may be well intentioned, their lack of self-discipline and good judgement gets them (and often those around them) into trouble.

Luke Skywalker (played by Mark Hamill) right at the beginning of the original 1977 *Star Wars* movie was the embodiment of unharnessed potential. He dreamed of adventure and had a sense that he was destined for greatness, but was impulsive, impatient and, for the time being, out of his depth. Over time and with masterful mentoring from Yoda he gradually discovered his power and realised his potential as he learned to channel his energy.

## The Show-Off

The archetypal *Show-off* has very high creative energy and so is like a powerful beacon of dynamism with their ingenious ideas and clever solutions. They are often charismatic, flamboyant and influential, but they have only medium levels of self-leadership



which means that they do not always harness their remarkable capacities in a productive way or know how to filter their flair.

It's all about THEM so they don't care who gets sidelined in the process of them pursuing their objectives. They may be unscrupulous, narcissistic and driven – with a disregard for others. They need to develop higher levels of emotional intelligence to temper their arrogance, exploitativeness and self-centredness. Indeed, because of the intensity of their creativity and high risk appetite, without the mitigating influence of ethical accountability, they can potentially end up being destructive.

This kind of intrapreneur can be quite dangerous because they don't take into consideration the consequences of their actions. So it is not unusual for others to get burnt as a result. They may act impulsively without necessarily considering the ramifications of their ideas.

In the movie *Wall Street*, Gordon Gekko (played by Michael Douglas) is a show-off. Everything is all about him. He has brilliant strategy and cunning tactics to outwit less canny people. But others got hurt and paid a high price for their association with him.

In a workplace, once people have had a bad experience with the show-off they won't want to work with that person again because the ramifications can be quite dire. A show-off may even threaten the reputation of an organisation. If things go well they will want the credit. But if things go badly they will have orchestrated events so that somehow they will not be blamed.

Because of the force of their personality and charisma, it will usually take the entire team to keep the show-off in check.

They are not easy to manage. This is an extreme archetype and not often found in most corporate workplaces.

## The Expediter

The archetypal *Expediter* has medium levels of creative energy and high levels of self-leadership. As such they may not be the source of disruptively creative ideas but are very good at helping to bring them to fruition. Like the lubricant that greases the wheels of change, they may not provide the driving force and the impetus that set intrapreneurial initiatives into motion – but they make sure they come to fulfilment.



Expeditors are the kinds of intrapreneurs who facilitate outcomes through their realistic understanding of situations. They are helpful, accommodating and good at bringing projects to completion due to their initiative, ingenuity and resourcefulness. They are great at organising processes, keeping people on the same page and on track. While they don't necessarily aspire to personally be in the limelight themselves, they are more than happy to support those that do – provided they have the right intent. They won't willingly support unethical behaviour (unless they are tricked into it by a show-off).

A screen character who is the embodiment of an expeditor is Pepper Potts (played by Gwyneth Paltrow) from the *Iron Man* movies. Self-disciplined, ethical, hardworking, loyal,

confident, reliable and resourceful, she more or less runs Stark Industries from behind the scenes. Somehow she manages to be across everything with a keen eye for detail, making sure that everything runs smoothly while thinking quickly in an emergency in order to save the day.

## The Diplomat

The archetypal *Diplomat* has medium levels of creative energy and very high levels of self-leadership making them the ideal change makers and intrapreneurs for large and important projects that require high levels of emotional intelligence, hard work, and resourcefulness. They are like conduits for collaboration, understanding and knowledge.



Their extremely well developed critical thinking skills, foresight and courage mean that they can bring complex intrapreneurial projects to fruition effectively without alienating people. They consider all elements from different perspectives to the extent that they may even come across as being dispassionate and detached, but what they are really doing is maintaining objectivity in order to make clear-headed decisions to benefit everyone.

Their creative input is driven by insight which makes them extremely good 'sense makers' which means they can filter information effectively to intuit people's unspoken motives and drivers, and what information is and isn't relevant. They have enough confidence in their abilities to take on the job of

brokering major collaborations which others would shy away from because of the risks and amounts of hard work that would go into them. You can count on the diplomat to work as much as possible within the rules but to find interesting ways of interpreting or using them to change the status quo.

The archetypal on-screen diplomat is Atticus Finch (played by Gregory Peck) from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Level-headed, calm in a crisis, prepared to take on a ridiculously difficult challenge in the hopes of changing the system from the inside out.

## The Rookie

With high levels of creativity and high levels of self-leadership the archetypal *Rookie* is on the threshold of greatness. This archetype is destined to do even greater things if he or she applies themselves to the discipline of further developing themselves and their skills. They are on the threshold of the metamorphosis from a caterpillar into a butterfly, ready to complete the transformation that will enable them to take flight and soar.



They are already performing at a high level. They have confidence in their abilities, and are earning the respect of their colleagues with their trustworthiness and inventiveness. They are fully aware of their potential and that they could do so much more if they have a good enough reason to strive for it and if they are given the opportunity.



The archetypal on-screen rookie is Elle Woods (played by Reese Witherspoon) from *Legally Blonde*. Uncompromising, resilient and a little unconventional, she is ready to be a crusader for a just and worthy cause. She has faith in herself and is perfectly capable of thinking outside the box to achieve her outcomes.

## The Explorer

With high levels of creative energy and very high levels of self-leadership, the archetypal *Explorer* is a seasoned intrapreneur who bravely but carefully ventures into new territory to discover and exploit opportunities.

Full of great ideas as well as enormous amounts of self-discipline, explorers not only think outside the box to devise clever solutions to difficult workplace challenges, they also have the grit to see them through. They are very good at overcoming obstacles and barriers to expand the boundaries of possibility and potential.

Their very high levels of self-leadership mean the explorer is not reckless but thoughtful. This kind of intrapreneur is quite prepared to take risks, but calculated ones and so will weigh up the pros and cons of a course of action carefully and diligently before committing to it. They are simultaneously courageous but careful, confident but considered, with a high sense of responsibility to those around them. The explorer will make the tough decisions and take responsibility when



it is called for. So they help people to feel safe when leading risky intrapreneurial initiatives.

The archetypal on-screen explorer is Ellen Ripley (played by Sigourney Weaver) from *Alien*. Brave, tough, prepared to venture into the unknown, but also careful, exercising good foresight and good judgement so as not to unnecessarily endanger the lives of those for whom she has responsibility.

## The Adventurer

Very high levels of creative energy and high levels of self-leadership make for the archetypal *Adventurer*. This kind of intrapreneur is a trailblazer who is fearless to the point of being almost cavalier in their approach to organisational change.



In their aspiration to bring bold, audacious and ambitious transformation quickly, they may occasionally be reckless, taking risks that others might find unacceptable. With an almost endless capacity to adapt without fatiguing, their stamina for change can be exhausting for the people around them. While their fearlessness might get them into trouble, their resourcefulness can get them out just as fast. But if things don't work out, they are prepared to take the responsibility and pay the price.

This kind of intrapreneur is invaluable to organisations with a high risk appetite, looking for disruptive change - fast.

They may be highly skilled, highly knowledgeable polymaths – having a variety of areas of expertise that they draw on to formulate their daring plans. They are good at putting a good team of people in place around them to help deliver on complex projects. If they are able to put together their own teams, they have a knack for choosing just the right skill set. However, working with them is not for the faint-hearted as they move fast and have very high expectations. They can also make danger look sexy which may entice people who are not really able to handle working with an adventurer.

The now famous apocryphal story about how Shackleton recruited fellow adventurers for his expedition to Antarctica is a good example of this. The authenticity of the ad is highly questionable but it makes a good story. The wording went thus:

*‘Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honour and recognition in case of success.’*

Story has it, he was swamped with applicants. He made danger look sexy!

The archetypal on-screen adventurer is Lara Croft (originally played by Angelina Jolie and now Alicia Vikander). Smart, resourceful, opportunistic, quick-thinking, nimble. Prepared to go on dangerous missions. She gets herself into and out of all sorts of trouble. Breaks the rules when need be but somehow gets the job done, although sometimes with a few casualties along the way.

## The Revolutionary

The final archetype is the corporate *Revolutionary*. This kind of intrapreneur has very high levels of creative energy and very high levels of self-leadership. This is the person who creates game-changing progress through genuine disruption. They don't just challenge the status quo - they turn it upside down with an impossibly bold vision. They're not content with just rocking the boat; they want to capsize it. Fearless and driven by a mission, they are prepared to pour everything into their work. Failure is not an option.



The revolutionary understands the system really well and so is in a good position to transform it from the inside out. They are prepared to change everything, in order to gain everything for everyone. They are not driven by self-interest but social good. But the magnitude of their ideas is such that they seem almost incomprehensible. Colonising Mars for the sake of humanity's future; capturing and organising the entire world's information; creating a source of limitless energy; finding an antidote to aging. They think in exponential leaps. People might often wonder 'what planet they live on'.

The archetypal on-screen revolutionary is Neo from *The Matrix* trilogy. He is able to free his mind from the restrictions of the artificially created reality of the Matrix, refusing the safety of a 'normal' life inside the system. Instead he chooses to risk everything to free humanity.

## Wrap-up

Knowing your archetype might provide you with some interesting insights into your behaviour. This is all well and good. But so what? Is there value in this knowledge for you?

There is if this process gives you insights into where you are and where you want to be; if it helps you to make a conscious decision about which archetype you want to be and how you can chart a course into that space. Which axis do you need to focus on? The Creative Energy axis or the Self-Leadership axis? Both?

What experiences, personal and professional development, and leadership opportunities do you need to seek out to migrate yourself into the space that will satisfy and energise you?

We are complex beings operating in complex systems so there is never a simple one-size-fits-all formula. We behave differently in different situations. So it might even be difficult to identify your predominant archetype. Behaviours of other archetypes may manifest given a change of circumstances. But it is a worthwhile reflection exercise. Self-awareness is the first step on a journey of development. Set some time aside to consider the questions on the following page.



## Idea Extensions

1. Which archetype are you most of the time?

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2. Which archetypes are you some of the time?

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3. Which archetype would you like to be?

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4. If it differs from where you are now, what are the kinds of qualities you will need to develop, evolve or intensify?

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5. Make a plan for how you can do that.

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6. If you have direct reports, can you identify the various archetypes within your team members and what insight does this give you into team functioning?

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# HOW READY ARE YOU TO BE AN INTRAPRENEUR

## The levels of intrapreneurialism

Organisations have people at many different *levels* of readiness when it comes to being intrapreneurial. Factors influencing their level could be things like length of time in the organisation, career stage, previous experience, perceptions about their leader's openness to new ideas, confidence, levels of trust and collaboration, nature of professional development undertaken, to name but a few.

The table below shows five common stages people are at in organisations. Each level has its characteristic activity, focus, outcomes and performance. Let's look at each in turn starting at the lowest level and working upwards.

Activity	Focus	Outcomes	Performance
Opportunity finder	Creating	X8	Very high
Problem solver	Achieving	X4	High
Questioner	Seeking	X2	Above average
Rule follower	Maintaining	X1	Average
Seat warmer	Opposing	X-1	Below average

Figure 4: Levels of intrapreneurialism

## The Seat Warmer

The *Seat Warmer* is an actively disengaged employee who is not looking to add value to the organisation or their team. They have low levels of motivation (either intrinsic or extrinsic). If opportunities present themselves for this person to implement positive change, they won't be acted on. In fact, the opportunities may be opposed or even sabotaged so that other team members can't act on them either. This person demonstrates low levels of commitment, self-leadership and problem-solving so their performance is below average. They often have a negative impact on a team hence the rating of

X-1 in performance. In reality their negative influence may be far greater.

## The Rule Follower

The *Rule Follower* is committed to doing things the way they have always done them. He or she is good at maintaining business-as-usual processes, is very risk averse, fears failure and is unprepared to try anything new – even if it looks like a promising opportunity to add value. Such a person is effective in a static environment but feels out of their depth in an environment that is rapidly changing, evolving and transitioning. Their average performance rating combined with the outcome rating of X1 reflects their skill of maintaining the status quo.

## The Questioner

The *Questioner* is actively seeking for better ways of doing things so they deliver above average performance. This person recognises the need to look for better ways of doing things but lacks the confidence or the skills to be genuinely intrapreneurial. However, the mere fact that they are open to new ways of doing things means that they have more capacity for positive impact in the team or organisation, hence their outcome rating of X2. They can be moved up the ladder with some appropriate professional development or mentoring. They may be described as ‘intrapreneurs-in-waiting’. A failure to develop them results in unfulfilled potential.

## The Problem Solver

The *Problem Solver* is someone who jumps at the chance to make things better. If they see an opportunity, they will act

on it with due diligence. They are confident in their skills and abilities, have demonstrated that they have good judgement and critical and creative thinking processes. They are astute about how they expend their energy and resources. Their excellent problem-solving skills mean that they take action and generate positive outcomes for their team, organisation and customers. As such they are sound intrapreneurs in so far as they have the professional, personal and creative skills to effect excellent outcomes on identified problems. The solutions they produce, and their openness to collaborate, facilitate the team to high performance. Hence their outcome rating is conservatively placed at X4; in reality it is probably much higher depending on the nature of the problems they solve.

## The Opportunity Finder

The *Opportunity Finder* is the true intrapreneur. The opportunity finder goes beyond being a good problem solver to being a talented *problem finder*. In other words, they are excellent strategic thinkers who can look ahead and identify potential problems before they turn into crises that sap time, energy and resources. These people have found ways of rising above the demands of the urgent to focus on the important. They can help shift teams from reactive to proactive mode. Sometimes they are respected for their skills but unfortunately, they are also occasionally sidelined by less future-focused team members or leaders who accuse them of inventing work for already busy people. People who are stuck in an 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' mentality resist the attempts of *opportunity finders* to pre-emptively bring change.

