

## **Fostering Intrapreneurship - The new Competitive Edge**

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### **Introduction**

The global economy is creating profound and substantial changes for organizations and industries throughout the world, forcing them to carefully examine their purpose and to design strategies to satisfy their multiple stakeholders. The task of management is to be aware of the changing scenario. This awareness will allow managers to predict future problems and prepare strategies before crisis arise. The changes are because of a variety of pressing problems, like----

- ❖ Increased global competition.
- ❖ Continual downsizing in the marketing –place, leading to fragmented markets.
- ❖ Dramatic changes in the market –place, leading to fragmented markets.
- ❖ Fast changing and less predictable economic environment and therefore, diminishing opportunity streams.
- ❖ Increased resource specialization and nearly unpredictable resource needs.

Given the complex, discontinuous, hyper competitive, fast changing world around us, it is imperative for corporates to take risks, and adopt innovative creative approaches. Heraclitus stated in 500 BC: "nothing endures but change". Companies need to evolve in order to thrive, infant to survive. Lately, even the rate of change has accelerated. The external turbulence is forcing the fundamental internal transformation. In a competitive entrepreneurship is an essential element in the long –range success of every business organization, small or large, new or long established

Entrepreneurship, being a major means for development, has received considerable attention in many countries including India. Multiple contributions of entrepreneurship such as employment and wealth creation may be reason for consistent and concerted efforts by governments and other organizations to strengthen entrepreneurship development. Entrepreneurship is of greater significance for a developing country such as India with huge challenges on the entrepreneurship have been initiated for decades in India, but their impact has been limited. A root cause of the problem of low contribution of entrepreneurship to competitiveness of India in emerging knowledge-based economy may lie in weakness in corporate entrepreneurship or Intrapreneurship.

Intrapreneurship is a concept linked to the entrepreneurial orientation of an organization. Intrapreneurship is the spirit of entrepreneurship within an established organization. Most successful private organizations were once entrepreneurial start ups that grew to the point where they became mature organizations. In situations like this sooner or later the spirit of entrepreneurship is no longer active and alive. Hence the need to catalyse the organization and imbue it with a new spirit of intrapreneurship - developing the spirit of entrepreneurship within the realms of an established organization. Intrapreneurs work within corporations to develop new products, increase innovation, and build employee morale. Intrapreneurship appeals to some because it allows them to pursue creative business ideas with the support of a large company's resources.

### **Definition of Intrapreneurship**

Scholars have defined intrapreneurship in a variety of ways. Terms such as intrapreneuring (Pinchot, 1985), corporate entrepreneurship (Burgelman, 1983, Vesper, 1984; Guth and Ginsberg, 1990; Hornsby et al., 1993, Stopford and Baden-Fuller, 1994), corporate venturing (MacMillan, 1986; Vesper, 1990), and internal corporate entrepreneurship (Schollhammer, 1981, 1982; Jones and Butler, 1992) have been used to describe the phenomenon of intrapreneurship (Antonic and Hisrich, 2001). For instance, Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) defined intrapreneurship as a process in which individuals inside organizations pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control, while Vesper (1990) defined it as doing new things and departing from the customary to pursue opportunities. According to Hisrich and Peters (1998), intrapreneurship is a spirit of entrepreneurship within existing the existing organization. Some of the definitions have

been narrow and focused on large organizations to the exclusion of smaller organizations (Schollhammer, 1982; Burgelman, 1983; Rule and Irwin, 1988; Kuratko et al., 1993), or have emphasized new venture formation (Baduerahian and Abetti, 1995). Recently, Antoncic and Hisrich, (2001:497) have defined intrapreneurship more broadly as “entrepreneurship within an existing organization.” For the purposes of this study, an acadepreneur is defined as an academic champion within a university setting who envisions, starts and grows a program irrespective of whether he/she has the resources. Implicitly, the process not only leads to the creation of new academic offerings, but also to other creative activities.

