

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.

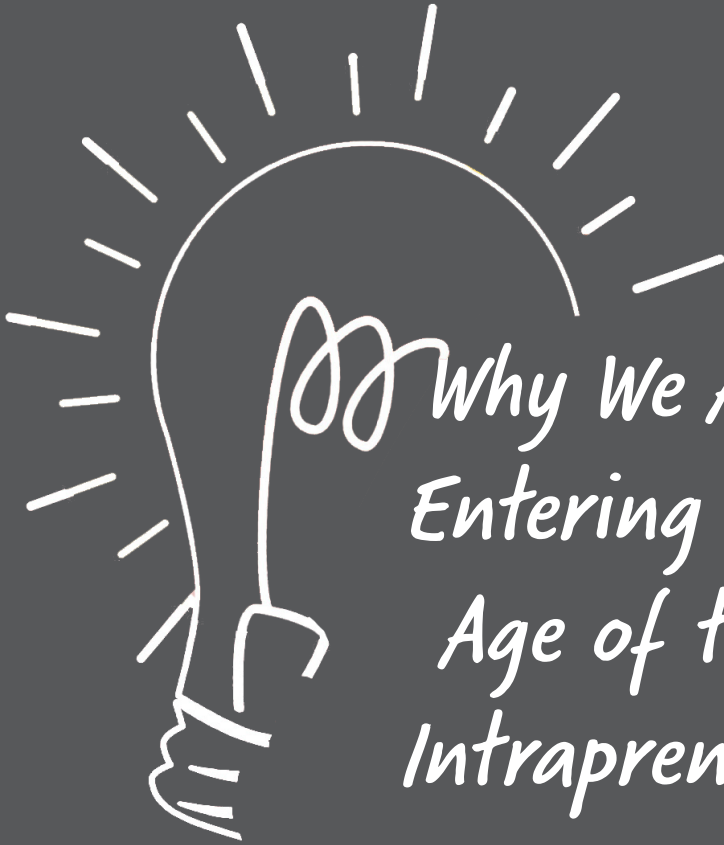
It should also be acknowledged at this point that not everyone is cut out for this new way of working. Similarly, not all organisations are providing their people with the opportunity to be intrapreneurial and don't see this new way of operating as relevant for them. That's the reality. This book will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

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*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.

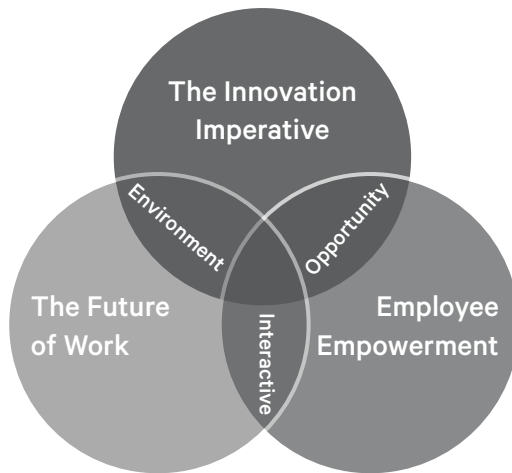


Figure 1: The perfect storm for intrapreneurialism

### 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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**“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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### **This book will show you how!**

**Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw** is a speaker, author, educator and mentor who specialises in helping high-performing and high-potential leaders to liberate their untapped creativity, innovation and leadership abilities. Her clients come from all sectors, corporate, government, education and SME. She is the author of *Leading in the Innovation Age*, the creator of the *StrateGEE®* method for identifying creative problem-solving preferences and the developer of the *Human Helium Program* for creating intrapreneurs.

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