These *opportunity finding* intrapreneurs are invaluable to any organisation that wants to become future-ready - hence their high outcome rating of X8. They are the game changers,

pioneers and drivers, the movers and the shakers who help the team and organisation to create and shape their future. They are high performers who believe in what they are doing and in the important work of their organisation. Consequently, they are constantly vigilant in seeking out opportunities to strengthen the organisation. They see it as their responsibility to be aware of the emerging trends, locally and globally, that are impacting their field, and they spend time thinking and reflecting on how to ride or navigate them.

*‘Virgin could never have grown into the group of more than 200 companies it is now, were it not for a steady stream of intrapreneurs who looked for and developed opportunities, often leading efforts that went against the grain.’* Sir Richard Branson

## Where Is the Critical Mass in Your Organisation?

It stands to reason that any organisation with a preponderance of people at the lower two levels is going to struggle to be innovative. Similarly an organisation with a critical mass in the top three levels is more likely to be change responsive, proactive and innovative. If you are looking for a way to migrate yourself, your team or organisation up the levels, then the following chapters offer frameworks for making that happen.

## Wrap-up

Spend some time reflecting on which level you are at and where you would like to be. If you would like to be at a higher level, then use the content of this book, especially the next

two chapters, to make a plan to help you transition to that level. Consider what this could mean for your career. When you are ready, use the following page to record your ideas.

If you are a senior leader in an organisation with responsibility for steering that organisation into the future, do you have enough *opportunity finders* in the organisation to help with that?



## Idea Extensions

1. Which level of intrapreneurialism are you at now?

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2. Which level would you like to be at?

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3. If it differs from where you are now, what is it going to take to transition to that level?

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4. What would it mean to you and your career, to be able to make that transition?

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5. If you have direct reports, what would it mean to members of your team to also transition to a higher level?

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# ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS FOR INTRAPRENEURIALISM

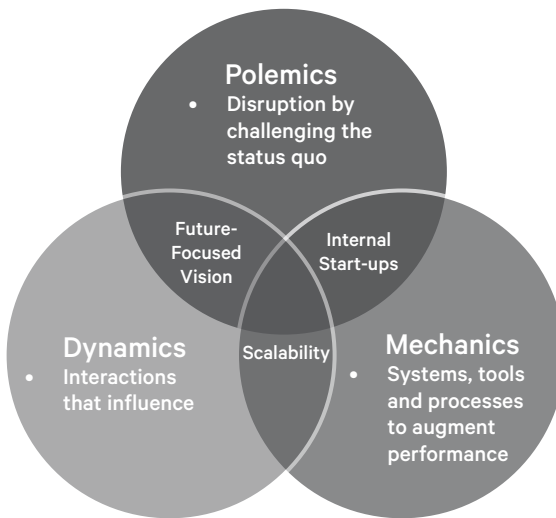
## The key drivers and practices of intrapreneurialism

Intrapreneurialism is generated through three *key drivers* and the intersections among them which give rise to three *key practices*. The drivers are *Polemics*, *Dynamics* and *Mechanics*. They are defined as follows:

1. Polemics refers to the *impetus to change*. This is the challenge to the status quo that leads to change and ultimately disruption.
2. Mechanics refers to the *steps to change*. These are the systems, tools and processes that operationalise and facilitate performance.
3. Dynamics refers to the *diffusion of change*. These are the myriad of interactions, conversations, communications

and collaborations that influence others – stakeholders, citizens, other parts of the business or other organisations. It is dynamics that ensures that change gets traction.

This chapter progressively unpacks the model below to understand the elements that give rise to intrapreneurialism.



*Figure 5: The drivers and key practices of intrapreneurialism*

We will first examine the three key drivers of intrapreneurialism and then the three key practices that emerge at the intersections of the drivers.

## The Three Key Drivers of Intrapreneurialism

### Driver 1 – Polemics

Polemics is the challenge to the status quo that leads to disruption. It is about thinking and acting like an

entrepreneur who looks for opportunities to solve problems and doesn't accept the business-as-usual paradigm.

The word *polemics* means an attack on someone or something. It is closely tied up with argumentation which is the result of questioning the status quo. So when we don't accept things the way they are, we are engaging in the practice of polemics. This is an essential starting point for change – either evolutionary or revolutionary.

Unless we identify the need for change and to challenge the status quo, nothing is going to happen. Imagine what you'd do if you gave yourself a 'Polemics Pass' every day. In other words, the permission to disrupt the status quo, challenge business-as-usual thinking and ask the kinds of difficult questions that prevent groupthink.

The ultimate 'polemicist' was Socrates. His nickname was 'the gadfly'. A gadfly is a horsefly – it is a most irritating insect because it buzzes around, biting livestock and generally making a terrible nuisance of itself. Plato described Socrates as a gadfly because Socrates often got on politicians' nerves by constantly buzzing around asking lots of questions – very often difficult ones that kept them on their toes. He turned his propensity for asking questions into an art form, or perhaps more accurately, into a powerful methodology for teaching and leading through questioning – called the Socratic method. This is where a good teacher (or leader) can help people to discover what they need to know, not by simply telling them but by guiding them to join the dots (so to speak) so they discover the answers themselves.

So be a gadfly – constantly challenge the status quo, ask questions, refuse to accept business-as-usual, this-is-the-

way-we've-always-done-it thinking, and goad people out of complacency.

To help you with this I'm giving you a **POLEMICS PASS**.

It entitles you to disrupt the status quo, challenge BAU (business-as-usual) and be a gadfly by asking difficult questions. It is your reminder to be bold and brave and to enlist growth mindset approaches, step out of your comfort zone and be a catalyst for positive change.

Carry it with you. Take it to your meetings, whip it out anytime you encounter a situation in your workplace where BAU is no longer serving your organisation. Don't accept it. Channel Socrates and be a gadfly.



You can download your *Polemics Pass* at

<http://www.drirenayashinshaw.com/intrapreneurs/#workshop>.

It is at the bottom of the page. Print it out; share it with your fellow intrapreneurs, team members and anyone else who might appreciate the humour and intention.

## Driver 2 – Mechanics

Mechanics refers to the systems, tools and processes that operationalise performance. This driver encompasses all the systemic things that need to happen in order for an intrapreneurial initiative to become reality. It refers to the various business processes that will be brought into play in order to create the change that adds value to the organisation. Just challenging the status quo on its own isn't enough to do that. The environment, the context and the culture need to support it. Challenging the status quo is an important first step – but then what? The answer is *change the system*.

## Driver 3 – Dynamics

The interactions, conversations, communications and collaborations that influence others – stakeholders, citizens, other parts of the business or other agencies or organisations – to ensure that change gets traction. So this is about influencing and engaging people. It is about creating some excitement and momentum for intrapreneurial ideas by creating a 'mini movement', so to speak, within your section of the organisation and beyond that other people want to be involved in.

## The Three Key Practices of Intrapreneurialism

At the intersection of the core drivers lie the outcomes and products of that pairing. *These are the key practices.*

## Key Practice 1 – The Internal ‘Start-up’

At the intersection of *Polemics* and *Mechanics* lies the concept of the ‘Start-up’ – a term not usually associated with large organisations – but it can be. This is where a small project driven by an entrepreneurial thinker interrogates the existing default and experiments with a completely different way of doing something. A start-up is simply a fledgling undertaking initiated by a small group of people, or a single person, working to solve a problem where the solution is not obvious and success is not guaranteed. It addresses a problem *worth* solving. But if successful, there must be embedded in its DNA the possibility to scale up and grow for major impact.

## Key Practice 2 – Scalability

At the intersection of *Mechanics* and *Dynamics* lies *Scalability*. This is where a new way of doing something gets traction because it not only solves a pressing pain point but also the fundamentals of how to do it are worked out. A new way of thinking and doing has emerged. As a result of the pilot (start-up) people now have a reasonable idea about what is required to forge a workable, longer term solution. Also, the people involved in the project, or who support the undertaking, are able to influence others and advocate in a way that garners wide support. The emerging solution is adopted more widely with increasing impact, all the while gathering momentum.

## Key Practice 3 – The Future-Focused Vision

At the intersection of *Dynamics* and *Polemics* lies the *Future-Focused Vision* where people can catch a glimpse of a better future where it is possible to address difficult and complex problems in new and exciting ways. This vision emerges because it is articulated, influenced and shaped by visionary,

disruptive, entrepreneurial thinkers with their finger on the pulse of the future.

## The Model in Action

Let's see how the application of this model plays out in a real context.

One large organisation that managed and delivered large infrastructure projects was highly siloed. As a result there was a lack of coordination between different units that were responsible for different parts of projects. The problems that arose from that were potentially costing the organisation time, money and reputation. There was a lack of coordination and clarity in project handovers from one area to another which resulted in unnecessary rework; teams were unable to be proactive in their resource sharing; and projects would literally look like they were turning up out of nowhere or got lost in the system. It meant that the people working in this part of the organisation who were involved in these projects often felt like they were constantly on the back foot and not able to forward plan.

What the organisation needed was a clear process and structure to provide visibility, support and coordination for all the units involved in particular projects. They needed to be able to share information more efficiently across the different business units without things falling through the cracks or getting lost in the handover process.

Three forward-thinking intrapreneurs from different parts of the business got together and proposed a collaborative solution. They each brought their intimate knowledge of their area to the table and developed a system to track activity around projects in a way that was easily accessible

across all the relevant business areas. It provided a strategic vantage point for people to see the big picture of what was in the pipeline.

The benefits were legion. Easy access to up-to-date data meant that people became aware of upcoming work and proposed work awaiting approval, as well as when particular milestones were due. This all meant that better decisions could be made about resource planning and allocation. Project and program managers acquired ready access to information regarding project outputs.

They started by running a pilot project during which time they found and tested a suitable platform that would support multiple users, trained relevant staff in how to upload information and clarified the processes around the use of the tool. They were also realistic about the potential pitfalls and risks when it was rolled out more broadly, and proactively developed a risk mitigation strategy to ensure take-up of the tool more widely. Wisely, they scaled up incrementally over a period of several months rather than rolling it out all at once across the business. This brought small groups of users on board at a time, who then became resources for the subsequent groups being inducted into the new process. As each group came on board, they were able to share their stories about how they were benefiting from the initiative, which served to provide incentive for the following groups. It also allowed them to see the gaps in the platform and what other information needed to be incorporated to make the tool even more effective and user-friendly. Although it took longer to roll it out this way, implementation was highly effective and use of the tool became progressively embedded into business practices. The senior management of the organisation saw the enormous value of this initiative and



the difference it was making to people's day-to-day work, so we were happy to fund it.

As the three members of this small self-directed team worked together over time to grow the project and bring their initiative to fruition, they learned to recognise their different styles of working. They respected those differences and used that knowledge to help them play to each other's strengths. They also discovered how to unleash intrapreneurial potential in others.

They learned how to become even more effective intrapreneurs through the process and are now so much more confident about their intrapreneurial abilities. One member of the team said to me that she was so much more conscious of allowing her creativity to inform the change process. As a very goal directed person she had a tendency to make decisions without incubating her ideas or the ideas of those around her. However, she realised through her experience in bringing this intrapreneurial initiative to fruition that she could get better outcomes if she allowed ideas some breathing space without stifling them prematurely. 'I'm looking for ways I can use all the learning from this experience in other parts of my work.'

### *Deconstruction*

If we dissect this authentic case study, we see all the elements of the model playing out in this scenario.

The three intrapreneurs engaged in *polemics* when they decided to disrupt the status quo. The existing business-as-usual practices within the organisation had, over time, led to a situation where important processes had become outdated and unable to sustain the increasing complexity of

knowledge management that was now required for the work their organisation was undertaking.

With the sanction and encouragement of their leaders they introduced a new software platform that enabled them to devise a new way of managing and communicating information. A new tool had been introduced to augment performance, the *mechanics* of which changed existing processes. The *key practice* at this point was to run a pilot which was, in effect, the equivalent of an *internal start-up*. At this point they were testing and measuring, ironing out the bugs and preparing to bring others on board – slowly and organically.

Over a period of several weeks they expanded the group of users of the tool, thereby beginning the process of diffusing the innovation throughout their part of the organisation, which is the driver of *dynamics*. As they did this they enlisted the help of the steadily expanding pool of users to influence others thereby incrementally *scaling up* the change, which is *key practice 2*.

The third *key practice* of having a *future-focused vision* which completes the cycle was illustrated by the words of one of the team who said that she was now looking for other ways to use the experience and learning from this project to bring improvements to other parts of her work and the business.

## Preparation for the Next Chapter

Now that we have analysed the core model, the next step is to identify and describe the three stages people go through on the journey to becoming confident, creative intrapreneurs who help organisations to SOAR. Each phase is characterised by a particular focus and activity. Any skill development

proceeds more smoothly if we take the appropriate actions in the appropriate order.