### **The Importance of Intrapreneurship to Economic Growth**

Allowing employees to introduce and implement innovation within an organisation is a means of fostering economic growth. Few innovations have been derived from a flash of genius, most are the result of a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities. Drucker (1998) has identified four areas of opportunity which exist within a company and three that exist outside a company:

Areas of opportunity within a company or industry:

- Unexpected occurrences.
- Incongruities.
- Process needs.
- Industry and market changes.

Additional sources of opportunity, which exist outside a company in its social and intellectual environment:

- Demographic change.
- Changes in perception.
- New knowledge.

Drucker acknowledges that the sources overlap and differ in the nature of their risk, difficulty and complexity, and that the potential for innovation may well lie in more than one area at a time. However Drucker stresses that they account for the majority of all innovation opportunities. Purposeful, systematic innovation begins with analysis of new sources of opportunities. Innovation is both conceptual and perceptual, an intrapreneur therefore must look, ask and listen. They must consider people and figures to work out analytically how an innovation can satisfy an opportunity. The most effective innovations are simple and focused, they should be directed towards a specific, clear and carefully designed application. Most usually only do one thing. Intrapreneurism is work rather than genius, it requires integrity, knowledge and focus. Intrapreneurism has evolved to include a number of concepts, Kautz (2003) lists the following:

- “Identifying and fostering employees who are considered to have intrapreneurial traits;
- Developing intrapreneurial processes for all or part of a business.
- Developing innovation through rewarding intrapreneurial behaviour.”

The need for intrapreneurism is a key factor in any company’s survival. Many large organisations, such as General Motors, IBM, General Mills, ATT & Tan Apple have benefited. Intrapreneurial activity within an organisation can foster a culture of motivation and empowerment amongst employees, ultimately resulting in increased revenue. L2S Incorporated (2000) identified intrapreneurial employees as being typically energetic and enthusiastic, imaginative and inventive, capable of generating ideas for new products and services. If encouraged, and provided with the necessary resources and manpower, such employees will add to the organisation’s economic development. If not they may leave, or set up on their own – taking valuable customers and business with them. In contrast, this could have a disastrous effect on an organisation’s economic development. Consequently intrapreneurial environments promote expansion and economic growth.

Fostering an intrapreneurial environment means taking risks, not all risks will pay off, but many will. For example, Ford’s Mustang, IBM’s personal computer and Kenner Toys ‘Star Wars

line' were all products of intrapreneurial activity, which boosted economic development. A well-documented example of economic development resulting from intrapreneurial activity is the 3M Corporation's Post-It Notes. In 1974, a company employee was unable to keep his hymns marked in his choir book. After various attempts to solve the problem he hit upon the idea of using non-permanent adhesive that was available at 3M. He placed the adhesive on the back of his markers and found that they remained securely in place whilst in use and then peeled off easily. The 3M Corporation actively encouraged employees to spend no less than 15% of their work time developing their own ideas and products. When the employee presented his idea to 3M management he was able to research and develop the new product with their support. However the project was not without setbacks. The marketing division told him that no one would be interested. The manufacturing department told him that the product was too difficult to produce. However, the employee stoically ironed out the manufacturing problems himself, even though this was not his area of expertise. Today Post-It Notes continue to be one of 3M's top-grossing products. Promoting intrapreneurial activity has increased 3M's economic development. Their intrapreneurs generate so many new products that 30% of their sales are new within the last five years. 3M have in the region of 60,000 products, which keeps growing.