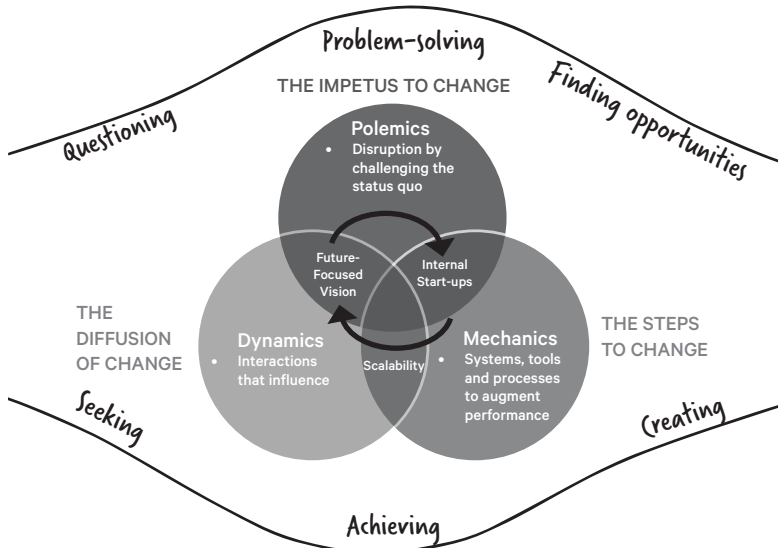


Figure 6: A holistic model of intrapreneurialism

During the first stage, people focus on questioning their own practices and seeking knowledge about themselves and where they might need to place their developmental energy. They are in a state of what could be called ‘attention in’ because they are focusing on their own positioning and readiness in preparation for taking the next step.

In the second stage people direct their attention more on the external environment so they enter a state of what we will call ‘attention out’. This is where they are looking at the issues and challenges in their immediate context in order to problem-solve. As they do so they will achieve outcomes that will build their confidence, preparing them for stage three.

Once people reach stage three they understand themselves and their environment and are ready to look to the future. They are now in a state of ‘attention forward’. The focus shifts to finding opportunities to help build a future-ready organisation. At this stage they are literally creating the future of their workplace and their organisation. Their actions will leave a legacy.

How long this journey takes is dependent on the amount of support and mentoring people receive to help them transition to the next level. Good instructional scaffolding supports development and accelerates progress.

## Wrap-up

This chapter introduced the three key drivers and the three key practices of intrapreneurialism. This knowledge forms the foundation for the intrapreneurial journey we’re about to go on in the next chapter.



## Idea Extensions

1. When and where could you use your Polemics Pass?

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2. Think of an intrapreneurial initiative you have been involved with or have observed first-hand. Map the key drivers and key practices of the model to the activities and stages of the initiative.

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3. Were any key elements missing? If so, how did that impact the outcomes?

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# THE STAGES OF INTRAPRENEURIALISM

## Charting the steps on the journey

*Intrapreneurialism* is a relatively new concept. So, it helps to have an instructional process as a guide to becoming an intrapreneur.

This chapter lays out the pathway to intrapreneurialism. It translates the holistic model of intrapreneurialism presented at the end of the previous chapter into a staged and stepped process for systematic implementation. There are three stages with nine steps, as illustrated in Figure 7 below. We look at the characteristics of each stage, the significance and contribution of each step, and the outcomes of both successful and unsuccessful negotiation of that step.

Intrapreneurialism is a learned skill. And as with any learned skill there is a road to mastery which charts the incremental development of capacity and confidence. As you read this chapter, it might help to make frequent reference to the journey framework below.

STAGE	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
	Focus/Activity	Focus/Activity	Focus/Activity
	Questioning / Seeking	Problem-solving / Achieving	Opportunity finding / Creating
POLEMICS	(Direction)	(Shift)	(Future-ready)
	Challenge	Change	Disruption
	(Stagnation) 3	(Defeat) 6	(Irrelevance) 9
MECHANICS	(Improvement)	(Traction)	(Flexibility)
	Insight	Adaptation	Experimentation
	(Rigidity) 2	(Disappointment) 5	(Frustration) 8
DYNAMICS	(Preparation)	(Cooperation)	(Leverage)
	Awareness	Initiation	Collaboration
	(Inertia) 1	(Apathy) 4	(Disengagement) 7

Figure 7: The journey to intrapreneurialism

## Stage One – Questioning and Seeking

People negotiating this stage are at the beginning of their intrapreneurial journey. They are learning the ropes, laying the foundations of their understanding, and testing and developing their capacities in relation to the three drivers of polemics, mechanics and dynamics. The beginning of any change journey starts with a *focus* on questioning the current reality and then *seeking* new ways of thinking, doing and being.

We will call this stage *the novice intrapreneur*. It must not be assumed that people at this stage are necessarily novice professionals. They may be experienced leaders or technicians but simply new to the concept of intrapreneurialism and the act of being an intrapreneur.



## STEPS 1–3

### AWARENESS – INSIGHT – CHALLENGE

#### *Step 1 – Awareness*

Without *awareness* of the need to bring intrapreneurial thinking and doing into the team or organisation, nothing will happen. People need to, at the very least, be aware of the behaviours, thinking and habits that will help or hinder their journey to intrapreneurialism. Without this awareness, there is inertia; with it, there is a preparedness to seek alternative ways of doing things.

To build an awareness of where you might be in your intrapreneurial journey, take this 20 question survey and draw your own conclusions.

INDICATOR	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am motivated to be intrapreneurial at work.					
2. I prefer a high degree of autonomy in my work.					
3. I love the challenge of finding better ways of doing things.					
4. I am good at seeing the big picture.					
5. I am an independent thinker.					
6. I am prepared to experiment with new ways of doing things even if it will initially take more time.					
7. I welcome the opportunity to step out of my comfort zone.					

8.	I am prepared to take calculated risks.					
9.	I am keenly interested in the trends shaping our workplace.					
10.	I am not afraid to stand out and be different.					
11.	I believe I can constantly improve my ability to think creatively.					
12.	I am good at persevering in the face of obstacles.					
13.	I make 'thinking time' a priority.					
14.	I like to ask lots of questions.					
15.	I am constantly developing myself – in both my personal and professional life.					
16.	I regularly seek and find opportunities to collaborate with colleagues.					
17.	I have a well-developed professional network beyond my immediate work colleagues.					
18.	I deliberately look for varied or unusual sources of information when doing research or starting new projects.					
19.	I feel that people at work ought to be more encouraged to think differently.					
20.	I am good at persuading people to believe in ideas I think are valuable.					

## *Step 2 – Insight*

*Insight* into what needs to be done to move forward is an essential precursor to change. This comes from the act of

questioning current practices and seeking better alternatives. Without this insight, we don't know what we don't know, and so are trapped in rigid default structures with no way to rise above them. But WITH insight we can shine a light on things we want to change, thereby bringing improvement.

One young intrapreneur told me that he had a major AHA moment when realising that he could bring project outcomes to fruition much faster by engaging with stakeholders more effectively and opening the lines of communication. He learned that by proactively reaching out to the wide variety of external players, expensive delays were avoided. It might seem obvious. However, people who are in the early stages of learning how to lead change still have to experience it first-hand.

### *Step 3 – Challenge*

Unless we are prepared to *challenge* the status quo, we will never advance. All progress comes as a result of contesting and interrogating the default – for the purpose of a better outcome or state. Without the freedom and capacity to challenge, we stagnate. Conversely, when we are brave enough to question established practices, we find new directions to move us forward.

A budding intrapreneur wanted to transform the way major strategic documents were developed and presented in his government organisation. It was part of his role to produce the documents and then send them through the approval process. The existing format was dry and boring and lengthy and he wanted to change that into a much more engaging format that was shorter, visually appealing and incorporated infographics. The organisation was supportive of the initiative but he underestimated the number of people who

would need to be involved in providing approval. It took him so much longer to implement his initiative than he expected given that he already had ‘in-principle’ approval from senior management. His learning was that he realised that ‘warming people up’ was an essential precursor for implementing change. In other words, flagging the change with the relevant people and enlisting their cooperation prior to them being presented with the change. Without doing that his revised document format kept getting held up because it was taking people by surprise and they needed time to get used to it.

Once again that might sound obvious in hindsight. Basic change theory tells us to prepare the ground for new initiatives by bringing people on board *before* they are expected to change. This is likely to deliver a much smoother passage. But unless budding change makers experience it for themselves and are able to gain *insight* from their experience – it is just theory.

Furthermore, while change theory might be part of a core skill set for people who work in the areas of Human Resources or Corporate Development, people in technical or governance or other areas are not necessarily familiar with it. And yet in the new world of work, *everyone* is being asked to be an innovator, but without the knowledge of how to make it happen effectively. This is why progressive organisations are bringing innovation and intrapreneurialism education to their workforce.

## Stage Two – Problem-Solving and Achieving

In this stage intrapreneurs increasingly gain confidence in their abilities as they initiate influential interactions with

others, adapt processes or procedures and implement change that will start to deliver a new normal. The focus at this level is to engage in *good problem-solving* in order to *achieve* good outcomes.

We will call this stage *the neophyte intrapreneur*. Not a novice but not yet an expert.

The value of this stage is in helping people to develop their belief in their power to effect change by making progress through minor milestones. This builds confidence and motivation to tackle bigger, more disruptive projects. Renowned psychologists Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer write about this in their *Harvard Business Review* article entitled ‘The Power of Small Wins.’<sup>1</sup> Their research showed that incremental progress in meaningful work has a potent effect on creativity and productivity.

Meaningful work does change the world but not necessarily on a grand scale. They write, ‘Fortunately, to feel meaningful, work doesn’t have to involve putting the first personal computers in the hands of ordinary people, or alleviating poverty, or helping to cure cancer. Work with less profound importance to society can matter if it contributes value to something or someone important to the worker. Meaning can be as simple as making a useful and high-quality product for a customer or providing a genuine service for a community. It can be supporting a colleague or boosting an organisation’s profits by reducing inefficiencies in a production process.’

This is the stage of incremental improvement, achieving positive outcomes through good problem-solving.

## STEPS 4–6 INITIATION – ADAPTATION – CHANGE

### *Step 4 – Initiation*

The diffusion of new ideas and new ways of doing things will be facilitated if we are able to *initiate* influential communication with others in some way. We need to be able to engage people through deep dialogue and authentic interactions. If we fail to take action in this area and do not initiate interactions with others in pursuit of intrapreneurial initiatives, then eventually people will become apathetic about our idea and move on to something more compelling. Done well, however, we can be confident of gaining cooperation from others in pursuing intrapreneurial ideas which will accelerate the diffusion of the idea.

If we want to successfully diffuse our ideas, then these three keys are essential. Empathy, where we see a situation from another person's perspective. Participation, where we create a sense of group identity, ownership and a shared vision. Communication, where you ensure that everyone is on the same page. Let us look at each in more detail.

### *Empathy*

Empathy is very much about relationship building and trust. This starts with understanding other people's perspectives and helps to create acceptance within a group in order to generate a sense of community. This in turn fosters strong group identity and a sense of belonging where people support each other in pursuit of collective goals. Without this strong sense of trust, organisational cultures turn toxic. And then too much energy gets sapped and siphoned off in negative ways instead of being directed to the advancement of the

organisation and just doing good work. If we want to initiate and sustain intrapreneurial activity, then build empathy into our dealings with others.

### ***Participation***

Participation is about encouraging others to become involved in changes we would like to implement. Enlisting the involvement of others substantially increases our chances of success in the implementation of intrapreneurial ideas. Embedded change is more likely if we involve EVERYONE who has a stake in the issue. Involvement helps to create a shared vision where people want to contribute because they feel that they have a stake in the outcome. People support what they help create.

### ***Communication***

One of the main reasons that even brilliant initiatives fail is a lack of good communication. How can we guard against that? Firstly, make it personal. The value of personal contact cannot be overstated. Wherever possible communicate plans personally rather than through email. Secondly, discuss the plans. Meet with people who will be impacted by changes and talk about the initiative in a way that will enthuse and excite them – clearly showing that there is benefit for all. Communicating in this way also means that concerns and questions can be addressed immediately. Finally, advocate effectively for your ideas. The most effective way of persuading and influencing people is to identify the *benefits* for them and the organisation. Be clear about what problem it is that is being solved and how this solution will make things better. The golden rule is this: when talking about intrapreneurial initiatives always lead with a benefits-driven case.

## *Step 5 – Adaptation*

Once problems have been identified for solving, a quick win can be achieved by looking for ways of adapting the context/situation into a more effective one. *Adaptation* by its nature is about small to medium size evolutionary modifications and variations rather than transformative, revolutionary outcomes. People often need to build their confidence in smaller ventures before tackling massive ones. If adaptation is done well, it brings traction to intrapreneurial initiatives, if not, it ends in disappointment.

### *Evolution Not Revolution*

This is where progress is achieved through a series of incremental steps. Approaching intrapreneurialism in this way is useful because it can help build confidence in smaller ventures before tackling disruptive ones.

### *Why, What, How*

When innovating through adaptation, think of the process as happening in three parts.

First of all, start with WHY. Why is this a worthy initiative? Why is it a problem worth solving? Then move to WHAT. What difference will it make? What outcome are you after and if you don't make the change then what will the future look like without it? Finally – HOW will you make it happen? It is in this space that there is great innovation opportunity! How could you do it differently? Think about how you may have solved similar problems in the past and how you could build on that experience to approach this one differently.



### *Step 6 – Change*

Once people start actively problem-solving and achieving outcomes on the issues they identify as ripe for adaptation, they bring about change. If done well, their efforts bring a shift in the productivity of their own work and that of their teams and colleagues, adding value to their organisation. If done poorly without achieving traction, people can be left feeling defeated, which can lead to a sense of jadedness with a disinclination to be involved in future intrapreneurial activity.

## Stage Three – Opportunity Finding and Creating

Stage Three is the domain of the *expert intrapreneur* who knows how to leverage time and resources through collaboration, and is confident with running experiments in the form of pilots and then scaling them up to create disruption. At this stage the focus is on proactively *finding opportunities* that will enable you to *create* the future.

### STEPS 7–9 COLLABORATION – EXPERIMENTATION – DISRUPTION

### *Step 7 – Collaboration*

One of the most effective levers for transforming teams and organisations and implementing innovation through intrapreneurialism in an embedded way is *collaboration*. When people with intrapreneurial dispositions can ignite the flame in others, then opportunities are amplified. Now there are multiple eyes and minds engaged in the transformation

process with the result that teams are much more likely to find opportunities for progress. Done well, this leads to leveraged activity that delivers much more than the sum of the parts. Done poorly it has the potential to disappoint and divide people, resulting in disengagement.