Oticon is another example of successful economic development through intrapreneurism. This Danish hearing aid manufacturer was aging and dying when a new management system was introduced. The company got rid of its traditional bureaucratic system and introduced a voluntary network based on the internal market choices of people and teams. Employees could volunteer for tasks and projects, often working for several different teams at a time. This has resulted in improved company effectiveness throughout the business, with profits increased by six fold in two years. To foster intrapreneurship and allow employees to develop new ideas it is essential to provide the time, space and resources required to turn their ideas into reality. Ultimately the company takes most risk, it is their reputation and finances. Not all ideas result in success, many new products and services fail or are only moderately successful. In such instances sales will not cover start-up, production and marketing costs. However a few moderate successes can be as profitable as one big one. Ultimately an organisation's employees must be able to add value through individual skills, team contribution, knowledge of the business and continued, self-perpetuating learning.

Organisations employing intrapreneurial strategies have a competitive edge, which boosts economic development. The main reason for this is innovation. Ideas are at the heart of a business, organisations that nurture ideas and innovation in their employees have a better chance of surviving, and thriving, in a competitive economy. Industry leaders are often those who have embraced intrapreneurism. Lew Lehr (3M) stated "3M is designed to encourage entrepreneurs to take an idea and run with it. The entrepreneurial approach is not a sideline at 3M. It is the heart of our design for growth." An intrapreneur's innovative idea may require capital and company marketing. It may also require ongoing access to proprietary technology and a staff sponsor. Ideas often have the greatest success when they fit the intrapreneur (skills, passion), the market (demand, margins) and the company (expertise, culture). Creative expression and growth are the most commonly cited reasons for employees setting up on their own. Consequently if employees have the freedom, fuel and facilitation to develop their ideas, the organisation will gain a competitive, intrapreneurial edge whilst retaining valuable, skilled staff

### **Intrapreneurship vs. Entrepreneurship: Is there a difference?**

In the self-employment world, small-business owners are frequently inundated with ambiguous, new terms and phrases that either help or confuse them in their quest to build a booming, thriving business. One word that has been on the scene for years, but only recently resurfaced is "intrapreneurship." Sometimes referred to as "corporate renewal," intrapreneurship is the process by which large organizations seek to utilize, maintain or retain the edge in innovation and profit-making by asking employees to spawn businesses within the business. The concept has been around for more than 20 years and was originally coined by author and innovator speaker Gifford Pinchot in an early 1980s book about corporate intrapreneuring.

Generally, the process of intrapreneuring works like this: Someone within a corporation is passionate about an idea and eventually shifts it into the company's venture division with the

suggestion: "If you have a potential new business, isolate it from the rest of the organization so it won't be infected, but still give it enough space to grow."

Intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship have vast similarities and differences. Here are the most notable:

- Intrapreneurs are still company employees, but they are supposedly given free rein to run a particular aspect of the company, perhaps a new product line or subsidiary.
- Entrepreneurs are self-employed people running their own company.
- Intrapreneurs know that if they fail, the company is still going to ensure they have a paycheck, at least for a while.
- Because of the system in which they work, intrapreneurs are chosen based mostly on corporate standards, not entrepreneurial success.
- Entrepreneurs don't necessarily have to worry about if they attended the right school or circulate in the right social circles—they're worried about making enough money to meet payroll and pay other bills.
- Intrapreneurs are usually selected by a corporate hierarchy and don't have to worry about building more structure they need to sustain a business (e.g. tech support, HR or marketing and sales).
- Entrepreneurs build all of that themselves.

One of the biggest differences is that intrapreneurs have at least a modicum of support from the primary organization; the entrepreneur doesn't. Also, intrapreneurs must get final approval of an idea from a senior executive. Entrepreneurs answer to themselves.

### **History of Intrapreneurship**

In an article in *The Economist* in 1976, Norman Macrae predicted a number of trends in business - one of them being "that dynamic corporations of the future should simultaneously be trying alternative ways of doing things in competition within themselves". In 1982, he revisited those thoughts in another *Economist* article, noting that the this trend had resulted in confederations of intrapreneurs. He suggested that firms should not be paying people for attendance, but should be paying competing groups for modules of work done. One suggestion was to set up a number of typing pools contracted for a certain amount of work over a certain time period for a lump sum. The members of the pool would be responsible for apportioning work, setting pay, setting work hours or even whether to subcontract out part of the work. Applied across the business spectrum such groups would provide the intrapreneurial competition he envisioned.