When it comes to collaboration there are a number of cultural factors within an organisation that can help to facilitate it. Firstly, a shared sense of purpose. This helps people to feel that they are working together for something worthwhile and bigger than them. Secondly, an environment that values contribution – where people look beyond their specific roles. Thirdly, an organisational infrastructure that not only values collaboration but also facilitates it through open channels of communication and processes that enable people to work together in flexible ways, e.g. by serving on more than one team. Fourthly, having leaders who model collaboration and who lead by example. Finally, open pathways along which information can flow, vertically and horizontally, e.g. having an online collaboration platform.

The table below offers suggestions for facilitating collaboration on an individual, team and organisation level.

Individual	Team	Organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek and support different points of view</li> <li>• Encourage respectful debate about ideas</li> <li>• Share information and knowledge freely</li> <li>• Listen carefully and be a good listener</li> <li>• Ask questions</li> <li>• Encourage people to network with each other</li> <li>• Be clear about expectations</li> <li>• Recognise that feedback is good</li> <li>• Give and receive constructive feedback</li> <li>• Listen carefully and ask questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to a shared purpose</li> <li>• Hold themselves accountable to project outcomes</li> <li>• Build trust, empathy and good relationships</li> <li>• Create a safe environment</li> <li>• Share responsibility as well as power</li> <li>• Consult regularly with other teams</li> <li>• Involve other teams in idea generation sessions</li> <li>• Reflect collectively on project outcomes</li> <li>• Value diversity</li> <li>• Share information and knowledge freely</li> <li>• Encourage respectful debate about ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities for cross-functional teams</li> <li>• Rotate people across areas</li> <li>• Involve external stakeholders in decision-making</li> <li>• Regularly consult and seek input and feedback from partners and the community</li> <li>• Seek external feedback and incorporate it</li> <li>• Break down silos</li> <li>• Network the organisation to facilitate access to technology, talent and information</li> <li>• Pool resources across the organisation</li> <li>• Encourage people to network so they become collaboration catalysts and conduits by which others can join forces</li> </ul>

## Step 8 – Experimentation

When looking for opportunities to create new ways of doing things within an organisation it is essential to be able to *experiment*. This is how new processes are created. Trying to be intrapreneurial without the permission or licence to experiment leads to frustration. Done well it leads to more flexible systems and new ways of working for the organisation.

When we are experimenting there are three key elements to keep in mind.

1. Have a start-up mentality. Run pilots. Start small, iterate and SCALE UP. Be agile. Be prepared to change your approach. Figure out FAST what does and does not work. Be benefit-driven. Problem-solve!
2. Think like a business owner! Imagine your income was tied directly to the success of your initiative. How would you use resources? What ROI (Return on Investment) would you be looking for? Aim for outcomes, not ‘busyness’.
3. Align outcomes with organisational objectives. Be accountable for meeting corporate objectives. Think big picture. Be strategic.

Experiments are pilot projects, the equivalent of internal start-ups. Small. Iterative. Scalable. If an organisation has a risk-averse culture, the recipe for successful experimentation that can facilitate intrapreneurialism is in these four steps:

1. Identify the value of an initiative. Be very strategic about which ideas are selected, groomed and implemented, ensuring that they align with organisational goals.

2. Create an MVP (which is a minimum viable product) that does not necessarily require the investment of substantial resources that commit you to a particular course of action.
3. Analyse the results and reflect as quickly as possible on what happened and why.
4. Iterate! Make objective decisions about the best way forward.

And that is your experiment.

### *Step 9 – Disruption*

*Disruption* is the leap into the future. This is where a talented intrapreneur or a team of them are thinking ahead of the curve. They identify the trends on the horizon and can prepare for them proactively. Successful disruption enables an organisation to be future-ready. Without it, organisations may be in danger of becoming irrelevant.

What do we mean by the term *disruption*? Today we commonly use it very broadly to refer to any innovation that is quite significant and that interrupts and changes a normal activity. I often hear Uber being referred to as disruptive because of the impact it has had on the taxi industry. However, that was not the original definition.

The term *disruptive innovation* was originally coined by Clayton Christensen, professor at Harvard Business School, in his 1997 book, *The Innovator's Dilemma*.<sup>2</sup> The original definition of disruption was the following:

*'It transforms a product that was historically so expensive and complicated that only a few people with a lot of*

*resources had access to it. Disruptive Innovation makes it more accessible and affordable to a much larger population.'*

*Disruptive innovation* is a process in which an organisation or start-up enters the bottom end of a market with a simpler and cheaper form of a product, thereby making it accessible to a whole new group of people who couldn't afford it previously. And then ends up displacing the established competitor.

The classic example is the advent of the personal computer which gave everyone access to the kind of technology that previously only large organisations could afford.

If we were to adhere strictly to Clayton Christensen's definition, Uber wouldn't be considered a disruptive innovation in the transport industry (as they often are) because they're not servicing a whole new market that couldn't afford transport. However, they could end up *becoming* disruptive because they are currently trialling in Dubai autonomous, self-flying drones that can carry one passenger about 50 kilometres at a top speed of about 160 kilometres per hour. Very few people at the moment could afford to commute to work via helicopter. So this innovation would be disruptive in the true sense of the word because it would give the masses access to a technology that is currently exclusive and expensive.

But I don't want to get hung up on semantics.

For our purposes let's use the term *disruption* to mean anything that will significantly change the way we do what we do, i.e. a major departure from the norm that positions an organisation more effectively for the future. Even more than that, it is a course of action that is simultaneously unexpected, surprising, audacious, ambitious, elegant, bold

and creative. It makes you want to slap your forehead and cry out, 'I never saw that coming but it's brilliant!'

In an exponential world disruptive innovation is becoming increasingly frequent. Keeping up is the new standing still and digital is the new normal. We need to be not just future-ready but also future-focused so that we can constantly stay ahead of the curve and be relevant. This requires us to be knowledgeable about trends – global, national and local – that are going to impact on us. That will help us to avoid disaster or extinction or irrelevance. Constantly asking the following kinds of questions helps: 'What current and future trends will impact our core business?' 'How will we prepare for them?'

Intrapreneurial leaders are the big picture thinkers who can take the strategic view. These are the people who can see a vision of where the organisation should be heading given the shifts in the environment. The only way an organisation will be buoyant in such a fast-moving world is if the organisation has a critical mass of intrapreneurs within their ranks.

One of the greatest traps for leaders is to be constantly attending to things that are urgent at the expense of the important. Thus they live in a reactive instead of a proactive mode. They can become trapped putting out endless bushfires without ever doing some proactive controlled burning to avoid the bushfires in the first place. Reactivity has come to be accepted as the norm in many workplaces, in which case that organisation will find it difficult to be future-focused.

So our challenge then is how to disrupt ourselves before we are disrupted by external forces. Being proactive keeps us out of crisis mode. It gives us the control to implement change strategically and on our terms.

## ***10x Your Thinking***

Great disruptions invariably start from small beginnings such as continuous improvement projects. Think of the last time you made a small change to your workplace that was successful. Now just imagine that instead of asking yourself, ‘Can I improve something by 10%?’ you ask, ‘How can I improve it by 10 times?’ To do this you need to think big and not worry if it sounds impossible.

Google calls it *10x thinking*. So to step into the disruption space, 10x something. Where are there inefficiencies within your business processes? 10x the solution. Ask your clients or end users what they would love to see you do. And 10x the delivery. Look at a big project and 10x it by asking, ‘How could I deliver a better result with 10 times *less* funding.’

The second way of sparking disruptive ideas is to look backwards from a future vantage point.

Imagine it is five years down the track. And your organisation has become the world leader in delivering on its mission. What is your organisation like? Close your eyes and imagine you are there. Look around.

What does it look like?

What does it sound like?

Who are your customers?

Where are your customers?

How has the service you provide evolved?

How do you deliver it?



How do you work with others?

What other organisations do you now partner with?

How is your organisation structured?

How has technology transformed what you do?

By creating a vision of the future we can ask ourselves, ‘What do we need to do today to achieve that future?’ Answering that question will open up opportunities for intrapreneurialism.

## Wrap-up

Anytime I share a model I also add the caveat that models are simultaneously useful and flawed. This pathway is a useful guide. Reality is rarely so neat and clinical. So use the model presented in this chapter as a compass but be prepared to deviate from the path if it serves you.



## Idea Extensions

1. Which stage of the intrapreneurial journey are you at?

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2. If you want to go to the next level, what steps will take you there?

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3. Focus on applying those steps to any projects you are working on right now.

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PART 3

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# INTRAPRENEURIALISM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVITY

## Positioning Intrapreneurialism

Much of the activity within an organisation can be classified into one of four categories based on the outcome it brings for the organisation. These are stability, maintenance, improvement or disruption. A healthy organisation has a balance of activity in all four categories. The figure below explains the origin of the categories and where the activity of intrapreneurialism is located within these categories.

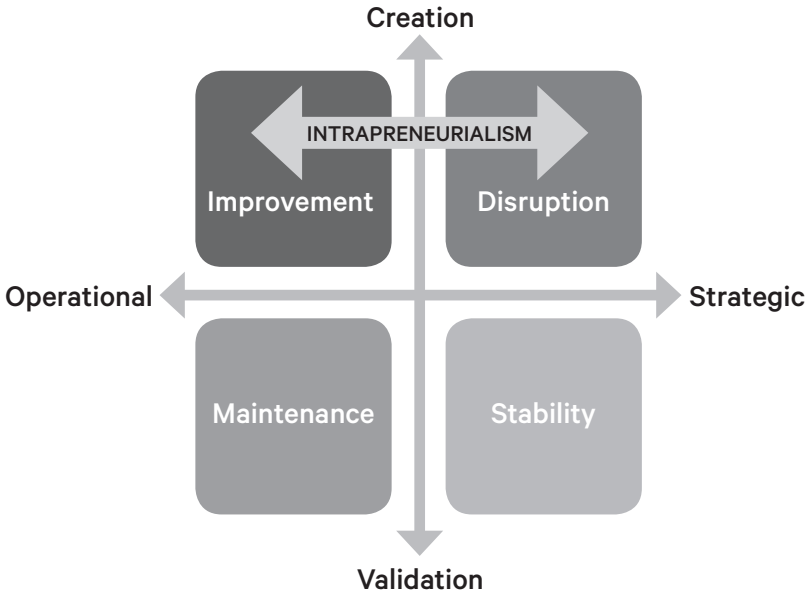


Figure 8: Intrapreneurialism and its relationship to organisational activity

Let us look at how these categories arise and what they mean for an organisation.

## Operational Versus Strategic Activity

The X axis represents the continuum between *operational* and *strategic* activity. Intrapreneurial leaders can move along that continuum in both directions as required. Both elements are important and complementary, often operating in parallel. Both are essential elements of a well-run organisation that is delivering on its mission and charter.

*Strategic* thinking and doing is about having the big picture and long-term view. It is like sitting in the ‘crow’s nest’ scanning the horizon. The crow’s nest was the structure



built on the upper part on the main mast of a sailing ship. It was the lookout point to spot land or approaching hazards or other ships – especially enemy ships. So today having a strategic view for the organisation is really important in fast-moving times when the environment is changing so quickly. What are the changes on the horizon that are headed our way – if we can spot them, then can we be ready for them? This is the kind of insight and intel that will drive smart innovation within an organisation. That is what helps them to be ahead of the curve. Fortunately we live in a time when we have easy access to data that makes it possible to be extremely well informed about trends.

The other end of the spectrum is *operational* activity – all those essential core activities that drive the delivery side of the organisation and that keep functionality at optimal levels. Operational activity is by its very nature detailed, short-term and evolutionary. The more effectively and efficiently these activities are carried out – the more productive the organisation.

## Validation Versus Creation

The Y axis represents the continuum between validation and creation. Intrapreneurialism requires creation rather than validation. It is driven by looking at things through new eyes and seeing opportunity rather than reinforcing and justifying what already exists.

Validation is about sanctioning, affirming and verifying something. It is about confirming that something is correct and acceptable and then endorsing it. It is the opposite of challenging something with a view to changing it.

That happens at the other end of the spectrum which is labelled creation, which refers to revision rather than replication. In this sense creation refers to looking for possibilities, using imagination to find opportunity and possibility thinking to find the gaps.

It is like the difference between Han van Meegeren and Picasso. Han van Meegeren was an expert art forger – his job was perfect reproduction of existing artworks. Picasso changed the art world by creating a whole new style of painting. Validation reproduces, creation changes.

When we overlay the two axes we get the four quadrants of Figure 8. Let us look at each in turn.

## Maintenance

Maintenance is the validation or reproduction of existing processes and practices, where operational procedures are meticulously followed without variation. And in some contexts this is essential. We want people like surgeons and pilots to have a stringent checklist that helps them to prepare and carry out procedures that are tried and true. Mid-operation or mid-flight is not the time to be experimenting with new processes to see if they work better. Of course, if there is an emergency and the whole situation deviates from the expected – then you would like a professional in charge who can save the day with some quick and effective problem-solving. So in those kinds of contexts, advancements are made by highly controlled testing in non-life threatening situations. And no one would expect differently.

But we are talking about the kind of workplace activity where no one is going to die if you look for new ways of doing something. In most workplaces constantly validating

operational procedures that are outdated will reduce rather than increase productivity. The trick is to find which processes are still serving the organisation well and which are ripe for revision. And start with those.

## Stability

In this quadrant we have strategic validation. In other words, it is a reinforcement of existing strategy. To use a sailing metaphor – it is a case of staying the course and continuing with the existing strategy and business model. In non-disruptive times this works well. But in disruptive times such as we are experiencing now it can be a recipe for irrelevance. A well-known example of this is what happened to Kodak. They chose to validate and stay with their existing business model for print based photography which had served them so well. Their thinking was – we’re the best in the world at what we do, so we will be okay. They didn’t see the tidal wave of disruption coming their way in time. When they did it was too late. So after being around for 120 years and employing 50,000 people worldwide they filed for bankruptcy in 2012.

Seeking stability in disruptive times is like building a house instead of a boat to navigate unpredictable, choppy seas. It’s the wrong strategy and the wrong vehicle. While it might sound comforting it is not a fit-for-purpose approach.

## Improvement

Now we move *above* the line where the emphasis is on creation rather than validation. This is where we look for new ways of doing operational things. This is the home of continuous improvement and evolutionary rather than revolutionary changes. It is the preparedness to ask ourselves, ‘How can I create value through incremental change?’ It is the act of

looking for and implementing process improvement that increases productivity, customer satisfaction, saves resources etc.

Ed Catmull, in his book *Creativity, Inc.*<sup>1</sup>, says, ‘You can win by reinventing the way you do your work, even if the business remains the same.’

One regional director in a Queensland government agency noticed how much time and effort her team was spending on managing the resource-sharing processes in her region. Over the course of a week her team members would spend hours on the phone having the same conversation with people asking the same questions, repeating the same information. So she developed a new methodology for how people secured agreement in the first place for sharing resources. It was simple and elegant and immediately cut down on the amount of time her team spent answering questions. She refined the process and rolled it out across a larger area with other teams, which saved them time as well thereby improving productivity. When implemented in her area alone, it yielded a saving of \$15,000 a year. Multiply that by the number of teams that adopt the process and the savings could amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. This is an example of a small improvement adding value to the organisation. It is not earth shattering, but many of these sorts of small incremental improvements can collectively bring enormous saving by reclaiming lost productivity back to the organisation over time.

## Disruption

The final quadrant represents strategic creation. *Disruption*. We talked about the meaning of this term in the previous Chapter. To recap let’s use it to refer to innovation that

represents a major change to the way things are done – a *leap* forward rather than a step forward. In this case it is the rethinking or reinvention of a business model or part thereof. It is the kind of change that asks people to see what they do through a completely new lens. Other ways of describing it would be a game changer, paradigm shift, the ‘moonshot’.

For example, Lego turned their clients into collaborators when they started awarding prizes for new Lego designs. In effect they put 50,000 people onto their Research and Development team without putting them on the payroll. It was simply a re-engineering of how they interacted with their customer base. Apple’s brand grew so quickly because they focused on customer experience rather than making computers. American home loan lender Quicken Loans revolutionised their business by moving documentation processing online and transforming their customer experience. Two decades ago it was an innovation that transformed the industry and enabled them to outstrip their competition. They ensured that they maintained this momentum by setting up what they called their ‘mousetrap team’ whose sole responsibility was to scrutinise and innovate all the company’s processes. The result is that the company grew rapidly and even won a number of notable awards for its high customer satisfaction.<sup>2</sup>

A large government body in my home state of Queensland which has over 30 individual education training offices around the state has historically kept those training records on paper files. These files filled over 3000 archive boxes which were stored in many different locations (including in sheds, under desks, in hallways).

The problem had gotten worse over the years and would continue to get worse as the number of files continued to grow and more boxes were filled. Retrieval of records was

very time consuming as particular individual records were difficult to locate. This was exacerbated by the fact that each of the 30 training offices had their own way of filing records so there was no standardisation and consistency. Imagine you are in a wind tunnel with thousands of pieces of paper swirling all around you and you are trying to catch one particular page. That is how one person described to me the experience of trying to find a record.

It was a chronic state-wide problem that was in the 'too-hard' basket. People avoided talking about it; there were no funds allocated to solving it; and no one had a plan for how to start tackling it. What they did have was a mandate, as the government of the state had a commitment to digitisation by 2020.

Enter intrapreneur extraordinaire – Christine. She decided to start by tackling the problem on a local level in one of the smaller regional areas with her team of four. This is what she did.

She started by creating a project process map with some free software she downloaded from the internet. This made it possible for her to share the information digitally, easily and in a visually engaging way. That on its own was a significant innovation as it was a very different way of sharing information within the organisation. Since using that method in her trial for this project, it has been picked up by others who are now using it for a variety of other projects.

She then pitched her idea to the senior leaders in her area and obtained both approval and funding to proceed with the project. The organisation Chris worked in was highly bureaucratic and had she not received approval she would not have been able to proceed. By leading with a benefits-

driven case and showing how her intrapreneurial initiative aligned with the strategic goals of the organisation, she effectively negotiated that hurdle.

She purchased some simple project management software that enabled her to represent processes using colourful flowcharts. Her team of four quickly learned how to use the software to produce attractive flowcharts and infographics to clarify the process for the project and also to use it as a training tool for others to apply in their context. They were already thinking about the impact of this initiative in a much bigger way. They knew that once they had worked out the most efficient process for digitising the documents they were going to have to train teams across the state in how to do that in their own local areas. So they were building saleability into their trial. After trialling the process with one group in a regional town, they gathered data about its effectiveness using SurveyMonkey to inform the improvement process.

Within the space of two months they went from having no process for digitising the organisation's extensive paper records to having an informative, colourful, visually engaging yet detailed procedures manual that could be used by branches across the state to digitise their records. There was now a procedure for scanning, archiving and destroying existing records, and for how to deal with the new records that were 'born digital' so they could do away with paper records altogether.

Before she had even completed the trial at the first site, people from across the state were contacting her, asking for the process manual. You know you have an idea whose time has come when that happens. People across the state had gone from avoiding the problem to wanting to be a part of the solution. At last the organisation had a 21st century records

management process that was a completely different way of performing this activity. In this sense it was a disruptive innovation. It just needed a committed intrapreneur to take the lead and get the ball rolling. By scaling up the concept originally trialled within the regional area, Christine and her team of four have successfully implemented a state-wide roll out of her initiative over a period of several months. At time of writing, 27 of the 30 training centres have implemented the new way of capturing training records digitally.

Transforming processes through digitisation is still one of the most effective ways for an organisation to disrupt itself. In a government context there is still huge under-utilised capacity in this area.<sup>3</sup> One particularly effective way of doing this, as we see from this case study, is to start small and scale up.

## Wrap-up

Intrapreneurialism comes in different shapes and sizes and in different denominations. It's all valuable. Improvement initiatives can lead to disruptive innovation if they are scaled up.

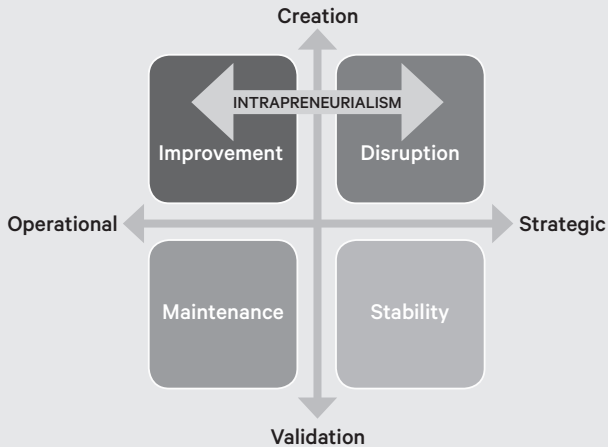
Realistically organisations need to operate in all four quadrants. They need a balanced mix of activities. There is no prescriptive ratio of what specific percentage is the ideal amount of activity in each quadrant. It depends on the nature of the organisation, its aspirations, its vision, its size, its levels of accountability. However, one thing is certain, if there is no or almost no *above-the-line* activity, that organisation is in danger of becoming irrelevant.





## Idea Extensions

1. Estimate the percentage of activity your organisation engages in within each of the four quadrants currently. Write the percentages in the relevant quadrants in the model below.



2. Consider if this is a good mix for the organisation going forward. Would it serve the organisation to revise this mix?

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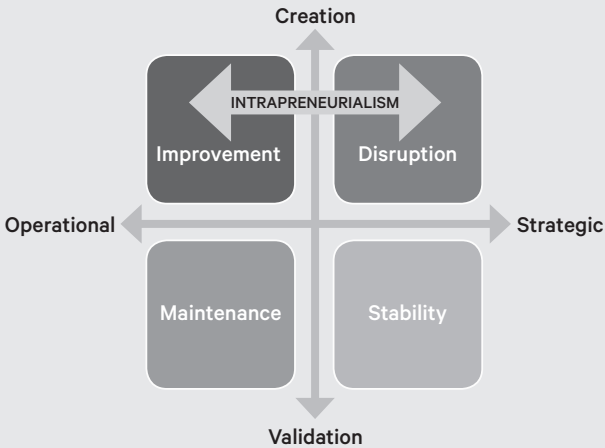


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3. If so, what would be a better mix? Write the percentages in the relevant quadrants in the model below.



# OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTRAPRENEURIALISM

## Rising above the obstacles

Barriers to intrapreneurialism and innovation can come from *people* within an organisation as well as from the *systems* within the organisation. The barriers may be *visible* or *invisible* depending on how easily they can be identified.

A key step in bringing intrapreneurial initiatives to realisation is being able to identify the barriers as well as the source of these barriers. What's visible and what's invisible is different for different organisations. Identifying and addressing barriers to innovation is just as important as finding innovation opportunities.

Trying to implement innovation without addressing inherent obstacles is like putting a new coat of paint over the old one without stripping it back and preparing the surface – it won't

be long before the new paint bubbles and peels. It won't 'take' and you will have wasted your new paint and your labour.

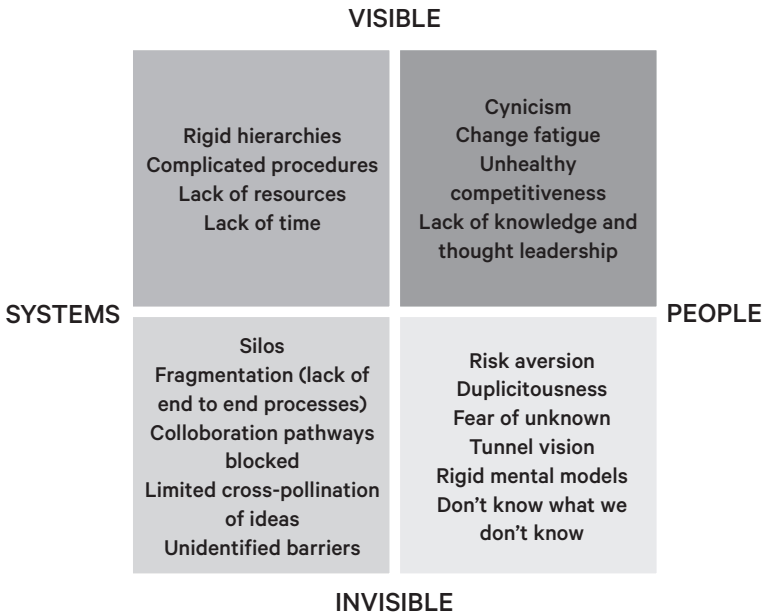


Figure 9: Barriers to intrapreneurialism

## Visible People Barriers

So let's look first at visible barriers to intrapreneurialism that commonly come from people.

Common barriers in this quadrant are things like cynicism, frustration, change fatigue, unhealthy competitiveness (jealousy), disrespect towards people and ideas, a lack of motivation, open communication, knowledge, insight, vision and thought leadership, lack of interest or apathy about what is happening in the bigger picture of the industry.

These barriers are visible because people talk about them – you can hear it in the negative, dismissive and defeatist language, you can see it in the inappropriate interactions or experience it in the conversations that drain energy and enthusiasm.

Visible barriers can be addressed through good training and development, coaching, mentoring, upskilling, open communication, sharing the vision for the organisation and actively refusing to accept below-the-line destructive behaviour while relentlessly and consistently encouraging and reinforcing above-the-line constructive behaviour.

## Visible System Barriers

Visible barriers to innovation and intrapreneurialism also come from the environment, such as the systems in place within the organisation. Common systemic barriers especially in large organisations are things like rigid hierarchies, micromanagement, overly complicated procedures, lack of resources and time, no overt recognition or support for intrapreneurialism or innovation in organisational documents such as procedures manuals, job descriptions or KPIs.

These are the sorts of forces that serve like a straitjacket to intrapreneurial initiatives. But at least they are visible so people are more likely to be aware of them, accommodate them, sidestep them or plan for them where possible, e.g. by building in extra time in innovation projects to allow them to navigate bureaucracy and learning to freestyle inside a framework (more about that in the next chapter).

## Invisible System Barriers

Invisible barriers are more difficult to deal with because they exert their influence so insidiously. Often these sorts of systemic barriers exist because they are part of the legacy systems in an organisation. So people don't notice them because they have been the norm for so long. Examples of these are silos, fragmentation (lack of end to end processes), and blocked collaboration pathways limiting cross-pollination of ideas.

It might be tempting to say, 'Well how could you have these kinds of barriers and not know about them? How can they be invisible - surely people can see siloed systems and fragmentation of processes.' But people don't see them for the same reason that you stop noticing the big reminder you put on your fridge to do something. Once it sits there for long enough it becomes part of the normal landscape and you stop noticing it. It's called domestic blindness - the inability to see something that is in plain view because our brain is so used to seeing it that it has become part of the norm. These sorts of invisible forces are part of the culture of the organisation and feel normal so they are not questioned.

## Invisible People Barriers

People are creatures of habit. And it is these habits that can drive our behaviour without us even being consciously aware of them. So they are, to all intents and purposes, invisible.