During the same time frame, Gifford and Elizabeth Pinchot were developing their concept of intra-corporate entrepreneur. They coined the word intrapreneur giving credit for their thinking to the 1976 article by Macrae. Under their model a person wishing to develop an intrapreneurial project would initially have to risk something of value to themselves - a portion of their salary, for instance. The intrapreneur could then sell the completed project for both cash bonuses and intra-capital which could be used to develop future projects. Based on the success of some of the early trials of their methods in Sweden they began a school for intrapreneurs and in 1985 they published their first book, *Intrapreneuring*, combining the findings from their research and practical applications. (Note: A revised edition of that book, [Intrapreneuring in Action](#) is now available.)

By 1986 John Naisbett was citing intrapreneurship as a way for established businesses to find new markets and new products in his out-of-print book, "[Re-Inventing the Corporation](#)" and Steve Jobs was describing the development of the Macintosh computer as an intrapreneurial venture within Apple. The concept was established enough that in 1990 Rosabeth Moss Kanter of Harvard Business School discussed in her book, "[When Giants Learn to Dance](#)", the need for intrapreneurial development as a key factor in ensuring the survival of the company.

And, in 1992, *The American Heritage Dictionary* brought intrapreneurism into the main stream by adding intrapreneur to its dictionary, defining it as "a person within a large corporation who takes direct responsibility for turning an idea into a profitable finished product through assertive risk-taking and innovation". Intrapreneurship was a concept here to stay.

## The Intrapreneurial Organization

[Intrapreneurs](#) have been credited with increasing the speed and cost-effectiveness of technology transfer from research and development to the marketplace. While intrapreneurs are sometimes considered inventors, inventors come up with new products. Intrapreneurs come up with new processes that get that product to market. Part of the reason they are considered similar to inventors is that they are creative and are risk-takers in the sense that they are stepping out of their traditional role within the business. However, their risk-taking behavior is personal. In terms of the business, they actually work towards minimizing the risk through the innovative approaches they use to more efficient and effective product production and sales.

Some methods that have been used by businesses to foster intrapreneurship are:

- Users of internal services are allowed to make their own choice of which internal vendor they wish to use.
- [Intrapreneurial employees](#) are granted something akin to ownership rights in the internal intraprisers they create.
- Companywide involvement is encouraged by insisting on truth and honesty in marketing and marketplace feedback.
- [Intrapreneurial teams](#) are treated as a profit center rather than a cost center (i.e., they are responsible for their own bottom line). One way some companies handle this is for the team to have their own internal bank account.
- Team members are allowed a variety of options in jobs, in innovation efforts, alliances, and exchanges.
- Employees are encouraged to develop through training programs.
- Internal enterprises have official standing in the organization.
- A system of contractual agreements between internal enterprises is defined and supported by the organization.
- A system for settling disputes between internal enterprises and between employees and enterprises is part of the intrapreneurship plan.

Intrapreneurism in business has evolved to encompass a variety of concepts: identifying and fostering employees who have what is considered to be intrapreneurial traits, developing an intrapreneurial process for part or all of a business, and developing innovation through rewarding intrapreneurial behavior.

## Developing intrapreneurship within large organizations

Many organisations have placed greater importance on a service-orientated approach to their business activities. Customers are seen as both internal and external and employees are expected to be positive, polite and professional. This customer service focus has resulted in an emphasis on being a team player. In such a team performance environment employees must manage their own time, solve problems, apply logic and reasoning skills and be able to set and follow through goals. "They need to be self-motivated entrepreneurs who are fixers, not finger pointers." Consequently, the culture and ethos of a customer service focus has enabled an increase in intrapreneurism. This in turn has led to the development of intrapreneurial competing teams within a company. Teams can function as small businesses within the organisation, which are nested and networked together. Teams can focus on either a product or a process (such as secretarial services or PR). Such practices result in a free market system where work is more effectively co-ordinated and responsibility is distributed more evenly. Pinchot (1999) has noted that intrapreneurial activity increases the speed and cost-effectiveness of technology transfer from research and development to the marketplace. Pinchot has developed the "Ten Steps to an Entrepreneurial Organisation" based on need factors, which he considers vital for the development of organisational intrapreneurism.