Typical invisible behaviours that can derail intrapreneurialism are things like risk aversion and duplicitousness (saying one is on board with innovation - but not really), and that is often motivated by a fear of the unknown. It can also be the

result of tunnel vision, rigid mental models and the fact that we don't know what we don't know.

How we respond to circumstances and make sense of all the information that comes our way is filtered through the lens of our understanding of the world which we have built up over a lifetime of experiences. They become our preconceptions, our expectations, our assumptions – our *mental models*. They unconsciously determine how we make decisions, interpret circumstances, maintain existing behaviours and react to new challenges.

There is an old Chinese fable about a little frog living in a well that could only see a tiny part of the sky from the bottom of the well and thought that was the whole sky. Then one day a little sparrow flew down and picked him up and carried him to the top and set him on the edge of the well where he could see everything from a different perspective.

So sometimes when people stymie intrapreneurial efforts – it isn't that they are necessarily being intentionally subversive and deliberately sabotaging positive change – but rather because they are not able to break the mental models that make up their world. They are like the frog at the bottom of the well. Their assumptions are based on their experience of the world. The filter can be changed and the lens expanded – it just takes some deliberate effort. Read on to find out how.

## Shining a Light on INVISIBLE SYSTEM Barriers

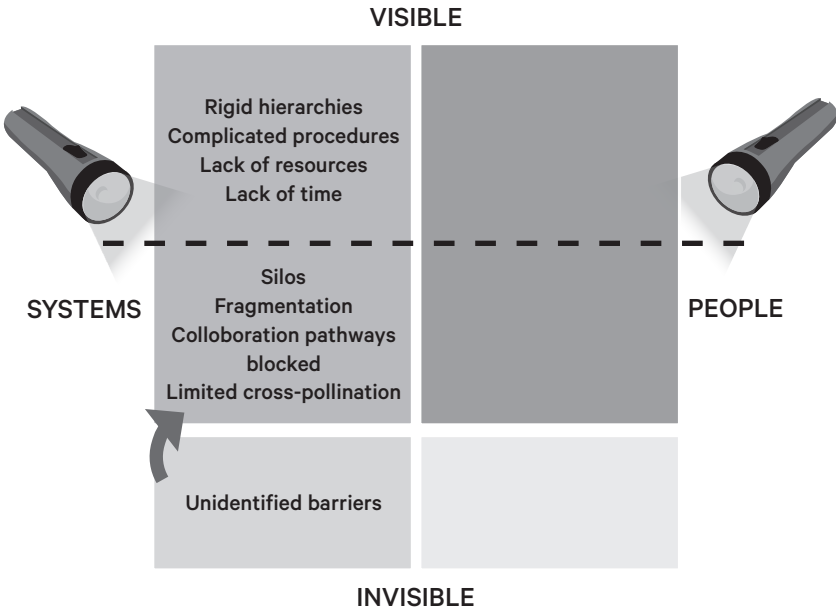


Figure 10: Illuminating the system barriers to intrapreneurialism

Invisible forces can be so insidious that they escape even the most diligent eyes. The opening story in the book *Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the unseen forces that stand in the way of true inspiration*<sup>1</sup>, by Ed Catmull, founder of Pixar, bears this out.

For 13 years Pixar held their regular meetings in a large conference room around a table that was long and skinny. The logistics of the set-up meant that the people with the greatest responsibility for the project, in this case the directors and producers of the films, ended up sitting in the middle because it was essential that they be easily heard by everyone – hard to do if you were seated at the ends. Those



unlucky enough to be seated at the far ends had to crane their necks to make eye contact. It was not a conducive environment for the free flow of creative ideas. Then, to make matters worse, someone began setting out place cards to ensure that the key people in the projects sat together around the middle. Over time this practice became ritualised to mean that the closer to the middle you were seated, the more important you must be. People at the ends became more like spectators rather than participants because it was difficult to jump into the conversation. Unintentionally a clear hierarchy had been set up despite it being at odds with the organisation's and the leaders' core principles.

*'Why were we blind to this? Because the seating arrangements and place cards were designed for the convenience of the leaders, including me. Sincerely believing that we were in an inclusive meeting, we saw nothing amiss because we didn't feel excluded. Those not sitting at the center of the table, meanwhile, saw quite clearly how it established a pecking order but presumed that we - the leaders - had intended that outcome. Who were they, then, to complain?'*

Despite Ed Catmull being the head of one of the most creative enterprises on the planet and being committed to building a culture of creativity, inclusivity and open communication in the organisation, this invisible force went undetected by him and the other leaders for 13 years.

It wasn't until they happened to have a meeting one day in a smaller room with a square table that Ed and his partner realised what was happening. The different arrangement allowed for easy exchange of ideas, information and eye contact. Everyone felt equally free to participate despite their job title. Suddenly the blinders came off and with that

insight Ed got rid of the long skinny table and replaced it with a more intimate square one that facilitated interaction.

Interestingly this act alone did not fix the problem entirely.

When everyone turned up for the meeting, there on the brand new square table were the same old place cards! The ghosts of the invisible hierarchy and the entrenched practice were still stalking them. It was only when one of the directors grabbed the cards and said, 'We don't need these anymore!' was the problem finally eliminated.

The story is instructive because sometimes the most damaging and intractable barriers to innovation and intrapreneurialism are not even intentional. They exist as part of the *Unwritten Ground Rules* of the organisation that help create the culture. Australian management consultant Steve Simpson writes about this in his book *UGRs: Cracking the corporate culture code*.<sup>2</sup> UGRs (unwritten ground rules) drive people's behaviours and yet are rarely openly expressed. Common UGRs are things like 'at our meetings it isn't worth complaining because nothing will get done', 'the only time anyone gets spoken to around here is when something is wrong', and 'the company talks about good customer service, but we know they don't really mean it, so we don't really have to worry about it'.

Any organisation seeking to create a culture of intrapreneurialism and to unleash the potential of its people needs to do an honest stocktake of its practices to identify the barriers. Shine a light on them and swallow the bitter pill of owning them and then addressing them.

That of course is MUCH easier said than done. But essential.

If rhetoric and culture conflict – culture wins. A common saying in the corporate world is ‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast.’<sup>3</sup> Think of it like the proverbial iceberg. One-tenth visible above the surface and nine-tenths invisible below. If the wind above the surface is blowing in one direction and the current below the surface is travelling in the opposite direction, which force wins? Of course the current.

It doesn’t matter how many times the words innovation, transformation, change, intrapreneurialism, creativity or improvement are mentioned in the organisation’s strategic plan or the CEO’s keynote at the annual conference – if the culture doesn’t enable it, it won’t happen. In fact, there is every likelihood that people within the organisation will become cynical and the organisation will get caught in a downward spiral.

If employees hear rhetoric from leaders about wanting change and transformation but they themselves don’t lead by example, it won’t happen.

## Shining a Light on INVISIBLE PEOPLE Barriers

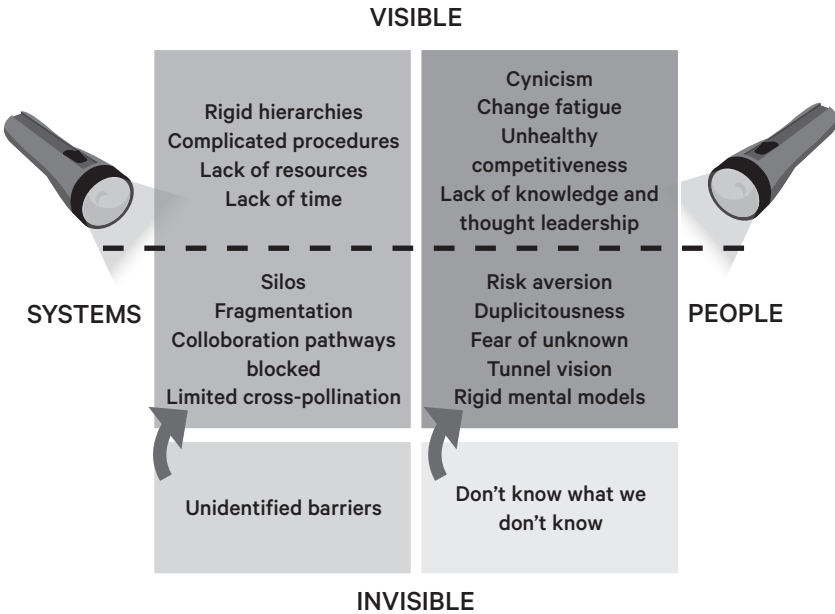


Figure 11: Illuminating the people barriers to intrapreneurialism

It is the people issues on the right hand of the above model that have the greatest impact on an organisation's performance. Great people will fix broken systems – the reverse does not apply.

Some ways of 'shining the light' on invisible people barriers are to initiate deep conversations, ask questions, prompt reflection, gather data, seek input, and make problematic issues the topic of team meetings. These are all ways of making the invisible visible. Realistically, no organisation will ever completely eliminate invisible barriers – but as long

as they are diligent about switching on the lights, then those forces can be kept to a minimum.

The role of leaders cannot be overstated in this process. One of the greatest invisible barriers to change in organisations is *fear*. Great leaders help people to feel safe as they navigate transitions. This is the subject of a popular TED talk by Simon Sinek.<sup>4</sup> He makes the point that when people feel unsafe, they expend their energy in protecting themselves instead of channelling it into the corporate good. Many leaders at the top of an organisation are not leaders at all – just people with authority. They would be prepared to sacrifice others to protect themselves. In contrast, there are people at the bottom of organisations who are the embodiment of leadership because they have chosen to look after the people around them and help them to feel safe.

Research done by Ryan and Oestreich<sup>5</sup>, in their book *Driving Fear Out of the Workplace: How to overcome the invisible barriers to quality, productivity and innovation*, found that there are four main fears that prevent employees from participating in the workplace and speaking up about workplace problems. In the following order they are: 1. They fear repercussions such as the loss of credibility and reputation with bosses and peers, harassment, being left out of the loop of organisational communication and decision-making; 2. They believe speaking up will do no good; 3. They wish to avoid conflict; and 4. They want to avoid causing trouble for others.

Worse still, the research found that the managerial misbehaviours spilled over into other parts of the organisation. In other words, poor practices in one sphere inhibited employee discussion in other areas. When you consider that it is employee involvement that drives continuous improvement and innovation, any workplace

where employees withhold information for fear of sharing their ideas is in for a world of pain.

Ways of shining the light on these practices would be for leaders to firstly acknowledge the presence of fear and the emotions that go with it, set a standard for interpersonal conduct, dispense with ambiguous behaviour, agree to discuss the undiscussable, collaborate on decisions, ask for input, challenge ‘worst-case’ thinking and engage in some degree of self-disclosure to build trust. For intrapreneurialism to flourish leaders need to build a high-trust environment that demonstrates fairness, respect, candour, honesty and integrity – consistently.

The organisations that get the best results from my in-house intrapreneurialism programs are the ones where the senior leaders are ACTIVE supporters. Despite their impossibly busy schedules, they take the time to take an interest. This sounds obvious but in reality it doesn’t always happen. Some executive leaders take the position, ‘We’ve done our part – we’ve hired you!’ Others make it a priority to speak personally with the budding intrapreneurs, talk about their projects, offer suggestions on who may be suitable project sponsors, clear a path and demolish obstacles, help create alignment between activity and strategic goals, attend their presentations. The message from these senior leaders to their corporate intrapreneurs who are often the emerging and aspiring leaders is clear – ‘what *you* are doing is worthwhile, important and valued’, not ‘*my* time and work is more important than yours’.

### ***One Swallow Does Not a Summer Make***

The occasional ‘feel-good’ gesture is not enough to compensate for extended stretches of weeks or months of fear.

At Christmas time, in one organisation it was traditional for the company to provide a Christmas lunch for all the operational staff. It was also convention for the executive leadership to come down and serve the food. It was set up buffet style and as people filed past, food was put on their plate by various members of the senior leadership. Sounds fine in theory except for the fact that for the other 364 days of the year the same leaders treated the people holding the plates dismissively and disrespectfully, like automatons without a brain, dealt with workplace incidents reactively with a blame mentality instead of looking for root causes. Consequently many employees over the years felt that they had been unfairly treated. In this environment the doling out of food just reinforced the broken culture rather than improving it because it came across like a soup kitchen rather than a celebratory feast. Many employees declined to attend, preferring instead to go to the McDonald's down the road. A small act of defiance to reclaim some personal power in a disempowering culture.

Remember the viral video footage early in 2017 of the scene of a legitimate passenger being dragged off a United Airline flight due to overbooking? This was the initial response to the incident posted by the CEO.

*'This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.'*

It was a particularly *underwhelming* apology. Then when United realised that they had suddenly become the most

anathematised airline in the world – overnight – this came out.

*‘The truly horrific event that occurred on this flight has elicited many responses from all of us: outrage, anger, disappointment. I share all of those sentiments and one above all: my deepest apologies for what happened. Like you, I continue to be disturbed by what happened on this flight and I deeply apologize to the customer forcibly removed and to all the customers aboard. No one should ever be mistreated this way.*

*I want you to know that we take full responsibility and we will work to make it right.*

*It’s never too late to do the right thing. I have committed to our customers and our employees that we are going to fix what’s broken so this never happens again. This will include a thorough review of crew movement, our policies for incentivizing volunteers in these situations, how we handle oversold situations and an examination of how we partner with airport authorities and local law enforcement. We’ll communicate the results of our review by April 30th.*

*I promise you we will do better.’*

That’s more like it. But I wonder if we would have seen the second more appropriate and contrite version in a pre-social media era, when the incidents would have been reported second-hand by eye witnesses rather than through the immediacy of the video footage.

The CEO in his second statement was promising to fix what’s broken. He has listed a variety of operational and process improvements. That is a good start. But it is just tinkering



at the edges. They are dealing with the visible rather than invisible issues within the organisation. They have a much deeper problem that won't be fixed by just reviewing crew movements, incentivising volunteers and partnering with airport authorities. They have a CULTURE problem and that takes more than the things the CEO has listed in his second statement to fix it. The CEO was relying on the one-tenth of the iceberg that's visible to set the direction for the nine-tenths that's invisible. It won't happen. It defies the laws of nature.

### *Leaders Assuage Fear by Taking Responsibility*

As a leader it is hard to imagine a more dire situation than someone getting killed on your watch. Yet this is what happened to Jocko Willink in 2012. He was a SEAL (Sea, Air and Land) task unit commander in Iraq when his unit was met with heavy fire from what was assumed to be enemy insurgents. Tragically it turned out that the fire was from another SEAL team and in the chaos a soldier lost his life.

How tempting would it have been for Willink to have deflected responsibility in such calamitous circumstances? He could have blamed poor communication, the other team, his own people. But he didn't. As the ranking officer Willink was certain of one thing – that everything that happened was his responsibility. By admitting that and taking ownership of the event he saved his job. His superiors recognised that all leaders make mistakes – but only the good ones take responsibility for them. He was allowed to keep command of his unit.

In their book *Extreme Ownership: How US Navy SEALs lead and win* (2015)<sup>6</sup>, Jocko Willink and Leif Babin, SEALs who led the most highly decorated special-operations unit in

the Iraq war, give an insight into what contributes to high performance in the most extreme of situations. During their training, SEAL teams experience worst-case-scenario simulations. The teams that underperform tend to have leaders who blame external factors – the scenario, their subordinates, the troops. Everything but themselves. This attitude then gets passed on to others and the result is that the team becomes ineffectual. They make excuses and pass the buck instead of taking responsibility and solving the problem. Effective teams, on the other hand, have leaders who take total responsibility, triggering emulation of that behaviour in their teams. Consequently accountability and initiative spread all the way down the chain of command.

Intrapreneurialism is less likely to happen in an environment where people feel like their leader does not have their back. If they know they will be the scapegoat for anything that delivers less than hoped for results, they will think twice before doing anything differently. That is one sure way of plugging up the pipeline of progress in an organisation.

## Wrap-up

This chapter was an essential precursor to our next and final chapter about organisation-wide intrapreneurship. Unless barriers are addressed, be they visible or invisible, be they people or systemic, organisation-wide intrapreneurship will stall.



## Idea Extensions

Identify the barriers in your workplace for each quadrant. In your organisation:

1. What are the visible people barriers?

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2. What are the visible system barriers?

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3. What are the invisible people barriers?

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4. What are the invisible system barriers?

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5. What can be done to shine a light on the invisible ones to make them visible so that they can be addressed?

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# ORGANISATION-WIDE INTRAPRENEURSHIP

## Getting traction

Organisations are only as creative and innovative as the people who work in them. There is no magic formula that suddenly makes an organisation vibrant and relevant and future-ready with a culture of creativity, innovation and intrapreneurialism *without* the hard work that goes into upskilling and empowering the *people* who *are* the organisation.

An organisation's performance is the composite of the skills, vision, commitment, creativity, leadership and intrapreneurialism of its collective workforce. Some people contribute more to it than others. Logically – the more people you have working within an organisation who are contributing great ideas, positive energy and committed activity, the better will be the overall performance of the organisation.

The core model shared in Chapter 6 (Figure 5) for driving individual intrapreneurialism is also applicable on an organisation-wide basis. It can be used as a framework for creating a culture of intrapreneurship using the same three key drivers and three key practices – just on a grander scale.

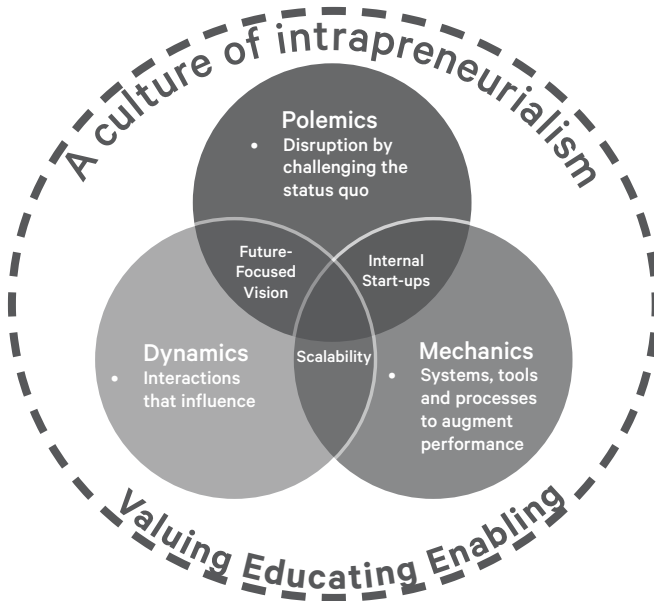


Figure 12: A culture of intrapreneurialism

A culture of intrapreneurialism is created when the entire workforce is encouraged to find innovation opportunities by constantly interrogating the status quo (Polemics), when the systemic barriers to innovation within the environment are minimised (Mechanics), and where the channels of communication are open enough to enable people from across the organisation to interact and collaborate (Dynamics). Simultaneously people are empowered to lead intrapreneurial projects (Internal Start-ups), refine and iterate them for wider impact as appropriate (Scalability),

and incrementally build their capacities to shape the future of the organisation (Future-Focused Vision).

## Start by Valuing Intrapreneurial Activity

It all starts by demonstrating on an organisation-wide basis that intrapreneurial activity is valued, then systematically educating and empowering people to look for opportunities for innovation, supporting them by clearing a path to implementation, and ensuring the channels of communication are open, inside teams as well as across the organisation. Doing this on an organisation-wide basis requires commitment, resourcing and vigilance on the part of leaders throughout the organisation.

One organisation in my home town of Brisbane that has successfully built a culture of intrapreneurialism over the last three years started with having a regular event called the *CEO's Innovation Afternoon* every month. The forum provided time, space and permission for staff to pitch ideas to the CEO and then be assigned a sponsor or mentor to assist with their professional development and delivery of the idea. This sent the message to all staff throughout the organisation that their ideas were valued at the very highest level. Many great intrapreneurial initiatives came out of that program.

That organisation simultaneously demonstrated its valuing of intrapreneurial activity in a number of other ways as well. They supported people who put their hands up to be champions and change agents for intrapreneurialism by giving them training and development as well as some professional oversight as needed; the result was the empowerment of intrapreneurial employees who first learned to develop their own innovative initiatives and then began encouraging

others to do the same. Many of them went on to self-form their own incubator groups, and so the ripples continued.

The organisation also actively encouraged the telling of stories celebrating intrapreneurial initiatives during meetings and other events. They established an innovation centre that was specifically dedicated to promoting strategic collaboration across the organisation and beyond. They implemented an effective mechanism for collecting and harvesting ideas through online spaces where people could post and discuss new ideas. They made sure they showcased the outcomes of their employee-driven initiatives at expos and events. They set aside some dedicated funding to support intrapreneurialism. They created and shared across the organisation mini videos showcasing innovations produced by staff. They brought a steady stream of speakers through the organisation at regular innovation lunches who served to inspire and inform the staff.

I have summarised a lot of activity into a few paragraphs which doesn't do justice to the amount of hard work and dedication that went into creating the culture. It took years to build these processes and embed the attitudes across the organisation. However, the reason their efforts were so successful was because they were built on a foundation of clearly and publicly valuing intrapreneurialism and then educating for it and enabling it.

## Freestyle Inside a Framework

One large government agency in my home state of Queensland has succeeded in creating a nascent but burgeoning culture of intrapreneurialism by focusing on implementation. They took action in a number of different ways simultaneously in order to accelerate progress. The approach was one of



‘freestyling inside a framework’. In other words, while there was an overarching framework driving the culture change, the operationalisation of that change was fluid and organic. There was a structured program that was put in place to empower and train up people across the organisation who were interested in developing their skills and learning how to lead innovation. People were then given the permission and support to bring their ideas to fruition in whatever way they could. The opportunity was available to anyone and everyone who was interested. After all, learning to lead innovation is everyone’s responsibility, not just of team leaders, managers or executives.

The process was driven from the top by one of the senior executive leaders who laid the foundations for the program by cascading the following key messages through the organisation.

- Intrapreneurialism and innovation are professional skills relevant to a 21st century workforce in the same way that customer service and project management are professional skills. They are core capabilities so we will train you up in this new way of working by giving you the skills, processes, permission and support to take your ideas from inception to fruition.
- We will work with the willing. Anyone who is interested can put their hand up to be trained, equipped and supported in their efforts, no matter where they are or what role they play in the organisation.
- We will provide you with the opportunity to have the headspace so you can think differently and use your creativity to solve the difficult issues that face us in a

complex world. We want you to take ownership of your ideas and empower you to bring them to life.

- We have a talented and skilled workforce. You are capable of innovation so we want to give you a voice, a profile and the opportunity to amplify and formalise what you have already proven you can do. We want to tap into the latent innovation capacity within the organisation and recognise it. Innovate in the area you know best because you're the best person to know how to do it better. We understand that no one will be more passionate about your idea than you are.
- The senior leaders will do everything in their power to clear a path for you, serve as sounding boards and provide oversight and resources where necessary.
- There is no right or wrong way to do innovation, there isn't just one approach so be prepared to try different ways of doing things. Do differently. If something doesn't work, try something else. We'll support you.
- We want to empower people from all different parts of the business and from all different levels to help us create a future-ready organisation.

Inherent in these messages are the key drivers of intrapreneurialism. Asking people to challenge the status quo to find innovation opportunities (Polemics); giving people the tools, the mechanisms, the permission, the opportunity and the support to see their initiatives through (Mechanics); and encouraging people to interact with others to open the channels of communication and collaboration across different layers of the organisation (Dynamics).

The messaging was closely followed up by training and development and mentoring for the first cohort of 15 employees who volunteered. Interestingly this agency started with the regional areas rather than the head office in Brisbane. This was a deliberate strategy to send the message that the organisation doesn't drive everything from the capital city, that employees can drive intrapreneurialism from wherever they are located within the organisation.

Taking this approach, many public sector challenges, large and small, long-standing and emerging, have been addressed in a relatively short time (six months). Issues such as how to staff remote regional communities; how to save resources by collaborating across different areas of the organisation; improving safety for field workers; digitising information gathering and sharing so it is *instantly* available to relevant stakeholders; processes for collaborating more effectively with industry bodies to deliver better services; using drone technology to eliminate tasks that previously posed risks for workers; protecting severely marginalised members of the community; collaborating with other government departments and service providers to proactively prevent health threats in certain vulnerable communities.

These are just a few of the social enterprise initiatives that have arisen from the empowerment of employees over the last six months as a result of the creation of a culture of intrapreneurialism in this public sector organisation. That is because the collective intrapreneurial talent of the organisation is being mobilised and harnessed. At the time of writing, these start-up projects were ready for scaling up. The public value that will be created from these initiatives over the next few years will be incalculable. It is the direct result of valuing, educating and enabling intrapreneurialism.

## Savvy Leaders Find Creative Ways of Building a Culture of Intrapreneurship

There is no one right way of creating a culture of intrapreneurialism. Smart, creative leaders will come up with their own ways of tapping into the intrapreneurial talent and drive within their people. For example, Adobe's chief strategist and VP of creativity, Mark Randall, created an initiative called 'Kickbox' to help incubate and cultivate innovation projects.<sup>1</sup> It was literally a red box which served as a toolkit. It contained seed funding on a prepaid credit card; various instructions; useful frameworks and exercises to help develop, evaluate and actualise ideas; a process map with six colour-coded levels containing checklists to be completed at each level to advance to the next one; a coffee voucher and a chocolate bar. Mark Randall was empowering intrapreneurial employees to be, in effect, the CEO of their own internal start-up.

When people completed all the levels in the red box they earned the funding to pursue their idea further. According to Randall, 'Kickbox is a way to get a lot of ideas, including some you'd never find any other way - and some that wouldn't survive a more bureaucratic vetting process.' Since its inception in 2013, more than 1000 kits have been offered to employees. The return on investment has been exponential. One idea alone, from an engineer in Romania, led to Adobe's \$800 million acquisition of online photo-and-graphics marketplace Fotolia.

Randall's rationale is that Adobe wanted to build *innovators* not *innovations*. Whether their first project succeeds is less important than the experience and skills gained. 'This is about investing in our people to build a uniquely valuable competency that will pay dividends for years.'

This is the long-term, big picture view. It is this sort of activity that progresses people up the levels of intrapreneurialism discussed in Chapter 5 that takes people to the level of *Opportunity Finder*.

## Identify, Empower and Educate Your Intrapreneurs

Intrapreneurs are usually easy to identify. They are the employees who demonstrate many of the qualities discussed in Chapter 3. They usually come to the attention of others because of the initiative, motivation, energy and creativity they demonstrate in their work. (And also outside of work. It is not unusual for intrapreneurs to also have start-up type activities, 'side hustles' or social intrapreneurial projects bubbling away from home.) In team meetings, they will be the ones with the alternative viewpoints, asking lots of questions.

If you need a more formal way of identifying your intrapreneurs, conduct an organisation-wide *hackathon*. A hackathon is simply a short-term event (often a day but can span a few weeks), where groups of people work as a team to solve a complex problem. The practice started in the computer programming industry when people with different but complementary skills came together to work intensively on a project with the aim of having a prototype at the end of the process (called a sprint because of the pace at which everyone works).