1. "Give users of internal services a choice of more than one internal vendor.
2. Give employees the security of something akin to ownership rights in internal intraprisers they create, as well as the larger corporation.

3. Demand and engender truth and honesty, marketplace feedback and marketplace discipline, to support widespread decision-making.
4. Give intrapreneurial teams responsibility for their own bottom line even if they are subsidised – as a profit centre rather than a cost centre.
5. Allow many options and diversity in personnel, in jobs, in innovation efforts, alliances, and exchanges.
6. Provide extensive training and education, and safety nets, so employees can develop and take risks as their organisation develops.
7. Create an internal “bank account” for every internal enterprise.
8. Streamline systems for registering internal enterprises so that they have standing in the corporation.
9. Establish a system for registering agreements and contracts between internal enterprises, so that people can give their word and trust the system.
10. Establish a justice system for adjudicating disputes between internal enterprises and between employees and enterprises.”

### **Human Resources Issues in Intrapreneurship**

What has intrapreneurship meant in the reality of the business environment? The area of greatest impact has been, of course, in human resources. Intrapreneurship has not just become a method for revitalizing business processes, but of also revitalizing jobs.

In [GTE's](#) Information Systems Division that has paid off for the company and its employees too. [This program](#) was actually developed by a former GTE employee, Anthony Spadafore, who left GTE to form his own consultancy program, [Pathfinders](#), which works towards developing self-directed employees. [Spadafore](#) spent extensive counselling the volunteer employees in this new way of thinking and working. From the initial group eight new projects were proposed and a number of them funded. A number of employees have defined totally new career paths for themselves. This program has totally redefined how GTE does business.

[3M](#) is another company that has reaped the rewards of intrapreneurism. 3M has a standard policy that allows all employees to work on developing their own business ideas at least 15 percent of the time they are at work. One of the big breakthroughs that came from this program was the concept of Post-It-Notes which was pioneered by an employees that wanted something that wouldn't fall out to mark pages in his hymn book at church.

One of the most exciting concepts in intrapreneurism is developing intrapreneurial competing teams within a company. The organization can be organized around teams that function as small businesses nested and networked together. These teams can be focused on a product such as a new car, a process, such as public relation or a service, such as the secretarial services of the organization. What evolves is a free market system with work coordinated more effectively and responsibility distributed more widely.

### **India and Intrapreneurship**

In the present century, Indian corporates have entered the global market on the large scale .The IT industry took the lead in this exercise. This industry has exhibited entrepreneurship to the point that it is a role model for the other industries mostly run on management style.

Innovation at every level and of every kind can be seen in IT industry. Traditionally, Indian economy supported entrepreneurship. The Indian mindset has cultural advantage, which is evident from the following.

‘Artisans –system ‘ was a well –known practice in India. Generation after generation ,the artisans developed their profession and made it richer in skills and knowledge by continuously innovating ,experimenting and expanding.

Mentoring and counseling is part of Indian social system. In joint families, the family head (Karta) as well as other elders in the family play the role of mentor. The ‘panchayat’ in the villages and the Biradari’ act in the capacity of counselor as/ if the need arises. This was apparent recently when ‘Ambani brothers battle’ was in full swing. There are certain castes, which promote their own community members as entrepreneurs in a very systematic manner. they have a well –developed support system to promote entrepreneurship within their Biradari’. The multi-

cultural environment of India helps in building sensitivity and tolerance that is so vital for success entrepreneurship.

### **What causes or retards Intrapreneurship?**

The primary factors retarding Intrapreneurship are:

- The costs of failure too high, and the rewards of success are too low. Intrapreneurs need to be given the space in which to fail, since failure is an unavoidable aspect of the Intrapreneurial process. This is not to say that organisations should simply condone failure, but rather that organisations need to begin to measure and attribute failure to either Intrapreneur fault, or circumstances beyond the Intrapreneurs control - and punish and reward accordingly. Similarly, the rewards for success are usually inadequate - few organisations provide rewards for Intrapreneurs that even closely approximate the rewards available to the Entrepreneurial counterparts. Most incentivisation systems need to be upgraded accordingly.

"Enron: If we've broken a paradigm, it's the compensation paradigm. We pay people like entrepreneurs. A lot of companies talk about intrapreneurship and ask people to take risks, but if those people succeed they get nothing more than a small bonus, and if they fail they get fired."

"You can't create wealth unless you are willing to share it."

Fortune Magazine

- Inertia caused by established systems that no-one is willing to change. Most organisations are governed by implicit and explicit systems, and in many cases people are reluctant to change them. Intrapreneurs are met with "this is the way we've always done it around here", "if it ain't broke, don't fix it", and "changing it now would just take too much effort..." Many organisations use their existing systems to prove they already have the "right answer" (see above), effectively dousing creativity.
- Hierarchy. Organisational hierarchies are what create the need to ask for permission - the deeper the hierarchy, that harder it is to get permission for anything new. Hierarchies also tend to create narrow career paths and myopic thinking, further stifling creativity and innovation. People lower down in the hierarchy have a tendency to become dis-empowered through having to ask permission, eventually developing the "victim mentality" that causes reactivity.

Why do many Intrapreneurs remain within bureaucracies despite these factors? One reason may be for the thrill of outwitting the Pointy-Haired Boss (ref: Dilbert comics).

Each of the elements above can become deeply ingrained into the culture (the symbols of acceptable behaviour) of the organisation. Consequently, bureaucratic behaviour may remain entrenched despite management's overt attempts to create an Intrapreneurial organisation. What then can organisations do to encourage Intrapreneurship? Here, the old adage applies: "You get what you measure." (A little bit of measurement based *incentivisation* wouldn't hurt either.) Organisations, therefore, need to find ways to measure and reward Intrapreneurship - both in terms of its frequency, and the rigour with which it is pursued. Organisational processes and structures are required to foster Intrapreneurship, just as they are for any other aspect of the organisation.

### **Companies can help Intrapreneurship to happen:**

"The best innovators aren't lone geniuses. They're people who can take an idea that's obvious in one context and apply it in not-so-obvious ways to a different context. The best companies have learned to systemise that process"

### **Conclusions**

- Intrapreneurship is important for the economic development of an organisation because it:
  - i. Increases employee productivity and motivation.
  - ii. Increases the speed and cost effectiveness of operations and business services.
  - iii. Promotes effective teamwork.

- ▯ Intrapreneurial behaviour is most likely to occur in organisations that encourage it.
- ▯ Intrapreneurs are more likely to be personally pre-disposed towards proactive behaviour.
- ▯ Intrapreneurial activity within an organisation can foster a culture of motivation and empowerment amongst employees, ultimately resulting in increased revenue.
- ▯ Organisations employing intrapreneurial strategies have a competitive edge, which also boosts economic development.
- ▯ Clear reward systems and strategies must be in place to ensure that the intrapreneur is adequately compensated for their innovation.
- ▯ The key to intrapreneurism is organisational flexibility.
- ▯ It is a sad indictment the most often the company name is recognised for intrapreneurial activity rather than the innovated individual, e.g. Ford's Mustang, 3M's Post-Its. In contrast names of entrepreneurs are well know. This may also be a reflection of the fact that intrapreneurial activity often takes place in teams.

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