These days, hackathons are used widely and take a variety of forms but at its core are idea generation, prototyping and pitching inside a strictly limited time frame. The challenges to be solved can come from employees but a variation on a

theme is where pressing complex organisational issues are posed and people nominate which challenge they would like to work on. Hackathons can serve as ‘auditions’ for intrapreneurs.

The intrapreneurs within your organisation are the ones who will lead this organisation-wide change. They will be the vanguard and others will follow in their wake. Develop these dedicated individuals to become the drivers of breakthrough change and the creators of new value.

Intrapreneurs thrive on growth projects and stretch development. Empower and enable them through training, time and resources to not only create original ideas but also see them through to the prototyping and implementation.

Give them the opportunity to learn new skills in the work environment. DreamWorks Animation, the company behind *Kung Fu Panda*, *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Madagascar*, offers their employees free classes, from script development to pitching, and then puts them in front of the company’s real executive team who will listen to their ideas and – should they be of the requisite standard – puts them into development!

Google gave their entire workforce the chance to be intrapreneurs when they introduced their famous 20 per cent time. They don’t do it now but when it was first introduced in 2004, it was responsible for a slew of innovations.

Identify intrapreneurs early in their career and give them a diversity of experiences and some good oversight or mentoring. This can have a catalytic effect on their performance, career development and ultimately their long-term contribution not just to the organisation but potentially to society at large. The story of Claude Blanchet who was

the first Director General of the Société de développement des coopératives du Québec, the Cooperative Development Corporation, demonstrates this.<sup>2</sup>

Fresh out of an MBA, he worked at a company called Campeau Construction Co. in Ottawa, Canada, which was itself run by a successful young entrepreneur called Robert Campeau. The company had blossomed to such an extent that Campeau himself had achieved millionaire status by the time he was 30 years of age. Campeau recognised Claude Blanchet's potential and gave him several positions in different departments of the firm to become familiar with its operations. He was then appointed manager of the International Division. Campeau Corporation had subsidiaries and representatives throughout the world, and Claude spent a full year travelling the globe to learn how the firm operated abroad. He was involved in the development of projects in several European countries, including Britain, France and Sweden.

Claude benefited enormously from the flexibility, responsibility and leeway he was given but most of all from his mentor's experience. About that he says that the most important thing he learned from Campeau was how to turn a dream into reality. 'Society isn't set in stone. If you use your intelligence, imagination, energy and willpower, you can make an impact. I really learned a lot about leadership. If you want something enough, you can change the world and the course of history.'

He took what he learned at Campeau, one of the most dynamic property development companies in Canada which had given him global experience and turned his considerable talents to social entrepreneurship to help create an ambitious vision for the future of Quebec. He became the President and CEO of The General Investment Corporation of Quebec and

was able to revitalise the corporation to the extent that it became the lever that made possible the development of many other sectors of the economy, and he ultimately became the first Director General of the Cooperative Development Corporation.

## Create Intrapreneurial Communities of Practice That Double as Cross-Functional Teams

Encourage the intrapreneurs in your organisation to get together with each other and create communities of practice. A CoP is simply a group of people who are empowered to learn from and with each other. CoPs provide the opportunity for people to extend as well as contribute their knowledge through collaboration.

*‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.’ Margaret Mead*

If a small group of committed people can change the world, they can certainly change an organisation. Let them.

Identify issues that need to be addressed. Put the call out. Enlist relevant people who have a joint interest in solving the problem, aiming for a diversity of expertise and perspectives within the group. Create a safe environment where all members can interact and learn from each other and share knowledge. Keep things simple. Once a group has been formed, they take over managing themselves to meet regularly; rotate the chair/organiser so that one person isn’t doing all the work of organising the meetings; progressively and iteratively implement solutions that emerge from each



meeting until an issue is resolved. Then wind down the group and disband it once it has served its purpose or find another issue.

When a community of practice is used in this way it also potentially serves as an intrapreneurial, cross-functional team which is an effective way of addressing complex problems. Intrapreneurial teams are a powerhouse of innovation. They have learned to work together to make the best use of their respective talents. They see different ideas that emerge from their ranks as opportunities for complementarity rather than competition. Ed Catmull, founder of Pixar and author of *Creativity, Inc.*<sup>3</sup>, said, ‘If you give a good idea to a mediocre team they will screw it up. If you give a mediocre idea to a brilliant team they will either fix it or throw it away and come up with something better.’

Create intrapreneurial teams that are simultaneously communities of practice and cross-functional teams.

## Recognise and Reward Intrapreneurial Activity

Recognising success is good, but it’s not just about formal rewards. An annual award is just not enough to catalyse a culture of intrapreneurialism. Sure, formal rewards are good for the short term – but they don’t keep people truly engaged.

The most powerful and robust type of reward and recognition – the kind that shapes organisational values – often occurs more informally. A wonderful example of this was an initiative implemented by several members of Colgate-Palmolive’s Global Research and Development Group. They initiated what became known internally as the ‘recognition economy’.

They introduced a culture of informal rewards by encouraging workers to distribute symbolic wooden coins to colleagues who had made noteworthy contributions to their projects. The recipients didn't hoard their winnings. They passed them on to others who had chipped in on projects that they themselves had led. It is a form of 'paying it forward'.

Coins were often distributed in meetings, but it was not uncommon for employees to return from lunch and find a pile anonymously placed on their desks. It was a creative method for informally acknowledging and encouraging people's efforts. The interesting thing was that people sought the 'coins' not with the intention of hoarding them but rather so that they could have the experience of passing them on.

Monetary rewards are not the primary motivators for intrapreneurs. Recent research conducted in South Africa revealed other motivators that are much more effective. The research project investigated the rewards that organisations use to motivate intrapreneurs in the public service as well as information and communication technology firms in South Africa.<sup>4</sup> The purpose was to determine empirically which rewards best encourage and stimulate intrapreneurship.

The findings of the research suggest that an effective intrapreneurial reward system tends to focus on social incentives and job redesign incentives. Social incentives are things such as verbal acknowledgement, encouragement and appreciation. Job redesign incentives are things such as autonomy where employees can make their own decisions and follow their own methods to achieve outcomes, growth through career development and recognition of performance. These reward systems are more highly valued by intrapreneurs than monetary rewards. Although direct financial rewards play a decisive role in *attracting* talented

employees to a firm, these rewards have only a short-term impact on the motivational level of employees.

Establishing effective reward and recognition systems across the organisation is a key to helping promote organisation-wide intrapreneurialism.

## Encourage ‘Accidental Intrapreneurialism’

Accidental intrapreneurialism occurs when people within the organisation happen to solve high-value problems without intentionally setting out to do so. It occurs incidentally while they are just hanging out together, chatting, decompressing, having coffee.

In 2009, several Qualcomm employees would have lunch together and during the course of their break would talk about their challenges, how they were solving them and share their knowledge. From those humble beginnings was born the company’s now famous FLUX program which stands for ‘Forward Looking User Experience’. Since its inception, this employee-driven think tank has grown to numerous teams, captured numerous patent-pending systems and sparked several commercialised projects. All of the work was done on a volunteer basis during lunch breaks. They weren’t asked to do it and they never intended to start an organisation-wide movement. They were accidental intrapreneurs.

Apple designed their buildings to force positive human collisions – where people bump into each other so they’d start conversations. It is from these face-to-face conversations that many problems are solved and ideas emerge. Accidental intrapreneurialism.

An award-winning printing company on the Sunshine Coast in my home state of Queensland came up with a unique way of nurturing accidental intrapreneurialism. The business allocated a portion of their outside space to developing a large vegetable garden which became a collective responsibility. People spent time gardening together and often chatted to each other as they did so – proactively sharing knowledge, skills and ideas. At the end of the day staff would pick their delicious, fresh vegetables to take home to cook for dinner. Not just a great team project but also a reduction to the grocery bill! More importantly, it reduced workplace stress while increasing conversations that led to collaborative problem-solving. Few people find a stressful, overloaded work environment to be a creativity incubator. It was a great way to give people the space, time and opportunity for their creative ideas to bubble up and to share them with others.

## A Culture of Intrapreneurialism Is the New Competitive Advantage

Enabled, empowered intrapreneurship creates a culture in which people bring their best selves to work. In an interview with Entrepreneur.com, Richard Branson says, ‘Everyone becomes so immersed in what they’re doing that they feel like they *own* their companies. They don’t feel like employees working for someone else, they feel much more like ... well, I think the only word to describe it is “*belongers*.”<sup>5</sup>

In our hyper connected world, an organisation’s culture is now highly visible. People can ‘see into’ an organisation easily and make judgements about the practices and values of the organisation. Corporate culture is now an organisation’s brand.

In their 2017 report called *Glass Box Brands*<sup>6</sup>, TrendWatching explained it thus:

*'Back when a business was a black box, the brand was limited to what was painted on the outside. The leaders of the business had a high degree of control over that. **But now that a business is a glass box, the brand is everything that's visible. Every person. Every process. Every value. Everything that happens, ever.***

Logically, those companies that are *seen* to actively foster and support a culture of intrapreneurialism will attract intrapreneurs! Talented, capable, creative individuals will be drawn to workplaces where they can feel empowered to make a difference. This sets up a virtuous circle of opportunity and innovation. The more intrapreneurs in the organisation, the more likely it is that the organisation will be on the leading edge of their industry, the more attractive it is as a place to work and so on. Investing in organisation-wide entrepreneurship is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

## Wrap-up

Use this book as a resource to support intrapreneurial activity in various contexts to facilitate organisation-wide intrapreneurialism. Part 2 provides a number of models which can be useful for supporting the development of intrapreneurs. Similarly, the prompt questions in the *Idea Extensions* pages at the end of each chapter invite you to consider more deeply particular issues. While most of them are directed towards you, the reader, to reflect on your position, if you are a team leader, you could use them as the basis for activities with your people and to lead them on a journey. It is entirely up to you to adapt the frameworks and content as needed.



## Idea Extensions

1. To what extent is intrapreneurialism actively and publicly valued in your organisation? How is that demonstrated?

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2. Do the organisation's leaders model and support intrapreneurialism?

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3. How are people rewarded for intrapreneurial activity? How else could they be rewarded?

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4. How could you adapt your organisational environment to encourage more accidental intrapreneurialism?

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IN CLOSING  
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# INTRAPRENEURS – THE FUTURE BELONGS TO YOU!

Having personally mentored or coached hundreds of innovators and intrapreneurs within large organisations, I have noticed a common occurrence. These smart, motivated change makers invariably underestimate the impact and value their initiatives bring to their organisations. Very often I hear the words, ‘It’s just a small project – it’s not really a big deal.’ Then when we start to look at the scalability potential and quantify the value over time – things look very different. Initiatives that start as small improvements can end up bringing major transformation to an organisation and playing an instrumental role in creating future-readiness.

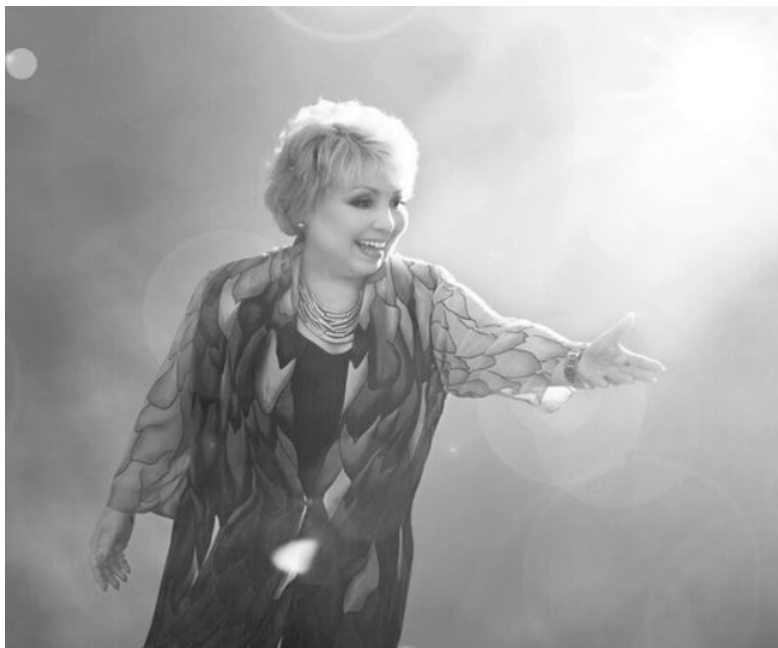
So to all the intrapreneurs reading this book, I say to you – you are leaders who have the power to transform your workplace. You may not be able to see today where the ripples of your great ideas and actions will be felt tomorrow, but make no mistake, they are making a difference. You are changing the world – one innovation at a time.

***If not you then who?***

## Want More?

There are a number of ways by which you can continue the journey with Dr. Irena.

1. Consider running Dr. Irena's workshops or programs in your workplace. More information at <http://www.drirenayashinshaw.com/intrapreneurs/>.
2. Invite Dr. Irena to speak at your next conference or event.



<http://www.drirenayashinshaw.com/services/#speaker>

3. Contact her office directly to arrange a time to speak with her about working with your leaders and teams. [admin@drirenayashinshaw.com](mailto:admin@drirenayashinshaw.com)

4. Sign up to Dr. Irena's blog [www.drirenayashinshaw.com](http://www.drirenayashinshaw.com).
5. Connect via social media
  - LinkedIn/Facebook/Instagram - Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw
  - Twitter - @IrenaYS
6. To purchase Dr. Irena's previous books or to download some of her other resources go to <http://www.drirenayashinshaw.com/services/#author>.

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**“Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw has cleverly captured the future of leadership in this ground-breaking book. She shows how creative and enterprising individuals - INTRAPRENEURS - are transforming their organisations from the inside out. A must read for leaders aspiring to unleash their inner entrepreneur to change the world.”**

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